

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT)
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CALL FOR PAPERS
FOR A THEME ISSUE OF A
SCOPUS -INDEXED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL-
WORLDWIDE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM THEMES (WHATT)

Abstracts and papers are invited for a theme issue of WHATT (v13 n4 2021). This issue will address the following strategic question:

How is the Hospitality and Tourism business in India responding to the aftermath caused by COVID 19?

The theme editors of this issue are:

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WHATT focuses on practical research that could be deployed by the practitioners, industry, policy makers and academia. These papers should potentially be developed by conducting round tables and focus group discussions with multiple stakeholders- government bodies, policy makers, industry, NGOs, etc to get their perspectives on opportunities and challenges. If the work involves usage of a lot of terms which are understood in local context or a particular industry aspect, the author(s) should include an explanation of such terms being used in the paper. Please look at a sample WHATT issue for format and pattern of publication.

This issue focuses on how the Hospitality and Tourism business in India is responding to the aftermath caused by COVID 19. Each paper should address some emerging issues of the Indian hospitality industry during the pandemic in the areas of human resource strategies, innovative designs, consumer behaviour, challenges in hospitality education, merger and acquisition trends, technological shift, risks and uncertainties, revenue management, financing strategies, operational strategies, and training and development, to name a few. It should not only capture the essence of these issues affecting the industry currently but also should have specific

recommendation for industry professions , managers, policy makers and other stakeholders on what strategies should be adopted to mitigate the aftermath of COVID -19 on the hospitality and tourism business in India.

Background

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) expects the crisis to cost the tourism sector at least USD22 billion, with the travel sector anticipated to shrink by up to 25 percent in 2020, resulting in a loss of 50 million jobs (WTTC, 2020). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) foresees international tourist arrivals declining by 1 to 3 percent in 2020 globally. This could translate into an expected loss of USD30 billion to USD50 billion in international visitor spending. Out of this, Asia Pacific is expected to be the most affected region with a decline of 9 to 12 percent in international tourist arrivals in 2020, down from growth of 5 to 6 percent forecast in early January (UNWTO, 2020). The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates global revenue loss for the passenger business between USD63 billion (11 percent) and USD114 billion (19 percent) (IATA, 2020). The analysis by WTTC reveals Asia-Pacific to be the most heavily impacted with up to 49 million jobs at risk, representing a downfall of nearly US\$800 billion to Travel & Tourism GDP (WTTC, 2020)

The Indian hospitality sector has faced a major and evolving challenge with the outbreak of COVID-19; it is witnessing today the all-time lowest demand. The overall negative impact on Hospitality and Tourism businesses is simply immeasurable due to the ongoing certainty, both in the short term and long term. Along with hotels and restaurants, the Indian tourism and hospitality sector comprising the tour and travel operators, event planners, etc. contribute more than US\$250 billion or nearly one-tenth of the GDP (Deloitte, 2020).The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) revealed that the total revenue from ticketed monuments was around US\$ 33 million in FY18, around US\$ 40 million in FY19 and approx. US\$ 37 million in FY20 (April-January). The outbreak COVID - 19 pandemic has created a global crisis that has had a deep impact on the Hospitality and Tourism industry. Looking to respond constructively to this situation, the world has adopted a new normal following the pandemic. Lessons from this downtime can help Hospitality businesses to respond to short term challenges and set the right priorities for the long run. Though at this stage we can't predict exactly what the future will look like, through this issue we are seeking original qualitative empirical research, theory development, and case studies to investigate the response of the Indian hospitality and tourism industry to the after map caused by COVID -19.

Some of the areas which would be addressed are as follows:

Economic Outlook: India has about 53,000 hotels and 70 lakh restaurants in the organized category and 2.3 crore restaurants in the unorganized sector, out of which almost 70% are staring at closure in the next 30-45 days (Times of India, May 18, 2020).The pandemic has mostly affected the hospitality, travel, and tourism sector due to travel restrictions across the globe. The majority of hotel operators expect that it will take 1 to 2 years for their hotels to return to revenue per available room (RevPAR) levels of last year, according to a survey conducted by JLL, India. The industry is trying hard to strategize the new policies and initiatives for economic

reactivation. Some questions to be answered are: What are the strategies to alleviate risk and to survive the slowdown caused by COVID 19? How do businesses respond for maintaining minimum margins to breakeven?

Consumer Behaviour: COVID-19 has unquestionably accelerated the expectation for customer experience higher than ever. Around the world, downloads of the top 10 health and fitness apps increased by 60% between December 2019 and March 2020 (Accenture, 2020). Looking at the global environment dominated by health concerns, the hotel industry needs to gain guest's confidence by catering to the consumer expectations. Post-COVID 19 consumers have shifted to healthier, hygienic, conscious, economical and thoughtful preferences. Experts on consumer behaviour will have to analyse some intriguing questions- How COVID 19 will change consumer behaviour permanently? Will certain services/products be have to be dropped for ever? What are the emerging demands from customers and what they are ready to pay for? What emerging initiatives or innovative services have been adopted by the Indian hospitality industry to fulfil customer expectations?

Technological Shift: COVID- 19, a health and economic crisis has a sustainable impact on consumer attitude and buying behaviour. Technology is playing a bigger role by creating new ways for consumers to explore personal pursuit (Accenture, 2020). There is a visible shift in workplace behaviour post-COVID-19 which mandates hotels to accommodate different guests' needs. Can leading technologies help revive the hospitality sector? What innovative technologies have been adopted by Indian hospitality industry to come out of the current situation?

Merger and Acquisition trends: Deloitte's seventh M&A Trend report reveals Merger & Acquisition activity to continue at an active pace in 2020. Looking at the impact of COVID 19 over the hospitality industry, many smaller hotel companies are forced to merge with the giant players in the industry, to survive post-COVID-19. The pandemic has a deep impact on hotel revenues and occupancy rates presenting investment opportunities for major players. Strategists have some tough questions to be answered -What are the emerging issues in terms of their M&A strategies in the hospitality and tourism business in India? What would be the risk associated and return on such investment trends?

Human Resource Strategies: As per The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) (2000), the corona virus impact could render 3.8 crore people jobless, which is around 70 percent of the total workforce in the tourism and hospitality sector. This will certainly impact the morale and mental health of employees. Such situation could also impact employee retention in the long-term even when the pandemic gets over. Thus it is important to understand the Human Resource Strategies of the industry to deal with aftermath caused by COVID 19.

Financing strategies: Hotel sector is to witness 50% loan defaults post RBI's August 31 deadline (Business today, 2020). Looking at the ripple effect of challenges associated with COVID 19, the hospitality industry is facing a hard time in terms of financing. As per the consultancy firm Hotelivate, approximately Rs 50,000 crore worth of outstanding loans are attached to the hotel real estate. The industry is facing a high risk of default after August 2020.

The CFOs need to see the following -What are the emerging issues in terms of their financing strategies? What kind of strategies industry is framing to handle the situation?

Profit Management: With the increasing spread of the pandemic and falling economy, the hotels are striving hard to maintain revenue growth. With suspended operations, hotels are aiming hard to increase the occupancy rate to cover variable and semi-fixed costs. Finance specialists have a hard road ahead -What should be the advanced revenue management practices and pricing models to respond to the developments quickly? What are some of the innovative practices that the industry is adopting to manage the revenues better?

Hospitality Architecture and Design: The COVID 19 pandemic has awakened us to the possibilities of design changes in hospitality spaces. Hotel operations will have to start looking to the changes as per new standards where architects have to integrate the best practices to maintain higher hygiene standards, minimum touch points, and a healthy environment. Architects and interior designs will have to evaluate--What changes would help the hospitality architecture to enhance the safety of both guests and staff alike? What are the innovative design solutions to promote guest engagement? What would be the possible design solutions for hotel kitchens to achieve maximum levels of efficiency and hygiene?

Hospitality and Tourism Education: Due to the COVID 19 pandemic educational system is facing challenges worldwide (UNESCO, 2020). According to UNESCO around one and a half billion students are engaged through online classrooms since March 2020. The recent changes in the higher education system in hospitality and tourism have significantly influenced the student engagement levels and classroom environment. The current situation promotes the need by HEIs to address the issues related to virtual learning student satisfaction, innovative tools, and its impact on hospitality and tourism education- Is the kitchen training being affected? Are online sessions on restaurant training doing justice to students' learning? What are the innovations in the curriculum being devised that captures uncertainly as arisen due to the pandemic? With lost jobs in hospitality and tourism business, what trends are being observed in enrolments for such programs?

Training and Development: The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), in collaboration with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), has initiated a dedicated training program on COVID-19 to gear up the hospitality industry across the country. Important questions are as follows- What are some of the innovative training practices that the industry is adopting to manage the pandemic better? What is the emerging of the role of Training programs such as the ISO 14001 or the CIEH Environmental Management Certificate for the hospitality industry?

Hospitality Law and legal guidelines: Due to the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic, many hotels are facing contractual obligations. The call for the industry is to examine whether COVID-19 is covered under the force majeure provisions or not. While epidemics and pandemics are covered specifically in most of the hotel management agreements, it is arguable whether COVID-19 would be considered as an Act of God or not. Also, it will be of interest to evaluate

the sufficiency of current guidelines issued related to health safety and hygiene by the Govt. of India for the hospitality and tourism business in India.

International tourism: International tourism is one of the sectors which have faced a major impact of COVID-19 pandemic. This enormous toll of COVID-19 on international tourism has now impacted different purposes of travelling as well. It would be interesting to evaluate how different modes of travelling like medical tourism, spiritual tourism, ecotourism and cultural tourism are impacted. It will be useful to explore how COVID 19 has impacted the choice of a particular destination and related activities.

Risks and Uncertainties - The hospitality industry faces huge operating risks due to the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic, like decreased FTAs, poor demand in meetings, incentives, conferences, and events (MICE), Business, and other events. It will be relevant to explore-What are the risks that the managers are facing currently in the Indian hospitality industry? What are the key risk management practices they should adopt in future?

This issue will have an interesting mix of articles, research papers and viewpoints from hoteliers, practitioners, higher education leaders, policy makers and other stakeholders. This theme issue will look into a wide variety array of aspects, strategic, functional and operational, which will be a unique feature of this issue.

Proposed Topics or Coverage for the Theme Issue

There will be in total of 12 papers which will be of the following nature in the above mentioned areas.

- 1 - Introductory article: (by the theme editor) (3,000 words)
 - 2 - Thematic literature review (5000-6000 words)
 - 3 to 9 - Research papers (interactions with practitioners/ practical solutions) (5000-6000 words)
 - 10 to 12 - Viewpoints (3000 words)
- Concluding article (by the theme editor)

Ensuring That the Theme Issue Engages With an International Readership

The outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic has created a global health crisis and no industry in the world is escaping the disruption of COVID-19. As per a report by World Health Organization, more than 200 countries have reported confirmed COVID-19 cases, including China, India, Italy, Iran, S. Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, USA, Sweden, Singapore, Sri Lanka, France, Australia, Malaysia, Spain, United Arab Emirates, UK, Nepal, Finland, Netherlands, Japan, Belgium, Russia, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia, and Germany World Health Organization (WHO, 2020). This Pandemic has not only affected our daily lives but apart from this, COVID-19 has severely ruined the global economy. As per a report by Mckinsey and Company, US hotel revenue per available room will be down by 20% by 2023. On comparing the statistics with the

year 2019, the occupancy level in the hotel chain has gone down to 96% in Italy, 68% in China, 67% down in the UK, 80% down in India and 56% down in the United State of America (Lexology, 2020).

The theme issue will engage international readership as it will be interesting for the worldwide audience to understand the dynamics of COVID 19 and to identify innovative approaches to face the pandemic and transform crisis into an opportunity. COVID 19 has shown that to face the worst impacts of this global crisis, industry leaders need to come together across the world to make policies, share ideas, and make bold decisions. The issue addresses the fundamental problem that the hospitality and tourism industry is facing across the world. As COVID 19 had a huge impact on all global hospitality players and should hence be relevant and engaging to them. Thus, the issue will invite readership worldwide.

Timelines

Submission of abstract: please see the sample issues)	October 12, 2020	(For the format,
Submission of the first draft of paper:	January 05, 2020	
Submission of the final paper (with reviewers' feedback incorporated):	February 15, 2020	

Please send your abstracts to

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