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## Travel post COVID-19: Reimagined, Redesigned and Rewired: Vikram Lalvani

*Domestic tourism and local demand will rise, making India stronger and more powerful than before writes Vikram Lalvani, Chief Officer- Revenue Management and Sales, Sterling Holiday Resorts Limited*



by **exchange4media Staff**  
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The Coronavirus pandemic has emerged as a major black swan event and has paralysed the global economy. Indian Businesses are struggling with a slump in consumption. The travel, tourism and hospitality industries are deeply impacted by the lockdown, however, with the latest announcement and relaxations offered under “Unlock 1.0”, the industry hopes to witness green shots of recovery soon.

The Holiday industry is already gearing up, making social distancing and hygiene an integral part of the new normal going forward. We will also see a new trend making headway for travel/holiday insurance and car rentals as people would prefer self-driving to destinations within 4-8 hour distance as opposed to taking the train or flights in the near future. Members and Fully Independent Travellers like couples, smaller families, and group of friends would prefer considering these nearby travel trips, road trips or staycations so as to avoid traveling to faraway locations and crowded places.

### **Safe travel for customers: Holistic 360 degree hygiene and sanitation program**

Going forward, most certainly, people will be selecting hotels and resorts which will assure great standards of hygiene and cleanliness. Travellers would look for transparency from hotels and resorts to identify and implement measures to guarantee safety for both the guests and employees. The touchpoints will be re-designed so as to eliminate any external probabilities for contamination, such as check-ins, key cards, restaurant buffets and engagement activities will be looked upon.

### **Rise in domestic travel**

According to a joint report by TCIL and SOTC, domestic holiday was the first choice of 64 per cent respondents. Destinations such as Goa, North East, Kerala Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir apart from driveable locations like Munnar, Coorg, Ooty, Shimla, Amritsar, Mussoorie, etc. are going to be on the travellers’ list. Within three months of relaxation of the COVID-19 lockdown, over 63 per cent of people in northern India are now willing to travel domestically said a survey by Confederation

of Indian Industries (CII). The lockdown has bothered one's mental and physical health hence Wellness resorts and destinations will be one of the enticed places for holiday that could be of preference to individuals. Some of the hotels/resorts have focused on delivering "Experiences & Discoveries" to customers which stands as a distinctive element. These

"Experiences & Discoveries" highlight the local culture, cuisine, flora, fauna & folklore of the destination.

### **How will the hospitality sector bounce back post-COVID-19?**

There's an opportunity hidden in every crisis. This pandemic has been a learning time for several businesses, especially for the Hospitality industry where businesses are now required to modify their vigour towards flexibility and adaptability while facing the situation. After these times, focus will be on sanitisation and transparency from brands; hence "farm to table" concept will see a significant rise. Businesses have to relearn and un-learn various things that they've been traditionally following. A new surge of contact-less services which will include digital transactions, digitally ordering from menu, and digital code instead of physical room keys is expected to be seen to create a sense of confidence in the minds of customers as well as workers. Open lawns, pre-function areas and spacious conference room to host MICE or large group functions will be favoured as they provide a natural opportunity to conduct activities with social distancing.

Domestic tourism and local demand will rise, making India be stronger and more powerful than before. The human nature to travel, to explore, to discover new places and things will not let him confined to one place but there won't be any unplanned travelling for sure. It's a matter of time, the industry will experience a positive change once all activities recommence on track.

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