Conference Report: 11th India International Hotel Travel & Tourism Research Conference “Re-Strategizing Hospitality & Tourism: Through Food, Facilities & Films” February 25th – 27th, 2021

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The 11\textsuperscript{th} India International Hotel Travel and Tourism Research Conference added a significant milestone in the evolution of Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology. Due to the unprecedented times of COVID-19 crisis the Institute took the opportunity and organized the 11\textsuperscript{th} edition of the conference virtually during 25\textsuperscript{th}-27\textsuperscript{th}, February 2021 focusing on the theme “Re-Strategizing Hospitality & Tourism: Through Food, Facilities & Films. Dr. Arvind K. Saraswati, Convener welcomed the delegates from twelve countries and across the three continents and the event was declared open by the Prof. R. K. Bhandari, President, IIHTTRC. He welcomed honorable Chief Guest Shri S.K. Misra (I.A.S.), Former Principal Secretary to the Hon’ble Prime Minister (India) and felicitated him with the Lifetime Achievement award for his outstanding contribution in Hospitality & Tourism Industry. Prof. Bhandari in his speech advocated the significant value, the research insights and thought leadership to the hospitality and tourism industry emergent from this innovative conference. The annual refereed Hospitality & Tourism Research Journal – “Indian Journal of Applied Hospitality & Tourism Research”, Vol. 13, (ISSN 0975- 4954), indexed in ISI, ISRA was released during the inauguration ceremony.

Shri S.K. Misra in his speech talked about the immense scope for developing rural and community based tourism in the country. He highlighted that even though dark clouds
had gathered in the form of the pandemic, each challenge could be converted into an opportunity just like every cloud had a silver lining. He also encouraged the promotion of rural tourism through apt intervention of government in respect to integrated planning and development of basic infrastructural facilities while coordinating with various agencies. He concluded by accentuating the requirement of management strategies for the promotion of world heritage sites and laid emphasis on the Public-private partnership in this regards.

Prof. Cihan Cobanoglu from University of South Florida in his keynote speech on “The Role of Technology on Post COVID-19 Tourism World”, defined the era of tourism as “3.C” where C depicts Confidence. Dr. Cihan discussed the importance of confidence building among travelers in post Covid Scenario. He presented various examples through which airlines, hotels, restaurants are trying to inculcate the feeling of being safe and secure amongst travelers in this pandemic time. He informed the use of air filters by airlines, thermal cameras and walk through health detectors used by hotels for guests along with flexi glass to provide a physical block, zapping germs by robotic technology used by event hotels, smart payment systems, as technological advancement introduced in the hospitality & tourism sector.

First Technical Session was held on the theme Re-designing Sustainable Development through “Vocal for Local” which was chaired by Dr. S.K Singh, COO, Amrapali Group of Institutions. Researcher and academicians shared their valuable contribution pertaining to the theme of the session.

Panel discussion on ‘Re-strategizing Tourism & Hospitality Facilities for the New Normal’ was organized on the very first day comprising of eminent panel members: Prof. Sudhir Andrews, Distinguished Professor, Thoughtful Leader & Author, India; Dr. Jenny Cave, Associate Professor, Swansea University, UK; Dr. Ali Afshar, Professor-Architectural Studies Eqbal Lahoori Institute of Higher Education, Iran; Dr. Enrico Panai, President, Euro Asia Tourism Studies Association, France; Dr. Yanki Hartijasti, Department of Management-Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas, Indonesia, which was moderated by Dr. Paramita Suklabaidya, Associate Professor, SOTHSM, IGNOU, India. The panel unanimously agreed for training and equipping local community, as well updating domestic destinations according to the expectations of domestic tourists in
order to re-strategize tourism and hospitality facilities as per the new normal requirements. It was in the discussion that one has to learn from past errors, and have to always be curious and creative in thinking, whilst being ready to adapt with a bigger vision of getting benefits from the previous experiences. The new normal strategies not only emphasize on or around people, but must also reuse, reinvent and reinitiate facilities and facility providers. Startups in the form of new-projects, having an entrepreneurial mindset, outsourcing services, promoting remote-tourism, enrich the existing structures, focusing on doing better and emphasizing on health-security were few of the outcomes of the discussion. Panel members also advocated that industry in collaboration with academicians and media can lead to the gradual development of remote as well as urban tourism in the country as well at the global level.

Day two of the conference commenced with the keynote speech of Dr. Yanki Hartijasti from Universitas, Indonesia on “Tourism Amenities: Reviving Your Strategies in the New Normal”. She discussed a brief review on impact of Covid-19 pandemic on tourism industry in Indonesia. She stressed upon different amenities required to incorporate in the New Normal era, and acknowledged it as the need in behavior change. Amenities highlighted by Dr. Hartijasti in her speech were related to airlines, railways, highways, ferry, car and bus rental and theme parks in Indonesia. She emphasized on prioritizing domestic tourism, and following strict health protocols at all times. Also, she advocated the need of strong leadership to enforce control mechanism, provide commitment to collaborate with all stake holders and willingness to utilize digital technology at its par. She stressed upon being positive, staying productive and above all keeping oneself away from pandemic fatigue.

Another keynote speech of the day was delivered by Dr. Saurabh Kumar Dixit from North-Eastern Hill University, India. He emphasized upon the Role of Food in Promoting Tourism & Hospitality during & Post-COVID. In his speech, he explained the importance of food as a key factor in the promotion of tourism opportunities for a destination. Dr. Saurabh highlighted that food is having a close connection with the natural and cultural traditions and it can be used as a means for marketing as well as promoting the local and indigenous culture of a destination. Incorporating food tourism products, motivators, dining preferences of tourists and through sustainable food tourism, a
destination along with other attributes can be established as a remarkable food tourism destination.

Deliberations were made by researcher and academician during second Technical Sessions on ‘Re-strategizing Food & Food Service Businesses”, which was chaired by Dr. R.P.S. Kaurav. It was followed by third Technical Session focused upon “Re-defining Hospitality Education & Human Resource Relations”. This session was chaired by Dr. Nikhil Monga, LP University and views on human resource relations and hospitality education were shared and discussed in purview of the new normal.

Keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Enrico Panai, President EATSA on the third day of the conference on “Emerging Ethical Problems of AI in Tourism: How Independent Auditing can help to Reinforce Trust?” Dr. Panai highlighted that artificial intelligence can help finding the best path to succeed in a task and can help shape our Imaginary tourism experience. He also stressed upon the risks associated with AI namely the imaginary tourist bubble and tourism destination radicalization. He revealed that future tourism practices should use ethics to reduce reinforcement bias. Entering a new era of ethical development requires a lot of effort from the market to build better industrial awareness was his conclusive statement.

Dr. Eugeni Osacar, University of Barcelona presented another keynote speech focused on “Film Tourism as key factor for Destination Promotion”. Dr. Osacar specified that film tourism is a powerful modality that destinations have to highlight for their differentiation and visibility. From the marketing perspectives films can be used as a unique communication to promote a destination by depicting value based messages for the targeted audience. Film tourism should be used as a key factor for enhancing the tourism image, creating the film tourism offer and creating new segments while stimulating and motivating people to travel to a place. Promotional activities using film tourism will help in reinforcing the brand destination and help in stimulating the revival of tourism post the pandemic.

Third day of the Conference witnessed an interesting Panel discussion focusing on “The Role of Films in Promoting Tourism & Hospitality Industry during and Post Covid-19. The eminent panelists in the discussion comprised of Ms. Spomenka, Director, Zagreb Tourism Tourism Film Festival, Croatia; Ms Nadia Oliveria, Director EATSA ART &
Tourism Film Festival, Portugal, Dr. Eugeni Osacar, Professor, University of Barcelona and Prof. Tsuyoshi Kigawa, Director Japan Tourism, Festival which was moderated by Mr. Rao Narender Yadav, Director, Woodpecker International Film Festival, India. The panel members agreed that safety is going to be the most important factor during the revival of hospitality and tourism industry and films can be used as a means for recovering tourism through building an emotional connect with the people to promote travel. Film based events and film festivals should be used for promoting destinations and reaching out to tourists showcasing their strategies of promoting sustainable tourism post the pandemic.

Panel Discussion was followed by fourth Technical Session of the conference on “Re-assessing Hospitality & Tourism Consumers and Marketing Strategies”, which was chaired by Dr. Subhashish Aditya Mishra, CT University. Deliberations were made by researcher and academician amidst the theme of the session. Conference was concluded with the closure report presented by Prof. R.K. Bhandari, President and vote of thanks extended by Dr. Arvind Kumar Saraswati, Convener of the conference.

Notes
No notes.

Cite this article

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