

# Comfort Times

by ISPF

**ISPF Consumer Survey**  
How the year 2020  
changed consumer  
preference on  
Mattress Buying?

**40** Customer Loyalty  
Programmes gel with the  
mattress industry

**36** Omni channel strategy to  
set foot in Indian Mattress  
market





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available to browse together with the customer.*



Cover Story

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# ISPF Consumer Survey How the year 2020 changed consumer preference on Mattress Buying?

A lot has morphed when it comes to the value consumers attach to a mattress. A lot is changing about what they expect from a sleep product too. The year 2020 has pushed the needle in a new direction. Here's what that means for players who are ready to follow suit.

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**Interview****44****Foam to wood or back –  
We have the edge of synergy**

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Companies Stand Out**

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Less is more. That's not just some interior design philosophy or a new responsible lifestyle approach. It is a tenet that is getting inside the typical mattress. Let us slip our hands into this trend

**Omni channel strategy to set foot in  
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Consumers are now looking at using online and offline platform for his/her benefit. Going forward omni-channel strategy improve business sense for the Indian industry

**Customer Loyalty Programmes gel with  
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Loyalty programmes are one of the key factors in keeping the customers loyal to the brands

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Creating better sleep-health is an obvious ingredient for any mattress player. But how far can these attempts go? How far will customers come?

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# FROM THE EDITOR



**C** COVID-19 has reshaped consumer behaviour. Find the new normal post COVID-19

In every market, consumers are the drivers of the market competitiveness, growth, and economic integration. Due to COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown and partial lockdown across the globe have created economic instability around the world. During such economic instability, even consumers also experience a transformation in their buying behaviour. As consumers around the globe adjust to the next normal, there is significant variance in consumer sentiment and behaviours across countries. A recent McKinsey report suggest that in most countries, consumers intend to continue shifting their spending to essentials, while cutting back on most discretionary categories. However, in China and India, spending is bouncing back beyond grocery and household supplies. Chinese consumers plan to increase spending on discretionary categories such as travel and apparel, suggesting that the country is further along the path to recovery than other countries. In India, consumers report a higher intent to spend across categories such as household, Travel, Entertainment, and services.

This edition of Comfort Times captures

the latest consumer survey findings from ISPF. This survey gives us an indication of what unfolds for the Indian mattress industry in coming days.

The survey says that the consumers have shifted to value-based purchasing and adopting to healthier lifestyle and buying products which promote health and hygiene. The survey found that most consumers are using digital channels to make payment and buy products spiking online business. Another interesting fact is that WFH has given rise to a new set of user segment for mattress industry.

The experience of living through COVID-19 is changing the world in which we live and the consumer buying behaviour. Changes that provide positive experiences last longer, particularly those driven by convenience and well-being, such as digital adoption, value-based purchasing, and increased health awareness. This provides an opportunity for mattress brands to offer innovative, value-based, anti-virus-based mattress for the new consumer segment. It is vital that mattress brands understand consumers' preferences to stay relevant and adapt accordingly. This will give momentum to businesses by creating customer loyalty and trust in the post-COVID-19 scenario.

**S. SUNDARESAN**



# 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

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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.

## Sleepwell rings in 2021 with a 'Healthy New Year' campaign, with Neem Fresche

Sleepwell, India's leading mattress brand from Sheela Foam Ltd., has taken the mantle of putting a spotlight on mattress hygiene with its new 'Healthy New Year' campaign that highlights the revolutionary Neem Fresche technology.

Last year was all about picking up various healthy habits that made people create checklists for ways to stay safe and healthy. The world had adapted to wearing masks, gloves, and using sanitizers regularly but had forgotten to replace their unhygienic old, overused mattresses with a new hygienic one.

The campaign was kickstarted with an interesting poll around 'Kya miss ho gaya?'; connecting with consumers and asking if they missed something important for maintaining personal hygiene.

Therefore, through this campaign 'Healthy New Year', Sleepwell aims to raise awareness about this issue and the benefit of using Sleepwell Neem Fresche protected products. The campaign will run for 3 months on various media i.e. - TV, Print & Digital across India.

Sleepwell has also partnered with leading celebrities and influencers to reiterate the importance of mattress hygiene with its new 'Healthy New Year' campaign. Well-known fitness and health enthusiasts such as Vidyut Jamwal, Pranitha Subhash, Yasmin Karachiwala, Samantha Akkineni and Suresh Raina are seen highlighting the benefits of the revolutionary Neem Fresche technology in Sleepwell mattresses and their role in keeping the mattresses germ-free.



Bring in a Healthy New Year  
with



## Duroflex's 'LiveIn Duropedic' addresses spine issues

A long day after working from home or doing activities that stress and strain the spine resulting in back problems. Addressing these problems, Duroflex has introduced LiveIn Duropedic, an orthopedic mattress approved by the National Health Academy that is available in smart roll packs that will be delivered in attractive boxes.

The mattress gives a restorative support to the back to give a good night's sleep. The advanced five zoned orthopedic layer is copyrighted to Duroflex providing a support to the five zones of the body resulting in optimum body alignment.

The mattress also comes with the special Triple Anti-Microbial Fabric that gives protection from harmful bacteria, fungi and dust mites.

Speaking on the launch of the product, Smita Murarka, Vice President – marketing & e-commerce, Duroflex said, "With LiveIn Duropedic mattress, we are strengthening our product portfolio online and catering to the digital first, mobile millennials. Our research shows that back ailments are on the rise among this audience due to lifestyle habits, stress and mounting work pressure. There is a growing need for a genuine orthopedic mattress from a trusted brand. LiveIn Duropedic is designed to provide the perfect back support at great value. It is easy to order and fun to unbox and comes with the convenience of a 100 Nights Free Trial."

## The 6th edition of IME will be held in Bangalore in 2022

INDIA MATTRESSTECH + UPHOLSTERY SUPPLIES EXPO (IME) – International Trade Fair for Mattress and Upholstery Production Technology, Machinery, Supplies, Production Tools and Accessories.

IME is India's ONLY B2B trade fair and the single most important forum for the industry in the subcontinent. The 6th edition of IME will be held from 24 – 27 February 2022 at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre, Bengaluru, India.

The upcoming edition of India Mattresstech and Upholstery Supplies Expo (IME 2022) to be co-located with INDIAWOOD 2022, will therefore offer an ideal blend for showcasing the latest in technology, trends, innovations and product development in one of the fastest growing sectors in India. India has an opportunity to build a more resilient and diverse economy in a post-pandemic world. As businesses the world over will attempt to decentralize the supply chain concentration, it provides India a unique chance to capitalize on this opportunity and become more integrated into the global supply chain.

IME 2022 is working towards facilitating access of Indian companies to global markets by focusing on a few clear priority areas: research, training, product innovation and better customer support.

It's time to innovate, create and harness the potential of this Industry.



## Nexus and Ion Crossover on board with Resident with \$130 million investments

Nexus Capital Management and Ion Crossover Partners (ICP) with participation from Baron Capital have invested 130 million dollars in the digitally native mattress and home goods brand platform Resident in Q4 of 2020 as per an announcement on Jan 7, 2021. The Nexus Capital Management and Ion Crossover Partners (ICP) will become a part of the Resident's board as per an arrangement.

"This capital infusion is a testament to our accomplishments, market positioning and momentum in a competitive and visible category," Resident Co-Founder Ran Reske said

in the announcement.

Investment was followed by Resident's tremendous sales of 100 per cent compared to 2019. The company also saw a tremendous growth in the retail sector of 2020 with its product available in many of the largest bedding retailers in the US. "We've been following Resident's success for a while and are excited to join their journey," said Jonathan Kolodny of ION Crossover Partners. "We are confident that the exceptional team and the marketing platform they've built will allow the company to continue on its unprecedented growth trajectory."



## Microban and Manchester Mills partner to provide antimicrobial products to hospitality sector

Microban® International, leading antimicrobial technology company, and Manchester Mills, leading textile manufacturers have joined hands to provide antimicrobial-treated textiles called Protect 360® to the hospitality industry.

A recent study\* revealed that 68 percent of respondents said that from past 6 to 8 months cleanliness in hotels have become extremely important to them and 58 percent of respondents were willing to pay more for a hotel room with products treated with antimicrobial protection. Majority of the respondents in the survey mentioned that the most uncomfortable and dirtiest they feel about a hotel room are the comforters, mattress and pillow encasements.

"Our partnership with Microban combines our textile engineering expertise and industry insights with the leading antimicrobial technology to provide products that meet consumers increased expectations for cleanliness and safety," said Elizabeth McNulty, Senior Vice President and General Manager at Manchester Mills. "Manchester Mills is focused on finding innovative solutions to instill guest confidence and support our hotelier customers businesses during these challenging times," she added. The collection of products will be sold directly to customers, through Manchester Mills and its distributor network in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and European Union.

## LINET extends hand to Côte d'Ivoire in fight against COVID-19

LINET, a leading global supplier of hospital beds donated twenty Eleganza single beds worth €40,000 to Côte d'Ivoire's healthcare system on Jan 6, 2021 with an aid to support the health care system's fight against COVID-19. The donation will be used at Center Hospitalier Universitaire (Chu) in Treichville, a part of the Abidjan metropolitan agglomeration "We implemented humanitarian aid at the request of the Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire to Germany. Our long-term goal is to promote access to healthcare in this West African country.

LINET is ready to offer quality and economically sustainable equipment to improve the availability of care, for example in the construction of regional health centers," said Petr Foit, LINET Group's Sales Director for Export.

The cooperation between LINET and other Czech companies with Côte d'Ivoire's Ministry of Health is actively supported by Petr Foit, a member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Manufacturers and Suppliers of Medical Devices of the Czech Republic, and also by the local consulate of the Czech Republic.

## Bedding Industries of America's facility to open shortly in Rialto

Bedding Industries of America, flagship licensee of Eclipse International has plans of opening a new facility in Rialto, California on April 1. Scheduled to open an 80,000 square foot facility, the company has planned to employ 120 employees to serve retailers in California, Nevada and parts of Arizona. The facility will manufacture mattresses Eclipse, Saatva, Eastman House and Natural Dreams Pure



Talalay brands and others from the company's portfolio.

"With the industry landscape changing and demand for our products so strong, we saw the need for a facility in Southern California to better serve our clients," said Stuart Carlitz, President and CEO of Eclipse International.

# ISPF Consumer Survey How the year 2020 changed consumer preference on Mattress Buying?

A lot has morphed when it comes to the value consumers attach to a mattress. A lot is changing about what they expect from a sleep product too. The year 2020 has pushed the needle in a new direction. Here's what that means for players who are ready to follow suit.



No matter what survey or pattern you track, there are three clear waves that have emerged in the storm that was 2020. As people got more time to sit and look around their homes, as they started working from not a desk but a couch or a bed – the very connotation of a mattress or a sleep product underwent a big flip. Customers have started underlining this part of their lives with a new-found interest and gravity. That bodes well for those industry players who want to fulfil this fresh appetite. But also means one more caveat – cater to these demand with the new qualifiers that go with it. Just selling any mattress won't do. So let us understand this new customer from the context of three layers.

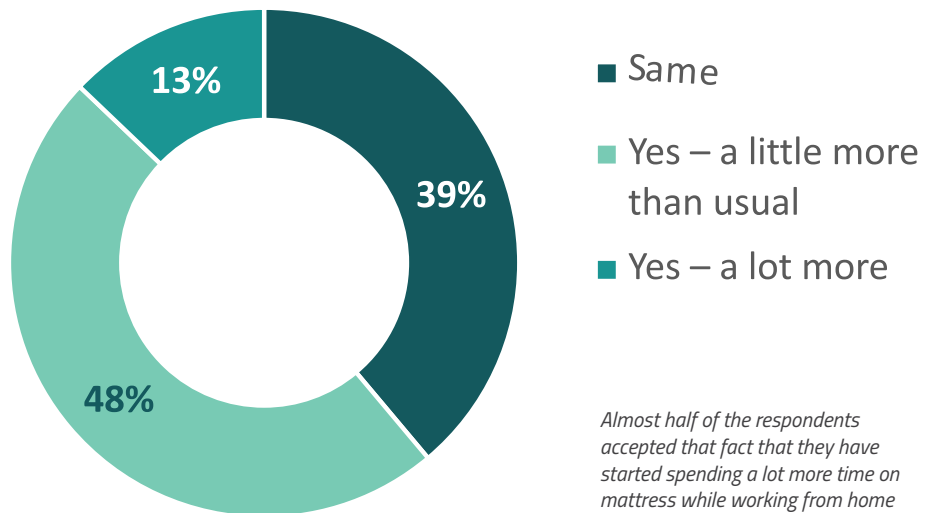
### WFH-fuelled Demand

The tendency to work from home (WFH) has swelled in huge ways in the lockdown dotted year. And the big change is not going to show any major signs of reversal too. People and employers have found the cost-advantages and flexibility-gains of the WFH model. They are going to keep tapping into this possibility. That means that the new set of needs and attributes that transpired in these environments will keep affecting consumer behaviour even through 2021 and beyond. Specially for products and services that are highly-personal and comfort-defined. Like mattresses.

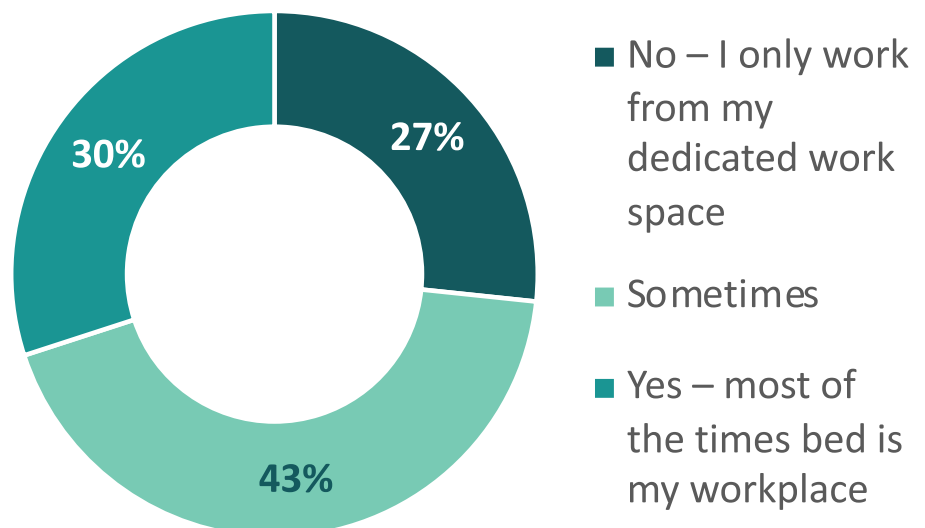
It was not so surprising to find that many consumers were feeling extremely vulnerable in public places and around people outside their immediate households. Indeed, 64 percent of consumers responding to the 2020 Gartner Consumer Behaviors and Attitudes Survey believed they were at risk of exposure in public places, and 77 percent said that socializing the way they did pre-pandemic is no longer comfortable (as per a September 2020 survey of the Gartner Consumer Community).

The preference for home and hesitation for outdoors echoes in many places. In an insight-packed ISPF survey done across 20 Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities in India (including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Surat, Pune, Ahmedabad,

## Time spent on mattress during WFH



## Working on Bed



*30% of the respondents mentioned that most of the time they work on bed only*

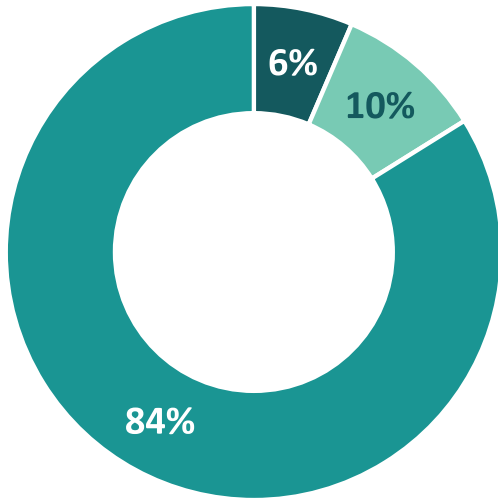
Agra, Jaipur, Kanpur, Kolkata, amongst others); it was observed that 16 percent of the respondents mentioned that their life has been impacted because of COVID. Almost 65 percent are in a WFH mode for the entire week while 18 percent have a three-day a week WFH schedule.

Imagine what that translates into? As many as half of the respondents accepted that fact that they have

started spending a lot more time on mattress while working from home. The pattern is similar across all kinds of cities (Bangalore: 67 percent, Agra: 50 percent, Ghaziabad and Delhi: 100 percent). Now 11 percent of respondents plan to buy specific furniture that suits their WFH lifestyle and 33 percent want to buy apt bedding here instead of a study table.

If we see an Accenture Covid 19 Consumer Pulse Research report that

### Mattress related hygiene



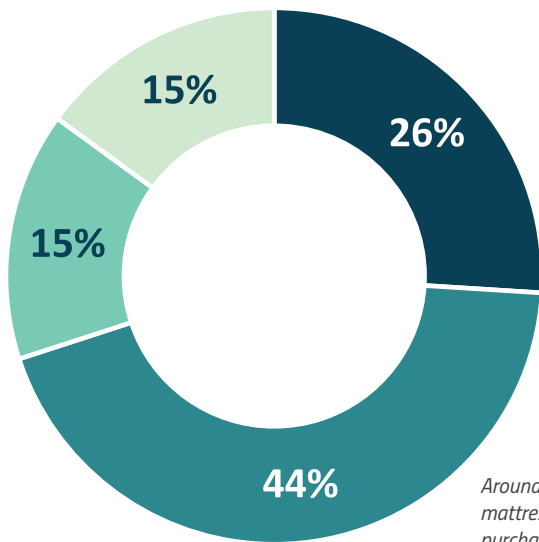
- Hygiene is not associated with mattresses
- Not Important
- Very Important

*84% of the respondents accepted that hygiene of the mattress is very important*

### Household spending to grow in 2021

Fitch Solutions forecast household spending in India to return to growth in 2021, after the Covid-19 pandemic led to a contraction in consumer spending in 2020. It is forecasted that household spending in the country to grow by a real rate of 6.6% y-o-y over 2021, an improvement from the -12.6% y-o-y contraction in 2020. While growth will return to positive in 2021, Fitch do note the recovery will be slower than most countries, as a result of the significant contraction over 2020.

### Mattress Age



- <1 Year
- >5 Years
- 3-5 Years
- Don't Remember

*Around 45% of respondents have last purchased a mattress more than 5 years back while 26% have purchased in less than a year*

of the community, the demand for localization and new 'essentials' such as home-ware. They need to recognize the changing role of the home as well as flexibility on its location away from urban areas, as WFH turns mainstream. As per its survey, 20 percent want to stay at home as much as possible.

This situation presents an opportunity for customers to explore a new lifestyle, as the lines between personal and work life are blurred – states the report. That is hard to argue with, specially when we see that 37 percent of consumers claim they are working from home more than before COVID-19, and a high proportion will continue to do so in the future. Also, look at those 13 percent of consumers who declared they have moved home as a consequence of this situation.

polled 2,500 consumers in India; we will notice that 90 percent of consumers are making lasting changes to how they live, work and shop- and there is no going back to the pre-pandemic world for consumer brands.

Consumers are now focused on their most basic needs while cutting back on nonessentials, as the report said. Staying-at-home and working from home have turned into norms rather than exceptions. The ways in which people spend their leisure time are

also changing because of the outbreak and related social distancing measures. What's even more interesting is that these habits are likely to continue and may not vanish after the world resumes continuity.

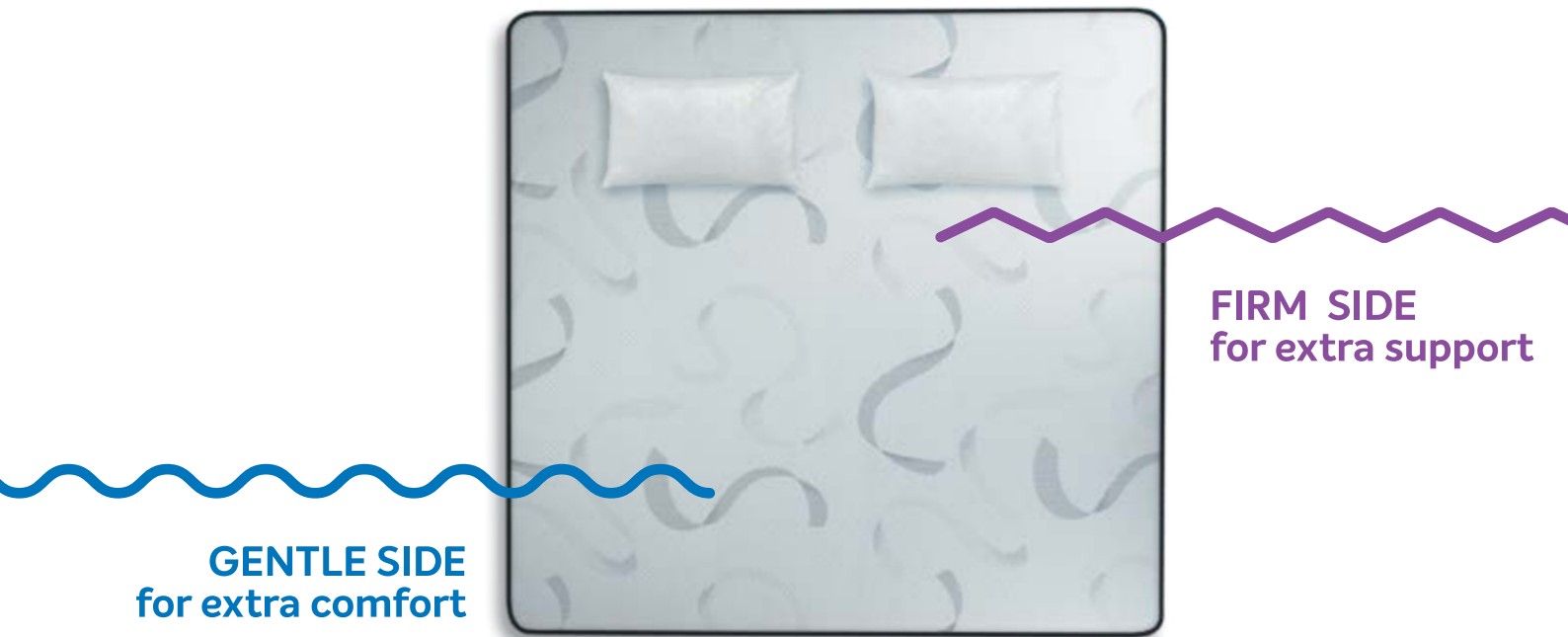
That's why experts are recommending ways to recognise and cater to this WFH segment. As per a November 2020 KPMG report on 'Responding to consumer trends in the new reality' companies are advised to seek to tap into the growth

This was noticed as more prevalent among those aged between 18 to 44 years old (23 percent). Just think about the corollary impact on activities that were sidelined before – like how net confidence in walking and cycling is +9 percent vs. pre-COVID-19, while confidence in using your own car is +25 percent. Think of how consumers trust public transport far less than before (-37 percent). Truly, routines have changed, and the road back to 'normal' is long.

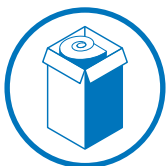
# Presenting



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mattress in a box



5 years  
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Zippered cover  
for easily interchanging  
top layers



Do it  
yourself  
easily



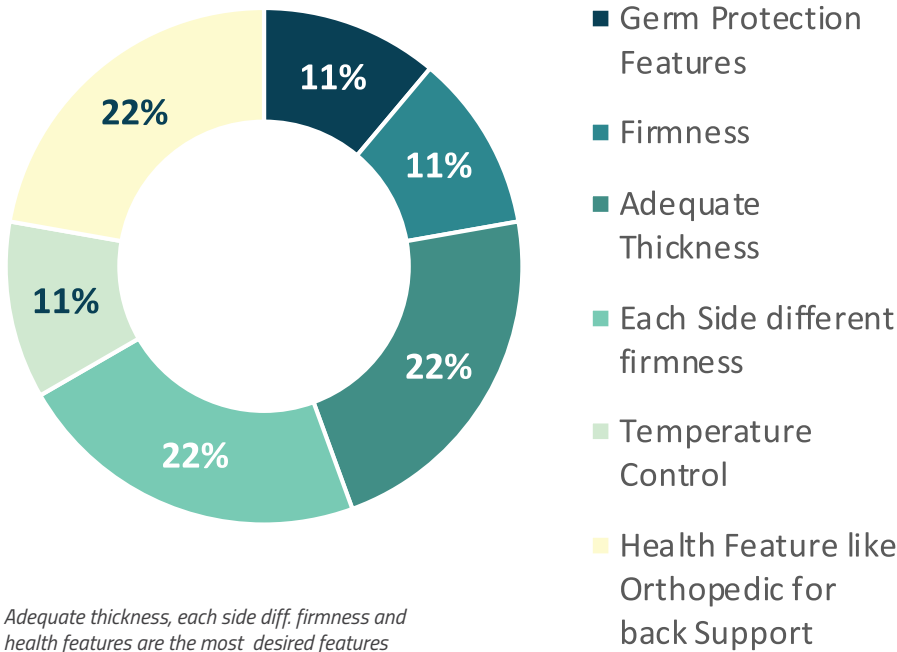
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## Desired Features



*Adequate thickness, each side diff. firmness and health features are the most desired features*

**Sleeping on an anti-bacterial mattress ensures complete wellbeing to a person's health as well as skin. Due to its hypoallergenic properties and odourless, the sleeper can repose peacefully and enjoy deep sleep**

If eating in (cooking in home, treats, alcohol) stood at 26 percent, +7 percent and house and garden improvements stood at 21 percent and three percent respectively, just think of how many positive ramifications can WFH trend have on a category like mattresses.

### Health and Hygiene

The virus was a wake-up call – and a really loud one– for people who had put their health priorities on the

back-burners. This phase shook them up with a brutal force and reminded them that what they should be paying attention to – as a human being and as a consumer both – is health. Now the psychographic hierarchy of almost every demographic has put health on the top plank. Customers have recognised the significance of being healthy and that's what they would expect in a major, and unforgiving, way from the products and services they consume.

In the ISPF survey it has also emerged that 84 percent of the respondents accept that hygiene of the mattress is very important. Comfort is also etching itself as a factor of importance now. Almost 60 percent of the respondents mentioned their mattress is comfortable. 22 percent now look for some sort of health feature like an orthopaedic product for something for back-support. Even on the packaging experience side, 22 percent want safe and hygienic packing delivery.

Having a "health strategy" will be a strategic differentiator for the foreseeable future – as it stresses through some numbers and their interpretations. One thing is clear

The majority of the respondents agree that the hygiene of the mattress is particularly important.

1. Because of the long usage of the mattress, more than half of the respondents feel comfortable while working on the mattress.
2. The majority of the respondents maintain the mattress clean and hygiene and an exceedingly in a small number of the respondents feels their mattress is unhygienic and might be harmful to their health.
3. The purchase behavior shows that the recent purchase for a mattress is for their self-use, this shows the more working from home has resulted in this behavior.
4. Look and feel is considered an important parameter and customers prefer retail stores over online to buy mattresses.

– Consumers are more mindful of what they're buying. They are not only striving to limit food waste, but they are prone to shopping more cost-consciously and buying more sustainable options. The report also advises that brands will need to make this a key part of their offer (e.g. by exploring new business models). There were 60 percent customers who exhibited the emphasis on shopping for health consciously and were intending to continue this post-outbreak.

No wonder, the mattress industry is also rife with announcements and plans from some players who are making health and hygiene a strong attribute of their products. Health-related features or designs will not be an add-on anymore. They would shape a core point to talk about and think about when it comes to a mattress.

### Lifecycle Twist

One more interesting shift that has happened in the pandemic year is the way people perceive the lifecycle and importance of many products. Many

Sleep also plays a major role in employees' productivity even in Work-from home culture. A healthy sleep stabilizes the brain and increases the immunity. The mattress plays significant role in WFH environment



segments like cars, apparel and groceries have seen a tremendous reshuffle in a year where people found out new reality-checks. Owning a car, even if a small one, turned out to be helpful in a crisis-packed phase. Wardrobes and wardrobes, full of branded clothes and accessories, proved useless; but essentials like household items and groceries were accorded a new value and urgency now. While a lot of these changes will evaporate as people move on to a normal life, the deep shocks and priority-checks that they got during a tough year will, possibly, settle deep into their psyche somewhere.

Like the ISPF survey also distils, around 45 percent of respondents had last purchased a mattress more than 5 years back while 26 percent have purchased in less than a year. And 13 percent of the respondents are planning to buy a new mattress in less than a year timeframe. Plus, 50 percent of the respondents plan to buy mattress for guests/other rooms.

#### ***New User Segment for Mattress sales***

This is a big opportunity for Mattress brands to tap this new user segment. ISPF estimates that a good chunk of consumers would be going for replacing their mattress which are 5 or more years old. In normal circumstances, Mattress is a slow moving product where a consumer would use his mattress for

### IBEF projects boom in E-commerce in India

Indian E-commerce industry has been on an upward growth trajectory and is expected to surpass the US to become the second largest E-commerce market in the world by 2034. Technology enabled innovations like digital payments, hyper-local logistics, analytics driven customer engagement and digital advertisements will likely support the growth in the sector. The growth in E-commerce sector will also boost employment, increase revenues from export, increase tax collection by ex-chequers, and provide better products and services to customers in the long-term. Rise in smartphone usage is expected to rise 84% to reach 859 million by 2022.

E-retail market is expected to continue its strong growth - it registered a CAGR of over 35% to reach Rs. 1.8 trillion (US\$ 25.75 billion) in FY20. Over the next five years, the Indian e-retail industry is projected to exceed ~300-350 million shoppers, propelling the online Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) to US\$ 100-120 billion by 2025.

over eight years before he replace it.

What happened during the pandemic was more than a blip- consumer priorities became centered on the most basic needs, and that made demand for hygiene, cleaning and staples products soar, while non-essential categories suffered a slump. So as basic necessities of life took precedence and personal health emerged as the top priority for the consumers.

#### ***Other Trends Worth Noting***

Of course, WFH and health are great levers that will drive the consumer story ahead. But there are many other adjacent areas that have to be taken into reckoning too. They span across the consumer journey – from where s/he shops, how /she shops to what impact the person leaves on the environment.

In the ISPF survey what also manifested was the fresh set of needs that customers are placing an emphasis on. Like 44 percent have picked flexibility of delivery date and time as the most desired delivery element. 33 percent want options for easy returns and 22 percent want safe and hygienic packing delivery.

This would be an important metric for brands thinking about what's on consumers' minds and their mental-readiness on many areas.

## Opportunity in Tier-II and III cities for Indian mattress industry

ISPF survey reveals that Tier 1 cities help growth for mattress industry mainly from the institutional sector as it has the highest presence in these sectors as compared to the residential sector and is the prominent buyer of premium segment mattress. Tier 2 cities have the presence of both residential as well as institutional sector in large numbers which makes them the highest revenue generator in the mattress market. These cities are the largest buyer of mid and economy pricing segment. Tier 3 has the lowest penetration of new-age mattress but observed as the fastest-growing market in the mattress market industry.

Attitudinal differences between affluent consumers and everyone else have been accelerated and exacerbated in the pandemic. Like - lower-income consumers are much more likely to say they have cut their discretionary spending – they don't have enough money for nonessential purchases. That may not apply for affluent consumers. But these higher-income consumers are considering their purchases with more care. They are asking *"Is this the best use of my money?"* They are also feeling new aspects like guilt, and caution that would be constraints that their spending patterns will see.

### **New mind set for shopping**

There is the factor of isolation too so consumers are using digital to connect, learn and play. That does not mean reduced shopping- it just means a new mindset to shopping. Note that 'Revenge shopping' may kick the way it did in China. Also, according to Reserve Bank's July 2020 round of Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS)- confidence has been low compared to 2019, but consumers have shown positive expectations for the next few months.

Is that not a good sign for businesses – specially with a revival in demand in segments like consumer durables, electronics, and appliances?

ISPF survey indicates that there is a significant increase in the online shopping of mattress during 2020. However, it doesn't mean that retail sales will drop. Retail stores will do their business as usual and an additional revenue stream of e-commerce will start growing in 2021.

Mattress companies in India should rapidly adopt digital – this should be done to reduce cost to serve and also to address customer demand for e-commerce. They must also manage cyber risk, simplify their product offering and consider how to ensure brand differentiation – this becomes vital when face-to-face brand-building opportunities are reduced.

If we analyse the ISPF survey, it is clear that Mattress brands should start endeavours to meet the safety needs of customers.

In other words, a lot has changed for sellers and marketers, specially the 'why' and 'what' consumers spend on. Brands should start making access, simplicity, frictionless experience, health and hygiene – along with environmental consciousness- the new imperatives. This is a great time for the industry players, as well, to realign their priorities and strategies.

The post-Covid consumer is familiar on some aspects but there are a lot of changes that have taken deep roots in the last few challenging months for everyone. This customer thinks differently – about sleep, about home, about one's impact on the world and about the importance of health. It is a good time to invest in and strengthen.

People have woken up to health, their impact on environment and their real priorities of life. The snooze button would not be pressed for a long time on this awakening. So step in where the customer is and follow the sunshine. **CT**

### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

1. Health benefits
2. Hygiene- in product as well as other areas like sales, service and support
3. Speed and contactless distribution
4. Personalised-product purchase and user-experience
5. Changes in product life-cycle
6. Emphasis on environmental-consciousness in products and sustainability-led business models

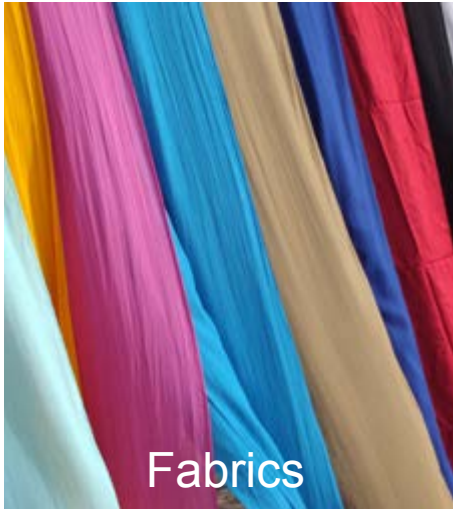
Most of the companies are adopting the concept of WFH which has proven and become the accepted way.

1. The new way of buying any furniture is "How Safe" and "How Healthy".. Consumers are becoming more conscious of what they are using and what they will use.
2. As per the survey the concept of "Work on your Bed" has become a practice.
3. Changing the mattress for hygiene purpose is exceptionally low.
4. At least half of the respondents interviewed have purchased the mattress five years back. There might be scope for them to change the mattress.
5. Adequate thickness, Ortho back support and Firmness on different sides is the important parameter considered.





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# Trade show inviting Innovators in Sleep Products: HGH India

Research has proven that quality and comfortable sleep has a direct connection with an individual's health, sleep hygiene and comfort leading to reduced stress levels and increase in productivity. There is a further growing consciousness towards developing better sleep habits as a result of pandemic-induced behaviour. The sleep industry is facing new challenges and opportunities to provide right sleep solutions in this new Work-from-Home lifestyle.

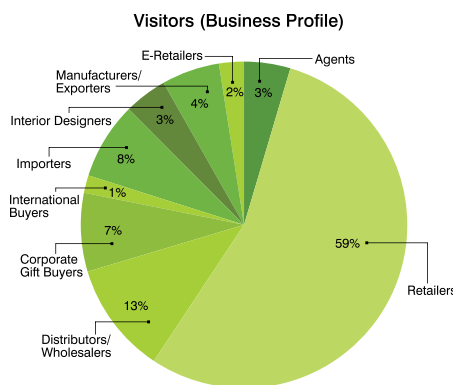
India is relatively new and therefore, a high growth market for modern sleep products such as Mattresses, Pillows, Comforters, Blankets, Mattress protectors, Sleeping Bags and other Sleeping Gadgets. HGH India 2021 is hosting a special Sleep Technology pavilion in hall 1 aimed at providing a focussed marketing opportunity to Sleep products manufacturers to educate retailers and trade visitors on upcoming innovations and enable them to understand various factors affecting the choice of right sleep products. This will help retailers provide better information to consumers, helping them buy the best suited sleep products for their individual needs.

The upcoming 10th edition of HGH India, is an apt opportunity to reconnect with your dealer and distribution network from 500 cities and towns across India. Scheduled for June 8 - 11, 2021 at Bombay Exhibition Centre, Mumbai, HGH India 2021 will also submerge in it the 9th edition which was postponed due to the pandemic. The trade show will help you identify potential business partners, showcase new products for target groups, meet & network with major trading houses, discover new business opportunities & enhance your brand image.

Over 19 leading mattress brands and manufacturers exhibited in HGH India



A visitor checking a new sleep technology



last edition with several innovations in spring, memory foam, coir and other varieties of high quality mattresses and pillows. Readymade mattress demand in India has been doubling year after year in India during the last 5 years leading to constant entry of new products, new brands and new range entering the market every day. Retailers, distributors, institutional buyers and interior designers need to keep pace with this dynamic segment.

HGH India 2019 helped visitors understand innovations and latest

developments from well established brands like Kurl-on, Springfit, Duroflex, King Koil, Centuary and Nilkamal. Also, other known brands such as Memoir, Coirfit, Dr. Back, Repose, Relaxwell, Magenta, Sleepmax offered a diverse range of mattresses and pillows for different market segments nationally.

An esteemed mattress exhibitor of HGH India 2019 remarks, "HGH India is probably India's biggest platform where we meet our dealers' network from all over the country. We do many exhibitions in North, South and West on different platforms but HGH India, I can say is one platform where dealers from all over India come. It is a very good tradeshow."

Connecting Collaborators, HGH India is a comprehensive hub for market research, trend information, product innovations & cost-effective sourcing for all kinds of business collaborators.

HGH India 2021 will offer a versatile platform for brands & manufacturers to present their innovations & trending collections to their channel partners & institutional buyers in the Indian market. **CT**

# Packaging for Success

How brands can leverage the packaging to create a sound connect with the customer



First impression is a very critical aspect to manage, be it for an individual or a firm. Opinions formulated at the start often play a crucial role in influencing long-term interactions. It is pertinent to remember that first impressions are not transitory, and they cast a prolonged impact on the future. In psychology, a term captures the first impression's effect; it is called the primacy effect. According to the primacy effect, people tend to remember the first piece of information they encounter better than information presented later on. In human-to-human interaction, first impressions are cast by a wide variety of engagements like looks, speech, tone, tenor, dress, body language, etc. In the brand-to-customer interaction, the first impression's scope is minimal; it is the packaging that impresses the customer with its worth or unworthiness. The adage, *"make a good first impression,"* applies to people and brands alike.

Phil Kotler, the marketing Guru, is renowned for his insightful approach to brand management. He has penned several books, and one of his most famous ones happens to be the 'Principles of Marketing'. In this book, Kotler had introduced the concept of 4Ps in Marketing, namely, product, price, packaging, placement. In the same, he defines packaging as *"all the activities of designing and producing the container for a product."* Essentially, packaging can be defined as the wrapping material around the product to cover, contain, protect, and promote a specific brand. According to MeadWestvaco's research, packaging plays a significant role in product satisfaction for the customer, even in India. Most Indian consumers gave high importance to the packaging as compared to the global average. The packaging is almost as important (71 percent) as the product's brand (75 percent).

Keeping aside the marketing bit, the importance of packaging can be attributed to following factors:

**Trust:** Packaging helps build trust with the customer, reaffirming the product's genuineness and the brand.

**The fundamentals of packaging apply to the mattress just like any other product, the bedding industry does have some unique challenges. Primarily these challenges pertain to size, time, and transport. In essence, packaging for mattresses must protect against moisture, dust, and other contaminants**

If the company has a long history, the packaging can leverage that to build trust.

**Preservation:** Packaging helps protect the product from any external damage. This protection ranges from when the product is shipped to the retailer, to when the customer buys it from the shop.

**Attraction:** Like the plant attracts pollinators through the flowers' beauty, a company attracts potential customers through packaging. The way the product is packaged attracts the consumer to look at the product on the store shelf. Hence, companies undertake extensive research on design, color scheme, and the type of packaging used.

**Enabling Purchase:** By providing relevant information to the customer, packaging can significantly aid the purchase decision. For instance, health-conscious customers would check the label for details about the ingredients and the impact on health before making a choice.

**Differentiation:** Companies can achieve brand differentiation through packaging. Through colors, logos, etc., customers distinguish one brand from

the other. Many a times, the customer might identify with the company brand, which propels them to buy the product. If the product packaging changes, it may change the brand perception of the company. This could lead to a delay in purchase decisions till the consumer can relate to the new packaging.

### *Mattress packaging*

While the fundamentals of packaging apply to the mattress category just like any other product category, the bedding industry does have some unique challenges. Primarily these challenges pertain to size, time, and transport. In essence, packaging for mattresses must protect against moisture, dust, and other contaminants. It also needs to be sturdy enough to prevent damage during shipment. Because of the size, weight, and shape of a mattress, achieving these results requires innovation and technology.

Additionally, mattresses are hard to move and store; they're heavy, not waterproof, and customers expect them to arrive in immaculate condition. Since mattresses are also shipped from multiple locations, you also need a solution that is not bulky or further escalates the shipping charges. One of the significant innovations from the packaging point of view has been compressed packaging; this aids in easy transport. Compressed mattresses are also cheaper to transport. According to estimates, compressed mattresses save near 70 percent space in comparison to uncompressed ones. Typically, an automatic mattress seal compressor is used for compression packing and turning it into a roll.

The best instance of this shift is the new bed-in-a-box. Over the past few years, there has been an explosion of companies selling mattresses in a box, dubbed as the 'bed in a box' category of mattresses. Unlike traditional mattresses that are carted in a *"ready to sleep"* format, the bed in a box is a mattress made of memory foam, compressed and rolled up so it can be shipped and delivered in a courier box. All that the customer has to do is unroll it, unwrap it, and wait for it to reinflate.

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This medium of the card-board box offers the company a grand opportunity for branding and advertising. A brand can elevate the design to an entirely new level through an interplay of color, fonts, illustrations, and graphic elements. (Read the Case study of Eve Mattress). Some of the best practices for a standout design can be listed as:

**Colour play:** Use color contrasts for a standout design.

**Illustrative:** Use distinctive visual assets to create an attractive solution

**Branding:** It should be in accordance with the brand strategy

**Informative:** Share the information about the product upfront and in bold on the box

**Innovative:** Functionalities are also appreciated, like how about a handle on the top, or hand-holds on the side.

**Creativity:** Creativity always scores high. For instance, can the box be turned into a doll-house or a board-game? Can the instructions be given on a website through a QR-code sign in?

In the end, packaging can be an excellent opportunity to engage the consumer. A brand should leverage that to the maximum, even when the mattress is delivered in a box on the doorstep. Casting first impressions are necessary, as Andrew Grant used to say, *"you never get a second chance to make a first impression."* So, make the best one you can.

### **Case Study: How Eve mattress got their packaging right**

Eve Sleep Plc is a UK-based company that primarily sells mattresses online. Founded in 2014, the company manufactures four different mattresses. The current Original has a three-layer design incorporating memory foam. The mattress is vacuum-packed and folded into a box and can be easily delivered and moved up staircases, unlike traditional mattresses. When unpacked, the mattress recovers its original shape and is ready to sleep on within hours.

## **Packaging can be an excellent opportunity to engage the consumer. A brand should leverage that to the maximum even when the mattress is delivered in a box on the doorstep**

Eve Sleep's products are designed and made on-demand in the UK and the United States.

To differentiate its product from the rest of the 'bed-in-box' competitors, Eve decided to redefine its advertising and marketing strategy with the packaging at the center of it. It starts with an easy-to-handle, crisp white box branded with a bright yellow logo rising and setting over the corners. When the box is opened, the mattress 'bursts out' of the box – like someone jumping out of bed. The box's inner lid is very inviting and shouts 'wakey, wakey, rise and shine'. As the company believes it to be *"the world's most comfortable mattress"* and *"the perfect mattress"* at a third of the price of an equivalent high street mattress, the packaging reflects that ethos.

To match Eve's vitality and freshness, its packaging box features the brand's signature sunny, vibrant yellow and plays on the palindromic nature of the logo. The company wanted the box to look fantastic on doorsteps and the trailers of bicycle couriers making deliveries around London. Hence the color palette chosen was bright and inviting.


And then, as the customer is waiting for the mattress to inflate and take its proper shape, they can spend some time reading some interesting quotes on sleep printed on the inner side of the box. The lively typography and upbeat language add to the consumer experience derived from buying the mattress.

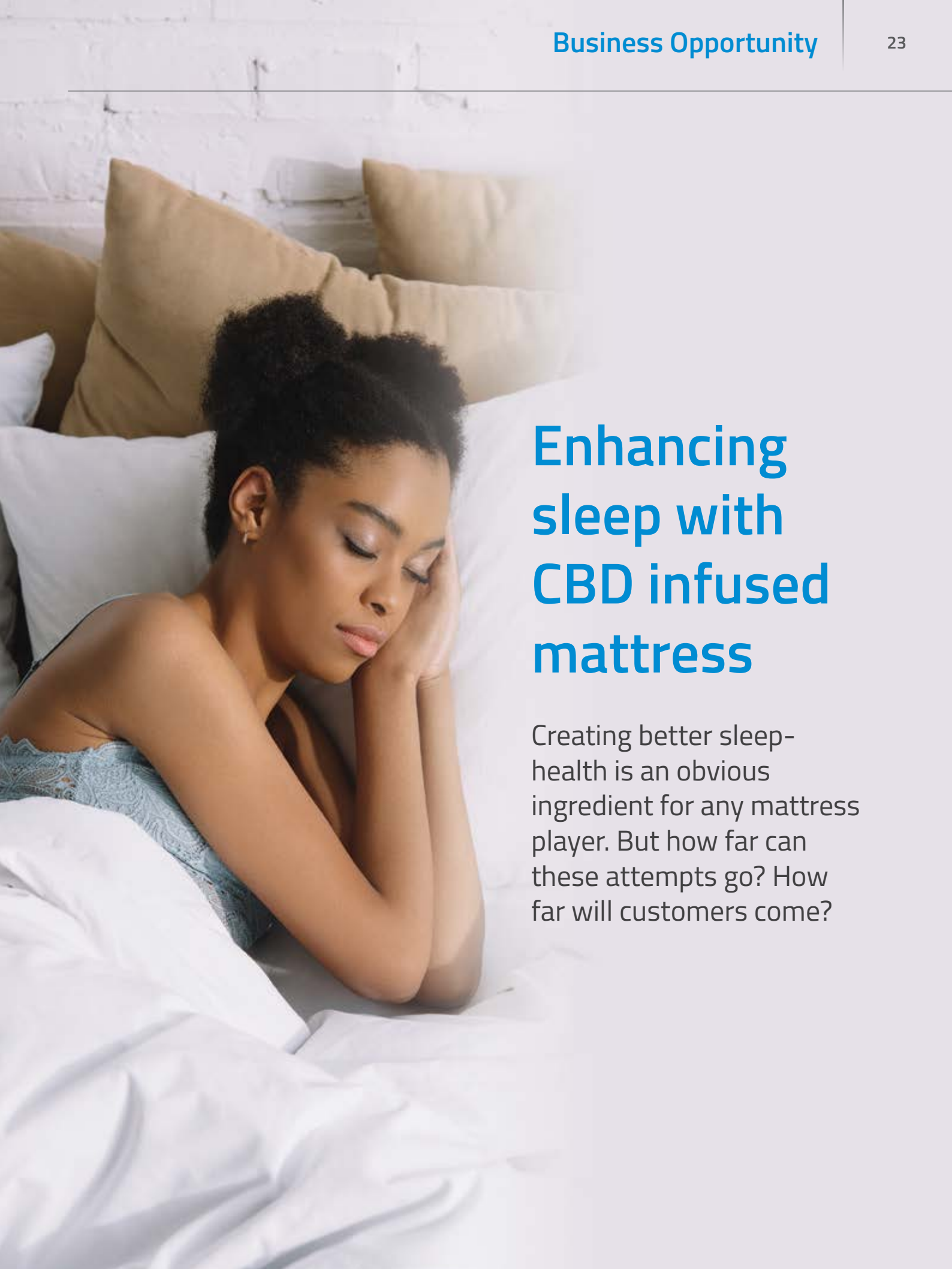
### **Case Study: Sustainable packaging with Hypnos**

Hypnos is a family-run bed making company in the UK. The company has been making beds and mattresses for 100 years for the Royals and claims to be the world's most comfortable bedding. The company has ingrained sustainability into its ethos and is the first British bed and mattress manufacturer to become Carbon-Neutral.

Taking this commitment further, Hypnos launched a carbon-neutral eco-packaging solution. The company has created a new recyclable, eco-friendly packaging solution that will be used for beds and mattresses across both retail and contract factories. It comes as part of the cutting-edge manufacturer's significant efforts to design its packaging from sustainable and renewable sources and eliminate the use of harmful, fossil-based products.

At the heart of the packaging is sugar cane, a renewable and carbon dioxide depleting resource. Sugar cane ethanol is combined with recycled plastic, a carbon footprint that can be up to four times lower than that of standard plastic, helping those who use it to reduce their carbon footprint massively. The use of ethanol, a by-product of sugarcane production, and recycled plastics that form a green polyethylene (a more environmentally-friendly form of plastic) means the creation is carbon neutral and 100 percent recyclable as well. Furthermore, it's incredibly durable and has superior technical properties to regular polythene, performing better puncture tests.

Hypnos led the challenge by working in partnership with a specialist green polyethylene manufacturer to create the cutting-edge solution which could be a sustainability game-changer across the entire bed and furniture industry. To help other mattress companies, Hypnos made the decision not to patent or trademark this packaging. Instead, the company is calling on industries around the world to ditch single-use polythene and make the transition to this 100 percent recyclable product. 



## Enhancing sleep with CBD infused mattress

Creating better sleep-health is an obvious ingredient for any mattress player. But how far can these attempts go? How far will customers come?



One theory that supports CBD infusion is that its role in preserving anandamide - a molecule produced by neurons in our body. It is a regulator of pain and inflammation levels - and breaks down quickly - as per some supporters. Its deficiencies can cause anxiety, depression and even chronic pain, and that's why CBD is argued as something useful because it binds to the protein that causes anandamide-degradation and decreases its presence. CBD is also claimed as a good regulator of endorphins which help to combat pain and stress in a human body. Usual painkillers help here but they can reduce the body's own ability to produce them, as per some contentions. CBD helps to increase self-sufficiency and decrease this dependency - as per some claims.

This decade has been about a lot of things and needs that started coming out of the closet. As blasphemous, or out-of-question, as it may have sounded just a few years back, people have started talking about using drugs as medicines - and in an open way now. They are urging law-makers and critics to consider the thin line between recreational and medicinal use of some substances - like Marijuana or Cannabis.

So do not be surprised when you hear about therapeutic mattresses of a completely new kind. Like - a CBD-infused mattress! Yes! Made out of cannabidiol, a natural derivative of the cannabis plant - this mattress is supposed to help people as a healer with its calming properties. It banks on the chemical nature of CBD as a pain-reliever and as a clinical tranquiliser. Cannabinoids, which are compounds found in the cannabis plant, are now coming up as alternatives to medicines to alleviate some medical discomforts and conditions.

No wonder a few mattress players have started infusing their products

with CBD in many ways:

- Direct integration in the foam
- Fibres infused with CBD oils
- Hemp that is full of CBD's purported benefits
- CBD-infused matrix that binds to the fibre of outer part of the mattress
- Micro-capsules that release the oil when friction happens
- Release of CBD inside the material as soon as a user moves or turns on the mattress. The friction from user's body causes the capsules to burst and spread throughout the fabric and then into the body
- Release of CBD in a way that skin and lungs absorb it in a regulated manner
- Transdermal infusion

If you look at some recent launches in this area, you would find the latest offering from Therapedic International - the new b-Calm mattress line-which is apparently designed to deliver a unique calming effect through a CBD-infused cover and foam. During the product release, the company explained that CBD is a natural derivative of the cannabis plant that has been clinically proven to impart a feeling of relaxation and

calmness. "It is the non-psychoactive portion of the cannabis plant, unlike its potent counterpart, THC. By law, CBD products may contain no more than 0.3 percent THC." A press statement clarified.

There are other players like Paramount Sleep, Mlily USA (CBD-infused Mprove mattress), CannaBeds (environmentally friendly Gel Memory Foam Hemp Mattress line) and startup ZBD Bed (makers of foam-beds with CBD oils and CBD-infused toppers and pillows) that are also bringing their own ponies in the ring to attack this market. The company Malouf recently added pillow-range of CBD with ActiveDough, the Zoned Dough, and the Shoulder.

The idea of such products is to help the user with a restful sleep so that s/he wakes up calm, refreshed and free of the stress s/he went to sleep with. They are claimed to be great for people who have a restless sleep or who suffer from some sort of chronic pain. They are also sold as anxiety-relievers for a specific segment of users by offering a full and restorative sleep. They promise deep sleep and, in turn, better health benefits.



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## Marketing opportunity for Sleep Products

India is a high growth market for modern sleep products like Mattresses, Pillows, Comforters, Mattress protectors, Sleeping Bags and Sleeping Gadgets.

HGH India 2021 will have a special focus on advancements in Sleep Technology. Sleep Technology pavilion in hall 1 will highlight upcoming trends and enable retailers and trade visitors understand factors affecting the choice of right sleep products. Idea is to make retailers better informed and empowered with right information for consumers.

HGH India 2021 is a unique opportunity for you to promote your brand and innovations amongst **retailers and distributors of sleep products across India** in a highly focussed manner. Exhibit at HGH India 2021 - India's largest trade show for home textiles, home décor, houseware and gifts



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In a research paper on Cannabis and Sleep – researchers Kimberly A Babson, James Sottile, and Danielle Morabito pointed out that cannabidiol (CBD) may have therapeutic potential for the treatment of insomnia. Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) may decrease sleep latency but could impair sleep quality long-term. The research work showed that novel studies investigating cannabinoids and obstructive sleep apnea suggest that synthetic cannabinoids such as nabilone and dronabinol may have short-term benefit for sleep apnea due to their modulatory effects on serotonin-mediated apneas. CBD may hold promise for REM sleep behavior disorder and excessive daytime sleepiness, while nabilone may reduce nightmares associated with PTSD and may improve sleep among patients with chronic pain. It however added how research on cannabis and sleep is in its infancy and has yielded mixed results. It is worth noting here that additional controlled and longitudinal research is critical to advance our understanding of research and clinical implications.

They are also being touted as great help for people who suffer from insomnia or other sleep-disorders but without leading to any addictions to CBD.

It is hard to argue that a certain section of consumers are curious for the idea. After all the market is already, err, buzzing with some beauty products, supplements, edibles, deodorants, pet products, bath products, sunscreens, drinks, smokables, pet products and oils containing CBD. Isn't CBD growing to be an almost \$25 billion industry within the next five years! In India, a small glimpse of this new area is palpable with some start-ups venturing into Ayurveda-based products with CBD.

Even Mary Helen Rogers, vice president of marketing and communications for the International

Sleep Products Association was heard saying in a media byte that the energy and excitement around this is very strong. "I think people are hungry for something new and exciting. I think we'll see CBD products for several markets to come. Consumers like to see new, innovative offerings, and from an industry perspective, it helps companies distinguish themselves from their competitors and allows them to introduce products that haven't been offered before."

But would people really need sleep to be offered from a health-plank?

### How Dope is Dope?



It is hard to analyse the tricky area of drug-infusion on this question, but we can certainly assess the broader question here. Let us check with Dr. Manvir Bhatia, MD DM Neurology, Senior Neurologist & Sleep Specialist. She has also been awarded by AAPIOS (American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, Boston), for "Extraordinary Contribution in Sleep Medicine" for the year 2017, for raising awareness of sleep medicine throughout, research and training of sleep experts in India. She underlines the broad aspect very strongly here – "We actually have to start to 'respect' sleep. It is the third pillar of health, after food and fitness. Managing sleep health is actually prevention of many bigger health issues like obesity, anxiety, diabetes, immunity-problems and even cancer. Our body needs this time to repair and work out some functions. The long-term implication of not sleeping well can be very critical. Good sleep helps us in the short term as well as in the long term."

Dr. Manvir Bhatia, MD DM Neurology, Senior Neurologist & Sleep Specialist cites how the landscape is rife for addressing the big issue of sleep health. "Insomnia, snoring and disturbed sleep – for instance. We have also started noticing cases of youngsters who are unable to sleep due to exams and stress of studies. Changing weather conditions also lead to fragmented sleep these days."



It is a \$9.3 billion (around 797 crore), industry according to a report from market research firm Grand View Research.

And people need solutions or actions to actively address these issues. "Snoring is a stigma even now. It affects relationships. Also dozing off without control is as much of a problem as insomnia where someone can get up at 3 am and start cleaning the house. People with the dozing disorder can nod off while driving or while praying. Reluctance to see a specialist is a problem here. Do not feel awkward. Do not self-medicate. Go to see a specialist." Recommends Dr. Manvir Bhatia, MD DM Neurology, Senior Neurologist & Sleep Specialist.

But finding a quick fix or an artificial aid is not the way to solve sleep-health issues, warns Dr. Saroj Sharma (who is an Ayurveda Expert and also the Director, Kala Ashram Wellness Centre). She refrains from commenting on any specific product but on a broader note, she raises the important point of time. She argues that the approach of the nature's way is the best timeline. "You can increase the quantity of fruits or vegetables with steroids but not the original quality. A baby still needs nine months to be nurtured inside a womb. Long-term life of any good thing needs time and effort. Any steroid or external formulation can help you with some

instant results for a few nights but it can harm you in the long-run. And think about the dangers of addictions and other side-effects. Then you would again get anxiety when you will not find a quick fix. This will create an endless loop of anxiety!"

### **Band-Aid or Balm?**

The idea of better sleep is certainly a strong gap that marketers can come in to fill.

Ashoo Advani, Strategy Director at Interbrand augurs that 'augmented-health propositions' reflect a micro trend but this area will become a major trend soon. "It's here to stay."



In the assessment of Pavel Naiya, Senior Analyst, Counterpoint Research, it is all about how long a good habit lasts. "Creating habits of health-consciousness looks impressive right now, but maintaining any good habit is a different scenario altogether. Gym subscriptions spike up every New Year but not everyone follows through the commitment. It is not that people do not want to be healthy. But maintaining this awareness and discipline is usually difficult on a practical routine. More than 50 percent of healthy routines are likely to drop, as one of our earlier surveys also unraveled." That said, the option of CBD as a better health habit is still very fuzzy.

### **Choose Your Balm – With Care**

It is clear that there are a lot of, and many radical, options available now to help people with better sleep.

But it is up to the customer to make a choice which aligns with one's specific need. Consider some general caution areas that Dr. Manvir Bhatia, MD DM Neurology, Senior Neurologist & Sleep Specialist indicates for better sleep-health. "In terms of the patterns that we observe, one intriguing factor is that of fitness-related habits. People who are consuming gym powders do not realise the high stimulant content that these bottles have. People who consume a lot of tea and coffee are also reluctant to accept their side-effects on sleep. They

In a research paper on use of synthetic Cannabinoid for certain insomnia and nightmare conditions, researchers Colin Cameron, Diane Watson, and Jeffrey Robinson found that abilone is a synthetic cannabinoid that has shown promise for the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)-related insomnia and nightmares as well as efficacy in the management of chronic pain. It has also been proposed for harm reduction in cannabis dependence. On one hand it was interesting to learn that medications associated with greater risk for adverse effects or abuse than nabilone were often able to be discontinued with the initiation of nabilone, most often antipsychotics and sedative/hypnotics. Also, there was no evidence of abuse within this high-risk population or reduction of efficacy when nabilone was given in powder form with water rather than as a capsule.

But on the other hand, it was added that the effectiveness for management of concurrent disorders in seriously mentally ill correctional populations has not been evaluated. This study supported the promise of nabilone as a safe, effective treatment for concurrent disorders in seriously mentally ill correctional populations. But it clearly underlined that prospective, randomized controlled trials are required to confirm the preliminary results. Follow-up in the community will be required to confirm effectiveness in harm reduction.

make an excuse – 'this does not affect my friend so why would it affect me'. But everyone's genetic make-up is different. So people should start realising what their own bodies tell them. No way, the answer is about a sleep short-cut.

As Dr. Saroj Sharma (who is an Ayurveda Expert and also the Director, Kala Ashram Wellness Centre) strongly avers, nothing can match the chemistry and brilliance of the best lab in the world – the human body. "And our body is constantly telling us something. If we can listen to what is troubling it or what is helping it, we need not look elsewhere for quick aids. Ayurveda talks a lot about the importance of digestive system for a good night's sleep. Eat as per seasons. Eat and sleep as per the nature's cycle. Adopt healthy practices and discipline. When you get exhausted in a good way and use healthy ways of relaxation, you do not need any external help for a good night's sleep or for fighting stress. We should start listening more and more to our bodies."

There is one more pattern that is coming up. Sleep is not just about the night but about how one spends the day. People tend to stay in their rooms a lot these days. Not going out enough, lack of proper food and exercise – all these also affect one's sleep quality."

Advocates of CBD substances espouse that these materials do not lead to any bad addictions and do not cause any side-effects. They are considered better than over-the-counter prescriptions or self-medications that people resort to.

Then why is FDA still investigating some serious CBD-side-effect possibilities like liver injury, adverse interactions with other drugs, male reproductive toxicity, and drowsiness? Would something like this ever be safe and attractive – for a customer? Specially when the proposition is surrounded with so much regulatory uncertainty and constraints. Not to forget, the easy propensity of people to become habitual of these substances. It may sound easy to inject a material inside a mattress but it is not that easy to inject the idea inside a user's mind – or worse, take it out of her/his habit-trap. Also even if CBD beds help with any kind of pain or disorder, the question still hangs over- how durable are these benefits? Will the material have a long shelf-life inside a mattress when a person sleeps over it repeatedly?

Clearly, there are many kinks that still dot this new bed. Will CBD ever be normal? That is a question that – for now- cannot be put to sleep that easily. **CT**



## The Coming of Smart Mattresses

Smart mattresses are going to be the new trend of the industry with slowly growing demand in the Indian market. This gives an opportunity for us to know more about this new face of mattress. Let us try to understand something about it.

Pooja Makhija is a renowned nutritionist consulted by the biggest of Bollywood stars. From Ranbir Kapoor to Deepika Padukone, all vouch for her fitness regimen and dietary acumen. She has thousands of followers on social media handles, especially Instagram. By virtue of her achievements and the testimonials, she commands much respect. Thus, recently, when in one of her Insta stories, she spoke about the need for good sleep hygiene, people started to notice. In her short informative video, Pooja talks about how sleep plays a vital role in our well-being and can boost immunity and overall health. "Seven to eight hours of sleep is important for adults to achieve good mental and physical health for longevity. What I really learned this year is the importance of sleep hygiene and having similar wake-up and sleep time." She also spoke about the biological clock or the circadian clock that maintains the bodily rhythms. "Also, each organ in the body has its biological clock. When this clock is disturbed, by not sleeping on time, or not having good quality sleep,

its rejuvenation and detoxification suffer," she adds. ([https://www.instagram.com/tv/CJV6szSBFhT/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CJV6szSBFhT/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link))

Indeed, the realization that sleep plays a very critical role in our lives is steadily being realized by one and all. Over the past year, with the world going into a topsy-turvy, with work from home becoming the norm, the delineation between work and routine life has been erased. People are not only working longer but also sleeping irregularly. This results in either oversleeping or undersleeping; in either case, it's harmful to the body.

And when we talk of sleep, we can't but not speak about the mattress. The mattress, unarguably, is the single most crucial piece of furniture in anyone's life. The math speaks for itself. On average, an individual spends close to 8 hours in sleep; that's a straight one-third of our life. Considering that mattresses are not changed for quite a few years, it is obvious the hours spent on the bed easily outdo any other spent anywhere

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The smart mattress use the smart technologies that are exciting to the customer. The interconnected devices converts the normal mattress to a intelligent mattress. This has allowed more customisation and personalisation for the customers

else. That's the power of the humble mattress.

### *Great powers, great responsibility*

Yet, despite all the importance the mattress plays in our lives, there hasn't been much attention paid to its form and make. Mattresses have been around since the time of the mighty empires, but they were the chattel of the rich and the mighty. It was only in the 20th Century when the mattress became a mass-market commodity with standardization in size and the materials used. The mattress was being quickly shipped off from the assembly-line to the retail store. In the many decades that passed, there wasn't much change reflected in the mattress. Indeed, many varieties were available based on the customer's budget, yet there was no essential difference among the mattress themselves.

Thankfully, that is changing now; one of the big trends is the technologization of the mattress. Over the past many years, technology has become an intrinsic part of our lives. We live in an age of technology, where everything is going 'smart.' In fact, the term smart would be listed out as an adjective or at rare times as a verb in our everyday usage. Yet, over the past decade or so, the word seems to have gained a life

of its own; it has become an idiom -- a term that typically presents a figurative, non-literal meaning attached to it. The reason is apparent; we live in a world where everything is either smart or becoming one. From the smart phones in our pockets to the smart homes in which we live, the smart cars that have debuted on the roads to the smart cities that have come up. Everything is becoming smart these days.

So, it is no surprise that mattresses, too, are joining the smart league. In recent years, innovation has come to the mattress industry, leading to smart mattresses that employ different technologies to give sleepers advanced sleep-enhancing features.

### *Defining the Smartness*

Essentially speaking, a smart mattress leverages the power of technology to provide exciting and innovative functionalities to the customer. Much of this technology is embedded and beyond the view of the customer. The driving spirit behind the smartness is the inter-connectedness that turns the mattress into a data-device that shares data, which can then be analyzed through the usage of various algorithms. With the availability and spread of high-speed Internet, India is seeing a boom in new devices coming

online. For instance, India ranks second in terms of the number of telecom subscriptions, internet subscribers, and App downloads. Still, India holds the world's highest data usage per Smartphone at an average of 9.8 GB per month. It is expected to double to 18 GB by 2024. A smart mattress uses all these technologies like Bluetooth connectivity, sensors, etc., to connect different devices or even to the Internet. Some of the exciting features of a smart mattress are sleep tracking sensors, automatic firmness adjustment, and cutting-edge components in the comfort system or support core.

Additionally, these mattresses allow greater customization and personalization of experience based on customer requirements. For instance, a smart mattress will provide a different firmness level to various individuals in the same family, based on their preferred choices. This is very different from the consistent experience from a traditional mattress that cannot change or adapt to individual choices.

### *The smartness spread*

Just like the features available on mobile phones, the features vary on the smart mattresses. Here are some of the primary components of a smart mattress:



to gather data on various sleep-related aspects.

### *The India story*

There is no doubt about the potential of growth for this market category in India. We have already seen how people are becoming conscious of health-related parameters. With fitness influencers like Pooja Makhija talking about health-related issues on popular platforms like Facebook or Instagram, the awareness levels among the average Indian is increasing. As the connection between good sleep and the right mattress gets strengthened, it will not be too far when mattresses with tech features make a splash in the Indian marketplace. Since everything is going smart, it is just a matter of time before we start sleeping on smart mattresses. **CT**

**Health monitoring mattress:** This type of mattress monitors the customer's various health-related parameters through the use of sensors. This sort of mattress can gather biometric data about the individual's health by measuring heart rate, breathing, and temperature. These mattresses can even assess the quality of sleep. The mattress can even monitor the ambient environment, like the temperature and light in the room.

**Customizable mattress:** Smart mattresses are unique in the sense that they adapt and change according to the customer's needs and requirements. For example, there are beds like an airbed, where the firmness levels can be altered through an app or a remote. Also, many of these smart mattresses provide a temperature control feature, wherein the bed could be heated or cooled by a few taps on the mobile phone.

**Self-adjusting mattress:** Artificial intelligence is the hallmark of smartness. And now AI seems to be making its debut in the mattress space as well. Take the self-adjusting mattresses, for instance. These mattresses proactively adjust setting through the night to provide a comfortable sleep to the customer. Using sensors that gather data on temperature and sleeping patterns, the mattress can tweak the firmness or temperature proactively and without you ever needing to wake up.

**Connected mattress:** Everything is interconnected these days, so why should not the mattress be as well? Presenting the connected mattress that connects to the home WiFi and can also integrate with other apps conveniently. Connectivity with Amazon Alexa and Google Home are popular features, especially since they can allow the customer to adjust mattress settings with voice commands.

**Sound-enabled mattress:** Smart mattresses also come with an audio interface that includes music-playing capabilities, integrated alarms, comforting sounds, meditation programs, etc.

And it is not only the mattress that is going smart; there are a host of other products that are also joining the bandwagon. Here are a few instances:

**Smart pillow:** Now, pillows are available with in-built speakers that can connect to mobile phone devices over Bluetooth.

**Sleep trackers:** There are several types of sleep trackers available on any online shopping mart. These can include wearable devices, small devices that wrap around your wrist and provide a detailed analysis of the sleeping patterns.

**Smart cover:** Slipping over the top of the bed, a smart cover includes sensors

### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

The market for the smart mattress is evolving on a global scale. The global smart mattress market size was estimated at \$1.14 billion in 2019 and is expected to reach \$1.26 billion in 2020.

Compared to the overall global mattress market, which stood at \$30.38 billion in 2019 and is projected to reach \$40.37 billion by 2027, the smart mattress category is still pretty small in terms of a number, accounting for 3–4 percent market share. The case is not too different in India. The available options to the customers are limited, and much of the sale happens directly online.



# MINIMALISM

## Waist-size or Waste-size?

Less is more. That's not just some interior design philosophy or a new responsible lifestyle approach. It is a tenet that is getting inside the typical mattress. Let us slip our hands into this trend

**T**ake the extra away and throw it out. Any minimalist worth her/his salt would swear by that ideology. In fact, s/he would even toss the extra salt away. It is not hard to understand why. Not anymore.

In the last few years, this mantra of minimalism - that was a creed that some interior designers and architects followed - has made its way into the life of an environment-conscious and stress-averse consumer. This is the kind of consumer who wants to simplify one's life and who loves the anti-materialistic credo.

As described by Euromonitor International, the 'Minimalist Seeker' is a kind of consumer category that focuses on living a minimalistic lifestyle and places a lot of importance on sustainability and community issues. This kind of consumer would rarely buy non-essential products and is unlikely to make impulsive shopping decisions.

Other attributes are that these Minimalist Seekers place importance on quality and are willing to pay more for this. It translates into longevity. These consumers would fix items rather than spend money or time in purchasing a replacement. Minimalist Seekers are unlikely to place importance on their image. Interestingly, they make a good target demographic for product innovations and new brands if one can align well, or speak clearly to their core Minimalist Seeker's values.

This kind of customer is thoughtful in spending on, and using, any product. They cannot be lured by discounts or aesthetics. They have a discretionary approach. They prefer timeliness, usefulness and versatility to redundancy and showing-off. They want returns on a product and sometimes, these returns can be as simple as sustainable or green product-values.

If we look at a report by Price

Waterhouse Coopers, 'The New Consumer Behaviour Paradigm: Permanent or Fleeting', we would see that as many as twenty-five percent of 18-27 year olds shared that their shopping behavior has 'changed significantly' and another 47 percent expressed it has changed somewhat.

Why pile up unnecessary stuff when you can easily live a comfortable life with minimal stuff - that's what these consumers ask and force the brands to consider too. And interestingly, there are producers and marketers who have started listening to this question. They have even started designing their products around this philosophy. They want to appeal to this new-age customer with a new model:

- Responsible sourcing of materials
- Minimal/optimal use of materials
- Simplicity-oriented design of products
- Preference to function over frills
- Long-shelf life of products



## Categorisation Chart

- **2 to 5 inches:** Low profile mattresses
- **5 to 8 inches:** Slim mattresses
- **8 to 12 inches:** Standard mattresses
- **12 to 16 inches:** Thick, deep, and tall mattresses
- **More than 16 inches:** Extra thick, extra deep, and extra tall mattresses

Generally, the comfort layer is 2-3 inches thick and a base layer is 6-8 inches thick. It can also be augmented with a 1-2 inch thick transition layer.

The best mattress should have a comfort layer that's at least 2-3 inches thick and a base layer that's at least 6-8 inches thick. Most mattresses also contain a 1-2 inch thick transition layer.

- Environmental-friendly approaches to design and manufacturing
- Importance to end-user comfort and the minimalism-oriented lifestyle

This shift has started emerging in the mattress industry too. Your beds may not be getting only cushier but ironically, a lot thinner.

### The Minimalist Bed-Maker

Catching up on the new-found wake-up call of minimalism a few players in the market have started designing beds and sleeping products with a new approach. The era of extra-deep mattresses that were 16 inch thick is now finding its way into a small lane. Brands like Lucid 5-inch, Signature, Zinus Ultima, Modway Aveline, Ikea, Linenspa, MustMat, FULL, Memoir are crafting thin mattresses at a quick pace. On one hand, they serve the bigger idea of simple design and on the other hand, they are great for people who have special back-support needs, or who have a different budget constraint, or who have a low ceiling bedroom or a minimalist interior vibe that a mattress should find a groove into. Also, these mattresses take up less space and are easy to dust off, move around and maintain. They regulate



Source: Euromonitor international's 2019 Lifestyles Survey

**The new-age customers are looking at smart life which leads to minimum resources utilised to maximum benefits. It is the new responsible way of living life. Life has become more cautious about environment as well as quality and longevity**

temperature and are not hot as they are made of fewer layers of foam. Unlike a low-profile mattress which is usually for a crib or a guest-room, a slim mattress can be used by adults or for regular sleeping needs.

A typical mattress can have 3 to 4 layers of foam. Each layer/s has a different material that define the final cushioning comfort, feel, sinkage, firmness, contouring, support and height of a mattress. The base layer and comfort layer are two key layers. The base layer dominates most of the thickness part of a mattress. It decides the durability of the product. In

inner-spring or hybrid mattresses, this part is made of coils. In memory foam mattresses, it is made of poly-foam. In latex mattresses, it can be latex or poly-foam.

The comfort layer can be made of wool, cotton, memory foam or poly-foam. It is a soft material that is stitched and packed with the cover. It is usually 2 to 3 inches thick. Some mattresses can have more than one comfort layer. The layers beneath this layer are transition layers. They can cater to specific support needs of various body parts. In a minimalistic mattress this typical construct can be challenged or looked into with a fresh eye.

Here's how is the minimalist sleep product achieved:

- Use of open-cell foams
- Platform beds with a minimalistic feel to the room-décor
- 4 to 5 inch size of foam with compact design
- Thin foam material size inside the mattress
- Low-lying beds
- Mattresses with easy foldable padding
- Special material like rush grass, non-woven fabric
- Lightweight support
- Beds with integrated storage
- Platform beds with edges that extend beyond the mattress so that it functions as a table or dining-spot

## Indian millennial population

In a 2019 Deloitte Report titled 'Unravelling the Indian Consumer', it was seen that India has the world's largest millennial population in absolute terms. They fall in the age group of 18-35 years, and with a population of over 440 million, millennials constitute nearly 34 percent of the country's total population. They constitute one-fourth of the workforce in the Asia Pacific region. Their contribution to the Indian workforce is significantly higher at nearly 48 percent. Millennials are increasingly becoming health-conscious and were seen placing higher importance on physical and emotional wellbeing, and thus swiftly moving towards healthier and organic options. Millennials aim at differentiating themselves from the rest of the crowd and prefer personalised product and service categories.

- Bed alternatives like futons
- Ground-hugging bed-frames
- Japanese inspired bedroom designs
- Beds made from renovated material and reclaimed parts
- Mattresses made with upcycled materials
- Sofa-beds with flexibility and minimal material usage
- Shrunk tiers of construction
- Mattresses with high-density foam as a base layer with high rebound and edge support

A thick mattress is expensive but can be good for people of a certain weight, medical condition or preference. A thin mattress consumes less material and may/may not fit the body requirements of the sleeper but it is easy to lift and manage.

### *Skeletal or stripped-down?*

It is hard to dismiss that minimalism is a trend that is gaining weight. But there are some challenges and doubts that envelope this go-thin direction even now.

Consumers no longer consider a product premium based on just a high price tag. Globally, less than one-third (31 percent) of the consumers consider a product premium only because it is expensive. Thus, a clear demand for value-for-money is emerging amongst the younger consumers.

Also, more than half of the consumers weigh evolving value drivers more heavily than the traditional ones - nearly 63 percent are willing to pay more for products where social impact values are demonstrated. Increasing disposable income, preference to unadulterated genuine products, increasing health and wellness consciousness, and awareness about implications of unsustainable social and environmental practices are some drivers here.

What about issues around shrinkage? What if the mattress starts showing lumps after some time? What if it is not comfortable or aligned to spine? These are questions that makers have to take into cognizance. And the most important one is – what if the customer gets bored of the philosophy of minimalism?

Ashoo Advani, Strategy Director at Interbrand augurs that 'Minimalism' is a micro trend and will remain like that for a long time. This is worth noting as compared to augmented-health propositions which is a micro trend but will become a major trend soon.

Ankur Bisen seconds this line of thought. His views are poignant - as a retail industry expert and also as an author on environmental subjects (his first book was about some India-specific issues and was titled 'Wasted-The Messy Story of Sanitation in India – A Manifesto for Change'). Ankur Bisen feels that the definition of home has definitely changed during the pandemic. "Now there are at least four

## The Minimalist Customer wants:

1. Simplicity
2. Clarity
3. Affordability
4. Environmental responsibility
5. Longevity
6. Durability
7. Meaning

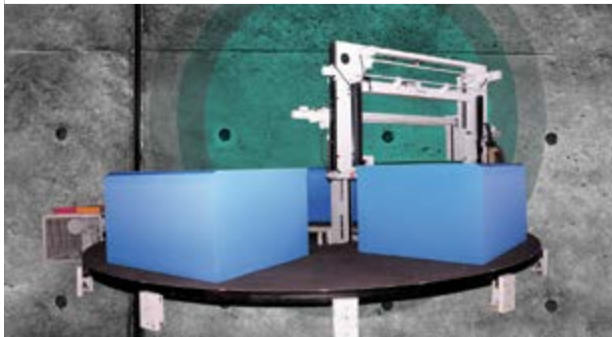
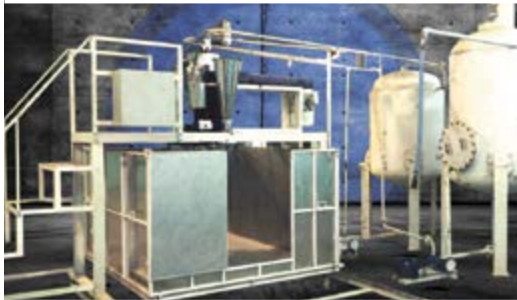
## The Minimalist Customer hates:

1. Clutter
2. Ostentatious looks
3. Complexity

workstations at any household and people are scrambling for space. So the way they plan and choose furniture and home-improvement would be a marked change. Income trends and price-sensitivity have also seen a shift due to Covid-related employment effects. Yes, a lot of people have become aware about environment but still there is a long way to go. People will take time to figure out how they can contribute. The idea of 'minimalism' would be less from an ideological sense and more from a practical and need-based angle. People will lean towards frugal, and sparse, consumption-choices in many areas. Discretionary spends might be post-poned. That's how I interpret 'minimalism' to take effect. The environment-friendly product is a niche area and there is still a long way to go before it grows substantially."

The pandemic has redefined a lot of industries and made people introspect seriously on how they affect the environment. Being conscious is great but what matters is how well this awareness is translated into actual consumption models. This is a job that is outlined for consumers and producers alike.

What will ultimately decide the durability of this trend is whether there is actual substance inside or just hot air – and that applies to the bed and the minimalist consumer's demand – both. **CT**



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## Omni channel strategy to set foot in Indian Mattress market

The mattress industry has benefited from the consumer shift to spending for the home during COVID-19. Consumers are now looking at using online and offline platform for his/her benefit. Going forward omni-channel strategy improve operational efficiency and better business sense for the Indian bedding industry

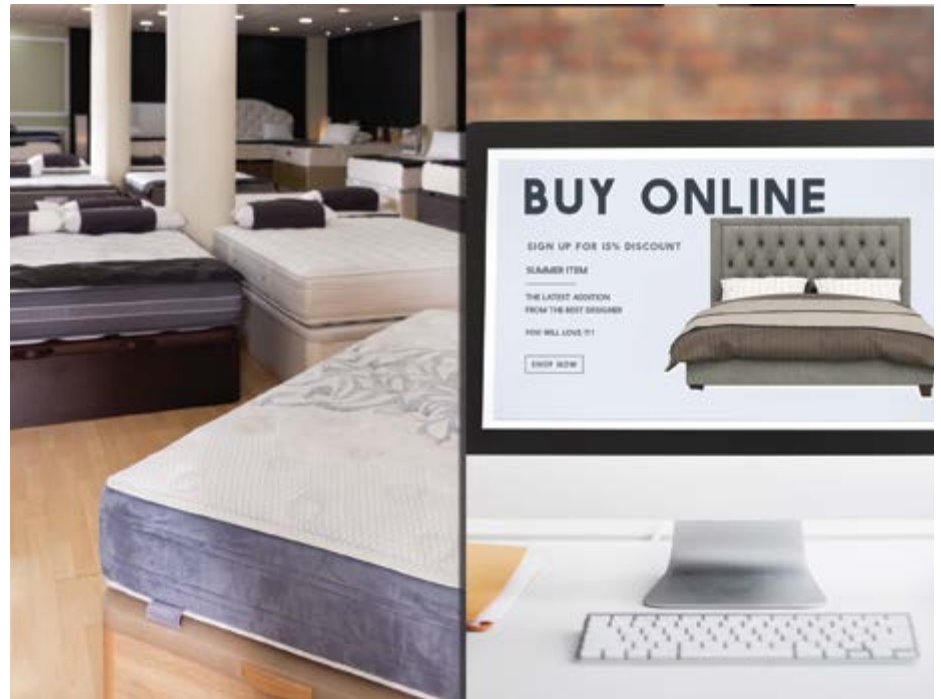
**O**mni channel strategy is the one that offers the retailers an ability to provide their customers with an integrated approach of both online and offline sales and marketing. Omni channel strategy is considered as a savior to offline business and an excellent booster for the online brands.

The Indian Mattress industry has been following the conventional method of sales and marketing mattresses offline and is now getting to know the Omni Channel strategy as one of the means of sales and marketing. The initial few months of pandemic had affected the Mattress industry, in turn, affecting the large mattress retailers and not to mention the small time retailers as it is hit the most. The Omni channel strategy has proved to be successful in the US and one of the statistics reveals that after the introduction of Omni channel strategy, the customer retention towards a particular brand is 89 percent. In India, retailers in the front end of the market were faced with the brunt of the COVID 19 initially and at present retailers feel that the Omni channel strategy might work for the Indian Mattress Industry in the long run.

“Sales had reduced by fifty percent during the initial months of pandemic and is now seeing a slow rise. We have both upmarket brands and local brands in our retail outlet. Introduction of Omni channel strategy might help us in the long run-even small retailers like us. Going online, might make a small retailer like us to face the global competition and it becomes quite challenging,” says Riyaz, a retailer.

When some retailers complain of facing stiff global competition a challenging task, others state that the new strategy might not work at present but might work for the Indian market in the later stages.

“I have been in the industry for 22 years and the coir segment of our retail outlet has a strong customer base and the pandemic hasn't affected them much. The customer base we have earned for the last 22 years is because



**The Indian mattress industry has been under the shadow of offline marketing for long now. Very recently it has opened its doors to online marketing. The Omni Channel Strategy gives an advantage to the marketing by providing higher rates of customer retention successfully**

of the offline store. We haven't had exclusive online presence and adapting to Omni channel strategy might help us extend our customer base. People can buy necessities online but a mattress needs to be touched and felt in order to buy that. The customer needs to know the quality too before buying. He can read the features given online but cannot know until he experiences it. But

an Omni channel strategy might help a customer to finalise a mattress based on the features and quality based on the reviews. One of the main reasons a person comes finally to the visit a virtual store of a mattress is to experience it. Work from home has been incorporated since the lockdown and people after their stressful day want to have a good sleep. Buying a mattress online would not let them experience it, but gives them an idea of the price range and the variants. A Maruti 800 car, an Omni car and Audi car all destined to go to Tumkur will take the passengers to Tumkur but it is the ease at which each of them reach the destination make them different,” says Lakshmi Narayan DS of Living Walls Furnishings.

Some of the customers opine that Omni channel strategy would be known only to people of IT-BT Industry and youngsters. Common people and older people would not have known such things and would always want to visit a store to buy the same.

He also added that there were few customers who researched online and bought one of them through virtual stores but have complained of poor quality. This is the end result of going through only an e-commerce site and

making a purchase. On the contrary, if a person goes through the Omni channel strategy, he gets an access to both online and offline buying experience.

“We have deployed other google tools that enhance our online relationship with our customers like the google 360 degree tool that helps a customer have a virtual view of our store. In the present scenario, the Omni channel strategy might work as most of the customers spend 3-4 hours of screen time. This strategy must also help us take our business globally and also extend our customer base globally,” adds Lakshmi Narayan.

Some of the retailers feel that the Omni channel strategy works well for the US as the return policies of a retailer in US are very good. A customer will get a replacement after a year of usage. Whereas in India not all shops or retailers follow such policies. Each company carries a different policy.

“Most of the Mattresses we deal with exclusively don't have the policy of selling them online. Only offline sales are accessible to us. Some of our mattress retailers are against these online sales as there is an investment on infrastructure and on the display of our mattresses,” says Srinath of Inscape (Sleepwell World).

Relaxing the policies and spending on the setting up of online sales and marketing gives a better sales and marketing perspective to the retailer,”

“Omni channel strategy does not work out for Indian Mattress market as most of the dealers make an agreement with us of not going online. With this, the 50 percent of the retailers would not be able to go online,” says Dheeraj of Haryana Handloom.

Though Omni channel strategy is still in the inception in the mattress marketing industry, retailers are positive towards the new strategy. There are customers who have different views regarding the strategy.


“I have been a fan of online shopping

**There needs to be a suitable modification in the policies of marketing that suits the new way of pushing the products to the consumers. The Omni Channel strategy provides access to the customer in both Online and Offline-buying experience, helping the business and customer relationship to grow**

for day-to-day basic necessities. We, as a family, take decisions collectively - if it is a wellness product like mattress; and till date, we have not purchased a mattress online. We have been a regular customer at a shop in Banashankari, Bangalore. Since the pandemic we haven't been out and I tried researching and shopping it online through various sites but I could not find the right mattress and was reluctant to go ahead with online shopping. I finalized a mattress after researching online and planned to buy the mattress in a shop as I would spend less time in a shop. I found on an online app the specifications and bought it from the shop. I decided not to buy mattress only online. Introduction of Omni channel strategy might ease the burden of looking at fewer options and gives access to more number of outlets. We have been purchasing a particular brand of mattress since it is of a good quality and we know it would be of good quality for the money we bought. Though Omni channel strategy is not a strategy I'm familiar with, the concept might making buying a mattress easier” says Nandini Satish, customer.

“I wanted to change one of the mattresses and decided to browse through various options available online. I visited websites like amazon, wakefit,

pepperfry and other e-commerce sites related to Indian mattress industry sites. Each site has mattresses of a standard size. I needed a 36 inches bed but I didn't find a perfect measurement of 36 inches. The mattresses I saw online was 34 inches or 34 and a half inches which didn't meet my expectation. I conducted a research for ten days consecutively. I finally visited an offline store and I explained my requirement. The retailer was able to help me with the size of the mattress that I needed. The Omni channel strategy to work must prioritize the customer requirements first. The online store must be able to provide a customization option wherein the customer must be able to place order of his requirement. When you approach a regular retailer he will have a specific size available with him. When you are planning to buy mattress online, getting the perfect size might be a challenge. There are cases where the order placed online is different from the one received. But with customization option, Omni channel strategy works better,” says Usha, a businesswomen.

“Suppose I need a mattress variant that is not available here in South India. A concept like Omni channel strategy might let me browse through various options and retailers in any part of India where such variant of mattress is available. I can choose few retailers in deduction method and contact them over a video call and I ask them to help me choose the mattress as per my requirement,” says Satish, Engineer. 

### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

The majority of retailers and customers feel shopping for mattresses on offline stores is the best option but alongside, the Omni channel strategy might help the customers understand the products better. The strategy also gives customers, an access to the remotest retailer on the map.

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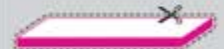
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## Customer Loyalty Programmes gel with the mattress industry

Customer Loyalty Programmes were started in 1995 and since then it has vectored the mattress industry towards better profits. The industry has seen a slight reduction of sales during lockdown and has bounced back after the lockdown. Loyalty programmes are one of the key factors in keeping the customers loyal to the brands during these leaps and bounds. Various loyalty programmes are customized according to the customer needs and few customers feel value additions to the loyalty programmes make them even better.

**C**ustomer loyalty programmes are one of the creative marketing tools that converts a new customer to a repeat customer. When a customer makes a purchase, the retailer rewards the customer with few points that can be redeemed for a future purchase. This marketing tool helps the new customer of the existing customer remain loyal the product/company/retailer.

According to Deloitte's recent survey, businesses with loyalty programmes are 88 percent more profitable than their competitors who do not follow the loyalty programme. Some studies show that investing in an existing customer is more viable financially than acquiring a new customer.

According to KPMG analysis, if a



customer is loyal, then 86 percent of them recommend the product through word of mouth, 66 percent write a positive review about the good experience and 46 percent of them stay loyal even after a bad experience. Customer loyalty programmes act as a benefactor to such customer's loyalty.

Some of the customer loyalty programmes that the mattress industry follows are

- Referral bonuses of a certain amount of cash back when a mattress is referred to a family or friend.
- Since mattress is a wellness product, the Customer loyalty programmes can be partnered with other products of theirs, giving more prospects to customers.
- A loyalty programme so designed that it gives the first sneak-peak to the latest mattress on the shelf with a 100 day trial or 90 day trial.
- Increasing digital and online customers must also be encouraged. Hence, loyalty programme members must be allowed to easily earned points online too.

### Seasonal Customer Loyalty Programmes

"We had customer loyalty programme last year where we had partnered with HP Petrol Bunk. People who billed an amount of Rs 2000 were given a voucher of Rs 500 of our outlet. People could come and buy anything for that value and we also had lucky draws when those customers approached. The lucky draw coupons were given to those customers and it again consisted of Rs. 500, Rs. 1000 and other vouchers. Since our outlet was closed from March to May due to Corona virus lockdown, we had to open our outlet in May and we were happy that sales started picking up during August and one of the reasons is due to the customer loyalty programmes," says Kumar, Bedding studio retailer from Mysore.

The customer loyalty programme is a very positive marketing tool and it definitely adds to the profit of the outlet. As per company policy, we introduce the customer loyalty program for a span of two to three months especially during



festivals like Deepavali and Dasara (in the months of October to December). We attract the customers through other offers during the other time of the year. Offers include a purchase of Rs. 36000 worth mattress will be rewarded with a cot worth Rs 12000 free," adds Kumar.

### Loyalty Programmes balanced between Online and Offline customers

There are some retailers who believe that customer loyalty programmes work best during times when sales soar up.

"We have customer loyalty programmes only for online business and not for offline business. It is for a span of three months. The discount offered by the company to dealer is divided cautiously into online and offline discounts as part of customer loyalty programmes so as to balance the profits. Around 5-10 percent discount is offered through customer loyalty programmes to customers who browse online. Equating to this, a similar offer is offered to the customers offline. In a year we get better profits for only two quarters and the other quarter is very dull. To be specific the first and the third quarter are the ones that fetch better profits. We focus on them majorly. During second quarter the business will be dull so we concentrate only on orders from institutions. During September, October, November and December that is during the festival seasons the profit is more and we offer customer loyalty

programmes to online customers during this season," says Hariprasad, Territory Manager for a branded mattress company.

Other than customer loyalty, retailers have other offers to attract customers like giving pillow, bedspread or comforters, protector, blankets free for a mattress purchased. It depends on the company as to what extent the freebies are given. This is a small contribution towards customer satisfaction. This is also an attempt in converting a new customer to a repeat customer adds, Hariprasad.

"Customer loyalty works well for both retailers and the customers. Customer loyalty is a very positive aspect and apart from this, manufacturing the mattress according to the customers' needs and demands also fetches us a repeat customer," adds another retailer.

### Loyalty Programmes brought back customers after lockdown

Even though there was a closed down of shops declared down to lockdown in many cities of India, sales did not stoop down even after the lockdown was lifted.

"We had closed during March end to May due to lockdown. But customers with loyalty programmes were welcomed even after the stores opened and they could redeem it after buying



a mattress or a pillow. This has helped sales a bit” adds a retailer Santosh.

Customers also have a very good knowledge about the product due to online research. Most of the customers go through the Omni channel strategy where the customers browse online and finalise the product and come to our shop to feel the product.

People are concentrating more on developing immunity and are careful about the mattress they purchase. Catering to these, there are some retailers who have introduced anti-stress fabric that has been imported from Belgium from past three four years and it has been placed on the high end products, heat absorption technology approved by certified company called outlast, a sister concern of NASA. We are offering the same to the customers at a reasonable rate and a high quality mattresses. Such high-end products also let them earn more loyalty points.

There is a loyalty programme in Australia which states that a point earned by a customer through loyalty programme is donated for a meal to the poor or needy. “Our company have been involved in contributing towards social causes but we do not believe in redeeming from the customer’s points. The MRP remains the same but a very

nominal amount of Rs.100 or 200 will be deducted and used for a social cause by the company. The company is doing it from its own interest,” says Territory manager of a renowned mattress company, Hariprasad.

Some companies are offering scratch cards and cash back offers as part of the customer loyalty programmes. “We are definitely looking into customer loyalty programme as they help the outlets achieve more profit,” says a retailer from Bangalore.


### *Referral-based Loyalty Programmes always a boon*

Customer perspectives towards customer loyalty programmes are quite optimistic but with a few value additions.

“Four of our relatives including us bought a house recently in Bangalore. My cousin brother bought a mattresses for his newly-built house and he got a customer loyalty reward to redeem for a pillow. But he did not want to buy the pillow. He transferred the points to me and I got the discount for the mattress I bought for my new house. Along with the mattress we received a pillow and a comforter free. Referral points that come as a part of the customer loyalty programmes are always helpful as they can be transferred to anyone who needs it. Mattress, fridge and washing

machines are luxury products and are bought rarely. Anyway, the customer loyalty programme works better when it is partnered with other fast moving products like coffee, hospitality, petrol bunks and others. Doing so would encourage customers like us to stay in touch with the retail outlet,” says Sujanashree, a finance expert at IBM.

An after-sales service as a part of customer loyalty programme enhances the tool better, says one of the customers.

“One of the major concerns when we purchase a mattress is regarding the cushioning of the mattress. After few months or years of usage, the cushioning reduces - making the bed uneven. It creates back pain when we sleep. The pillows we get as freebies during a mattress purchase also get a yellow patch after being used for a certain time. If the customer loyalty programmes are rewarded as discounts for the after-sale service like cushioning of mattress and cleaning of pillows it would be beneficial. If the customer does not want the cleaning and needs a replacement, the company can replace the old mattress for a discount using the redeemable points,” says Srilakshmi, a teacher. 



The customer loyalty programmes have very well served the mattress industry very well. Good loyalty programmes are the ones that provides customers with a VIP feeling and hence, more number of personalized and creative customer loyalty programmes are coming up. The coming year 2021 has been encouraging to the customers to buy mattresses visiting a store and the customer loyalty programmes might enhance a better relationship between the retailer and the customers.

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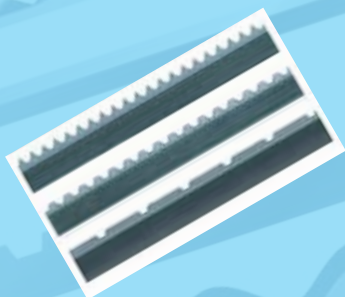
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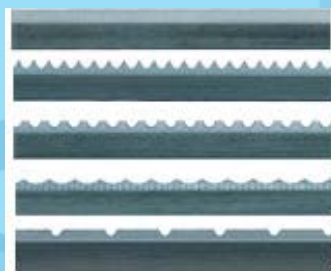


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*Subodh Mehta, Senior VP, Sales & Marketing, Godrej Interio*

# Foam to wood or back – We have the edge of synergy

**Subodh Mehta**, *Senior VP, Sales & Marketing, Godrej*

*Interio*, unveils why a symbiosis between furniture and mattress space; and the ability to innovate at scale have made this young challenger a formidable name in the market. He shares new ideas that are being carved out from the insights picked in the pandemic.

**Q** What has your journey been like as a player that entered the industry just a few years back?

We entered the category with a specific objective – to leverage the category as a complementary force for the home and furniture segment where we are a leading brand. The extension from furniture to mattresses is a local one. Even otherwise, mattresses are, often, sold through furniture outlets. It makes a lot of sense to expand in this domain. But the idea was not merely to spike up volumes. We want to build a truly one-stop experience for the customer so that s/he does not have to go anywhere else for needs related to home.

We also aimed at a clear positioning with a differentiator. We focus on ‘sleep experts’. That makes sense in today’s environment and it is supported in a huge way by the kind of R&D efforts we undertake. We want to make mattresses as per the unique needs of the Indian customer and are coming out with new designs in that direction. ‘Sleep Expertise’ drives a lot of our strategy, market focus and innovation muscle in a strong sense.

**Q** What are the synergies that come from furniture business?

As you can see, there are lot of front-end synergies between both the businesses. There is a natural alignment between the two categories. But we also have some salient back-end synergies.

We want to improve the quality of products like sofa-sets. That’s where we use our knowledge of foam or upholstery and that expertise is growing in a seamless and easy way now. Our experience and insights from that side of the customer behaviour and preferences can be used very well to anticipate and serve customer needs of this category of products. We have design and manufacturing strengths in upholstery and the two areas of mattress and this product align very well.

**Q** Do you foresee strong competition from hybrid players (PepperFry, Urban Ladder) or DIY players (Ikea, Babloo by Wakefit) as we move into the next year? What is the space like between ‘foam to wood’ or ‘vice-versa’?

Normally, a lot of furniture players sell mattresses because it is a logical branch to follow. The players you mentioned- Like Wakefit – are trying the reverse-route and extending from mattress to furniture. I feel though

that manufacturing is a specialised job, specially for this industry. Even retail needs a specific kind of scale and expertise.

What will ultimately win is the ability to offer the complete solution to a customer and that’s what our core strength is. Players like Ikea source their material. Not many rivals have the kind of scale, economies and efficiencies in manufacturing like we have. We make our own furniture. Godrej has the big advantage of market insight, quick design and manufacturing capabilities here.

There is a different level of strength and capabilities that emerge when one is confident of manufacturing at scale – for a market like this. At the same time we understand the customer from a strong and deep angle and in a holistic way.

**Q** What changes (like WFH furniture) have you injected in your portfolio and approach during the pandemic? What lessons will you take forward?

We were making such products earlier too. Definitely, this opportunity is opening up in an explosive way. The



pandemic has created a new market for WFH solutions across various categories and furniture is a top one in that new wave.

We are the first ones in the block to offer WFH furniture because we have been supplying to B2B segments. We already make chairs and desks. Now a plethora of needs are expanding the market – specially chairs and employee desks for the houses and not offices. We are ahead of the curve here also because of our strength in ergonomics. These offerings need the right channel and display-related avenues.

We are also witnessing a surge in interest from corporates who are discussing many models to furnish their employees with good WFH furniture – like ease-to-avail company-specific coupons for e-commerce sites, which save a company the distribution hassle. We are also modifying some of our products to go well with WFH needs – like a couch with movable desk, or a foldable table that can take care of space constraints, or a sofa with an arm-rest. We are discussing, and learning from, our customers in this space.

**We are looking to place ourself in the market as a differentiator. We want to create a one stop solution for the consumers that supports the unique needs of the consumers**

**Q** How do you see the industry shaping up in the next two to five years? Do you have any innovations-in-progress to capture new opportunities? Do you think mattresses will play an important role with health as a proposition?

We are focusing a lot on innovation and are not limited to the numbers-game. We want to bring high value to customers. Innovations help us a lot in accomplishing that aim. Like most mattresses have the same unified head-to-toe cross-section in terms of construction. But we started working on

a five-zone or seven-zone mattress that understands that human body is not the same in weight and pressure points from head to toe. We are also emulating foreign pioneers in bringing the power of IoT and digital strength for better sleep-pattern-analysis and – hence- better sleep experience for the user. We plan to introduce a smart mattress very soon.

Incidentally, our refrigeration expertise from other domain helps us in offering something for regulation of temperature. A mattress that gets warm in winters and cools down in summer season – these are possible because of our learnings in technology from other segments.

The market is very huge and this is a good time to grow and innovate. People are understanding the importance of a mattress. We are trying to strengthen the sleep-health awareness among customers. We are telling them that bed is just a structure, what matters is a good mattress and with that – good sleep. As a responsible player, we will continue to innovate and also to strongly educate the customers. Ultimately, what matters is a happy, and comfortable, sleep experience. **CT**



## The Take-Out trend: A fad or a solid trend

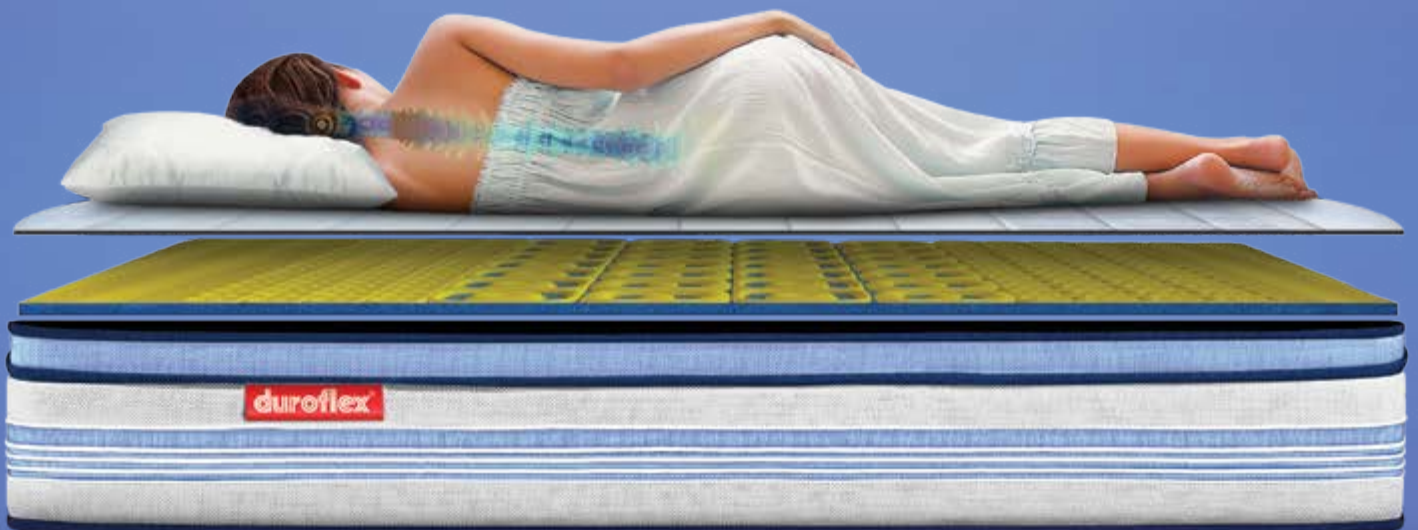
With the advent of the pandemic, the grab-and-go shopping strategy has moved from burgers to mattresses too. Will this fast-lane go far?

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In a world where contactless shopping changed from a never-heard-before word to a staple way of life, it was hard for mattresses to stay away from the quick-service models. A lot of brands were first a little disoriented – as were many others in almost every industry – when the crisis hit the globe in an unexpected way. But slowly the smart and agile ones adapted to the changing circumstances. They made peace with the constraints this lockdown-world imposed. They found ways around these dead-ends. And they evolved their offerings and services in a swift way to cater to the touch-less era of the new consumer.

Did this shift work? Did it make things easier for customers and mattress players?

### *French Fries and Mattresses – Same thing?*

Yes, at the onset it sounds like an obvious choice. Why would a customer prefer touching (forget buying) a mattress or bed that someone else may have just sat upon? No matter how many precautions a store takes, some rubbing of shoulders is inevitable for a touch-and-experience product like a mattress. And yet, it was something that most people had to buy, because they suddenly found themselves for longer hours on a bed in the lockdown phase. Of course, online sales came as a relief but a hybrid model worked well for both consumers and sellers.

If we look at some surveys done by the Nationwide Marketing Group it was clear that the in-store retail had been the most affected as 52 percent of survey respondents reported a significant fall in foot-traffic. As stores got busy in making operational changes for government directives, cleaning and sanitization processes, some were also arguing with authorities if mattresses fit the 'essential business' box. (Ex- a dispute between the local government and an Illinois Mattress Firm). Consequent measures allowed limited in-store staff at some places while some stores had to shut down. The low-volume nature of this product made it possible to deliver the product

in a unique way while enforcing the requisite social distancing rules. That's how drive-in shopping took a new traction. So did supporting services like rapid prototyping, 3D image experience and omni-channel communication to help consumers decide on a product choice.

Analysts have seen that most mattress companies globally were enjoying "very strong recent demand" despite initial hiccups. One analyst estimated the bedding industry with a year-over-year sales increase of more than 30 percent. And the smart mattress industry, has been projected to rise \$109 million between 2020 and 2024.

All said and done- Driving in to a window for a hot parcel of sandwiches is a different thing. But for an industry where a lot of sales were largely dominated by in-store purchases and an unorganized sector, the zip-zap-zoom model was not so easy to switch on to.

However, a lot of brands did so. The recent advent of online players and bed-in-a-box rivals accelerated this phenomenon. They quickly embraced a model where a product can be chosen in a contactless way or through any omni-channel mode. And once the purchase is sealed, the delivery can be ensured in an entirely contactless way again – either through company options or through specialized packaging for the customer. This needed some extra investments in PPE kits, delivery teams, sealed packages, stringent hygiene practices, payment infrastructure etc. – but it was all worth it. Customer liked this convenience and option. This served their needs for instant product availability as well as assurance on hygiene.

### *The Next Step*

As we move ahead, the shop-with-a-hop format is expected to gather steam, albeit, with some key denominators.

If you ask Strategy Director at Interbrand, Ashoo Advani, he reckons that 'Take out' trend is here to stay. "Patterns have changed. People have

## Economic and Consumer Spending Impact of the Pandemic

1. 40 to 50 percent of discretionary consumer spending might not occur as people indulge in precautionary saving and cut down purchases (McKinsey)
2. 78% of consumers have changed their shopping habits in the wake of COVID-19. They are shopping online whenever possible, using contactless payments at checkout and using less cash (Visa 'Back to Business' study)
3. About 48% of consumers would not shop at a store that offers only payment methods that require contact with a cashier or shared device. Nearly two-thirds are ready to switch to a new business that installed contactless payment options (Visa 'Back to Business' study)
4. COVID-19 safety precautions were the #2 priority for Cyber Week shoppers. (Digital Commerce 360)
5. Black Friday 2020 foot traffic dropped 52% year-over-year. Also Thanksgiving declined 95%. (Bloomberg)
6. In a survey that entailed home, fashion and electronics as verticals, 52 per cent brands exhibited surges in demand. As many as 80% of traditional retailers saw their sales sink since the crisis, but only 22% of D2C brands saw a dip. (Totem Media)
7. Since the lockdown, the Indian retail sector has lost around Rs. 5.50 lakh crore. As many as 20 per cent of Indian retailers may collapse and wind up their businesses in the next few months. Estimates from Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT)



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got used to a new way of living. WFH (Work From Home) model will change urban living and people will move from large cities to outskirts and smaller cities. There is fundamental shift that has happened and will impact many categories.”

Offering a contrarian view, Saurav Chachan, Engagement Manager, RedSeer argues that this ‘buy online and pay at the store’ approach of consumption works well for grocery items or items like coffee where one is pressed for time, or does not want to go through the hassles of parking or interactions. Or it works for a customer who has ordered a product late night through online research and just wants to pick the product without too much time invested at the store. It works aptly for immediate-consumption categories. It will not fly off as much for a product like mattress specially after the need for contactless interactions has faded. It is a good model for categories like groceries but not for fashion products or experience-related products. In metros, it can still work because people are pressed for time. But in tier-2 cities, this may not be too relevant.”

Either ways – the industry will have to tune in to the models that were not around before. As per a Technomic ‘Delivery and Take-out Consumer Trend’ report, the off-premise landscape has been transformed to a large extent by the Covid pandemic. Competition for off-premise services is expected to intensify. It would be vital for players to create a safe and seamless experience for consumers. We can expect new concept models, contactless services, contactless-pick-up as well as contactless-delivery to be refined and invested in as we enter a new phase. In order to make sure that customers walk out as happy as they are when they walk in, brands would need to invest in some salient areas for sure:

- High levels of hygiene and contactless features
- Sanitised packaging
- Automated prompts and contactless guidance for self-service products
- Contactless payment and service infrastructure

## The drive-in shopping has taken a new traction. So did supporting services like rapid prototyping, 3D image experience and omni-channel communication to help consumers decide on a product choice. The zip-zap-zoom model is not so easy to switch on to where in-store purchase is dominated

- Contactless does not mean disconnected. Investments in human-warmth and service-experience are still serious factors
- Consistent and agile communication standards
- Regular updates and information to customers about order confirmation, payments, vehicle details, package tracking etc.
- Support should be both swift and personalized
- A streamlines back-end infrastructure and team
- Create partnerships with similar verticals for collaborative synergies and economies of scale

Of course, on the customer front, all necessary precautions are also called for. They should put in some efforts on:

- Prep and clean-up areas
- Assembly, installation and contactless movement
- Careful unboxing
- Proper steps in case of threshold delivery for high-touch surfaces
- Area-wise availability information
- Adherence to safety and distancing guidelines
- Wearing appropriate attire, gloves and other accessories
- Removal of packaging and proper disposal
- Adequate cleaning and disinfecting

## Lessons from Restaurants

Since COVID-19, 38% are likely to order carryout/delivery with the same regularity as before. Almost 22% will do so less frequently and 24% more frequently. 16% expressed they won’t order carryout/delivery at all.

Source: A survey by ResponseLabs on food delivery trends

Indoor dining in restaurants may not return to pre-crisis levels for months—or possibly even years. Full-service restaurant operators need a new economic model.

As to the idea of returning to dine-in restaurants, over 80 percent of survey respondents reported medium-to-high anxiety levels. More than half said they would be highly anxious.

As to drive-through dining, only 16 percent of respondents reported high anxiety.


When McKinsey studied consumer anxiety in grocery shopping, it was noted that people were much more anxious about interacting with other shoppers than with store employees.

Touching fruits and vegetables that many other people may have touched—was one of the main drivers of anxiety during grocery-store trips.

McKinsey advises that by implementing new hygiene and safety measures, players can still attract customers who feel only low, or medium, levels of anxiety. Putting high-anxiety customers at ease, will be tough.

A McKinsey Pulse Survey 2020

of new purchase items as per product type

A customer would never compromise on quality, service and experience—whether it is a falafel roll or a mattress roll. As long as that attention and effort are taken into priority, this trend will be a good sauce to accompany the industry’s new and uncertain journey ahead. 



Sabina Bhanpurawala, CEO - Foam Home India Pvt Ltd,

# Where Blue Blood Companies Stand Out

Sabina Bhanpurawala, CEO - Foam Home India

Pvt Ltd, unravels how a clear definition of market segment, constant modernisation, innovation and actionable patents are threads that weave a strong company with a deep foothold of several decades.

**Q** What strengths and challenges has your company experienced in the last four decades?

One of our biggest strengths that I believe has been in defining our market and not deviating from it. Being a niche player has given us a thorough understanding of this segment; and thanks to our 43 years in business, we enjoy great recognition and reputation in the same. Another very important tradition we follow is to constantly innovate and modernise in every sense. Be it manufacturing processes or manufacturing advanced mattresses, I believe we are far ahead of the Indian market trends. This allows us to always offer products that are at par with developed nations. Of course this model has its set of challenges.

**Q** Can you elaborate?

Scale is one of them. The dealer and distributor channels in India for bedding are very unorganised. These are not ideal to display or sell Premium products, since these products need a different consumer experience coupled with highly knowledgeable sales personnel. Our current challenge is spreading geographically for these very reasons.

**Q** In your reckoning - what are some of the emerging opportunities for the Indian bedding industry in

India?

The pandemic has affected consumers like never before. Health has become a priority and, hence, so has Sleep. Consumers now delve into minor details before making a purchase for a mattress. They are more aware, knowledgeable - thanks to the internet. They look at the mattress as an investment. This gives manufacturers room to create quality products and not simply focus on cost-effective low-budget options. This has widened the Premium Mattress segment.

**Q** What excites you, or worries you, about the shape of the industry today?

I think it is exciting times for the industry. Of course the pandemic has slowed us down but the direction in which the industry is moving assures that we will see a big change in the way consumers will experience the buying process. We see many company-owned stores with great displays now. Product portfolios have increased. There are plenty of options for consumers now. Communication styles have changed from being product-centric to consumer-centric. The entire industry is trying to educate the buyer about the importance of sleep which, I feel, is very important and a prime reason the industry has stayed at a nascent stage

for so long.

Companies are now also exploring the digital space for awareness and selling. But this is also my area of concern.

**Q** Can you explain why?

It is great that the "blue blood" companies - as I like to call them - have moved online with their products making it easier for consumers to buy without moving out of their homes. These are established companies with established products who know and understand the mattress industry and belong to it. What worries me are the new entrants into the market who have very little experience in the industry. Most online selling companies are simply replicating companies from the USA. Right from the product appearance - to the content on the website - to the advertising style and message. It is important to know that India, as far as mattresses is concerned, is a very unique market. The Indian mattress consumer has very different preferences and needs when it comes to mattress-shopping. We see a lot of consumers who fall prey to baits like 100 nights trials and huge discounts provided online and find themselves stuck with an unsuitable mattress. While online is the future, I feel we still have some time till the market is ready for it. **CT**

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# Logistics of the mattress industry needs to be improved

The retail mattress industry has been in a win-win situation since COVID as the hospitality and health sector have always kept the mattress sales leading them to profits. Even the manufacturing sector for that matter has not been affected for the same reason. But the transport or the logistics companies are badly hit by the pandemic making them enter into a stiffer competitive zone.





the product. If the product is high end product (price range is high) we do not charge much; but on the other hand if the product ordered is not much highly priced then we charge the customer according to the transportation price. If it is Bangalore we send it through courier services like VRL and the customer has to pay for it once he receives the mattress," says a retailer from Mysore.

"If we get an order from a remote place, the logistics charges will be levied to the customers. If it's out of station then the logistics will be charged to the customer completely," says a retailer of a branded company in Bangalore.

### *Vacuum-Packed mattresses*

Meanwhile, a leading mattress brand introduced vacuum-packed mattresses to eliminate the logistics challenge faced by the mattress manufacturing industries. Traditional mattresses are heavy and delivering them was a challenging task as majority of the buildings do not have service elevators and carrying a mattress up was a difficult task.

When questioned about the retailers about vacuum-packed mattresses, they submitted that the factory that deals with manufacturing the mattress must be equipped with a facility that deals with vacuum-packing and not all stores or packing outlets can do that.

"Vacuum-packed mattress are the trend now but there is only one brand available with us called Livein mattress. It is a complete vacuum-packed mattress. It will be vacuum-packed in factory itself. This definitely helps us in transporting to the customer but not all customers prefer this vacuum-packed mattress," adds a retailer.

"No shops can do vacuum-packing and we don't house such vacuum-packing equipment either. We depend on the local autos for transportation and the autos charge on the number of mattresses. Transportation in Mysore city is much easier due to the traffic compared to Bangalore," says Dattatreya, a store manager in Mysore.

**T**he mattress manufacturers have been considerate towards their retailers. Most of the manufacturers do not charge their retailers with the transportation charges they incur.

"We deal with Spring mattresses, foam mattresses rubberized coil mattresses. As we place an order with the manufacturer the order is dispatched from the manufacturing unit in Krishnagiri, Hosur Road. As they dispatch it to a point in Bangalore we retailers get it to our outlet by hiring a local transport. We also take up customized orders from the customers. During such situations we place an order with the manufacturer for this particular order placed by the customer. The company then plans a route to deliver the ordered mattress. For instance, if there are major orders coming from South route of Bangalore, the ordered mattress is sent along with the other deliverables. The container delivering the South part of Bangalore will be delivering the consignment and we will be informed about it. We take a local auto and procure it. Other retailers also pick up their orders this way. This way the South Bangalore orders are finished in a day," says a retailer of leading mattress in Bangalore.

**The retailers of mattress industry are looking for the solution for those extra expenses that they have to pay for the logistics. The logistics is one of the most important part of the mattress business. There are some issues that are to be looked at with more attention**

### *Free transportation for Customers*

On the other hand retailers sometimes do charge the customers when they are not within the deliverable range.

"The manufacturers send the consignment through vehicles either directly to the retailers or they give a certain customer point from where we can pick up. The choice is left to the retailers. We charge the customer for the transportation even if it is local and we charge it based on the price of

### *Imported furniture retailers' story*

Unlike the local retailers, retailers that house imported mattress face a different situation altogether.

"We deal with an imported brand of furniture and mattresses. Hybrid mattress, memory foam mattress, spring mattress are few of them housed. It is a brand from US and the manufacturing units are in Vietnam and China for Asian region. It is shipped from there vacuum-packed condition. It comes in boxes and we send the same to the customers. But, we are charged with shipping, credit containment charges and lot of other charges which makes this a costly affair. Within Bangalore we deliver for the customer free of cost but out of Bangalore we charge for the transportation. From Tata Ace to big containers, we have our own logistics but we do hire outside transport services sometimes. The customer is charged according to how many products the customer has ordered since we sell even furniture. Cot and mattress are usually ordered together. We have a warehouse in Rampura, Hennur where the manufacturer docks the mattresses. From warehouse to retail outlet we use our vehicle to transport," says Vivek Mani of an imported leading brand of Bangalore.

### *Small Scale Manufacturers and Logistics*

Where retailers are charged with transportation charges, some of the small scale mattresses manufacturers are facing difficulties in transporting the mattresses since COVID.

"We are into manufacturing of mattress and into interior designing of houses and offices with a small manufacturing unit in Jigani. We deal directly with the client without going through the conventional retailer to customer route. We undertake customized mattresses according to the needs of the client. We get the mattress done from local craftsmen according to the needs and deliver it through a local transport autos. The mattress variants available in the market are available with the same features but for a lesser rate," says Panduranga of VWant Interiors.

## The packaging plays a crucial role in the transportation of the mattresses. The mattress in a box (Vaccum-packed mattress) are a new trend and much easier and economical to transport in comparison with normal mattresses

According to few small scale manufacturing units it was a challenging task during pandemic to deliver mattresses to the customers but responding to these difficult times, certain apps are introduced that are helping a big time in logistics.



"Prior COVID we hired a local auto to deliver our consignment. During times of COVID, the sales sunk low as the transportation problem set in. We could not hire the local autos due to lockdown but since a month back it has been picking up. The major problem with hiring local transports guys are the charges and the punctuality. There was an order from a customer and I had promised to send the mattress to her within 1 pm. I booked an auto at 10 am and he could not come on time. I tried calling the transport guy and he did not pick up my call either. I could not face the client as I had already taken an advance from her for the product. During my search for a better and organized transportation I came across a certain app that deals with logistics," says Panduranga.

The app associates with various local transport guys and sends them on time to whoever books it. When one opens the app, the nearest transport vehicle available for delivery is visible to the

customer and he can book the transport according to his needs. There are small autos to big containers.

"I would prefer this App as it is more organized and they charge less compared to the local transport guys. For instance, a consignment from Jigani to Whitefield costed me Rs 2500 earlier. But with the introduction of App, they charge us Rs 1700 instead. This is an economical process," adds Panduranga.

Some manufacturers have the local transport guys as their last preference due to some of them negligent in delivering the goods.



"Some of the regular transport people whom we approached come to us now complaining that they are not receiving the business from us regularly like earlier. We console them by giving them few assignments in between. This makes them encouraged and work better. We even had plans of having our own transport vehicles instead of hiring every time. But it would not work out for us as we will not be able to promise an entire day job of delivering consignments. With this we will not be able to pay them salaries for the amount of work they do. But a major disadvantage of the app is they do not have trained man power to handle the mattress during transportation and delivery. We will have to send someone from our factory to handle to mattress" adds Mr Panduranga.

### *Logistics companies and their working*

Logistics Apps are slowly increasing and there is a need for such apps that help in delivering mattresses across the city or state as apps are more organized, efficient and professional in delivering and transporting. The local autos or transport can also associate themselves and make business in the process as the apps promise them a better earning at the end of the day.

But in the process, the most affected are the logistics companies that take up transportation of the consignments.





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“Cropping logistics apps are beneficial in a way to the company and vendors like us. I’m a vendor to Gati since 1992 with a small fleet of vehicles. Gati is a courier company and Gati books the material and transports from one place to another. We provide our vehicles to the company and few leading brands have been our clients. We operate mainly in South India. During COVID, our company was badly hit. If there is production there is demand for the logistics company. Everything was stopped for 4-5 months since lockdown. May be 20 percent of some of the productions were going on. Among them mattresses was one. The competition was fierce with less production and we did not receive much orders for transportation. Pro COVID, four of our vehicles were getting booked at once. At present, the bookings have come down drastically,” says BV Ramesh of Unnati Logistics.

Apart from not receiving any business, there were other factors that affected them badly like the maintenance of the vehicles (as they were stranded in the depots), payment of EMIs even though there was no business, management of insurances as the third party insurance rates were increased.

“The taxes we had to pay were

**Logistic companies play a key role in moving the products from the source to destination. During the time of COVID many of the logistic companies took a bad hit on their economy. They are adding technology to their business to improve the quality and coverage by joining many local transporters to their groups**

exempted only for a month and it was of least help compared to the losses were incurring. The EMIs for the vehicle loans we had borrowed were piling up. We were given time to pay the EMIs but with an extra interest. In November and December we did well compared to the previous months but it was only for those two months we could do well as

it was for the pre-existing orders the company had received in the month of March. To fulfill the orders received in March we had business in November and December. From January the business has come down as the pre-existing orders had been completed in November and December,” says Ashok, a transport company owner.

Fuel rates have also affected the business. After COVID cost reductions in companies have been more.

“When the diesel price was Rs.58 I was charging Rs.33000 for a particular route of consignment delivery. Today the Diesel price is Rs.81 and I’m charging Rs.34,900 for the same route. I use 230 liters of diesel to that route. There is not much difference between Rs.33000 and Rs.34,900. Doing this my profit margin has come down. We will have to pay the EMIs irrespective of what we earn,” says Ramesh.

#### ***Mattress Logistics and Improvements***

There are lot of apps coming up in the market like Porter app and is useful for the logistics companies too. The logistics company that has been badly hit can be recouped with certain improvisations. This, in turn, might help the struggling small-scale logistics companies.

Here are few suggestions from the logistics industry that might help in the betterment of logistics in the future.

The logistics app introduction is beneficial to the customers. Introduction of more such apps gives a broader picture of prices to the customer. The customer can compare the prices and approach a competitive one that suits his needs. But these apps should display the details and picture of the vehicle when a customer books something. There are few companies who show a new vehicle during the time of booking and send another vehicle which is not up to the standard during the time of pick up. Such loopholes can be managed with such apps through reviews. This makes logistics more organized.

Talking about the transportation



a customer books a truck.

Transport industry is one which will not die as long as the production is there. There must be an equal opportunity to all players in the industry even if that means involving logistics companies also. **CT**

of mattresses, the type of vehicle chosen for the transport becomes equally important. Mattress is a bulky material and containers should be used to transport them. It is voluminous. Earlier mattresses were transported in open roof top vehicles. But now closed containers are being preferred and open roof tops are depleting for the reasons like theft, damage of the product if there is rain or sunny weather. Closed containers are always safe and should be preferred by the customer.

"When I was delivering goods to Orissa I had a bad experience as there was theft on the way. Closed vehicle is a protection to the vendors," adds Ramesh.

Recently a stumbling block has appeared for a smooth transition of business between the customer and a businessman. Entry of agents. Earlier the vendors were booked by the company owners directly and off late the game has changed with lot of agencies interfering. The population of agents are more than the vendors. The middlemen are getting the consignment booked for a higher price but in reality the price of the consignment is not much. The company owners should directly approach the direct owner eliminating the middlemen.

Apart from the above mentioned points, there are few other small yet important aspects that needs to be bore in mind. If a mattress company books a container he has to bear in mind few things like the condition of the vehicle so as to making it consistent enough to deliver a mattress. The app should be updated with the latest vehicles. Old vehicles of 15 years or more should be scrapped as per government rules is a very good one. An old vehicle for delivery charges less when compared to new vehicle as the cost of the vehicle would be less when compared to the new vehicle. For instance a new vehicle costing around 25 lakh will be getting an EMI of 25000 to 30,000 and he would not be able to pay the EMI as an old vehicle would be grabbing the business. Whereas the newer vehicles efficiency is good and the delivery takes place on time. Older vehicles may breakdown in between and delivery might not happen as planned. Such events might curb the new companies from entering the field.

### Conclusion

Truck manufacturing companies can also play a major role in smoothening of transportation of mattresses from one place to another. For instance, Ashok Leyland should educate and train the truck owners regarding managing of trucks and maintenance. Such programmes should be organized when

### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

The LOGISTICS is the important part of the mattress industry as the mattress gets ready in a factory setup which will be located in some remote area. To make sure that the products reach the customers industry has dependency on the logistics services. There are some points to be noticed for the betterment of the business.

The Logistics needs to have good network of local service providers, inter city services, which are reliable, less expensive and of good quality.

There are some problems between mattress manufacturers and retailers related to logistics which need a serious attention to make sure that both of them are not incurring losses due to this reason.

There is a need to look for better business solutions in this department of logistics to move ahead.



C M Hariraj, M D, Coir - on Foam Products

# Don't just buy. Think and buy

**C M Hariraj, M D, Coir - on Foam Products**, takes us through the corresponding up-sides and down-sides of all kinds of mattress types – be it coir or spring or foam. After all, he has seen the market change to so many new shapes - time and again- all these three decades.

**Q** What is it like to be a player with a 30-year legacy? What has the journey been like?

When we look back 30 years, what's interesting to note is that mattress industry was quite a small sector. Now it has grown 300 to 400 times. Earlier people thought of a mattress in a conventional way – they thought of cotton, then rubberized mattress and then foam mattresses. Now a combination of various formats are doing well now. Coir mattresses have their own value and privilege of a natural product. Those who enjoy the comforts of coir mattresses will ask for that only. May be the young generation is experimenting with spring mattress or other forms. The industry has a lot of potential. The demand is growing and the comfort connotation is also expanding and changing with times. Costs going up – that's a bit of a worry. Also, non-registered players use different materials which is a concern from the angle of quality and customer comfort. But overall, the industry is doing well.

**Q** What shifts have influenced your strategy in a big way - the shift from Coir to PU Foam or to Memory foam?

Manufacturing of coir is a lot of work. It is a tough industry in terms of appliances and manufacturing problems. Rubberised

coir production is struggling with some challenges like pollution. So many people have shifted to other formats. Spring and foam manufacturing are relatively easy and possible with limited labour and manufacturing investments. Spring mattress manufacturing is simple. Foam mattresses are also easy in terms of fabrication and cutting. Foam can also be compressed and sent in boxes and other models. Many players are in these two areas only. People do not know much about thickness of materials. Consumers can get lost in good finish and tapestry. What is the life of the product – that is a question they should be asking. Coir-as we emphasise on - is about quality and comfort. It also has applications in agri-areas.

**Q** What makes your company different from the other mattress brands?

I cannot claim hundred percent that we are better than everyone else. But we are definitely pioneers with a legacy of 30 years. Gradually we have evolved to this level with a good scale everyday with 60 percent coir and rest of the scale towards spring and foam. Being a pioneer is a privilege. Our road is steady and strong.

**Q** According to you what are some of the emerging opportunities for the

**Indian bedding industry in India?**

The young generation has different purchasing methods and mind-sets. That's where compression in a box helps. Coir mattresses cannot address this category as well as spring and foam mattresses do. So some alternatives have a better potential as per the new demand of easy access and transport that is emerging.

**Q** How do you see Indian consumer's buying behavior evolving further in the next 12 months?

The pandemic has affected a lot of lifestyle choices. Online business has seen a big impact and it will pick up. Costs can be reduced to some extent and the advantage can be passed on to the customer.

**Q** One challenge in India – is the dominance of an unorganized mattress sector. How to move customers to organized segment?

When the customer wants to buy a mattress, one should study the mattress – what is the format, the manufacturer, its reputation and quality. Do not just compare costs and directly buy from the place where it is cheaper. That's not the right approach. Think of overall life and strengths that branded options offer. Take a decision which is based on proper discretion and knowledge. **CT**

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## Sleep Paralysis, a condition that neither lets you sleep nor remain awake

Sleep paralysis is technically neither sleep nor being awake. It is that condition where the mind is lucid and awake but the body is filled with chemicals that make the body paralyzed. The person with sleep paralysis experiences someone or something in the room and a feeling of a pressure on the chest and other physical sensations. Less than 8 per cent of population experience sleep paralysis and is common among students and psychiatric patients. Many report feeling an evil presence near them but out of sight. Others report actually seeing ghostly or disturbing figures in plain sight, and they are not able to move.

## Buying beds on Sundays prohibited in Washington

For reasons unknown, it is illegal to buy mattresses on Sundays in Washington. It is not clear why this law exists or how strictly it is being enforced.

## Hypnic jerks, the sensation of falling off when half asleep

Sometimes we jerk, as if falling off from an elevated place and it usually occurs when we are half asleep. Even though the reason behind this exactly not known it is deemed to be perfectly healthy. They are more frequent in young people and reduces as one gets older. Some occurrences state that it might be increased by anxiety, caffeine or physical activity close to bedtime.

## The brain changes pattern during sleep

The brain remains active during sleep. Its activity patterns change during different stages of sleep. In rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, brain activity ramps up to a level where the person experiences a real life experience while still dreaming.

The shifts in brain activity during sleep are believed to be important that makes one realise as to why sleep is critical in effective thinking, memory, and emotional processing.

## Waterbeds are more than 3000 years old !

Waterbeds are more than 3000 years ago and it is indeed an interesting invention. The very first water bed was created in Persia with goatskin stuffed with water. A better waterbed was created in 1873 by Neil Arnott and it was used in a hospitals to treat patients prevent bed sores. Twenty-two years later a similar type of bed that resembled a huge hot water bottle, became available by mail order from a British store. Unfortunately, there weren't enough materials so it kind of died its natural death. However, with the invention of vinyl in the 1960s the waterbed rose became popular and it was given the name "Pleasure Pit."



## Costliest bed amounts to \$ 6.3 million

The costliest bed in the world costs around \$6.3 million. It is called the Baldacchino Supreme bed that's handcrafted out of chestnut, ash and cherry wood as well as 24-carat solid gold. Fabric for the mattress used is Italian silk and cotton with no burn certificate. The bed can be customised with diamonds or any other different stones.

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