

Comfort Times

by ISPF

Strengthening
your brand
with
new-age
marketing
strategies



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Manufacturing

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perspective to mattress
industry



Our Creations

*Our in house designers develop personalized designs daily to our customer's needs.
An extensive library of more than 300 000 designs is readily
available to browse together with the customer.*



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What, Why and How of Online marketing strategy

Online marketing is so complex that marketers struggle with where to begin and how to navigate. It takes some time for true mastery over online marketing. Most marketers feel that creating a digital marketing strategy is not easy. In this edition, we try to share practical suggestions that can help solve few painpoints for the marketers in their digital efforts.

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FROM THE EDITOR



During difficult times, our mind is usually disturbed, and our intelligence confused. Let us keep our thoughts positive, be hopeful. Hope can nourish, sustain, and inspire us to grow even in challenging circumstances.

As second wave of COVID-19 sweeping India, we are in uncharted waters, yet mattress industry must take decisive action to ensure their organizations are resilient.

The pandemic may cause long-term economic impact. It is expected that this pandemic will significantly affect extant social behaviours, spending patterns, travel habits, supply-chains, country interdependence, and service delivery models, with consequential impacts on lifestyles, markets and the global economy.

A KPMG report suggests that organisations should use this as an opportunity to reflect on the ability to navigate a crisis and, going forward, consider actions to increase agility and become more resilient in the future. KPMG foresees seven ways in which the business landscape is likely to evolve in the days to come.

1. There will be shift towards localisation
2. Digital will get a real push
3. Cash is king for businesses
4. Businesses will move towards variable cost models
5. Sensing and control capabilities will receive attention
6. Supply chain resilience will become a central consideration
7. Business will look to become more agile

Speed, agility, and innovation are required from businesses in crafting responses to cope with this evolving new normal. Hence, our editorial team decided to bring you this edition which focuses on Marketing. We feel now is the time for marketing planning. Industry needs flexible and scalable marketing plan with a tone of voice to fit more cautious consumer. Indian Mattress Industry is no stranger to crisis management, but uncertainty around COVID-19 is a first for all of us. Many global companies have responded with meaningful marketing messages during this pandemic with a message to bring in belief among the consumers that we will get through this crisis and move forward together.

As HBR puts it, we are in the acknowledge-and-adapt phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. But we also must plan for life beyond the crisis. As we navigate what we know, marketing leaders must work externally to keep their brands and customer journeys as whole as possible, while working internally to do three things:

- Understand the impact of business interruption and continue to triage the unexpected.
- Lean into digital ways of working and connecting with customers, knowing that this will likely have lasting effects.
- Mitigate risks to the customer experience by thinking realistically from the outside-in.

The mattress industry has always known tides, fluctuating business. Today, it is much more than just a low tide. But let us hope that sufferings of people end and the future brings in a smile for everyone.



INDIAN SLEEP PRODUCTS FEDERATION

MANAGING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sheela Foam Limited



Centuary Fibre Plates Pvt. Limited



Kurlon Enterprise Limited



Tirupati Foam Limited



Duroflex Pvt. Limited



Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co. Ltd.



Sobha Limited



M. M. Rubber Company Limited



Real Innerspring Technologies Pvt. Ltd.



Nilkamal Limited





SERVICE

INNOVATION

CONSUMER
EXPERIENCE

ISPF **VISION**

- ▶ To promote the sleep products industry by enhancing consumer awareness on quality sleep, while setting benchmarks for its products and services.
- ▶ To represent the industry with a commitment to the society and the environment.



Peps to open 20 Great Sleep Stores in Telangana

Peps Industries plans to open 20 exclusive 'Great Sleep Stores' in Telangana in this year to meet the growing demand for quality sleeping solutions in the region. This is in addition to the existing 11 stores already present in the region and operating in a franchise holding industry.

K Madhavan, Founder of Peps Industries, said: "Telangana is a large market for Peps products with a major contribution to Peps' current market in the mattress category. The expansion and opening of these exclusive Great Sleep Stores across the country will help us realize our vision and strengthen the brand position as that of the DreamMaker. Peps is the only Indian company to have a licensing agreement with Restonic Corporation, one of the largest mattress companies in the world. As of date, the total number of Great Sleep Stores operated by Peps is 80, which it plans to increase to 160 stores at the end of the fiscal year. The stores feature a complete, first-class branding experience for consumers and it features all the best products over the price points that enable the consumer to touch the mattress and accessories that touch a complete bedroom decoration.

Shree Malani Foams Wins the Star Export House Award by Commerce Ministry

Shree Malani Foams Pvt. Ltd. won the coveted 'Star Export House' award from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The certification is valid for 5 years between 2021 to 2026.

With this notable development, Shree Malani Foams Pvt. Ltd. has emerged as the first and only mattress and mattress components company to be awarded this honour in the past 5 years.

Speaking on the recognition, Siddharth Malani, Managing Director, Shree

Malani Foams Pvt. Ltd., said, "Shree Malani Foams has been setting new, innovation-led benchmarks in the comfort & bedding industry by partnering with international furniture and retail brands for global supplies.

We are honoured to receive this prestigious recognition from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and will continue to build on our offerings to deliver exceptional value to our global consumer base."

Duroflex launches Sounds of Sleep, a unique digital music series as a sleep aid

Duroflex launches new music series Sound of Sleep which aims to revive, celebrate, and recreate India's rich tradition of regional lullabies in a digitally convenient way. Aimed at new-age parents who are looking to inculcate healthy pre-sleep routines for their kids, the six-episode series is hosted by actor Kalki Koechlin. It features popular singers like Monali Thakur, Shilpa Rao, Chinmayi Sripada, Sanah Moidutty, Shalmili Kholgade and Geetha Madhuri.

The first episode of the series was released on World Sleep Day on March

19. Speaking about the theme of the series, Smita Murarka, Vice President, Marketing & E-Commerce for Duroflex said, "Our earliest memory of sleep music are the lullabies that our parents or grandparents used to sing and rock us to sleep. Even as an adult, music is a great way to relax the mind and body making it an enriching pre-sleep routine. As India's sleep coach, we wanted to go back to our roots, celebrating this sleep routine tradition from various parts of India and curate it digitally for the convenience of new age millennial parents."



Casper Launches New Cooling Collection with Innovative Mattresses Featuring Snow Technology

Casper Sleep Inc., unveiled the Casper Cooling Collection – a new line of innovative cooling products designed to minimize night time overheating. Research from Casper Labs determined that temperature is the most important variable of achieving a quality night's sleep, with 64 percent of those surveyed reporting overheating or sweating as their most common temperature problem when sleeping. The Casper Cooling Collection was developed in-house with proprietary technology to directly combat this widespread problem and provide tangible solutions to help people achieve a cooler, more comfortable and restful sleep.

Philip Krim, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Casper said, "Our new collection, helmed by our innovative mattresses with proprietary Snow Technology, provides unparalleled offerings for a large segment of consumers. We're thrilled to present our latest product expansion, backed by rigorous research, testing, and strategic design, to bring better sleep to all." The full suite of cooling products

includes new mattresses with Snow Technology, Hyperlite Sheets, Lightweight Duvets, and a Breathable Mattress Protector. The Casper Wave Hybrid Snow Mattress and the Casper Nova Hybrid Snow Mattress are designed with innovative features that pull heat away from underneath the body. Combined with breathable Airscape foam layers, sleepers will stay cool and comfortable from bedtime through morning. The addition of our proprietary Snow Technology provides the same comfort as our existing mattresses, but offers an overall 6 degree cooler sleep made possible by HeatDelete Bands that remove 34 percent more heat for 12+ hours of cooler sleep when compared to the Casper Wave Hybrid. The QuickCool Cover at the top layer of the mattress delivers an added 24 percent cooler to the touch feeling upon climbing in bed compared to the Casper Wave Hybrid Mattress. After undergoing 150 tests at Casper Labs, this proprietary, four-pronged superior cooling system provides sustained temperature regulation throughout the night.



Global Sleeping Mattress Market to reach \$39.9 billion by 2027: Allied Market Research

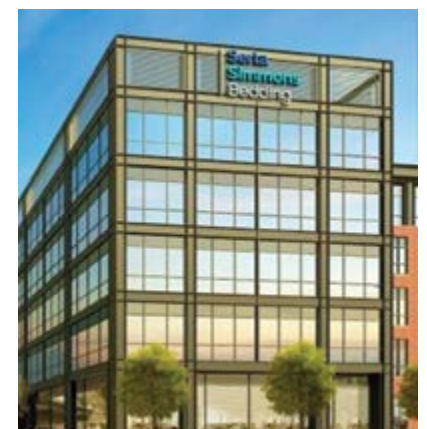
According to the report published by Allied Market Research, the global sleeping mattress market generated \$33.2 billion in 2019, and is projected to reach \$39.9 billion by 2027, witnessing a CAGR of 5.2 percent from 2021 to 2027. The report offers a detailed analysis of changing market trends, top segments, value chain, key investment pockets, regional landscape, and competitive scenario. Rapid urbanization and expansion

of the hospitality industry, rise in prevalence of back and posture-related concerns, and ongoing innovations drive the growth of the global sleeping mattress market. However, surge in prevalence of bed allergies and availability of counterfeit products hinder the market growth. On the other hand, recycling activities of mattresses and health monitoring through sleeping mattresses present new opportunities in the coming years.

Serta Simmons Bedding Elevates Two Key Leaders,

Serta Simmons Bedding, LLC, one of North America's largest sleep companies, recently announced organizational enhancements, including changes to its leadership team, as part of its transformation and growth strategy. Most notably, Melanie Huet (formerly Chief Marketing Officer and EVP of Marketing and Innovation) will take on the role of Chief Commercial Officer for SSB, and Shelley Huff (formerly CEO of Tuft & Needle, EVP of Direct to Consumer) will become SSB's Chief Operating Officer. Huet and Huff will maintain their former titles of Chief Marketing Officer and CEO of Tuft & Needle, respectively, continue to serve on the company's executive leadership team, and report to SSB Chairman and CEO David Swift.

"We are relentless in our pursuit of helping people sleep better through consumer-inspired innovation, a digital-first mindset, our commitment to exceptional service and an outstanding team who always strives to set the bar higher," said David Swift, Chairman and CEO of Serta Simmons Bedding. "Both Melanie and Shelley have made a tremendous impact on our business in their time with the company. I look forward to partnering with them as we continue in that pursuit and accelerate our strategy for growth."



COVID IS BACK

How the mattress industry will fight its second battle?

Every crisis brings new opportunities as well. Is the Indian Mattress Industry ready to take it?



The economic impact of the Covid-19 second wave has started taking a toll on many sectors in India. The mattress industry, which depends on institutional sales apart from Retail sales, is likely to see the hardest of times. Sectors such as Hospitality and Real Estate are looking at downward trends – and this is likely to affect mattress sales in India. Lockdowns on various states has contributed to decrease in retail sales of mattress.

The hospitality sector, which is interlinked to the tourism sector, faced a massive struggle during the first wave of the pandemic. The situation during the second wave is slowly turning grim as restrictions continue to rise. Similarly, Real estate and construction sector activity has started facing disruption during the second wave, as a large number of migrant workers have left urban areas.

A study by Journal of Health Management-'Effect of COVID-19 on Economy in India: Some Reflections for Policy and Programme' focus on assessing the impact on affected


sectors. The study points out that the pandemic will affect the manufacturing and the services sector—hospitality, tours and travels, healthcare, retail, banks, hotels, real estate, education, health, IT, recreation, media and others. "The economic stress has started and will grow rapidly. While lockdown and social distancing result in productivity loss on the one hand, they cause a sharp decline in demand for goods and services by the consumers in the market on the other, thus leading to a collapse in economic activity. However, lockdown and social distancing are the only cost-effective tools available to prevent the spread of COVID-19", says report.

The tourism industry is the worst affected due to the COVID crisis. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2020) estimations depict a fall of 20–30 percent in international tourist arrivals to India. This is a bad news for the mattress industry.

The Indian retail industry which accounts for over 10 percent of the country's GDP and around 8 percent of employment is also likely to contribute to lower sales of mattress. In the retail

sector, the suppressed demand has a tendency to revive very fast and this will enable the sector to recover the losses in short time once COVID-19 situation improves and the lockdown is lifted in various parts of India. However online retail is operational and this will help in offsetting some of the losses for the mattress industry.

The International Labour Organization in its report describes the coronavirus pandemic as 'the worst global crisis since World War II'. About 400 million people (76.2 percent of the total workforce) working in the informal economy in India are at a risk of falling deeper into poverty due to catastrophic consequences of the virus. According to the survey, majority of these workforce, who are migrants from rural India who come to seek employment, are going back to their villages. This is going to affect the construction sector. Indian Mattress Industry needs to rethink on its developmental paradigm. Industry should force India government to provide greater support to SMEs in Mattress industry and bring in reforms in labour laws. Improvements in labour laws will help manufacturing businesses grow and lead to creation of jobs.

The study indicates that the risk of a global recession due to COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 would be extremely high, as it has been observed globally that the shutdown of all economic activities—production, consumption and trade—to control the spread of COVID-19 is imminent. "The nature of shutdown is unique in case of COVID-19 due to a supply shock, a demand shock and a market shock. The recovery in economy depends on the timing and magnitude of government support as well as the level of corporate debt and how the companies and markets cope up with lower demand. However, every crisis brings about a unique opportunity to rethink on the path undertaken for the development of a human being, community and society. The COVID-19 pandemic has a clear message for the Indian economy to adopt sustainable developmental models, which are based on self-reliance, inclusive frameworks and are environment friendly." 

What, Why and How of Online marketing strategy

Online marketing is so complex that marketers struggle with where to begin and how to navigate. It takes some time for true mastery over online marketing. Most marketers feel that creating a digital marketing strategy is not easy. In this edition, we try to share practical suggestions that can help solve few painpoints for the marketers in their digital efforts.



How to increase sales with Digital Marketing

Increasing revenue can be done in many ways digitally. Shopping, paid search, display, and retargeting are the most widely used form of pay per click (PPC) or cost per click (CPC) advertising techniques. SEO, content marketing, and social are crucial for getting more traffic on your pages of people looking for offerings.



These days the question whether a business should market online is never asked. It is implicitly understood that a business which is not actively marketing and selling online is a business on its way down. What the entire Internet industry was hoping for, for the past two decades where all the business transactions would take place in cyberspace is actually coming true. In terms of coverage, we are halfway there.

The mattress industry has perhaps found a big trend in online marketing especially in these pandemic times. When “Internet first” mattress companies came onto the scene there was both a sense of disbelief and a sense of self-denial which was prevalent in the industry with respect to the success rate of these companies. However, the new-age mattress manufacturers have done well and in a way have shown others, the traditional retailers, to follow suit.

Practical Guide

When it comes to marketing online there are numerous opinions readily forwarded by overzealous digital marketing consultants and agencies. In this article we try to bring you a realistic guide which is practical, implementable and measurable for your business.

“We sold our products entirely on online channels especially on Amazon and we have seen tremendous response to our products,” says Pallav, a mattress accessories seller in Bhubaneshwar. We asked people like Pallav and Amit Chand who runs a mattress store in Indore on how they embraced online marketing. And the collected experiences of retailers in other industries closer to mattress industry such as clothing stores, interiors decorators, cotton fabric makers, sofa and furniture fabric makers and the likes. There has been an unanimous opinion that people should approach online marketing in a systematic way. Our readers may be already quite advanced in their online marketing journey and keeping that in mind we said that we will focus on some of the key strategies one can adapt, the road blocks one faces and how to



Courtesy: MarketingCharts.com

overcome these roadblocks.

Website: Any retail business which wants to be successful in online marketing should have a web presence — that is a first and foremost necessity. They can go for a simple HTML5 Single Page Web Application with their product catalog and a contact form for visitors to reach them without fuss. The very first step in online marketing is to attract people on to your website and get them to fill the form or call you on a number that you publish in your web page.

A question may be asked at this point saying: why is it necessary to have a web page when I can run my business using a WhatsApp business account? To answer this question, we have to understand the psychology of a mattress buyer. A mattress buyer will not look for a WhatsApp channel or your business on WhatsApp because he just cannot discover it that way. The first thing a mattress buyer will do is to go to a search engine like Google predominantly or Bing very rarely and search for mattress brands that she/he can buy or mattress stores near to her/him. When she searches using these keywords it is essential that your page comes up on at least first or second pages. A word of caution here, many marketing consultants and digital marketing agencies approach retailers promising the sky that is telling them that they can get them listed in the first page of Google when people search for certain keywords. Believe us, nobody not even Google, unless you take a paid ad, can guarantee you this. We will

For Indian mattress industry, it's time to amplify digital presence. Today's consumers were already making most purchasing decisions online before the pandemic, but now during COVID-19 lockdown, people rarely leave the house – which means that they prefer to shop online. It is a good reason to be online.

tackle this while we're talking about Search Engine Optimization later.

Web Optimization: Once the web presence is established and the web page has been filled with relevant content one has to look at optimizing the web page for certain keywords. This is to help people who are searching for, say, mattress accessories, pillows, bed covers, bed sheets and the likes to land up on your web page. Remember there will be hundreds of other mattress retailers like you who would be doing the same thing and you will be competing

against all of them. It depends on how creative you would be in optimizing your page with the right keywords so that people will land up on your page rather than on the pages of other players. This is called Search Engine Optimization.

SEO: There is more to Search Engine Optimization than using the right keywords. Google, which we will mostly talk about, uses more than 200 parameters to rank web pages based on the relevance of search. It is in our hands to make Google find our web page more relevant and in doing so we have only a handful of parameters to control. One is the content which is the most important factor. Unless your content is relevant to the search even if you use the right keywords but the content is not in the right context, Google will not throw up your page to the searcher. That means your content and your keywords have to be in the right context. What does that mean? Let's say people search for Virat Kohli a lot and if you decide to optimize your mattress retail store page for Virat Kohli as a keyword would it not be a great idea? It turns out that it is not. Virat Kohli as a keyword is not relevant to a mattress retail store and Google seeing this will immediately rank your page lower than the others. This simple case study shows that just by stuffing interesting keywords that people may be searching for on your web page will not bring up your web page on top. While talking about content we should also know that the content has to be original i.e. it should not be copied from anywhere which Google can trace back and immediately penalize your page by ranking it lower. Your content should be free of grammatical and spelling errors. If you're using pictures they should be relevant and have the right alt-tags to tell Google search engine about the picture.

The speed of your webpage is another factor that Google looks for in ranking your web page higher. If your web page takes more than 10 seconds to load, for example, Google may rank it lower than your competitor which may be loading faster. There are many reasons for a slow loading webpage and one of the most common problem, that



Courtesy: <https://wearesocial.com/>

we see is the size of the images on the page and the number of images on the page which increases the page size and adds to the page-loading time. So the moral of the story is your page should have web optimized images and not be stuffed with too many of them. As stated earlier, take care to have alt-tags for your images.

These days Google also looks at mobile-friendly web pages. If your web page is not mobile friendly then Google may rank it lower. Many companies take advantage of a Google sponsored project called AMP pages which renders mobile web pages and it's faster to load. But remember it is not necessary and you can live with normal responsive web pages.

There are a number of other technical parameters that Google looks out for and some of them are:

- Have a Canonical link to your web page. This instructs Google to fall back on a standard URL to reach your web page.
- Have well-formed HTML and XHTML tags
- Do not use deprecated tags for example the blink tag which makes a text to blink
- Add alt text to your images
- Structure your content in a neat hierarchy starting from H1 tag is to H2 and so on in terms of headlines
- Make your web page URL SSL-enabled which can be accessed using

Types of digital marketing are Search engine optimization, Content marketing, Social media marketing, Pay-per-click marketing, Affiliate marketing, Native advertising, and Email marketing

HTTPS protocol

- Keep your image size web-optimized and in kilobytes
- Do not have hidden content in order to mislead the search engine
- Have the right Robot.txt file in your root folder

These are only a handful of things that can be easily fixed by a web developer and enough for a good SEO. The combination of a web presence which is search engine-optimized and a well-designed contact form is a wonderful tool for a new or an established online marketing. The contact form is important in order to have your visitors contact you. There is a tendency among new online marketers to add more than one contact form or what we call as call-to-action links. There should be only one contact form and that should have only one call to action link. Taking

another view, if you have a contact form you should not have another call to action link. The contact form itself will have a call to action link in the form of a submit button. Then what is this call to action link referring to? Imagine you have a web page and you have a contact form for people to contact you but then you also have a link which will take the visitor away from this page and to your image Gallery or to your product catalog. This actually disturbs the focus and attention of the visitor and instead of filling the form and hitting the submit button she may, 90 percent of the time, move away from the page never to come back again.

Having potential buyers discover your retail store is one of the best ways to make your online marketing a success. Every time a potential buyer is searching for a mattress if your page is somewhere in the first page or second page there is more likelihood that he or she will visit your page. When you start off on this journey you will most certainly not be on the first page or the second page or even on the 10th page but by consistently updating your web page with the right content and taking time to do so you will increase your probability of moving higher up in the search engine results pages. Patience is a virtue in this game.

Google Adwords

For those of you who cannot wait you can take paid Google ads. Most searchers these days can easily identify a paid ad from an organic search. But in the marketing world it is said that any visibility is good visibility and if you can afford to spend money on Google ads, earlier it was known as adwords, you should do it.

Some of the things you should take care while running your Google ads:

- Identify your landing page which can be your homepage or your product page with a clear call-to-action
- The ads that you are going to run on Google will lead the visitor back to this page hence ensure that you are giving the right content in an attractive style motivating the visitor

Protect your loved ones also while they sleep.



Your mattress attracts all kinds of germs. Effecting not just your health, but that of your loved ones too.

Thankfully, every Sleepwell product is treated with Neem Fresche Technology that protects you from -



Dust mites



Allergies



Breathing disorders

- to know more and to fill the form
- Use the Google keyboard planner tool to identify the right keywords to optimize your ads for
- Write your ad copy in a succinct, clear, concise language
- Set your campaign goal, whether it is Pay Per Million or Pay Per Click, we call it PPM or PPC
- Run your ad and watch the analytics and don't be in a hurry to judge the ad. Keep going back to your keyword planner and fine tuning the keywords that you will optimize your ads for

Very often, people who are on paid Google ads get disillusioned in the first week by not seeing enough conversions. The conversion could be in the form of a visit to the web page, filling up the contact form, or calling your number. Google ads improve your chances of conversion as time passes. Start with a low reasonable budget, be consistent, give it time and slowly ramp up the budget as you see conversion going up. Typically people fail to take advantage of the conversions by not following up and that is a business loss. If you are running an ad, you should have an eye on it on a daily basis.

Online marketing is not restricted to search engine marketing alone. These days mattress retailers are finding a lot of success on Instagram for instance. Instagram is a Facebook product and the advantage is that you can run the same ad in both Facebook and Instagram.

Social Media

In order to be active on Facebook and Instagram you should have your company page on these platforms. Getting traction on Facebook and Instagram requires a lot more involvement because these days due to the continuously upgraded privacy policies of Facebook your posts are not automatically broadcast to your followers or friends depending on their privacy settings. Facebook also requires you to pay to broadcast your post or page to a wider audience. For a mattress retail store, it is worth the time and money that you spend on Facebook and Instagram. Again, like in Google ads you should start small,

plan well, continuously monitor and tweak your campaigns to get the best results.

One of the common complaints that we hear from Facebook and Instagram advertisers is: I spent a lot but didn't get any conversions. This could well be the experience of a beginner. Without understanding your target audience, targeted reach, and the right messaging it is unlikely that you will get success in the very first campaign. Also remember that Facebook users are more interested in consuming good, informative, funny stories than looking at your sales pitch. So go back to your post and check if you are actually selling hard in those posts or writing something interesting which will pique the interest of the Facebook user forcing her to visit your web page.

More people than not that we interviewed were more bullish on Instagram rather than Facebook. In Instagram you post images only and not have links attached. But you if you have a good story to tell through images people will jump onto the browser and visit your page.

The next online marketing tool that we are going to talk about is the newsletter. We believe in newsletter as a great tool to reach people online, directly in their inboxes, where you can have their attention. The trouble with newsletters is that - more often than not they may end up in spam folders of people. Earlier it used to be hard to create newsletters but these days you have good tools that help you create newsletters on the go. If you broadcast good information, useful facts to your target audience then it may not end up in their spam or they may not unsubscribe from your newsletter.

The first time or the first few times that you send a newsletter there is all possibility that it will reach the spam folder. And studies have shown that by just using the right keywords or let's put it the other way by not using the wrong keywords newsletter do get delivered to the Primary Inbox. Spend a lot of time in crafting your subject line of the newsletter which most spam filters

check and compare against their block list of words; if they find even a single word matching their block list then it is sent to the spam folder directly. Good newsletter marketers spend quality time with the subject line and test the newsletter with a control group before sending it out to the wider audience.

In this article we have attempted to focus on three key online marketing tools, strategies to adopt, and pitfalls to avoid. We would be eager to know your experiences, we hope you will try the tips we have given and come back to us and tell us your success stories. **CT**

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Every aspect of your digital marketing campaign should reflect mobile considerations.
- Implementing strong organic search strategy will increase your website's visibility within the search engines and help drive more traffic to your website.
- Creating new and impactful content for your website creates business authority.
- Utilizing a variety of social media platforms creates new opportunities to interact and connect with potential customers.
- Digital marketing is not a quick-fix solution to gain momentum.
- Search engine optimization (SEO) or social media marketing (SMM) will take atleast few months start showing results
- Currently focus more on pay-per-click (PPC)



Online or Retail stores

Buying a Mattress Offline vs Online

Though ecommerce is growing faster than any other retail sector, the opportunity for brick-and-mortar retailers isn't extinct, just shifted.

Without much ado let us jump directly to the point. In a survey that we did on online buying preferences, an overwhelming majority of 55 percent have said that they are always looking out to buy mattresses online. We'll pause here for a second to look at this survey result as this flies in the face of common knowledge in the industry which is that consumers don't buy bulky, complex, pricier goods like a sleeping mattress online with an exception of mobile phones or laptop computers.

One respondent went on to say that we bought our first mattress five years back online and they will always buy a mattress online because that saves them time and energy and gives them better price choice. One of the biggest concerns people have buying online especially, goods like mattress, is whether, *"I get what I see."* Online buyers on Amazon, Flipkart and other branded online stores often get to see a catalog

of products and a zoom-in zoom-out feature providing a closer look at the fabric and its color. But what they miss out is the touch and feel of the product. *"The most important factors that make a good mattress are the support and comfort,"* says a respondent. The popular belief in the industry is consumers would like to buy electronic goods or other household items which has been negated by this survey.

"The advent of Internet-first mattress companies which offer better online shopping experiences have become extremely popular among consumers in the group of 25 to 40," says Bhagawan, a mattress retailer in Malleswaram in Bangalore. Internet mattress companies first made their mark in the U.S. market bringing in new concepts like easier returns, better unpacking experience for the customer. Companies like Casper introduced the unique packing technology which made it easier for mattress manufacturers



to ship mattresses to buyers' homes using regular parcel services like UPS and FedEx. In India companies followed suit but also went on to add physical experience stores for people to come in, sleep, and get that much needed experience. *"Mind it, they did not call their physical stores as a physical retail store but they called them sleep labs or sleep experience centers,"* says Bhagawan.

Online Buying Habits

Online buying has taken new dimensions where retailers are able to penetrate remote markets places beyond their local and neighbor markets. Today, a mattress retailer is able to sell a mattress to consumers and request the principle for fulfilling the order. *"We have head of companies in a larger city fulfilling orders in a smaller town but not the other way round and that is the power of online selling,"* says Keshav Sharma, head - IT in a supermarket in Mysore. This experience shows that selling online is not a single dimension approach but can take a hybrid model where people can walk into a store, choose the mattress they want, place an order online, make the payment online and get the mattress delivered home. In this model the need to visit a mattress store is also taken care and the experience is made totally zero-touch, a much-needed approach these days. *"Most of the buyers who walk into the store would be already informed about the brand, the price of each mattress, model and they would have made up their*

mind on the brand and model they want to buy, thanks to online marketplaces like Amazon and Flipkart," says Bhagawan.

Survey results - Highlights:

- **55 percent** of the people are willing to buy a mattress online
- **40 percent** of the respondents are willing to buy a mattress depending on the brand
- **70 percent** of the respondents buy from online marketplaces at least once a month
- **50 percent** of the respondents prefer online buying to in-store buying due to zero-touch experiences
- **20 percent** of the respondents have already bought a mattress online

Nuances of online buying

Now that the myths are behind us, it is important to understand a few nuances of online buying. The survey throws light here again. Out of the 20 percent respondents who have already bought a mattress online, a significant 3 percent said they may not prefer to buy online again because they found the product experience to be different from their expectations. This gives us a good insight into how to organize online marketplaces in alignment to customer expectation. *"One retailer that I know sells online, delivers the mattress to buyers and offers to take it back if they didn't like the experience within one month,"* says Bhagawan. *"And in that trial period the retailer closely follows up*

With Internet access now 'shop online' is the trend. The goal is not only to get the targeted audiences, but to keep them coming back. This can be accomplished through means such as offering good customer service, personalized experiences and quality products.

with the customer and ensures that he answers all the queries to the satisfaction of the customer and in turn returns reduce drastically."

The crux of the matter in online buying is *"experience"*. One of the little things we found that was coming in the way of online selling is this age old adage: goods once sold, are not returnable. While it had its place in another era, taking it too literally and the nature of online marketplace where direct human interface is absent makes it appear like a one way Street – and unacceptable to buyers. Once you sell a mattress to a buyer, especially online, it is essential for you to follow up through digital means or telephone calls to show that there is someone to turn to when in trouble - this is important for the customers. *"After sales communication in online sales is the most crucial part of customer satisfaction and retaining the customers,"* says Ram Samtani, a retailer in Bangalore.

Online sales are thought up as just another delivery model. Rather it is an entirely different experience model and the key stakeholder in this workflow is the customer. *"Online sales have opened up customer relationship management in completely new ways and most online players haven't understood this well enough. Those that have, like the big ones continue to grow consistently,"* says Jay Ram, an ERP and CRM consultant. Most



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The online marketing trend has opened up the new ways of customer interaction. A well thought-out workflow can identify the touch points at each stage of interaction to fulfill customer queries. The on line marketing trend is still growing in India

companies that we surveyed approached online sales just like any other sales outlet where customer interaction is handled by a single person doubling up as a help desk, troubleshooter, inquiry desk, order fulfillment desk, etc. It is essential to think through the entire process from, the factory floor or the warehouse, to the customer's home.

Companies looking to sell online should identify customer touchpoints at every stage throughout this workflow and assign capable teams to handle each stage. Special skills, knowledge and know-how required to fulfill customer queries at each state needs to be identified and those need to be imparted through trainings to the customer interaction teams. *"When we talk of online sales we're not talking of absence of human model rather online is just a convenience channel and it requires more investment in human resources trained to handle customer queries,"* says Arul Swami, a mattress supplier in Salem.

Online buying is still maturing in India. The pandemic may have speeded up the process where people go to online stores to buy. Only 30 percent of the respondents in our survey bought fashion accessories/clothing during the pandemic; otherwise the preferred choice was to walk into a store to buy these items. Likewise, a mattress is an experience product and people will still like to experience it before buying. *"We*

have these local mattress makers who go from household to household offering to make their mattress by breaking their old mattress and by using the old cotton or filling. We have to bring in a similar model with local mattress artisans who can go from household to household, place the order online using a mobile device, show them physical catalogs, measure their cots and beds to help the consumer visualize how the final mattress will lay on the cot and bring in all the elements that one looks at in an in-store experience when customers step in," says Bhagawan.

Mattress selling and Online

It was also interesting to find how online buying can be an effective way for mattress companies to upsell. Upselling accessories or a second mobile phone for a family member can be a good pointer for mattress industry. *"I've seen companies build a good online marketplace that brings up related products in a pop-up just before check-out or just as the potential customer is navigating away from the page,"* says Ram. "

Many times, this can be an exercise in futility. Bringing up related products without care and concern for the kind of product the customer has bought earlier or is interested in can actually mar the customer experience online." Our survey respondents did throw light on this fact. Very few companies were able to throw up good and relevant products in an unobtrusive way without enforcing a decision on consumers. *"We can achieve this in a hybrid online marketplace where the product selection and order-placing takes place online and local company representatives can visit the household for further customization,"* says Bhagawan.

Online sales are an implicit part of the future of retail sales. One has to understand the nuances of this new phenomenon and keep innovating on delivering better customer experiences. Buying online doesn't mean absence of human interfaces but it only means enhancing customer convenience. A Wordpress E-Commerce plugin or an online catalog will not make you an online marketplace. You should have the complete workflow optimized for online buying experience.

Own e-commerce Vs E-Commerce Platforms

Javed Ahmed, one of the leading merchant of Home décor products says that he prefers to sell his products on his own e-commerce platform rather than some of the established platforms like Amazon or Flipkart. He says there is a huge commission needs to be paid to these platforms on each sale. Also, he says they will pay the money only when the product is sold. Till that time, our product will be in their inventory.

Conclusion

Unhappy customers are the same liability for both online and offline sales. Customer service becomes paramount and it is not negotiable. More importantly, in both the channels human interactivity is important. Also, retailers need to find avenues for the improvement. **CT**

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Consumers are likely to buy familiar, branded items with known quality online
- New-to-market products that consumers need to see and feel in person will be sold mostly in retail stores
- Customers buy online because they expect choice, transparency, research prices, customer reviews and promotional offers
- When customers buy in person, they're willing to spend their time, money and effort for expected payoff
- Instant gratification was the key benefit to buying in person
- Buying online versus buying in person is different—but one isn't necessarily better, for consumers or merchants



Online reputation management: The fireworks that can burn

ORM is generally an extension of public relations which entails the maintenance of a brand's online presence through social monitoring and listening

Reputation is like Rome. It is never built in a day. But unfortunately, the power and ferocity of online voices are so ruthless that they can demolish this Rome within minutes. We have all seen how much damage trolls can do – irrespective of the size of the issue or the reality of the situation they are attacking. We have also seen how contagious such a damage can be. If the online medium has given brands a big armoury of ways to build attractive images, it has also left open a lot of chinks. Yes, you can converse with your customers, you can gather instant feedback, you can create excitement, you can generate campaign/product buzz – but you also run into many rough spots.

The last year was a case-study in itself. From the Black-Lives movement to the angst against brands selling fair complexion, we have seen umpteen examples of how brands cannot stay

away from what the customers think and talk- not anymore.

Because the truth is that one individual tweet or post can take just a few clicks before it goes viral. That makes today's brands extra cognizant to the need to respond to reputation attacks and criticisms. Because from gender-equality to body-shaming to racism to patriotism – anything and everything can rub the feathers of public sentiment the wrong way.

Take the case of an activist raising voice against Myntra's offensive-looking logo, where memes and tweets started bringing attention not just to Myntra's image but also to its parent companies Flipkart and Walmart.

Or the case of a Pepsi ad trying to piggyback on the Black Lives movement when supermodel Kendall Jenner held a Pepsi can and entered a protest. In

the ad she got a friendly nod from the cop just because she was carrying this can. The ad got YouTube onslaught just minutes after it went live.

Or the poorly-executed International Women's Day campaign of Burger King that wanted to encourage more female chefs. But its first tweet from Burger King UK that read "*women belong in the kitchen*" immediately got a flurry of social media criticism. And understandably so.

Mattress companies are no different than smartphones or fashion brands. What will you do if a customer tweets about a mattress that catches fire, or about a bad product design or a brand that does not stand up for people with certain health needs or does not include the other gender in its ads?

Will you sit back, hoping that the dust will settle soon? Will you take out

If we look at the mid global COVID-19 lock downs, Spotify, Netflix and Amazon came up as the biggest risers in ranking. They also outperformed other brands on three Brand Strength factors – Empathy, Agility and Affinity. Biggest Risers were: Amazon: 60 percent, Microsoft: 53 percent, Spotify: 52 percent, Netflix: 41 percent, Paypal: 38 percent. As per Interbrand's latest report, social media and communication brands -have fared exceptionally well if we look at the last year ladder. We saw Instagram (#19), YouTube (#30) and Zoom (#100) making their trails into the rankings for the first time

Source: Interbrand

swords and fight? Will you hire a crisis manager?

The answer would vary but the point is that you should start thinking about these questions way before the need emerges.

The Power- and Flip side – of Online Voices

Dr. Renuka Kamath, Professor of Marketing, S.P. Jain Institute of Management & Research underlines that gravity of online reputation these days. *"It is really high. It matters a lot, especially if the brand's TG shops mostly online. If the TG's engagement with social media is high, then brands have to manage their digital footprint extremely 'carefully'. I use the term 'carefully' since digital presence has to be managed. While it shows a comparatively low cost and high reach, it has a flip side too. Over doing it can lead to fatigue and any bad rating or comment can go viral in a jiffy."*

In a country with increasing internet penetration, online reputation holds the key for all the brands, reminds Neha Chandra, a PR Professional with ten years of work experience across varied sectors like Technology (both consumer and enterprise), Corporate, Startups, Marketing, Telecom, New Age Businesses, Entertainment.

The Importance of Online Reputation

Some key statistics...



Courtesy: www.ientrepreneur.co.in

There is no denying that digital consumerism has come a long way and has evolved way beyond expectations given the pandemic, reasons Shweta Sayankar, a PR veteran who has worked on various verticals from lifestyle, technology to automotives in India and the Middle East. *"It matured by leaps and bounds as the consumer became more cautious and smart about their spending. Having said that, it proves to be a boon to brands across sectors as they could reach their consumers directly. Even start-ups and smaller brands could reap its benefits."*

In the Deloitte 2020 Marketing trends Report, it is clear that many brands and marketers have recognised that to keep up with the competition, they need to evolve their approach. It has been stressed that brands need to create a dynamic two-way

engagement across all stages of the consumer journey and the product life cycle. This is where the customer participants can also become brand ambassadors, influencers, advocates, collaborators and even innovators. The Report highlights the significance of Virtual truthing (engaging consumers quickly and effectively to gain insights about emerging products and services in near real-time), communities (like Reddit groups, and brand loyalists with superfan pages)

For mattress players, there is an interesting example of Made Unboxed, a UK furniture retailer in the UK, that engages its customers through a dedicated social platform—Instagram. Here followers can upload personal photos on how they integrated Made Unboxed furniture into personal spaces. Others can like or offer inputs on these décor photos. The customers are not just fans here, but also service providers, advisors, trouble-shooters and educators.

Some brands are also using co-creation, where they build customer participation directly into the product development lifecycle or crowd-funding approaches, prototyping and collaborative platforms like Mindsumo. This helps to understand and integrate customer insights, voice and influence into different product design and development stages – as Deloitte

Case Study

A popular Hospitality chain launched an Online Relationship Management initiative to address lewd comments targeted towards women on its social media platforms. In order to fight against such people, the team from this Hospitality company schooled disrespectful users by politely customizing replies and positively reinforcing them to opt for compliments instead.

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In Forbes' recent reckoning, brands like Nintendo, Burger King, Hennessy and AXA, entered the list of ranking, while Philips, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Nissan and Kellogg's could not make it.

The biggest value percent gain from 2019 to 2020 was seen in: Netflix 72 percent, Chanel 42 percent, Amazon 40 percent, Microsoft 30 percent, Paypal 24 percent

The biggest value percent loss from 2019 to 2020 was spotted in: Facebook – 21 percent, Wells Fargo 16 percent, Mercedes-Benz -14 percent, Ford -14 percent, GE -14 percent

In terms of Total Value, the top 100 most valuable brands were worth \$2.54 trillion, up from \$2.33 trillion last year. The tech sector was dominant in rankings with 20 companies. It was followed by 14 in financial services, 11 in auto, and 8 in retail.

Source: Forbes' annual list of the World's Most Valuable Brands

highlights.

Interbrand's latest report gives a peek into the brands that shone and the brands that lost their sheen in the last 12 months. It also talks of how outrage has sparked movements that are driving radical change. This is felt on existential issues such as diversity, equity, inclusion and climate change.

The power of social media is raising crucial questions. Accelerated by exponential transformation and immediate propagation, radical change – ideas, movements, technologies, growth, habits – is simply happening at a speed and scale never seen before. As a result, what is relevant to us changes instantly and dramatically, and in ways that even the most forward-looking organisations can only partly predict or influence. People's expectations have never been more unstable and unforeseeable. Tells the report in its interpretation of possibilities.



Courtesy: www.webfx.com

This is the right way to go, specially if you are talking to and catering to new-age customers in some way. Insights from Luxe Analytics point out that Millennials will be the key luxury driver in India.

This generation will have a lot of discretionary spends and also high expectations from brand that can align luxury to reflect their individuality and meaningfulness instead of just a status-symbol.

Also, by 2030, India would touch 370 million Gen Z consumers between the ages 10-25 and hence, going digital is an imperative and not a menu-item. Plus, the value of online reviews and social media will rise even further as we see the inclination change from ownership to sharing economy in a lot of areas. PwC estimates have shown that the rental market will reach \$335 billion by 2025 globally with India's share at \$35 billion. That means that a mattress brand cannot discount the decibels and speed of the online world around them. These brands should embrace it and walk in rhythm with it. How?

Ride the Beast. Do not run from it

There is a nimbleness required by brands that in the past wasn't a critical demand, recommends Dr. Renuka Kamath, Professor of Marketing, S.P. Jain

Institute of Management & Research.

"Bigger and well-established brands have more at stake and are risk-prone. Smaller brands have less at stake and are nimble. Consumers can be very hard and demanding from an established brand. So it is more incumbent on the bigger brands to be more responsible and agile, since they certainly have more to lose." says Dr. Kamath.

Harish Bijoor Brand-Guru & Founder, Harish Bijoor Consults Inc. affirms that online reputation is very important. *"However this is a cluttered space. Rising above the clutter costs a humongous amount of money, as well as large dollop of creativity."*

Well, the power of online ire is quite formidable. That explains why Myntra took swift action and changed its logo which was appearing as disrespectful to women according to some people. Or why KFC took the humorous route and owned up with a witty apology.

The brand ran some messages explaining, and owning, the goof-up of short restaurant supplies and ran the image of an empty KFC bucket that spelled 'FCK'. That's some apology.

Nike did something similar when it faced online ire with #Justburnit and

#BoycottNike attacks. It issued an ad with instructions on how to burn something safely. It was tagged with the line 'Just do it safely.' It is a tough call to make – whether to react or not. The last few months have brought brickbats to brands and celebrities who chose to say silent on burning issues. Either way, one's response should be consistent and taken with a strategic eye.

Sometimes the no-engagement approach may work too. But if a brand can add speed and clarity to its responses, it can still mitigate the reputation that bleeds after an online zombie attack. That's why brands are spending so much on influencers, on digitally-niche campaigns and on social media management these days.

Whatever you do – whether you speak up or dial down or stay shut-up – everything will mean something. You will have to decide what – else the online world will derive that meaning for you.

Incidentally, the Interbrand report also adds that with an aggregate value of over 2 trillion dollars, brands are now a force of macroeconomic magnitude and, influence. That explains why their policies and actions have a far-reaching impact. So we need the world's most influential brands to lead from the future, setting a worthy purpose and a powerful ambition beyond turbulence and chaos.

"At times of crisis, brave leaders don't just commit to a worthy purpose; they inspire others to join them on a shared journey. Brands that thrive in an anxious world foster dialogue, invite co-operation and create a following. They do this through iconic moves that capture the imagination and solve unmet needs, as well as small acts that show vulnerability, gratitude and empathy. Encapsulating and anticipating the zeitgeist, great brands lift us from indifference and make our choices meaningful. They count us as constituents, not just consumers. They become anchor points at times of volatility, sparking desire, delivering utility and building trust." Interbrand's

experts translate the writing on the wall very well.

So mattress brands should capture the weight and speed of the online winds in a way that that it helps them move forward. It would need a prudent mix of digital strategy, resources, creative

messages, influencers, smart advocacy and the ability to pre-empt mistakes before they blow out of proportion.

Rome cannot be rebuilt in a day, but every brick counts. Whether it is coming towards you, or whether you use it on the wall. **CT**

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Some Ways To Guard and Enhance Online Reputation

1. Do not succumb to knee-jerk reactions. React fast when you have to but have a template of strategic guideline and posture to help your teams during such situations. Stay consistent to core brand values and reputation
2. Choose your battles. You do not need to indulge every lazy troll out there. But if the breeze looks like capable of turning into a storm – have proactive PR and crisis-management experts and tools ready
3. Maintain constant dialogue with customers – specially those who react on bad service or product dissatisfaction. A lot of these viral anger-noise can be nipped in the bud by offering timely attention and remedial action
4. Match the strength and creativity of angry tweeters with an equally-creative and fun response. Deflect the anger towards an entertaining response
5. Communicate and share information when the issue involves customer safety in any form
6. Choose the right spokesperson and message, along with the tone and medium of the message. Sometimes a press release works and sometimes the founder or a CXO's human face with the right tweet would be better
7. Acknowledge the issue if it is really serious. Apologise, be transparent and show genuine efforts in taking corrective action and finding out what went wrong
8. Invest in social media experts, platforms, advocates and expertise on regular basis. You cannot ramp up this army overnight when you need them
9. If you are true, a little lucky and have a smart PR team to help you, you may actually leverage an attack to your advantage. Just like Taco Bell did when it thanked a lawyer for suing it for ingredient-related issues. It used this chance to promote its brand's strengths and rise up against competitors. It even used the incident when people started searching Google with its name – by using the right SEO campaigns and advertisements to pull customers towards its side of the story, hence, bolstering its reputation
10. Have a constant level of preparedness and awareness. It is not the newspaper and TV world anymore. A small line can become a full-blown out crisis in a few minutes. So pre-digital era strategies and tools to solve a PR incident will not work anymore. Have agile protocols, statements and monitoring tools ready all the time
11. But before everything else, chew what you say – through your messages, tweets, posts, advertisements and product instruction manuals. Everything counts. Have a rigorous approval process so that nothing wrong or insensitive is said in the first place

BRANDING

New clothes or a new person

The efforts and investments that are put in branding initiatives assume serious contours when the product in question is a new one or a high-involvement one. So how does that work for mattresses?

Since the ages of cave paintings to the modern-day Virtual Reality Billboards, marketers have always ensured that their messages stand out. Branding is that special wrapping on a product that gives it speed, distinction and a special parking spot in the consumer mind-space.

This acceleration can get even more profound when the product is in its launch stages. Similarly, in a challenging time when demand is low and when spending is constrained – like what we saw during the Covid phase- the importance of right branding gets underlined. And that applies with a new gravity for mattress products. Because on one hand, general consumer spending has been stunted due to the impact of the pandemic, but on the other hand, people are spending more time and attention on two aspects – health and home. Incidentally, both apply closely to a mattress brand. So what should mattress brands be listening to as they chart their strategies and campaigns?



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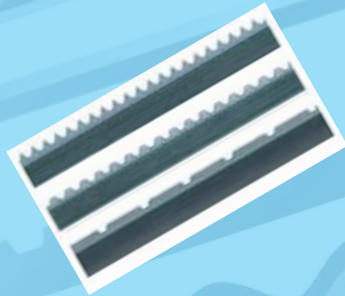
Band Knife Blade

Bandknife Blade

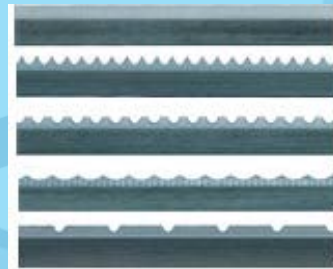


Block Cutter Blade, Vertical Machine Blade, Horizontal & Circular Machine Blade, Peeling Machine Blade, Looper Machine Blade,

CNC Blade



Oscilating Type CNC Blade



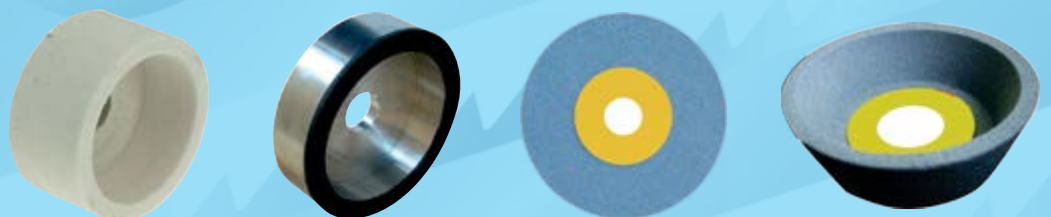
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What's hot and what's not – For marketers

Pandemic's Hangover

Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) and branding professionals have been subject to a lot of changes and new trends in the recent past. As per the Bynder's COVID 19 edition of the State of Branding Report (which surveyed 301 creative, marketing and brand professionals) it was observed that 57 percent believe COVID 19 will have a lasting impact on their brand/marketing efforts, but it won't be transformative. There were 36 percent who have actually increased their output of marketing campaigns since the COVID 19 outbreak. And 1 in 2 brand professionals saw the development of new messaging, content and campaigns in response to COVID 19 as their highest branding-related priority. Albert Garry Beard, CMD of A.H.Beard (Holdings)Pty Ltd had pointed this out too when he told Comfort Times that people were at home and were saving money. *"Travel came to a standstill. Being confined to home, people decided to invest in better-quality beds."*

Frank van Gogh, CEO of Joyce Foam remarked in a conversation with Comfort Times earlier that spending patterns of consumers have changed. *"But consumer behaviour has not changed much – for the mattress category. They have switched attention from travel to home improvement. Household products, renovations and home solutions have done well in the pandemic period."* That should be a good cue for brands to leverage this new current. Mattress players can dovetail their messaging and tone to these customers who want the right solution for their home improvement plans and who do not want the same run-of-the-mill answers this time.

Image Shifts

So when times change, the way consumers are approached and products are offered also changes. Shifts in the overall environment affect marketing strategies and new product launches in a serious way. Bynder's report surmises that given the unusual nature of these times, there is no tried-and-tested brand strategy to follow. Many organisations



seem to be adopting a more cautious approach – there are 45 percent which are *"tweaking focus and messaging"*, and only 18 percent believe that they have to *"drastically change the way we do business"*. What is interesting is that 53 percent manifest development of new messaging, content, and campaigns in direct response to COVID 19 as their highest branding related priority right now. It emerged as more important than ensuring existing messaging/content.

Also if 52 percent are feeling *"somewhat concerned"* about making missteps that could affect their brand image, and 27 percent feeling *"very concerned"*, that means that marketing assumes a new gravity and role in this year.



Dr. Renuka Kamath, Professor of Marketing, S.P. Jain Institute of Management&Research (SPJIMR) explains the importance of marketing in the launch of a new product. *"The importance of marketing can't be understated for new product launches. From targeting the right segment to the most important element of brand positioning, marketing has a very large part to play in the success of a product launch."* Talking about a high-involvement category like a mattress or a car, she elaborates, *"If the product itself is really good but is pushed at the wrong consumer, then there is little chance*

of success. Moreover, it has to resonate with the consumers. This is particularly true for high-involvement categories, where consumers will conduct their own homework and also are largely clear about their needs."

The impact of COVID 19 on brand and content strategy is quite palpable. There are 45 percent marketers who feel that this effect is strong – and that they must pivot their our brand and content strategy, while 31 percent also felt that have to drastically change the way they do business. Marketers are also concerned about making mistakes – there were 52 percent that felt somewhat concerned, 27 percent were very concerned, and 22 percent were found unconcerned.

So while it may be tempting to roll out a flurry of new products, mattress players have to be very creative and cautious about the branding approach they adopt. It has to nail the new set of customer aspirations and concerns very well. There is little room for making mistakes, now that the consumer would be extra-impatient and extra-careful.

Luxury Upgrade

The current landscape's new patterns etch a different story altogether when we are talking of a product that is either luxury or a high-involvement category. A mattress is not something one buys like groceries. People spend time and



The long-term impact of COVID 19 on brand/marketing efforts:

1. 13% believe that the pandemic will have a permanent impact on branding
2. 17% are more optimistic feeling that the effects are only short term
3. 57% opine that COVID 19 will have a lasting impact on branding and marketing, but this effect will not be transformative

Source: Bynder's COVID 19 edition of the State of Branding Report

attention in making this decision. It will be relevant then to juxtapose some marketing trends that are rising in the high-end markets.

Insights from Luxe Analytics reveal that India is the fastest growing luxury markets in the world – slated to rise from current \$30 billion to more than \$200 billion in 2030. And when it comes to luxury, consumers, specially millennials, emphasise on experience and authenticity - that means brands should pay attention to these factors and reinvent themselves when necessary.

Apart from talking about high-grade material quality and delivering cream-level experience, brands should also define the values that align with such a category. That is where personalisation and immersive marketing get centre-stage. Consider here that over 80 percent of luxury sales get 'digitally influenced' and online luxury sales is a slice growing as big as \$70 billion globally by 2025.

There is one more factor here that marketers cannot ignore. The psychological and emotional construct of the customer. As per a Kearney Institute report, consumer emotions are increasingly driving buying decisions and influence how brands can activate consumer communities. Mattress brands can shift the conversation as stewards of their core consumer

communities. They can do this by embracing both the commonalities and differences. So, moving forward, gaining share in a consumer's consciousness (mind share) is going to be elbowing out the traditional market share metric mind-set.

Responsibility

There is a palpable shift toward community marketing and there is a need to tread carefully around sensitivities. As per a recent Forrester report "Predictions 2020: CMO", the key to survival will be establishing control over the customer experience in order to provide value. As we step ahead into a fresh business era, successful CMOs will no longer be exclusively focused on marketing. They will wear responsible for "customer obsession" by expanding their control to areas like customer experience, company values, brand innovation and employee experience. The recommendation for marketers is to align resources so that brand value can be generated and delivered quickly to customers. About 10 percent of CMOs will actually assume that level of control next year. The ambit for marketing will also expand in breadth and responsibility. Almost 181 CEOs adjusted the priority for their companies from serving shareholders to serving all stakeholders – that means almost everyone - customers, employees, suppliers and broader communities. And to add to that, CMOs are going beyond

storytelling. They are becoming story makers.

That explains why some clever mattress brands have already rolled out formats like experience stores, or sleep-awareness campaigns or social-media communities. Some brands are creating specific propositions and voice around a specific group's needs – like ortho patients or sleep-deprived workforce. Some campaigns and product-offerings are talking to couples with different sleeping needs or people who want to track sleep as part of their overall fitness regime. This points to a new direction in mattress marketing.

Long-Tail Marketing

So marketing is getting more responsible, more innovative, more personalised and more interactive. It is also expanding in a physical way as it expands in an emotional way. If we thumb through Kearney's new India Retail Index, we will see how tier 2 and tier 3 cities are hot-beds for growth. They are unlocking powerful opportunities for retailers to expand. A big array of smaller cities is emerging as the growth centers. These cities have with their own consumer preferences.

The pandemic has underlined another big factor about India's smaller cities: resilience. The impact of COVID-19

on retail activity was noted to be less severe in tier 2 and smaller cities than it has been in tier 1 and metro cities. There was a faster reopening of stores and a smaller impact on disposable income supported by a good season for crops—as seen in retail demand in tier 3 and smaller cities. These are expected to bounce to normal faster than in metro and tier 1 cities. The tier 3 and beyond-cities have shown 53 percent growth in e-commerce volumes. It was seen in this index that product categories like apparel, footwear, and jewelry, show a presence in more than six times the number of cities. And some smart mattress players have already lapped on to that drift. Their expansion plans now include these regions as priority areas.

Ok, so far all looks easy and rosy. But is that all for marketers in the mattress industry to be ready for? Or is there something else? Should they hit a big 'reset' button too?

Should mattress-makers reinvent and repackage their brands?

Human Over Common

Apart from adding excitement and relevance, repositioning helps a brand to illustrate its company's evolution and embrace change. It makes customers see you in a new light. This rebranding strategy can also extend your appeal to new demographics and boost business growth. As per Deloitte 2020 Global Marketing Trends, just as people expect brands to treat them like humans and not merely as transactions, they also expect brands to act more human. That is where it becomes important for brands to embody human qualities—like transparency, freshness, consistency and authenticity. This points out some crucial elements that a brand needs to embrace with full vigour - Purpose, fusion, trust, participation and human experience.

If we look at the top issues that consumers identify with while making decisions about brands, we can see that 28 percent consider how the company treats its own people/employees, 20 percent look at how the company treats the environment, and, 19 percent go

The branding is the part of marketing for any organisation. The branding comes with responsibility, quality, and trust that company builds up over the period of time. The branding alone can win the business deals many times. But challenges are there in front of branding also when consumer is not ready to spend. The brand marketing faces challenges with Covid-19 today. Companies are trying to make over the brands with value addition being human-centric, and economy-centric.

for how the company supports the communities in which it operates. Deloitte's consumer pulsing survey revealed that more than 80 percent of consumers would be willing to pay more if a brand raised its prices to be more environmentally- and socially-responsible or to pay higher wages to its employees.

So it would be a win-win for marketers to add sustainability, health and environmental responsibility in their new offerings. Also, do not replace human connect with dead tools, It has been seen that despite automation and AI, the essentials of human connection—eye contact,

personal touch, empathy—have stayed irreplaceable by technology. In the Deloitte research on how organisations can authentically—and empathetically—elevate the human experience, it was noted that after years of viewing the customer experience and the workforce experience as isolated initiatives, many organisations achieved only marginal results. But the most effective results get accomplished by aligning and connecting the customer, workforce and business partner experiences through shared value. Organisations which can align their values best with their stakeholders are also the most successful in terms of workforce and customer satisfaction. When assessed over a three-year period, these same organisations are twice as likely to outperform peer groups in revenue growth.

The writing on the wall is clear. It is a great time to bring out something fresh – whether it is as a product or a message or an overall marketing strategy.



Harish Bijoor, Brand-Guru & Founder, Harish Bijoor Consults Inc. highlights the importance that

marketing adorns in the launch of a new product - specially if it is a high-involvement category like a mattress or a car? "Branding and marketing are critical pathways for new product launches need to invest in. Marketing overall does help branch reach their end goal-point, the customer."

Yes. This is the perfect time for a mattress-brand to aim for a new demographic or a city or a voice. Just make sure that you know what new values and priorities have emerged? What customers are gravitating towards? If you start thinking beyond a 'product' mind-set, beyond the 'metro' city, beyond 'a physical store', beyond a 'digital' tool, and beyond 'one stakeholder'— you will surely win not just more and more wallets and likes, but also more hearts. Turn to the side of the bed where customer gets up from. That's the future. That's the new 'new'. **CT**

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The Paradox of Green Manufacturing

Is it possible for factories to lower their energy bills and have an environmentally-friendly footprint? Let's see what advantages and opportunities can mattress manufacturers tap from what's happening around



The story of Sisyphus is an old one but its essence applies to many businesses even now. Specially for manufacturers who are trying to lighten the load of energy bills as they climb the uphill road of productivity, scale and profitability.

Every time they reach a certain peak, they are cursed to roll down again. The heavy weight of energy footprint just never goes away. Because with each new breakthrough or innovation that helps factories to produce more or gain more profits or achieve economies of scale, there is some more iron added in the form of a new equipment or tool. And downhill they come again.

Does that mean that the whole idea of having a green factory is a fantasy?

Energy and factory – A tenuous relationship

As unfortunate as the reality is, the pattern continues from the days of coal to the days of silicon. Factories have always had more negative, than positive, impact on the environment.

This is due to a lot of factors:

1. Air pollutant emissions
2. Toxic waste disposal
3. Air and water contamination
4. Greenhouse gas impact
5. Extensive use of resources like water (cooling, cleaning, dilution, boiling)
6. Production and logistics

Mattress and carbon

In a typical mattress-manufacturing set-up too, there are a lot of processes



The manufacturing sector is a major part of the economy as it accounts for nearly 16 percent of the global GDP in 2018. There are many initiatives in emerging economies to promote the manufacturing sector - like Make in India and Made in China (MIC) 2025.

Since the Make in India effort took roots, FDI in the country has followed an optimal trend. During the period, April 2014 to March 2019, FDI inflow in India was \$286 billion, which is nearly 46.9 percent of the overall FDI received in the country since April 2000 (\$592 billion). This resulted in owing to the investment-friendly policies and opening of FDI allowance in several sectors.

Source: ResearchandMarkets

that create waste – often because they are largely fragmented and manual. This happens right from product design to raw-material sourcing to mattress-platform to foam-filling to supply chain parts. Many traditional players are still trapped in legacy equipment, conventional equipment and out-dated tools. There is a lot of room to make these parts efficient, smart, automated, streamlined, and green.

A myriad ways exist wherein a simple mattress can wreak seemingly-small but substantial damage on the planet:

- Emission of fumes and chemicals in the atmosphere
- Harmful materials that go into manufacturing of mattresses
- Health risks arising from petrochemicals, blowing agents and adhesives used in foams, dyes and additives etc.
- Use of toxic VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) (from flame-retardants, for example, that many memory-foam mattresses used for a long time)
- Foam-making materials like polyurethane or petroleum that were predominantly used in old-kind of mattresses
- Energy use and emissions from the mattress-making processes that entail both factory emissions and the carbon impact of transportation of materials and goods

There is a need to emerge to for green/eco-friendly manufacturing process that involves raw-materials, production process, intelligent automation that reduce the waste creation from product design to product sales

- The problem of responsible disposal of mattresses since most products use non-biodegradable materials and a lot of mixed materials (spring, wood, foam, and fabric) that makes it difficult to sort, recycle or environmentally-conclude a product

In fact, industrial production and logistics have been estimated to be responsible for more than half of global CO₂ emissions from fuel combustion – as per a BCG Survey 2019-2020. Production accounts for more than 40 percent of global CO₂ emissions from fuel combustion, and commercial logistics contribute about ten percent. Emissions from production and logistics would need to decrease by

approximately 45 percent by 2030 if we want to be on a path to meet the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target for limiting the global temperature increase.

The scale and pervasiveness of factories makes the situation even more serious. Think of India where the manufacturing sector is growing at a fast clip and can reach \$1 trillion by 2025. It is hard for factories to grow and embrace new markets without causing adverse environment impact. But are they not realizing that it is both a cost and a climate-change alarm?

The new green lever

Yes they are. Factories across the world have started waking up to both the gains and imperatives of being environmentally-conscious. However difficult it may look at the onset, there is actually a business logic to cutting down manufacturing's negative impact on the environment.

That explains the rise of the concept of Sustainable Manufacturing. This is an amalgam of both the lean and green manufacturing methods that focus on the entire product life-cycle. It entails everything – from the first step of raw material sourcing until a product's

The Gross Value Added (GVA) at basic current prices from the manufacturing sector in India grew at a CAGR of 5 percent during FY16 and FY20 as per the annual national income published by Government of India. The sector's GVA at current prices was estimated at \$ 397.14 billion in FY20PE.

Business conditions in the Indian manufacturing sector continue to remain positive. The manufacturing component of IIP stood at 129.8 during FY20. Strong growth was recorded in the production of basic metals (10.8 percent), intermediate goods (8.8 percent), food products (2.7 percent) and tobacco products (2.9 percent). India's Index of eight core industries stood at 131.9 in FY20.

According to the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, India's industrial output, measured by IIP, rose by 3.6 percent y-o-y in October 2020. In October 2020, India's manufacturing sector manifested robust improvement for the third consecutive month, with businesses growing production to the greatest extent in 13 years in the middle of robust sales growth.

Source: Manufacturing Sector in India Report, IBEF

'end-of-life, and even after that through remanufacturing and recycling.

Interestingly, Environment, Society, and Economy have now started to appear the 'three pillars' of 'Triple Bottom Line' (TBL). Now a lot of companies have got carbon targets in place. A recent study 'The KPMG Survey of Sustainability Reporting 2020' shows a notable jump since 2017 in the number of companies disclosing carbon reduction targets. It was seen that two-thirds of N100 companies and three-quarters of G250 companies are doing this now. In fact, companies in the automotive, mining, utilities, and technology, media and telecommunications industries are dominating this space with 70 percent



Industrial production and logistics are held responsible for more than half of global CO₂ emissions. The rate of pollution has lead the path to the rise of the concept of environmentally-conscious, sustainable manufacturing

or more of N100 companies disclosing carbon targets.

Companies have begun to find a new connection between green consciousness and business sense. It was observed that in 2020, a majority (55 percent) of N100 companies that disclosed carbon targets linked them to external targets. A large portion of businesses that disclose carbon targets, are recognizing the need to contribute their fair share to efforts to reduce emissions.

If we consider a BCG study of 1,200 operations executives from numerous producing industries, we again see that industrial companies want to reduce

their carbon footprint, with more than three-quarters of them placing decarbonization as a high priority.

There is a money angle to these trends. A lot of businesses are facing, or will soon face, increased costs in materials, energy, and compliance. These will be amplified with higher expectations of customers, investors and local communities. So being careless about one's environmental impact just would not be ok anymore.

Footprints to follow

Also, Companies are now discovering that it helps to make their development both economically and environmentally sustainable. The early adopters and green trailblazers have been great templates here – they have shown that environmental improvements help in profit-making and improved competitiveness. Here are a few examples.

- 1. Volkswagen Group:** Its ID.3 EVs has been announced as the first model manufactured at its Zwickau plant that uses carbon-neutral production. Goals have been set for carbon-neutral production for its entire fleet by 2050.
- 2. SSAB:** Plans to reach carbon-neutral steel production by 2026. It is controlling CO₂ emissions by discontinuing the coal-coking process traditionally used for

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53 percent of UK consumers think producers and manufacturers are responsible for ensuring the goods they buy are environmentally-friendly. A KPMG research finds that over two-thirds (67 percent) of Brits say they care more about the environmental impact of the consumer goods they buy today, compared to 5 years ago. However, they mainly feel it is the responsibility of manufacturers and producers to tackle the issue. The youngest and oldest generations seem to be more engaged in the fight to make consumer goods more environmentally-friendly. Overall, respondents say that they would be willing to pay an average of 8.5 percent more for environmentally-friendly consumer goods.

Source: KPMG Report 2019

ore-based steelmaking. It would be shifting to a process powered by fossil-free electricity and hydrogen.

3. **Bentley Motors:** Uses an innovative energy management system that targets energy fissures and –energy consumption by its plant’s boiler and compressed air system. It has cut down energy usage for the production of each car by two-thirds and for the entire plant by 14 percent.
4. **Coca-Cola:** With a partner in Sweden that reuses pallets, it is working on reducing costs by \$700 million and waste by 25 percent in Sweden
5. **Dalmia Cement:** Is sourcing 32 percent of its raw materials from industrial waste. It is enjoying a CAGR of 23 percent for revenue over the past five years which affirms that sustainability creates value. It is now building a large-scale carbon capture facility with a capacity of 500,000 tons per year. Aims to become world’s first carbon-negative cement producer by 2040.
6. **Tata Steel:** Uses advanced analytics with AI and machine learning to optimize production processes. The algorithm manages the heating process for liquid raw iron. It has reduced materials waste in a significant way and has generated annual cash savings of €50 million.
7. **Mercedes-Benz:** Its Bangkok plant is on track to achieve carbon-neutral production starting in 2022. It is

using large solar-powered systems on its roof to generate electricity. It is storing excess power in a stationary second-life battery storage system. This one uses recycled electric vehicle batteries.

8. **Daimler:** Has created a goal for all its assembly plants to be carbon neutral by 2022. This would be done by switching from coal-based electricity to energy generated exclusively from renewable resources. It is also urging its suppliers to adopt its standards for decarbonization.

The BCG survey also points out 75 percent find carbon neutrality as either the most important initiative at their company or one of the top three initiatives. Parallel to these decarbonisation drives, companies are also finding support and innovative muscle from the rise of technology and Industry 4.0. By digitizing operations and using technological enablers of the fourth industrial revolution, the trajectory of sustainable manufacturing is getting even stronger.

Technology adds a shoulder?

Now companies can use economically-sound processes that reduce negative environmental impacts and help in conservation of energy and natural resources. What they give is a cost for now but what they get is a multi-dimensional spectrum of benefits – both for the present time and in the

long-term.

- They improve brand impact consumer affinity, and safety of employees and communities
- They enhance operational efficiency by reducing costs and waste
- They can target new customers and create new product offerings
- They can build reputation and bolster both regulatory and public trust
- Inject long-term business viability and faster responsiveness to changes

The regulatory landscape is also making this change desirable and urgent. The Environment impact assessment that was earmarked as a process under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, is one example of compliance- driven responsibility because it prevents industrial and infrastructural projects from being approved without proper oversight. Obtaining prior environmental clearance helps a company to be cognizant and proactive in controlling environmental burden of its processes.

At the same time, the market is on a fresh path that encourages the use of environmentally-friendly tools. Look

As of 2019, global GHG emissions from fuel combustion totaled approximately 33 gigatons of CO₂e (Gt CO₂e). To be on a path to achieve the 1.5°C target, net emissions would need to fall to 18 Gt CO₂e by 2030. If we extrapolate the current trend for global emissions to 2030 yields emissions of 33 Gt CO₂e—a shortfall of 15 Gt CO₂e is seen against the incremental goal for meeting the 1.5°C target. To close this gap by 2030, GHG emissions from production and logistics would have to fall by 45 percent relative to the current trend. From that point, incremental reductions would have to continue for two more decades until net emissions dropped to zero.

Approximately 60 percent of participants reckon that governmental pull (such as subsidies) and push (such as a CO₂ tax) are crucial factors for motivating implementation of more decarbonization measures in their operations. Only 22 percent feel reduced investment cost is a significant factor, and just 9 percent point to stronger demand from customers.

Source: BCG Survey

at the smart manufacturing market that is all set to rise from \$214.7 billion in 2020 to \$384.8 billion by 2025. Factories are embracing industrial automation in manufacturing processes and using software systems that reduce time and cost. Technologies like IIoT (Industrial Internet of Things), AI (Artificial Intelligence), ML (Machine Learning), RFID, industrial robotics, distributed control systems, condition monitoring, smart meter, smart beacon, interface board, yield monitor, guidance and steering, GPS/GNSS, flow and application control devices are making it easy for factories to monitor and correct their environmental impact. Even advancements in industrial communication technology with better/real-time man-to-machine and machine-to-machine communication are assisting in finding gaps and delays



before it is too late.

From sensors that catch water-wastage to energy audit tools that evaluate high-stake equipment; factories are now better equipped with technologies to find where they cause environmental damage and then take remedial action. Asia is not behind other regions here. The smart manufacturing market in APAC is expected to grow at the highest CAGR from 2020 to 2025.

According to Salesforce's Trends in Manufacturing Report, based on a survey of 750 responses from manufacturing leaders globally, the highest priority for C-suite executives over the next 24 months was made of these areas - increasing process efficiencies, demand planning, and new service offerings. The main difference between manufacturers who are future-ready and those who are not is simple - business agility.

Mattress and green innovation

In the mattress industry, a key area that can create a big shift is injecting this efficiency and green-conscious across the entire cycle. From the OEMs to suppliers, vendors, partners so that all stakeholders can work more efficiently and optimize the complete journey of a mattress. As some mattress players have shared earlier, investments have started pouring in for areas like IIoT, lean manufacturing, advanced R&D, Supply Chain digitization, and smart

manufacturing in many factories. Tools like AI and IIoT are being deployed to cut costs, bring efficiencies and garner visibility across the lifecycle of the mattress. Solutions like Edge Computing, Digital Twins and Predictive Maintenance are also helping to expand the longevity of machines and to shrink their negative environment burden. Some players are working hard to improve logistics and distribution parts that affect the last mile of a mattress cycle.

Green mattress manufacturing

As per a Prescient & Strategic (P&S) Intelligence Private Limited report in September 2018, there is an unmistakable surge in demand for eco-friendly mattresses with an increase in public awareness on environmental issues such as toxic pollution, VOCs emitted from polyurethane-foam mattresses. There is an appetite for natural and organic products which is tilting the market towards eco-friendly mattresses. Consumers are not only becoming aware about, but are also demanding use of eco-friendly materials like organic cotton, natural latex organic wool, hemp, animal hair, organic cotton and wool, natural latex foam and coconut fiber. The way use of renewable and biodegradable materials is rising and the way responsible manufacturing is becoming part of the product's proposition – it's a clear sign that mattresses have been flipped



towards a greener tomorrow.

Not to forget, now players are also seriously innovating on various aspects. Consider Anti-Microbial Technology that prevents growth of bacteria and is resistant to dust mites and Neem Fresh Technology that deters bacteria and dust mite-breeding.

Let's have a quick look in the various ways – both inside and outside a mattress – that sustainability is entering this space:

1. Advent of carefully-designed organic and natural mattress brands that use healthy and non-toxic materials
2. Attention and interest to alternative mattress-materials like natural latex, organic cotton, organic wool and organic bamboo that are devoid of harsh flame retardants or chemicals
3. Decrease in the use of polyurethane, chemical adhesives, dangerous pesticides, and other off-gassing chemicals
4. Use of eco-friendly production practices
5. Inclination towards local production and direct-to-consumer models of logistics that reduce transport-side carbon impact of the mattress industry
6. Innovation and efforts in recycling and down-cycling so that old materials/mattresses can be used as new ones
7. Radical formats like inflatable or filling-less mattresses or astronaut-inspired foam works
8. A broader and discernible move towards plant-based materials like cotton, vegetable oils and tree-tapped latex; as companies forgo foam and try options like wool or bamboo

Consumers are becoming aware about environmental issues, and are also demanding use of eco-friendly materials like organic cotton, natural latex, organic wool, hemp, animal hair, and coconut fiber

Tricks and hacks- dead-weight lifts

Here's a snapshot of what is being done by green factories and what can be done if, as a manufacturer, you want to have a positive impact on the environment:

1. Use the right visibility and audit measures so that you first know where you are causing wastage or damage
2. Use an approach that is coordinated,

integrated and not random or chaotic

- Try to aim for a win-win scenario between costs and profits. That's possible
- Adopt innovation strategic analysis and look to work beyond ticking compliance boxes
- Integrate sustainability across business functions and have a long-term mindset to it
- Do not ignore the suppliers and external stakeholders that join your manufacturing chain in some –small or big- way. Encourage them and collaborate with them for environmental-responsibility
- Replace aging equipment. Go for the new machine if repairs or part replacements are causing time and energy consumption. Even a small change or time saving can have a considerable impact on product turnaround time
- Try to use wasted heat in cogeneration or other facilities. Do not toss away scrap metal and waste material. Use it all in some way.
- Control scrap rates and machine idling time. Try to optimize layouts to reduce the complexity of logistics processes. Reduce waste in process emissions and energy consumption.
- Aim to generate, use, and recover heat more efficiently with high-efficiency burners, heat exchangers and heat pumps that



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raise the temperature of waste heat to a usable level.

- Use intermodal transportation to optimize logistics network and materials handling. Use automation for initiating a shutoff when the equipment is not in active use.
- Convert factory into an intelligent factory. Do it comprehensively – here all the production areas and distributors and customers, are integrated. Also, the transparency of the production processes and supply chain activities, gets enhanced by connectedness and automation.
- Collaborate with other ecosystem players, like local universities and businesses for reducing waste
- Recycle when you can: Example – When you recycle aluminum, it needs 95 percent less energy than producing the primary metal from bauxite. It also reduces the corresponding emissions.
- If you cannot reduce carbon in some areas, you can compensate for its CO₂ emissions through offsetting measures. Also these measures can be unrelated to your own production or logistics. Many governments offer taxes and subsidies related to carbon – and they are, often, global in nature
- Go for the word renewable in every way possible. Wind, solar

and geothermal – anything.

- According to the OECD Sustainable Manufacturing Toolkit, measuring performance is a vital first step to improvement. Start small and go step by step.

Will the rock roll back?

It is encouraging to see that intent, awareness and tools are rising to help factories as they embrace a new environmentally-friendly avatar. But there could be fresh challenges worth reckoning as we move into the future.

One of them was, of course, the pandemic. As per the estimation by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the COVID-19 outbreak could cause global FDI to shrink by five percent to 15 percent.

Many players of the industry are considering and innovating towards the eco-friendly Mattress Business. The study reflects that majority have plans to implement decarbonisation measures

This was attributed to the downfall in manufacturing sector coupled with factory shutdown. The manufacturers of the automobile, chemical, electronics, and aircraft are already facing concerns regarding the availability of raw material. If factories struggle with basic existence and survival issues, they may forget or postpone their carbon-neutrality plans.

Also, as the BCG survey pointed out, most companies have struggled to achieve their carbon goals. Just 13 percent respondents said that their company have fully implemented decarbonization measures in their production and logistics. Here, the chief impediment has been the concern that the initiatives will raise conversion costs.

It is nice to see that over 60 percent of BCG study participants reflected plans to implement decarbonization measures. And more than 90 per are dedicating a portion of manufacturing investment budget to decarbonization measures in the next three years. What's lacking though is the presence of set science-based targets for measuring their success. Globally, only about 330 companies have established science-based targets when it comes to decarbonization, according to a collaborative initiative that monitors such efforts. Also, 63 percent companies believed that decarbonization will increase their conversion costs (total manufacturing costs minus material



The challenges will be there and may change also in future. The industry needs to focus on skills, and resources required to make things safe for users and environment. Also, think about the economic factor. The industry need to start at one or the other point for safer and healthy life.

costs) by 2030. The ones who thought that they can lower their conversion costs through decarbonization by 2030 is less – just 21 percent. The perception of implementation costs for carbon-reduction applications is similar: 63 percent of participants believe that these costs will increase during the next five years. Only 18 percent felt that they will decrease.

Companies need to get out of this short-sighted approach. The payback time frame may exceed the two-year period. Companies have to realize that these investments have a far-reaching impact – whether they look for avoiding carbon taxes or helping the world reach its climate change goals. Note that by 2019, 46 countries (responsible for approximately 20 percent of global GHG emissions) had implemented CO2 taxes or certificates for promoting decarbonization. We also need to have more examples of actual action than simply setting of goals or glimpses of high ambitions. Remember that merely 13 percent reported that their company have fully implemented decarbonization measures in their production and logistics.

The scenario is grim for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) that


are struggling with their short-term survival, or cost. They lack knowledge and resources to invest in environmental improvement. Some of them do not even know where to start.

Also critical is the area of skills. Factories cannot just switch to a green colour or a digital mode. They need to have resources and talent that aligns with the new milieu. Specially when we see that digital skills are important for non-technology sectors like manufacturing. According to an AWS report ‘Unlocking APAC’s Digital Potential’, it was seen recently that in the manufacturing sector, cloud architecture design and the ability to create original digital content such as software and web applications will be among the most in-demand digital skills by 2025. Over 50 percent of digital workers in the manufacturing sector believe that they will require these skills to perform their jobs. Incidentally, digitally skilled workers currently represent only 12 percent of India’s workforce. The number of workers in India requiring digital skills would need to rise nine times by 2025.

As we can see that challenges will remain and change, but the path towards environmental- responsibility should continue. Because it is not just environmental but an economic factor too.

Tani Colbert-Sangree, Program Officer, GHG Management Institute explains that the drivers for turning environmentally-responsible are a lot. “Companies have many different reasons. From branding to compliance to cost-efficiency. I think it boils down to branding generally, whether a company wants to be seen as part of the solution vs. part of the problem. Whether they are actually part of the problem or the solution requires digging a bit deeper into the goals they and their actions to reach those goals.”

What is definitely hard to deny is that now carrying a heavy rock is foolish and callous. It will not only cost more environmental damage but will also stop a business from achieving the win-win

of positive impact and profitability. The awareness of customers and the availability of new tools may be finally the breaking the curse for factories. All they need to carry up on the hill’s top is a carefully-chosen plant or sapling. They need to stay on top and water it well. It’s now possible and prudent to change the rock into a tree. Because it will grow every day. But it will not roll back. Thankfully! 

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

There is a serious concern rising about being eco-friendly as the global industry pollution is held responsible for the rise in global warming. The Mattress industry is checking for its possibilities to lower the energy bills and have an environmentally-friendly footprint. There is a need emerging for green/ eco-friendly manufacturing process that involves raw-materials, production process, intelligent automation that reduce the waste creation from product design to product sales. The rate of pollution has led the path to the rise of the concept of environmentally-conscious, sustainable manufacturing. The challenges will be there and may change also in future. The industry needs to focus on skills, and resources required to make things safe for users and environment. Also, think about the economic factor. The industry need to start at one or the other point for safer and healthy life. We shall observe what advantages and opportunities can mattress manufacturers tap from what’s happening around.



The R in PR

Creating an image and strengthening it – is something that takes a lot of effort, time, and experts. And it goes way beyond marketing

A brand is not just what a company thinks or says it is. It is what a customer perceives. This perception can definitely be shaped by paid marketing efforts, clever campaigns, creative messaging and regular buzz around a brand. We have seen how some salient mattress brands have become synonymous with the attributes they stand for. Some instantly remind of luxury, some are connected deeply with variety, and some stand for health-oriented sleep solutions.

A lot of this story is woven by marketing teams and brand narratives. But a lot of this also comes from an activity that is different from paid, high-scale and regular marketing activities. This is where Public Relations or PR

steps in.

If you see around the mattress industry, you will notice that some brands have started creating conversations, awareness and expertise on issues like sleep health, sleep hygiene, work-life balance, posture-awareness, smartphone-use balance and giving respect to one's sleep cycle. This is being done majorly through PR tools. Articles that come in credible newspapers, magazines and blogs are being leveraged in frequent ways to create a specific brand voice. Podcasts, tutorials, debates and walk-throughs on various digital platforms are adding to this niche portrait of a brand that PR teams cultivate.

One may wonder here – why PR?

Specially when a brand is already spending time, money and energy in marketing? It is a good question to consider whether a mattress brand can go beyond a certain level by adding PR to its marketing foam. It is a bigger question when we ask – can PR be just an accessory, a pillow to the bed – or is it the frame of the bed instead?

PR – Building roots before branches

The answers vary- depending on the age, relevance, strengths and demographic-details of a brand. It would also change drastically if the brand is going through a negative phase or a numb mindspace in the customer's radar. No amount of marketing budgets, no number of ads on TV can replace the gravity and credibility of a word spoken in a media platform that customers look up to. Specially when they doubt everything else.

Interestingly, the significance of this weight rises during two scenarios – when a product is entering the market, and when it is facing a tough spot in the market.

As Dr. Renuka Kamath, Professor of Marketing, S.P. Jain Institute of Management & Research (SPJIMR), outlines, successful product launches begin with awareness. "It is very evident that the higher the awareness with the target consumer segment, the higher is the likelihood of conversion to sale. For awareness or rather positive awareness, PR and media coverage are the best methods. They matter a lot since credibility and reach are both high. Much more than product advertising."

For categories like a mattress, the same strengths and opportunities of PR apply as they would for a lifestyle brand or a technology brand. "PR helps as well. While advertising is largely perceived to be marketing-led, PR softens the marketing blow. PR makes communication 'peer to peer' as opposed to marketer on top and consumer at a different level altogether." Contends Harish Bijoor, Brand-Guru & Founder, Harish Bijoor Consults Inc.

Shweta Sayankar, a PR veteran who has worked on various verticals from



According to a Nielsen study, PR is 90 percent more effective than advertising. That being said getting a favorable mention of your brand, which is earned and not paid, holds much more weight than an ad.

lifestyle, technology to automotives in India and the Middle East shares: that PR has an important role in the image building/maintenance of a product – whether new and existing. This is specially high for a high-involvement category like a mattress. "PR in itself has come a long way from being a probable service lateral to explore while establishing a brand to being a must-have in the launch or brand sustainability program. By virtue of being an inclusive model that entertains everything that comes under communications - its benefits transcend fine boundaries of sales, reputation and brand recall."

Neha Chandra, a PR Professional with ten years of work experience across varied sectors like Technology (both consumer and enterprise), Corporate, Start-ups, Marketing, Telecom, New Age Businesses, Entertainment explains

that PR is important irrespective of the category – a mattress or a car. "Public relations is about sending the right messages to the right place and the right people, which is key for any brand."

According to ResearchandMarkets, Public Relations has the power to unite all functions with a single vision as per the mission of the organization. 'A well-made, integrated PR plan can connect customers and clients with the organization. It creates competitive advantage for organizations. It helps to attract attention and raise the visibility for the product/service.' The firm points out PR's value in a recent report.

PR- The auto-pilot button-plus- The trust switch

And sometimes PR's value can be as strong as or even more impactful than a marketing campaign. Shweta Sayankar explains that while marketing has its own credibility, PR is expansive and allows the brand to delve into every aspect of communication for brand reach. "Once a brand is launched in the market and all the advertising is done, only PR has the power for sustainable communications roadmap to keep the momentum going. From PR tools like authored articles, press notes, experiential PR to non-media initiatives like industry research, thought leadership and B-B communications roadmap; there is immense scope to explore opportunities to keep the momentum going."



The formula that PR cracks is that of trust. It is here where a customer's mind switches in a different way than it would after watching a TV ad. As Shweta Sayankar nails very well, "There is a lot of credibility factor at stake when it comes to PR. It earns the media space and doesn't pay for it. The relationship has a lot to do with the PR agency itself as well as the brand and its offering. With marketing, it is fairly easy because you simply buy ad space.

Neha Chandra echoes that thought. "Paid marketing supports the sales team while PR supports the larger brand image in the market."

And that assumes a considerable value in an era where brands struggle with erosion of trust, every day, in old and new ways.

If we look through the Deloitte 2020 Marketing trends Report, we observe that digital transformation has changed how organisations should account for the issue of trust. The report clearly defines that 'Organisational trust is a bilateral relationship between businesses and their customers, workforce, partners and governments. This means companies should build an infrastructure that protects what stakeholders value most, while proactively detecting threats in the domains of cybersecurity, data protection, regulatory compliance and reputation. Companies that don't

For a positive awareness, PR and media coverage are the best methods. Much more than product advertising. PR has an important role in the image building of any product.

systematically safeguard these domains likely face existential threats.'

Whether brands like it or not, the implications of trust can affect everything - the market value of the brand, potential decline in customer loyalty and the ability to meet customer needs.

Now that the digital era has turned trust a complex issue. Just imagine a simple case of how profiting from the direct sale of data impacts customer trust. As per Deloitte 2019 Consumer Pulsing Survey in the United States, United Kingdom, China, and Brazil - almost 53 percent said they will never use a company's products that sells their data. About 40 percent stressed that a company should make 0 percent of profit from selling their data.

In fact, the value of reputation has only gone up among corporate chief executives. Companies are stressing more on corporate purpose, as unravelled by the ICCO World PR Report 2020. It found out that corporate reputation remains the most important objective for most clients (this was seen among 41 percent, and only 35 percent pointed at clients were looking for product or sales objectives).

Other important issues that came up were - Sustainability and climate change (60 percent of respondents), diversity and inclusion (55 percent), education (31 percent) and data privacy (29 percent). That leaves a lot of room for PR to help brands and CXOs reach the right spot when they are parking themselves in a customer's mind. Incidentally, or not, all these issues - specially sustainability, reputation and education have become accentuated for mattress brands in the recent past.

The next page - New playgrounds for PR

The advent of digital forces have started changing what PR talks about and how it talks too. Programmatic PR in the digital medium is exploiting automation of advertising and artificial intelligence in a big way. It helps to raise transparency and control. It delivers greater efficiency with better targeting capabilities for audiences.

Interestingly, PR is also moving into the realms of curation, online advocacy and digital influence as consumers shift their eyeballs from TV and billboards and even newspapers to their mobile devices. PR is harnessing the power of curation and advocacy in a big way - as seen in the recent months.

Industry experts have noted that the vast number of consumer purchase options across channels and platforms are expanding a brand's "real-time" competitive set. Now that customers can instantly react, the line between the market and mind has dissolved and that is why it helps to have the right curators by your side.

According to a reckoning by DGLaw



STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT



Courtesy: <http://www.brandlabindia.com/>

Challenges

Almost 67 percent of Americans are concerned about misinformation on the internet. Customers are finding it tough to separate fact from fiction. About half of Americans say they changed how they use social media in response to the proliferation of fake news.

of navigating tight-knit groups, the mistakes in aligning with consumer values, and the pressure to live up to the trust that a community puts in them. Now that people spend more time online and have limited outlets to vent their problems, brands would have to confront the challenge of managing individual frustrations that can leak into larger groups and gain a louder megaphone – as the report pointed out.

Report

As per a Kearney Institute report:

- An increase in community isolation, polarization, etc. have intensified the risks that come with brand community development
- Everyday brands are facing greater risks as blame, division, and exclusivity increasingly define consumer communities
- If brands deviate from community standards, it leads to consumer frustration, outrage, and anger

Growth

The global public relations market has been climbing from \$95.9 billion in 2019 to \$96.2 billion in 2020. This shows a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.4 percent.

report, Davis and Gilbert survey, PR firms are expanding their service offerings in areas like Digital, Social/PR/ Content Creation and Creative Services. These became areas where revenue came in a major way from – during the first eight months of 2020.

Advocates, communities and influencers are becoming strong pockets of creating awareness and excitement around a brand. Specially when marketing can hit a wall in a situation where everyone is packed inside their homes. The pandemic year has deepened the importance of such community voices. They help to take a brand beyond an ad and right into a customer's conversation. But they have their flip side too.

A recent report from the Kearner Consumer Institute, highlighted that speaking through, and in, communities can play out in positive as well as negative ways. It explains the challenges

All these questions are very pertinent and directly related to mattress brands in the current context. From rumors of counterfeit materials, sloppy inventory management, bad reviews to criticisms coming from new-age disruptors and bed-in-a-box start-ups - a mattress brand has to fight the challenge of building and maintaining trust every day. Plus, bigger issues like sleep health, investing in a good mattress, buying a branded mattress for better health instead of stretching an old one or discouraging customers from going to unorganised sellers – all these factors necessitate that brands have a constant and careful dialogue and PR voice extended to their prospects and customers.

A well-crafted, and executed, PR plan can not only add to the gains derived from marketing machinery, but it can also be the sole saviour when a company faces situations where an ad just won't work. If a mattress catches fire, if a brand is rumoured to go bankrupt, if customers

are sceptical of toxic-materials or inferior materials inside a mattress-then a PR exercise would salvage the situation far better than an ad it would do so with clear and timely communication.

That is always better than hollow promises and glossy ads. PR may not work in isolation. But sometimes when PR works, nothing else can. **CT**



Women can bring new perspective to mattress industry

A Deloitte analysis says, Women in manufacturing are seeing positive changes in the industry's attitude towards recruiting, retaining, and advancing women over the last five years, but we are not done yet

The mattress industry has been traditionally a male dominated industry. Of late we have seen women taking key positions in the middle management and top management. It is not that women have not been part of the workforce in the mattress manufacturing companies. Most of the work that requires design aesthetics, innovation and most support roles are dominated by women. While these activities are labor oriented and had little interaction with the outside world, the industry depended on its male executives to interface with the consumers, vendors and suppliers.

There is undoubted evidence that the buying decision in both households and institutional buyers are made by women. Realizing this trend manufacturers have started looking at bringing in women into roles that require external interface. "A

woman can empathize and understand another woman more objectively and this will be a great opportunity for mattress manufacturers to put women in key external interfacing roles," says an industry veteran.

Industry observers point out that women show so much more patience and are far more diligent while showing a greater sense of design aesthetics. When it comes to, say, product development and product presentation women have a natural instinct to convince their target audience. "Let us flip this view and see how a woman goes about buying a mattress in a retail store. It is OK for a man to walk into a store look at the brand, the price tag and make a decision right away. But women get into after sales service, durability of the product texture of the fabric and colour and a whole lot of things that a typical

male buyer misses out." As a corollary, is it not then only apt that we put women in place to ensure that all these factors are taken care of. By the rule-of-thumb, women can make great Project Leaders, Product Managers and Design leads while also can drive innovation labs.

The time is right now for manufacturing companies to look at on-boarding female employees in key positions. You can design the job role in such a way that they get to interact with the external world more. Typical rules would be marketing related roles but there could also be product development which involves understanding the latest trends and motivating the internal team to come up with new designs.

There are a number of reasons why woman make for good leaders and transform the business. Let's list them

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out one by one.

- **Empathy:** Women possess amazing capability to empathize and to understand a situation. They tend to put themselves in the shoes of the person they are interacting with, understand the problem at hand and offer a solution. They focus on the work and not on the person which is a big advantage in team management.
- **Motivation:** Women are able to motivate teams more effectively than male leaders. Their ability to understand their team members' capability and specialization and their level of patience helps motivate the team more effectively
- **Work ethics:** Women executives show greater work ethics than their male counterparts which, in turn, reflects back in their team. Their sense of fairness is somehow more rounded than the male executives. For instance, their sense of Time-In and Time-Out at work is impeccable and it is something they will not compromise on.
- **Soft but firm in managing:** Women are naturally warm-hearted and tend to approach people the same way they do with their family. Their ability to look at things more objectively and understand the context helps them be perceived as soft but as we have seen before the sense of fairness and work ethics shows that they are firm.

It is time to bring women to the forefront in the mattress industry. We have already seen that some of the manufacturing companies are now headed by women or have women in top management positions. It is now time for us to bring them from support roles which we discussed in the beginning of this article. It makes great sense especially in the pandemic and post-pandemic era where work from home culture is prevalent to put woman at the helm. For one, they can understand the pressures of work and the requirement back at home much better. They will be able to bring work life balance automatically not only to themselves but to the team leading to a better working environment. "If you

In 2019, women held only 8% of management roles, 9% of business management roles, and were only 2% of CEOs in India.

	All Women	Women of Color
Senior Vice President	26%	5%
Vice President	30%	7%
Senior Manager/Director	34%	9%
Manager	38%	12%

Source: Catalyst.org

want a more happy workforce then put a woman in charge," says a senior industry executive.

We asked a few CxOs in other industries on why they chose woman to lead some of their teams and here are the results.

- Diligence 40%
- Work Ethics 40%
- Innovation 55%
- Design ability 60%
- Understand
- Target audience 70%

Does Having more women executives make for better business sense?

It makes good business sense to have more women in your executive mix. Citing a 10 year study on women executives in corporates, a Forbes article claims that companies with the highest gender diversity see a much higher return on equity[10%], a higher operating result [48%] , and stronger stock price growth, as per the McKinsey study.

Just to be sure that we are talking about good business sense here are a few pointers that assert that women executives are good for business.

- Women are especially proactive in driving for results and championing change and are persistent through numeral challenges and typically won't rest until the job gets done
- Women build strategic connections that strengthen organizations.

Women are natural at engaging and developing people; in identifying their skill sets and motivating them to perform better. They are able to bring teams together and build collaborative environments.

- Women are holistic problem-solvers. Contrary to popular belief, women love to make decisions faster, they are able to organise bits of data into a cohesive pattern and solve a wide array of problems. Moreover women are natural at soliciting and listening to diverse set of views .
- Women are quite adept in building relationship and networks. Woman is an expert in social skills and are able to connect with people from diverse backgrounds more easily than their male counterparts. They are able to read emotions and pick up nuances of postures faster than anyone else.

A few things companies can do to encourage woman to take leadership roles

Management Training: As women rise up rise of the corporate ladder, they tend to encounter that their male counterparts most often better trained than they are. Companies should have a program to offer management training to woman. Some mattress manufacturers have a program to identify women who can take up leadership roles and put them on air fast track similar to what they do for male executives.

Friendly Atmosphere: Bring a more friendly atmosphere for woman to feel safe and secure to work. It is important

to take cognizance of the special needs of woman executives and bill policies and work contracts so that their needs are addressed. In today's world are there in store Bosch is important to ensure safety at work.

Women are carrying a Lion's share at home. And now at offices too. So give them some slack and allow them additional perks and leaves they will require. The more comfortable they feel, the more dedicated they are to their work. If you care for them, they can bring in valuable insights to the management table which cannot be replaced by any MBA or Ivy League degree.

Put woman in charge of innovation: More often than not, we have seen woman playing the supporting role but they have, time and again, proved that they are far superior than their counterparts in driving innovation. The companies can create special innovation teams led by a woman.

A HBR article gives a succinct gist of why women make for good leaders:

They don't lean in when you've got nothing to lean in about. That is do not try to prove a point but let their work prove it.

They empathize. And often make it a point to expect the same from their team mates. In the process setting right expectations right from ground zero.

They motivate through transformation. They focus on team engagement, performance and productivity of the entire team rather than focus on individual glory.

They put their people ahead. Like true leaders, they allow their team members to take credit when things go right and take the blame on themselves when it doesn't.

Also they focus on elevating others. Rather than make light of their capabilities.

They are practical. Perhaps, the biggest of all reasons why women make

for better leaders is this.

They don't say they are "humbled" ever. But they remain "humble". There is a corollary to this. Women are "implicitly obedient" to their work principle and thus they remain within their sphere of influence and do not get drawn in external egocentric worlds.

Give the pay parity right

This is perhaps one of the biggest controversial things in modern workplaces. Women are paid less than their male counterparts. Companies who have seen this anomaly and changed their organizational structure to bring in parity between male and female workforce have seen tremendous success in productivity. "I've seen more and more organizations asking for successful effective women executives that they can hire. This is a big change of heart in corporate India which seems to have suddenly woken up from years of slumber trying to sweep under the carpet the issue of giving woman greater parity in position and compensation," says Ganesh, HR Consultant in Bangalore.

Women have been underemployed and relegated to support roles and hence been overlooked in terms of compensation, forget the parity. During the pandemic, the international Labour organization found out that women have worked through the period consistently and with more effect. While cultivating a culture of passion is important for companies it is more important to look into the pay parity. Unless companies believe that women are their high achievers, one of the reasons they have risen through the corporate ladder, and they do everything it takes to bring women compensation on par with rest of the company, any amount of other initiatives will be futile.

While researching for this story and talking to companies about women executives in their organization we realised one key factor that could contribute to the success: having a specific recruitment program for women. In India the TATA group is known for running such programs

but, of late, every other corporate has launched similar campaigns. It is worthwhile to launch a woman specific hiring campaign to augment diversity in your executive teams. This can add bring fresh ideas, new vigor, and a new sense of purpose to the entire middle level and senior level executive teams. If you have not already thought of now is the time to think about it and also act upon it.

As the industry makes a comeback from the Pandemic era, there are newer challenges. Most manufacturers already employ able women. As the ILO (International Labour Organization) says that more and more organizations are relying on women executives in middle and senior management roles. World over, there is a mini revolution underway to bring women to the forefront. People in top management are contributing in breaking the apparent glass ceiling which would be a hindrance for women executives to rise to the top. In the mattress industry there is an inherent advantage as women have already held key support roles. However, it is now time to bring them into key management roles to take the industry from good to great. **CT**

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Research shows that gender diversity benefits a manufacturing organization through improved ability to innovate, higher return on equity, and increased profitability. When employees believe that their organization is committed to inclusion, they report better business performance in terms of their ability to innovate. Organizations can also unleash the full potential of their female workforces by creating a culture where unique strengths thrive.



Deepak Mehta, Director, Tirupati Foam Ltd

Creating a sustainable product is our top priority

Deepak Mehta, *Director, Tirupati Foam Ltd*, explains why and how new categories and innovations would dominate both consumer appetite and industry innovations in the next new world that we enter after battling the pandemic

The storm is here but everyone is hoping and working for it to pass soon. Soon the dust will settle and we will start picking the pieces and get ready for a 'new normal'. That's what will be interesting for mattress players – because it would be a normal where health, comfort and home would have found new connotations that can be leveraged and strengthened well by the industry. If players can do so in innovative and sincere ways, they can unleash a completely unprecedented proliferation of opportunities.

The winds are blowing to a new world. And **Deepak Mehta**, *Director, Tirupati Foam*, explains why and how new categories and innovations would dominate both consumer appetite and industry innovations in the next new world that we enter after battling the pandemic. He shares some light on how the first and second wave of Corona has affected the industry. As we explore in this interview, the industry is already shaping towards non-traditional concepts like sustainable mattresses, customizable products, the 'mattress in a box' concept and accessories becoming significant in the overall market terrain. This is where he also unravels how research thrust and emphasis on IT have created strong advantages and path for the company. And why segments

like medical mattresses and modular offerings would continue traction or not, once the industry comes out of the pandemic stress.

Q Has the pandemic year been a good turn for the mattress industry? Do you feel that mattress players have found new pockets of demand even in a tough year? Would the uptick in home-improvement-led demand continue?

If we look for an overall scenario talking about the Indian/Global landscape, I don't think it's a good turn for the mattress industry as demand did not surge as expected. Also, the increase in raw material prices had a great impact on buying trends of consumers. A lot of customers delayed buying mattresses and, instead, invested more in their health and essential items.

Q What implications has the Covid-impact caused on product innovations in mattresses? Anything in your portfolio or plans that you can share right now?

The impact of Covid has delayed product innovations for the mattress space but still, new development in products is going on. Creating a sustainable product is the top priority that we need to keep in mind while developing any of the

products. Value for money and comfort also need to be kept hand in hand in this pursuit.

Q How is the industry dealing with the U-turn of Corona? Specially on the side of uncertainty over transport, abrupt interruptions in revival of physical-retail demand and management of staff?

Yes, suddenly a spike in the cases has disrupted the whole working chain. Starting from raw material, transport to staff- each and every aspect has been affected. The second wave of Corona has been more aggressive in infecting people which has seen an increase in mortality. Everyone is struggling at this phase.

As for the demand scenario, the future will show an increase in demand but it will greatly depend upon how the pandemic is handled.

Q Would segments like medical mattresses, hybrid furniture, modular beds etc. get stronger as we move ahead? Even after normalcy returns?

Medical Mattresses will be in demand till the pandemic gets over. But once everything gets normalized, the sudden spike that we have seen now will not come in normal scenario.



Categories like hybrid furniture and modular beds will surely move at a stronger pace. The 'Mattress in a Box' concept is also increasing and all this may result in 'Work From Home' system.

Q Tell us something about your brand strategies for industrial foam and consumer-segment products? How do you plan your capital outlays, marketing, expansion and offerings for both the markets without blurring the boundaries? Any cross-consolidation advantages that being in both the places offers to you?

We have invested in Research and Development; and have developed a lot of products which have a B2B segment usage. These applications are different from the traditional consumption of foam. We have also started looking, and catering, to overseas market and have developed products according to the specification for that country/consumer.

Q How has the journey of brands like Hindustani mattress, semi luxury, luxury mattress, etc. been? What next is on the radar?

Hindustani mattress has always been a success ladder for us. We have seen a great response of our Hindustani mattress brand. There was a point where mattresses were sold by just their own names rather than the company name/brand name and we have seen a good response in our other future products

as well. But it was a trend in the past as there was not enough variety in mattresses. Nowadays customized layered mattress are in higher demand than traditional single foam slab mattresses. With different types of fabrics and foam comforts, people are choosing new type of mattresses. We have also introduced 'Mattress in a Box' concept for our regular retail market where even a retailer can order a single piece of box mattress and help it get delivered to its customer directly.

Q Has the rise of sleep-awareness in the country been significant? Any impact on the mattress industry that you have observed so far – given the fact that this factor can have huge implications on the demand side and product-choice side for the consumers?

Yes, sleep awareness has been increased in the country and all thanks to rise of digital era with low-cost internet available to consumers. This has resulted in proper understanding and knowledge-study of mattresses by a consumer before one buys a product. Online mattress format is one of the outcomes of sleep awareness.

This has made consumers buy a good quality mattress through retail outlets as well. A majority of the consumers buying mattresses still want to feel the comfort & support that the mattress is going to provide them – and they explore and expect this before they buy.

Q You also cater to the accessories market? What trends are shaping up there? If you can share some examples from your own basket or path, that would help

The most basic accessory with a mattress is a pillow. Nowadays a variety of pillows are available and people have started buying special pillows like latex pillow, memory pillow, molded pillow which are different from cost-effective fiber pillows.

People have understood the importance of a pillow along with a mattress. Mattress protectors are have also seen an increase in demand. Getting educated on the product can always increase its demand trajectory.

Q You had invested in IT and connected your manufacturing and administrative functions in a strong way earlier. How are using technology now, and ahead?

Integration of IT is one of the most crucial things in today's time. We have applied and customized IT infrastructure at our company. Data is one of the most crucial things which helps in managing a company's growth. Faster and reliable information can be obtained on a real-time basis with effective and smart use of IT. Connectivity with one's plants and office is accomplished in a better way with proper IT structure. And no matter where you are the data provided to you can be easily accessed. **CT**



MATTRESS FABRIC

What is trending for consumers?

When it comes to mattress fabric coverings today, we have number options and materials to choose from. The variety of choices, fabrics, properties and materials can be completely overwhelming. Mattress manufacturers can consider changing consumer preferences

With the awareness about quality mattress growing rapidly thanks to the Internet and a globe-trotting consumer, preferring a luxurious, quality mattress doesn't mean burning a hole in your pocket anymore. With continuous innovation and technological advances in sleep products, the consumer today is conscious that when it comes to purchasing a mattress in India, she is assured that she has access to a wide variety of choices which are on par with global standards. The state-of-the-art mattress technology with international quality certifications ensures a global parity.

"When we bought our first mattress online, we were particular about the fabric used. Fortunately, we got both," says Tejaswini M, a consumer

in Bangalore. Not to be left behind, mattress manufacturers are making the best mattress available in Indian markets. "We spend significant time interacting with the consumer to find out their taste in terms of fabric, mattress filling, colour and hundred other details," says a manufacturing unit executive in Vadodara. "We place consumer preference as the driving force behind every single mattress we make. In fact, rarely do we manufacture a line of mattress without running at least 10 in-person surveys," she says.

Consumer Preferences

So, what exactly are these preferences? When we ran a survey to find out directly from the consumers, we realized that there is a large section of buyers who are not as glued into the technology and benefits of mattress and they buy based

on recommendations by friends and relatives and mostly recommendations by in-store salesmen.

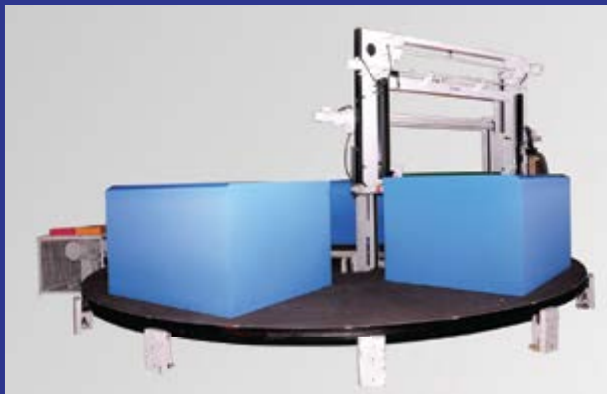
A friendly mattress retail store executive, Somanath from a local mattress store in Hubli listed out the primary styles preferred in a mattress:

- Adults like off-white colour combination with texture
- Children prefer comic characters, animal crackers and these days space-related themes printed on the fabric
- Older age group would like to have cotton fabric with light-coloured prints of various patterns

"The style and pattern changes from age group to age group and from culture to culture," add Mukesh, a fabric prints



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workshop owner in Coimbatore.

"A pure silk fabric on the mattress offers excellent feeling any time of the year," said Roshan S, a civil contractor in Bangalore. Silk fabric is among the most expensive but preferred fabrics for mattresses.

Styles and prints have changed. "Ever since Elon Musk has come up on the world scene with his SpaceX venture, kids want to have a space theme printed on their mattress fabric," said Navakanth, a food scientist with a leading research centre in Bangalore. "Mattress fabric style fade in and out as fast as any fashion wear," said Ram Samtani, a fashion clothing retailer, "we need to be alive to the world around us and understand the trend early enough."

These days, people prefer tones of white and grey in their bedroom and the fabric should also go along with it," says Rakesh K, a furniture upholstery retailer in Tumkur. "There was a time when colour-stained fabric was popular, or some years back large, printed pattern was a rage," he says. "Much depends on the living conditions. "Typically, a household with an AC fitted out in the bedroom prefers lighter, sober colour like the variations of white," says Ram. "Whereas a bedroom without an AC but with large windows prefer coloured fabric."

Fabric types

However, there is a bigger game in town

when it comes to mattresses and that is the fabric that is used to cover the mattress innards. Our mattress fabrics are made of primarily woven or knitted yarn. Natural fabric material combined by inspiring design and colour is perfect for making a mattress the ultimate object of desire.

"Mattress fabrics are the most overlooked factor in choosing the mattress," says Ranjit Rayen, a consumer from Chennai. Mattress fabric a key factor in getting that feel of comfort and people miss out on it. Mattress industry experts opine that a consumer should be aware of the various yarns used in making the mattress, because that might make or mar their good night's sleep.

"I changed my mattress fabric to a cotton on and from then on I have not woken up tired," says Kavitha, an entrepreneur from Pune. If you are tossing up in your bed, then it's more likely that the fabric of your mattress is to be blamed. With the right materials, a mattress should keep you fresh when it's hot, warm when it's cold, and refreshed even when you're sweating heavily.

Let's take a quick look at various fabrics.

Organic cotton Yarn: Mattress fabric made of cotton fibres and yarns are preferred by many. They are available easily and are easy to maintain.

Natural Bamboo fabric: If you are someone passionate about using natural resources then yarn made of Bamboo offers excellent moisture wicking which keeps you cosy and dry even in extreme hot weather.

The Maharajas of Mysore have been known to have used Bamboo yarn since for this very quality. Its eminently breathable fibres make it a perfect yarn for warm climates or hot summers. As it's also very soft on the skin and inherently anti-bacterial, it reduces allergies caused by bacteria or fungi.

Tencel yarn: Comfortable, cool, and rugged is a hallmark of Tencel, a unique yarn created from a mix of pre-consumer cotton waste and wood pulp from sustainable tree farms.

Anyone who comes in contact with this material will immediately fall in love with its ultra-soft, light-weight fabric. Tencel is a natural moisture absorber and is preferred by people with sensitive skin. Thanks to its durable character, it's very long-lasting and not prone to becoming thin over time.

Modal fabric: Modal is a type of rayon, which was originally developed as an alternative to silk. Modal rayon is made from hardwood trees like birch, beech, and oak. This soft and very drapable fabric is known for its comfort and brilliant lustre.

Easy cleanability is something many of us are looking for nowadays, and modal lives up to this demand. Modal is washable and is 50 percent less likely to shrink than cotton. Add in its effective sweat-absorbing property and you've got yourself a perfect partner for your bedroom.

Silk yarn: Reduce wrinkles while sleeping is the greatest catch line of silk, the strongest natural fibre in the world.

A natural anti-aging material, Silk, is one of the most preferred luxury fabrics in the mattress industry. Its naturally occurring amino acids are believed to work on the skin when left in contact overnight.

Apart from being the strongest natural fibre, silk offers other benefits owing to the fact that it is a completely natural material. It can be used in any climate and is one of the preferred fabrics of mattress connoisseurs.

Softer and cool fabrics with brighter colours are trending

In a survey conducted by us, 26.9 percent of respondents say they prefer a branded mattress made of cotton yarn and printed in bright coloured-patterns. There are about 20 percent of respondents who only prefer off-white fabric with subtle patterns and textures. See the section above on various fabrics people can choose from.

The respondents find silk and organic cotton to be the most comfortable, 53.8 percent of respondents agree to it. Around 23 percent of respondents have selected Tencel and Modal type fabric to be comfortable and 11 percent of respondents have chosen organic bamboo fabric.

When the respondent was asked to describe their quality of sleep that they get on the present mattress that they are using, 69.2 percent get comfortable sleep and are satisfied with their mattress and are not likely to change it soon, 19 percent have no problem getting sound sleep on their mattress, 7.7 percent find it difficult at the beginning to fall asleep on the mattress, they are likely to change to a comfortable mattress.

When the respondents were asked what comfort means to them 70 percent of the respondents liked their mattress to be soft. 15 percent of the respondents find comfort in mattress fabric that does not have accented texture. And only 7 percent liked textures that are coarse.

Considering silk fabric is trending and moving up the popularity chart, it is interesting to note that 20 percent of the respondents have never experienced the silk fabric. and are looking forward to buying it. And only 11 percent have tried it find it uncomfortable. Silk requires higher level of maintenance and is one reason people shy away from

it. However, with the awareness about its benefits, silk is moving up.

When the respondents were asked to rate their comfort of the present fabric – irrespective of what they are currently using a scale of 1-5 where 1 being least Satisfied and 5 being Most Satisfied -- 46 percent rated 4. 30 percent have rated 5 and only 3.8 percent of people have rated 1. This means that most people are fairly satisfied and comfortable with the fabric they are currently using.

"Organic Cotton for me personally is very comfortable. I like its soft texture and subtle patterns with off-white colour. I find this more comfortable than, say, silk as it is too fine for comfort" says Mr. Senthil a member of Global Textile Alliance India

Mattress fabric and style are continuously being innovated as they are the most visible part of a mattress both in terms of look and feel and experience. "Nobody wants a simple poly-cotton fabric with loud patterns anymore. People have discovered the benefits of advanced organic material and that is the future," says Ranjit.


Fabric categories

Now let's talk about the various categories these fabrics fall under. There are three levels of segments for mattresses, i.e. Low class segment, Mid-Level segment and the Premium segment Starting with the lower segment, this segment has mattresses ranging from two thousand rupees to eight thousand rupees. The kind of fabric that goes in making the mattress is usually a cheap fabric like polycotton fabric. The fabrics used are low density foams, coirs or ep sheets. Here the colours are fancy colours, printed colours. In upper segment of the low-class segment where the mattress prices range from six thousand to eight thousand, the fabrics used are a mixture of foam and coir and the colours are coffee brown, maroon and vibrant colours.

Now let's talk about the mid-level segment, where the most sales happen. The price of this segment ranges from

ten thousand rupees to twenty thousand rupees. The common fabric sold in this segment is cotton and modal. Here the fabric mostly used are predominantly with vibrant and attractive colours, for example a white background with floral designs. This is the segment where the online players come in. The average fabric material quality used in the segment are from 200 - 250 gsm.

And the final segment, the premium segment of Mattress mostly has natural organic material like bamboo, silk or Tencel. The price range for this segment of the mattress is thirty thousand rupees to sixty thousand rupees.

The online players are targeting the age group of 25-35 years of age because this is age group that prefer soft comfortable fabric. 

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Mattress manufacturers are interested in wrinkle-resistant fabrics for a boxed bed or for alternative packing methods
- Pandemic is forcing people to stay more at home which is sparking interest in home improvement projects and redecorating bedrooms
- Whether consumers shop in-store or online, it's still the fabric that gives them their first impression of a mattress
- Consumers believe that the garment materials which are used in mattress need to be best in quality since they come in direct contact with the skin
- Anti-bacterial treatment to mattress fabrics is preferred by consumers



Divyesh Modi, Chairman, Magenta Life Care Pvt Ltd

We first have to sell the very idea of a mattress

Divyesh Modi, *Chairman, Magenta Life Care Pvt Ltd*, explains how knowledge about mattresses and awareness of sleep health have redefined mattress-shopping and sales in the current environment.

Q Can you share something about your brand expansion and market strategy? Any USPs that you can highlight?

We have worked for more than four years with rigorous studies to find the best way to design mattresses for the Indian customer. We are the first company for a certification for non-hazardous product for the Indian market. We also pioneered a bed-in-the-box format with a special compression technology in the market. We have tested many parameters and ensured quality during this compression. It took us six months of arduous testing for purity and quality of mattresses with impressive bounce-back capability. We have also tried to create transparency between customers and channels with open-zip mattress so that the customer can look inside and ascertain the quality of the mattress.

Q You have also been working on some radical areas of overall set-up and green-friendly materials, right?

Yes. We are also the first ones in rubberised bottom-grid formats. Usually people struggle with storage and weight of mattresses with hassles and tedious problems of tucking in bed-sheets. Our approach solves that problem. It is also skid-free in its properties and the mattress does not move from its

position even when it is handled for bed-sheets. We are also educating architects to help customers for easy tuck-ins.

We have also designed organic mattresses that have been created with bamboo charcoal extracts which help to reduce electromagnetic radiation. It is important in today's era when people sleep with electronic gadgets in their bedrooms. It also has the capability to absorb humidity.

Q What is your assessment of the future of the mattress industry from a lock-down impact's angle?

The mattress industry in India is pretty much unorganised in a dominant way. There is a huge potential of migration with factors like Internet, changing lifestyles and smartphones. The pandemic will induce a temporary slowdown but I believe that everything will bounce-back with double speed. There is a huge opportunity for e-commerce companies. These are creating more awareness-levels. The more awareness we create, the more we all will benefit.

The health consumption market is very nascent and there is huge scope for growth here. People are becoming more aware about health. Priorities are also changing in terms of where they spend money. People have put value

of sleep and quality of mattresses on a different priority now. In the next ten years we will see the industry changing in multiple folds in India.

Q Any surprising customer behaviour that you have come across during the pandemic?

We are not selling mattresses but sleep. We cater to high-end markets. We address the high-end interiors and furnishing outlets. Of course, they saw some impact during the lockdown but I reckon this is a temporary situation and will change soon. We have seen customers expending more time and looking for more details while purchasing the product.

The knowledge and research effort done by a customer have gone up considerably. Earlier they would rely completely on dealer suggestions. Today they know and ask about density, hazardous materials, what fabrics are being used, what is latex, what is memory foam etc. That's a big change. We have to stick with quality. The challenge with Indian market is that the industry has no room to capitalise the purchase unlike other products. The mattress is not purchased every few days or weeks. It is done once in five or eight years. We should stick to good quality and not compromise on quality. **CT**



No Kids' Play

Mattresses for children are highly specialized and require a completely different approach to sell them. Gone are the days when people would use home-made beds for infants and growing children. There is a huge industry in the west which caters to children's beds.

India has just about seen a surge in baby beds market but the buyer response is still muted. There is no end to the variety of beds one can choose from.

Baby mattress makers are so innovative that they make the bed and its accessories so intertwined that it is difficult to walk away from a store once you set sight on it. There are mattresses with mosquito net and sleeping bag combo. The artwork on fabric varies from animal prints to favourite Disney and other comic characters. If enliven is a verb you want to use then you should see a baby bed on display at a store. It will have everything from a cot, bed, pillows, mosquito net, soft toys, pretty bed covers, pull overs and alarm clock.

These baby mattresses are fitted with 4-5 inches of high-density foam

and will have a water-proof cover. Some mattresses provide for safe spot to sleep which eliminates the risk of smothering and suffocating while sleeping. The material could be a range of high-density foam to bonnell spring. In short, the baby bed market is spoilt for choice.

Globally, baby beds had a significant increase in market share. This could have mirrored here in India if not for the traditional attitude among the consumers.

Here is a look at factors that have been an inhibitor in the category taking off:

Obsolete

As we have said earlier, babies outgrow their special purpose beds in a matter of 2 years. That is too short a period for

many people to invest in a bed. The rate of obsolescence is very fast rendering the life of the product too low. First time mothers may prefer a baby bed out of curiosity but their opinions change with a second child. If the child does not outgrow, the bed wears out.

Cannot be reused

And one of the drawbacks of a baby bed is that it cannot be easily reused. Storing a baby bed is hard given its special appendages and fabric. The material tends to wear out. And people prefer not to reuse the bed for the second child.

Not enough awareness

There is a segment of buyers who are not worried about the obsolescence or the wearing out factors. They can afford to buy a baby bed at its premium cost. However, there is a general lack of awareness of the benefits of baby

beds. The mattress industry does not talk enough about baby beds, not even as much as it talks about its other loss leader, the pillow for instance.

Not many makers

Perhaps, the market is muted because not many manufacturers produce baby beds. In India, there are hardly a handful of brands which offer baby beds.

Opportunities and Demands for the baby beds industry

The global baby beds and cots market grew at a CAGR of around 6 percent. A universal truth is that which parents would not wish to provide their child a good sleep and this seems to be the overarching emotion the category plays on. Sleep is considered to be an essential part of a child's cognitive developmental process, more so in the initial years helping growth, allowing for the intricate process of rest and learn cycle which helps in improving dramatically the attention span among babies. With better understanding of this crucial role of sleep, the rise in demand for baby beds and cots is not surprising. Baby beds and cots are designed to be small keeping them the young infants comfortable and protect them from falling over. The beds are also designed in a such a way so as to entice the infants to sleep more by being soft, comfortable and warm.

Baby Beds join the increasingly trendy and utilitarian category of baby care products that promises advanced protection. Baby beds makers are tracking products like strollers, monitors, to get an insight in to this market. One of the biggest factors that is positively impacting this segment is the growing nuclear family and today the Pandemic situation. The market segment is a witness to rapid innovations in terms of safety standards as required by local regulatory requirements.

Due to the short life span of the product, owing to the babies outgrowing the bed, there is a tendency among parents to look for products that can be used for multiple purposes so that the guilt of putting a product to waste is less – as many think it is not only about

Globally, baby beds have a significant market share, but in India it needs to catch the market yet. Industry is looking positive in this segment

the price factor. So, can these beds be converted into cushions for a small recliner or a diwan in Indian households? Innovation is the name of the game in this segment. Manufacturers of baby beds go to lengths to ensure better quality, comfort and utility but we think they should also put their mind on this other factor of reusing it for a different purpose. To be fair to baby bed makers, they are adding features such as wheels for mobility, side rails preventing falls, extending sleeping area and other similar ideas. These are still good-to-have features and the question that comes up is: what after couple of years.

A growing aspiration for better lifestyle is playing a role in the growth of this market segment. The upwardly mobile demographic in urban and semi urban segments are more likely to invest in baby beds – without conditions. However, the growth of 6 percent of this segment is a telling tale on why the segment isn't growing faster. There is a huge market theoretically, but typical Indian micro-markets suffer from the utility factor and price factor.

Baby beds are typically classified into traditional, contemporary and modern styles. Among these, traditional baby beds and cots take a lead position usually but most customers are gravitating towards contemporary and modern styles. "If you have to beat the sentiment and reuse attitude, then give the parents something to aspire for. Something they would just love their kids to have no matter what," says Rayen.

Benefits of using a Baby Bed

- Baby can sleep more peacefully without getting disturbed

- It encourages faster cognitive development by helping babies sleep more
- Sleep training can start right after birth
- Practical and Portable
- Better sleep for the parents and the baby

"I bought a bed, a French brand, from one of the popular child care store," says Sheetal, a project manager at a leading IT company in Pune. "But for our second baby, we reused the old baby bed." That's the usual practice in India. Children's mattresses hit the "Indian thought ceiling," a phenomena which forces people not to waste.

We do not dispose of things for years. Things like mattresses will lie in the attic until the kid has grown up and actually stumbles upon it on a clean-up drive.

"In theory Child mattress is a great product and every mom would love to see her child sleep soundly in one," says Janardhan, a retailer, "but remember that mother is also a shrewd home maker."

Not many mattress makers in India have a child mattress line realizing such difficulties. And not many stores offer child mattresses. But things are showing a change for the good. Manufacturers are realizing the potential and many are watching in the side wings to enter the fray.

One strategy is to offer a buy-back scheme where the consumer can exchange the mattress when the child grows up. This trouble with such ideas is that, it is extremely difficult to keep track of returning inventory. Manufactures rather write off the returns as losses than make anything out of it.

"We are clear about these products. They are not fast moving but have a limited clientele and we don't mind waiting for them," says the owner of a child care store in up-market Bangalore. But the tides are changing. There is a steady interest in baby beds, baby cribs and baby cots. A growing affluence has contributed to this rise. **CT**



Dinesh Kejariwal, Owner, Restin Industries

Direct-To-Consumer Sales will continue to increase behind traditional sales

Dinesh Kejariwal, *Owner, Restin Industries*, has shared his views on industry and evolving customer trends.

Q According to you, what support the government should provide to the mattress industry during this pandemic?

The Government cannot provide any specific relief or support to any industry in covid times. Reduction in GST rates from 18 percent to 12 percent in the long run may help increase volumes and make mattresses more affordable for the masses.

Q What are some signs either with the mattress, or physical aches and pains that indicate that it is time to start mattress shopping?

Like all consumer durables, Mattresses have also a usable life – maybe 5-8 years depending upon the quality etc. Hence Mattress should be changed after this period without fail. Waiting for body aches or uncomfortable sleep to happen should not be the case to decide change of Mattress.

Q Having been in the mattress business for last so many years, where do you see the industry headed over the next two to three years in terms of innovations?

Mattress Industry in terms of innovations would see a lot more changes in new types of Raw material being used, better innovative mattress ticking fabrics being introduced. Next level of innovation will

see more productive machines reducing manpower and improving product finish. There will also be changes in the way a mattress is being sold -Online sales will increase promoting a certain range of Mattresses. Traditional dealer sales will undergo changes making them not only more competitive but also more responsive to Consumer needs. Dealers will encourage customers to try out mattress before buying.

Q Can you share your thoughts on evolving consumer trend for the mattress industry?

Lockdown and stay-at-home during Covid Pandemic has made Consumers more conscious about their well-being. I feel Customer will be asking a lot more questions about the product than before and will be looking forward to buying Mattresses which addresses them. Price will not be a major factor and customer will definitely look to upgrade his comfort level.

Q How do you see direct-to-consumer commerce and what market dynamics make this model work?


Direct-to-Consumer Sales will continue to increase but it cannot overtake traditional sales. Online sales is favoured due to ease of buying and low cost. All companies will continue to sell

online and offline segregating different products for different markets.

Q How does Restin approach the convergence of design and technology?

We at Restin have always tried to amalgamate design and Technology to deliver an affordable Mattress. We believe Science and Technology should help us to make better product at a more affordable price. All our efforts over the years have been to ensure Technology helps us to design better products like Improvement on Pu foam over the last decade has helped promote more durable and comfortable Mattress with better cushioning. Promotion of Pocket Spring Mattress has upgraded comfort in Hospitality industry. Better Orthopaedic Mattress in hospitals have increased Comfort for Patients and helps prevent many Health issues.

Q What are Restin's newest products, and what makes them unique? What plans do you have for 2021 and 2022?

Restin is a small niche player in central India - we cater to the rising middle class. In 2022 we intend to introduce products incorporating new types of Pu foam and other comfort elements like innovative Cool fabrics looking to the Climate in our geographical area. 



“Coronasomnia” a new term for sleep problems related to the pandemic

Millions of people suffered from insomnia before the coronavirus, and unfortunately, the pandemic creates a host of new challenges — even for people who previously had no sleeping problems.

“Coronasomnia” is a new term that refers to sleep problems related to the pandemic. With increased stress and anxiety, there is a definite impact on our sleep and mental health, and the best way to combat it is to stick to good sleep hygiene practices. The coronavirus pandemic doesn’t affect everyone in the same way. Of course, patients with the virus and front-line medical workers face the brunt of the direct impacts of the disease. But the consequences — economically, mentally, and emotionally — have spread far and wide, and pose significant barriers to sleep.

Courtesy: Sleep Foundation

COVID-19 and Sleep Disorders

Rachel Manber, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Director of the Stanford Sleep Health and Insomnia Program has answered few questions related to Covid 19 and Sleep. For the benefit of Comfort Times readers, we are publishing this Q&A as it is published in Stanford medicine website.

We’re hearing and reading about a general increase in reports of disturbed sleep in these times of COVID-19. Is this to be expected, even in those for whom healthy sleep was never an issue?

Dr. Manber: Yes, but not universally so. The two main contributors to potential worsening of sleep are changes in stress levels and changes in sleep behaviors. The pandemic and related shelter in place measures to mitigate its spread have increase stress levels among many. People may worry not only about the disease itself, other health issue that might not be optimally addressed, financial issue, as well as other psychological and interpersonal stressors. In general, worries and anxieties tend to have a negative impact on sleep. Distraction and other strategies people use to deal with the stress during the day are not helpful when they go to bed at night. The intrusive thoughts then make it difficult to fall asleep initially or return to sleep if awakened in the middle of the night. But there are also people who sleep better now than before the pandemic. Working from home allows them to maintain a more balanced life, and hence less stress and better sleep. For example, they may be taking more breaks and have more interactions with the people they live with. Another example is people who have not given themselves enough time to sleep and now they can, or adolescents who had the pressure of an early school day can now get the additional sleep they need.

What kinds of diagnosed sleep disorders are most likely to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic

Dr. Manber: Insomnia disorder and circadian rhythm sleep-wake disorders, delayed type, are the two disorders most likely to be impacted by the pandemic. Insomnia disorder is characterized by difficulties falling or staying asleep that occur despite having adequate opportunity for sleep that are not better explained by other medical or psychiatric disorders or by use of substances. Circadian rhythm sleep-wake disorder, delayed type, is experienced as difficulty waking up in the morning and falling asleep at a societal normative time, but when going to bed and waking up at a later time sleep is not an issue.

What self-care practices might help? And, are these different for different age groups or genders?

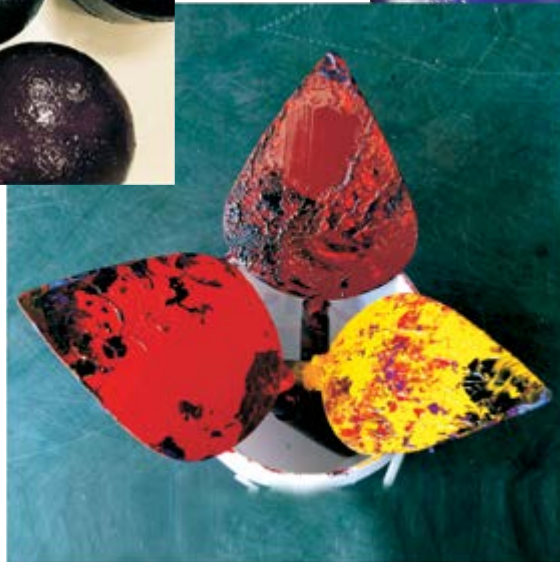
Dr. Manber: People of all ages need to take time to unwind. During the unwinding period, do things that you enjoy effortlessly; but make sure they are not too activating. This is a personal choice. If someone tells you to read a book or listen to calming music that have helped them but you find boring, recognize that this is not the right thing for you.

If you are awake in the middle of the night and are having difficulty falling back asleep, take a break from trying to sleep. If you keep trying you will get frustrated or upset, which will only make it more difficult to sleep. Instead focus on resting. During this break from trying to sleep do something that is restful, such as reading or listening to content that you enjoy and that is not too activating. Getting oriented to what you need to do the next day is rarely very restful. Hopping on exercise equipment is too activating. These are obvious things you should not do. Again what is restful for you might be unique to you, the important thing to do is stop trying to sleep.

Create a structure to your day. The pandemic may have disrupted the structure you used to have but you can still create a new structure. This begins with starting the day at roughly the same time every morning and ideally having some social interaction early in the day. This interaction does not need to be elaborate, a short phone call will do.

Courtesy: <https://med.stanford.edu/psychiatry/about/covid19/sleep.html>

Kromatiks...



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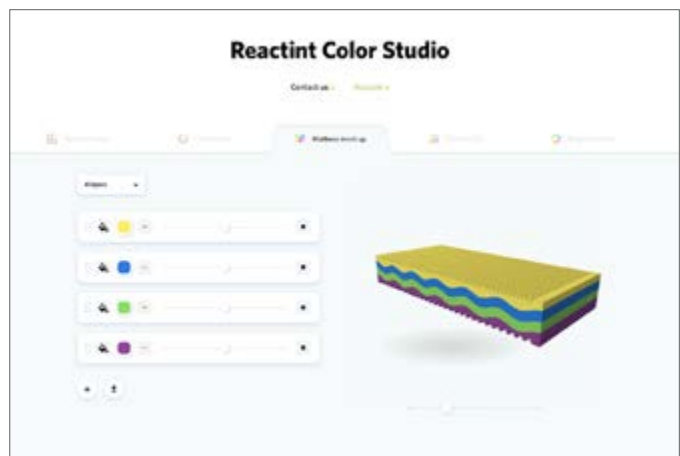
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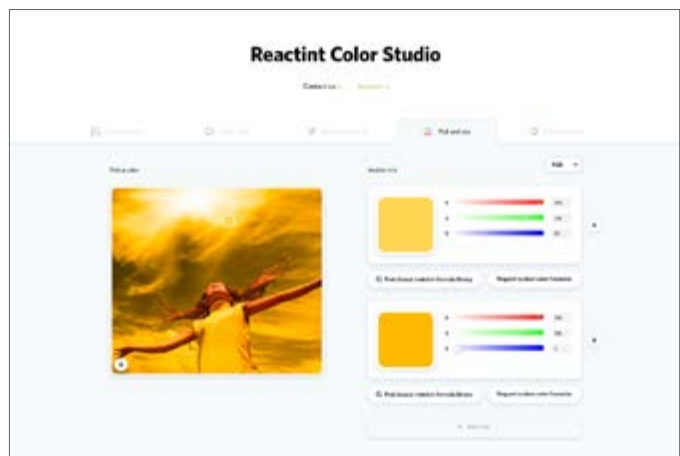
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