

There are many reports and estimates of the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic on national economies and on service industries, like travel, tourism and hospitality. How then are hospitality and tourism businesses responding? I am delighted to welcome back theme editors Gunjan M Sanjeev and Shweta Tiwari who investigate on-going responses in India, one of the worst affected countries in 2021. I should like to thank Gunjan, Shweta and their writing team for a timely collection of articles that adopt an industry-led approach to exploring this question.

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT) aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a WHATT theme editor, do please contact me.

Richard Teare
Managing Editor, WHATT

How are hospitality and tourism businesses in India responding to the Covid-19 pandemic?

The coronavirus pandemic has had an immense economic impact on worldwide hospitality and tourism. To illustrate this, the [United Nations World Tourism Organization \(UNWTO\)](#) predicted that a 57% reduction in international tourist arrivals would occur by March 2020 with 67 million fewer travel and tourist visits and a revenue reduction of US\$80 m, affecting 120 million jobs in tourism and related activity. With closed borders, travel restrictions and a health crisis, the Indian scenario is no different than that of the rest of the world.

As travel and tourism-related gross domestic product (GDP) makes a vital contribution to the Indian economy, Indian hospitality leaders are trying to translate difficulties arising from the pandemic into opportunities. This involves reshaping policies and practices geared for new normal realities and an array of initiatives linked to the changes being made to encourage customers to return to hospitality settings. To facilitate enhanced contactless service, hotel companies are accelerating their deployment of technology to address the trust deficit and rebuild customer confidence. Technology is also playing a role in the rise of virtual tourism on the YouTube, driven by travel vloggers, and in education, as it adapts and adopts virtual learning platforms. Given the extent of the crisis, there is evidence that hospitality firms in India are exploring an array of cost reduction, revenue enhancement and resource conservation approaches in order to mitigate the impact. Developments in health and safety policies and procedures are a critical element of pandemic response, and measures taken include the implementation of new guidelines and standard operating procedures related to service delivery and the development of innovative training programs all with the aim of enhancing the guest experience. There is also a need for appropriate policy formulation to ensure a safe and protective environment for medical tourists during their visits to India and other destination countries.

This theme issue addresses aspects of all of the above in the context of India's tourism and hospitality response, and it draws on industry-led applied research and viewpoints from hoteliers and other practitioners, higher education leaders, policymakers and other stakeholders. It also considers a wide array of perspectives – strategic, functional and operational, and we hope that readers will derive a deeper understanding of the dynamic



changes occurring in India's tourism and hospitality industry. We hope though that this collection of articles will be of interest and value to a global readership given the extent and severity of the pandemic.

Gunjan M. Sanjeev and Shweta Tiwari
Theme Editors

Reference

United Nations World Tourism Organization (2020), "International tourist numbers could fall 60-80% in 2020", available at: <https://www.unwto.org/news/covid-19-international-tourist-numbers-could-fall-60-80-in-2020> (accessed 13 June 2021).

About the Theme Editors:

Gunjan M. Sanjeev PhD is the Vice President RBEF (Amity Education Group), Director of International Affairs and Professor (Finance) at Amity University, Haryana, India. She is responsible for some of the institution's key strategic initiatives, such as establishing international campuses, fostering international linkages and international accreditation relationships. She has also served as a jury member for the European Foundation for Management Development's (EFMD) Case writing competition 2020 (Indian management issues and opportunities category), is an experienced researcher and author, has conducted executive development programs and is a visiting faculty member at IIM Ahmedabad. Gunjan has also served as a WHATTT theme editor on four prior occasions.

Shweta Tiwari PhD is the Associate Dean Academics and Professor (Human Resource Management) at Vedatya Institute, Gurgaon, Haryana, India. She began her academic career in 2003 and has 17 years of experience in teaching, training and academic administration in higher education institutions in India and of international university Indian campus operations. Shweta has published and presented work on aspects of training and employee retention, employee engagement, human resource planning, business education and talent management in national and international journals and at conferences. She has also served as a WHATTT theme editor and is an assistant editor of the Journal of Services Research, an International Journal of Vedatya Institute Gurgaon.