

Comfort Times

by ISPF

FROM THREAD TO BED...
How smart tech is empowering
the mattress journey?

29 **Mattress Ticking**
Because looks matter!

51 **Entering into the World of**
Sleep: 7 tips to make room
conducive for quality sleep





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Cover Story

10

From thread to bed... How smart tech is empowering the mattress journey?

The technology is the key driving force behind any industry in present world. Mattress industry is no exception. It has become need of the hour to use technology for the betterment of the mattress industry and sleep health.

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Interview

36



Sleep is a fascinating topic all over the world

Ms. Jyothi Pradhan, CEO, Kurl-on



“Sustainability is becoming the most critical and talked about factor”

Mr. Ananth Muthupandian, Director – Polyurethanes, PO/PG, Dow Chemical International Pvt Ltd

42



‘The demand for the sleep solution has increased post pandemic’

Mr. Sumit Bhatt, Director, COMFEX, B D G Steel Ltd.

50



“Our research will help consumers to choose the right type of mattresses”

Mr. P. Muthukumar, Managing Director, Sriram Foams

60

Feature

23



Why companies are investing on consumer awareness?

The Indian mattress market is growing day-by-day. But the Indian consumers needs more awareness on the sleep health. Since the sleep health is one of the most important aspect of human life, and is getting disturbed due to various reasons such as change in life style, working at late nights etc.

Mattress Ticking - Because looks matter!

29

Mattress ticking is no longer a simple covering meant to hold feathers or fillers that were formerly used to make a mattress. Besides contributing to the luxury, performance, durability and obviously, the aesthetic appeal of the mattress, ticking also plays a vital role in mattress market. A closer look at its functions should help us better understand the role it plays in driving mattress sales.

Fixed beat

38

The ISPF Training Programme is creating effective changes in the sleep products industry

ISPF is putting its efforts in training and empower the retailers to achieve better success in the business and meet customers' expectations.

The world waking up to EOC mattress sustainability

43

The momentum is gaining now to make mattress friendly to environment.

Entering into the World of Sleep: 7 tips to make room conducive for quality sleep

51

In the contemporary world this is getting missed due to various reasons leading to many sleep related disorders.

Event

58

HGH Expo (July 2022)



OTHER STORIES

Editorial

5

India News

8

Global News

9

Back of the Book

61

FROM THE EDITOR



The intersection of technology is apparent in every business vertical and the mattress and sleep industry is no exception. With the global pandemic acting as a catalyst, investment on technology has become the topmost business priority among the key players in the mattress industry. While the global mattress industry is leveraging latest technologies to deliver the best sleeping experience to their customers, Indian counterparts too, are deploying the best technologies across their organizations to offer some unique sleep products to both domestic and global consumers.

Mattress industry is not only focused towards launching high quality mattresses but they are also trying to produce mattresses that would monitor our sleep quality. Earlier, mattress companies deployed technologies like Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Management Information System (MIS) and other related technologies to ensure smooth functioning across their organizations' business functions. Now, the trend has taken a giant leap, wherein, we are witnessing Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Internet of Things finding their way to our beds. For instance, smart beds that have already entered the mattress market, use a single sheet of smart fabric to track your sleep pattern. The smart beds capture detailed information related to the sleeper's

heartbeat, respiration, body pressure and other details required to assess the sleep pattern.

This is not all, the smart beds are equipped with app integration that allows the sleepers to control home gadgets and devices through the Internet of Things, so that we don't have to get up from our beds.

The advent of technology in the mattress industry will not be limited to this. Growing demand from hospitality and healthcare sector, will call for more sophisticated technology to cater to the mattress segment. According to the numbers revealed by Expert Market Research, "the global mattress market reached a value of around USD 30.4 billion in 2020. The market is likely to increase at a CAGR of 6.9 percent in the forecast period 2021-2026 to reach a value of around USD 45.4 billion by 2026."

Innovative sleep products, convenient mode of shopping, huge investment in Research and Development (R&D) will not only make the sleep and mattress industry more competitive but will also increase the deployment of latest technologies in the forthcoming years. How the global mattress industry will shape up in terms of deploying latest technologies and how the Indian mattress makers match up with their global counterparts will be an interesting trend to watch out.

S. SUNDARESAN



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Centuary Fibre Plates Pvt. Limited



Kurlon Enterprise Limited



Tirupati Foam Limited



Duroflex Pvt. Limited



Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co. Ltd.



M. M. Rubber Company Limited



Real Innerspring Technologies Pvt. Ltd.



Nilkamal Limited



The Sleep Company



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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.

The Sleep Company launches its first flagship store in Bangalore

Asia's SmartGRID mattress pioneers, The Sleep Company, launched their first flagship store in Bangalore and marked its entry into the offline retail space. The mattress maker aims to launch more than 25 stores across India in the next six months.

The offline stores of the Sleep Company will add the 'touch and feel' element to the D2C brand's online presence. The company owned and operated store will operate on an omnichannel model where customers can buy small products from the stores and place orders online for their SmartGRID mattresses that will get delivered at their doorstep.

Priyanka Salot Co-founder of The Sleep Company said "While the last few years have done wonders for the online mattress market, nearly 85 percent of consumers still prefer buying mattresses offline given that the purchase experience continues to be heavily dependent on a touch-and-feel element. Therefore, as a growth driver it becomes necessary to have multiple touch-points for the consumer to buy our product especially when it's something as one-of-a-kind as our SmartGRID technology. Our offline retail expansion comes at a time when we are growing aggressively and we're excited to kick things off with Bangalore considering that it is one of the top cities in terms of market share for The Sleep Company."

The SmartGRID pioneer aims reach its revenue projection of Rs. 500 crore in the next two years. The company also plans to launch retail stores in Karnataka, Hyderabad, Kerala, Chennai, Maharashtra, Gurgaon and in the Eastern regions of India.

ISPF participates in Sleep Expo Middle East

ISPF took part in the third edition of Sleep Expo Middle East conducted in June 7 - 9 2022 at the World Trade Centre, Dubai. The Expo witnessed a large number of visitors from seven countries with bubbling enthusiasm and keen interest.

After the impact of Pandemic for nearly more than two years, the response from the exhibitors and the visitors has been encouraging. It was indeed nice to note that more than 130 exhibitors took part in the Expo and 38 Technical Sessions were held during the three days of Expo.

These sessions were focused on every part of the mattress manufacturing from sourcing of raw material, mattress process and last but not the least including recycling. ISPF has received positive feedback on the

same. A variety of mattress stalls were on display including Memory Foam, Latex Foam Hybrid, Gel etc offering sleep solutions to all age levels. A large number of visitors from the Hospitality Industry keenly observed the new inventions and the luxury products.

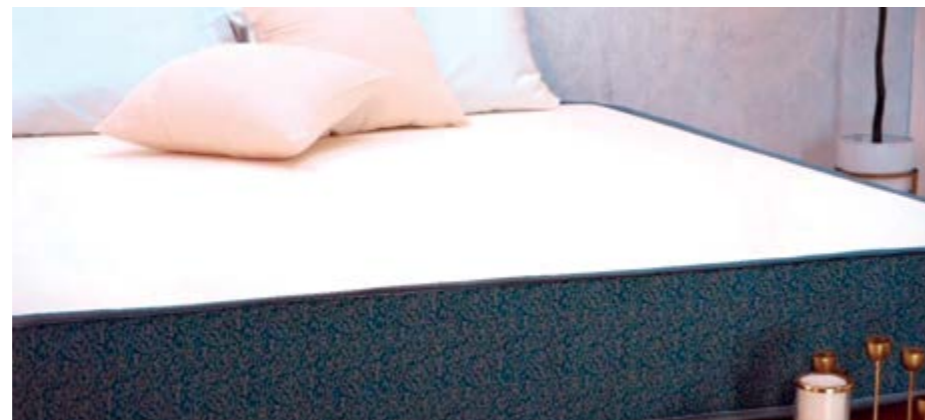
The feedback on the whole was encouraging and the next show is scheduled to be held during September 2023.



Welspun India forays into mattress segment

Welspun India recently announced its foray into the mattress segment under its home linen brand SPACES. The company launched 'SPACES Mattress' as an extension of its home wellness offerings.

"The company's deep understanding of stated and unstated consumer requirements provides it with the insights to innovate and offer the most relevant products and solutions to the country's diverse and fast-growing consumer base," said Manjari Upadhye, CEO of Welspun India.



Based on different consumer preferences, the brand offers customisable, Orthopedic, and firm mattress options. The mattress is equipped with an in-built mattress protector, odor-free and anti-pilling along with 12 years of warranty, shares the company.

The entry of Welspun India into the mattress segment indicates SPACES' aggressive focus on the domestic market and it aims to tap the emerging opportunities in this segment with its offerings.

Legends Furniture & In2Rest appoints Marty Melchar as its New VP of Sales-Bedding

Legend Furniture and its subsidiary company In2Rest that have been producing the Remedy Sleep line and private label mattresses for large retailers has appointed bedding veteran, Marty Melchar as the Vice President of Sales-Bedding. Melchar will be reporting to Sam Curtis, Executive Vice President of Business Development and will use his expertise to support the expansion of In2Rest and the relaunch of the remedy Sleep line and program.

Besides that, he will work with the team to accelerate the company's growth.

With over 25 years of experience in the bedding industry, Melchar has served as the VP of Sales for both Serta Simmons and King Koil and is highly experienced in consulting. He has spent 28 years with Serta Simmons Bedding, where he held various sales positions at a senior level.

He joined Serta in 1991 as a Territory manager for Central California and was later promoted as Vice President of Sales.

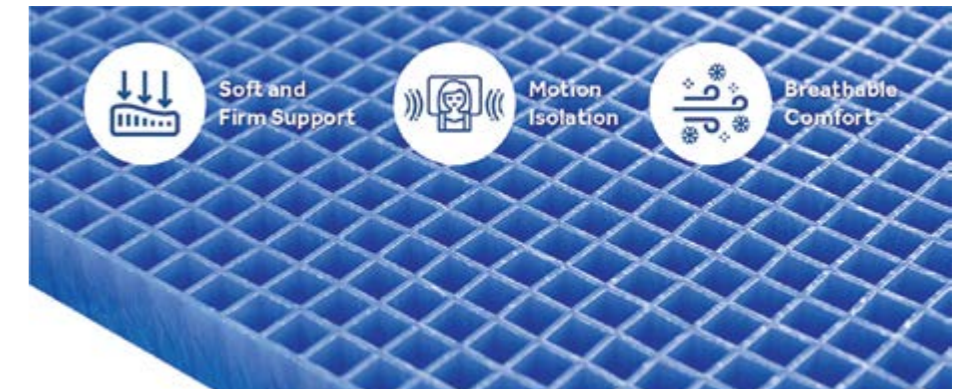


Diamond Mattress unveils Gel Technology for Sleep comfort

Diamond Mattress will launch its new gel grid mattress at the upcoming Las Vegas Summer Market to provide a competitive edge to retailers with gel technology priced to move. The gel grid mattress can be customized by retailers suiting their merchandising strategy.

"Diamond has always been about adding value and giving retailers the best margins possible in any innovation we bring to market. Gel Grid by Diamond enables the retailer to compete with something new and unique for their brand, and it reinforces Diamond's commitment to growth for our retail partners," said CEO Shaun Pennington.

Diamond's Gel Grid addresses two most common sleep disrupting issues i.e. sleeping hot and pressure points that results in tossing and turning. The cooling gel material and grid design ensures comfortable sleep. The gel grid design ensures soft and firm support and allows multi directional movement. This means, it can adjust according to the sleeper's position and provides support, wherever required. The bed features hundreds of grids that can shift in different directions enabling excellent motion isolation. Diamond's Gel Grid also features an open cell design for airflow to prevent hot spots during sleep and helps maintain an even temperature throughout the night.



Corsicana Mattress to restructure business through Chapter 11 of US Bankruptcy Code

Corsicana Mattress Company and its affiliated entities filed for voluntary reorganization on June 25 under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code in the Northern District of Texas in Fort Worth. The filing indicated that Corsicana will be filing a proposed asset purchase agreement with an affiliate of Blue Torch Finance, LLC to acquire the Company's assets through a court-supervised auction and sale process under section 363 of the Bankruptcy Code. The proposed transaction is subject to Court approval.

In connection with the proposed sale transaction, Corsicana has received a commitment for debtor-in-possession financing from Blue Torch.

Upon Court approval, the new financing, together with cash generated from the Company's ongoing operations, is expected to enable the mattress company to continue operating as usual and continue to maintain its high standards of quality and customer service. The Company has sought approval to remit employee pay and continue certain Court-approved benefit programs uninterrupted.

"The Chapter 11 process enables Corsicana to accelerate its re-focus on core customers, renegotiate agreements, flatten our organization and drive greater efficiency in all aspects of our operations," said CEO Eric Rhea.

From thread to bed... How smart tech is empowering the mattress journey?

The technology is the key driving force behind any industry in present world. Mattress industry is no exception. It has become need of the hour to use technology for the betterment of the mattress industry and sleep health.



Lost in the details, we associate the operations of a manufacturing unit with watertight protocols, methodology backed by years of research and veracious number-driven strategies. Indeed it is what lends the process the element of business. But we tend to forget where it all begins: solution-oriented creativity. Manufacturing is as much art as science. To seek ceaseless creative innovation in the form of technological solutions at every step not just lets a business achieve higher efficiency, it is what lands them a competitive advantage in the long run.

Mattress industry is no exception. According to Fortune Business Insights, the global mattress market size is expected to reach \$42.84 billion in 2028, exhibiting a CAGR of 4.8 percent during the forecast period. Following suit, the Indian mattress market has seen accelerated growth due to rise in income levels, health consciousness, growth in the real estate and hospitality.

Consequently, innovations in mattress technology have been only accelerating in the past few years. Yet, that's not it. New-age mattress brands have been able to excel by taking control of the entire journey: from product innovation to post-sales support, from warehouse tech revamp, footfall analytics to AR based digital catalogues and shipping outsourcing, technology has sipped into every operational aspect of mattress manufacturers.

A closer look into what's hot and what's not. Read on!

Whereabouts of warehouse tech

Every brand depends on its technology to maintain and increase the efficiency of systems, products, and services. It helps track and streamline processes, maintain data flow and manage contacts and employee records.

Warehouse management plays a vital role in ensuring efficient and quality fulfilment of productivity goals. No matter how exceptional of a product you manufacture, if efficient inventory is not established along with streamlined shipping, the overall business performance will be drastically affected, making the entire affair a lost cause.

There are several Mattress companies in India and International who have adopted several innovative products and solutions for the benefit of business. US based Pleasant Mattresses have been keen on realising an efficient warehousing system's contribution and haven't shied away from acting upon it too. Implementing lean manufacturing methods in its production plants and warehouses has helped Pleasant Mattress maintain a consistent flow of products, enabling the company to increase output by 30 percent and ship nearly all of its orders within one week.

Inventory

This brings our attention to another important segment of warehouse management: inventory. In the dynamic markets that persist, inventory availability is an important factor

Mattress industry is continuously driven by the technology, providing innovation and improvements to make better products into the market. The technology plays key role in various verticals of the mattress industry, from product innovation to running organisation's administration

for manufacturers. Digging deeper, the stress is laid upon having the right levels of safety stock in the warehouses. However, there is a thin line between a controlled safety stock and unnecessary overstocking. One ensures smooth and confident running of the business while the latter results in a relative loss with tying capital up in items with less or no demand.

Automated forecasting in inventory optimization solutions utilise workflows for smoother purchasing practices where less money is tied up in overstocked items. Less time is spent having to manually calculate purchasing orders and in turn results in freed up capital that can be invested elsewhere to keep the business moving forward.

There are plenty of niche technological solutions service providers are offering new age inventory solutions. Again capitalising on this phenomena, with the genuine intent of helping manufacturers opt for the most suitable options, are certain websites that are letting you compare various service providers and give access to extensive databases.

As some Indian mattress manufacturers test the waters in D2C methods and omnichannel, while some veterans as well as start ups are already thriving, ERP solutions are being relied upon more and more.

Shipping & Outsourcing

E-commerce fulfilment and delivery has become an important focal point, as much for manufacturers as retailers. Kingsdown is a Centuary old mattress industry veteran who has worked at length to integrate technology in their shipping operations. Recently, they have also entrusted a truck rental agency to carry on their quality operations countrywide.

In late 2019, just before the pandemic struck, the company switched to Miami-based Ryder System, which now handles all Kingsdown's U.S. mattress shipping, both long-distance runs, as well as shorter deliveries

GPS and other technologies allow Kingsdown to track



products through every link of the supply chain.

This is indicative of the increased trust and need amongst mattress manufacturers for outsourcing their operational aspects, specially the ones requiring technological coherence. Shiprocket is one such entity thriving from this new technological integration revamp in India.

Retail at forefront

The job is not all done once the cherished mattresses have left the plants. The journey in fact has only just begun. Especially on the retail side, integration of technology to create accountability and collect and access data in a systematic manner is equally important. Footfall analysis in one popular method to monitor performance and identify key opportunities for maximising sales.

There are a number of visitor movement or customer footfall tracking systems available that use infrared sensors to monitor body heat density, or single entrance counters with reflective beam, proximity or pressure sensors for example. Linked to electronic point-of-sale systems, the data produced can be used to plan store, staffing and merchandising operations more effectively.

SmartSteps is one such analytics service provided by Telefonica Dynamic Insights, a multinational telecommunications company. Launched first in the UK in 2012, it has truly revolutionised the footfall tracking tech scene worldwide.

Smart Steps uses anonymised and aggregated mobile network data to provide trends about footfall by time, gender, and age. It helps companies and public sector organisations make better informed decisions, reduce costs through increased efficiency, and better understand and serve the needs of their customers.

Mattress brand Gardner White in US have installed solution called 'Entry' at each of its store's entrances and integrated the data via its API into their homegrown retail analytics solutions. A mashup of data from staffing records, Point of Sale (POS) and other sources.

Easily integrated with Gardner-White's existing PoE+ networking equipment, Entry sensors accurately count every customer who enters and exits the store. Using machine learning and processing power, Density's device analyses data in real time to anonymously measure foot traffic at each location.

Customer is king

Customers benefit from technological integration as well. With so many choices, it's hard to know where to start. Hence, technological solutions can help customers make more suitable choices and thus, assist in elevating customer satisfaction. At the start of this year, Mattress Warehouse announced implementation of patented diagnostic sleep system called bedMATCH.

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Technology is used to collect data, analyse data and provide data to innovate and improve the mattress industry. It helps in taking informed decisions, reduce costs, increase efficiency and better understanding of customer needs. Technology is truly revolutionising the mattress industry

which includes sensors and diagnostic technology to analyse your body. In only three minutes, the system then provides a list of recommended mattresses for their individual sleep needs.

The technology thus takes the realm of crafting personalised customer experience a notch up.

As the industry moves a step ahead, from realising the power of aware customers to capitalising on the same by being the dispensers of information themselves, technological innovations provide plenty of opportunities to catch up to an audience never contacted previously.

In 2021, Mattress Firm, one of the world's largest mattress specialty retailers announced the launch of the Sleep.com mobile app for iOS and Android devices. With an embedded sleep tracker, the app unlocks personalised insights, recommendations, Sleep.com content and more, helping people improve their sleep and well-being.

The app is powered by technology from SleepScore Labs, Mattress Firm's strategic partner and the industry-leading sleep science and improvement company. Sleep.com, a wellness resource from the Sleep Experts at Mattress Firm, serves as a go-to source for learning how to sleep better and feel better with personalised expert guidance, wellness tips and the latest trends in sleep technology.

The Sleep.com app provides sleep tracking that measures breathing rate and body movement without requiring a wearable device. It includes features such as a Smart Alarm, Snore Quiz, Sleep Goals and several other tools designed to help users monitor, understand and improve their sleep habits. Users can also consult with a certified sleep coach to build a personalised sleep improvement plan and a more meaningful relationship with rest. The app's Sleep Library gives users access to Sleep.com's wellness tips and sleep-related articles designed to guide them on their journey to getting quality rest and living a healthier life, both mentally and physically.



One has to understand that besides the genuine intent of empowering the people with practical sleep science, the app also gives the firm access to ethical data. This in turn helps them understand the customers' sleeping habits, needs and concerns better to predict market trends and henceforth, optimise their market strategies and business operations in general.

While on the extreme customer spectrum, the market is being flooded with sleep technology for everyday use. Whiting offers an under-the-bed sleep tracking pad, the data from which can be found on its app along with a sleep score for each night. One of the most convenient wearable options on the market till date, Oura ring is a custom smart ring offering numerous stats and tailored advice. Tempur-pedic sleep tracker can track the sleep of two people at a time. A perfect choice for couples. Vivosmart 4 can track your light, deep, and REM stages of sleep.

This is just a fraction of what the market entails. Many backed by years of research, some not so much. Nonetheless the cumulative evidence points towards elevated awareness regarding the importance of sleep, accompanied by the willingness to act and spend for better sleep quality.

Data Management

At core, the intent is always to help customers achieve an optimised level of quality sleep. Some manufacturers care the same for their employees too, and thus choose to take

off the strain of managing large scale data. In order to work with the manufacturer of their choosing, Bello Mattress needed help setting up EDI so that they could exchange invoices and other standard business documents with the manufacturing company that would handle the fulfilment of their mattresses.

They also needed to automate order information when purchases were made online through their WooCommerce store. Rather than manually enter orders, inventory, shipping information, etc., between WooCommerce and their SAP Business One back-office system, they knew that their accounting team would benefit from an integration solution that could automate the flow of data and maximise efficiency.

eBridge came to their rescue, automating the EDI with the manufacturer, and also providing order integration from WooCommerce to the company's SAP Business One ERP system. This offers a completely automated business process and eliminates the need for manual data entry between the applications and systems Bello Mattress was using.

Visual technology leading the way

In the high-connectivity induced world that we live in today, sight as a sense has come to take a front seat in every possible domain. From the world of augmented and virtual reality to something as simple yet effective as high

In the present world the technology has provided many avenues to change the market dimension. There are various ways of approaching the customers using technology. The huge amount of data flow that is produced by the technology has to be well integrated, processed automatically to reduce the manual intervention

resolution photographs, the virtual realm offers a serious competitor advantage in form of wider reach and fascination amongst clientele.

Visual configuration tools let online and in-store shoppers see a visual representation of products with any available customization they want—upholstery colour, for example, or additional pieces added to a sectional sofa—in 2D or 3D imagery. 2D configurators show customer customizations from a fixed perspective, while 3D configurators allow the consumer to explore the product either from a fixed number of viewing angles or with 360-degree rotation.

Augmented reality (AR) tools take 3D configurators to the next level by letting consumers use their smartphones or tablets to scan QR codes and visualise the product in their homes. It's the best way to answer the questions "Will this fit?" or "How will this look in my room?" Companies

incorporating this technology into their e-commerce platforms have reported a 10 to 50 percent increase in cart conversion and a 30 percent to 50 percent average order value increase, according to a recent Gartner report on visual configuration. Not surprisingly, it also reduces returns. In one case, the return rate dropped from 20 percent to 1 percent.

Centuary Mattresses in India is also working on UI/UX with technologies such as AR, 3D renders, etc. to present a more intuitive digital catalogue and seamless experience to its consumers.



Centuary has a highly automated logistics process, and has been successfully using real-time vehicle tracking apps to provide better visibility to our customer base, says Uttam Malani speaking to Comfort Times.

"Other technology-led innovations are bringing the entire pool of transport service providers onto our logistics platform for day-to-day functions such as bidding on lanes, acceptance of vehicle placement requests, POD closures, fill rate tracking, etc."

Today, the biggest challenge facing any supply chain is data visibility, which Centuary has successfully cracked over the last couple of years. This has resulted in enormous efficiencies being generated through better inventory control, container utilisation, service levels, etc. Omni-channel CRM tracking will be crucial in future to provide a seamless experience to the consumer, while enabling brands to better leverage customer insights. This is something Centuary is currently planning to work on.

The impact of AI is to be seen across categories, and the mattress industry is no different. The effect is more visible



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on the customer facing activities such as customer profiling, product & campaign design, marketing strategy execution, etc, he adds.

Another major brand, Sheela Foam, is also gearing up on accelerating its digital initiatives aimed at improving customer experience and strengthening its retail game. Their most recent venture involved incorporation of video analytics using AI. The company has implemented AI-enabled cameras at its manufacturing plants and retail outlets to derive meaningful insights, which then lead up to various use cases ranging from product quality control and plant safety to sales efficiencies.



Sheela Foam has been at the forefront for incorporating Digital technologies in almost all of its operations. Such as using RFID in tracking product journey from manufacturing, to sale, to customer feedback in order to continuously improve our products and services, says Manoj Sharma - National Head Retail, Sleepwell

"Our unique barcodes for warranty registration and convenient settlement of complaints is another example of using the latest technologies for achieving customer satisfaction. The use of AI at our retail showrooms for enabling a customer to choose the right products is another new initiative.

Our technological interventions have made significant contributions in not only enhancing business efficiencies but have

also contributed towards building consumer trust and respect. These initiatives signify our commitment to not only offering the best in class range of products but also present them at all consumer touch points with best in class Brand experience.

We endeavour to offer technological solutions that make the process of choosing the right products, a simple and convenient journey for a customer's personalised requirements.

Today the range of products that we offer are designed using many path breaking innovations. The technological benefits of our products need to be matched with the individual comfort requirements, it is here we feel that AI can contribute significantly, in making this a very convenient process and importantly a uniform journey across all our stores in the country.

We expect increasing use of AI in not just presenting products but first assessing consumer needs and expectations and then recommending the right products and services. We also see comfort products increasing their level of interactions with the consumers by analysing sleep patterns and even recommending lifestyle changes for enhancing sleep quality," says Manoj Sharma.

The cameras can also help in understanding if the customers are being handled properly, whether the store sales executives are effective enough in their reach out to the customers. All this video data is then analysed to identify the gap areas and areas where improvement is required. With the help of intelligence built in through AI, these cameras

The technology is to be used in proper way to the advantages of the industry growth. Save time for consumers, provide better consumer experience, allow customers to have look at the product virtually with all informations in most appealing and attractive ways. Using technology to help customers to take informed decisions

installed at the conveyor belts in the plant read the various parameters, like length, breadth, width, etc. from the RFID chip embedded in the material that comes on the conveyor belt. In case there is any deviation from the set parameters, the camera captures it and an alert is generated.

The visual checks done by these cameras help in ensuring that the mattresses on the production line are in compliance with the set parameters as well as maintaining zero defects during the production process. This in turn has helped in removing dependency on people in the manufacturing plant for doing quality checks, which can be very subjective and error prone.

Also the company has made mattress ordering and delivery through the digital app eliminating paper based processes.

Outsourcing is all the rage!

Previously popular notion that a complete intramural management of business operations provides for a closer regulation and thus better results is being questioned without reservations now. As manufacturers look at the prospect of incorporating only the best of technological solutions, the world of outsourcing through well-equipped applications has bloomed far and wide. Take the example of Texas based e-commerce, FloorFound.

The startup is expanding to meet consistently elevated demand to handle returns of bulky and oversized items, like mattresses. It has triumphantly carved out a niche in providing "recommerce" for oversized items.

This approach is helping retailers transform returned and open-box merchandise into a new, repeatable, and sustainable source of inventory and revenue. In a way, FloorFound sits at the perfect intersection of the two





most transformative trends in retail: sustainability and supply chain resilience.

Tech and humans, hand in hand

Duroflex provides an excellent example of how even the most humane aspect of business operation, i.e. Human Resource Management, can also embrace technology to its advantage. Along with embracing a people-centric culture, Duroflex has leaned into their mission of providing technology-backed solutions. As the company engaged with customers and employees, they noticed a need for tools that empowered all employees.

The timing couldn't be any better. Duroflex was well on the way towards enabling workers through digital technology when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Lockdowns, curfews and other restrictions may have changed the business landscape and stifled operations for a time, yet the challenges served as a catalyst towards a digital future.

The technology had to be easy to use for employees on the shop floor; for sales representatives in the field; and for employees working out of the corporate office. The user interface and experience (UI/UX) served as a critical factor. One of the principal considerations for the company was the appeal and user-friendliness of the product to a diverse and dynamic workforce.

It's all in the details

Adding a whiff of freshness and creativity, Mihir Parekh founded an innovative division called the BubbleGuard, now the third important vertical of firm Nilkamal. The initiation finds its root deep in the values Mihir has consistently held on to in the realm of sustainability. Launched to be a sustainable packaging solution in the industry, the honeycomb structured sheets are made using a patented European technology.

This sets the tone for what is to come. When we think of adapting innovative technological solutions, particularly in the business processes of the mattress industry and in general, the wider manufacturing economy, we often circle back to thinking of customised systems for handling big data or all inclusive ERP. However, true technological revamp lies in assimilating feasible technological solutions throughout all the stages and operations. Afterall, efficiency comes from zooming in on the details.

Data is synonymous to opportunity

Data is probably the most prized by-product in today's economy that sits and breathes in the world of technology. Some might shoo it off as a tedious add-on, and in all honesty, we can understand why. It calls for extensive protocols, and secure storage solutions and what not. However, what looks like a heap of numbers from below, on adapting a larger-picture perspective, offers a field


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of never-discovered-before insights and the ensuing opportunities.

Take the example of the bedMATCH test mattress we discussed above. The diagnostic system issues mattress recommendations based on personal input. This collective input in itself can act as a valuable insight, like an informal survey. It will directly fetch first-hand information about the user's sleeping style, body, positions etc. This can be further used to understand the market composition and the arising trends and opportunities.

Besides these customer-based data examples of Smart Steps and sleep.com app, companies' internal data from Darwinbox and EazyStock also offers real-time information and insights into manufacturer's operations. Knowledge is indeed power. Big data analytics is offering several ways for improving asset performance, streamlining manufacturing processes and facilitating product customization. Manufacturers are able to make informed decisions using productivity and waste performance data provided by big data analytics, lowering operating costs and increasing the overall yield.

All in all, technological solutions sipping into the mattress industry's every realm doesn't only solve real-time operational setbacks and optimise the overall efficiency. The accompanying data throws open a field full of opportunities.

The future is here

Besides data, Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning seem to be the next wave in manufacturing. AI is helping production teams analyse data and use the insights to replace inventory, reduce operational costs and offer seamless quality control over the entire manufacturing process.

Virtual reality (VR) is simplifying the product design process by eliminating the need to build complex prototypes. Designers and engineers are using VR to create realistic product models, allowing them to digitally see their designs and troubleshoot potential issues before starting production. Clients can also review and interact with these digital designs, simulations and integrated devices, significantly reducing the time needed for designing to manufacturing the finished product.

Brands who have adopted various technological solutions have only reported increased efficiency in their business processes. Yet, let's not forget it's all about numbers. Due to the extent of investment certain tech solutions call upon, a definite analysis of their impact can only be made in the long run.

To summarise something this exciting and vast, all we can say is that the realm of technological solutions in business processes is full of promising prospects. Consequently, the substantial question is not 'if' but 'how' to partake. **CT**

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

1. Indian mattress industry can consider:
 - a. Product innovation for post-sales support.
 - b. Revamp of warehouse technology.
 - c. Implementation of footfall analytics to AR (Augmented Reality) based digital catalogues & shipping outsourcing.
2. Adoption of Lean Manufacturing for the production plan to increase output levels.
3. Right levels of safety stock in the warehouse for unnecessary overstock maintenance.
4. Automated forecasting that can be implemented in inventory optimizations solution to utilize workflows for smoother purchasing practices.
5. Involving the usage of GPS & other technologies to track the product through every supply chain link.
6. The retailer needs to integrate the technology to collect and access the data systematically.
7. Integration of footfall analysis to monitor the performance and identify the key opportunities for maximizing sales.
8. Integration of visitor management or customer footfall tracking systems linked to electronic point of sales system which produces data to use in planning stores, staffing, and merchandising operations more effectively.
9. Retail stores need to implement test mattresses (sample mattress) which includes the sensor and diagnostic technology which analyses the body in a few minutes, the system provides a list of recommended mattresses as per the individual sleep needs.
10. Implementation of apps that can track & measure breathing rate and body movement with a smart alarm, a snore quiz, sleep goals & several other tools designed to help users monitor, understand & improving sleep habits.
11. Implementing data management tools eliminates the need for manual data entry.

A photograph of three people in a clothing store. On the left, a man in a light-colored suit jacket is seen from the side, looking towards the center. In the center, a man in a dark blue suit jacket over a brown polo shirt is smiling. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a purple button-down shirt, is sitting on a white surface and looking up at the man in the suit with a smile. The background shows a white wall with glass shelves and a black-framed mirror.

Why companies are investing on consumer awareness?

The mattress market in India is growing and evolving at a rapid pace. In fact, as per the ResearchAndMarkets.com's report "India Mattress Market Outlook, 2020-2025", "The overall mattress market of India has grown at a CAGR of above 11 percent over the last five years. Earlier, the unorganised sector primarily dominated the Indian mattress market but with growing awareness and an increase in the earning capability of consumers, the organised sector picked up fast and it grew nearly at a CAGR of 17 percent in last five years." In future also, focus on spreading consumer awareness will only help the mattress companies to increase sales.

Spreading consumer awareness about quality of sleep is the key

While it is generally seen that Indians often shop for many things offline or online, frequency of shopping for a quintessential product like mattress is very less in the country. This is because Indians often undermine the importance of quality sleep and mattress in their life. They generally overlook the facts that sleep is a vital ingredient for one's good health and overall wellbeing and one spends nearly 1/3rd of their lives in bed. Thus, people often take sleep for granted much like their mattress that is used for this activity. This makes it necessary to make the people realise that if they are spending nearly seven to eight hours on bed every night on an average, they need to invest both time and money in buying this product. So, the mattress companies along with organisations like Indian Sleep Products Federation (ISPF) have taken numerous steps to spread awareness amongst its customers about quality of sleep and importance of good mattresses through development of retail infrastructure and marketing activities.

Earlier marketing was directed at only promoting the product but now the focus has shifted to promoting quality sleep which has become the need of the hour amidst growing diseases, unhealthy lifestyle and hectic schedules. In fact, mattress manufacturing companies have taken upon themselves to make people realise that a good night's sleep is of utmost importance in life.

Srinivasan Sundaerasan, Secretary, ISPF, says, "The best gift and comfort that you can give to your body is sleep. However, that is something that most Indians neglect. Most of the people don't know about good sleep hygiene which includes basic things like not using your mobile phone before sleeping, not having tea or coffee after dinner and avoiding blue light before sleeping because it blocks a hormone called melatonin that helps you sleep. Thus, due to lack of sleep hygiene, people end up having sleepless night resulting in a stressful next day."

In addition, the mattress industry players firmly believe that a quality sleep can not only increase your productivity but also help you to reduce your hospital bills as you can keep many diseases away from you if you have a sound sleep every night. In this context, Srinivasan avers, "Most of the

The Indian mattress market is growing day-by-day. But the Indian consumers needs more awareness on the sleep health. Since the sleep health is one of the most important aspect of human life, and is getting disturbed due to various reasons such as change in life style, working at late nights etc.

times, it is 80 percent sleep and 20 percent medicine that help cure any illness or disease. So, instead of paying huge hospital bills, you should buy a good mattress that helps you sleep sound. Here, mattress surface also plays a vital role."

Increasingly mattress manufacturers are making their customers aware about good mattress surface. In fact, different kinds of efficient mattress surfaces have emerged in the recent past that can satisfy different needs of the customers. These include memory foam, pocket spring, Bonnell spring, PU foam, viscose foam, multilayer hybrid foam, 5-layer foam etc. Such high technology mattresses help address various issues faced by many like sleep apnea, insomnia and other sleep related problems.

Gradually, due to the extensive efforts taken by the mattress industry and many study results, people are beginning to understand that a good sleep can reduce various problems like obesity and the risk of heart disease, dementia and even some cancers. Hence, consumers are willing to invest in technologically advanced products over traditional cotton beds as they promise them a better night's sleep and a longer and healthier lifespan. However, due to the presence of many brands and their multiple offerings and extensive advertising, customers are getting confused.

Well, Duroflex launched a campaign recently in this regard. Smita Murarka, Chief Marketing Officer, Duroflex, notes, "We have launched a campaign called 'Asli Neend' with our brand ambassador Alia Bhatt with the aim of educating the customers on making well-researched choices when it comes to their sleep solutions products and not get lured by attractive deals, advertising gimmicks and false promises."

She adds further, "Gradually, people are showing interest towards quality sleep solutions. However, since many brands have entered the mattress segment claiming to sell superior materials, customers are getting confused and thus, they end up purchasing a mattress which does not address their specific needs resulting into disrupted sleep and ensuing health issues. Hence, through this campaign, we are aiming to increase consumer awareness and help India sleep well through quality solutions."

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In 2023, as the world celebrates a resilience greater than we could have hoped for, Milliken & Company's ColorDirection Bold Unity presents a collection of connected tones powerful in impact and vulnerable in expression, colors that can sing gentle harmonies or raise the roof with vibrancy.

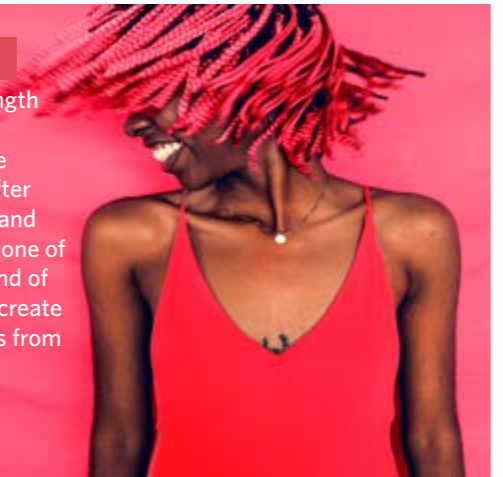
The new 2023 collection is the work of thought-leaders and trend-watchers in the worlds of textiles, packaging, fashion, design, and marketing and a specially convened Milliken panel, analyzing what's trending today and what is next.

Mixing the dreamlike with the ultra-real, the gentle unknown with the vibrant unmissable, Milliken ColorDirection 2023: Bold Unity combines a palette of boldness with pastel alter-egos, creating tones and contrasts that work together as a team.



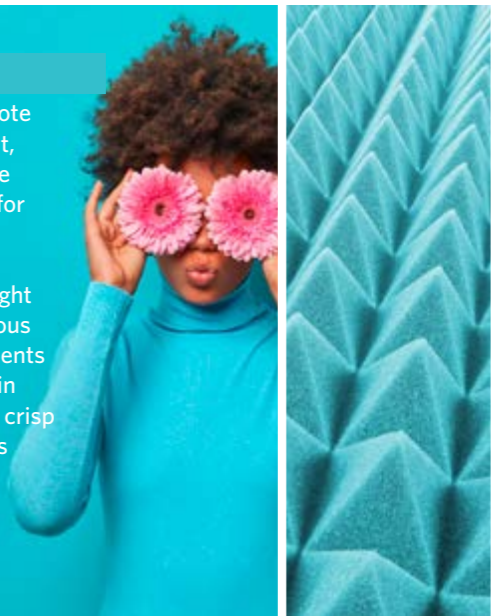
RADIANT ROSE

Shining its bold strength through the color palette, Radiant Rose brings together a softer harmony of warmth and comfort. This is the tone of challenging norms and of working together to create new visual languages from an alphabet of color.



CORAL MOMENTS

Adding a welcome note of freshness and light, Coral Moments is the spirit of playfulness for the consumer mind. Carefree walks with loved ones under bright summer skies, precious days collecting moments that will live forever in memory, all with the crisp bright comfort of this unmistakable hue.



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Consumer awareness through retail infrastructure upgradation and training

In order to achieve their initiative of promoting good and quality sleep, brands are leaving no stone unturned. They are encouraging the retailers and training them as well as to how they can educate their customers about five things that are needed for good sleep in a bedroom i.e., good ambience, no noise, pleasing light, good smell and good surface. Further, brands are also motivating their retailers to ask the consumers about all their requirements including budget and then suggest a mattress surface which is best for them in terms of features, advantages and benefits. This is in line with the fact that most of the mattress manufacturers believe that since retailers are at the forefront and are the ones actually selling a mattress to the customer, training and educating them to spread customer awareness is very important. Hence, mattress companies are increasingly focussing on retail training, so that they can sell better sleep solutions to the customers.

Srinivasan notes, "In this regard, 2000 dealers were trained by ISPF this year and the focus of the two virtual sessions was to increase sales through consumer awareness. Also, since we know that mattress is a product which customers want to see and touch, we educated the retailers as to how they can enhance the customer experience like through simply displaying the mattress on

a flat surface and then asking the customer to roll over the mattress from left to right or vice versa to see the comfort the mattress offers."

He adds further, "Nearly 275 retailers were given physical training at the HGH India trade show this year through its World of Sleep pavilion which was focussed on promoting good quality sleep through sleeping solutions that customers are increasingly looking for."

Even big mattress companies are doing a lot on the retail training front. Smita says, "We communicate with our dealers on a regular basis. We take various initiatives to educate our dealers by providing them literature, sending them e-mails and training them. We even conduct digital training sessions. Through all these measures, we ensure that they are able to serve the consumers better and increase consumer awareness."

In the present times, what makes retail training important is the fact that before the Corona virus pandemic outbreak, mattress customers mostly used to visit the stores and buy the mattress. However, the pattern changed drastically after the pandemic as people moved more towards online shopping and D2C brands. Thus, digitally native brands grew more than the legacy brands. This was also because of the fact that the customers wanted to know more directly from



the source and save money and not pay the middlemen. Thus, in order to counter this issue, mattress manufacturers in India had no option but to start focussing on upgradation of retail infrastructure and retail training to improve the selling technique and spread consumer awareness about quality sleep and health benefits of various mattress surface materials.

Not only this, today, the mattress manufacturing companies are also suggesting their retailers to act on even smallest of complaints of their customers as through this they can gain confidence of their customers. Retailers are even asked to take feedback from their customers after sales and provide support to the customer if they have any issue. This is because customer feedback has become very important in the present times as customers have various platforms like Facebook and Twitter to voice their opinions on a particular product, service or company and this is one of the best ways through which mattress manufacturing companies can improve the quality of their offerings and gain more customers.

Digital marketing to spread consumer awareness

Now, how you reach your consumer has also become very important. Until and unless, you don't reach your customer, you would not be able to create consumer awareness. Hence, in this internet age and especially after COVID-19 outbreak, leveraging and investing in digital marketing has become all the more important. Hence, mattress manufacturers are increasingly demanding their dealers to opt for online

marketing to spread awareness about quality sleep and promote brands and connect to the potential customers. In lieu of this, as a basic step, mattress manufacturers are asking their retailers to take mobile numbers and e-mails of their customers and maintain a data bank, so that details about new products and offers and discounts on special occasions and festivals can be sent to customers well before time.

Well, the need of the hour is that the digital marketing campaigns should contain educative content that strikes the correct pain points of the consumers and educate them about good sleep. Even social media serves as a good platform in this regard. Hence, increasingly retailers are leveraging the social media user base to promote sleep and sleep products by engaging the audience in a two-way communication through quizzes, contest and memes.

Today mattress manufacturers are also directly using the digital medium to educate their customers. Smita notes, "In addition to contests, conferences etc., even through our website, social media platforms including blogs and others, we educate the customers on the importance of good sleep and how they can ensure that through various measures like right light, right temperature, etc."

Increased consumer awareness leading to growth of organised segment

Due to the various efforts taken by the mattress industry to increase consumer awareness, customers are gradually

moving from unorganised to organised segment and thus, the organised sector is growing at a fast pace. In fact, today customers of every age group are realising the importance of eight hours sleep and the impact of a comfortable, modern and technologically advanced mattress on their body, mind and soul and hence, are preferring to buy a good brand mattress to which they earlier did not pay attention due to their relatively high price as compared to the products offered by the unorganised players.

As per Smita, "Today, mattress industry is 60 percent unbranded but the scenario is expected to change in future and this is definitely true." According to a report by Redseer, the branded mattress market in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 13 percent over the next 5 years to constitute 37.5 percent of the market by 2022. The report further states that a large part of the growth of the branded mattress market can be attributed to the efforts and investment made by mattress players to increase consumer awareness about quality mattresses through development of retail infrastructure and marketing activities.

In a nutshell

In the recent past, there has been a definite shift in terms of consumer awareness and willingness to spend on sleep solutions, not just in the big cities but across small towns of India as well, thanks to the mattress manufacturers' initiatives. As awareness is increasing, people's willingness

to do in-depth research and make informed decisions while buying mattresses have also grown significantly. This is making retail upgradation and digital marketing important in the mattress segment and hence, mattress manufacturers are taking all the steps in this direction. **CT**

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

The Consumer Awareness is the important factor for the mattress industry. This leads to increase in the business of organised sector. In India, the mattress market is dominated by unorganised sector. The mattress industry needs to look at the ways to find opportunities to bring the consumers from unorganised sector to organised sector of mattress industry. All manufacturers are to take new initiatives to increase the awareness in general consumers about importance of sleep health and how this industry is working on this? how it can benefit customers? This can increase the customer's willingness to make purchases of branded mattresses.



Mattress Ticking

Because looks matter!

Mattress ticking is no longer a simple covering meant to hold feathers or fillers that were formerly used to make a mattress. Besides contributing to the luxury, performance, durability and obviously, the aesthetic appeal of the mattress, ticking also plays a vital role in mattress market. A closer look at its functions should help us better understand the role it plays in driving mattress sales



leave much scope for visual storytelling for the purpose of branding. Thus fabric designs offer a good opportunity to create a distinguished and recognizable brand image.

The range

Cheaper mattress covers usually zip on polyester ones that can bobble and warp over time. More high-end mattresses feature natural fibres which are more breathable and long-lasting. The depth and grams per square metre (GSM) of the fabric helps assess its quality and density. Opting for a higher GSM fabric results in a thicker and higher quality fabric than a lower GSM count. Lower GSMs such as 100g will soon flatten and will stop providing that additional comfort layer. However as Mr. Pooviah points out *“True quality shouldn’t be compromised, while at the same time diversity and range are integral to any industry, specially in India.”*

Depending on the sleeper’s needs and habits, their preference also varies to a great extent. Like a placebo effect, some people do sleep better on antibacterial fabrics because they feel more comfortable and relaxed with the idea of a cleaner surface.

Sustainable fabrics are also gaining much popularity because people feel more comfortable sleeping on natural surfaces that have been harvested without the use of fertiliser and pesticide, and manufactured in a GOTS-certified facility. Recycled and ‘upcycled’ polyesters provide comfort and a better conscience because of their association with recycling and ocean cleaning. While copper fabrics are adored for their bacteria-killing power and pain relief properties.

This awareness amongst customers in combination with manufacturers’ shared interest in diversifying the ticking

range has pushed the industry to innovate. For example, Outlast and Coolmax are high wicking fabrics that claim they can help remove some of the heat issues in memory foam. Jacquard also boasts of their GOTS certified natural fibres as well recycled material that has helped keep 7.50 lakhs plastic bottles from ending up in the landfills or oceans.

The rage!

Earlier, mattress showrooms could be best described as a sea of white. But since the past few years, the colour palette has really bloomed along with the patterns. Traditional florals patterns have subsided (except for the economical segment), giving way to bold geometric patterns. Oversized or repeating geometric patterns are going strong. The feel can be best described as *“minimalistic or clean look with a classic touch”*. Mr. Alok notes how *“ticking manufacturers have taken inspiration from home and apparels furnishings to consciously develop new designs.”*

Engineering designs along with plasted designs are catching on. Another interesting element, contrast, is all the rage lately. Pattern layering and asymmetry are also strong trends. A closer look at international trends shows demand by manufacturers for the aesthetic style of the fabric to convey the function. Instead of putting ‘hemp’ or ‘cooling’ on the bed, they want the look — the fabric design and colours — to convey the story.

The new ways of retailing have also given way to fresh trends in ticking business. As retailers try to up their game, they are eager to showcase maximum mattresses and pique customers’ interest with a multitude of options. Vertical stacking like books-on-a-shelf is a popular style now. This has in turn brought much focus on the design of the borders

As retailers try to up their game, they are eager to showcase maximum mattresses and pick customers’ interest with a multitude of options. Vertical stacking like books-on-a-shelf is a popular style now

and for all the right reasons. A successful border creates a standout look that frames the panel.

There is a subtle movement away from texturized borders to more patterns. The Contrast effect, yet again, is enjoying massive popularity. Unquestionably, a great border does a good job at drawing the customer to the mattress. Hence the blorder the colours and pattern, the more chances of the mattress standing out at first glance.

In terms of functionality, *“sweat wicking and cooling achieved by phase change materials are some of the fastest emerging trends in mattress ticking. Both of these are aimed at heat management that in turn facilitates an enhanced quality of sleep.”* notes Mr. Alok.

Mr Pooviah shares an interesting observation regarding how in the past few years companies have shown increased interest and participation in ticking development. *“They have in-house designers and elaborate product design teams, who come up with detailed briefs and work hand-in-hand with our design teams to fabricate their desired ticking into reality. They are using pantone colours. This in itself is evidence enough for the way fabrics have come to add value to the product and impact sales.”*

The way ahead

As technology, economy and humanity as a whole move towards an even more sophisticated future, the need for enhancement of every big and small aspect of our lifestyle comes as no surprise. A better quality of sleep demands a better mattress, which in turn demands for better components, including the ticking. Our elevated fascination with aesthetics and sensory comfort translates into the mattress surface taking on bigger roles.

“The resulting innovations have been made possible only because of persistent breakthroughs in application of ingenious textile finishes with a combination of sciences such as chemistry and other hardware machinery that process such fabrics with minimal to no loss of productivity.” Another very original observation by Mr. Alok throwing light on the new-day mattress ticking industry.

Lava is one to take the game a notch up. The company’s Per4mance fabric combines its .BeWarm specialty yarn with Glacier or Xtra Cool fibres. The result is a fabric that can be

used in a zoned panel to cool a sleeper’s head and body, and warm their feet. BekaertDeslee has unveiled its Nightro collection of technical fabrics. They provide better recovery during night time for better sports performance. Maxime Knitting uses silver to keep fabrics fresh and free of odours.

And many more textile innovations are in process, thus indicative of the elevated importance ticking has gained and the role it has come to play in mattress quality and sales. But more importantly, it tells of the shared zeal of the industry to reach greater heights. **CT**

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- A good mattress ticking is comfortably soft, skin-friendly and durable, and offers the manufacturer a competitive advantage through its design and aesthetics.
- It helps keep the shape of the mattress intact and protects the materials inside from exposure of light, solvents, dust or other elements that can oxidise them or fasten the process of deterioration.
- It plays a vital role in the breathability of the outer layers as well as aid in temperature regulation.
- The design holds the potential of landing a competitive advantage to brands.
- Manufacturers seek fabrics that photograph well, “pop” on screen and convey a “visual softness” that appeals to shoppers buying online.
- Awareness amongst customers in combination with manufacturers’ shared interest in diversifying the ticking range has pushed the industry to innovate.
- Traditional florals patterns have subsided (except for the economical segment), giving way to bold geometric patterns.
- Borders are gaining much attention, with shifts from texturized borders to patterns. Bold contrasts are also in.

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THE MATTRESS OF INDIA

"If you want to have a good sleep, you have to have a good mattress." - Jonathan Scott



A brand that is a household name today, is one of the most iconic and early startups that made comfortable sleep a reality for every household in the nation. In 1962, a journey of comfort began, which has transformed into a relationship of trust, quality, and value for money, today.

THE BEGINNING OF AN ENIGMA

There was a time when comfortable mattresses were exclusively for the ones who belonged to the affluent part of the society. It wasn't until 60 years ago that a visionary entrepreneur changed the ideology of a comfortable sleep. **Ramesh Pai** saw how coir was used in automobile seating during one of his visits to Germany. A man of vision, he knew he could use the untapped potentials of coconut fibre to create a product that could shape the future of the nation. With an excellent understanding of the market needs, his research introduced India to a product that changed the way India thought of their sleep.

MOVING TOWARDS A CONSUMER-CENTRIC MARKET

A PAN India partnership with a strong network of distributors, in addition to **9 manufacturing plants**, Kurl-on has come a long way innovating around its products. As a customer-centric brand that has forayed

into pillows, cushions, bolsters, comforters and home furniture, Kurl-on also provides livelihood for many families by directly or indirectly employing them, while offering something for every type of consumer persona. A network of **10,000+** dealers across **70+** branches alongside thousands of employees in the management and manufacturing sector have worked tirelessly to make this journey a success.

ADAPTING TO MARKET TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INNOVATION

Taking charge of the mattress industry, Kurl-on worked on the much-needed organisation of the scattered mattress manufacturing industry in India. Today, Kurl-on has expanded its manufacturing prowess to around **135 configurations** pan India with a single objective of improving the quality of sleep.

It was the first ever brand to implement the iconic **Motion Separation Index Technology** into a mattress with Luxurino range. Some never-experienced-before products like **Zero Pressure Points**, and **Kurlo Fresh** have made the brand an unparalleled leader in the industry.

The consistent quality and innovation in Kurl-on products has rewarded the mattress pioneer with accolades from the likes of the Coir Board of India and the National Safety Council. It became the first ever brand to be **selected as a Superbrand** by consumers – in fact the **only mattress brand in India** to have achieved this feat consecutively for five years.

A JOURNEY THAT PASSED THE TEST OF CHANGING TIMES

The way Kurl-on has evolved in sixty years, introducing new products and foraying into various segments in home furnishings speaks volumes about the trust consumers place in its quality and affordability. This rise to the top would not have been possible without the immense and continued support from the stakeholders and the consumers. Their arduous belief in the products and constant support has helped Kurl-on sail and lead as a brand while reaching out to a bigger market spectrum. Amidst the milestones covered and achievements accumulated, Kurl-on hopes to keep growing with its customers who come home to comfort, stir some stories and make memories.

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Sleep is a fascinating topic all over the world



Ms. Jyothi Pradhan, CEO, Kurl-on

A post-graduate in both computer science engineering, and management from University of Southern California, **Jyothi Pradhan** brings with her a versatile experience working in various industries, both in India and the US. Speaking to Comfort Times, she shares company's digital transformation, online, e-tail selling models and changing consumer lifestyle. Excerpts:

Q You joined the Kurl-on leadership team in 2019. What digital transformation have you introduced within your company since you joined?

Kurlon has always been a forerunner in using digital technology to facilitate ease of business for all stakeholders. In the last few years, Kurlon has been focusing on using technology to giving real time information, improving the customer experience and enabling virtual after sales support to stakeholders. We are using Artificial Intelligence, Block chain technology, Machine learning and Augmented reality in various business processes.

Q Kurl-on is one of the oldest Mattress brands in the country. How Mattress industry evolved over these years?

In the last decade, thanks to easy access to the internet, the Indian consumers have become educated on benefits of good sleep and the impact it can have on one's well being. This in turn created the birth of the mattress industry in India - huge spurge in the number of brands of mattress brands both at a local as well as regional level. With this sudden increase, the availability of machinery and suppliers to the mattress industry also has become favourable creating a sustainable ecosystem in India. This ecosystem today thrives under the Indian Sleep Products Federation (ISPF) - a industry association that connects consumers, channel partners with manufacturing and suppliers. Just earlier this year, we had the Sleep Expo which was attended by over a lakh of people from the industry - domestic and international.

The online and e-tail channels have also opened up market opportunities to unorganised players who previously would only be able to sell to consumers walking down their street. It is delightful for us at Kurlon to see this progress as this helps us to continue to push the boundaries on more innovative products that give better value to the consumers.

Q Today large mattress companies are expanding with CoCo and Franchisee-operated. Which operation works better for the home segment? What is the role of online in this plan

The Indian consumers have many options to shop for a sleep product from brick and mortar stores to online. Each channel has its own benefits and conveniences that serve a need for a specific segment of customers. The home segment is seeing an omnichannel approach from consumers.

Q Kurlon has a widespread dealer network and what made you start your own retail store network?

At Kurlon, we have always aspired to be as close to the consumer as possible. This has helped us understand their



changing needs and adapt our products accordingly. In the last decade, we have seen consumerism go through a wave of change with brands from every industry giving a more focused product experience. The need for us to open our retail stores was two fold- one to be able to test consumer acceptance to new products before scaling up for launch and two, to be able to have presence in new channels like malls - where our dealer network is not present.

Q How does the Indian mattress industry compare vis-à-vis peers overseas?

Sleep is a fascinating topic all over the world and overseas, consumers are now realising benefits of coir based natural products - A focus brought in mainly because we are spending so much of time on our mattresses today. In India, coir has always been a major product category and continues to be a major contributor in the industry.

In India, the digital transformation of the common man has enabled a lot of entrepreneurs from both the organized and the unorganised sector of the mattress industry to leverage online and e-tail channels- this phenomenal access to consumers across geographies has been game changing where it is not just roll packed mattresses, but also regular mattresses from the local "gadda" to the high end premium mattresses that are today available from the comfort of one's home.

Q How acquisition of Spring Air and Englander brand of mattresses helped Kurl-on?

The Indian consumer in the premium segment today is well travelled and wants products that he/she experienced overseas- we have a niche segment of customers who have created this demand; be it in gourmet food or luxury accessories. Mattress is no different and we have seen a rise in the number of overseas brands that are serving Indian consumers for more than a decade. Kurlon saw this as a opportunity to serve a new segment of consumers and we are proud to be associated with both the Spring Air and

Englander brands as their Partners for the India

Q In India, around 60 percent of the population still sleeps on some kind of cotton mattress. They don't have access to affordable, good modern mattresses. What is avoiding this population to move to a modern mattress?

The Indian household has different needs as per the lifestyle. Most of the population today stays in studio style housing- where the same room transforms from a living/ dining area in the daytime to a bedroom at night. Most homes don't even have a cot. The limited space makes it a minimalist lifestyle, and cotton mattresses/ bamboo mats are easy to roll - making them a product of choice.

Q New mattress brands are entering India. Do you think there is enough market available for all?

Almost 20 percent of the world's population is in India. With 1.5 billion people living in diverse geographies, India is a unique market with customers for every category and price points. This in addition to the growing population and increased GDP is making India a exciting opportunity for lot of consumer oriented companies.

Q What is the USP of Kurl-On in India?

Kurlon is not just a mattress- it's a lifestyle. As a brand, we are in the segments of sleep, home and comfort. Over the last 6 decades, we have evolved from a coir product manufacturer to a household name for sleep. Today, we are aligned as a company to take responsibility for our business footprint, product circular journey and impact on the environment.

Each product we design and bring to market is handcrafted with high precision, best in class quality and most importantly- a commitment to excellence - a commitment that is upheld by our suppliers, team members and channel partners. I invite you to experience Kurlon #LetsKurlon [CT](#)

The ISPF Training Programme is creating effective changes in the sleep products industry

The trained retailers are now improving the way in which they operate their stores.



A mere three word quote from the eccentric Rita Wilson: *"Awareness is empowering"*. Empowering for the scientific understanding it brings, for the choices it enables, for the value it adds to our wellbeing. For too long, markets, though successful in capturing the imagination of the people to an extent, have lacked depth. Rather than stressing extensively on *"You need this"*, what was missing all along was simply focussing on the why of the *"need"*. Customers always show an elevated level of satisfaction when the purchase comes from a place of awareness, followed by independent choice.

It is only fair the retail ups its game to resonate with the behaviour of the new-age customer. An industry as genuinely purposeful as mattress need not rely on sly marketing techniques. By simply equipping the customers with the much-needed information through the medium of the ever-trusted mediators: the retailers, the industry can thrive further. The retailers ought to not only be aware but skilled to pass on the information in a constructive manner.

ISPF at the forefront

Forefront It is no surprise ISPF has been at the forefront of elevating the retail segment of the Indian sleep product industry so as to ensure a quality experience for all the stakeholders. Their training programs have been one of the key drivers in this mission. In the past year, 2000+ retailers were trained and certified. The number itself speaks of the impact endowed.

The last month saw HGH India World of Sleep Pavillion host a large number of industry's stakeholders and their enthusiasm. During these 4 days, ISPF in association with GTT (Global Talent Track) organised a training program for 245 retailers. A professional consultant from GTT lead the 4 day long sessions with holistic modules and imparical learning methods. The focus was increasingly laid upon consultative selling methods to enrich customers' experience.

Bi-annual training sessions

With an overwhelmingly appreciative response from retailers at the HGH India coupled with visible impact, ISPF has made the obvious choice of taking a countrywide approach to these training sessions. The organisation in association with GTT will be offering a bi-yearly training session across numerous cities, starting with Bangalore and Hyderabad this August.

The dual sessions will also be accompanied by regular enhancement of knowledge and latest sleep products industry news. For this, monthly newspapers as well as regular updates will be used to maintain a steady and accessible stream of information for the retailers. The upskilling efforts will ultimately help empower the consumers into making a more informed choice. Besides, the retailers would also receive a certification and a mention on the ISPF website, handing them a favourable position online in front of their customers.

ISPF is putting its efforts in training its retail partners and empower the retailers to achieve better success in the business and meet customers' expectations. It is heading towards empowerment of retailers with knowledge that can help customers to take informed decisions as much needed information flows through the retailers in most effective way

4 modules, 1 mission!

The sessions would entail 4 modules to lay equal focus on the important aspects. The first is in regard to upskilling. It concerns the general retail etiquettes of the mattress industry. The second one focuses solely on consumer experience: line of inquiry to understand customer's needs better, practice consultative selling, provide product knowledge in simple relatable manner using relevant examples, etc.

Since technology has slipped into every possible aspect of life, sleep industry retailers showing minimum participation into the realm would only be doing so at the cost of their own customer base, both new and old. Nowadays, it isn't unlikely for digital window shopping to convert into actual purchases in real time. Thus the need for an in-depth digital presence is justified and wouldn't be wrong to say, an absolute necessity.

This is exactly what the third module focuses on. Amidst stiff competition from online channels, brick and mortar businesses need a strong digital strategy to thrive. Retailers will be assisted in their digitization efforts. Creating a strong presence is not the only purpose, since at the end of the line, it is always the customer satisfaction the efforts are concentrated at.

Hence retailers will be trained about aspects like how to reach out to the right audience through suitable platforms and strategies, satisfyingly address customers' queries and provide them with coherent information while keeping user-friendliness in focus. Simply, the aim is to use the power of the digital world to create a bridge that ultimately leads the customer to the retailers' doors.

Another crucial but often an overlooked aspect, display, will be covered here. A retail store is a place the customer should not only get to see the mattress or other products, but experience it using all the senses. Big companies like Walmart and Ikea admit to savvy display strategies being a major part of their success mantra.

Afterall, we tend to be a slave to our senses. We walk towards a product before even realising it, almost akin to a trance. This is a realm that ought to be extensively exploited by the sleep product retailer, especially considering the fact that it poses a major advantage against their digital rivals.

A layer deeper

An in-depth conversation with Mr. Sundaresan unveils the deeper layers of this mission. From workplace accidents, diminished productivity to lengthy hospital bills and overall, a degraded quality of life, the consequences of poor sleep health are many. Everyone faces them on a regular basis but not necessarily realises it.

With the right training *"we expect the retailers to be industry's torch bearers, shedding light on these issues that customers face due to poor sleep health and thus help them attain awareness."* Not that they want to only help bring focus to the issues, but speak in a way that is solution-based. *"This is where the part of sensitising customers about the benefits of a good mattress and further, suggesting suitable mattress comes in."*

"Curating a personalised experience for the customers is the need of the hour" Mr. S. Sundaresan stresses. *"When we are able to talk about the topic of poor sleep health and its consequences in a way that is relatable to the customer, we can finally make them understand how switching to a suitable mattress acts as an investment."*

Thus, expertise of retailers translates into informed choices by customers. That is indeed a win-win situation for all involved. No doubt, the upcoming ISPF Retail Training efforts in association with GTT do give us all something to be excited about. **CT**

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

1. ISPF has been at the forefront of elevating the retail segment of the Indian sleep products industry
2. ISPF is getting associated with various partners to arrange the training programs
3. ISPF is organising the Bi-annual training sessions starting from August.
4. ISPF is targeting Country-wide training sessions in coming days.
5. ISPF putting efforts in right training to the retailers and curating a personalised experience for the customers.



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“Sustainability is becoming the most critical and talked about factor”



Mr. Ananth Muthupandian, Director – Polyurethanes, PO/PG, Dow Chemical International Pvt Ltd

In his first interview to Comfort Times, **Ananth Muthupandian**, *Director – Polyurethanes, PO/PG, Dow Chemical International Pvt Ltd*, India shares details about company’s contribution to Indian mattress industry and sustainability efforts. Excerpts:

Q What is Dow India’s contribution to Indian Mattress industry?

Dow Chemical International Pvt Ltd. (Dow India) has contributed to Indian Mattress industry in multiple ways over the decades now and had been a key pillar to its growth. Some of which are,

- Bringing in global technologies and sharing global best practices directly and indirectly through making connections to our customers. Working closely with customers and using the capabilities of Dow India to develop bespoke technologies for the unique needs of the Indian consumer.
- For more than 2 decades, a recurring issue for customers in India was product availability due to uncertainties in supply-chain, given that most of the raw materials had to be imported, when the Indian Mattress industry was evolving and growing, we were the first company to invest in a bulk tank facility located in India. Thereby becoming a virtual manufacturer with the capacity to deliver product to customers. This commitment ensured reliable supply helping our customers grow faster and serve the market better.
- To respond to the evolving needs of the aspirational and well-informed Indian consumer, especially when it came to benefits derived from optimal levels of comfort, we introduced our ComfortScience approach. This essentially attempts to combine Dow’s material science expertise and application knowhow with insight from our customers to deliver the most comfortable products possible.
- Foam handling and mattress manufacturing facilities are highly prone to accidents, especially fire related. We have conducted many programs for customers and potential customers to bring awareness on how simple measures could be adopted to avert major accidents

Q What thrust areas are expected for PU in India?

India is estimated to grow over 7 percent - with thrust of investments in a slew of manufacturing driven companies, a bounce back for chemical and petrochemical industry is already happening. In a Sector like automotive, components are likely to contribute to growth specifically for PU business. Similarly, we see a huge upside in Insulation demand as government is actively supporting growth in reefer transport and related infrastructure. Huge consumer base and digitalization, will increase reach and affordability in consumer products like mattress and footwear. In India, while the outlook is good, and demand will continue to grow, we see new challenges emerge on the horizon. Eg., sustainability is becoming the most critical and talked about factor in the industry. Its impact includes resource and materials substitution, decarbonization, renewable energy and waste elimination, outweighs any macroeconomic concern. This is leading to many R&D initiatives on making sustainable chemistry innovation, part of products and processes. **CT**

The world waking up to EOC mattress sustainability



In late July, almost the entire continent of Europe endured a particularly fierce heat wave, with some countries like the UK recording highest ever temperatures till date. Pictures surfaced of train signals melting and fires breaking out, with the London mayor noting it to be the busiest day for the fire department since WW2.

The reasons for these unusual developments aren't hard to decipher. Global warming has ceased to be a topic only subjected to yearly reports by national agencies. It is a phenomenon that keeps on becoming more real every day, with its consequences being felt more viciously by all the countries now. But better late than never. Elevating awareness and solution-based approach is gaining momentum amongst all stakeholders.

Mattresses are no exception. Occupying large space on landfills and taking almost 80-100 years to decompose, EOC (end of cycle) mattresses pose major environmental issues. It is almost ironic. Something that endows 'sweet dreams' sleep for years could become a nightmare for the planet in its last stages. However, sustainable solutions to this problem have been in experimentation for more than a decade now and are gaining serious attention by many countries. Let's look at some of the leading examples.

The USA

The US disposes up to 20 million mattresses each year according to industry sources, adding as much as 800 million cubic feet to landfills. The bed-in-a-box marketing and super convenient return policies have definitely facilitated better quality of sleep and growth for the industry, but at the cost of swelling the already dreadful numbers stated above. However, laws by certain states, initiatives by NGOs and city councils, and innovative efforts by producers point to a better future for EOC mattresses in the country.

California, Connecticut, and Rhode Islands are soon to be joined by Oregon as states with a legislature-backed mattress recycling program. Through this EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) approach, the law requires that the mattress producers, with the help of a certified mattress recycling organisation, create a state-wide program to collect and recycle mattresses. A visible recycling fee is levied on the consumers on the purchase of each mattress, which is further used by organisations to collect, transport, and recycle mattresses, combat illegal dumping, and educate consumers as well as the larger industry regarding the need for mattress recycling.

Trailblazing the recycling efforts in these states is the Mattress Recycle Council, a non-profit organisation inceptioned in 2015 by mattress industry stakeholders. In the march of 2022, they made the proud announcement of reaching the milestone of 10 million recycled mattresses, thus diverting as much as 375 million pounds of material from landfills and incineration. *"In addition, our Bye Bye Mattress consumer education effort has informed residents why mattress recycling*

The mattresses are also playing a key role in the global warming once they are discarded. They take time of about a century to decompose. There have been some efforts put on by the technologists and researchers to address this issue in the past. The momentum is gaining now to make mattress friendly to environment

is important and how to do it correctly,' said Mike O'Donnell, MRC's Managing Director.

MRC leverages existing solid waste infrastructure to obtain mattresses from waste haulers, landfills, transfer stations and public works yards, as well as mattress retailers, businesses and institutions that dispose of mattresses, such as hotels, colleges, and nursing homes. Their Sleep Products Sustainability Program helps mattress manufacturers reduce waste while increasing operational efficiencies. Training, program resources and certification are all offered at no-cost to eligible manufacturers. Currently, they are seeking creative proposals that demonstrate how mattress components can be used in new and reformulated products, with select applicants eligible to receive as much as \$100,000.

As for other states, the efforts don't lag that far behind. Websites like Earth911.org host one of America's most extensive recycling databases, with over 100,000 facility listings across the US and Canada. Many municipal offices are offering free pick-ups and organising community drives too. Efforts are also being stressed upon making the process more accessible. Some sources suggest that fees are as minimal as \$15 in certain areas, in comparison to city landfills and mattress retailers charging as much as \$20 to \$50 for disposal services.

Australia

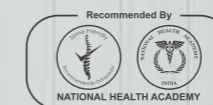
The country discards 1.8 million mattresses annually, of which surprisingly enough 60 percent are collected by a recycling facility. Soft Landing, a national social enterprise operating in Victoria, Western Australia, ACT, and NSW, is a household name by now. Besides offering collecting and recycling services at minimal costs, they also have a wide network of drop-off locations. Many government backed databases and organisations like Australian Bedding Stewardship Council (ABSC) are working relentlessly to optimise the processes.

Current recycling processes only recover roughly 44-64 percent of the materials (or less) which is predominantly steel and polyurethane foam. The diversity of materials used and construction methods create complexity at EOL for



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The percentage of recycling of mattresses in comparison with sales is about 10-20 percent on an average worldwide. Rest of the mattresses are going to landfills. The constant innovation in recycling the mattress needs more support and strong will.

recyclers. Lack of consideration at the product development stage for recyclability at the end of the useful life of a mattress, makes circularity virtually impossible. This is an area being addressed head-on by ABSC. A 60 percent recycling rate with 40 percent efficiency is an illusionary number after all.

United Kingdom

Countrywide analysis by the National Bed Federation (NBF) suggests that 7.26 million mattresses are sold annually while only 1.36 million are recycled, a rate lower than 20 percent. In the UK, collection of mattresses poses as much of a dilemma as its recycling. Flytipping (illegal dumping of waste) generates a bill of nearly £60 million a year to taxpayers in England. Local councils offer a collection and disposal service for bulky waste, but at surprisingly expensive rates. There's often no guarantee that a mattress won't end up in a landfill.

It has rather been the efforts of other stakeholders that have turned out to be more fruitful. Number of high-street retailers such as Argos, are offering To collect and recycle your mattress for a fee of £20 when you buy a new mattress. John Lewis offers a similar service, charging new mattress customers a fee of £29.95 to responsibly dispose of their old mattress. Bed-in-a-box mattress brands such as Emma and Eve also offer an old-mattress collection service for customers.

However loose regulation and inadequate transparency is evident. In July 2019, 100 containers of British waste were found in the port of Colombo, Sri Lanka. A close inspection

of the picture reveals that many of the mattresses are wrapped in distinctive green packaging. National retailers use these under their take-back scheme, meaning mattresses that were supposedly sent for recycling have been illegally dumped in third world countries.

The National Bed Federation has a code of practice and accreditation system for genuine mattress recyclers. All the companies listed on RAMR (Register of Approved Mattress Recyclers) have been carefully vetted and audited to make sure they are trading legally, complying with all relevant regulations and standards and recycling responsibly.

Netherlands

With almost 75 percent of mattresses being collected and recycled, the country is spearheading the recycling revolution not just in the EU but on a global scale. The company RetourMatras alone claimed to have handled 1 million mattresses in 2020 at 3 of its Dutch locations. In a press release earlier this year, Patrick de Kort, Regulatory Affairs Manager of EUROPUR said *"In our country, I'm glad to say that we now have solutions for dealing with the 100+ Eiffel Towers of mattresses reaching the end-of-life stage every year in an environmentally sound manner."*

EUROPUR stands for European Association of Flexible Polyurethane Foam Blocks Manufacturers. Among many materials used, polyurethane foam happens to be a material of choice amongst manufacturers in Europe. To contribute to mattress recycling, the polyurethane supply chain is currently investing heavily into expanding existing and developing new

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recycling technologies.

He further remarks *"This is a very exciting time for the recycling of mattresses and flexible polyurethane foam. With better collection and dismantling capabilities and new recycling technologies reaching the market stage, we can finally be confident that more and more valuable materials will be recycled. These technologies will enable the recycling of material from mattresses reaching their end-of-life stage today instead of various mattresses that are designed for recycling which will only reach this stage in 10–15 years."*

The intent and dedication of Netherlands in optimising their mattress recycling efforts is evident in their solutions acknowledging and addressing the urgency of the waste problem.

To state the obvious, large scale operations using advanced technology is the need of the hour. This will make the process more profitable too and thus give the stakeholders the much needed incentive to participate. A major dutch recycling company, RetourMatras, is spearheading this realm. Their highly automated and sturdy technology backed method is believed to bring up the efficiency to a peaking 90 percent and they are in the process of opening Europe's biggest mattress recycling plant. Yet it can only be specialised to cater to chemical recycling of PU mattresses.

This brings us to another important point. The constant innovation and diversity of mattresses poses another challenge, keeping large long-term investments at bay. 'Bed in a box' mattresses are relatively homogenous and provide easier recycling opportunities. However, some recyclers

believe it is the heterogeneity of older mattresses itself that provides with better EOC market opportunities and monetary incentive. For eg: Stronger end markets, like scrap metal, can help buoy weaker ones, like shoddy. [CT](#)

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

1. Indian mattress companies need to implement a lucrative & convenient return policy on EOC (End of Cycle), which could help in getting the old mattresses dumped under the landfill for the betterment of the environment.
2. Mattress industries need to come up with a website where people can pay the minimum amount and have a home pick up their old mattresses for recycling.
3. Besides landfills, mattress industries can utilize a wide network of dropoff locations where the recycling process can be done.
4. At the time of purchase, retailers can educate consumers on the benefits of recycling old mattresses and also they can provide service of collection & transport of old mattresses for recycling.



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'The demand for the sleep solution has increased post pandemic'



Mr. Sumit Bhatt, Director, COMFEX, B D G Steel Ltd.

An IIM Calcutta alumni, **Sumit Bhatt** has been leading the foam & mattress business under the brand Feelex Mattress and Comfex Foams respectively. He is focusing to expand into southern states with its foam first and then mattresses eventually. In his first interview with Comfort Times, he has shared his company future in view of changing consumer requirements post pandemic.

Q Can you please share details about your company for our readers

BDG Polysteel LTD is a Kolkata-based company, majorly manufacturers of TMT bars and Steels. We have diversified ourselves into mattresses and foams since 2016. And we have three units presently one in Kolkata, another one in North Bengal (Siliguri), and the third one in the West of India (Daman). Primarily we are foam manufacturers, and we make EPE foam, Polyurethane foam, and Rebond foam. We also manufacture mattresses since 2017 under the brand Feelex and Comfex, these two brands are marketed in eastern states of our country and are available in 330 retail outlets.

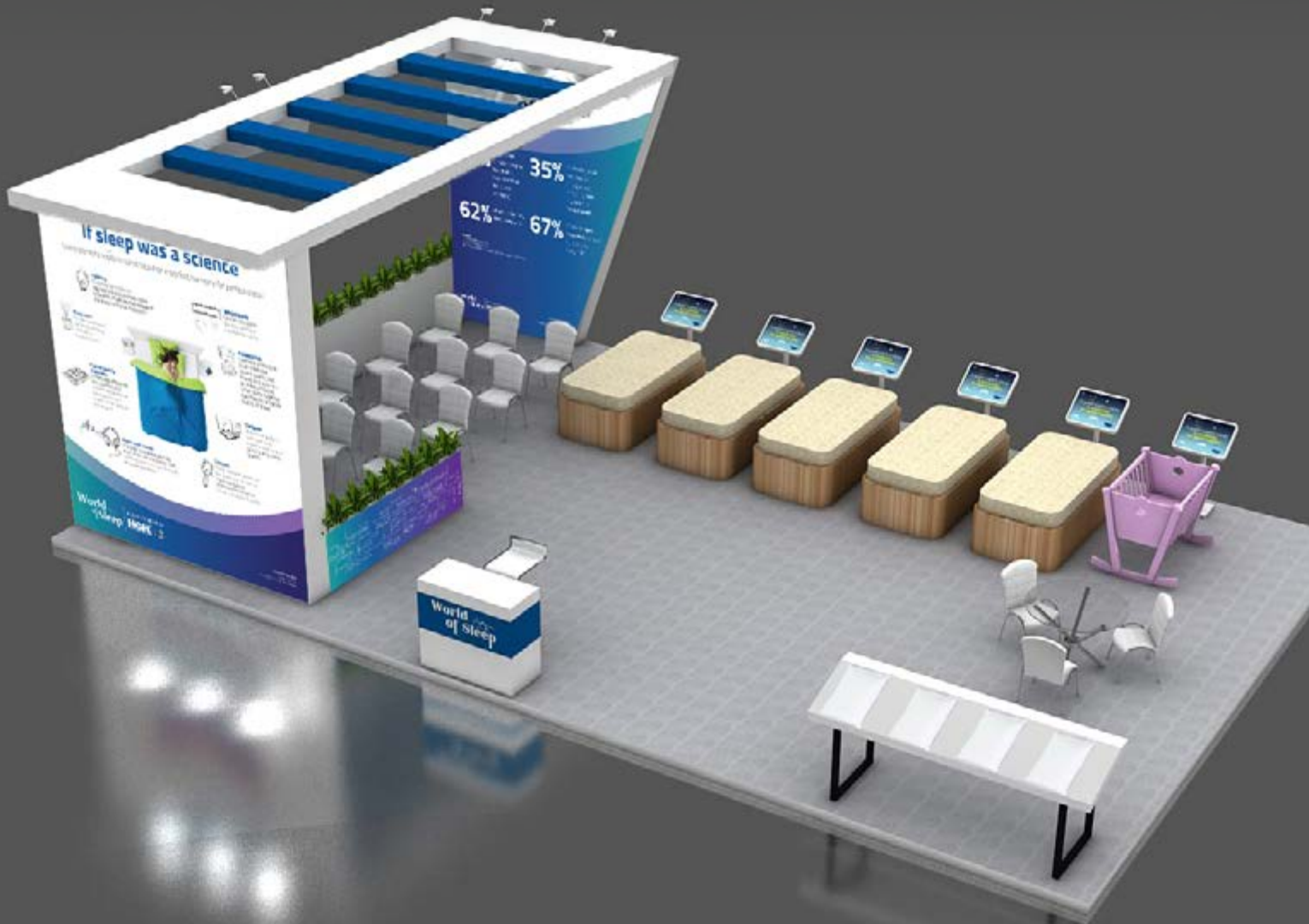
Q Do you have any idea to expand into pan India? Yes, we have already present in major parts of the Western part of the country and, we supply foams for major mattress manufacturers brands presented in the country. We are planning to expand into the south and a plan is already started. We are planning to have partners in Bangalore and Hyderabad and wish to expand it very soon into other parts of the country.

Q How consumer requirements are changing post Pandemic and lockdown?

I can see a complete shift by consumers in pursuing the mattress post-pandemic and during the pandemic. But we can see changes in sleeping solution category, people have started focusing on sleeping solution, which is good for our industry. The demand for the sleep solution has increased, awareness to use the right quality foam or mattresses has also been increased. During the pandemic people started understanding the importance of the sleeping solution which is one of the major shifts in preferences. Another major shift in the last two years is online demand, which is a new thing that all has been adopted in this pandemic, this will be one of the reason the industry is growing.

Q How B2B platform has utilized the online platform, is there any online transaction is happening between Manufacturer and vendor?

There are various platforms where customers can easily get connected with the manufacturer online, but only primary orders can happen online, gradually it goes on to the traditional trade pattern, when it comes to selling the foams. We are pushing our foams to customers who are the major mattress manufacturers (B2B). The buying pattern of the customer is also changing, there are also checking our social media handles like how we are approaching to customers, mainly focusing on the look and feel of the company, approach skills, communication skills, features of the product. So B2B has also changed in last 4-5 years. **CT**



Entering into the World of Sleep

**7 tips to make room
conducive for quality sleep**

When was the last time when you got a good sleep and awake feeling refreshed? Well, if you are unable to answer this question, then you are not alone. Today, due to hectic schedules and stressful life, good sleep has become rare and the recommended eight hour sleep has become a dream for many. In fact, sleep has taken a back seat in our lives and has become the most ignored activity in our lives. This holds true for more than half of the population of our country whose lack of sleep is directly impacting their health and wellbeing. This is giving rise to common ailments like insomnia, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome among others and these ailments are resulting in long-term health complications like heart diseases, high blood pressure and diabetes, depression, obesity etc.

As per the 5th edition of Great Indian Sleep Scorecard (GISS) 2022 of Wakefit.co, one out of every four Indians felt that they have been suffering from insomnia. Typically 31 percent of women and 23 percent of men felt that they have lost their sleep. Nearly 50 percent of teens under the age of 18 years felt that they were suffering from some sleep disorders. These numbers seem to be alarming. However, what was more glaring from the report was the fact that almost 80 percent of the youth between 18-24 years felt that they did not feel fresh after getting up and nearly 50 percent of youth claimed that their bedroom environment was affecting their sleep health.

Well, this brings us to the point that quality sleep depends on many factors including the bedroom environment which assumes a lot of importance. So, if your bedroom is optimised for the light, noise levels, temperature and comfort among others, you sleep better. Thus, this makes it important that we enter and understand the World of Sleep.

The World of Sleep

World of Sleep (WOS) is a joint initiative by HGH India and Indian Sleep Products Federation (ISPF) that primarily focuses on promoting good quality sleep by bringing together information and insights that can help people make better choices for better sleep. Like last year, this year's WOS pavilion at HGH India 2022 too, gave visitors an insight into the technology-driven innovations that characterise healthy sleep products like mattresses, pillows, comforters, blankets, mattress protectors, sleeping bags, sleeping gadgets, supplements, sleep sprays, wake-up lights, smart bedroom gear, drapers, diffusers etc., to create the right mood and environment in the bedroom.

Importance of bedroom environment for achieving quality sleep

Scientific studies and sleep researchers have found out that bedroom environment has real and measurable effects on sleep. Further, since sleep quality and duration are directly tied to other aspects of human health, a bedroom environment that promotes sleep can also improve how you feel while you're awake.

The good sleep is base for wellbeing. In the contemporary world this is getting missed due to various reasons leading to many sleep related disorders.

Now, you may be wondering as to how to make your bedroom conducive for quality sleep. So, here are 7 tips:

- Keep it light and dark:** Light is one of the most important factors that affect sleep and greatly helps in creating good sleep environment. While mostly people know that it is easier to sleep in the dark, the relation between light and sleep is much deeper which we need to understand. Light has a dramatic effect on your sleep. It helps to regulate the body's sleep-wake cycle and influences the release of the sleep hormone which is melatonin. As per the studies, exposure to bright and electrical light both before and during sleep suppress the production of melatonin due to which you are not able to have quality sleep and even wake up at the night. In addition, exposure to blue light before sleep also affects your sleep. Typically, smartphones, televisions and other devices with screens produce artificial blue light that can hamper your sleep to a very large extent. Hence, it is best to not see television, mobile phone or any other screen device before sleeping. So what should you do? Keep your bedroom as dark as possible to promote quality sleep. If you intend to read in bed before sleep, then you should keep your bedroom light levels as low as possible. Overall, ensuring that the bedroom has soothing lights helps you sleep peacefully. In this regard, many light manufacturing companies are offering innovative and unique sleep lighting solution with the sole intention of promoting good sleep, thereby leading to a refreshed tomorrow.
- Colour it right:** Colours can greatly affect the mood which can actually affect our sleep. As per colour psychology experts, some colours put us at ease while others make us alert. So what should you do? You should choose the right colours in the bedroom to ensure good night's sleep. The best colours for sleep are yellow, green, silver, orange, and pink as these colours have a calming effect on the body and thus, reduce stress and soothe the nervous system. So, you should try to stick with neutral or pastel shades for a soft and welcoming atmosphere. You should save the bright and bold colours for other rooms of you house and choose subtle colours to make your bedroom a slumber oasis, so that you get a full eight hour sleep. From the colours of the walls to the colour of the furnishings and even wall accessories like paintings, you should pay attention to everything as all of these can contribute to a good sleep. Here again, prominent paint companies in India are focussing on providing best colour solutions to their customers to promote good sleep.

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What makes a good Sleep environment

- **Keep it cool:** Yes, you heard it right? Room temperature also affects your quality of sleep. Particularly, warmer temperatures result in a poor sleep. As per most of the sleep experts, the optimal temperature range should be between 60 - 67 degrees Fahrenheit (22-25 degrees Celsius). So what should you do? You should maintain an ideal room temperature by switching on the air conditioner, installing a ceiling fan, using an electric fan or opening windows when night time temperatures are cool. Simply put, you should ensure that the temperature in a bedroom is at a level where it gives maximum comfort and is neither too warm nor too cold. Companies like Daikin and Hitachi are constantly involved in creating optimal air and temperature for your sleep spaces. These companies are offering perfect solutions for creating the right sleeping environment in your bedroom.

US scientist Nick Obradovich warns that *"Too little sleep increases susceptibility to disease and chronic illness and harms psychological and cognitive functioning"*. Obradovich conducted a major study on the effects of climate and temperature at night on sleep. His findings – that increases in night-time temperatures exacerbate sleeping problems – come as no surprise. Yet they urge us to get prepared to withstand the expected increase in tropical nights (i.e. nights when temperatures never drop below 20° centigrade)

DAIKIN Air Conditioning has introduced Emura range of products to address this challenge. It offers not only constant temperatures, it is also whisper quiet, comes with a silver allergen removal and air purifying filter. *"Of all the factors affecting sleep, temperature plays an integral role"*, says Alexander Dalinger, General Manager – Marketing & Corporate Communications at DAIKIN Central Europe. *"Especially for elderly people and children, a good night's sleep is invaluable. But the same applies to*

everybody else. DAIKIN's solutions and products lower the negative effects of tropical nights, both in homes and in hotels."

Similarly another Air condition provider Hitachi offers the new airHome range, which integrates air conditioning technology to fulfil healthy air and temperature needs. The airHome 400 model features key characteristics that check many of the boxes for optimal sleep quality: precise temperature control, air-purifying features for better IAQ and odor elimination... For example, its SleepSense function uses smart technology to automatically detect when the room occupants are sleeping, adjusting to the ideal temperature to prevent the room from getting too cold, contributing to a more comfortable sleep without disturbances.

- **Focus on fragrance:** Smell is one of our most potent senses and directly impacts how we feel while going to sleep. Further, certain smells create a physical change in the body and help you to relax. For example, Lavender lowers your heart rate and decreases your blood pressure, therefore puts you in a more relaxed state. In addition, Vanilla, Jasmine and Rose also promote good sleep quality. Hence, using aromatherapy can come as handy to create a pleasant and comforting environment in a bedroom to achieve quality sleep by relaxing your mind and body. So, what should you do? You should try and introduce ways of inviting the scents in your bedroom through sachets made of the scents, diffuser that uses essential oil or applying scents on your bedding and the like. All of this can result in a good sleep.
- **Make the right noise:** While noise in the bedroom can lead to poor sleep, soothing music or sound can help in sleeping well. This is in lieu of the fact that the brain processes sounds, not only while we are falling asleep

Some sleep facts we simply cannot ignore.

- Lack of good quality sleep directly impacts our health and wellbeing.
- Most adults who suffer from a lack of sleep face common ailments like
- Insomnia | Snoring | Shift Work Sleep Disorder | Chronic Pain | Sleep Apnea | Restless Leg Syndrome | Narcolepsy
- These ailments add up to long-term health consequences like:
- Heart disease | Kidney Disease | High Blood Pressure and Diabetes | Depression | Obesity

Wake up! Some sleep facts we simply cannot ignore

- 50 percent of adults still consider sleep to have maximum impact on their health and wellbeing
- 35 percent of people do not feel they get enough sleep, impacting their physical and mental health
- 62 percent of adults say they don't sleep well
- 67 percent of adults report sleep disturbances at least once every night

but even when we are asleep. Thus, soft and soothing music can greatly help in promoting good sleep. As a matter of fact and based on various studies, music helps in regulation of hormones including the stress hormone cortisol whose elevated levels can increase alertness and thus lead to poor sleep. Listening to music decreases levels of cortisol. Music can also improve sleep through calming parts of the autonomic nervous system leading to slower breathing, lower heart rate and reduced blood pressure. Further, various night-time noises like noise from roads, airplane or neighbours can also be subdued by soft and soothing music. So, what should you do? Simple, make it a routine to listen to soft and soothing music before sleep to ensure that you sleep right and tight.

- **Accessorise it right:** Mattress protectors, plush mattress covers, good quality bed sheets and pillows allergen-proof mattress and pillows, if you have dust or mold allergies and moisture absorbing bedsheets, among others are all the factors that have a significant effect on the quality of sleep. So what should you do? You should clearly pay attention to these in your bedroom to ensure a good night's sleep.

- **Quality mattress is the key:** For a quality sleep, the right kind of mattress in a bedroom also plays a pivotal role. In fact, you spend 1/3rd of your life on a mattress; hence you should make it a point to opt for the right mattress. So, what should you do? You should select a branded mattress that addresses all your needs. Ideally a mattress should not only offer comfort at varying levels but it should also provide the right ergonomic support. Further, you should keep on checking the mattress for any wear after every few years.

In addition, you should eliminate any clutter in the bedroom to ensure a good sleep. To sum up, a cool, dark, relaxing, cozy and distraction-free bedroom can lead to quality sleep and a refreshed tomorrow. **CT**





The second edition of the World of Sleep Pavilion at the HGH Expo (July 2022) created a memorable show, inspiring the visitors at large.

The WOS initiated by ISPF and HGH impressed the retailers and the response was highly encouraging.

During four days of the show a professional team held more than 20 sessions of training for about 275 retailers on Consultative Selling.

Many of them were thrilled and wanted to learn more in the detailed sessions of ISPF.

The Brands from the Sleep Industry under ISPF brought out several new and innovative SLEEP products and kept under display .

The display of innovative Sleep Products was welcomed by the retailers and showed deep interest in learning more about the features, advantages and the benefits of the innovative products.

The contribution by a Sleep Specialist along with a Professional Consultant made the show very impressive and attracted a huge crowd of retailers.

On the whole this show was very successful in spreading the awareness of quality sleep and also the importance of using innovative sleep products. CT



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“Our research will help consumers to choose the right type of mattresses”



Mr. P. Muthukumar, Managing Director of Sriram Foams,

Despite a hike in the prices of raw material amid the pandemic, Tamil Nadu based Sriram Foams could maintain its sales numbers in the last financial year. In an exclusive interview with Comfort Times, **P. Muthukumar**, *Managing Director of Sriram Foams*, discusses about the challenges facing the mattress industry and the changing consumer preferences along with their future plans

Q We believe Sriram foams manufactures several products. We are keen to know more about the mattress segment and its contribution to your overall business?

It's true that Sriram Foams manufactures a variety of products and we are currently in the niche space of high end memory foam mattresses. We are not into any other mattress segment.

Q How was FY 22 for your mattress business? What were the major growth drivers last year? Please mention, if any specific product or geography contributed towards your growth last year.

In FY 22, we did not witness any decline in our sales number and we could maintain our business at a normal pace. We do not have any retail stores and all our sales happened through references only in Tamil Nadu region.

Q What were the major challenges faced by the mattress industry amid the pandemic?

The biggest challenge that we faced during the pandemic was dealing with the increase in the prices of raw material. Besides that, limited availability of raw material was the biggest hurdle, we had faced during the hard times.

Q How has the consumer behaviour shaped up in the last five years? Please discuss about the changing consumer preferences.

Consumer behaviour has changed a lot in the recent years, in terms of, consumers being more conscious about their health. They are now judging a mattress on the basis of the health benefits it could offer rather than just serving as a sleeping surface. This change in consumers' preference will lead to an increased penetration of high-end mattresses.

Q What are the biggest challenges faced by the mattress industry? How do you think, these current challenges can be addressed?

There are plenty of challenges in front of the Indian mattress industry. There are some particular areas of concern that the industry is working on.

Some of the major challenges faced by the Indian mattress industry include, recycling of old mattresses; availability of low-cost machinery in India; standardization of mattress and testing standards and the alignment of the furniture and mattress industry. **CT**

Exposure to dim lights during sleep may increase health risks

Researchers from Northwestern University in Chicago have investigated that exposure to artificial light at night will lead to negative effects on health and well-being. They investigated the biological effects of different light exposure levels while sleeping.

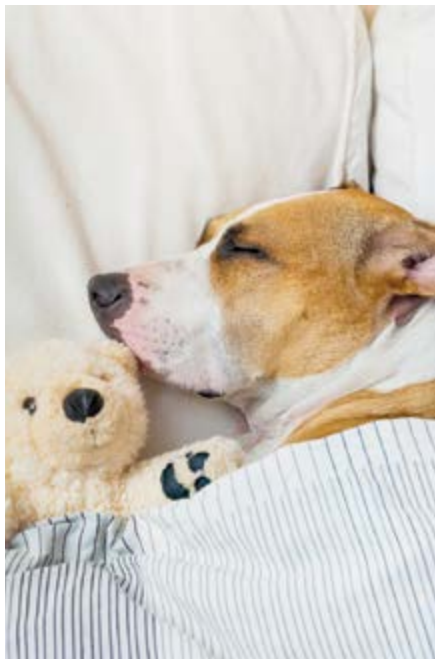
According to the researchers, exposure to moderate ambient light during one night sleep can affect glucose and cardiovascular regulation and lead to health risks like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

Another research published in 2019, indicates that artificial light at night (ALAN) i.e the light emitted by television, night light, is associated to obesity in women. Another study



reported that higher levels of ALAN is linked to higher rates of type 2 diabetes among older adults. Other research says that blue-enriched light exposure in the morning and evening alters glucose metabolism and increases insulin resistance.

Animals and their frequency of dreams



Many research reports figure out that almost every animal dreams to some degree. Generally, more highly evolved creatures dream less frequently but longer than less evolved beings. While humans dream 4 to 5 times a night with each dream cycle lasting as long as one hour, reptiles dream as many as 350 times during one sleep period. Big dogs dream longer, but less frequently than little dogs. Puppies and kittens dream more than adults as it is believed that dreaming in young animals aids in the development of neural pathways. Animals and people deprived of qualitative REM sleep experience a number of physical and psychological disorders including irritability, cognitive dysfunction, overeating, and weight gain.

Dreams recharge your creativity

According to the American Psychological Association, sleep rejuvenates the body and dreams revitalise the mind. This is because dreams are similar to creativity. The way the brain solves problems in dreams is similar to how it thinks creatively when its awake. Many artists are more likely to be inspired by their dreams and to think creatively while awake.

Learning while Dreaming

Sleep deprivation is the major cause for deterioration in mood, concentration and mental performance. It can also lead to numerous health risks like hypertension, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. According to research, a small nap may help boost learning, memory and creative problem solving. A Harvard study revealed that dreaming may reactivate and reorganize recently learned material, improving memory and boosting performance.



Visually impaired people experience more sensory dreams

Both sighted and visually impaired people go through the same set of experiences during sleep. However, visually impaired people realize fewer visual images in their dreams. As their visual dream content is reduced, their other senses are enhanced. When a visually impaired dreams, he/she experiences more sensations of sound, touch, taste and smell than sighted people. Their dreams are different from that of sighted people, like, visually impaired individuals experience more dreams about movement and travel and they even experience more nightmares.

There are over 80 different sleep disorders

While Insomnia is the most common sleep disorders among the global population, there six major classifications of sleep disorders, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. The six major classifications of sleep disorders include Insomnia; sleep-related breathing disorders; central disorders of hypersomnolence; circadian rhythm sleep-wake disorders; parasomnias; and sleep-related movement disorders.



Our 'Need for Sleep' is largely genetic

According to guidelines issued by National Sleep Foundation, adults aged between 18 to 64 years of age, generally need 7 to 9 hours of sleep. Meanwhile, adults more than 65 years of age should be fine with 7 to 8 hours of sleep and children can need as much as 17 hours of sleep.

Though some people are comfortable

with sleeping for lesser hours, the fact remains, individuals can't train themselves to sleep less. Various research studies have revealed that up to 80 percent of a person's need to sleep is genetic. Researchers opine that the number of sleep hours doesn't matter as long as we reach a good quality sleep for the complete recovery of brain.

Keep your face up while sleeping to prevent wrinkles

If you are someone, worried about ageing, here's one tip for you to stay young. Sleep with your face up to prevent gravitational folds, elastic creases or crow's feet. Researchers have figured out that sleeping on your stomach or side puts repeated pressure on your facial muscles leading to breakdown of collagen.



What is this medical condition called Dysania?

If you're finding it especially difficult to come out of your bed in the morning, you could have a medical condition called dysania. According to the Cleveland Clinic, it can be caused by a nutritional deficiency, depression or other issues. Dysania is often mistaken with drowsiness but in this condition, an individual is unable to come out of bed for one to two hours after waking up.



This type of dream could be an indicator of Dementia

If you experience frequent violent nightmares, it could be a sign of RBD (REM sleep behavior disorder) which is associated to various neurological conditions. Researchers indicate that 80 percent of RBD patients are more likely to develop neurological conditions such as Parkinson's Disease and dementia.

Losing sleep reduces your threshold to tolerate pain

People experiencing insomnia and other sleep problems seem to have an increased sensitivity to pain. Losing sleep seems to reduce dopamine in an area of the brain dedicated to pain response, according to researchers at University of California-Berkeley. "Sleep loss not only amplifies the pain-sensing regions in the brain, but blocks the natural analgesia centers, too," says Matthew Walker, a UC Berkeley professor of neuroscience and psychology.

Millenials are more likely to sleep in 'freefall' pose

Millennials and Gen Xers are most likely to report sleeping in the "freefall" pose i.e on the stomach with their legs and arms outstretched, says a study done by Better Sleep Council. To remain healthy, people must sleep on their back.

New parents sleep 750 hours lesser

It is known to everyone that a new born or infant can give their parents sleepless nights. However, we do not account the number of sleep hours lost while raising a new born. For first time parents, a baby can remove 750 hours from their usual total sleeping hours for an entire year.

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