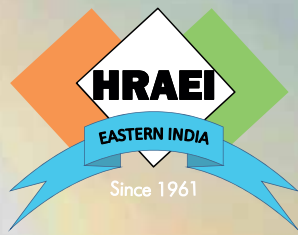


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A Bi-monthly Magazine by HRAEI | Vol 7 | Issue 2 | March - April 2021



BOUNCE BACK MANTRA

Despite the pandemic new hotels are coming up in eastern India

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The association has again initiated a tie-up of hospitals with hotels for satellite facilities to serve ailing Covid-19 patients in the hour of crisis of the pandemic's second wave. Recently some healthcare units formalized the venture at a meeting attended by the home secretary, principal secretary (health) and the commissioner of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, along with representatives of HRAEI and hospitals.

At the meeting the health secretary advised us to meet with our hospital counterparts and expedite the satellite facility structure. More than 500 hotel rooms would be ready in the first phase. We requested the administration that the hotels also should be allowed to start care centres individually for Covid patients who have no symptoms.

Association of Hospitals in Eastern India president and AMRI Group said they were

“

The tie-up with hospitals had gone a long way to deal with the acute crisis of hospital beds

”

ready to join hands with hotels for satellite centres. The hospital has already tied up with three hotels— Sojourn, Southern Plaza and Casa Broadway. Belle Vue and Medica are also joining the effort. Our association has already written a letter to the health secretary, offering rooms for satellite Covid treatment. We have also requested the state government to provide a list of the towns and cities where it would require rooms for quarantine centres.

Incidentally, HRAEI had organized 2,000 rooms during the first wave. The tie-up with hospitals had gone a long way in helping the state government deal with the acute crisis of hospital beds during the peak of the pandemic. It also helped hotels get minimal business – since the bed and food charges were nominal – to recover the utility bills and pay its staff salary, when normal business was hit hard due to low room occupancy.

Mr Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI



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Properties can be shut but the government must do justice to the owners, staff and their families

The Maharashtra lockdown which began in mid-April is likely to have a severe effect on the hospitality industry, especially the restaurant and bar segment. Having registered a huge spike of infections in the second wave of the pandemic, there is no doubt that some restrictive measures were needed.

Though hotels have not been shut and their restaurants are still open for in-house guests and room service, the sector still feels strongly about the need for measures to stop Covid, though the methods can vary. With the new local restrictions in place, travel in the state is going to be adversely impacted and will affect the hospitality industry which is heavily dented due to the pandemic.

While the restaurants are ready to come forward and coordinate, it clearly indicates that the government has to meet the industry somewhere in the middle. Properties can be shut but the government must do justice to the owners, staff and their families. Salaries must be taken care of, owners must be unburdened of the property tax, statutory fees must be waived off, electricity and water bills must not be generated until the industry becomes completely operational again.

The decision by the state government is tragic as the authorities have chosen to go with another draconian lockdown instead of accelerating the vaccination program. Hope other states don't follow in the footsteps of the Maharashtra government

MYSTIC EAST

A BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE BY HRAEI
Vol 7 | Issue 2 | March - April 2021

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The industry is not sure whether the ECLGS scheme would help the bulk of the MSME segment

Ever since the Union Government announced the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) under the Atmanirbhar Bharat stimulus measures to fight the Covid-19 financial stress, the travel and tourism sector stakeholders have been asking for a sector specific scheme as many of the parameters defined in the government scheme were not easy to be met and fulfilled. The government continued to ignore the demand all these while, but decided favourably considering uncertainties that exist in the sector due to the new virus wave in the country.

The ECLGS 3.0 announced by the Ministry of Finance will cover business enterprises in hospitality, travel & tourism, leisure & sporting sectors which had, as on February 29, 2020, total credit outstanding not exceeding INR 500 crore and overdues, if any, were for 60 days or less, on that date. ECLGS 3.0 would involve extension of credit of up to 40% of total credit outstanding across all lending institutions as on February 29, 2020. The tenor of loans granted under ECLGS 3.0 shall be 6 years including a moratorium period of 2 years.

While the scheme will be beneficial for big players with credit outstanding upto INR 500 crores, the industry is not quite sure whether the scheme would have any major impact on the bulk of the MSME segment in the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. The small enterprises did not have an exposure to banks or had a very limited exposure as on February 29, 2020. Also, it would be very good if hotel staff were also considered as frontline workers for eligibility for immediate vaccinations.

Mr Mohammed Azhar

Honourary Secretary

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Despite the spectre of the pandemic many new properties are coming up in eastern India



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Hotel-hospital tie-up to fight Covid in Kolkata

With the number of Covid-19 cases increasing on a daily basis, patients are facing an acute bed shortage across hospitals in Kolkata. Most city hospital beds have been filled up and at every hospital, the queue is getting longer.

In this trying time, the Hotel & Restaurants Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) has joined hands with the Association of Hospitals of Eastern India (AHEI). Hotels have come forward to offer their rooms to serve as satellite centres of hospitals that are within a 2 Km-radius of respective hospitals.

Sudesh Poddar, President, Hotel & Restaurants Association of Eastern India (HRAEI), said, "We have offered around 1,000 rooms across various categories of hotels, which can be attached to hospitals as satellite facilities. These centres will be used to

accommodate Covid positive patients with mild to moderate symptoms, where the attached hospital will be treating them under the care and guidance of their medical teams, as per the guidelines and advisories framed by the Union Health Ministry and the State Health department."

Rupak Barua, President, Association of Hospitals in Eastern India, said, "Hospitals in Kolkata, Salt Lake, Rajarhat New Town, and adjoining areas have tied up with hotels and almost 500 rooms have been added as satellite facilities of hospitals. Asymptomatic patients admitted in such satellite centres will be treated under strict supervision of qualified medical teams of the associated hospital, with round-the-clock presence of doctors and nursing staff. These centres will be equipped with necessary medicines, oxygen supply, and other

treatment protocols."

"More than 50 percent of the rooms in these satellite centres have been filled up with asymptomatic patients and are being treated there. More and more hospitals are taking up such facilities and we expect more beds will be added at satellite centres over the next few days," Barua added.

Although hospitals have been augmenting beds for Covid patients, the rising demand on a daily basis is still causing issues in finding beds at hospitals.

Poddar said, "The arrangement between hotels and hospitals have been quite fruitful. The situation is expected to ease down within a few days. We have received interest from more hospitals to set up satellite centres and the number of beds at these centres will go up over the next few days.



Associations urge FM to customise ECLGS scheme



Several hotel associations in India have made some submissions recently to the Finance Ministry. While conveying its deep gratitude for extending support to the Industry by extending the scope of the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) through the introduction of ECLGS 3.0 to cover business enterprises in Hospitality, Travel and Tourism.

The associations have highlighted that the scheme requires some customization. In addition to being highly capital intensive, hotels have a high percentage of fixed costs of operations that have become unsustainable owing to nil or negligible revenues. The recovery of hotels will also be long drawn as borders will be reopened with extreme caution and traveller confidence will return over an extended period of time. The

ECLGS 3.0 scheme for hotels, therefore, needs to factor in these aspects unique to the Industry.

Inclusion of State Financial Corporations, Asset Reconstructions Companies (ARCs) and Debt Funds, extension of moratorium, capping of interest rate at 8 percent, increasing of the delinquency period are some of the suggested customisations. In addition, the Association has requested that Hotels with no borrowings should also be eligible for ECLGS 3.0 as these too are facing a severe liquidity crunch. HAI has highlighted that while ECLGS 3.0 offers liquidity to pay interest obligations, it does not help businesses to survive. Interest subvention and a longer payback period can provide both liquidity and relief.

A simpler and quicker dispersal process will make for a better and

more improved scheme. Allowing hotels to utilise the credit line for any business purpose, including repayment of loans and interest payment would provide additional support.

A complete or partial waiver of statutory expenses like property tax/lease rentals/license fee /excise fee payable by hotels to various government authorities and an Introduction of a plan/policy where hotels can renegotiate lease rentals/license fee in a manner that for the remaining term, the lessor/li

ensor can have incremental revenues, while the hotels are given the opportunity of recovering/recouping their losses due to this pandemic are other relief measures suggested the Association for sympathetic consideration.

Source: ET Hospitality World

Industry's own efforts helped the islands get back 50 per cent of its business



Mr Girish Arora is General Secretary, Hoteliers Association of Andaman & Nicobar Islands. He is a Managing Committee Member of Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) and also a Member of the Lieutenant Governor's Advisory Committee in the island. As the past President of Andaman Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Mr Arora has taken key steps to develop the islands into an important tourist destination. He is a Managing Partner of Sea Shell Hotel Resorts & Spa, a chain of luxury resorts in Port Blair, Havelock and Neil Islands—counted among the most gorgeous resorts in the islands by Conde Nast Traveller.

He spoke to Mystic East in an exclusive interview on how the hospitality industry in A&N Islands has coped with the pandemic situation. Excerpts here:

What strategies have you adopted to bounce back in the after the Covid-19 outbreak?

We adopted the following strategies during and after the pandemic. First, we instilled confidence in staff to come back to work in an industry where close proximity to guests is unavoidable. To do this we trained the staff with the new cleaning and sanitation Standard Operating Procedures. We created a safe working atmosphere for all by ensuring that all staff are following the laid down hygiene and sanitation protocols. Second, we coordinated with the administration to make it mandatory that all incoming passengers



► Sea Shell Hotel Resorts & Spa, Port Blair

or guests to these islands undergo mandatory Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) at the airport on landing to detect the virus responsible for Covid-19. However, it was observed that this resulted in long queues at the arrival terminal and increased exit time from the airport. Then in consultation with the administration it was made mandatory that all incoming passengers or guests to these islands should get their RT-PCR test done 48 hours before boarding the flight. This led to the Andamans being the “Safest Destination to Travel” and it greatly inspired guest confidence to travel to these islands.

In addition to this, we communicated to guests that we are following the prescribed norms for best control over the pandemic social media platforms and other media channels so that they are confident to travel to the islands. For this campaign a

substantial budget was allocated. We ensured that guests followed all the Dos and Don'ts and they can actually see that hygiene and sanitation protocols are being followed. They were encouraged to recommend us suggestions to improve the protocols.

During the uncertain times—not conducive to travel—we introduced a flexible cancellation policy to make it convenient for guests, in case they are unable to travel.

These steps were initiated on World Tourism Day (September 27, 2020). As a result by December 2020 the tourism in these isles was back to 50 per cent of the pre-COVID times.

What help did you get from the State and Central government to bounce back?

We requested the administration to make RAT/RT-PCR tests mandatory

for all incoming passengers. This was done by the government. We asked the administration to speak with airlines to increase the frequency of flights to these isles. We were getting 18-22 flights per day before the pandemic, but now we have only 10-12 flights per day. The administration is trying to increase the number—it's a work in progress. We requested the government to allow private ferries to operate across islands—the administration allowed it.

Did the Union or State/UT budget offer you any support?

No. Apart from the Government of India's All India COVID Relief Package, no specific relief for the islands was announced. In the State/UT budget no offer of support was mentioned. Frankly speaking, we have received no financial support or assistance from the state/UT.

BACK TO BUSINESS

Hospitality industry in Spain adopted a proactive initiative, with robust support from the country's government and the European Union to recover from the pandemic-induced setback



► **Tourism has been making an important contribution to the GDP of the Spanish economy for many years**

THE health crisis caused by the pandemic COVID-19 has been of such magnitude that the drop in economic and tourist activity in most countries is generating an economic crisis with consequences that are still difficult to measure. Spain is one of the few countries in the world in which a double situation occurs: tourism is a basic sector of the

country's economy and, at the same time, the country is a leading destination of world tourism. This double circumstance means that Spain was affected by the pandemic caused by COVID-19 in a very negative way and it was essential to have an adequate recovery strategy especially geared towards this sector and its companies.

When crises such as COVID-19 happen, they force hospitality companies to change their operating strategies. These events generate high levels of uncertainty and usually require quick responses in facing negative impacts. Nevertheless, previous research has shown that there is little preparedness for a crisis situation in the hospitality industry, due mainly to a



► **The main origin countries for these tourists in Spain before the pandemic were the United Kingdom (21.60%), Germany (13.35%) and France (13.33%), which accounted for 48.28% of international tourist**

lack of devoted resources and a lack of knowledge and experience about how to act.

Previous research has focused on destination response and recovery with little research specifically in hospitality responses and recovery strategies. However, the little research unanimity that exists has found that crisis situations have a strong im-

act on the hospitality industry. The immediate-term impacts are a severe decrease in tourists, occupancy levels and a fall in average daily rate (ADR) and revenue per available room (RevPar). In the short term, other impacts, such as job cuts, changes in operations and reduction in services, threaten the recovery of the hospitality industry. In the medium-long

term, difficulties in collecting loans, postponed future investment plans or difficulties in paying debts can accelerate the return to normal activity. Summarizing, the main response strategies are focused on cost reduction, push and relaunch local market, price reduction, preparation of contingency plans and human resource policies. The following section

will deepen an understanding of how the Spanish hospitality industry is facing the return to the “new normal” following a situation of zero tourism.

Key contributor to GDP

Tourism has been making an important contribution to the GDP of the Spanish economy for many years. Specifically, it is estimated that, in 2018, the tourist gross domestic product stood at more than 147 billion euros, which represents 12.3% of the national GDP. Furthermore, this contribution has evolved very positively in recent years, with a growth rate in the 2015–2018 period of 25.3% in income and 11.8% in the percentage of national GDP.

This important contribution of tourism GDP to national wealth

has been due to the attractiveness, welcoming capacity and high degree of tourism competitiveness that characterises Spain. In the period 2016–2019, inbound tourism grew 11.13%. The main origin countries for these tourists were the United Kingdom (21.60%), Germany (13.35%) and France (13.33%), which accounted for 48.28% of international tourist arrivals in Spain. This is a major added problem of the pandemic, because these three countries are especially suffering the COVID-19 crisis due to having very high levels of transmission among their population. The attractiveness of Spain as a tourist destination has enabled it to occupy, in recent years, the second position worldwide for international tourist arrivals, reaching entries of 83.7 million

tourists in 2019.

Within the tourism sector, the hospitality industry has a special role in Spain, because international tourists who visit Spain prefer hotel accommodations. Specifically, in 2019, 65.38% of these tourists stayed in a hotel. In addition, the evolution in recent years has been very positive, despite the strong growth in the use of rental housing and shared housing with their owners, reaching a growth rate of 13.61% in the 2016–2019 period, with an average stay in 2019 of 3.08 days. On the other hand, most of the tourists who stay in Spain in hotels are foreigners. In 2019, overnight stays by residents abroad accounted for 65.20% of total overnight stays, compared to 34.80% corresponding to Spanish residents. This accom-



► Within the tourism sector, the hospitality industry has a special role in Spain, because international tourists who visit Spain prefer hotel accommodations

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modation capacity is due to the fact that Spain has an important hotel offering. Specifically, the average number of hotels opened in Spain in 2019 amounted to 14,840 hotels that offered a total of 18,201,847 beds annually and hired, throughout the year, a global average of 219,796 employees.

In the first seven months of 2020, there had already been a decrease of 72.43% in international tourist arrivals, or more than 34.8 million tourists. January had a fall of 1.36%, followed by a recovery of 0.98% in February, but March was a disastrous month with a decrease in the entry of foreign tourists of 64.27%, shifting from an entrance of more than 5.5 million tourists to just over two million. However, April and May were even worse, because there was no entry of international tourists.

Given these disastrous data, it was necessary for Spain to adopt recovery strategies that apply in general to the tourism sector and in particular to the hospitality sector that mitigate, as much as possible, the negative effects that the pandemic is causing to these sectors. In the next section, an analysis will be made of the initiatives that are being undertaken both internationally and in Spain to try to properly recover the tourism sector.

Initiatives to Support the Hospitality Industry

In the face of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 health pandemic, a wide range of initiatives have been undertaken, both internationally and nationally, which have been complemented by specific actions by hotels and hotel chains operating in Spain.

At the international level, two general types of initiatives have been launched to support the crisis gen-

erated by COVID-19. The first set of measures are of an economic-financial nature and were initially promoted after a telematic meeting of G20 ministers held on 24 April 2020, in which the need to work together and in a coordinated way worldwide was raised, setting homogeneous measures to create safe destinations that allow an adequate recovery in the tourism sector. In this way, the G20 tries to take on the challenge that the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) launched two days earlier; that is, to lead a coordinated recovery of the tourism sector worldwide, since the countries that make up the G20 have a tourism activity that represents more than three quarters of world tourism GDP.

The European Council approved, on 23 April 2020, an initial budget of 540,000 million euros to help countries finance their plans to avoid mass

layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the aim to repair damage from the crisis and prepare a better future for the next generation, the Commission sent to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (Brussels, 27 May 2020 COM (2020) 456 final) a Communication on 27 May 2020 entitled Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation. It proposed a new Euro 750 billion recovery instrument, Next Generation EU, embedded within a powerful and modern long-term EU budget. In addition to Next Generation EU, the Commission proposed to revamp the EU budget, amounting to some Euros 1100 billion between 2021 and 2027. From the Next Generation EU, it is estimated that Spain could receive around 140,000 million, of which 77,000 million would be



► **Given disaster caused by the pandemic, it was necessary for Spain to adopt recovery strategies that apply in general to the tourism sector and in particular to the hospitality sector**

non-repayable and the remaining 63,000 million in loans.

Hygiene Protection

The second set of measures are sanitary protection. The tourism sector, through the WTTC, developed a series of protocols [36] to reactivate safe tourism in the world, and, at the end of May 2020, the protocols to be applied in hotels had already been published. The "suggested protocols for hospitality were compiled based on input from leading hospitality companies either directly or from their public announcements around the safe, healthy and responsible reopening of hotels to the public.

The protocols also take into account World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. The objective is to ensure that protocols are in place across all relevant functions with an increased focus on health, safety and social distancing guidance which travelers will need and expect".

National Initiatives

At the Spanish state level, economic-financial initiatives can be classified into two categories. The first includes all those policies and measures to support companies in the sector whose survival may be at risk due to the harmful effects of the pandemic. This support to the tourism sector can be classified into four categories: (a) labour measures, through the possibility of applying temporary employment regulation files to companies in the tourism sector (b) financial aid, through the application for bank loans with public guarantees (by mid-May 2020, more than 80,000 applications had been processed from 68,000 companies for a total of almost 6,500 million euros); (c)

The European Council approved, on 23 April 2020, an initial budget of 540,000 million euros to help countries finance their plans to avoid mass layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the aim to repair damage from the crisis and prepare a better future for the next generation, the Commission sent to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee

support for self-employed workers in the tourism sector through financial benefits (in mid-May 2020, more than 250,000 workers in the tourism sector received these benefits); and (d) tax measures, which are specified in the deferral of debts, business and self-employed taxes for a period of six months. Most of these measures have also been implemented, with their specific features, by the rest of the European countries.

Private Initiatives

To analyse the private initiatives that companies in the sector are developing in Spain, the five largest Spanish hotel chains based on turnover have been selected. Among these

chains are Meliá Hotels International (hereinafter Meliá), Iberostar Hotels & Resorts (Iberostar), Barceló Hotel Group (Barceló), Riu Hotels & Resorts (Riu) and the NH Hotel Group (NH). All of them invoice more than 1500 million euros, have between almost 100 and more than 350 hotels and offer between 32,000 and 83,000 rooms to their guests.

The five Spanish hotel groups have set themselves the common objective of protecting the health of customers and their employees, implementing strict hygiene standards in the facilities and in the processes, promoting social distancing and avoiding, as much as possible, direct contact between employees and customers by strengthening digitisation and opting to undertake extensive communication and awareness programmes that involve both customers and employees in the adoption of and compliance with these prevention measures against COVID-19.

However, there are also substantial changes that affect the core of the hotel business, such as those related to the acceleration of digitisation, the operation of accommodation and food and beverage services and the use of common areas, as well as internal security protocols and the creation of new departments and jobs.

Ancillary uses

One of the response strategies that has been implemented in all health crises as a recovery strategy has been the offer of rooms for purposes other than tourism accommodation. This response strategy was implemented by the sector during COVID-19 after Spain closed all its economic sectors and the health sector was on the verge of collapse. The Madrid Hotel Business Association offered the Gov-



► **The five Spanish hotel groups set themselves the common objective of protecting the health of customers and their employees, implementing strict hygiene standards to boost tourist confidence**

ernment of Madrid the possibility of medicalising some hotels during the harshest phase of the pandemic.

Specifically, beds were offered in 13 hotels (Ayre Gran Hotel Colón, Hotel Marriott Auditorium, HotelVía Castellana, Hotel City House Florida Norte, Hotel Vértice Roomspace, Hotel Miguel Ángel, Hotel NH Parla, Hotel Ilunium Atrium, Hotel Praga Santos, Hotel Euroforum Palacio, Hotel Las Provincias, Catalonia Plaza Mayor and Barceló Occidental Aranjuez) and more than 2500 patients infected with COVID-19 stayed and were treated there. Other hotels served as temporary accommodations for workers from essential economic sectors and the state security forces who had to travel throughout the territory to work where the government required them to be.

Other recovery measures that are

common in all health crises have been implemented, such as the redirection of hotel marketing and sales programmes and promotional packages. Four of the five chains have given names to the infection prevention programmes that they are implementing. Specifically, Meliá has named it “Stay Safe with Meliá”; Iberostars, “How we care”; Barceló, “We Care about You” and NH, “Feel Safe at NH”. All these programmes are available on the website of each chain.

These campaigns are aimed at attracting and rebuilding confidence in tourists, one of today’s main priorities. The hotel sector has taken sanitary measures, and these campaigns aim to create value from them by showing the creation of social distance in the jobs and leisure places, as well as changes in the accommoda-

tions. However, these measures and campaigns will only be successful if there is close collaboration between the government and the hotel sector. The government’s support is needed in relation to the permitted mobility measures, opening of borders and airports, elimination of quarantine periods and other measures that pose barriers to the enjoyment of tourist activities. In addition, the hotel sector must ensure the health of tourists staying at its facilities.

These campaigns are aimed at attracting and rebuilding confidence in tourists, one of today’s main priorities. In conclusion, it can be said that faced with this situation, the response of supranational institutions, especially the European Union, has been overwhelming. The European Union has involved itself as never before in the revival of economic activity in its



► **The hospitality industry should be focused on building trust in tourists, reinforcing their brand and adapting their operations to the so-called “new normal”.**

sphere of action, granting significant financial resources to countries more affected by the pandemic, some in non-repayment and others in the form of repayable credits. In the same way, all nations have made an important commitment to emerge from the crisis with labour, financial and fiscal measures.

In order to restore confidence in tourists, the tourism sector in general, and the hospitality industry in particular, have mobilised with the aim of protecting tourists from the virus by promoting—in the case of public and private tourism institutions—and implementing—in the case of hotel establishments—action protocols to make the stay of tourists in their facilities safer.

In the specific case of Spain, the Secretary of State for Tourism, through ICTE, has published action protocols

in the tourism sector in the face of the pandemic which are being followed by companies in the sector. Furthermore, the hospitality industry is adopting its own protection measures, as evidenced by the case study conducted, which show that the five largest Spanish hotel chains by turnover have their own action programmes against COVID-19. Given the sharp drop in the entry of international tourists into Spain, one of the possible short- to medium-term solutions is to try to take advantage of domestic tourism while restrictions on international mobility continue to be maintained. Given this situation, the Spanish authorities will focus, like many other countries that receive international tourism, on trying to support domestic tourism, as has happened in other past crises situations. Thus, in the meantime, public-private collaboration is crucial,

as well as governmental measures to support the tourism industry.

The hospitality industry should be focused on building trust in tourists, reinforcing their brand and adapting their operations to the so-called “new normal”. Those strategies could be valuable in this period and in the near future when the pandemic is controlled.

The main limitation of the present study is that, during its execution, the pandemic was still in the process of expanding, with uneven rates depending on each a selected country. This does not allow an analysis of this situation from the proper perspective, since it is still unknown if the virus can be eradicated, if there will again be outbreaks in the countries that have it more controlled or if the coronavirus will mutate. With regard to subsequent studies, it would be convenient to analyse what the real evolution of the tourism and hospitality industry has been, at least during the year 2020, and what the forecasts are for the following years, establishing scenarios that facilitate a prospective study. Another future line of research will be to analyse the result of these strategies in tourists, the perception of Spain as a tourist destination, and the recovery of the hospitality industry. Future research should measure the impact of governmental initiatives to support the tourism and changes in hospitality in organization, operations and performance to survive in the “new normal”.

Source: COVID-19 Impacts and Recovery Strategies: The Case of the Hospitality Industry in Spain José Miguel Rodríguez-Antón * and María del Mar Alonso-Almeida value from them by showing the creation of social distance in the jobs and leisure places, as well as changes in the accommodations

CRISIS LESSONS

How are the hospitality and higher education landscapes changing? Here are some insights from Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne, Switzerland



SUCCESSFUL hospitality professionals know that the difference between success and failure often depends on how we deal with challenges and difficulties. In fact, this mindset aligns very well with the etymological roots of the word “crisis”. Whereas we generally use the word to describe times of difficulty and distress, the original Greek word “krísis” described “decisions”, significant

“turning points” for better or worse, and/or a “decisive stage” in the context of a decision-making. Hence, what are the “turning points” and “insights” that we, as institutions of higher education, are currently experiencing during the pandemic? In fact, institutions of higher education have been significantly impacted, both domestically and internationally, by Covid-19. Based on an education model that attracts inter-

national students and fosters student mobility, universities have started to reflect on the long-term implications of Covid-19. Here are five insights to stimulate thought and reflection on how the hospitality education sector can successfully evolve from it.

Insight #1: Solidarity and sharing

In the face of uncertainty in hospi-

tality and tourism's future economic performance, the demand for insights from educational services and higher education has increased rapidly during the past months. Some academic institutions have been very quick and proactive in distributing knowledge and training to respond to this demand. For instance, the Florida Atlantic University, among others, has launched a series of free online certificates to help hospitality professionals that have been made unemployed or face reduced workload. Webinars, panels and leadership insights have been popping up like mushrooms during the past weeks. Based on our history and values, EHL also did not hesitate in providing free hospitality insights and know-how to the industry under these specific circumstances. Given that EHL's leadership team had decided to invest in an online education portfolio in 2017, we were very well prepared to respond quickly to an increased need for educational services and could provide the industry with qualitative online course material immediately.

Solidarity and sharing are unique characteristics of the hospitality industry. Hospitality professionals and educators are passionate to serve customer needs. With an increased spirit of solidarity towards those needs, educational institutions have been providing help, advice and insights during the pandemic. It is something that we as an industry can be proud of and that spurs confidence when looking forward. Our educational models are judged by those who need them. The high demand for these resources during the past months emphasizes the importance and critical role of academic institutions in the future. Listening to the industry and customizing the

In these market conditions, our industry needs to have flexible programs that allow to respond to the specific educational needs of the individual, providing an edge for students when they return to a post-downturn job market.

educational offer to changing market demands will become one key element in shaping the future of the hospitality education sector around the world.

Insight #2: The trend towards individualization

Hospitality graduates know that after an economic downturn their own future job prospects depend on how well they are qualified compared to others looking for fewer available jobs. In these market conditions, our industry needs to have flexible programs that allow to respond to the specific educational needs of the individual, providing an edge for students when they return to a post-downturn job market.

But this individualization of the educational portfolio is a trend that has been ongoing for over 5 years now,



► **Solidarity and sharing are unique characteristics of the hospitality industry; hospitality professionals and educators are passionate to serve customer needs**



► **Resilience and character are key components of our industry, and deserve to be further accentuated in certain curricula**

(for example, EHL's program portfolio of short-term certificates). Hospitality experts need flexible and relevant course topics that complement their own level of expertise. This trend will continue in the future and highlights the fact that hospitality educators need to also become facilitators and coaches for their students. Actually, the pandemic and its consequences have not created a new trend of online education, but rather accelerated its implementation.

Insight #3: Reconceptualization of the academic curriculum

One particular insight of the pandem-

ic relates to the fact that self-isolation, social distancing, working from home and communicating in the virtual space do not come naturally to professionals in various industries. Managing virtual teams, improving communication skills, as well as building mental and emotional strengths are aspects that can and should be included when building future skills and competences. Resilience and character are key components of our industry, and deserve to be further accentuated in certain curricula.

Overall, the pandemic has triggered a great opportunity to reinvent not only curricula but how we deliver

them. Here, the mix of online and physical components becomes critical. While there are multiple ideas and possibilities for online education, it also has its limitations. Social exchanges, networking and certain vocational training components can only be transferred into the virtual world in part. Future success models will be based on a well-balanced and identified portfolio of physical and online components. These blended models can and will reap the benefits of both worlds.

Insight #4: Proximity to the hotel sector

The post-Covid-19 period for the



► **Innovation, creativity and service agility are not only critical for the sector's recovery but represent an opportunity for authenticity and unique guest experiences**

hotel industry will be a balancing act between dealing with uncertain revenues and an adequate cost structure. In particular, the way in which operational costs are managed will become critical for the overall hotel performance, highlighting the importance of flexibility and creativity. Cost-sharing models and collaboration between hotels might

provide possible short-term solutions for certain hotels. In addition, the pandemic is projected to negatively influence the ease of travel in the future. Domestic markets will recover first and hence, hotel concepts must respond to the needs of local rather than international travelers. Here, proximity to guests will become an important element and a question

of direct versus indirect booking via OTAs might arise.

However, innovation, creativity and service agility are not only critical for the sector's recovery but represent an opportunity for authenticity and unique guest experiences in the industry. How to foster a creative mindset, customer empathy and flexible work processes will be questions that Master and Executive education programs need to answer in the future. A continuation and strengthening of the integration of industry professionals in the education experience is a promising approach which ties in well with keeping up with the rapid changes in the hospitality and service industry.

Insight #5: There is not only growth!

For a long time, the hospitality and tourism industry could have been characterized as a global growth industry. Growth markets allow for international expansion, the attraction of talent and investment, as well as standardization. The asset-light model was an excellent business concept to leverage these growth opportunities. The pandemic has made the industry aware that there are certain limitations to this growth model.

Such awareness can be very fruitful as maturing, declining market conditions are excellent platforms for business model innovation and creativity. It is a unique chance to ask whether the current business portfolio is adapted to future travel needs, increased safety regulations and growing environmental concerns. Here, digital components will play a key role in the future, allowing for a virtual closer proximity to the customer and an increase in the service experience for guests. Authenticity, technology and creativity will become important com-

Hospitality Skills to Include on Your Resume

While almost any skills in your skill set can translate into valuable skills in the hospitality industry, there are a number of skills that should always be included in a hospitality resume to provide you with the best opportunity to obtain the job you are looking for. Ideal skills include both hard and soft skills, which can enable you to deal with customers, manage other staff members, and help you to better perform in maintenance, food and beverage, or hotel operations. There are other skills you will want to include on your resume that may not be related to a specific job but are necessary to work in the hospitality environment. Some skills to include are:

- **Communication Skills:** The ability to communicate instructions, both verbally and written in a way that is clear to other staff and management is vital for a hospitality position.
- **Computer Skills:** All industries rely on computers and software programs. Knowledge of basic computer programs and those directly related to the hospitality industry can be a plus as it can reduce the amount of training needed if you are hired.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Being able to work with a wide range of personality types can help make you a better team player and a more valuable staff member.
- **Leadership Skills:** Even if you are not applying for a management position, it is important to possess leadership skills that allow you to take the initiative and step up to the plate when called upon.
- **Organizational Skills:** Being able to work with team members and meet and exceed client wants and needs is a juggling act, and the more organized you are, the better able you will be to handle everything that is thrown your way.
- **Accountability:** An employer will want to look for someone who is confident enough in their decisions to own them. You should always be accountable for your decisions, both good and bad.
- **Conflict Resolution:** You should not only be able to handle conflicts that may arise but also be able to come up with solutions to manage and resolve those conflicts with both team members and management.
- **Customer Service:** No matter what position you are applying for, customer service skills are a must. The hospitality industry is all about providing service to and pleasing the client, so an employer will want to make sure you have the skillset to accomplish this goal.
- **Detail Oriented:** In the hospitality industry, the details are what separates an average establishment from a great one. You need to have the foresight and attention to make sure that every detail is explored and taken care of.

Source: EHL Insights



► From an educational perspective, the pandemic allows us to revise certain administrative and bureaucratic processes within our educational programs

petitive aspects that will shape and influence future hospitality concepts. Hospitality educators need to find new and creative ways of responding to these trends. It raises questions of whether a current course catalogue is still aligned with these realities.

The way forward

The pandemic has hit our sector and industry substantially. We are still dealing with its consequences on various levels in the private and professional sphere. From an educational perspective, the pandemic allows us to revise certain administrative and

bureaucratic processes within our educational programs. Multiple institutions have shifted their educational offer from the physical space into a distance-learning format in record time - proof of how the educational system can evolve. With Covid-19 acting as a trigger for change in our educational model for more individualization, flexibility and global reach, we can now return to the original meaning of "crisis" as a turning point for better hospitality educational models in the future.

Source: Dr Achim Schmitt, EHL Insights

BOUNCE BACK MANTRA

Despite the spectre of pandemic and lockdown restrictions many new properties are coming up in the region



► **Nestled amidst sun-kissed world famous Makaibari tea garden, Taj Chia Kutir Resort & Spa is spread over 22 acres**

Worldwide pandemic and political instability in the hills notwithstanding, the Ambuja Neotia Group in partnership with the Taj group opened the first of the five planned properties at the picturesque Makaibari tea garden in Kurseong from last December. Industry veterans feel this development will be a game changer for Darjeeling tourism.

Nestled amidst sun-kissed world famous Makaibari tea garden, Taj Chia Kutir Resort & Spa is spread over 22 acres. The 72-room resort, often enveloped in mist, has panoramic views of the rolling hills. The design is

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

The culinary choices include The Chia Veranda, the all-day diner, perched in the natural surrounding serving world cuisine. Sonargaon, the fine dining restaurant, offers North West frontier, Punjabi and Bengali cuisines. Guests can enjoy an elaborate high tea and tea tasting session with

the Tea Sommelier at the charming Makaibari Tea Lounge. The elegant all-glass bar offers enchanting views of the tea gardens.

"We are delighted to partner with IHCL under the "Taj" brand.....This partnership will give a strong impetus to the development of tourism in eastern region," said Prosenjit De, vice-president of hospitality, Ambuja Neotia Group to The Telegraph. Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), South Asia's largest hospitality company, is owned by the Tatas, and manages properties under the Taj, Vivanta and Ginger brands.

Suresh Periwal, advisor, Himalayan

Hospitality and Tourism Development Network, who has been in the industry for the 52 years, said to The Telegraph that entry of the “Taj brand” would be a game-changer. “Taj is an internationally known brand and the presence of such brands can be a game changer. It will definitely make the presence of Darjeeling even stronger in the international tourism map,” said Periwál.

The Ambuja group has invested around Rs 150 crore in the Makaibari property, providing a much-needed investment for hill tourism. The Kurseong property, complete with heated swimming pools — a not-too-common option in the hills, international culinary choices and other high-end amenities, is also looking at promoting wellness tourism.

Darjeeling was considered a health sanatorium by the Britishers. Of late, resorts are being set up in tea gardens of Darjeeling hills but this Kurseong property is the largest so far in terms of occupancy. The group also has properties in other parts of the region and plans to create a circuit to show the diversity in the region. Construction in Kurseong started in 2017 but the hills were soon closed for 104 days due to the Gorkhaland agitation. Things had barely limped to normality when came the Covid pandemic. “Our dateline was delayed by six months,” said Dwivedi.

The four other properties which are being developed by Ambuja Group and will be operated under the Taj brand are being set up near Gangtok and Patna and two in Calcutta. The total investment in these five properties is estimated at Rs 800 crore. “Taj Guras near Gangtok and the one in Patna should be operational by 2022 while the Calcutta projects should be completed by the second quarter of 2021,” said Dwivedi.

TAJ CHIA KUTIR: ONE STOP LUXURY IN DARJEELING



In an exclusive interview with BWHO-TELLIER, Jitendra Singh Lote, General Manager, Taj Chia Kutir Resort & Spa, Darjeeling talks about ‘Makaibari’ way of life, promising guests ‘Instagrammable moments’ along with visit to the world’s first ever tea factory, guided trips and valley treks while at the same time putting health and safety of all stakeholders as top priority.

Set amidst 22 acres, the Taj Chia Kutir Resort & Spa, Darjeeling is a 72-room luxury resort nestled amidst the sun kissed tea gardens of the Makaibari Tea Estate in Kurseong. Home to the first and the oldest tea factory in the world, it was established in 1859, also the first to be certified as a fully organic tea garden 32 years ago. The resort, often enveloped

in mist, has panoramic views of the rolling hills. The design is inspired by the meandering tea terraces and blends with nature.

Can you elaborate on the USP of the resort and the reason for choosing Makaibari Tea Estate as the location?

The exotic location seeped with traditional blend of cuisines and cultures were some of the reasons to choose Makaibari Tea Estate as the site to build the hotel. The eco-friendly design of the hotel incorporates elements of stone, bamboo, cane to instill the essence of Makaibari. Jiva spa with an indoor heated swimming pool is an ideal way for our guests to relax after curated trips to the tea gardens and its factory, cuisine trails and a host of experiences. In addition to

DESTINATION FOR TEA TOURISM AND

a mélange of cuisines offered at Chia Verandah, we also present to our esteemed guests Sonargaon all the way from Taj Bengal, Kolkata.

What are your expectations for traveler footfall, average occupancies and ARRs? Which are the potential source markets?

We are looking at positioning ourselves as a one stop destination for guests who wish to experience the thrill of tea tourism along with comforts of luxury. We see an opportunity to unlock a beautiful resort in the hills of the Himalayas and make the Makaibari way of life come alive in all its interactions, the X factor that will boost visitors to the hotel. Guests for our hotel would be varied and across the spectrum. A blend of conventional hill station lovers as well as a long tail of micro consumer tribes. Focus on key feeder micro markets like Siliguri and Guwahati which are also extremely amenable to driving holidays, short-hauls are being considered along with Kolkata which would be a defining opinion maker of this address – as most of our guests would be familiar with the region and it is a matter of great pride for them to be associated with the hotel.

What has been your marketing strategy for better sales?

Top of the mind recall for key travel agents based in the source and micro markets, property tours and virtual connect with each of them. Roadshows and FAM trips along with reaching out to the loyalty guests database to introduce the new entrant in the Himalayan circuit. We have also focused on social media campaigns on handles of different hotels to leverage our strength.



What are the measures you have taken to ensure a safe and 'seamless guest experience' especially in light of Covid-19?

The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to reshape the hospitality business. While we have adapted to the dynamically changing market scenario, our top priority continues to be the health and safety of all our stakeholders. We have developed a framework in collaboration with some of the leading players in the field of safety and hygiene, to build standards that ensure well-being and safety of our guests and associates embodying our renewed spirit of Tajness - A Commitment Restrengthened, which is representative of our augmented safety, hygiene and physical distancing standards. Technology is being integrated for seamless, yet personalised check-ins, check-outs and dining experiences. With digital payments and non-invasive thermal screening, physical touch has been replaced by a touch of safety. Enhanced disinfection protocol with frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces is in place with rooms

allocated to guests only after mandatory resting for a specified time frame.

What do you think of the future of the hospitality industry? How long do you think it will take for things to go back to normal?

As we have adapted ourselves to the new normal, we have been able to repose the trust and faith in our guests. We are looking at positive trends in revenues with our guests venturing out to recharge themselves. We are closely monitoring the guidelines issued by the Govt of India along with the health authorities and making the necessary changes in our operations. The future of the hospitality business looks promising with green shoots of hope springing up.

What special experiences are in store for the guests coming to Taj Chia Kutir and Resorts? What makes this resort stand above others in the competitive benchmark?

We promise the guests a host of 'Instagrammable moments' as they enjoy the specially curated experiences. These include mystical tea trails of Makaibari where the guests can experience tea cultivation at the only organic tea garden where Camellia Sinensis are growing in harmony with the primary sub-tropical rain forests. Visit to the world's 'first ever tea factory' built in the 18th century which is built on wood, bamboo and cast iron and is perfectly functioning till date. There is a valley trek to take guests into a world of pristine tea estates dotted with winding forest paths and streams of pure spring water gently flowing along wet, mossy creeks with interesting birdlife. Guided trips to Ghoom, Darjeeling and Kurseong to explore local history, cultures and cuisines. Guests can also enjoy 'Tea Ritual' which is a hi-tea and tea tasting session with our Tea Sommelier.



SYMPHONY SAMUDRA: Located at one of the most stunning sunset viewpoints and amidst a reserve forest, this is a 5-star resort in Port Blair with a wellness centre and a nightclub in Port Blair - Nisi5. The resort also boasts of an infinity pool and its adjoining Sunset Lounge



► The resort promises the guests a host of 'Instagrammable moments' as they enjoy the specially curated experiences.

NEW PROPERTIES

1. **Taj Guras Kutir**, Gangtok aims to bring alive Sikkim's local culture with a modern flair. It is scheduled to open by the end of 2022. "We are committed to East India, as we believe it has tremendous potential," says Puneet Chhatwal, managing director & CEO, IHCL, commenting on the partnership with Ambuja Neotia to Business India. "We are further strengthening our footprint in the region. It also cements our relationship with the Ambuja Neotia group." The luxury resort spread over eight acres at Pangthang in east Sikkim will have boutique cottages, villas and a premium five-star hotel, possibly with a casino.
2. **The Taj hotel at Ambuja City Centre II**, Kolkata, is strategically located in close proximity to the airport and the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, one of the largest convention centres in South Asia. The hotel, with 147 keys, has been in operation for over 10 years. Accor France, under the Swiss Hotel brand, had been managing the property for the group. It is now undergoing extensive renovations, before reopening as a Taj hotel in 2021.
3. **The Taj hotel at Eco Park, New Town, Kolkata**, consists of a 57-room hotel overlooking Eco Park's 112-acre water body. The resort hotel, with state-of-the-art banqueting and convention facilities, spread across 50,000 sq ft, is slated to open in 2021.
4. **The Taj hotel at Ambuja City Centre**, Patna, is located on Budh Marg in Lodipur, at a short distance from the airport. This will be the first branded luxury hotel to be set up in the city. The hotel, with 126 rooms, will be a good choice for conventions and meetings. It will open in December 2022.
5. **The Fern Denzong Hotel & Spa, Gangtok in Sikkim** was launched last December with 70 rooms adorned with contemporary elegance and Sikkimese hospitality spirit. Besides, stunning views of the great Kanchenjunga Mountains also await there. With the launch, this hotel became the fourth hotel the company is managing in Eastern India. The hotel offers a multi-cuisine restaurant, cafe, and bar.
6. **Symphony Samudra**, a new 5-star property, debuted in Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands recently. Spread across 20 acres at the famous sunset beach called Chidiya Tapu, with 86 keys and state-of-the art convention facilities boasts of scuba dive centre and a wellness club



FOOD BUSINESS, FRAMED

Even though there is no study till date to show that the corona virus spreads via food products, foodservice operators were among the first workers experiencing the impact of the first wave of COVID-19

C COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 due to its rapid and extensive spread among many countries through its very contagious nature and its high mortality among the elderly and infirm. Data on the

survival of the contagion SARS-CoV-2 on contact surfaces has been reported, but there is none on the survival of COVID-19 on food surfaces and packages. The potential survival and transmission of virus via food and packages are discussed based on data available for other respiratory

viruses such as SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV. However, studies are needed to explore its transmission via food and survival on food packaging materials. The implementation of food safety management systems such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), and Good Manufacturing

Practices (GMP) are important to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection. Cleaning, sanitation, good hygienic practices, and active packaging are also needed from farm to fork.

The Potential COVID-19 Transmission via Food Products

Foodservice operators were among the first workers in frontline employment sectors experiencing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is no study to date which reports that COVID-19 spreads via food products. Further, no evidence is available showing that viruses which infect the respiratory tract can be transmitted via food or food packaging (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] and World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). The transmission of SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV through the consumption of foods does not appear to have occurred yet (European Food Safety Authority [EFSA], 2020). However, it has been reported that human coronavirus 229E (HuCoV-229E) survived for at least 5 days on the surfaces of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyfluorotetraethylene (Teflon, PTFE), glass, ceramic tiles, and stainless steel and for 3 days on silicon rubber surfaces at 21°C with a relative humidity of 30–40% (Warnes et al., 2015). Similarly, SARS-CoV-2 survived on stainless steel and plastic up to 2 and 3 days, respectively, at 21–23°C and a relative humidity of 40%; however, the virus was not detected on copper and cardboard, after 4 and 24 h, respectively (van Doremalen et al., 2020). These results indicated that SARS-CoV-2 can be transmitted via contact surfaces because of the ability of the virus to survive on the surfaces for several days.

Coronaviruses can persist for long periods in environmental samples

which may enhance the probability of transmission via package contact surfaces (Geller et al., 2012). It has been confirmed that virulence of variola (smallpox) virus and influenza virus were positively correlated with survival time in the external environment, which explained their high mortality rate compared to other viruses with low survival rates in environmental samples such as the virus causing parainfluenza and rhinovirus (Walther and Ewald, 2004).

WRONG ASSUMPTION

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] and World Health Organization [WHO] (2020) proposed that touching food packag-

es or containers contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 could transmit the virus to the mouth, nose, or eyes. However, this is not considered the main route for disease spread because the virus shows poor survival on these surfaces. A previous study reported that food products were a plausible transmission route for respiratory viruses including SARS-CoV-1 and influenza (Klein, 2004). In another study, the risk of Ebola infection to individual humans in the United States resulting from contaminated cocoa beans, palm oil, or cashews imported from South Africa was considered negligible to low (Bergeron et al., 2016). In addition, several studies showed that transmission of avian influenza



► **No evidence is available showing that viruses which infect the respiratory tract can be transmitted via food or food packaging**



► **The probability that consumers might get infected with COVID-19 via the consumption of food or the handling of material contacting food or packaging was considered negligible to very low**

through poultry products (Golden et al., 2009; Bauer et al., 2010; Sánchez-Vizcaíno et al., 2010) or water consumption was a remote possibility, but possible (Schijven et al., 2005). Similarly, the probability that consumers from the United Kingdom might get infected with COVID-19 via the consumption of food or the handling of material contacting food or packaging was considered negligible to very low. As mentioned, the genome of SARS-CoV-2 is closely related to SARS-CoV for which the transmission via foods has not been

confirmed. It has been suggested that the potential foodborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 may occur due to the consumption of foods originating from infected animals or the consumption of cross-contaminated foods (Oakenfull and Wilson, 2020).

More effort is needed to address the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from the respiratory tract to food package surfaces or through food consumption. The Food and Drug Administration [FDA] (2020b) proposed guidelines for consumers during food shopping, food handling and food

preparation. It is worth mentioning that food handlers including food establishment employees and consumers should adhere to good sanitation and hygienic practice guidelines to avoid SARS-CoV-2 transmission and comply with at least the minimum requirements of the food safety system.

NOT ON FOOD

It is widely known that viruses cannot multiply in food products because they need an animal or human host to grow. However, to date, no study has investigated the survival of SARS-

CoV-2 in foods. To the best of our knowledge, only two studies reported the survival of infectious respiratory viruses in food products. Adenovirus survived on both lettuce and strawberries at 4°C for up to 10 days. In contrast, coronavirus survived only 2 days on lettuce, and it was not recovered from the surface of strawberries after inoculation (Yépiz-Gómez et al., 2013). These results indicated that respiratory viruses may transfer from food surfaces to the hands and subsequently to the mouth, nose or eyes. The survival of MERS-CoV in different types of milk (camel, goat and cow milk) at 4 or 22°C has been investigated. MERS-CoV titers were decreased by less than 1 log in all types of milk after 72 h at 4°C. Higher log reductions were observed when milk was stored at 22°C since the virus titers decreased by ≤ 2.0 log with 48 h of storage. Low temperature, long time pasteurization (63°C/30 min) of raw milk completely eliminated the virus from the milk of the three different animals (van Doremalen et al., 2014).

The infectious dose of most respiratory viruses is low; thus, the handling or consumption of food products could represent a risk for infection. As a result, preventive measures such as washing and sanitizing of fresh produce surfaces as well as the implementation of good personnel hygiene and practices among workers would seem reasonable ways to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

Another issue is that several viruses that cause respiratory infections have been found in the human gastrointestinal tract and were capable of proliferation there. These include Enterovirus (Coxsackie A, B virus), Parechovirus, Orthomyxovirus (Avian influenza virus), Henipavirus (Nipahand Hendra viruses), Mastadenovirus (adenovirus), Alphatorquevirus

(Torque Teno virus), and coronavirus (Bosch et al., 2018). In the later case, lymphocytes and mucosal epithelial cells of the patients' intestine were positive for SARS-CoV (Shi et al., 2005). This may mean that the viruses can be acquired by humans via the consumption of contaminated foods. However, these results may not apply to SARS-CoV-2, which points out the need for studies to investigate the survival of SARS-CoV-2 in different foods and on food packages.

SURFACE CARRIERS

As mentioned, COVID-19 virus has

an ability to stay alive for up to 72 h as a virion on inanimate objects after completing its life cycle in the body of an infected person (van Doremalen et al., 2020). Therefore, if the respiratory discharges of the COVID-19 patient come in contact with food, the food items can become a fomite (carrier), and if these items are contacted by other individuals, the virus is more likely to gain entry to their respiratory epithelium when unsanitized hands touch the nose, eyes, and mouth (Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung [BfR], 2020; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020).



► **To the best of our knowledge, only two studies reported the survival of infectious respiratory viruses (such as, adenoviruses) in food products**



► **All food industry organizations should strictly follow the protocols of Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS) given by authorities based on HACCP principles**

The surfaces of utensils, packaging material, counters, conveyor belts, interiors of transport vehicles, and all other food work stations where there might be human contact with food should remain a focus of attention where food handlers can act to impede the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, the proper use of personal protective equipment and adherence to the guidelines issued by public health authorities that include regular hand washing when exchanging goods, plus the use of hand sanitizers, wearing masks and gloves, and the maintenance of at least 6 feet between personnel are most important. A range of disinfectants and sanitizers are available in the marketplace. If

disinfectant labels suggest that they are effective against coronaviruses or norovirus, then they should be effective against SARS-CoV-2 as well. Additionally, complete instructions are given on EPA disinfectant labels regarding the contact time, concentration, and appropriate surfaces for application (Environmental Protection Agency, 2020).

HACCP PROTOCOLS

All food industry organizations should strictly follow the protocols of Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS) given by authorities based on HACCP principles and should be kept updated in response to new pieces of evidence for viruses when required.

In food companies where HACCP protocols are not being implemented, an expert should be appointed who will remain in contact with public health authorities to seek advice during the pandemic situation. Hand washing stations should be maintained for the workforce with the provision of normal soap, warm running water, hand sanitizers, and posters designed for displaying information regarding effective hand washing and sanitization. The physical distancing of 6 feet should be implemented among workers as infected people may remain asymptomatic or be pre-symptomatic during the course of the disease and may spread the infection when close to others (Kimball et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2020; Tong et al., 2020; Wei et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020). The introduction of staggered workstations is an effective method to overcome the challenge of physical distancing in food industry facilities.

FOOD DELIVERY

It is advised to minimize the contact between people during the outbreak; therefore, online food deliveries are more desirable. These allow physical distancing between customers and sales personnel. At this stage, proper dissemination of information on food handling practices is also required. Since food packages and paper currency are exchanged between consumers and retailers, proper precautions are needed to minimize the potential for virus transfer during the transaction. Some third-party delivery companies have also introduced contact-free delivery to homes. The packaging can be discarded after keeping track of important information mentioned on it. The proper use of gloves, sanitizers, and disinfectants can minimize the risk of virus spread and disease transmission (Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] and World Health Organization [WHO], 2020; Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2020a).

RETAIL SHOPS

Maintaining the movement of food along the food chain is an important function that requires all involved to contribute and stay vigilant. It is necessary to maintain the confidence and trust of consumers regarding food safety and food availability. In case of limitations on the foodservice industry, home deliveries can be promoted, however, a safe and secure environment for food retail shops and canteens must be ensured at both the consumer's and retailer's end. Retailers can play their roles by ensuring the provision of sanitary facilities including wipes, disinfectants, sanitizers, and display of sanitary practices through visual aids. Physical distancing can be maintained by having the floors marked as a reference for maintaining minimum distance required. Plexiglass can be installed to avoid contact at cashier counters, and food tasting for promotional campaigns should be avoided (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] and World Health Organization [WHO], 2020; Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2020a).

At the consumer end, people should make sure that family members belonging to vulnerable groups (immune-compromised, elderly, children, and COVID-19 patients) should stay at home (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). Besides, the use of masks, wearing gloves, using hand sanitizers, using wipes before handling food carts, avoiding reusable shopping bags and opting for acceptable respiratory etiquette should be prioritized. If reusable bags are deemed regionally

acceptable, their disinfection should be done instantly after use.

HOME KITCHENS

It is advised to stock food items according to their perishability in order to minimize the number of visits to markets. After safe purchasing with all protocols, the most neglected thing is the safe handling of food. With respect to food handling practices in our kitchens, evidence that has been obtained with coronaviruses indicated that they cannot survive cooking, but if food remains unwashed and is frozen afterward, the virus can survive up to 2 years during frozen storage (Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung [BfR], 2020). Therefore, scrubbing of food items like fruits and vegetables is essential if they are not to be cooked for longer periods or to be eaten uncooked. For canned foods, the lids should be wiped before opening. Ensure the disinfection of utensils, pots, countertops, and fridge at every use and minimize the risks of cross-contamination among food items during storage. In addition, respect cooking protocols to ascertain food safety and avoid a false sense of security by following proper cooking time, temperature, and thawing protocols.

INTELLIGENT PACKAGING

Consumers' concern regarding the ability of SARS-CoV-2 to survive on the surface of packages has led to an increasing interest in the development of polymers and biopolymers with antiviral properties. The applications of polymers and biopolymers have shown high efficacy against hepatitis A virus (HAV) and human norovirus (HuNoV) (Randazzo et al., 2018). A previous study showed that the release of copper ions can help in the inactivation of HuCoV-229E on copper or copper alloy surfaces

(Warnes et al., 2015). These findings are a source of validation for the recent findings by van Doremalen et al. (2020) regarding the decreased viability of SARS-CoV-2 on copper surfaces and inactivation within 2 h. The lack of trials on food matrices and related food regulatory requirements remain the hurdles to the adoption of novel food packaging. The development of biopolymers with antiviral properties and their applications in the food area remains an open field of research. For example, it has been recently reported that the use of nanomaterial coatings or films containing copper, silver, and zinc nanoparticles has a potential against SARS-CoV-2 to prevent contamination of food packaging surfaces and thus reduce its transmission (Sportelli et al., 2020).

In conclusion, there are only shreds of evidence regarding the duration of coronavirus survival on different contact surfaces and in foods under certain conditions which suggests the need for advanced studies in understanding the risk of COVID-19 spread associated with food and food packages. Research trials are required to find a link between the ingestion of food contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 and the probability of infections as well as the development of antiviral active packaging using nano-based biopolymer materials. The current guidelines issued by public health authorities are based on the disease patterns of previously encountered coronaviruses and they need to be updated according to the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 as this virus is likely to persist and people will have to modify their "normal behaviour" to a "new normal."

Source: Food Safety During and After the Era of COVID-19 Pandemic, *Frontiers in Microbiology*

HASHTAGS FOR REVIVAL

The new media can be used diligently to attract travellers to book first time or a return visit



Covid-19 had brought about some kind of travel ban across the world, but with vaccine distribution we can finally see light at the end of the tunnel.

Now after getting shots people are expected to resume their postponed travels and break free from a locked

down life. Now those who run hotel and restaurant business can position properties for success by utilizing social media in a strategic, targeted way now.

Social media allows direct communication with guests and can produce quick results if used properly. It pro-

vides a platform to raise awareness for travellers considering destinations for their return to travel. It is also an important vehicle for building trust. Chief among soon-to-be-travellers concerns is health and hygiene. Social media channels are among the most effective ways to proactively commu-



► **Listening and reporting on social media is also an excellent way to uncover new trends and develop new offerings based on real-time traveller feedback**

nicate safety initiatives.

Listening and reporting on social media is also an excellent way to uncover new trends and develop new offerings based on real-time traveller feedback. Here are five effective ways to use social media in your recovery strategy.

Highlight unique experiences

Most of us spent a large part of 2020 in our homes dreaming about the next trip. Multiple travel bans created a pressure cooker of pent-up demand in the mind due to lock-down.

For some, trips had to be cancelled whereas for others, planning came to an abrupt halt. As comfort levels rise along with the availability and widespread distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine, they will begin planning their trips, and experts anticipate a "revenge" travel trend.

Hotels can foster interest now during the consideration phase by showcasing their unique offerings and experiences via social media. Information, images, video, and virtual experiences will whet the appetite and prompt bookings as soon as people feel it is safe to travel again.

Throughout 2020, people have visited many places from their couch through their social media accounts. As their trip dreams begin to materialize into firm plans, hotels need to be front and center for guests who want to be convinced that staying with them is the right decision -- whether it is a bucket list trip or travel based on proximity.

Travellers are utilizing hashtags on Instagram to search for that Instagrammable trip. They are also researching top things to do on Pinterest. And they are experiencing destinations vicariously through YouTube.



Influencer Marketing

WITH THE SURGE IN POPULARITY OF MULTI-MEDIA DRIVEN SOCIAL MEDIA SITES SUCH AS INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK, SNAPCHAT, WHATSAPP AND SIGNAL, MORE AND MORE USERS ARE LEARNING THE VALUE OF LEVERAGING THEIR FOLLOWERS AS A REVENUE CHANNEL OR TO BARTER FOR FREE CLOTHING AND BEAUTY SUPPLIES, COMPLIMENTARY MEALS AND HOSTED VACATIONS.

Since social media is a leading place for travellers to research and plan their trips, hotels need to be there, too. Brands that execute a good social strategy can win a place on a traveller's consideration list for future travel.

Hire local social influencers

Any number of studies and pulse surveys have pointed to the rise in short-distance trips by automobile since mid-2020. While traveling across or outside of the country may still be in the distance, there is an opportunity to use local social influencers to promote nearby destinations. People are looking to get a taste of travel

– perhaps a quick getaway – even if they do not yet feel comfortable getting on a plane. That's where staycations and road trips come in. Focusing on the local audience in the near term could pay dividends as people are looking for a change of scenery from their homes.

Local social influencers will be able to visit your hotel and create content now, potentially at a "friends' rate" or for barter as they are looking to continue posting relevant material while underscoring and acknowledging the priority of staying safe. Connecting with travel or lifestyle influencers allows the hotel to benefit from the

brand awareness they generate and gather content for future promotional efforts.

Most influencers are open to negotiation of usage rights of the photos and videos they create while at the hotel and destination. This will give the hotel additional assets from different perspectives with which to showcase the property. Travel brands like National Geographic take this a step further by posting influencer content directly to their Instagram feed. This brings different styles and a wealth of interesting and engaging content at minimal cost. In most cases, influencers are more than



► **Using a social listening tool or manually searching travel hashtags can reveal emerging trends and allow hotels to develop new and appealing offerings that fit with the brand**

happy to provide permission because it amplifies their content across new channels and helps to grow following and engagement.

Uncover new trends

Before and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen trends emerge like work-from-anywhere, an increased focus on wellness and self-care including sleep. Using a social listening tool or manually searching travel hashtags can reveal emerging trends and allow hotels to develop new and appealing offerings that fit with the brand. Knowing what the customer wants, or even what they

do not yet know they want, will help hotels stand out in what is setting up to be a competitive travel recovery market. Social listening can also keep one's finger on the pulse of travelers' evolving safety concerns allowing for proper response with safety measures.

Emerging trends like work-from-anywhere has inspired some hotels to build focused offerings and highlight existing amenities that cater to this audience of newly minted digital nomads. As safety concerns continue, specifically regarding larger gatherings and potentially crowded spaces, smaller hotels and those in rural areas can stand out as responsible and safe

options for travel.

Hotels that fit this category can use social listening to determine what this new audience expects as a clue of what to add or to promote in terms of relevant offerings. Social listening can also inspire new ways to present existing amenities or build new programs that speak directly to current trends, making it more likely that the property is top of mind when guests return to travel.

Use social metrics

Key to a smart social media strategy is to give the people what they want. It is imperative that brands monitor their social metrics to see how their

audience responds to content. This will allow focusing resources on the most valuable content for the audience and will allow for ongoing fine tuning of strategy to effectively promote key messages. A social media strategy should have a framework that is true to the brand and yet allows for fluidity over time.

Brands should lean into what is working for their accounts on each social media platform, while testing different types of content and ways to present it. A simple adjustment to the type of photo or switching to video might help drive more engagement and subsequently more eyes on a brands content.

Metrics are also a roadmap for hotels having to make the most of limited resources -- and who doesn't these days? Budgets and team member resources are exceptionally lean for the time being. Social metrics can help a small or reduced team focus the hotel's efforts on the areas that are driving awareness, inquiries, and reservations.

Metrics will offer insight to either cut back on social platforms that are not performing well or develop content that can easily be manipulated to what works best for each social platform. In addition, working with social influencers can be an affordable way to supplement or replace an on-site photo or video shoot.

Communicate safety initiatives

Communicating safety measures is more important now than ever and is likely to be a permanent part of hotel messaging strategy. While people are eager to travel, there is ongoing concern about when it will be safe to do so. Clear and consistent communication is imperative. In addition to visual cues on-site and communication on the hotel's website and

Social media allows a hotel to show safety measures in practice rather than a list on the website of everything that is being done to keep guests safe. It can increase guest comfort by seeing safety measures in practice, while also showcasing guests enjoying their stay in the new normal. Social listening can also help un-cover specific traveller concerns a guide social media content to address a hotel's particular protocol.

through email, social platforms are a great way to get the message out and meet people where they are already researching their travel plans.

Social media allows a hotel to show safety measures in practice rather than a list on the website of everything that is being done to keep guests safe. It can increase guest comfort by seeing safety measures in practice, while also showcasing guests enjoying their stay in the new normal.

Social listening can also help un-cover specific traveller concerns and

guide social media content to address a hotel's particular protocol.

There is no question that the travel industry took a big hit in 2020 and it will be essential that hotels and other travel partners utilize all their assets and channels wisely to stand out from the competition in enticing travellers and gaining their trust. The recovery of the industry starts now as consumers and business travelers are considering their travel plans for the near and distant future.

With the right content and messaging and discoverable posts, hotel brands can connect with past guests as well as new audiences -- especially as travelers consider staycations and shorter road trips they would have not considered prior to the pandemic. Executing on a strategic social media program has the potential of buoying a successful recovery and boosting long term business growth once the crisis is in a distant rear-view mirror.

Hoteliers are often bombarded by requests for collaborations and it can be hard to determine which ones are worth the time, room nights, perks, or sometimes monetary compensation, and which ones are best passed on. By ensuring that potential partnerships are well-researched and vetted, brand appropriate and authentic with engagement numbers, often times influencer collaborations can provide a cost-effective marketing strategy to help get your brand in the feeds of thousands of potential guests.

With over one billion users and growing, Instagram is one of the fastest rising social media platforms today with the majority of its demographic targeting millennials and Generation Y (ages 18-34). As the platform grew in popularity the "travel influencer" was born - a savvy and often stylish wanderer whose profile is a mosaic of stunning photography

depicting exotic locations, upscale resorts and interesting adventures. Instagrammers with an aching wanderlust follow their favorites in hopes of gaining inspiration for their bucket lists, travel tips and of course, ideas for the best photo opportunities.

In addition to the travel influencer, celebrities are also hopping on the social media revenue engine and using their substantial followings for added perks, vacation and profits. In the best situations it's a mutually beneficial agreement that puts eyes on a property with a smaller investment. But how do we shuffle through the countless opportunities making their way in our inboxes to make a legitimate return on investment and how can we make the most out of each potential opportunity?

Choose the Right Partners

When selecting partners with whom to work, in addition to evaluating the "ask", it's important to determine whether this person truly has any influence over their community. Experience shows that working with micro-influencers may be even more powerful than collaborating

with major (macro) influencers with large followings that may have been bought or are a member of follower pods, which work in tandem to inflate engagement rates.

Make it Legal

Once you have done your homework and identified a prospective partner, it's time to ensure that your property is covered from a legal standpoint. As influencer marketing continues to build in popularity, becoming a primary revenue stream for many, it's critical to ensure parameters are agreed upon up front so there are no surprises that may pop up before or after a stay. Marketing and legal should collaborate on a binding agreement which makes the influencer responsible for the costs associated with their stay if all deliverables are not executed on. At the end, there should be no grey area as to expectations from both parties. Important items to cover in the contract include:

Maximize the Opportunity

There are many current options across the most popular social media platforms used to amplify results and

to measure and quantify a return on investment. According to a recent study by influencer marketing can generate a high return on investment, but it's important to plan ahead in order to track subsequent website visits as well as actual room nights booked.

Look for influencers who are skilled content creators and quite adept at generating beautifully curated photos and videos. By including additional assets into your contract, for instance a gallery of 10 photos that can be posted at the hotel's discretion, you will be able to build a nice library of content that would otherwise cost thousands of dollars to hire a photographer. And influencers know what catches the eyes of social media fans.

With the right strategies in place and a little homework, it's a cost-effective and contemporary way to market to current and potential guests, attract new fans, build community and communicate our best attributes, amenities and services through dynamic content that makes the "scroller" want to stop and take a look.

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STATE SURVEY

NATURE'S HIDDEN JEWEL

Jharkhand has drafted a new tourism policy focusing more on private investment which has proposed a 30% subsidy on total capital investment for developing any tourism facilities in the state.



In a bid to attract investment to develop tourism, the New Tourism Policy has proposed a 30% subsidy on total capital investment for developing any tourism facilities in Jharkhand, officials said on Friday. Besides, the policy also aims to generate employment for around one lakh people in the sector through short-term and long-term planning.

Jharkhand had announced its first ever tourism policy in 2015. However,

it failed to attract investments. The new government led by Hemant Soren, which came to power last year, decided to revise the policy and make it more attractive. Now they are offering 30% flat subsidy or Rs 10 crore, which is lower, on capital investment for developing tourism facilities such as hotels, parks, resorts or others in the state. The subsidy will be 35% for developing the same in tribal districts. Since the 2015 policy failed

to draw investments it's been made more attractive for private investors.

The federation of Jharkhand chamber of commerce and industries (FJCCI) has welcomed the subsidy initiative of the government. "Investors basically want safety, security and incentive. I believe the subsidy initiative will attract the private investors in the tourism sector," said Shailesh Agarwal, sub-committee (tourism) chairman of FJCCI.



► Ranchi is famous for its enchanting waterfalls

The 2020 policy says it will create 75,000 jobs in the tourism sector, mostly for the backward and vulnerable. As many as 130 tourist spots have been identified. The policy aims to give capital investment incentives too

The tourism director said the policy was drafted after studying the tourism policies of various states including Gujarat, Rajasthan and Kerala.

Even though tourists' inflow has increased manifold since the state's inception in November 2000, safety and security of tourists have been a major issue in the state due to left wing extremism in some parts of the state. In 2000, when Jharkhand came into being, just 4.53 lakh tourists, including 3,111 foreigners, visited the state. But the number rose to 3.55 crore in 2018-19 including 1.76 lakh foreign tourists.

Chief minister Soren asked the officials to develop a tourist tracking system and documentation of places of tourists' interest. The system will help monitor tourists' safety and security and it will also guide them where to visit during their journey.

Geo-tagging and demarcation of tourism destinations are also being done. The demarcation of tourist places would help the people who want to conduct film shoots or events. The department is also working on a single window system for tourism so that people could get all the information or formalities from one spot, officials said.

The Director, Tourism, Government of Jharkhand, A. Dodde said the hospitality and tourism sectors have immense potential to generate employment. "We are targeting to create 75,000 to one lakh employments in the sectors in coming years," he said.

On the lines of the Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), a Food Craft Institute at Deoghar has also been proposed in the draft policy, which will offer certificate, diploma and degree courses. The draft policy also mentions various tourism circuits such as religious, eco, cultural, rural, adventure, film and mining.



► Also known as Shikharji, Parasnath is one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Jharkhand and a highly revered religious centre amongst the Jain devotees

The 2020 policy says it will create 75,000 jobs in the tourism sector, mostly for the backward and vulnerable. As many as 130 tourist spots have been identified. The policy aims to give capital investment incentives too. Barring a few additions, the 2020 policy is similar to the Tourism Policy 2015, and will continue its focus on the same lines:

Religious Tourism

In addition to a number of religious spots, Parasnath Development Authority has been set up to manage Madhuban and Parasnath. Itkhori and Basukinath to be developed on the lines of Deoghar. Following are some of the spots:

Deoghar is one amongst these spiritual towns which have become immensely popular amongst Hindu devotees and other tourists. Home to Baidyanath Temple, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India where Lord Shiva appeared in the form of a light, Deoghar is believed to be the place where demon king Ravana worshipped Lord Shiva and offered his ten heads to get the boon of immortality. Even though the exact history of the temple is unknown, it is still believed that the temple was formed thousands of years ago by a king who was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. Today, the temple is one of the highly revered places in India and is visited by millions of tourists.

Parasnath: Also known as Shikharji this is one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Jharkhand and a highly revered religious centre amongst Jain followers, Shikharji is located in the midst of dense forests atop Parasnath Hill, the highest of them all in the entire state. Hence, it is a preferred destination for several nature lovers and photographers apart from Jain followers and other devotees. It is also considered as a place where one can easily attain salvation. It is a complex of more than 20 temples amongst which Jal Mandir, Parshvanath Temple and Gautam Swami Temple are the most popular. Trekking up the hill and catching panoramic views of the nearby



► The state is culturally very rich and with right packaging it can be an attractive destination for cultural tourism

settlements along with savouring the beauty of a peaceful, secluded and divine atmosphere is an experience in itself

Jagannath Temple: Located on a small hillock on the outskirts of Ranchi, Jagannath Temple was built during the late 17th century by a king named Thakur Ani Nath Shahdeo. The temple was constructed on the similar architectural style as that of Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha. Hence, it is considered one of the important landmarks in the state. Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, this ancient temple is frequented by millions of tourists and devotees every year. The major thing which distinguishes it from other temples in the state lies in the fact that it allows people from

all castes and religions to enter the compound. As it is located in the capital city of Ranchi, it is one of the most visited temples in the state. Like Jagannath Temple at Puri, it also hosts a rath yatra every year which is attended by tourists and devotees from all over the state.

Pahari Mandir: Another beauty which defines the devotional aura of Ranchi, Pahari Mandir, clear from its name, is located atop a hill and overlooks the settlement and natural beauty of the city. With an elevation of about 2140 feet, it is also one of the highest temples in the state. Pahari Mandir is dedicated to Lord Shiva and hence, it is considered as a significant religious site amongst Hindus, especially Shaivites. If you

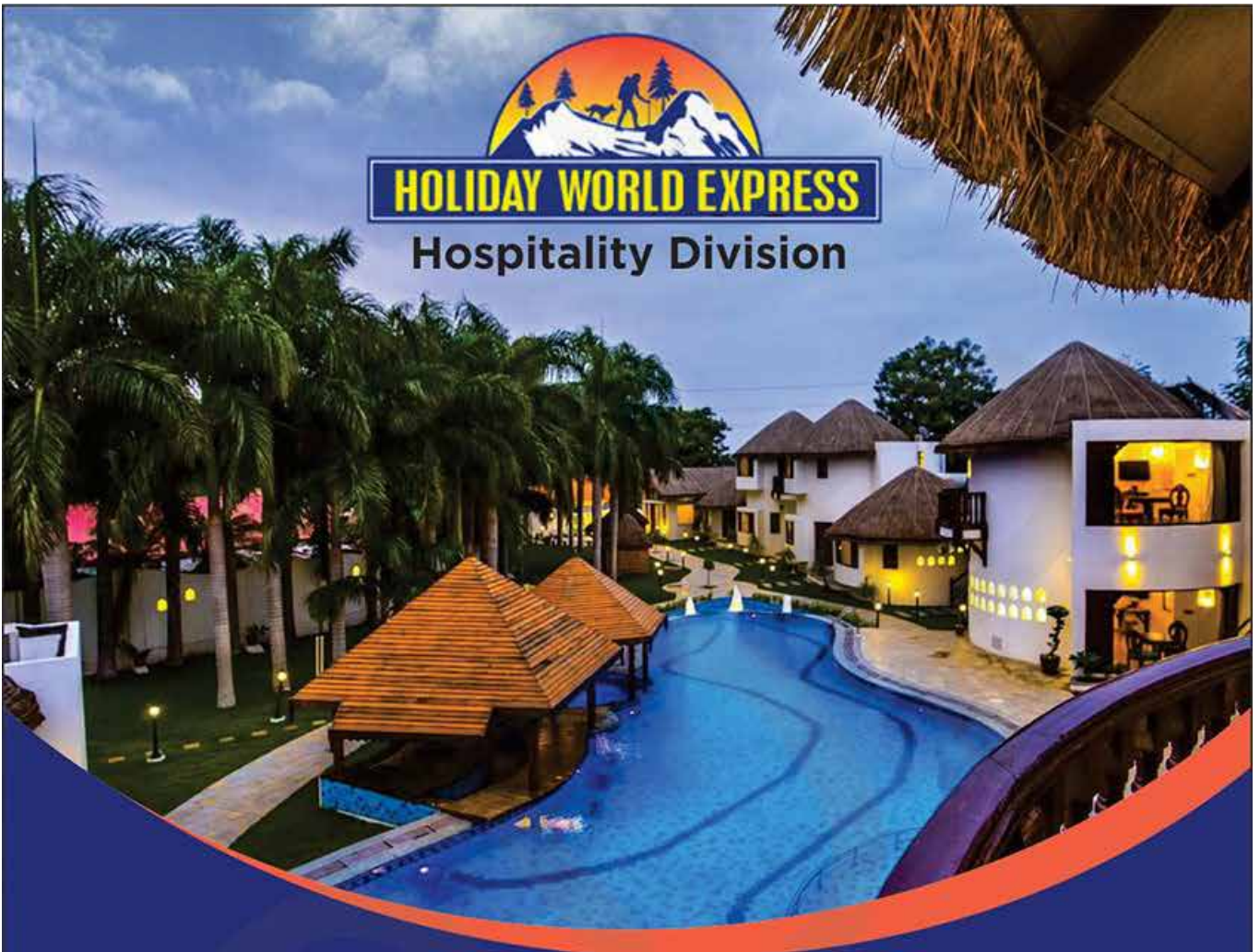
are looking for a site in Ranchi where you can actually feel the beauty of stillness and savour the panoramic beauty of the capital city, then it is this picturesque temple. The presence of beautiful trees spread all around the temple and atop the hill helps in maintaining a pleasant and charming atmosphere. Isn't it an interesting spot to soothe your nerves? On one hand, you can indulge in religious activities inside the temple and on the other hand, you can enjoy the pristine surroundings of Ranchi from the hilltop.

Rajrappa: It is a small town in the Ramgarh district and is popular as a pilgrimage centre on account of the presence of Chhinmasta Temple. The temple is dedicated to Goddess



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► A passenger train passing by the picturesque Parasnath Hills famous for its Jain temple

Chhinnamasta who is known as a nude goddess standing on a mating couple and holding her severed head in her hand. The compound of the temple also houses several other shrines dedicated to Hindu gods, such as Lord Shiva, Lord Surya and Lord Hanuman.

Eco Tourism

The State Government, in its bid to promote Jharkhand as an eco-tourism destination, is trying to utilize its existing infrastructure at the popular forest and water bodies. As per the eco-tourism policy, the tourism department would facilitate activities to develop biodiversity rich areas of

the State, promote eco-tourism and also conserve wetlands that shelter migratory birds from other parts of the country and the world.

For the development of tourists' destinations as eco-tourism spots, the State tourism department is working under two policies: first Swadesh Yojana and second is retreat tourism, which is also known as spiritual/ wellness tourism.

Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation (JTDCL) General Manager, Dr Alok Prasad said, "There are two centrally sponsored schemes for development of tourism in Jharkhand. First is the Prasad scheme under which religious /spiritual destinations in the

State are developed. In Jharkhand under the Prasad scheme Deoghar is being developed. The second scheme is the Swadesh scheme under which rich flora and fauna areas of the State are being developed."

He said, "Under the Swadesh scheme an eco-tourism circuit is being developed from Dimna Lake to Betla/Netarhat passing through Parasnath, Massanjore dam, McCluskieganj, Patratu dam and Netarhat/Betla area. These areas will be developed as eco tourist spots."

Apart from developing an eco-tourism circuit, the tourism department is going to host festivals/ functions in February to develop tourism as



► **Beautiful sunset point by the River Subarnarekha near Jamshedpur, the steel city in Chota Nagpur Plateau**

part of retreat tourism. Alok Prasad said, "As part of retreat tourism, the tourism department is going to host festivals/functions in February under which eco-tourism will be promoted."

The department is going to improve infrastructure facilities in these areas such as good accommodation and food for tourists. Also in these areas adventure sports will be promoted. In the connection retreat tourism will be promoted in Massanjore dam, McCluskieganj, Patratu dam and Netarhat.

As this festival/function will be held during Covid pandemic period, special attention will be made in hygiene, cleanness and following social distancing norms.

The Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted the tourism industry across the globe covering sectors like hospitality, tour operators, travel

agents, air, land and sea transportation industry and others. The department's priority is to once again give pace and momentum to the tourism industry in Jharkhand.

Cultural Tourism

The state is culturally very rich and with right packaging it can be an attractive destination for cultural tourism. The life and styles of the indigenous people is unique and can be showcased to tourists from India and abroad. Folk songs and folk dances of the state can compete with those of other states of India. The Chhau, a magnificent form of martial dance, is performed at the open courtyards attached to shrines of village Gods.

The Mura or Munda tribes, the worshippers of Sun God Sing Bonga, are the most ardent participants in Chhau dance. The Kurmis, or Mahatos,

also enthusiastically perform these dances mostly based on episodes Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas. The dance is integrated into social and cultural life of people in the area, despite day-to-day hardships of the practitioners.

Apart from these dance forms of Santhals and there are various types of folk dance in the state which are performed during harvest season, festival and social gatherings. Jhumair, Domkach, Lahasua, Jhumta, Fagua, Paika and Santhali are some of these dances.

Showcasing these dance forms through cultural fests can go a long way in the development of Jharkhand as a tourist destination. Konarak dance festival organised by Odisha Tourism is a nice model.

Rural Tourism

Village Tourism Committees to be identified and established. Identification of villages to be set up model villages. Homestay concept to be brought into picture. Model village on the lines of Choki Dhani in Rajasthan can be developed as an integrated tribal complex to showcase different aspects including tribal culture, art, craft and cuisines. The miniature mock village has activities that you will find in real Rajasthan – like puppet shows, acrobatics, parrot picking cards, fortune telling, boat rides, horse riding, and magic shows too. There is also an art gallery, shopping arcade and bevy of food stalls with diverse ticket prices depending on the dining experience and royal stay facilities. This luxury heritage resort here gives a glimpse and experience of true Rajasthani rural culture. Visitors can see original Rajasthani art & craft including ancient artifacts, wall-hangings, old paintings, traditional handicrafts, sculptures & folklore.



► **Massanjore dam, across the Mayurakshi River, is in Dumka district. Built with Canadian aid, it is also called Canada Dam or Pearson Dam. The reservoir has an area of 16,650 acres in when full**

Jharkhand hasn't developed any such mock village but two adjacent villages Amadubi and Panijya were started by the Jharkhand tourism department and implemented by Jamshedpur-based NGO Kalamandir in 2013 has increased the livelihood of villagers and led to the revival of dying art form of Paitkar painting. Over 40 families of Paitkar painters were virtually on the brink of starvation when the project was conceived in 2005-06. The project received the much-needed support from the tourism department and one can see the transformation in the lives of the artists and their families. Paitkar is derived from 'pait', an aberration of pata, which means scroll, and chitrakar which means painter. It is a traditional art form practiced by

the Paitkar community in Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha. They have been placed under the economically weaker section as per the Government of India socio-economy survey 2011.

Adventure Tourism

Adventure: An adventure tourism institute has been set up to provide training to local youth. A master plan to be prepared for the development of trek routes, water sports activities. Rescue teams to be formed for adventure sports.

Jharkhand has a number of destinations known for generating the real sense of adventure for visitors. Many of the destinations – like Giridih, Parasnath and Satpahar hills – in the state possess lots of scope for many

adventurous activities like paragliding, Water Sports & Parasailing Giridih, among other sports helping Adventure Tourism in Jharkhand get much popularity. Some of the most wanted destinations of Jharkhand Adventure Tourism are explained below:

Water Sports, Giridih: Around 8 km North-East of Giridih, a water reservoir is among the best spots providing you water related adventure sports and bird-watching activities. One can get an amazing panoramic view of Khandoli site from a watch tower and 600 feet high hillock. You can get the adventure of elephant and Camel Safari and many other amusement facilities like Boating, Rock-climbing, Parasailing and Kayaking.

Parasailing training, Giridih: Giridih offers a remarkable space for an exciting aero sport parasailing, in which one can sail in the air up to an altitude of 300 feet through a half cut orange shaped parachute called 'Parasail' that is dragged through a rope linked to a jeep on land or by a motorboat above water.

New Ventures

Wellness Tourism: Jharkhand will be promoted as a 'Rest and Recuperate' destination. Holistic therapy centres will be included in the definition of tourism units

Film tourism: A film city to be established in conjunction with Public relations Department. Up to 15% upfront subsidy of the total production cost of any film shot in Jharkhand will be provided.

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