

HRA Today



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GST: The tipping point

DIGITAL MARKETING **The next wave**



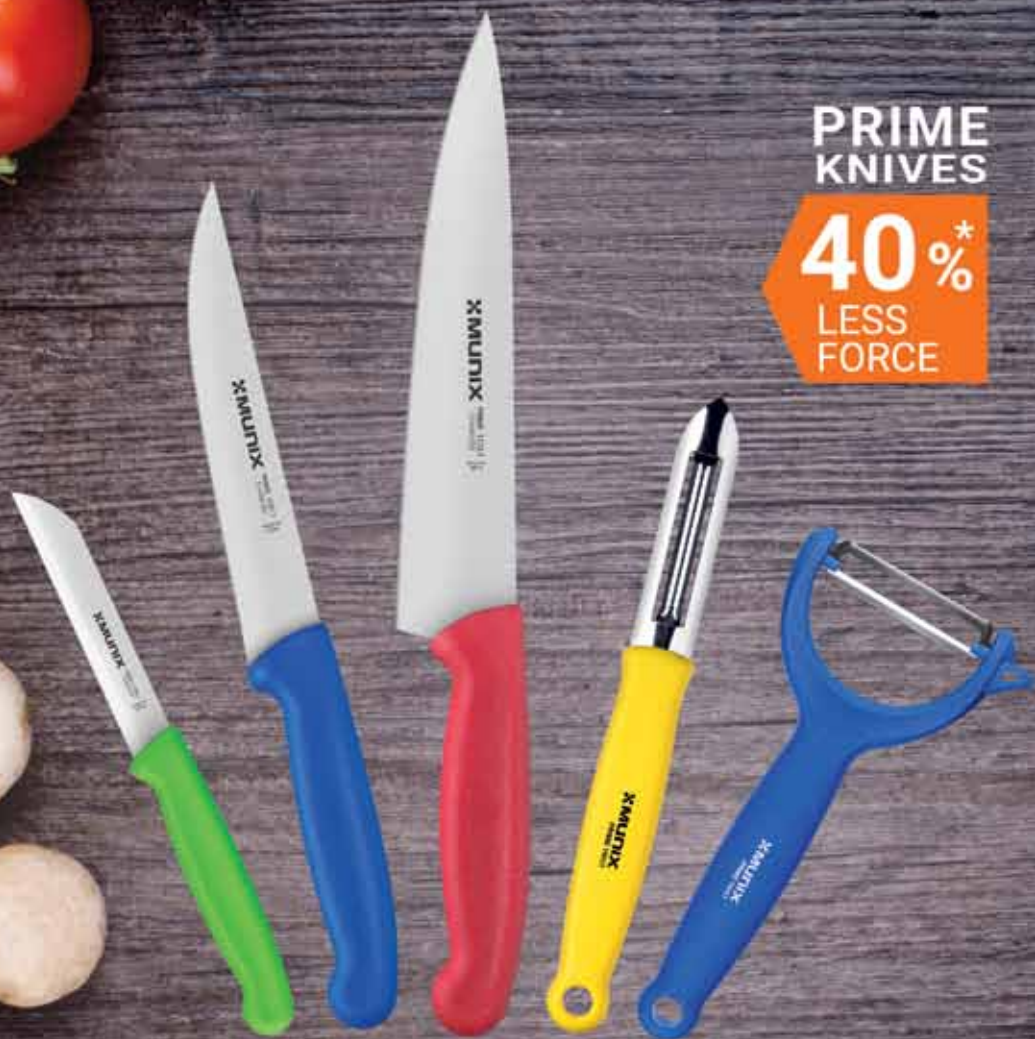
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My Dear Members,

Summer has finally set in after a prolonged winter. We welcome it and look forward to a good season and good news for the industry.

While our tussle with OTAs continues, we are also bringing to book food Apps and aggregators after many restaurant members informed us about issues they have been facing. These food Apps or food aggregators are creating problems similar to those by OTAs. Deep discounting, unreasonably high commissions, misuse of a dominant position, and predatory pricing are some of the issues which they bring with them. They are, in fact, affecting restaurants adversely. The online delivery platforms and the issues they create impact footfalls and divert consumer traffic from restaurants to these platforms. Restaurants cannot compete with online platforms due to heavy investments and overheads, besides the deep discounting they offer. They have gone further and created their own kitchens, which is in direct contravention of the law as the aggregator cannot also be the owner.

This is clear monopolisation and misuse of database to divert traffic to a particular brand. The issue is not that there is a choice available to the guest, the issue is that there is creation of a monopolistic atmosphere whereby participants are forced to follow their dictatorial discount policy and this affects the restaurants in the hotels due to business diversion to the preferred brand, creating adverse conditions for both – the one to whom the business is diverted as well as the one from whom the business is diverted. This has affected business of restaurants and spells doom in the future for the participating restaurants.

We had tackled the illegality of rampant listing of establishments on the Apps by involving the government and informing them about the lack of hygiene, disparity, and danger of listing of illegal establishments. The government took notice of our complaint and ordered over 9,000 illegal or unregistered establishments to be delisted overnight - something we are hoping to do in the hotel sector also. Your association is with you on all counts!

In our recent EC meeting held in Goa, we met up with the hospitality entrepreneurs from Sindhudurg and Tarkarli. Our membership committee will be visiting them soon to formulate new members from there and other regions which so far had not been able to be a part of the association.

As we await election results, we are formulating a White Paper highlighting the importance of the hospitality industry, to hand over to the government, outlining us as an integral part of tourism as much as the travel industry. We are presently in the process of hiring an agency to accumulate and process definitive data to present to the government, showing them the contribution of the hospitality industry in tourism and more importantly, in growth. You can reach out to me or the Secretariat whenever needed. I wish you a very pleasant summer!

Warm wishes,

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli

President, HRAWI
(president@hrawi.com)

The Park Hotels launches luxury hotel in Juhu, Mumbai

The Park Hotels brings its design vocabulary to Mumbai, with the launch of its newest hotel. Strategically located at Juhu Tara Road, The Park Mumbai is close to the Juhu Beach and overlooks the Arabian Sea. The 60-room hotel has six categories of rooms designed with a monochromatic colour palette with world-class amenities. Meishi, an elegant space off the lobby, is an Asian-inspired all-day dining fusion restaurant that uses fresh and organic ingredients and is currently open only to resident guests. The Saffron Room is a 2500 sqft banqueting space on the first floor and has two types of lighting.



Speaking about the launch, **Priya Paul**, Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, said, "We are excited to add

this important address to our collection of hotels. Mumbai is a vibrant city and The Park Hotels will add to it by bringing

immersive and anything-but-ordinary experiences. Our vision is to have a slice of The Park in every city people travel to."

OBITUARY



YC Deveshwar
(4.2.1947 – 11.5.2019)

YC Deveshwar, chairman of the ITC group, passed away on May 11, 2019. He was 72. He passed away after a prolonged illness at a hospital in Gurugram.

Deveshwar joined ITC in 1968 and became the executive chairman of the company in 1996. Under his leadership, ITC was successful in warding a takeover threat from its largest shareholder BAT, and it

made a successful diversification in the FMCG category.

Deveshwar moved to the role of non-executive chairman in 2017. He was conferred the coveted Padma Bhushan by the government and was also ranked the seventh best performing CEO in the world by Harvard Business Review.

Sanjiv Puri appointed as new chairman of ITC

ITC has appointed **Sanjiv Puri** as the company's chairman after the demise of Yogesh Chander Deveshwar. Puri will assume his duties as both chairman and managing director. He is an Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, alum. He joined the company 33 years ago, back in 1986. Deveshwar was mentoring Puri to potentially assume both roles as a managing director as well as chairman.



In a statement, Puri said, "It is an honour and privilege to be appointed the Chairman of ITC. It is a responsibility that I accept with humility and with a deep resolve to build on the outstanding legacy nurtured over the years, further strengthen and build market leadership across all business segments whilst reinforcing ITC's commitment to put nation first, always. In the journey ahead, I am sure I can count on the support of our shareholders, partners, associates and most of all, the dedicated team at ITC to continue our shared aspiration to build an exemplary enterprise of pride for the nation."

UK-based coffee chain launches in Mumbai

Perfecting the art of great coffee for over 30 years and serving freshly brewed barista coffee, Caffè Ritazza is a UK-based multinational coffee chain belonging to SSP Group with about 111 outlets across 16 countries. It has now opened its doors in Khar, Mumbai. Caffè Ritazza specialises in serving artisan style coffee and is proud to serve Buonissimo, its bespoke blend from Segafredo. Caffè Ritazza plans to open 75 outlets pan India.



Giving details about the services brought to the Indian market, **Sukh Tiwana**, Group Commercial Director of SSP

Group, says, "The store brings affordable luxurious offerings in India with a wide-ranging spread of its handmade pastas,

delectable pizzas and croissants, and also a special focus on maintaining the traditional Italian coffee shop setting in

terms of interior design and elements in the store." The menu also offers ketogenic smoothies for Keto fans.

Central Beacon Hotel opens in Surat, Gujarat

Central Beacon Hotel, Surat is the newest addition to the portfolio of Concept Hospitality. This is the 11th hotel managed by

The Fern Hotels & Resorts under the Beacon brand, and takes the total number of hotels managed by them to 59. Expressing his

satisfaction on the overall growth of the company, the COO of The Ferns Hotels & Resorts, **Suhail Kannampilly**, said, "We are very

happy to mark our presence in this diamond manufacturing and exporting hub, and we are looking forward to serving guests in this very important business destination."



Central Beacon Hotel, Surat is a 48-room smart hotel. It offers three different categories of rooms - Deluxe, Executive, and Executive Premium. The rooms are equipped with all modern amenities. The hotel is situated in the heart of the city with all the major sightseeing attractions in its vicinity. It houses Sugar N Spice, a multi-cuisine restaurant that serves Indian, Chinese, and Continental fare.



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Ginger signs new hotel in Dwarka, Gujarat

Ginger has expanded its presence in Gujarat with the signing of a new hotel in Dwarka. With the addition of this hotel, Ginger will have 11 hotels in the state. The new hotel will have 99 rooms, an all-day diner, a meeting room, and a fitness centre.

The hotel is a management contract agreement with Blue Rock Hospitality Ventures and is slated to commence operations by the end of May 2019.

Deepika Rao, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Ginger, says, "We are



happy to partner with Blue Rock Hospitality Ventures in the pilgrimage city of Dwarka. With this hotel, we will expand our footprint to 795 keys in the vibrant state of Gujarat."

Dwarka is an ancient city and is well known for its many temples. The city also has a beautiful beach overlooking the vast expanses of the Arabian Sea, a wildlife sanctuary and many more tourist attractions. With the signing of this hotel, The Indian Hotels Company will have 15 hotels across its brands in the state of Gujarat.

Promotion at HRAWI



HRAWI has promoted **Savio Fernandes** to the position of Assistant Secretary General with effect from April 1, 2019. The Association wishes him all the very best in his new assignment. He can be reached at asg@hrawi.com. Members are requested to note that Aspi Nallaseeth's secretary can now be reached at pa@hrawi.com.

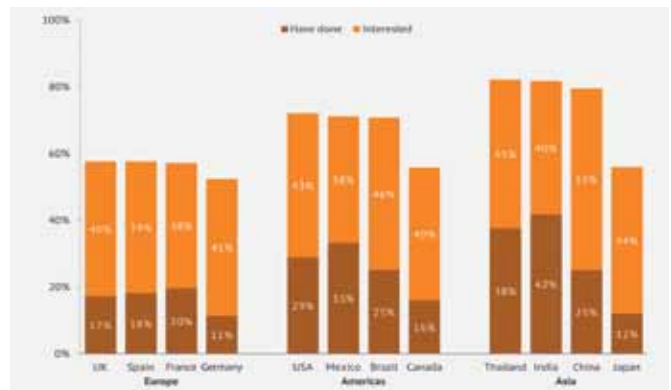
Accor launches 'Day Stays' with 60% discount

Accor has introduced the concept of 'Day Stays by Accor' at its 51 hotels across India. Through this concept, guests can make bookings for 12 hours or less and pay with a discount of 60 per cent on the best available rate of the day and can shorten their stay, rest, and save time. Guests in transit with ample time to relax, those attending a seminar in the city, or the ones wanting to celebrate an occasion can experience the impeccable hospitality with Day Stays by Accor. Le Club Accor members can also earn points through this programme.



Representative image

40% Indians have stayed in personalised rooms



In a survey of 7,500 people in 12 markets globally, an Amadeus-IHG study titled 'Drivers of Change in Hospitality' reports that 40 per cent of Indians have stayed in a personalised room that was customised to their needs, for instance, furnished with preferred furniture and room accessories. Traditional room types will no longer be the core product offered by hotels. Instead, guests will choose from room configurations that match their needs, the report states. This is known as attribute-based booking. In-room amenities, non-room inventory, and even tickets for out-of-hotel attractions can be flexibly included in bookings, and this very much represents the way that consumers want to be able to buy.

Attributes that can be added into rooms include functional items, both low-tech and high-tech – a cot for infants or smart room technology. Choosing which floor to stay on is also a customisable option.

India's chefs launch 2019 awareness campaign

The chefs of India have announced the launch of their 2019 campaign of 'International Chefs Day' by starting the awareness programme on April 20, exactly six months before the actual Chefs Day which is on October 20. This symbolism is necessary as there is a lot of work ahead to achieve the goal of 10,000 chefs celebrating their day and also donating more than 100,000 meals.

Also announced was the 2019 campaign motto: Every Chef Matters. This was done in an innovative way by many leading chefs simultaneously posting the same message across all their social media channels. The message was, 'Let's make sure every chef celebrates



Chefs Day because every chef matters.' An innovation for this year is the introduction of the Star Chefs team. They are top chefs, executive, corporate and chef-owners who are the natural leaders and innovators

of today for tomorrow. These Star Chefs have committed to use their immense goodwill and collective voice to make Chefs Day in India immensely popular as it should be because every chef matters.

First List

Michael Swamy, celebrity chef and author; **Paul Kinny**, Culinary Director, The St. Regis, Mumbai; **Gunjan Goela**, vegetarian food consultant; **Jerson Fernandes**, Executive Chef, Sea Princess; **Rajeev Janveja**, Corporate Chef, Lemon Tree Hotels; **Rahul Gomes Pereira**, Executive Chef, A Ta Maison, New Delhi; **Vineet Manocha**, Senior VP - Culinary, Lite Bite Foods; **Abhijit Saha**, Co-founder, Director and Chef, Avant Garde Hospitality; **Sunit Sharma**, Culinary Mentor, Goa; **Kayzad Sadri**, GM (corporate) F&B, Mahindra Holidays; **Rakhee Vaswani**, Chef and Proprietor, Palate Culinary Studio & Academy, Mumbai; **Balendra Singh**, Founder and Executive Pastry Chef, Institute of Bakery & Pastry Arts, New Delhi; **Sabyasachi Gorai**, Director, Fabricaa by Saby, New Delhi; **Ajay Anand**, Culinary Director, Pullman & Novotel Aerocity; **Ajay Chopra**, celebrity chef restaurateur, and others.

21,068 rooms in India are under construction

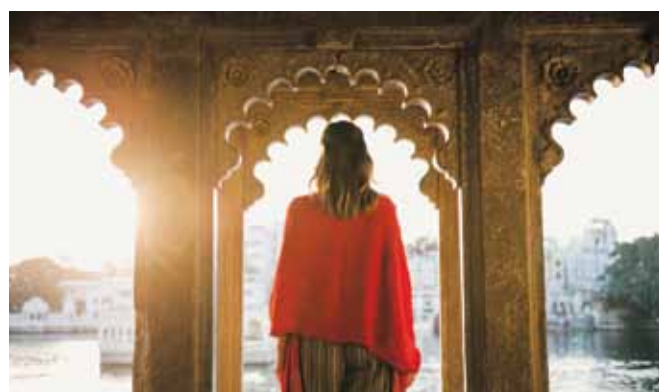


Representative image

The pipeline data for the Asia Pacific region by STR, a provider of premium data benchmarking, analytics and marketplace insights for the global hospitality sector, showed 1892 hotel projects accounting for 423,343 rooms in construction as of April 2019. This represented a 23.3 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of rooms in the final phase of the development pipeline. Five countries reported more than 20,000 rooms under construction, including India at 21,068 rooms (7.4 per cent).

International tourists' spend on hotels to grow

International tourists' spend on hotels in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of approximately 14 per cent by 2022, as per a latest study by KPMG and Google. Indian players currently enjoy a 55 per cent share of revenues in the accommodation industry. This is expected to reduce to 50 per cent by 2022 as international players plan to expand aggressively into Tier-I and Tier-II cities in India. These cities see the majority of leisure travel spending (approximately 87 per cent of overall international tourist spending is for leisure purposes).



Sichuanese at Sofitel

Sofitel Mumbai BKC recently hosted a gastronomic experience of flavours of Sichuan cuisine at its all-day dining Pondichéry Café, in association with Fairmont Chengdu and **Chef Jerry Tan**, through a 10-day food festival. The southwest Chinese region is home to ancient Chinese history that involves a wide range of ingredients, cooking

techniques, and delectable hot and spicy dishes. Sichuanese cuisine is dominated by peppery, chilli flavours, and best known for a liberal use of condiments like chilli, garlic, cinnamon, dried orange peel, scallion and more. Tan was specially flown down from Chengdu to curate authentic delicacies such as Sichuan Osmanthus Fish and Sichuan Spicy Fried Rice.



Let's talk about it!

Hyatt Pune, Kalyani Nagar has been fostering healthy communities around the world as part of its International Women's Day initiative. In a bid to spread awareness about menstrual hygiene, it visited Bhatkya Vimukt Jati Shikshan Sanshtha (BVJSS) in Wagholi. Hyatt Pune, Kalyani Nagar along with **Dr. Geeta Bora** and **Mita Banerjee**, the energetic soul behind 'Team Miracle' - the social support group in Pune for paraplegic soldiers and amputees, poor cancer patients, street children and destitute women – visited BVJSS. Since 1987, BVJSS houses orphans and children who are deaf

and blind. Dr Bora addressed girls aged between 10 to 16 years, explaining to them the importance of talking about menstruation and its hygiene.

After an insightful talk, the girls enthusiastically started asking questions. All volunteers from Hyatt Pune interacted with these girls, answering queries relating to careers and further studies. Hyatt Pune also distributed sanitary napkins to them.



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Callebaut's Pâtissier of the Year

Callebaut recently announced the winners of its Pâtissier of the Year challenge, the finale of which was held at Trident, Bandra Kurla, Mumbai. The winner was awarded a trip to the Chocolate Academy centre in Belgium for a two-day course.

Callebaut announced **Prathna Narang** (Lavonne Academy, Bengaluru) as the winner of the second edition of India's Callebaut Pâtissier of the Year 2019. The first runner-up was **Danish Khan** (JW Marriott, Bengaluru) and the second runner-up was **Mayukh Mazmudar** (Trident, Bandra-Kurla). Exclusively dedicated to the theme 'Future of Chocolate', the second edition witnessed a nationwide hunt for India's best gourmet pastry chef via boot camps in Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi.

The jury included **Seung Yun Lee**, Head of Chocolate Academy, Singapore; **Sarah Todd**, MasterChef Australia contestant; **Vinesh Johny**, Co-founder and Executive Pastry Chef of Lavonne Academy of Baking Science & Pastry Arts; **Avijit Ghosh**, Corporate Pastry Chef for Hotel Leela Venture; **Minette**, Head of Chocolate Academy centre in South Africa; celebrity chef **Varun Inamdar**; and **Vivek Kadam**, Pastry Chef at ITC Hotels.



Italian food with Beppe De Vito

All Things Nice presented an evening that celebrated modern Italian cuisine with Michelin Star chef **Beppe De Vito** and **Mirko Febbrile**, Head Chef at Braci, as they teamed up with the culinary team of JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu.

Guests for the evening were treated to a six-course dinner prepared by chefs De Vito and Febbrile. The culinary team at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu did an outstanding job under the leadership of their Executive Chef **Abhishek Basu** and their Executive Sous Chef, **Alok Verma**. Guests for the evening included **Dabboo Ratnani**; **Akshay Saigal**; **Aabha Bakaya**; sommelier **Nikhil Agarwal**, Founder, All Things Nice; **Sharad Puri**, General Manager, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu and top corporates.

De Vito's passion for food first began to take form while he was still a child, living in Italy and working at his neighbourhood café. Fast forward 20 years, and De Vito was sent to work in Singapore via London by renowned Italian restaurant group Bice. After racking up an impressive set of skills and experiences from helping several prestigious F&B establishments, De Vito found that it was finally the right time to open something that he could call his own.



Kings United at Sahara Star

Hotel Sahara Star recently hosted Kings United India, winner of World Dance Championship. The dinner was organised to felicitate the team and compliment them on the glory they have brought to the country. The global dance competition, in its third season now, is hosted by actor Scott Evans, and judges include choreographer Derek Hough, actor and singer

Jennifer Lopez, and singer-songwriter Ne-Yo. With their consistently top-scoring performances, Kings United battled four other finalists from across the world. The dance team was welcomed with a traditional *aarti*, after which they were showered with a round of applause from the CEO and hotel staff. A cake-cutting ceremony was organised at The Oceans.



Kids make the world greener

Ahead of World Earth Day, The Resort held a three-day activity #Growyourfood that involved helping children reconnect with nature. Children in the age group of 6-15 gathered at The Resort premises where they were taught to grow their own patch of vegetables. The idea behind the activity was to engage with young children and convey to them the importance of conserving and preserving nature through the vegetable growing activity.

Around 20 to 25 children participated in the activity which concluded on April 19. Speaking about it, **Satyajit Kotwal**, General Manager, The Resort Mumbai, said, "This year on World Earth Day, we wanted to engage with young children who will be our future. Gardening can be a fruitful and fun activity for both parents and their kids. Teaching gardening skills to kids can have many benefits and it is a great learning activity."



Gastronomical magic at Marriott

The master of scientific cooking, **Chef Heston Blumenthal** recently made his way to India for the first time with Masters of Marriott. He curated exclusive meals for guests while revealing the secrets behind his distinguished multi-sensory culinary creations.

Promoting consistent innovation in the F&B industry, the Masters of Marriott initiative celebrates not only Marriott International's talented culinary experts but also renowned international chefs. During his visit to the country, Blumenthal hosted a series of distinctive culinary experiences for Masters of Marriott in Mumbai and Delhi. The guests in attendance got a chance to sample signature dishes from his restaurant in

England, The Fat Duck, including Vegetarian Scotch Egg and Roasted Scallops.

Commenting on the association with Blumenthal, **Neeraj Govil**, Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International, said, "Marriott International is thrilled to have partnered with Chef Heston Blumenthal. The response that we have received for this event has been phenomenal."





Social Kinnect helps connect the dots

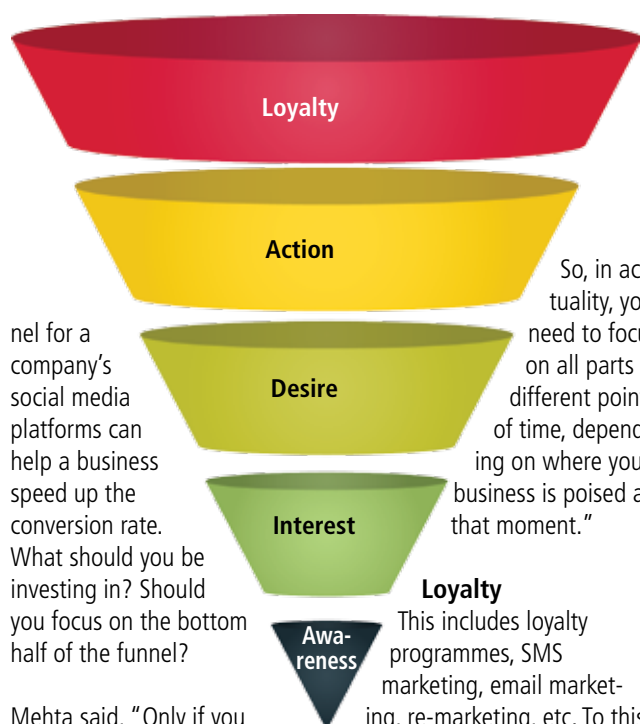
The recent session that HRAWI organised on marketing via social media left the audience wiser and asking for more. Here are some salient points that **Rohan Mehta**, CEO of Social Kinnect, outlined during the talk.

Hazel Jain

The fabled 'marketing funnel' is what every marketer needs to delve into. Elaborating on this was **Rohan Mehta**, CEO of Social Kinnect, an independent digital agency in India. He was speaking at a special seminar on 'Sales & Marketing Practices for Hotels & Restaurants' that was organised by the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) at Hotel Marine Plaza in Mumbai.

There were 46 hospitality professionals from several Mumbai-based hotel and restaurant establishments participating at this seminar.

According to Mehta, devising a good digital marketing fun-



Rohan Mehta

Loyalty This includes loyalty programmes, SMS marketing, email marketing, re-marketing, etc. To this, Mehta said, "Having a loyalty programme is very important.



"The early adopters have witnessed how marketing can enhance their hotel's or restaurant's awareness, improve guest relations, and create engaged brand advocates. Marketing has played a very important role in improving revenue and boosting overall performance of an establishment. It has become one of the most exciting, and more importantly, a determining factor for hotels and restaurants to stay ahead of the game. Going forward, it will become increasingly important for marketing professionals to monitor developments, disruptions, and identify patterns in this sphere to remain relevant and competitive in this dynamic business."

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
President, HRAWI



It is usually very complex, but Marriott recently simplified theirs under the new name 'Marriott Bonvoy'. What more do guests want? They want more room nights. So make your loyalty programme very simple to redeem."

Action

It helps to have a well-designed website which has competitive pricing – slightly better than what the OTAs have, said Mehta, adding, "Almost 90 per cent of the first searches are done on the mobile phone, even though you see more action on the desktop version of the website. So, you need to make sure that the 'm-website' has a payment gateway for higher conversion as well as a Virtual Reality walkthrough, which always helps."

Desire

Social marketing is necessary across platforms and should have offers and deals. For 'desire' to take over, Mehta said, "One must create desire in the user through contests, discounts, and create beautiful video

content which is probably the easiest route to creating desire." This video can be created in-house or outsourced at a small fee.

Interest

An organic way of social media marketing is via influencer marketing or video marketing.

According to Mehta, the most under-utilised and under-priced of all in India is influencer marketing. "I think this method will work in India for the next three years, especially for specific launches or for a season. This is also because the OTAs will never do this. So, the edge lies with hotels. We must realise the power of the hashtag," he added.

Awareness

Awareness can be created through paid social media marketing, SEO, SEM marketing, and Google Ads.

"Even YouTube advertisements are effective. You need to figure out what data you will be using to target which kind of audience. The focus is on cre-



"I thank the participants for attending the seminar and making it a success, and I also thank Karan Godhwani and Rohan Mehta for sharing their knowledge with us. Over and above the benefits that the membership offers, HRAWI is committed to organising such programmes that are a great value-adds for our members."

Shail Barot
Chairman, Seminar Committee

ating high quality content. Different social media platforms work in different countries. So, it is good to have a mix of all platforms.

For instance, currently, Instagram is the main place to market for young customers but older users are still on Facebook. YouTube, although more expensive, is known to create high affinity among users," Mehta added. This is why a good mix works the best.

Mehta also took questions from the audience for specific problems or challenges they had been facing.



Costlier visa means fewer tourists

The increase in visa fee for visiting India can be detrimental to the government's target of 20 million tourists by 2020. This belief is reiterated by inbound agents, some of who share their discontent over the move.



HRA Today Bureau
★ **Rajiv Mehra**
Vice President
Indian Association of
Tour Operators

The increase in visa fee has impacted travellers to India from across the world, especially from Southeast Asian countries. We, as IATO, have taken up the matter with both Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Last year in December, we were called for a meeting by Secretary, MHA. Principally, it was agreed that the visa fee should be reduced and no visa fee should be charged at all during the summer months to boost inbound tourism.



★ **Rajnish Kaistha**
Joint Secretary
Indian Association of
Tour Operators

The visa fee for India ranges between \$70-80 approximately, with an increase in validity from 90 days to a year. This is good for visitors like businessmen and NRIs who come to India multiple times, but not for leisure tourists. An increase of \$30 on average on visa for each applicant in a family of four would mean an increase of around \$120 in the cost of travelling to the country. This, at a time when our neighbouring destinations like Thailand and Indonesia are offering free visa-on-arrival. Offering free visa during the lean season would benefit everyone.



★ **Ravi Gosain**
Treasurer
Indian Association of
Tour Operators

Visa fee hike is always a deterrent for people coming to India. If the visa fee is between \$70-80 for India, it doesn't look as inviting to tourists as compared to other South Asian destinations. India is an

attractive destination for international travellers for its heritage and culture. Hence, to encourage tourists to come to India, the visa fee needs to be in check. The Ministry of Tourism recently invited representatives from various associations to get their feedback on visa fee hike. IATO proposed a reduction in the fee to make India a competitive destination, and also suggested that in the low season, there should be no visa fee to encourage tourists to visit India.

★ **Dipak Deva**
Managing Director
Travel Corporation (India)



It is harsh on visitors for the government to be asking for visa fee. In my opinion, even if it is looking to make some money out of it, the visa fee shouldn't be more than \$25.

The hike does impact business because a tourist, while making a booking, would not choose India over destinations like Turkey or Egypt due to the high visa fee here. In fact, there has been a decline in the number of tourists visiting Goa because of this. If we need to increase inbound growth, the visa fee needs to be reduced. Multiple representations are being made by trade associations to the government, urging it to reconsider and lower the visa fee.



★ **Suresh Periwal**
Managing Director
Clubside Tours & Travels

Inbound travel to India is facing multiple challenges in terms of cost of travel when compared to neighbouring countries, with taxes on accommodation going up to 28 per cent. The hike in visa fee will only add to these woes, thereby making India an unattractive destination to

consider. The recent turbulence in the aviation sector is terrible news for tourism. The reduction in the number of seats is making travel to India very expensive. Multiple representations are being made by trade associations to the government, urging them to reconsider and lower the visa fee. We fully support IATO in its demand for a reduction in the fee. This is a vital step to be able to attract a larger number of tourists and make India an attractive destination to travel to.

★ **Hector D'Souza**
Director
L'Orient



Increasing the visa fee to enter India is not entirely counterproductive as long as the facilities become seamless and quicker. Many of my guests complain of long waiting hours for getting the visa stamped at many Indian airports as there are long queues at arrival terminals. Hence, more visa processing counters are needed with clear instructions to carry a copy of the visa approval letter prior to boarding the flight to India in order to reduce processing and waiting time at the airport. The effect for individual tourists travelling as FITs is minimal as compared to MiCE and group travel which is price-sensitive and walks a tightrope on budgets. In that sense, visa fee should be reduced, though it appears that policies for increasing visa fee are based on reciprocal treaties.





Raffles Hotel, Singapore

Raffles to make India debut

Accor's luxury offering, Raffles, is set to make a 2020 debut in India. **Jean-Michel Cassé**, Chief Operating Officer – India and South Asia, Accor, shares more details about the move and the group's growing interest in the country's many hotel segments.

Anupriya Bishnoi

With a focus on expanding its presence in the Indian luxury and premium hotels space, Accor is all set to bring the Raffles brand to Jaipur and Udaipur.

While the first property will open in Udaipur by mid-2020 with 101 rooms and suites, the hotel group will venture into the Jaipur market by 2022 with 55 suites.

Both these hotels will deliver a palatial experience to guests in an extraordinary setting along with the famously discreet and personalised Raffles service.



Jean-Michel Cassé

Speaking about the move and the suitability of the brand for the Indian market, Cassé said, "The signing of Raffles Jaipur and Raffles Udaipur marks a historic moment for Accor in India and certainly for tourism in India. We are seeing increasing demand for luxury travel in the country and are looking forward to expanding Accor's globally-renowned portfolio of luxury brands here. The addition of the iconic Raffles brand signals a new era for our group."

Rajasthan is known for its rich heritage and tradition, and is famous for its spectacular palaces and forts. While Jaipur

forms part of the culturally-rich tourist circuit - The Golden Triangle comprising Delhi, Agra and Jaipur - Udaipur is a natural extension to it given its proximity to The Pink City. Both cities are world-renowned as epicentres of luxury.

Speaking of Accor's other properties in the pipeline, Cassé said, "Today, we have 51 properties in India, one in Colombo, and 52 in the region, taking the room count to 9,500 with presence in 22 cities. What we have in the pipeline today is 25 per cent of our current inventory, which will come in the next three to five years. Hopefully, we will also see new brands in this pipeline."

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Rationalise GST for hotels

The latest report released jointly by FICCI and Yes Bank has suggested that the government rationalise GST rate for hotels, and boost private investment in order to push tourism sector growth in India.

HRA Today Bureau

Enlisting the measures, a FICCI-Yes Bank report titled 'India Inbound Tourism: Unlocking the Opportunities' states that by 2029, the Indian tourism sector is likely to grow at 6.7 per cent per annum. The government should take steps such as rationalising GST rate for hotels and incentivising private participation to boost the tourism sector as it holds huge potential to push economic growth and job creation.

'GST applicable on hotels varies according to the room tariff. Rooms with tariff between ₹2,500-7,500 per night attract a rate of 18 per cent and rooms with a tariff of ₹7,500 and above per night attract a rate of 28 per cent. This makes premium/ luxury hotels and resorts in India among the most taxed in the world, higher than those in cities such as New York, London and Paris,' the report added.

It also said that higher taxes on hotels made the segment less competitive as compared to other Asian peers, and recommended 'reducing GST

with a ceiling of 18 per cent on hotel rooms to make the segment more competitive'.

The report said that the availability of a suitable land parcel is the preliminary step

itinerary of tourists on long visits to the South Asian region,' it said. The report also highlighted the urgent need to focus towards development of quality accommodation infrastructure



for assessment towards the development of a tourism project. Seeking relaxation in visa regime, it suggested that India should work with other member countries of BIMSTEC, SAARC, and ASEAN to offer a combined visa. 'Such visa will result in the conversion of stopovers to short-haul visits and will also add India on the

across the region to unlock the true potential of the country's north-eastern region.

Further, the report said the tourism sector generated 26.7 million jobs in 2018, and by 2029 is expected to provide employment to nearly 53 million people, directly and indirectly.

“
India should work with other countries to offer a combined visa which will result in the conversion of stopovers to short haul visits
”



Vocalising localising

In the decades to come, food production and sustainability in India will face an unprecedented confluence of pressures, which brings into focus the importance of sustainable food and localisation of food production.

HRA Today Bureau

The Indian Network on Ethics and Climate Change (INECC); Laya, a non-governmental organisation based in Visakhapatnam; and **Michael Swamy**, a chef and food media specialist, came together to organise a discussion titled 'The Value of Thinking Local' in their series 'Towards Food Sustainability: Journey of Change Through a Climate Kaleidoscope', on May 1, 2019 at Avion Hotel, Mumbai.

This discussion builds on a series of such discourse with civil society, which was organised in September 2018 in Mumbai. The food sustainability agenda has emerged as a result of a Laya-INECC concern of feeding 10 billion people, more so the poor and the marginalised worldwide by 2050, without increasing emissions and keeping the world under 1.5 degrees,

without fuelling deforestation or exacerbating poverty.

The discussion explored key facets of a sustainable food future through localisation of food production, considering the pressures on land, the current climate change challenge, environmental impacts, poverty alleviation, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This discussion was of special significance for Maharashtra where over one lakh farmers have quit agriculture; 20,000 villages are running out of water, plunging groundwater levels, depleting fish stocks together with rapid urbanisation and changing lifestyles; and where growth of the niche restaurant industry offering global food and cuisines presents a set of deeply intertwined challenges.

Experts from academia, chefs, restaurant owners and managers, entrepreneurs, civil society,

and food watchers shared their insights through a discussion with various players involved with addressing the issue of localisation. The discussion aimed at identifying specific actions that can be taken by stakeholders at various levels including the food industry, policymakers, producers, consumers, etc., on the challenge of food sustainability and possible ways of balancing competing needs and our role in creating responsible consumption and production patterns.

The discussion was the third from a series of such events that will be organised over the next few months at various locations in India. Through these events and workshops, the organisers aim to bring the discourse as a key issue to be addressed in our educational system, resource management and planning system, agriculture, and the food supply and demand systems.



Michael Swamy



Design in action

Every hotel subtly influences the mind of the guest through design elements that have cleverly been placed by the architect.

Bobby Mukherji, Founder, Bobby Mukherji & Associates (BM&A), talks about the intricate elements that help weave the perfect story for each hotel the firm designs, one that rightly delivers on the brand's philosophy.

Anupriya Bishnoi

How has the architecture of Indian hotels evolved over time?

India has come a long way from the time only big brands dominated the scene. Over the years, hotel design has evolved tremendously. Hotel companies now recognise the importance of storytelling in hospitality. Travellers, meanwhile, are seeking a uniform experience with a chain, across the world. As hoteliers, the biggest challenge our clients face is to build and sustain this experience.

Experience-driven design is gaining phenomenal acceptance; hotel chains are now building properties across the globe on a singular philosophy with a series of experiences that are uniform at a core level but customised to build in the local experience. These experiences and engage-

ments with space and people are now the norm.

What are some of the unique experiences you provide through a hotel you've designed?

The Lemon Tree Premier Hotel in Gurugram brings out the 'nostalgic and modern' feel, and is in reality an ode to the New York hotel scene. It is full of character with a display of vintage-style art and club-style leather sofas.

The space is designed to be a social hub, and yet deploys clever layouts creating a space within a space. In addition to this, we have noticed that travellers are increasingly getting out of their rooms and coming into the common areas to interact with other guests. Designed using neutral colours and textures against a backdrop of wood panelling, the hotel is

now the destination for moguls of the financial district to enjoy a drink with friends.

What challenges do you face being in India?

The challenges are not much, except for government permissions and lack of good contractors, availability of good finishing materials at affordable prices, technical lighting, and factory-made furniture. Compared to our counterparts abroad, we give a lot of time to our projects during execution, to ensure that quality and design are not diluted.

Tell us about your upcoming hospitality projects.

We are working on a range of new projects from luxury retreats to service apartments, hotels for the working traveller, and boutique villas or resorts like a Rajasthani palace-themed resort.



Bobby Mukherji

Strength, thy name is woman

Two decades ago, the biggest challenge for the industry was to get women to join the workforce. While they have come a long way in the workplace, men continue to hold most leadership roles. Hopefully, this too will change in the near future.



Laxmi Todiwan (third from left) with her students

I have heard from some of my senior colleagues how they had to reach out to the elite, creating awareness about the hospitality industry for women and recruiting them for the front office and housekeeping departments. Not many allowed their daughters to work in the industry. Fast forward to the 90s, and both hospitality education as well as the industry were able to reach the masses with the growth of travel and tourism in the country. It became one of the largest employment generators, which led to more women joining the hospitality and tourism industries.

Challenges that women face

The biggest concern for women is not being able to continue work post their marriage or starting a family. Some are able to balance their careers with responsibilities on the home front whereas others

find it difficult due to lack of support. So, they choose to quit altogether to fulfil more important responsibilities such as child care. Many women restart their professional journeys from where they left or even lower, and settle for lower pay cheques as well.

The industry is aware of this and measures are being taken to make women-friendly workplaces as well as HR policies. These may include providing flexibility at work, part-time employment, child care leave, crèche facility, work-from-home facility, or even job sharing. I strongly urge industry leaders and HR heads to incorporate these policies on a war footing.

Retaining talent

Data indicates that women do not stay in the industry because they feel excluded from the informal communica-

tion networks and often feel overlooked when decisions regarding progression are made.

While there is good representation of women workforce in the hospitality industry today, it is mostly at the lower levels of the hierarchy with very few women in leadership roles. Companies need to create role models and leaders through a focus on career path, succession planning, and mentorship. For instance, The Park Hotels has a 'Welcome Back' programme and it's not just for women employees. Such measures from organisations encourage them to take on more women, especially after they have had a gap in their careers.

(The author is Laxmi Todiwan, professor at Apeejay Institute of Hospitality, Navi Mumbai and Founder, Indian Women in Hospitality. Views expressed here are her own).

“While there is good representation of women workforce in the hospitality industry today, it is mostly at the lower levels”



★ **Sohansinh Jadeja**
President
IAAPI

The Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI) has elected Sohansinh Jadeja as the new national president for the term 2019-2020. IAAPI is the apex body representing the interests of amusement parks, theme parks, water parks, and family entertainment centres in India. Jadeja joined IAAPI as Director in 2005, and over the years has worked as Regional Chairman - Western Region and Chairman of Membership Committee. He is a civil engineer by profession and has over 28 years of experience in the amusement and water park industry.

Jadeja joined IAAPI as Director in 2005, and over the years has worked as Regional Chairman - Western Region and Chairman of Membership Committee. He is a civil engineer by profession and has over 28 years of experience in the amusement and water park industry.



★ **Sulabh Suri**
Area Director of Human Resources
Grand Hyatt Mumbai

Grand Hyatt Mumbai has appointed Sulabh Suri as Area Director of Human Resources. Suri, who has been an integral part of the Hyatt family for over a decade, will be responsible for ensuring that the HR operational policies and processes are adhered to

and continually improved as part of the new role. He has worked with Hyatt Regency Delhi and Hyatt Regency Mumbai in the past, and has also been a key member of the pre-opening team at Grand Hyatt Goa where he was instrumental in setting up the entire workforce of over 600 associates.



★ **Clifford Coutinho**
Director of Sales
The Westin Mumbai Garden City

Clifford Coutinho has been appointed as Director of Sales at The Westin Mumbai Garden City. He is a seasoned hotelier with over 12 years of industry experience, making him a collaborative leader with a strategic and analytical perspective. In the new

role, Coutinho will be responsible for leading and further evolving all aspects of sales, driving revenues, promoting brand strategies, and providing the best of The Westin Mumbai Garden City's hospitality experience to guests. His key focus areas include revenue management, business development and sales, with a keen interest in hotel management and operations, training, and coaching the team.



★ **Zubin Sutaria**
Director of Sales
Hyatt Regency Pune

Hyatt Regency Pune has appointed Zubin Sutaria as Director of Sales. An industry expert, Sutaria holds an experience of more than 10 years in the hospitality industry, converting strategic vision into measurable results at various hotels. As the Director of

Sales, he will be responsible for maximising revenue through result-oriented sales and marketing strategies, exploring business opportunities through events, etc. A driven professional, Sutaria is a leader with the ability to build relationships, establish trust, and train people to achieve their potential. Prior to joining Hyatt Regency, he worked as the Director of Sales with Four Points by Sheraton, Pune.





★ **Vrushali V Kummar**
Director of Sales
Fairfield by Marriott Pune Kharadi

Fairfield by Marriott Pune Kharadi has appointed Vrushali V Kummar as its new Director of Sales. She is an influential and accomplished hospitality business leader with 18 years of experience with companies like IHG, Berggruen, Marriott, Oakwood, and Hyatt. She

also holds extensive knowledge of global practices in hospitality and is well-versed in establishing sales and marketing setups from luxury to business hotels in major markets such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Pune. A graduate from Pune University, Kummar has seen numerous highlights including successfully launching Park Hyatt Goa, Oakwood, Courtyard by Marriott, and Keys Pimpri Pune.



Appointments



★ **Shankush Mahajan**
Rooms Division Manager
The Westin Pune Koregaon Park

Shankush Mahajan has been appointed as Rooms Division Manager at The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. He brings with him passion, energy and expertise, and is a good communicator with a strong analytical and problem-solving aptitude. In his

previous tenure, Mahajan was associated with The Chedi Mumbai where he was in charge of curating guest experiences and handling operations pertaining to rooms. At The Westin Pune Koregaon Park, he will oversee the operations of front office and housekeeping, and will be responsible for running the day-to-day procedures of the hotel and driving change.

★ **Raghav Sawant**
Spa Manager
The Westin Pune Koregaon Park

The Westin Pune Koregaon Park has appointed Raghav Sawant as Spa Manager. He has over 10 years of experience in the industry, during which he has played a key role in consistently delivering results that contribute to the mission and overall success of the hotel by accomplishing performance objectives focused on business revenues, guest and associate satisfaction. In the current role, he will lead and supervise the development of the spa along with wellness and recreation operations. Sawant's experience helps him understand and identify new business opportunities developing in the market while simultaneously managing the day-to-day activities. His last assignment was with Grand Hyatt Goa.



★ **Gaurav Herwadkar**
Executive Sous Chef
The Westin Pune Koregaon Park

Gaurav Herwadkar has been appointed as Executive Sous Chef at The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. With over 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he brings with him expertise in the kitchen and the F&B department. His last assignment was with JW Marriott, Pune. Herwadkar has also previously worked with The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata, and later began his journey with Marriott at the JW Marriott, Pune. At The Westin Pune Koregaon Park, he will be responsible for the planning of order and execution of all daily operations, supervising junior associates in maintenance and cleanliness, while ensuring minimum wastage and controlling food costs.



All-natural fruit-fill

Puratos India's newest launch, the all-natural Fruitfil range of freshly-blended milkshakes, offers a variety of delicious fruit fillings which contain up to 30 per cent natural fruit. The range has no artificial flavour and no added colours, giving it the coveted NAFNAC label. With Fruitfil Mango, one of the four flavours of the Fruitfil range, one can create thick, creamy, and healthy mango milkshakes packed with the natural goodness of sweet mangoes. The range is also available in three other flavours - Fruitfil Blueberry, Fruitfil Strawberry, and Fruitfil Pineapple. It is the perfect, ready-to-use solution for chefs looking for natural fruit fillings for multiple applications such as cake layering, spreading on baked finished desserts, mixing with mousses, flavouring of milkshakes and much more.



Furniture that's easy on the eye

Ficus has recently launched a fresh collection of outdoor furniture that is made of a durable and aesthetic material that gives the look of classic vintage cane or bamboo furniture. The Ficus outdoor furniture comes in many hues and colours - snowflake white, muddy dark brown, charcoal grey, and beige. It also has options for outdoor fabrics, which can be used to cover furniture that can be used indoors as well as outdoors. The furniture can be used in patios, balconies and lawns, or any outdoor and terrace seating. The most popular fabric colours for outdoor upholstery are Mediterranean blues and shades of aquamarine. Other popular colours are vibrant orange and fresh lime green or yellow.

Atop the table

Classic Marble Company's (CMC) Quadra porcelain slabs are now being offered as part of custom-made table-top applications. The company offers a range of 20 products in various colours and patterns. The cross-section of the Quadra slabs carries the same design as its surface, giving it the advantage of being cut and polished in desired shapes while maintaining uniformity with the existing décor of a space. CMC offers Quartz Carbon, Quartz Grigio, Quartz Ash, and Quartz Noir in the shades of black, grey, and beige. The slabs can easily be mounted on a wooden or metal base to create an eight or six-seat contemporary dining table or a modern-day conference room table. Quadra's surface is evenly textured, non-porous, and resistant to chemicals, scratches and fire, satisfying all the primary requirements for a functional table-top.



Blend on the go!

Usha International has launched the 'On the Go Blender', which addresses the need of modern consumers for versatility and health. It comes with two detachable jars with a capacity of 300ml and 600ml. Innovatively designed, the blender is loaded with smart features like two-fin SS304 stainless steel food grade blades enabling quick and fine blending of food ingredients, anti-slip suction feet, and anti-flip cover to prevent spills and impurities. Furthermore, the blades can crush and blend frozen ingredients, and the carry-along jar ensures healthy storage of fluids. The blender is equipped with a 250 Watt motor, comes with BPA-free food-safe bottles, and is available in two colours - Orange Crush and Peppy Purple. It also has a two-year warranty.



Vintage in the restroom

Drawing on the vintage appeal of the late 1900s, Roca has introduced the Carmen bathroom collection that offers a complete range of bathroom products including WCs, basins, faucets, and bathroom accessories. The collection has a strong vintage feel whilst incorporating the latest innovations in bathroom design. The wall-hung, countertop, and pedestal basin collections offer a timeless and enduring feel to the overall bathroom space. Carmen WCs are equipped with rimless technology, making them easier to clean while providing better hygiene and uniform water distribution. The products are formulated with Supralit soft-close seat and cover, which offers greater resistance to chemical agents and to discolouration. The product family also includes bathroom accessories like robe hook, soap dish, soap dispensers, tumbler, etc.



Fresh to the 'Tea'

Typhoo has launched a range of refreshing green teas to help you cool this summer. While the Moroccan Mint green tea has the cooling effect of natural spearmint, Green Tea Lemongrass is a light, yet stimulating blend with pleasant citrusy flavours. It is an exotic fusion of carefully plucked green tea and refreshing lemongrass, rich in antioxidants. The Peppermint green tea is a caffeine-free infusion of pure peppermint leaves and has a deliciously fresh spicy aroma. Lemon and Lime Zest green tea gives the freshness of lime and lemon. These caffeine and sugar-free green teas are a sip towards a healthier life.



Loco over Coco!

Marico has launched a range of vegan gourmet products under the brand 'Coco Soul'. The range includes 100 per cent organic virgin coconut oil, 100 per cent natural virgin coconut oil, 100 per cent natural infused variants of cold pressed virgin coconut oil, as well as Coco Soul foods which include spreads, chips, and 100 per cent organic coconut sugar. The range marks Marico's foray into the organic products space. Coco Soul Infused Cold Pressed Virgin Coconut Oil is extracted via a no-heat process which helps preserve vital nutrients, rich aroma, and the flavour of real coconuts. Being a source of Medium Chain Triglycerides (MCTs), the oils are easy to digest, providing an instant boost of energy, aiding digestion, and helping manage weight while supporting cognition.

Dine in style



IDUS has launched a new and stylish dining chair collection that comprises Dressy, Savi, and Carilla dining chairs. Dressy dining chair sits upon four tapered wooden legs, dressed with leatherette seats. Savi has a vintage design and is upholstered in fabric with a wooden frame for support and comfort. Carilla, with its square, curved and protective back and seat in beige leatherette, resembles a great sense of style. Each chair has its own practical and aesthetic purpose that adds character to any dining space.

With uniqueness and freshness in design, the collection promises style and comfort.



AKARSH MATHUR

General Manager | The Deltin, Daman

Spending quality time with family, especially with my seven-month-old son, is important to me. I enjoy taking small breaks once every three months. These are ideally two-day getaways to a nearby place. I enjoy these unplanned breaks as they allow

me to de-stress over long drives and give me a sense of adventure. For a regular vacation, my favourite places in India are Rajasthan and Kerala. I have recently discovered what a wonderfully blissful place Diu is with clean beaches and not many tourists.

“I enjoy unplanned breaks as they allow me to de-stress over long drives”

PALLAVI JAYSWAL

Chef & Co-founder | Uno Más - Tapas Bar Kitchen, Mumbai

With so many options around us to de-stress, I think I'll always stick to the old school way to relax - to plop down on the couch, get comfortable with a book or the television, or simply workout. Apart from having an entrepreneurial bug and being passionate about expanding my business, I am also a pretty decent actor and I would have

actually pursued that as a career if I wasn't this lazy! My most memorable holiday moment would be scuba-diving alongside large turtles in the Maldives. Even though I run a Spanish restaurant, I will always have a soft corner for pan-Asian food.

“I am a pretty decent actor and would have pursued that as a career”



SALIL FADNIS

Hotel Manager | Hotel Sahara Star, Mumbai

Working at a five-star hotel, one gets a chance to don all the hats one can. Cooking, for me, is therapeutic and I love to experiment with food. In my free time, I also like to write down my thoughts and spend quality time with my family. I also like to travel,

whether it is outside India or exploring cities and cuisines within the country. I also love trying out different cuisines. On weekends, I am out with my family and also try and take some time out to practise yoga. When unwinding at the end of the day, I listen to music as it is very soothing.

“Cooking, for me, is therapeutic and I love to experiment with food”

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