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Hotel Plug

Hotels need to be honest and clear to build guests' confidence

Industry veterans reckon that due to the ongoing pandemic, the travel and hospitality sector will reach pre-COVID levels, not before 2022. However, the only breather in the entire scenario is that the industry is experimenting with new ideas and is exploring additional revenue streams. In the process, guests are also evolving with their tastes, preferences and experiences.

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Travel will take some time to pick up, and will depend largely on the opening up of domestic and international travel. Also, for some time, business travel will be restricted to the absolutely necessary, and leisure travellers will look for options closer to home.

Road trips will come even more into focus, with most guests being more comfortable about travelling in their own vehicles with end-to-end connectivity, rather than gathering in public places like airports or railway stations.

There will be a huge demand for hygiene, safe and sustainable stays. From all the research we have done and reports we have delved into, we have further collected data that says that guests are willing to forego certain aspects of travel and hotel stays, as long as the cleanliness and hygiene factors aren't compromised.

There is also a focus on adopting more and better digital solutions for various processes in the industry, not to replace but to augment the personal touch. From contactless dining platforms and QR codes to online payments and e-forms for data collection, the world is moving in a more digitally optimised direction. While, in hospitality, nothing can ever completely replace human interaction, these digital solutions can go a long way in bridging communication between us and the guest in a safe and controlled environment.

I also firmly believe that being 'honest and clear' gives the best results and boosts confidence, which mirrors the concept of transparency and how that strengthens a firm, along with reinforcing their mechanism to their audience. It is very important for every hotel company to showcase their best practices in hygiene, cleanliness and social distancing so that every guest can make an informed

decision for a safe stay

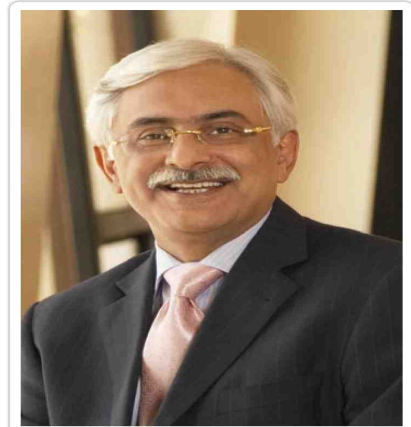
Consumer confidence is driven by many other external factors – the environment, clear confidence-building measures by the government and cohesion between the Centre and states. Until vaccines are available – on our own, our industry can only play a small part. We must ensure that everything we do is focused on ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of our guests and team members, and ensuring the highest level of hygiene across all touch points. As the economy starts to perform, confidence and happiness will enable travel.

The media needs to promote how branded hospitality players have endeavoured to make travel safer for customers. It is imperative that we think of unique ways of doing the same in terms of conviction, pricing, belief and continuity.

For the past few months, we have been supporting the national and state government needs for quarantining guests, and for hospitals to assist health workers. This has created a revenue opportunity, albeit at very low rates. Also, this demand will change as the number of cases reduces, and government regulations regarding quarantine continue to change.

One area we have tapped into is day-use accommodation and work areas with business facilities and high-speed WIFI for the day for transient and short-stay guests, and for those for whom it may not be convenient to work from home – whether due to personal reasons or infrastructure limitations. These days, WFH could mean work from hotel just as much as work from home.

In our continued effort to provide a clean, comfortable and safe stay every time a guest visits us, we have launched our Rest Assured initiative. As a part of this initiative, we have extensively researched, benchmarked



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and implemented stringent cleanliness, sanitisation and social distancing protocols across our 80 properties, in India and abroad. We have partnered with Diversey, a global leader in smart, sustainable cleaning and hygiene solutions, for our Indian properties. They are providing us with US EPA approved safe chemicals, operating checklists, training support, videos and support materials to add to our own repertoire of processes and procedures, and will be conducting regular reviews in all properties, as part of this association.

We foresee a lot more domestic travel this year until the skies open up and international destinations have been cleared. We expect an uptick in domestic leisure travel, and with nearly 80 hotels across the country, are planning several packages targeted towards staycations and great Indian getaways.

Rattan Keswani is the Deputy Managing Director at Lemon Tree Hotels and Director at Carnation Hotels.