



SPARKLE

NSBM MARKETING & TOURISM MAGAZINE

2021



THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
C1**



DEPARTMENT INTRO

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND TOURISM IS THE DEPARTMENT WHICH MOLDS CREATIVE MARKETERS AND COMPETENT TOURISM EXPERTS TO THE MARKET. THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND TOURISM OFFERS DEGREES, DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATE COURSES IN BOTH THE MARKETING AND TOURISM FIELDS FROM NSBM, APPROVED UNDER UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION AND UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH, A HIGH RANKING FOREIGN AFFILIATED UNIVERSITY. STUDENTS WILL EXPERIENCE LEARNING AND REAL BUSINESS ATMOSPHERE THROUGH DIFFERENT INTERACTIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT. THROUGH THIS PROCESS, DEPARTMENT WILL ENSURE TO CREATE COMPETENT GRADUATES TO THE INDUSTRY WITH NECESSARY ANALYTICAL SKILLS. WE WELCOME STUDENTS WHO WISH TO ENLIGHTEN THEIR CAREER PATH IN BOTH MARKETING AND TOURISM FIELDS.

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VISION

VENTURING TO BECOME THE FRONTIER IN EXPLORING MODERNISTIC HORIZONS IN SOUTH-ASIA”

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MISSION

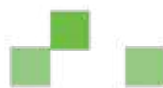
WE EXPLORE NEW BUSINESS POSSIBILITIES WITH COLLABORATION OF SOCIETY AND STAKEHOLDERS, WE DELIVER THE BEST EXPERIENCE TO OUR STUDENT COMMUNITY AND WE EXPEDITE BEST RESEARCH PRACTICES.”

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TAGLINE

EXPLORE. EXPERIENCE. EXPEDITE”

MARKKLE



VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE



It is with pride that I congratulate the Department of Marketing and Tourism Management, Faculty of Business on its first issue of their own department magazine Sparkle on World Tourism Day 2021.

This magazine features some renowned individuals on their views on tourism, hospitality and airline industries. NSBM always attempts to give first-hand exposure and experience to our students while providing them with an opportunity to witness some great minds at work, enabling them to get a clearer picture of the topic at hand.

As one of the most vibrant departments in NSBM, I am delighted to witness how capable our students are. At NSBM, we staunchly believe in ensuring that our undergraduates strengthen their core academic abilities whilst sharpening their soft skills. As the Vice Chancellor, I am proud to witness how our students have been given a great platform to showcase their talents by the Department of Marketing and Tourism Management, Faculty of Business.

South Asia's first-ever green university, NSBM, stands with the perception of undergraduates partaking in the roots of necessary soft skills along with the best academic base to become a global graduate, a sophisticated leader, a team player, a colleague and a valued adherent to the society. Therefore, we provide the best facilities, starting from modern technology-equipped classrooms, an expert panel of lecturers, extracurricular avenues and international exposure. Moreover, going hand in hand with external business parties, we provide them with enough opportunities for a secured future, thus revitalizing the Sri Lankan future generation.

Carrying forward this vision, NSBM will engage in more endeavours as such in the future to provide the needed exposure to its undergraduates. As the Vice Chancellor of this iconic educational hub in Sri Lanka, I would like to thank the NSBM team who is always committed to ensuring the best.

In closing, let me extend my sincere wishes and thanks to all the resource personnel, distinguished persons, academics, and my dear students who contributed to the magazine.

PROF. E.A.WEERASINGHE
VICE CHANCELLOR
NSBM GREEN UNIVERSITY



DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

I extend my heartiest congratulations to the Department of Marketing and Tourism Management, Faculty of Business on the success of launching the first issue of their department magazine Sparkle embedded with great value, on World Tourism Day 2021.

I am proud to witness how our students have been offered many opportunities to engage with the industry and showcase their talents by one of the most vibrant departments in NSBM. I sincerely wish this magazine success!

PROF. CHAMINDA RATHNAYAKE



HEAD OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT & QUALITY ASSURANCE

The world around us is changing rapidly. Change of behaviours and advanced technology are transforming the way we work, live and communicate. What the future looks like is uncertain, but it is interesting. It is a pleasure to congratulate the Department of Marketing & Tourism Management in producing the first of its magazines Sparkle. May this be devoted to knowledge sharing and realizing opportunities of the future. I wish you all the very best!

PROF. J BARATHA DODANKOTUWA



DEAN – FACULTY OF BUSINESS MESSAGE

I take great pleasure in conveying my best wishes to the Department of Marketing & Tourism Management for the commendable efforts put forth by the students and the academic staff in publishing its first-ever magazine - Sparkle 2021. With unrelenting dedication, effort and charisma since its inception, the department inherits such a wonderful journey ahead. I wish them all triumph!

MS. THILINI DE SILVA



HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING & TOURISM MESSAGE

Department of Marketing and Tourism aims in building, developing and delivering the most engaging and relevant learning experience in both marketing and tourism fields. Launching its first-ever magazine, "Sparkle" is a significant milestone achieved by the department in its journey. I am pleased to convey my sincere felicitations to the students and academic staff of the department for their diligence. Congratulations on your well-deserved success.

DINUSHA WEERASEKERA



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DEPARTMENT OF
MARKETING AND TOURISM
MANAGEMENT



THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR
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SUSTAINABILITY



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A VISION FOR TOURISM REDESIGN IN SRI LANKA

MS. KIMARLI FERNANDO

CHAIRPERSON – SRI LANKA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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SRI LANKA TOURISM IS BEING POSITIONED AS THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENTIAL DESTINATION.

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CONSISTENTLY DEVELOPING TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE IS IMPERATIVE FOR A WORLD-CLASS PRODUCT, AND SRI LANKA TOURISM HAS IDENTIFIED SEVERAL KEY AREAS THAT NEED URGENT ATTENTION

Can you provide a brief overview of SLTDA and your role as the Chairperson of this organisation?

Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority is a key institution that operates under the aegis of Sri Lanka Tourism along with Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management and Sri Lanka Convention Bureau. Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority is the official institution with the governance to regulate the tourism industry in the country and is tasked with planning, development, and policy implementation of tourism and related industries. It is also responsible for tapping into Sri Lanka's natural potential to expand and enhance its tourism offering while supporting communities, SME's and larger stakeholders in a sustainable fashion while positioning and developing Sri Lanka as a leading destination globally. In addition, one of the key areas the authority is also responsible for is attracting foreign investment into the industry by promoting tourism-

related investment and facilitating the process. In my capacity as the Chairperson of Sri Lanka Tourism, I see the tremendous untapped potential within the industry, and my role is to drive the positioning of the destination by differentiating our offering, develop new markets and increase the tourist spend per day. It is also my vision to ensure that all stakeholders in the sector are enabled to reap the benefits of the industry.

What are the strategic decisions taken by SLTDA to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry?

Sri Lanka Tourism strategised on a first move advantage and successfully launched the innovative bio bubble concept when we initially re-opened the country in January this year. We were recognised at ITB Berlin and many international media outlets for our innovative idea and strategic approach, which did boost traveller confidence. As part of this concept, we introduced the Safe and Secure certification in adherence to health protocols after an audit by KPMG and Ernst & Young, which



enabled the industry and even smaller establishments, and travel guides benefited from tourism activities conducted under the bio bubble. We have already implemented taking registration of accommodation providers, SME's, guides all online, reducing the documentation process and encouraging more providers to become 'official' in the industry. By them falling into the registered category, they are able to reap many benefits like training, coaching and financial aid. Recognising that the SME sector is a crucial sector within the industry, we are focused on guiding and enabling this sector to thrive.

In terms of relief, with the third wave of the pandemic severely affecting the industry, we have requested new relief from the Central Bank of Sri Lanka in addition to the extended debt moratorium from

banks and finance companies, as well as concessionary working capital, which was arranged for the industry in 2020/2021. Further, the authorities secured VAT exemption for the tourism industry by lobbying for tourism to be classified as an export industry; a 12-month instalment facility for utility payments and six-month grace period for vehicle lease rentals was obtained; provisional registration to support informal sector was structured; loan and refinancing schemes to the value of Rs. 150 billion for affected industries which included tourism was provided, and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) to provide island-wide training for Tourist Drivers was facilitated. The authorities additionally provided the opportunity to convert existing accommodations to Safe and Secure Level 1 and Level 2 hotels and intermediary care centres while the liquor license fee was waived off for 2021.

What are the new and upcoming trends that SLTDA has identified for the future progression of the Sri Lanka Tourism Industry?

We have studied the market, observed best practices, and with the assistance of partners

and donor agencies, have developed strategies to capture and develop emerging market segments. Wellness and Ayurveda, Digital Nomad, Cruise, Film, Adventure and Sports Tourism are segments we have identified as having potential for the industry. Currently, strategies are being implemented in the key identified areas. Despite the pandemic, Sri Lanka Tourism has made progress in strategic areas of technology, sustainability, branding & promotions, and efficiency improvement. We are in the process of incorporating technology into the sector as we understand that it is

made by the new age traveller, it is important to raise the bar of the service standards in the industry; some feel that service is merely a friendly smile; however, if we are to attract the high-end traveller, we need to ensure that we understand what service really entails. The ability to anticipate what a guest desires without them having to request for it and learning the art of observing guests and choosing instances to over deliver on a service promise will really differentiate our product. In order to ensure that our hospitality training is in line with our strategy, we have engaged with Ecole

ongoing inter-ministerial discussion to add critical infrastructure required in the main cultural sites and wildlife parks by way of additional toilets and restaurants, and other facilities to meet international standards and ensure comfort for visitors.

excellent geographical locations along the main sea routes and access to the ocean, we are also targeting cruise liners to make Colombo or Galle a key stopover. Sri Lanka Railway too can be a critical pillar for the industry, and we are discussing with them to

“CONSISTENTLY DEVELOPING TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE IS IMPERATIVE FOR A WORLD-CLASS PRODUCT, AND SRI LANKA TOURISM HAS IDENTIFIED SEVERAL KEY AREAS THAT NEED URGENT ATTENTION”



imperative in order to remain competitive in the digital era.

Given the changing market dynamics, what kind of competencies should the tourism industry develop to be successful in the new normal?

With new strategies in place, Sri Lanka Tourism is being positioned as the ultimate experiential destination. With this new positioning, we will, in addition to our existing audience, start to attract a new segment of travellers who will be savvier in technology and have high holiday expectations. In order to cater to the demands

hôtelière de Lausanne Advisory Services to conduct a gap analysis of the current hospitality educational offering with the goal of being on par or above the global standards.

In terms of new product development, what would be the directions/ areas that require major improvements for the tourism industry as a whole?

Consistently developing tourism infrastructure is imperative for a world-class product, and Sri Lanka Tourism has identified several key areas that need urgent attention. We have an

There is also a need to develop more connectivity. The 16 domestic airports in the country will allow easy access for tourists to visit sites without being bogged down in lengthy commutes by road. Considering our

add luxury carriages for an enhanced experience. To leverage on the sustainable tourism trend, we have embarked on a National Sustainable Destination Certification (NSDC) programme with UNDP Sri Lanka, in which we have identified

9 destinations in 9 provinces, and we are working together with respective provincial councils to transform them into sustainable destinations.

Technology too will play a huge role as a tourist will want more contactless travel, information at the touch of an App, and alerts and updates on

information and a visitor feedback portal for travellers.

From your viewpoint, what are the best practices to follow in the new normal in terms of retaining current customer segments and attracting potential niche markets?

We recognise that Wellness Tourism is a growing market with huge potential and are working to position the Island to cater to the demand of this high yielding segment. With the assistance of external experts, we are focusing on product and infrastructure

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WHILE TRAVELLERS WILL BE SEEKING TECHNOLOGY-BASED SOLUTIONS TO MAKE THEIR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAY CONNECTED, THEY WILL ALWAYS SEEK PERSONALISATION AND THOSE 'WOW' SERVICE MOMENTS TO MAKE THEIR HOLIDAY UNFORGETTABLE

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development, training and guidance to the SME sector and the larger industry targeted marketing and promoting investor opportunities. In addition to the Wellness Tourism segment, we are also focused on developing the Film Tourism market. Sri Lanka was growing in popularity in this segment with international producers, and as such, we have developed a Single Window Approval scheme to further facilitate growth in this segment. Even though the Meeting and Incentive travel segment may not do well

health regulations. We recognise this requirement and hence the development of our Travel App 'Visit Sri Lanka' - with World Bank and ADB assistance where close to 5000 lesser-known attractions to be uploaded along with tourism police

as soon as borders start re-opening, Destination Weddings will be a segment that will have potential. Since Sri Lanka has the possibility to cater to larger outdoor weddings, it is also the perfect destination for an intimate wedding, and both event segments will have potential.

In the next 10 years, what kind of compulsory skills and additional traits are you expecting from graduates who are to build their careers in the tourism industry?

In addition to the curriculum learnt over the period of study, I feel that it is imperative for graduates in the tourism industry to be as competent in soft skills, which will be key for Sri Lanka to compete with our regional rivals. Being highly skilled in the areas of emotional intelligence and empathy will be essential. While travellers will be seeking technology-based solutions to make their travel arrangements and stay connected, they will always seek personalisation and those 'wow' service moments to make their holiday unforgettable. Teamwork, Stress and time management and the ability to innovate, strategise and re-strategise when the unexpected occurs, as

the current pandemic, will be crucial for our industry to thrive.

What are some of the proposed plans for the Sri Lanka Tourism Industry by SLTDA?

Sri Lanka is perfectly positioned to attract the post-Covid-19 traveller with its wide-open spaces and a multitude of nature-based experiences. We are currently in the process of launching a 5-year Global Communications campaign. Sri Lanka Tourism has true potential to attract the experiential traveller, and I believe that with the launch of the integrated global communication campaign, we will be able to highlight to the world the treasure trove of adventures Sri Lanka has in store for them. Despite the many challenges which we will have to face in the future, it is important to look at the possibilities, and with Sri Lanka positioned well as a post-Covid-19 travel destination, I am extremely confident of the future and know that Sri Lanka Tourism is on the path to reach its true potential.

"WE RECOGNISE THAT WELLNESS TOURISM IS A GROWING MARKET WITH HUGE POTENTIAL AND ARE WORKING TO POSITION THE ISLAND TO CATER TO THE DEMAND OF THIS HIGH YIELDING SEGMENT"

WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

PROF. D. A. C. SURANGA SILVA
SENIOR LECTURER - UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

Sri Lanka Tourism has been showing its outstanding potential as one of the most decisive contributors to the economic growth and development of the country. It has become the third-highest foreign exchange earner to the Sri Lankan economy.

Travel and tourism contributed nearly 12% to the country's GDP in recent years. Foreign exchange earning of the industry had been around USD 4.4 billion in 2018 despite the nearly 18% of decline of this earnings happened in 2019 as a result of the Easter Sunday attack. However, at present, more than 90% of foreign exchange earnings and the contribution to the GDP of the Sri Lankan economy from the tourism industry have not been made as the industry has become the most hard-hit industry of the Sri Lankan economy due to global Covid-19 pandemic.

Recovery and resilience building of the industry has become the highest priority at present, but it is a huge challenge. We as a nation must be smarter and more proactive. As an industry that has a great potential to grow with multifaceted development contribution, it is the right time for Sri Lanka Tourism to capitalize on the emerging growth opportunities in global tourism under the present new normal situation

created by this ongoing pandemic. The tourism industry must cater its services to meet the emerging and growing tourism demand trends and patterns. The services focused on more individualized, personalized, heterogenous, health, safety, and wellbeing, responsible with the protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage

Similarly, wealthy tourists are seeking healthier and wellness tourism services.

When looking into these global trends, focusing on the application of sustainable tourism practices must be highly instrumental at present. Sustainable tourism brings a new vision to the global tourism industry as it balances a harmonized relationship between

**PH.D (AMST) IN ECON;
M.PHILL (MAAST.) IN
ENV ECO; MA (CMB)
IN ECON; DIP (AUS) IN
ENV, ECON; B.A (CMB)
IN ECON**

and for every section of the society. In line with such inclusive growth, the practices of inclusive tourism must implement specific tourism development activities to provide the ways and means to take those who are marginalized and excluded from the current tourism development process into the mainstreams of tourism development by making them enjoy the fair distribution of tourism benefits.

It is the right time to redesign and reshape Sri Lanka Tourism towards inclusive and sustainable tourism development through a collective and integrated effort of



FOUNDING COORDINATOR: MASTER IN TOURISM ECONOMICS AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

SECRETARY GENERAL: TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATORS AND RESEARCHERS ASSOCIATION OF ASIA (THERAA)

DIRECTOR: CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY ANALYSIS (CERIPA)

ACT. DIRECTOR: COLOMBO UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY EXTENSION CENTER (CUCEC)

of the destinations, fair trade with euphoric host-guest relationship is becoming more attractive for new tourists under new normal situation. Furthermore, these growing travel trends indicate that rich tourists are more inclined towards eco-tourism and green tourism hospitality services.

economic development, community wellbeing, and environmental protection simultaneously.

Inclusive Growth means equitable economic opportunities for the members of society by ensuring a fair distribution of economic benefits to each member

all stakeholders of the industry. Finally, the success of such efforts will determine the prosperity of our tourism industry and will be the best resilience building strategy for post-Covid-19 Tourism Development in Sri Lanka.



UPLIFTING THE TOURISM EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

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For centuries, Sri Lanka has been a popular place of attraction for foreign travellers.

The tropical climate, beautiful beaches, rich wildlife, ancient history, together with a variety of water sports options and the possibility to experience all different climatic conditions within a short period of travel, makes Sri Lanka a unique travel destination.

The natural beauty of the country is accented by a cultural history dating back thousands of years. However, we are blessed with all the above rich resources. Therefore, it can be said that Sri Lanka is a popular tourist destination. The world has become competitive in every way, even in the tourism industry. Our regional competitors like Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and even Vietnam are ranked well ahead of Sri Lanka in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness index by World Economic Forum. If the entire country could get along with one vision and

strategy, it is not far that our country would be branded as one of the top high-end tourist destinations in the world. As a basis for that, steps have been taken to provide education on tourism in Sri Lanka.

Skills training for tourism is conducted internally through induction and in-house structured programmes and externally through public, private, and non-government organizations. The low



incidence of external training in the industry suggests that pre-employment training is important in Sri Lanka. As the tourism industry grew faster than usual after the war in Sri Lanka, training institutes were not able to produce the required number of human resources for the industry. Therefore, more and more unskilled and untrained employees were used to fill the vacancies. Today the industry faces significant challenges of identifying the right requirements for different categories of human resources and training the staff who are now in the working process with low levels of skills. Tourism & Hospitality establishments may find it difficult to fund their own training, which underlines the need for appropriate training to be publicly funded if Tourism Vision 2025 is to be realized. There should be a special focus on the practical aspect of training, especially as Sri Lanka becomes a high-value destination and requires the provision of quality service. Training programmes for the tourism sector are designed in consultation with the tourism industry only to some extent. At the national level, the government has established a sector skill

council for hospitality and tourism that aims to make training more responsive to industry needs. Some training institutions such as SLITHM also have former and current members of the industry involved at the board level. Currently, universities, government-sponsored institutions such as SLITHM and Vocational Training Authority, as well as private sector training providers conduct their improvised training programmes online.

These educational programmes are expected to make progress in the future of the tourism industry, but the current epidemic is delaying it. The kind of tourist that will emerge in the post-Covid-19 world will be more aware not only of the environment but of their



own approach to travel. The pandemic has made them think about how and why they want to travel. It is very likely that road trips might make a strong comeback. Despite flights being cheaper and available

destinations becoming further and further away, national travel restrictions will bring back the appeal to road trips to places that are not so distant. However, there will be a need to escape after lockdown, staying closer to home, given that the current backdrop will make them more cautious. As such, it might not be possible for us to regain our status as a great long-haul destination immediately after this crisis is over, but we will get there once things come back to normal.



TODAY THE INDUSTRY FACES SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES OF IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT REQUIREMENTS FOR DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND TRAINING THE STAFF WHO ARE NOW IN THE WORKING PROCESS WITH LOW LEVELS OF SKILLS.



THE INSIGHT FOR THIS ARTICLE WAS PROVIDED BY MR JAGATH NANAYAKKARA (FORMER VICE PRINCIPAL OF SRI LANKA INSTITUTE OF TOURISM & HOTEL MANAGEMENT - SLITHM)

ARTICLE BY: DILKI KAUSHALYA, DINEKA NIKOLI



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MARKET INTELLIGENCE TOOLS
NEED TO BE IMPROVED AND
USED FOR THE DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS, AND PEOPLE SHOULD
BE CAPABLE OF ANALYZING
DATA AND SUGGEST THE MOST
SUITABLE STRATEGIES TO
CAPITALIZE ON OPPORTUNITIES”
”

THE POST- PANDEMIC AIRLINE INDUSTRY: HEALTH RESPONSIBILITIES, SAFE TRAVELS AND NEW TECH

Could you please give us a brief introduction about your role in Sri Lankan Airlines?

Being the Area Manager for Shanghai, China, I am responsible for all aspects of SriLankan Airlines operations in the station. This includes the operational and commercial aspects of the route based on set KPIs. In short, I would say that the Area Manager is responsible for achieving revenue targets given to each station in terms of Passenger, Cargo and Ancillary products.

MR. SUJEEWA RODRIGO

AREA MANAGER
(SHANGHAI, CHINA) - SRI LANKAN AIRLINES



Drilling down the above responsibilities to match your focused subject, I would say that the Area Manager is responsible for filling the flights with passengers to earn the budgeted revenue for the route.

In order to fulfil the above requirements, the Area Manager is responsible for generating appropriate strategies to attract different segments of passengers existing in the market.

What could be the new trends in the airline industry in the new normal, from your point of view?

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, airlines have had to cut down the capacity in almost all routes and dependency on cargo revenue has superseded passenger revenue compared to the pre-Covid-19 period. Border closures and travel restrictions had made drastic limitations on travel, and people have adopted alternative ways to fulfil their requirements. Business travellers have started having remote meetings with their partners using e-technology. International tour operators have shifted to domestic tour operations where there are no restrictions. In the new normal, we expect that the business travel will be limited, and only the most essential people will travel for business activities, and it will take few years for this segment to come back to normal. Hence, the share of the leisure segment will be more on the passenger composition, which is a challenge for airlines in terms of revenues as traditionally, yields generated in leisure segments are relatively low compared to business travellers.

Hence, the airlines



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should focus on aligning their strategies to face the dependency on leisure travellers in the short term till the Covid-19 is completely eradicated.

As an overall view, in terms of new product development, what would be the directions/ areas that require major improvements for the whole airline industry in the new normal?

In order to build confidence in travellers, airlines will have to invest more in hygiene and safety standards. Adoption and implementation of safety guidelines and proper communication, on the

ADJUSTABILITY & ADAPTABILITY TO ANY SITUATION WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR YOUR SUSTENANCE IN THE FIELD. APART FROM THAT, YOU SHOULD BE A GOOD TEAM PLAYER, AND YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS WILL LEAD YOU TO EXCELLENCE.

same to the travellers, will be important for us to build confidence among travellers. Also, the airlines should invest more in information technology to provide solutions for product distributions through diversified virtual channels, online check-in, boarding etc., to minimize human interactions at airports. Further, airlines may have to look at changes in cabin interiors as well to suit the expected passenger compositions. For e.g., Airlines may have to increase the number of Economy Class seats and reduce Business Class due to the low expectancy of business travellers in the



global trends.

Market Intelligence tools need to be improved and used for the decision-making process, and people should be capable of analyzing data and suggest the most suitable strategies to capitalize on opportunities. Should have the competency in reaching the target segments through digital channels, which is the most efficient upcoming medium.

Further, the online or offline key touchpoints need the required technical competencies as well as the customer handling soft skills to win the customer confidence for long term retention

From your point of view, what are the best practices to follow in the new normal in terms of retaining current customers' segments and attracting potential niche markets?

As discussed previously, it is important that the required standards are updated in the product we offer according to

the warranted new normal conditions, and continuous communication with the existing customer database is important with constant updates on the measures we take during new normal to manage new challenges. We can use the certifications obtained from recognized institutions as testimonials to have a solid endorsement of the fact, e.g., The Certification that SriLankan Airlines received from APEX (Airline Passengers Experience Association) in Health Safety Audit.

What is important is to stay connected with your existing customer base during this difficult time. EDMs, social media and websites could be used in this aspect. The focus should be to direct the clients to e-commerce channels. We may use flexible date change options, full refunds, and longer validity periods on the offers available to build confidence. Focus on discounted advance purchase options to keep the clients hopeful for future travel along with

short run.

We all know that the market has reshuffled and what kind of competencies should an airline develop in order to be successful in the new normal?

With the expected change in passenger composition, airlines should focus very much on revenue optimization with better inventory and yield management. Smart IT tools with competent manpower should be used in that aspect.

Also, operational cost-effectiveness is the key and should focus more on e-commerce activities in order to be on par with





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previously discussed flexible terms and conditions will enhance customer engagement and will support the current cash flow as well.

It is also important to be in touch with the trade that promotes tour packages out of your market. Constant engagements with them through virtual platforms will be helpful to keep them updated on new developments and take their feedback to make required adjustments or modifications for current practices.

Further, it is important to focus on the target segments, understand their behaviours, priorities, and values in the new normal and align or update your product

suitably to attract them for sustenance.

How long have you been in this industry? In the next 10 years, what kind of compulsory skills and additional traits you are expecting from graduates who want to build their careers in the airline industry?

I have been in this industry for over 25 years now. To answer your question, for anyone who has a desire to get into airline industry in the sales and marketing field, it is important that the person possess adequate skills in relevant critical areas. Written and oral communication skills are very important as your role will involve storytelling to your external and internal

customers. This should come with good interpersonal skills.

When you are engaged in your sales and marketing activities in a competitive environment, analyzing market dynamics, competitor activities etc., are essential to implement appropriate strategies to favour your share in the market. In that sense, you should be equipped with the skills to handle IT tools and should be loaded with analytical skills to make proper decisions.

Theoretical knowledge in the field of sales and marketing should be the key as a fresher to lay foundation in the industry. In

addition, knowledge of e-commerce and digital

marketing will be beneficial on the way forward. Adjustability & adaptability to any situation will pave the way for your sustenance in the field. Apart from that, you should be a good team player, and your leadership skills will lead you to excellence. Honesty, reliability, and positive attitude are some values you should inculcate within you for your success in any field.

Any other suggestions and recommendations for the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry related to your professional sector?

More capacity, expanded facilities, new routes in new markets, more visibility targeting high yielding segments will be important for growth in this sector.



AVIATION FACTS

IN A SURVEY, 67% OF PILOTS ADMITTED THAT THEY HAVE AT LEAST ONCE FALLEN INTO SLEEP ACCIDENTALLY WHILE FLYING.

ELLEN CHURCH WAS THE FIRST FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT, AND SHE WAS A TRAINED NURSE AND PILOT.

QANTAS INVENTED BUSINESS CLASS IN 1979.

SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT IN TROUBLED TIMES - THE NEED FOR INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY



DR. TANYA BELLINGHAM - SENIOR LECTURER – UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

The tourism, hospitality and events industry is beyond question one of the most dynamic and exciting fields in which to work however it is also amongst the most vulnerable due to the fundamental requirement that it relies on the need for people being able to participate and travel to diverse locations.

Whilst the industry has become familiar with risk assessing for potential acts of terrorism, extreme weather events and even disease, nobody, with perhaps the exception of those who create works of fiction, could have anticipated the impact of a global pandemic that resulted in the removal of the freedom of movement for the world's population.

As a result of Covid-19, many of the businesses in the tourism, hospitality and events sectors have been lost or, at best, are just managing to “stay afloat”; something that is hardly surprising when tourist arrivals in 2020, fell globally by more than 65% and it is predicted that tourism receipts are unlikely to recover to the 2019 levels until 2023 (Behsudi, 2020). The crisis is omnipresent and has exposed the vulnerability of the global tourism, hospitality and events sectors. Even the USA, a country somewhat impervious to global crises, has suffered the biggest and most dramatic decrease in tourism revenue globally equivalent to \$147, 245 million over a ten-month period during 2020

MA, BSC (HONS) OU, SFHEA, DIP RSA,
MEMBER INST OF LINGUISTS (SHE/HER)
NODE LEADER NSBM SRI LANKA BSC (HONS) TOURISM,
HOSPITALITY AND EVENTS MANAGEMENT
LECTURER BSC (HONS) EVENTS MANAGEMENT

(Madden, 2021).

At a time when travel has been forbidden for all but essential journeys and suddenly imposed lockdowns or “curfews” have become commonplace, the UK tourism, hospitality and event businesses have seen daily operations come to a sudden standstill. Income streams have been cut off, and the need to rely on government aid in the form of “furlough” payments and the Government Job Retention Scheme to support staff imposed for those businesses that were eligible.

However, amidst the gloom and desperation, some businesses have demonstrated incredible resilience, innovation and determination in creating new directions for their operations that have changed their product profile and potentially started new industry trends post-pandemic. For some organisations, the pandemic has offered a unique opportunity to pause, regroup and seize the chance to rethink their futures. The examples below show how creative thinking has enabled some businesses not only to survive but to



refocus their long-term strategies:

Restaurants have introduced take-away services and, during the lockdown, provided delivery services to local residents; some have decided to continue this post-lockdown.

Hotels have offered their accommodation at reduced rates to Key Workers, i.e., those involved in the medical care of Covid-19 patients and were unable to live at home in order to protect their families – again, some accommodation providers are now looking at more diverse markets throughout the year to maximise income in the future.

Some events have moved seamlessly from face-to-face to the virtual world despite having to grasp the mechanics of modern technologies – some event managers are now stating that they

will continue to deliver virtual and hybrid events as part of their portfolio of products.

Event venues have reconfigured their premises to become temporary hospitals, mass testing sites, vaccination centres, courts, homeless shelters, or foodbanks. One of the first event companies to temporarily repurpose itself in the UK, was etc. Venues. Their state-of-the-art venues equipped with the latest technology enabled them to be contracted by Majesty’s Court and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), transforming two event venues into Nightingale Courts. This kept the venues functioning and helped to tackle the impact of the coronavirus on the justice system. The organisation now promotes itself as “meeting and hybrid specialists” (s) (etc. venues, 2021).

Accommodation providers who saw the lockdown as an opportunity to modernise, revamp and future proof their operations against similar experiences in the future.

The emergence of “hybrid” events such as award ceremonies and concerts enabling wider

participation and more diverse audiences, some of which will continue in the future.

These examples have set the scene for different but still thriving industry, so what characteristics and actions did these business owners demonstrate that others failed to embrace?

Numerous authors



have investigated creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurs to try and uncover the secret formula for success (Amabile 1994; De Bono, 2000; Eckert and Stacey, 1998; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The research has identified many distinctive characteristics and traits as being key to innovation and creativity in business operations and product development, but it is Dawson and Andriopoulos (2014) who summarise these traits, categorising them into four different domains:

Cognitive factors: these include individuals who exhibit mental flexibility, who can break from the norm to remain open to new ideas (Majaro, 1992). Costa and McCrae (1992) found that people who are more open to experience tend to be more imaginative and open to varied perspectives. Eckert and Stacey (1998) add to the list by including those who can “think outside of the box”, those who are able to link remote associations.

Personality traits: more creative individuals are found to be risk-takers albeit calculated risks, with the tolerance of ambiguity, they have self-confidence, they are

EVENT VENUES HAVE RECONFIGURED THEIR PREMISES TO BECOME TEMPORARY HOSPITALS, MASS TESTING SITES, VACCINATION CENTRES, COURTS, HOMELESS SHELTERS, OR FOODBANKS.

pro-active and have a need for achievement, they are autonomous, self-starters, and frequently non-conformists (MacKinnon, 1962; Buel, 1965; McGrath, 2000).

Knowledge: those who are the most creative have a good mix of explicit and tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994) (knowledge also referred to as formal and informal). Without an understanding of a subject and experience, it is seldom easy to create anything new or devise something that will work.

Motivation: creative individuals are motivated both extrinsically and intrinsically; what can be done is one thing but having the drive to make it a reality is crucial to success.

To conclude, despite the pandemic, some business owners have shown resilience and survived; indeed, some continue to thrive. Using a variety of the skills and knowledge described above, they have adapted and responded to situations dexterously. The changes they are making may not be radical, but they are developing the industry in different ways. Perhaps looking forward, the legacy of the pandemic may not be completely negative for the development of the tourism, hospitality, and event sectors.

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As Lao Tzu quoted, great things will always commence with simple beginnings. Tourism trends have been emerging since the Grand Tour of the 17th century, which was a very simple beginning that eventually brought about greater trends as tourism developed in the 21st century.

Occasionally, tourism trends may be inconsistent or unclear. However, by looking at the current trends, it can predict where the sector is heading and the expectations in the foreseeable future. Significant trends have been on the rise with customers' needs for new and different experiences. Moreover, the use of innovative technologies in the business processes has enabled improvements in guest experiences of the travel industry. This

article will aim to discuss new trends which emerged in tourism and the trends relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism practices meet the needs of the tourists, the industry, the

EMERGING TRENDS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

“THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP.” – LAO TZU



environment, and the host community by considering the current and future economic, social and environmental impacts.

Sustainable tourism has been introduced as a result of the offset of carbon dioxide emissions, global warming, and other activities that are harmful to the environment. According to Booking.com research, 72% of tourists believe that people need to take action now and make sustainable travel choices to save the

more money on unique experiences rather than on material things.

Many tourists prefer to travel like locals and immerse themselves in the culture, traditions, customs, and language of a particular destination to gain local experience. The creation and development of the local infrastructure have been a major benefit of the local tourism industry. One of the most popular experiences is food sampling, where tourists will be able to taste and cook the local cuisines of their travel destination.

self-confident. Golf tourism, religious tourism, rural tourism, and cruises are some ways to engage in solo tourism.

Increasing Levels of Personalization

Personalization has an impact on the tourism industry as travel companies will create new experiences that are in line with the ideas, goals, and needs of a traveller. Travel experiences will be delivered according to the client preferences.

Customer personalization is used as a strategy to strengthen

services. It connects users to hotels, car rental companies and other entities. Examples of OTAs include Expedia, Booking.com and Travelocity. A potential consumer can visit the website through a mobile device to learn about a company's services, and bookings are available directly from a smartphone or tablet.

The improvement of these OTAs has led to an increase in online sales, and it contributes to the reduction of the costs of advertising agencies. OTAs are very convenient for tourists to efficiently and effectively collect information about popular tourist destinations and property. This will help to make the right choice and to create self-experience. Reviews of travellers' personal experiences and observations on the OTA platform can help other travellers to make better choices.

The Covid-19 pandemic

According to the UNWTO, 2018 recorded the highest international tourist arrivals, but the sector is now undeniably has faced unprecedented challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic. These challenges have led to a place where the tourism industry needs to be innovatively re-structure to cater to the industry at present and emerging trends.

Health and Wellness Tourism

Travellers will obtain elevating experiences with the key purpose of achieving, promoting, or maintaining health, well-being, and balance in life.



planet and preserve it for future generations. To avoid this problem, the concept of "sustainable tourism" has been introduced, including eco-tourism and green tourism.

Experience and Cultural Tourism

People want to experience authenticity, and in the age of social media, many of the tourists are becoming more demanding of it. A study done by Harris Group revealed that 72% of Millennials preferred spending

Bleisure Travel

Bleisure travel is a growing trend where people travelling for business purposes include some leisure time at their destination. The 2018 data of Expedia Group Media Solutions revealed that 60% of U.S. business trips incorporated leisure elements.

Solo Tourism

A solo tourist is someone who mainly prefers to travel alone to their preferred destinations, which enables the traveller to feel free and become

the relationships with customers and increase the revenue generation. Travel agents and other travel companies need to conduct controlled operations of the experiments to identify how various segments of consumers respond to a variety of promotions. Travel companies that offer unique personal experience will always have an advantage over their competitors.

Online Travel Agencies and Mobile Bookings

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are websites that sell travel-related



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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HAS BEEN INTRODUCED AS A RESULT OF THE OFFSET OF CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS, GLOBAL WARMING, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT ARE HARMFUL TO THE ENVIRONMENT

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Health and Wellness Tourism may grab more attention due to the 'Ayurvedic' practices that improve the health and well-being and strengthen the immunity. Yoga and relaxation with nature will also emerge.

Transformative Travel

Transformative travel includes not only leisure travel but also the aim to

make a difference in both the lives of others and oneself. This may include volunteering trips where travellers may set aside time to volunteer at their travel destinations.

Other trends which may emerge with recovery include Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality experiences, Space Tourism, Polar Tourism, shift from international to domestic tourism, family trips in private vehicles and travel in small groups, less travel to crowded

places, demand for travel insurances for emergency medical expenses, evacuation charges and cancellations, demand for direct flights than connecting flights and travel demand to island destinations including Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles, New Zealand and Caribbean Islands.

To conclude, the travel and tourism industry continues to develop and evolve. The trends that are said to be more visible in the future will enable the travel agents and tour operators to strategically attract potential clients and promote destinations.

**ARTICLE BY:
SENELIE GUNARATNE**

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STRIVING FOR CONTINUED EXCELLENCE IN A POST-PANDEMIC HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

MR. KAMAL MUNASINGHE

GENERAL MANAGER – CINNAMON GRAND AND CINNAMON LAKESIDE



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What is happening in the tourism sector presently? Did you identify any kind of changes during these pandemic days?

Yes, quite a lot has been happening in the tourism industry now and the industry has been at a downward spiral since April 2019. After the bomb blast the pandemic came and it got turned in to a worse direction. Since then, the industry has been always trying to sustain our business and as you know we have about 400,000 people working in the industry

and all of these jobs are at risk at the moment, especially when you look at the number of arrivals to the country because for hotels to do this business alone is not enough to sustain our business and to sustain with the restrictions is very difficult. But anyway, hotel industry is an evolving industry, and it has been through so many difficult times in the past as well. Especially if you look at the Sri Lankan hotel industry during the war for 30 years, we have been through really difficult times, but we

IT IS MY PREROGATIVE TO ENHANCE THEIR OFFERINGS, STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION IN THE INDUSTRY AND BETTER ALIGN THE PROPERTIES TO CATER TO MODERN TRAVELERS. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE STRIKE A STRATEGIC BALANCE BETWEEN WILLINGNESS TO TAKE RISKS ONCE BUSINESS RESUMES AND HAVING AN AGILE PRESENCE IN THE MARKET. LUXURY IS ALL ABOUT PERSONALIZATION.

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remained very resilient as an industry (Sri Lankan tourism industry). So, if you look at the current situation, I think the industry is just trying to maintain its status book and trying to just get over it, while making sure that we take care of our staff. The pandemic has introduced certain new protocols and new regulations which we are following, and that's where we are at the moment.

Did the government take any decision to develop the tourism sector which has been affected by the pandemic?

I think government alone cannot do that but having said that SLTDA has come up with a very brave marketing plan. Quite a lot of money has been invested in promoting Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. However, Sri Lanka is an amazing destination and I think it has its own drivers so, you don't need to do much about driving the hotel industry. In 2019 we were rated as the best place to visit by Lonely Planet, and unfortunately, we couldn't get the mileage out of it because of the bomb blast. So, if you look at the support that is required for us from the government it is about getting the infrastructure ready for the industry. If you look at the region, the regional giants in the tourism industry such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand, attract around 25 million tourists a year and we are attracting about 2 million tourists a year. The reason for that is, when tourists come to a destination, they look for certain things and tourism is not just leisure tourism, it's business tourism and when you look at that I think we have a long way to go in

the sense of having the proper infrastructure for tourism to come. If we look at both leisure and MICE tourists, they are looking at things that they can do other than just see sand and sun, and that is what we need to gear up for and that infrastructure facilitation is expected from the government through SLTDA for the industry to prosper.

Do you think those

“ SRI LANKA IS A DESTINATION THAT CAN OFFER SOMETHING VERY UNIQUE WHEN IT COMES TO WELL-BEING, WELLNESS, AND MINDFULNESS THROUGH OUR AYURVEDIC CULTURE, THE FOOD CULTURE, AND OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES ”

strategies have been implemented in the tourism sector, or whether those decisions can be implemented, in the Sri Lankan context?

I think because we have seen this in countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia where they have very relaxed approaches on tourism related legal frameworks, it is convenient to take business decisions based on economic and social impact to the country. Considering the different



changes that will take place if we grow from 2 million to 6 million tourists over two to three years, imagine what would that do to the country in terms of GDP growth, employment generation and other related industries. So that's a huge socio-economic system that gets impacted by this. So, we need to look at that and ensure that it is not going to have a negative impact on society.

Do you suggest any changes to the prevailing government strategies and policies that a destination will need and if so what are they?

What I see here for Sri Lanka is the focus on the promotion, but I think we need to focus on the other side which I mentioned earlier about having a proper framework for investors to come and invest. In the tourism industry, there is a huge interest at the moment and if we look at the hotels in the pipeline that are being planned for Colombo itself over the next 5-6 years all the top international brands are going to be present in Colombo. So, that means there's potential people from big companies that are looking to come here and those companies will do destination marketing for airlines such as Air France, Swiss Air has also confirmed that they are coming to Sri Lanka. Those airlines will do the destination marketing for us. So, when we look at the industry those stakeholders in the industry will do quite a lot of marketing for the destination. What we therefore need is the proper framework for an investor to come and invest and develop this industry. I'm not talking about only hotels; the entertainment industry and the country's overall

In general, we need to make sure to give the assurance that it's a safe place to visit. That's what people are thinking right now even before they go to any hotel. Anyway, our hotel hygiene practices operated under very strict health and safety guidelines even before the pandemic. Now people's expectations are higher than even before so that's why we need to use that assurance to show customers that Sri Lanka is a safe place to visit.

Any other suggestions and recommendations for the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry?

I think I've been talking about this with all our colleagues as well. Apart from developing the infrastructure and the right legal framework, securing the right talent is important to Sri Lanka because we have a talent drain and most of our trained people are going out of Sri Lanka especially during this pandemic situation. Going forward with 2022 soccer World Cup coming up I'm sure Qatar will attract a lot of employees from Sri Lanka, and they love to work with us. So, we need to have a proper system in our supply chain. We don't have that system going into the rural areas it's just the cities like Colombo that has this infrastructure, but I think there's a lot more we can do if we have a proper system or even a private investor coming into play and then start developing these talents to have a proper supply chain. Because if you look at the industry, in Colombo itself there are about 20 plus international brands coming into the market and we don't have that type of Labor in Sri Lanka so that's one area that you need to look at.

Delivering a

professional experience is another key area for us as a tourism destination to go up in this industry, and it is very important if we are competing with the regional giants. If you go to our neighboring country India, the level of service is very high and their professionalism, their language skills are coming to one place. The restrictions we have in importing certain basic things that is required for hotel industry and certain taxes that is put on imported items puts us again at a less competitive level when it comes to the region. We're competing with those destinations with the strengths mentioned earlier and if they can offer a premium product at a very reasonable price, it puts us at a disadvantage. We need to look at all these aspects in order for us to be competitive. The product development, the talent, the infrastructure and then also the restrictions and tax structure we have is everything which is directly affecting the industry.

In the next 10 years what kind of compulsory skills and additional traits you

are expecting from graduates who want to build their careers in the hospitality industry?

The industry is digitizing a lot, and we need to work with this new system more efficiently. The computer literacy, the language skills is always required and then of course the use of new systems, adapting to the new IT infrastructure is going to be a major turning point to our tourism industry. And then cultural understanding as we're talking about serving different people from different parts of the world that understanding that must be there. I think it's important that we travel to other destinations and get a little bit of an exposure on their cultures. When we were studying, we use to go to destinations to get this exposure, but I think even as an individual you should do it yourself because traveling is very important and if you want to be successful in this industry you have to have knowledge about other cultures as well.

BY:
NATALIYA DONDEENU

infrastructure must match for us to boom in the industry.

In terms of new product development, what would be the directions for major improvements in the hospitality industry?

After the pandemic more and more people are becoming more health conscious but that was a huge trend even before that. Wellness, well-being, and mindfulness are going to be huge for a long time. Sri Lanka is a destination that can offer something very unique when it comes to well-being, wellness, and mindfulness through our Ayurvedic culture, the food culture, and our local communities. That offers a wide variety of things that we can do here as a destination, so we need to work on this and get our products ready to promote this globally.

In your point of view what are the best practices to follow in the new normal in terms of retaining current customer segments and attracting potential niche markets?

THE BEGINNING OF LIFE EXPERIENCES UNCOVERED

MR. SAVIN KAPURUSINGHE

BRAND MANAGER – ELEPHANT HOUSE
BSC. MARKETING MANAGEMENT –
GRADUATING CLASS OF 2016

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“EVERY
PERSON
THAT I
ASSOCIATED
IN THE
UNIVERSITY
HAS THEIR
OWN
VERSION OF
SUCCESS
STORIES”
”



Can you give a brief introduction about yourself?

My name is Savin Kapurusinghe, and my school is D.S. Senanayake College. I got my degree in Marketing Management from NSBM Green University, and I also hold a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing from SLIM. I also did a manager development programme, endorsed by John Keells Holdings at PIM. I am currently reading for the Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing at CIM, and I'm the Brand Manager of the frozen confectionery category at Elephant House.

How was your experience at NSBM? How did it help find your first position after graduation/ journey?



I got my internship at Elephant House when I was studying in my final year. NSBM life is a very different one. We still have connections with friends and lecturers from the University. It's more like a family. Every person that I associated in the University has their own version of success stories. The team experiences we had and the leadership qualities that we developed at NSBM helped us a lot in our journey; apart from the education, the intangible aspects help us when it comes to working in any organization.

What do you enjoy most about being a manager, and what are the challenges of being a manager?

What I enjoy is I get to do what I am passionate about. I need to be a joyful person when working in the ice cream industry. I make people happy, so I need to be happy. The environment I work in is more like a family. Everyone is so close to each other. I enjoy working there. It helps me to do my day-to-day work easily.

Speaking about the challenges, when you are an executive or an assistant manager, the environment is quite different. You always have the opportunity for trial and error. You have a limited scope. Everyone will appreciate you in whatever you

do. But when you climb up the ladder and take managerial positions, everything totally changes. Because everyone is looking at you and the responsibilities and the scope that you must look into is wide. So those are quite big challenges.

Are there any significant turning points in your career that you can recollect in your working journey?

There was a huge campaign in Elephant House which was named "stick eke luck eka", and I was an intern at that time. But the manager

wanted me to do that campaign. I had no idea regarding handling a campaign because I had just joined and had no experience at that time. I had to handle this campaign, and I was put in the deep end straight away. I managed to learn a lot from this experience, and it has been a long and wonderful journey from there on until today.

What are the common strategies that you employ when it comes to reaching new customers in your organization?

Talk their language, be in their shoes, see yourself as a customer and ask "what do I want?". Understand what they need and decide whether to cater to niche markets or mass markets with your products. First, attract the customers, then think about developing your product. Customize the product based on the masses.

From your perspective, what makes an effective leader when building a team?

Listen to your team, take a third eye perspective, be an example to them, they will be looking up to you, be humble and teach them whatever possible, let them also explore on their own, engage with each team member, and understand their strengths and weaknesses. That's the best way to build up an effective team.

Do you have any advices for a person who is starting a marketing agency or any business?

Always do the right thing, be passionate about what you are doing, have some love, show your passion or else it will be boring, have a good attitude and results will come, start from

scratch, learn as much as you can because that will take you a long way.

Should a graduate go into a venture or first get the business exposure?

Everyone has a beginning before every success story. Therefore, learning in a multinational and local business to get that



exposure is the best way. Otherwise, it'll be like shooting in the dark. You need to know what your basics are, whom are you talking to, how to sell your product or service so it's better to learn from a multinational to get that knowledge and then move up.

From being an intern



"DON'T THINK ABOUT THE NEXT LEVEL JUST THINK ABOUT THE LEVEL BEYOND THE NEXT LEVEL. IT WILL LEAD YOU TO YOUR SUCCESS. NEVER LIMIT YOURSELF."

to becoming a brand manager, what has been your biggest achievement in this journey so far?

It's my career. All of it.

You previously mentioned that you still pursuing further education even now. What are the goals that you are hoping to achieve in the future?

When you are in a position, always make

sure you aim to the next level and beyond that. Always aim above your next position because that's what drives you. As for me, it's just a beginning, and I still have to explore more. Don't think about the next level just think about the level beyond the next level. It will lead you to your success. Never limit yourself.

What kind of advice and recommendations

would you give to an undergraduate who is hoping to join a corporate career one day in the future?

I would say when recruiting; I need to see a passion in someone, that spark; if you feel it, you will go a long way. Don't think about the salaries or positions. That will not take you a long way. It will leave you stagnating in one position. Always

start from scratch. Learn your basics because sales and marketing are the heart of any organization. Then you will create your own successful story, and you'll succeed in life.

BY:
JANITH WICKRAMASURIYA

SRI LANKA AS A TOURISM DESTINATION FACTS.

- The oldest human-planted tree in the world is in Anuradhapura, one of the ancient capitals of Sri Lanka and it was planted in 288 BCE.
- In Sri Lanka, you can see the world's largest marine mammal, the Blue Whale, and the world's largest land mammal, the elephant, all in one day!
- Did you know that "serendipity" is derived from "Serendip", the old name of Sri Lanka called by the Arabs and Persians?
- Sri Lanka boasts 8 UNESCO World Heritage sites!
- In addition to being one of the finest tea producing countries in the world, Sri Lanka is also one of the largest exporters of Cinnamon globally!

MAKING TOURISM FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH REALISTIC BY ENCOURAGING THE 'PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES' PARTICIPATING IN TOURISM VALUE CHAIN THROUGH TOUR GUIDING

DR. MANOJ SAMARATHUNGA,
SENIOR LECTURER - RAJARATA
UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

Many scholars view inclusive growth as sustainable growth that generates and expands economic opportunities, which enable an increased number of members of a society to participate in and benefit from growth.

It is also envisaged that the benefits of growth are fairly distributed among all stakeholders. Sri Lanka, as a pristine destination in the world, needs to revisit its policies and practices on inclusive growth aligning to the UNWTO principles. PWD's are a vulnerable sector in any country that mostly belong to economically and socially disadvantaged groups. Therefore, it is vital to provide them with an adequate standard of living and basic income security, thereby reducing vulnerability and levels of poverty. Tourism is one of the gateways through which the PWD's are empowered and given the wings to fly. However, there are no official records in Sri Lanka on PWD's participating in the tourism value chain

except for few individual cases. Therefore, this short note discusses about the challenges faced by PWD's when performing as tour guides and put forward recommendations to increase their



participation and performance in tour guiding.

One of the main challenges faced by PWD tourist guides is the inability to handle physically challenging activities since tour

guiding involves walking many kilometres per day. In addition to that, climbing up mountains, rocks, getting on and off of the vehicles are also physically challenging activities. The unavailability of PWD friendly infrastructure at tourist destinations is another obstacle. PWD friendly infrastructure,

including special access to the destinations/sites, sanitary facilities, resting places etc. are not available at most of the destinations in Sri Lanka. The public attitude towards the PWD's in Sri Lanka is mainly

sympathetic, which is another hindrance for the PWD's. The public thinks that PWD's cannot perform jobs and always need others' support to carry out day-to-day activities. Therefore, PWD's are discouraged from taking challenging jobs because they have been cornered to depend on someone else. In addition to that, Sri Lankan two operators and travel agents also think that a PWD tour guide cannot perform the duties of a conventional tour guide. As a result, the PWD tour guides do not receive as many tours as the other guides with no disabilities.

In Sri Lanka, the educational facilities available for PWD's is at a poor stage. Therefore, the personality development of many PWD's is at a poor level. As a result, the PWD's are not willing to take a challenging job because they have been depending on someone else for a long time. Additionally, it has been noted that the PWD's in Sri Lanka try to skip social interactions as much as possible. On the other hand, the conventional tourists believe that when they



Further, wheelchair access, special driving/riding arrangements and permissions need to be supplied.

Since there are different types of tour guides, the PWD tour guides can do guiding at a specific location, for example, closer to a key destination with the best view or at a museum where wheelchair access is not restricted.

The PWD tour guides also can maintain their own websites, social media platforms to educate potential tourists about their duties as PWD tourist guides. They can also invite potential tourists to visit Sri Lanka and obtain the service of the PWD tour guides.

It is also important to highlight the social responsibility of potential tourists when visiting developing destinations like Sri Lanka

It is also suggested to form an association for the PWD tour guides through which the common issues faced by the PWD tour guides can be identified. The said association can discuss with the leading tour operators and the travel agencies in Sri Lanka and secure a certain part of a tour.

The PWD tour guides could be further encouraged by establishing an effective system to encourage their participation in a guiding. Successful local and international PWD tour guides could be identified and invited to share their knowledge and experience in handling tourist groups despite physical difficulties.

In order to successfully conduct the tours, the PWD tourist guides could be equipped with electric wheelchairs, advanced hearing aids, access to knowledge through tabs and laptops, group communication facilities



through short-wave technology within a tourist destination.

Voluntourism can be promoted with the PWD tour guides. The volunteers who are visiting Sri Lanka could be assigned to one or more PWD tour guides at a destination, and they can support those tour guides when performing the duties. It will help the volunteer to increase his or her understanding of the nature, culture, heritage, history, and other aspects of a tourist destination by being with the PWD tour guides. On the other hand, the PWD tour guides will be exposed to the international community by means of knowledge transfer.

Awareness programmes could be organized for the general public, tourism service providers, and other tourist guides about the importance of PWD tour guides at tourist destinations. The general public could be taught on improving the acceptance, bear with difficulties to improve inclusiveness. In addition to that, Sri Lankan travel agencies, tour operators can be briefed about the importance of people

with disabilities joining the tourism industry.

Sri Lanka does not sufficiently promote international tourism for disabled tourists compared to other tourism destinations. Through promoting Sri Lanka among the disabled potential tourists, the PWD's will stand a very good chance to serve as tour guides. On the other hand, the tourists with disabilities will have a better understanding of the physical condition of the tour guides and vice-versa. Therefore, proper mechanisms need to be implemented to promote Sri Lanka as a destination among tourists with disabilities.

Tourism is a social phenomenon that largely depends on public resources. PWD's are a vulnerable social group that needs pivotal attention. Therefore, tourism has to be a catalyst for encouraging, empowering, and making the PWD's independent in our society. By doing so, we will be able to make the 'Tourism for Inclusive Growth' concept realistic in Sri Lanka.

obtain the service of a guide, the guide should be with them at all times. The PWD tour guides, however, cannot engage in many touristic activities due to their physical constraints. Furthermore, certain PWD's are suffering due to the lack of access to knowledge, and as a result, their awareness of the country, economy, politics, nature, and culture could be a little lower than an average person. This imposes major restrictions for the PWD's when performing as tour guides.

In order to encourage the PWD's participation in the tourism value chain, all social agents have an equal responsibility. These social agents include the public, private, and non-governmental bodies who can stand on behalf of the PWD's. Therefore, the following strategies are proposed to increase the PWD participation in the tourism value chain:

National Tourism Organization, Provincial Councils, Pradeshiya Sabhas have to invest in accessibility, restrooms and washroom development that cater to different demands of PWD tour guides.



Do we eat just because we are hungry? Well, as per our personal experience, we not only eat just because we are hungry but for many other purposes as well. We eat food as try-outs, to celebrate something, to share love and happiness, sometimes to convey our feeling and also as mood fixers. Just by taking a glance, it is clear that humans not only consume food to get physically healthy and to maintain our figure but also due to the emotional connection between food and us.

Here are some interesting clues about how to fix moods with your favourite gourmets. When you feel upset, depressed, or sad most of us try to comfort ourselves with some good food. This food may help you to fix your mood instantly. So, this is the best way to get to know how to change your bad moods in a few minutes. Dark chocolates, coffees, nuts and seeds, berries, ice creams, and oats are a few of the common foods that most people prefer to have when they are in a terrible mood. Out of all these mood fixing foods, we picked the two most loved options!

DO YOU KNOW THAT SOME FOOD CAN BOOST YOUR MOOD?

Dark Chocolate

Dark Chocolate is a world-famous food because of its heavenly taste. But it's not the only reason for the huge consumption of dark chocolate all around the world. It is known as one of the best mood boosters existing in the world. Dark Chocolate always comforts you in many ways besides making you feel good with its

piece of Dark Chocolate every 2 hours and observed that they were awake. Also, Berk said that chocolate impacted their genetic activities, increased anti-inflammatory agents, and also impacted in increasing their infection-fighting cells, which were later revealed according to blood tests.

Additionally, researchers have found that chocolate

increases the blood flow to the brain; it helps in boosting brain health while regulating your moods. Chocolates are rich in good chemicals like cocoa polyphenols, which helps to enhance your brain cells. On the other hand, dark chocolate is known as the best booster of memory, spatial memory of visualization, tracking, managerial skills, scanning, and also working memory. In addition, Dark Chocolate may help in providing a stable mentality when suffering from depressions. Even though Dark Chocolates are high in calories, it's good for diabetic patients because it contains low amounts of sugars. So, hurry and grab your favourite Dark Chocolate to feel the difference!



texture and also aroma. It helps to promote positive emotions. For instance, in experimental research at Loma Linda University, the dean of research affairs, the main experimenter Lee Berk had given a 48-gram Dark Chocolate bar for the participants at starting up of the experiment and then asked them to have a





Coffees

As the world's most popular drink, the global consumption of coffee exceeds 10 billion kilograms per year. Coffee contains a high level of caffeine. It helps the brain to release mood fixing neurotransmitters such as dopamine and norepinephrine. Some studies have shown that consuming coffee reduces the risk of depression. According to a review by A. Nehlig described a cup of coffee (75mg of caffeine) caused to observe a pattern of boosted advancement of mood every 4 hours a day. Caffeine also strengthens the energy levels of the body, moods, concentration and focusing. Some are suggesting, for older adults, caffeine works as a nutritional supplement. Moreover, it enhances moods and stimulates mental performances in their daily routine. It is even better for young people to have a cup of coffee in the morning that helps to improve their

productivity throughout the day.

On the other hand, high consumption of caffeine may make you feel low spirited and sleepless. Also, it increases the risk of dementia. But one or one and a half cups of coffee per day works as a preventive effect for dementia when compared to non-caffeine consumers. Coffee is a great mood fixer, but overconsumption can be harmful to the body. So don't be hesitant to have a cup of coffee while maintaining your limits of consuming patterns. Enjoy your favourite latte, mocha, espresso, cappuccino, or black coffees with your loved ones to elevate your

mood.

There are other foods that are said to be connected with human mood. Although each and everything is not scientifically proven, most food can change one's mood. While some food helps to improve your mood, some may adversely affect your mood. The bottled dressings, the ketchup you eat, the energy drinks you consume, the frosting in your cakes and even your favourite doughnut have connections with moods related to depression and anxiety. Therefore, consuming this food in favourable amounts is always a good thing to do. However, you should not reduce consumption

of these foods only because they lack the nutrients, or they stand in the last section of the food pyramid. Occasional consumption of them might help you stabilize your daily mood changes making your life so much easier. Yet, this may change from person to person as well. Food that makes someone happy instantly may not be preferred by another. Lastly, though there's a lack of scientifically proven explanations for how every food is related to human mood changes, there is enough evidence to state that food can affect your mood.

**ARTICLE BY:
GAYATHRI DAYAWANSA
AND SINALI LITHARA**



REGAINING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY



MR. DILIP DE SILVA

FORMER
CHAIRMAN -
SRI LANKA
INSTITUTE OF
TOURISM AND
HOTEL
MANAGEMENT
(SLITHM)

*THE NEW NORMAL PARADIGM
HAS COME TO STAY FOR A
LONG PERIOD. IN THE FUTURE,
SEASONED VISITORS WILL NOT
BE LOOKING FOR JUST SEA AND
SAND BUT MORE ADVENTURE*

What is happening in the tourism sector these days? Did you identify any kind of change during this pandemic situation?

It is a well-known fact that the tourism industry globally is at the doldrums due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the past two years, no country has been spared in tourism development. The major change that could be identified since the onset of the pandemic is the uncertainty of the global tourism movements that have affected Sri Lanka as well. The travel restrictions imposed by European countries and strict health regulations (PCR, Antigen tests), and quarantine regulations have set the tourism industry around the world on a spin without any foreseeable solution thus far.

The significant change that can be identified during the pandemic period is the courage and enthusiasm of the entire tourism sector to confront the challenges and forge forward despite new challenges daily. The trust and loyalty of both the investors and workforce have been the cornerstone of Sri Lanka's tourism history.

Did the government take any decision to

develop the tourism sector, which has been affected by the pandemic?

Taking a step back to analyze the successive governments' foresight on tourism over the past 5 decades, it has been a roller coaster journey. Successive governments have taken several measures to mitigate the impact of the adversities faced by the country, mainly affecting the tourism sector. The current government has mediated with the concerned lending organizations to provide relief to all affected businesses due to the

Covid-19 pandemic. Since there seems to be no end to the pandemic and with the moratoriums that has been given to businesses are about to expire and leaving the tourism fraternity in a serious cash flow situation. The lobbying and other measures taken by the Tourism Ministry, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL), and all the respective organizations will justify the industry needs until the tourism comes to normalcy.

toll among mostly the European countries as well as in many southeast countries resulting in an unstable economic situation in the country. Sri Lanka Tourism has taken several bold steps to keep the tourism sector alive and attract tourists despite the adverse global pandemic. The introduction of charter flights from Ukraine was a topic that had been debated widely. The introduction of Bio bubble to attract tourists has had mixed results. However, the concept of Level 1 and Level 2 status given to selected high-



“SRI LANKA WILL HAVE A DISTINCT ADVANTAGE OVER COMPETITOR DESTINATIONS IF PROPERLY PACKAGED AND PRESENTED”

Do you think those strategies have been implemented in the tourism sector, or whether those decisions can be implemented in the Sri Lankan context?

Currently, the development of the tourism sector is like a moving target! This situation has prevailed during the past one and half years. When one step is taken forward, the industry had to take back two steps due to escalating death



end properties under strict guidelines has given several properties to operate under the Bio bubble. Unfortunately, the global restrictions for travel from many parts of the world have affected the efforts of Sri Lankan tourism authorities to entice tourists to take advantage of Sri Lanka's value for money deals.

Do you suggest any change to the prevailing government strategies, and what are they?

The current government strategies are in line with global health and safety guidelines. However, the future trend seems to target high-end visitors than attracting lower-end visitors to the country. The recent promotion campaigns in traditional target countries have kept Sri Lanka's hopes alive once the pandemic situation eases up. Changes to the current government policies may not warrant significant changes as such. However, an area that government could encourage, and support is the domestic tourism sector. This is the sector that will respond instantly once the travel restrictions are lifted in the country. Sri Lanka tourism also in the recent past has discovered several interesting and historical destinations which have not been

utilized. For example, the Delft Island in Northern province has been earmarked for future tourism development. Similarly, places like Kalpitiya which has large resources for adventure tourism.

What are the new trends in the tourism industry?

The Tourism industry will not be the same again. The new normal paradigm has come to stay for a long period. In the future, seasoned visitors will not be looking for just sea and sand but more adventure. Wellness tourism will be one of the priority areas that will focus the attention of future visitors. In the past, Sri Lanka had a good European market for wellness tourism, especially from German and Austrian clients. Since the onset of Covid-19, nearly all visitors have been looking for safe and healthy options. Since neighbouring countries like India, Malaysia, & Thailand have well-established wellness markets, Sri Lanka cannot compete head-to-head with them. Sri Lanka has a unique climate and well-trained staff to offer the best that Asia can offer. While there are many forms of tourism such as Sports tourism, Religious tourism, wellness tourism, etc., Sri Lanka should concentrate on our closest giants, India and China, who account for 25% of the global population. With the Asia & Pacific region to which Sri Lanka belongs to accounting for a 25% share with over 364.0 million tourist arrivals, there is promise for Sri Lanka as well.

In terms of new product development, what would be the directions/ areas that request

major improvements for the whole tourism industry?

The year 2019 accounted for almost 2.0 million foreign tourist arrivals to the country, where the average spend per tourist per day stood at 181 US Dollars. Apart from the year 2019, Sri Lanka too was maintaining steady growth in tourist arrivals. Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority has identified several new tourism destinations that have been neglected in the past. SLTDA has taken steps to improve the infrastructure and accessibility of these places to promote both domestic and international tourism.

From your point of view, what are the best practices to follow in the new normal in terms of retaining current customer segments and attracting potential niche markets?

Tourism is not an industry that could be ignored by the government. The government is heavily dependent on the tourism industry to earn the much-required foreign exchange for the economy. The loss of public sector revenue through tourism in 2020, based on 2019 earnings, is estimated to be around

Rs.12,000 million. Even 2021 sees similar losses. Overall, the economy has lost around 3,500 million US Dollars during 2020 and will continue in 2021. At a time when Sri Lanka has depleted foreign exchange reserves, the propping of established and proven avenues for the generation of foreign exchange has to be a prime concern of the government with a long-term vision. Thus, at this juncture, it is of paramount that the tourism industry receives top priority to ensure sustainability and to derive maximum economic benefits in a planned manner.

How long have you been in this sector? In the next 10 years, what kind of compulsory skills and additional traits are you expecting from graduates who want to build their careers in the tourism industry?

I have been working in the tourism industry since 1970 where I spent 40 years working abroad, mainly in Australia and southeast countries and the remaining 10 in Sri Lanka. In the next decade, tourism graduates need to be well versed with soft skills and foreign languages, especially Tamil/Urdu and Chinese, given the fact that Sri Lanka's two major sources of tourist





arrivals were from these two countries. While mastering technical skills, tourism graduates also need to be equipped with sound business acumen, as today, one has to manage businesses in very challenging financial situations.

Tourism graduates also need to be well versed with technological developments globally and have hands-on experience in information technology aspects. The graduates who will be able to face the industry challenges and develop their careers are the ones who will display their leadership character as well as financial management. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) estimates that the direct jobs in the travel and tourism industry in Sri Lanka are expected to be around 522,000 by 2028, and total employment is



WELLNESS TOURISM WILL BE ONE OF THE PRIORITY AREAS THAT WILL FOCUS THE ATTENTION OF FUTURE VISITORS



expected to increase to over a million jobs by 2028. As of the end of June 2019, over 300 investment projects have been approved, totalling over 19,000 hotel rooms, of which 107 projects are currently under construction or have been completed. Once all new projects are completed, it would add nearly 40,000 rooms in SLTDA registered establishments.

Are there any other suggestions and recommendations for the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry?

The tourism industry has survived in the past,

mainly on those visiting Sri Lanka for pleasure purposes. It accounts for a high percentage of around 83% of foreign visitors, followed by business travellers accounting for around 11%. Wellness, MICE, and Sports tourism has potential and needs to be developed over time. Sri Lanka caters to many different segments of tourists and should not be promoted only as an "Up-market" travel destination. Priority need is to support the current stakeholders, initially for survival and gradually to improve and upgrade their

respective products to be competitive within the region. Global tourism, subject to Covid-19 been brought under control, will gradually pick up by mid/ late-2022. In relation to some of the major generating markets, Sri Lanka will have a distinct advantage over competitor destinations if properly packaged and presented. Markets such as the United Kingdom, China, Germany, France, and Russia will be capable of generating bulk. However, it is a prerequisite to ensure that the product is of acceptable quality and maintains proper standards.

References: WTTTC, Industry prospect (P.Fernando)

KOSH'S

PASSION

FOR

FASHION

MR. KOSHIKA HIMAL HEWAGE
HEAD OF OPERATIONS
THE AGENCY SRI LANKA



EVER SINCE I STARTED MY CAREER, MY MAIN GOAL HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO CELEBRATE SRI LANKA AND OUR OWN TALENT



How did you start your journey to become one of the most prominent fashion icons in Sri Lanka?

My first experience with design was when I was working with my mom and helping her design her bridals but to be very honest, even though I was passionate about fashion long before I started university, I believe my first taste of what it's like to be in the limelight was through my time at NSBM because I was given a chance to show off my collection at my own fashion show which was a part of the NSBM's Talent Show. From that moment onwards, I just knew that my heart and soul was in fashion.

How did your university life help you in becoming who you are today?

My university life was a very big part. My knowledge of organizing events, managing talent and how to be more organized is because of all the events I did at NSBM. My time at university was extremely fruitful because they gave me the platform that I needed to realize my dreams even though it wasn't a fashion institute. NSBM truly is a place that gives students a platform to be who they are meant to be.

What was the turning

point in your life when you decided to become a fashion designer?

I'd say it was in me all along. It was what I was born to do. I know it sounds a little cliché, but from way back in 2010, when I was helping my mother out with her designs, I realized I enjoyed this line of work and researching the new fashion trends a lot more than I did force myself to study something I wasn't passionate about. I always enjoyed trying out new styles that were on-trend and expressed myself through my clothing, but there's always been a barrier here in Sri Lanka because a boy always had a set dress code of trousers, shirts, jeans, t-shirts and sneakers, and anything besides that was frowned upon, which meant I had to conform to this boring style that just wasn't authentically me. So, this passion was always in me, and I was finally able to let it shine, and NSBM played a big role in showing me the right path.

How would you describe your muse?

My muse changes all the time, but ever since I started my career, my main goal has always been to celebrate Sri Lanka and our own talent. I strongly believe our celebrities and our designers and stylists should get more recognition and be appreciated more. So, my goal has always been to bring talent into the



EVEN THOUGH I WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT FASHION LONG BEFORE I STARTED UNIVERSITY, I BELIEVE MY FIRST TASTE OF WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE IN THE LIMELIGHT WAS THROUGH MY TIME IN NSBM



industry and nurture and train them and give them the platform they need to express themselves and make a name for themselves. As a designer, I've always believed that we have amazing fashion icons here in Sri Lanka, and they deserve a chance to shine, and I want to do whatever I can to make that happen.

From your perspective, do you think bringing the fashion and the tourism industries together would be



successful?

Definitely, it did happen to a certain extent a while back when Colombo Fashion Week (CFW) was held. There were resort shows outside of Colombo, and there were several celebrity destination fashion shows that happened that created a lot of buzz. I think with all the new travel bloggers

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NEVER STOP LEARNING AND STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF AND FOLLOW YOUR HEART AND YOUR PASSION

”

and the brand deals they get because of their status as influencers; they'll certainly bring fashion and tourism together.

For an instance, events like CFW have a big impact on tourism because it's the biggest fashion event in Sri Lanka. In the time I've worked for CFW, we've had designers from Galle, Negombo and quite a number of other places, and we've even had fashion bloggers from India and Europe promote the show, and I think it certainly does make a positive impact on our country's tourism.

From your perspective as a social media influencer, how do you think social media can influence the fashion and tourism industries?

The biggest trends right now are exotic looks and exotic destinations, the beach concepts, and the hot summer looks. If done right, I do believe that social media influencers can create new fashion trends that are true to Sri Lanka and also promote our tourist destinations in the process.

What is KOSHÉ, and what are the other brands you've launched?

KOSHÉ is a luxury high fashion brand that I launched seven years ago at my very first fashion show while I was at NSBM. I started that entire fashion show with just 5000/- rupees

that I had to borrow from a friend because my parents didn't really believe in the concept. And that's how I made my entire collection for that show, with just 5000/- rupees, and now my outfits sell for about 150,000/- rupees per piece. It's definitely come a long way. The second brand I launched is called Kalon. It's pretty much a family business with my best friend, who is my business partner and my dad, who is an antique jeweller. We make luxury silver and gold antique jewellery pieces. I also joined The Agency Sri Lanka 5 years ago.

My best friend and I then launched my third brand, which is called Two Broke Stylists, and we successfully became the first Sri Lankan stylists for Odel's billboard campaign, and we also styled Australian bowler Brett Lee.

We've also done several shoots in Paris, Milan, Ireland, and Holland, and I was the stylist for Mrs World 2020 and am the personal stylist for Oscar-nominated actress and model Nimmi Harasgama. The brand I launched 2 years ago is called KH2, which essentially is affordable luxury wear for the fashionistas that want to wear high fashion at an affordable price.

You're the head of Operations at The Agency. How did you get to where you are

right now?

I started out as a backstage volunteer at fashion week while I was studying at NSBM. I was helping models get ready for the runway when I was scouted by Adam Flamer Caldera, who recommended me to the Colombo Fashion Week office and the next thing I knew, I was hired as the model coordinator for the fashion show.

That same year, I won the Design of the Year award in Sri Lanka, which gave me a lot of media attention and also gave me a chance to go to a fashion show in Paris, where I was then signed for an event company called Studio FDO. I worked there for 2 years and designed for Ms France, Ms Sri Lanka and Mrs Grand International. I'm now the Head of Operations at The Agency Sri Lanka, and I manage about 170 models all around the world.

What would you say to aspiring young designers who might be considering the same career path?

First and foremost, know what you want and know your path. Do your research on the industry, the current trends, and your target market. Do the outfits you design cater to your market. Make sure your collection is on-trend and in style. Start off here in Sri Lanka, and give back to your country, then build yourself up to the international standard. Never stop learning and stay true to yourself and follow your heart and your passion.

INTERVIEW BY:
NATALIYA DONDEENU
ARTICLE BY:
SAHANDEE MEEGAMA



REACH FOR THE SKIES

“ FOR ONCE YOU HAVE TASTED FLIGHT; YOU WILL FOREVER WALK THE EARTH WITH YOUR EYES TURNED SKYWARD. FOR THERE YOU HAVE BEEN, AND THERE YOU WILL ALWAYS LONG TO RETURN. ”
LEONARDO DA VINCI

Aeronautical design and the idea of flight have existed for centuries. One of the most successful early inventions of air travel was the hot air balloon performed in 1783. There were different types of hot air balloons (airships, thermal ships), and some of them were manned hot air balloons, unmanned hot air balloons, hydrogen balloons, and manned hydrogen balloons. However, the invention of the first airplane is credited to the two American inventors, Orville and Wilbur Wright, the pioneers of aviation. Both of them were interested in mechanical projects that gave them the force to create their invention.

Even though the First World War took place a mere decade after the Wright brother's groundbreaking invention, the events and innovations of World War 1, such as radio communication, parachutes, and synchronization gear, changed the future of Aviation forever. In the aftermath of World War 1, bomber planes were used to create about 20 small passenger airlines in countries like France, Great Britain, and Germany. The International Air Traffic Association (IATA) was created in 1919 to set a common technical standard for the industry, though it was dissolved when World War 2

began. By 1938, the world's airlines were carrying nearly 4 million passengers, and with the increase in air traffic, a system of cooperation was desperately needed by the leading international airlines. With IATA's guidance, the technological standards for commercial air

travel were created and implemented. Later in 1945, IATA was recreated as the International Air Transport Association. When World War 2 began in 1939, Military requirements forced the aviation industry to adapt and evolve, and commercial air transport

in Europe and other Western countries came to a complete halt, while it continued to grow in Central and South America, especially in Mexico, Columbia and Brazil as they were unaffected by the war. Several aircrafts in varying sizes were built,



and the first jet engines were also developed. The advance in technology, such as the development of the radar, resulted in many significant improvements in their operations and aircraft design. In 1944, the Convention on International Civil Aviation was signed by 52 states, and it laid the foundation for the progressive and structured development

of global civil aviation.

The jet engines were perfected in the 1950s following World War 2, and as a result, the passenger and cargo air traffic continued to grow in the 1960s with tourists from North America and European countries flying to Asia, the Pacific, and Africa because of the enhanced speed, safety, and

comfort. The early 2000's was very challenging to the industry due to the terrorism-related international tensions and the SARS epidemic of 2003.

However, despite these setbacks, there has been a steady growth in revenue and air traffic over the past decade, and though it has slowed down significantly at

present due to the Covid-19 pandemic, experts are optimistic that the industry will grow even more in the future.

WORDS: ASAN MUNASINGHE & SAHANDEE MEEGAMA
COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF ASSOCIATION OF AVIATION NSBM



EVOLUTION OF AIRPLANES – FACTS

► The Wright brothers invented and flew the first airplane in 1903. It is considered the world's first "sustained and controlled heavier-than-air powered flight." Their aircraft, the Wright Flyer, flew about 120 feet. Today, the newest Boeing 787 can fly 10,000 miles on a single tank of gas.



► The world's smallest jet is the BD-5 Micro. Its wingspan is 14–21 feet and weighs just 358 pounds.

► Most pilots and co-pilots on major airlines are not allowed to eat the same food to avoid the possibility of food poisoning sickening the entire flight crew.

SUSTAINABILITY, FUTURE OF TOURISM AND YOUTH IN THE TRAVEL TRADE

MR. MAXIME WICKRAMASINGHE

PRESIDENT – SLAITO YOUTH
ATTACHÉ TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR
THEME RESORTS & SPAS AND
CONNAISSANCE DE CEYLAN

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SUSTAINABILITY IS NOT ABOUT
JUST ONE CAMPAIGN TOWARDS
THE CONSERVATION OF THE
ENVIRONMENT; IT IS MORE OF A
JOURNEY, WHERE YOU NEED TO
GO ON AS A COMPANY

”





Kariywasam and then the current president Mr Thilak Weerasinghe for facilitating this initiative.

Given the situation, it has been very challenging for us as an industry, but we have managed to create a dialogue and push the issues that are important to us, like sustainability, youth engagement, and different issues that I believe are more sensitive and applicable to the youth.

Can you elaborate your thoughts with regards to the pandemic's impact on the tourism industry and the areas that we need to focus on to recover in the future, including aspects like Destination Marketing?

Covid-19 has been a nightmare for everyone in the industry. It has been really tough, and from a travel industry's perspective, you know we are all inbound agents, and all the members of SLAITO have suffered greatly because the business has been at zero for more than a year. Even though the country is open for tourists, most of the countries do not allow their people to visit Sri Lanka. It has been a very tough time for everyone because the companies have to go with scaling down their staff and having pay cuts.

Let's start with a small introduction about yourself.

Well, my name is Maxime Wickramasinghe. I currently work as the Attaché to the Board of Directors for Theme Resorts & Spas and Connaissance De Ceylan. Last year I was honoured enough to be appointed as the first president of SLAITO Youth. I've been in the industry for around 5 to 6 years.

Congratulations on your achievement, and to start off, can you give us a small introduction about SLAITO Youth?

SLAITO Youth was first set up in June 2020 as a platform for the youth in the travel industry to voice their opinion and make changes that are needed for the betterment of our industry. I'm really thankful to the outgoing president of SLAITO main body Mr Mahen

But when comparing Sri Lanka with other countries except for perhaps Maldives, I guess we have done quite a good job.

In terms of destination marketing, one thing we need is good global campaigns, and SLTDA is currently working on that. You know Sri Lanka is very rich with experiences and a lot of good stories, but we should start building and strengthening these stories about the country. **Considering the future and the present, what are the steps that the local tourism industry has taken on promoting sustainable tourism and what more can be done within this area?**

I think countless evidence suggests that it is very vital for the travellers when they do decide travel that the destination is sustainable and also the activities that they do are sustainable. So, I think even in Sri Lanka, there has been a lot of talk about this topic. If you take 10 years ago, you will not be finding a tourist who hasn't gone to Pinnawala, but in the current context, it is difficult to find a tourist, especially the Europeans who want to go to Pinnawala, as they try to opt out going of going there. So, when taken from that perspective, there are certain things that we have to look closely at as a destination in terms of regulation & best practices. Especially when it comes to our country, we are so fortunate to be blessed by the biodiversity that we have, but at the same time, it comes with a cost, if you look at the densities of population and elephants, for example, 40% of the time we see they share the same habitat and so there are huge conflicts

within this area.

There's a lot of things that we have to do even in our national parks in terms of the number of visitors travelling there. However, coming back to the main essence of SLTDA, I think there's a lot of important strides being taken from SLTDA to initiate dialogues on these, and talking about these aspects is really important to create awareness. I think they have also started initiating certain sustainability-related initiatives as well.

However, I think we require some guidance because what I have personally realized is that it gives you a very broad perspective about this matter because sustainability is not about just one campaign towards the conservation of the environment; it is more of a journey, where you need to go on as a company.

It can be hard since we don't have the required income to spend on these activities, but through these discussions, we can find different topics like aligning the industry towards achieving the SDGs and create a pathway to go forward. I think the creation of these guidelines from SLTDA will be very important. Also, we





have a lot of questions that we need to ask ourselves as an industry in relation to the broad aspect of sustainability. **How would you best describe the current tourism marketing strategies used in Sri Lanka to promote tourism, and do you see any advancements in this area that can change the tourism industry's dynamics?**

Well, I think the rise of vlogs, blogs and even social media to an extent has been very important where people prefer to get their information from a person who they admire or follow on social media, because that has a very natural message being imparted since it's their personal experience. Sometimes there are big promotions being carried out, and I think that is something that we have started doing well. For example, the blogger campaign done by SLTDA and the influencer marketing campaigns done by travel companies on their own have been

very successful, in my opinion.

According to my view what we haven't had in Sri Lanka is that we lack a very concentrated campaign because if we look at other countries like India and Malaysia, their slogans are in every promotion, which increases the recall. If we ask a tourist what is Sri Lanka's slogan, they might not know because, over the last 20 years, many changes have been made to it over time. So, I think consistency is important to place ourselves in the mindsets of our customers. Also, I



think the success of Sri Lanka tourism lies mainly with the youth travellers and backpackers who come and promote the industry through their social media handles. So, we need to promote Sri Lanka as a destination for everyone, so there should be a lot of storytelling that needs to be done to attract these markets and niche segments like the Ayurvedic segment. **What do you believe are the main challenges faced by the Youth when entering into the tourism industry?**

Well, I think the short-term challenge that they are unfortunately facing as we speak right now, with Covid-19, is that many people have just moved away from the industry. Also, the jobs are being worse off since the revenue sources aren't doing well. So that's a short-term challenge, but I think when the recovery takes place over Covid-19, I think there will be a huge job market opening up with the rising demand. So temporarily, it's the job market within the industry that is suffering

and, with time, that can be recovered.

Are there any recommendations that you would like to give to the undergraduates who are willing to join the tourism industry?

Well, I think when you see from a travel agent's perspective, the modern context, it is more tailor-made packages that exist. So, what is important mostly is the love that you develop towards tourism and having an interest about Sri Lankan culture, wildlife, history and many more aspects. So, getting involved and studying these aspects is very important. Also, if you look at travel executives, they have to know all these things, and at the same time, it's important to be a storyteller, and currently, when you have tech skills like graphic designing, it's an added value as well.

**ARTICLE BY
JANITH WICKRAMASURIYA**



SUSTAINABILITY IS NOT ABOUT JUST ONE CAMPAIGN TOWARDS THE CONSERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT; IT IS MORE OF A JOURNEY, WHERE YOU NEED TO GO ON AS A COMPANY



TRAVEL REVOLUTION

Hello

There is no doubt that technology and travel are the perfect combinations in the present world. This combined force also plays a key role in the way people travel as most of the travellers tend to use internet to plan their trips; from the vacation destination they choose, all the way to what they do once they are there in the destination, and even in the time after they have come back from the journey. Technology has the great advantage that it allows tourism industries to switch expensive human labour with technological labour, hence not only reducing labour costs but also avoiding matters regarding customer service. Yet, technology may produce a whole new set of unintentional outcomes. There are some important technological solutions for the tourism industry.

Accordingly, Mobile Technology is one of the most frequently used technology for travelling. Smartphones have become the tour guide, travel agency, navigation apps, and maps regarding where to find the best restaurants recommendations, hotels for stay etc. With the support of mobile-related devices, multiple travel concepts and travel modes have been developed, such as mobile tourism, smart tourism, and e-tourism. The introduction of location-based sensing functions on mobile devices is an added value to increase the desirability and usability of tourism. The new technological development in mobiles enables the recommendation system to consider customers preferences using various opportunities to provide effective travel recommendations. This technology has not only benefited the travellers, but also increasingly being adopted by travel suppliers and related government departments. When seeing in the marketing perspective, it is highly advantaged for promoting and advertising tourism-related activities. They can show up to customers via mobile devices at any time and any place. Large desktop computers have

been largely displaced by mobile tablets and smartphones. This is advantageous because many tourists bring a mobile device with them on a journey. By adopting GPS monitoring, hotel organizations may keep clients informed about changes and delays to their bookings, give special promotions. Virtual assistants' technologies like Siri, Alexa and Watson are some which are used by travellers in various ways for various purposes. 5G network makes travel technology more powerful; this guarantees much faster downloading speed, stable connection, wider coverage and loading speed. As technology plays a prominent role in travelling, the network is also important. Internet Of Things (IoT) guarantees to bring substantial updates to the tourism industry. This is also seen in hotels where hoteliers offer an app to their customers to let them interact with the control

of the televisions. This can also be used to find lost baggage by connecting them with their phones through IoT. Big data is currently a popular feature in technology. The particular parties can make decisions and come to conclusions on the basis of analytics, evidence-driven and number-driven data. This will help to improve the customer experience, and the precise target market can expect future demand to be more accurate and can enhance pricing strategies in the tourism industry. Online reservations, after the client goes with this technology, the organization gives the option of downloading a free guide about every city that the client is going to visit. With the technology, the customers are able to view the reviews of the tripping place by the particular destination website.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted conventional travel,

there has been a surge of enthusiasm in using technology to re-launch travel and tourism, as seen by the introduction of digital Covid-19 travel passports. According to a study conducted in 2020, Thai travellers were the most confident nationality that technology would be helpful in limiting human connections during the Covid-19 pandemic, while Germans were significantly more suspicious. According to a study conducted in September 2020, mobile applications that give on-trip notifications and alerts, as well as contactless payments, were among the most popular technologies for increasing travel confidence.

Customer interaction is essential in the travel industry and technological advances are letting firms get closer with their customers. The technology in the tourism industry helps to speed up the functions and travelling process more pleasurable and efficient. Finally, the ICT revolution has resulted in considerable changes in tourist governance, as well as the emergence of an electronic version of tourism referred to as e-tourism.

**ARTICLE BY
JANUDI WELIKALA AND
THARUSHA ABEYSINGHE**





I WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT THE HOSPITALITY FIELD WHEN I WAS WORKING PART TIME, BUT MY TRUE CALLING IN HOSPITALITY WAS SHOWN TO ME BY NSBM



CHALLENGING THE NORMS OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

MELISSA KARUNATHILAKE

ASSISTANT BANQUET SALES MANAGER – WATERS EDGE BSC. EVENTS, TOURISM & HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, GRADUATING CLASS OF 2015



What was your first step in the field of hospitality?

The first footstep I would say is working for Kairoz events Part-time. That was weddings and events, and that was right after A/L's. I used to work part-time. I was doing my degree while working there. After completing my degree, I joined Waters Edge.



As a young lady, what inspired you to a career in the field of hospitality?

It's very challenging, and it's something new every day, and it's about getting to know people which I'm very interested in; it's something new. It's not the same thing that I'm doing every day.

How did your university life help you in becoming who you are today?

I would say that NSBM was the first foundation, as you mentioned. I learnt a lot of things, that is mainly thanks to my lecturers who shaped me, I used to go and talk to them, and they would tell me "Melissa do this" and they always guided me throughout, and I also had a wonderful set of friends who used to guide me when I had questions. Yeah, I think university helped me become the person I am right now.

What are the extracurricular activities

you did at NSBM?

I used to plan a lot of batch get-togethers, with friends, of course. And there were other small events which were happening, and we helped for those as well.

What has been the biggest achievement of your career so far?

So, the biggest achievement I would say was the SLIM NASCO awards which I was awarded in the bronze category. Only 2 people who were rewarded from the whole department. It was the first time they introduced the hospitality field in the NASCO awards. There were only 3 people from the whole country. I was 24, and it was just after one year of joining water's edge.

Before, you mentioned that you worked part-time while studying at NSBM. Was it a challenge for you to balance both?

It was because I was new to both my

university life and also the work-life and so it was all about balance, and it was a challenge, but I think I successfully took up that challenge.

What would you say to aspiring young female hospitality leaders who want to follow in your footsteps?

Go for it. Take that risk. It's not easy; it's going to be tough. There will be people who will put you down, especially when you're a female; those are things that happen. But go for it, don't stop, push yourself and be extraordinary among the ordinary so that people will always remember you.

**INTERVIEW BY:
NATALIYA DONDEENU
ARTICLE BY:
CLIVE MARCUS**



“ GO FOR IT, DON'T STOP, PUSH YOURSELF AND BE EXTRAORDINARY AMONG THE ORDINARY SO THAT PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU ”

The most common questions that were raised What do I do? A question that I've asked myself a lot when it came to the environment and its sustainability. Questions like: "What is sustainability?" "How can I help better the environment?" "Should the action I take be big?" "Don't the changes I make have to be big for them to count?"

Similarly, we've all had questions on the 'what' and 'how' on the topic of the environment when in reality, it's simple.... just do. That's it. Just do. What we don't realize is that even the smallest, minuscule of actions can help. That it's not this huge task, work or burden we've associated it with and made it out to be, that the whole, adding to the environment and its sustainability, always isn't a drastic, dramatic change but can be the tiniest of actions.

This isn't an article on what sustainability is and how you can help. You can find that out with a few clicks on your phone, tab, or laptop. This is an article on relatability,



on realizing that going across and beyond isn't always the solution, but how even the bare minimum can be a start.

I hadn't been aware of this, how a thought on making a change could impact your view on sustainability. Not just your view, but even your actions.

Let's look at this from a different perspective. This student didn't think about their environment or sustainability. Sure, they were aware of what the basics were; that the world is getting worse, our climate is not in its best condition, pollution is a constant problem, that protecting

it is important and all the rage nowadays yet remained indifferent with the thought ... "as long as I intentionally do not add to polluting, it's all good".

But it isn't all good. The world, its climate, its oceans, its forests, its habitats, its animals... they are all not good.

For a more theoretical understanding, a fact; According to NOAA.gov (oceans & coasts) and Chassignet et al. (2021), over 1.4 million pounds of trash enter the ocean every year; Sri Lanka's coast and surrounding oceans were recently and currently contaminated with chemicals and toxins as a result of the 'MV Xpress Pearl' ship wreckage that caught fire. More of this can be found on BBC News

A LESSON ON RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION





Asia: X-Press Pearl: Sri Lanka braces for environmental disaster from the sunken ship, 2021 (Again, not all good).

What the student didn't realize was that just like them, hundreds of people remain indifferent, hundreds think on similar terms; as long as we don't add, we don't harm. In retrospect, that would seem true. If the student threw their plastic straw into the recycle waste labelled 'PLASTIC' wherever they went or visited, they weren't polluting, and they weren't adding.

But what if the student never had to throw away their straws. If instead, they used a....metal straw? BOOM... and just like that, they've 'done. Just like that, hundreds of people have reduced the amount of plastic used and decreased the number of plastic straws thrown into the bin labelled 'PLASTIC' found in some places when travelling (and most times not).



FOR A MORE THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING, A FACT; ACCORDING TO NOAA.GOV (OCEANS & COASTS) AND CHASSIGNET ET AL. (2021), OVER 1.4 MILLION POUNDS OF TRASH ENTER THE OCEAN EVERY YEAR;



how to do things, but more on your intention and remember that here, the bare minimum always counts and is a start.

Maybe just one point on how you can help (In the kindest, non-critical and most undemanding way): use a metal straw.

**DONA WIRASINHA
ICTH SUSTAINABILITY**

Hundreds of people have 'done.

Can you relate? To some extent, I'm sure you can. I say this because that student is you.

That student is the person sitting across from you, the guy walking past you, everybody in the next room and over, me. We're all learning. We're all aware. We are all students. And that is okay. Worry less on how big or small the action you take has to be or on



COVINOVATION OF THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY

MR. TUAN KITCHILAN

MANAGER - HAYLEYS AVIATION BRITISH AIRWAYS GSA

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CONTINUOUS
EFFORTS OF
IMPLEMENTING
GREENER
SOLUTIONS AND
INVESTMENT
IN NEW
TECHNOLOGY
WILL HAVE
TO CONTINUE
DURING THE
NEW NORMAL
TO CRAFT THE
POST-PANDEMIC
FUTURE



Could you please give a brief introduction about your role in your organization?

Hayleys holds the number one position in the GSA representation, both cargo and passenger. My prime role is to represent a few of the airlines in the areas of sales and marketing maintaining relationships with the industry patronage. Also supporting the teams involved in business development on aviation and related areas.

What could be the new trends in the airline industry in the new normal from your point of view?

Air cargo revenues have helped a lot to keep the airlines afloat. This will continue until the scheduled flights increase the belly capacity bringing the rates competitive. In terms of passenger travel, essential travel is keeping the airline industry occupied despite the numbers have drastically dropped. Leisure travel will be an interesting area to monitor closely. Free Independent Travel (FIT) will recover faster than the group travel. Similarly, resort based tropical destinations will also recover faster than the crowded attractions.

As an overall view, in terms of new product development, what would be the directions/ areas that require major improvements for the whole airline industry in the new normal?

The pandemic challenged almost all essential areas in aviation. These areas need either fast track innovation or do a complete reinvention of the value offered. Joseph Amankwah named this as CoviNovation. Airline catering is one of the mostly impacted areas. We saw how some airline catering businesses entered food delivery; improving the resources available. The consumer concern on health and hygiene will push towards the

border control will surely be a new experience in the near future. The majority of the technology was available, but the adoption was slow. The pandemic has actually challenged the latest technologies to reinvent the entire processes and routines. Ground handling services delivery and In-flight service delivery remain as the areas that face-to-face interaction is desired as a major value by consumers. It will be interesting to see new developments in the consumer attitude on interaction during the recovery period.

We all know that the market has reshuffled and what kind of

competency. Most of the airlines have embraced the industry changes. We noticed how the mighty giants made very visible strategic cuts that are essential in the short and medium-term. This will remain important in the new normal where borders can be closed overnight, causing the entire schedule plans into a six.

Internal marketing and communication is a key competency during and post-pandemic. The pandemic forced too many changes all at once. It was evident how CEOs to senior management of airlines engaged in intensive internal marketing communication activities to win the hearts of

retaining current customers' segments and attracting potential niche markets?

The best practices implemented in the health and hygiene areas will need to continue or even be enhanced to build consumer confidence. Loads of innovation is in place on these areas, and these practices need to continue. Continuous innovation on ground handling and border control to create touch-less travel should continue. Adopting technology that is available and new inventions should be encouraged.

We saw how airlines dropped the larger



automation in the airline catering industry, where less human involvement in the preparation of the meals that are served to you on-board. The method of disposal also needs attention to ensure the safety of the airline cabin crew.

The majority of the airlines, airports, and countries have fast-paced adoption of contactless travel and biometrics usage. Passenger check-in and

competencies an airline should develop in order to be successful in the new normal?

Revenue management has been and will remain to be one of the most crucial competencies any airline will require to sustain in this competitive industry. This is essential to face any crisis and also important not to be left unguarded during smooth operation. Agility is another very important

the employees despite many layoffs to continue operations which were drastically reduced. Continuous efforts of implementing greener solutions and investment in new technology will have to continue during the new normal to craft the post-pandemic future.

From your point of view, what are the best practices to follow in the new normal in terms of

aircraft usage; this would continue for a little longer as passengers prefer avoiding larger crowds. Point to point travel reducing multiple transits and operating to new or unpopular airports should also be continued. We saw how Sri Lanka used Mattala airport to manage Seafarer and leisure charter flights. Travelling to resort-like tropical destinations for leisure would continue in the immediate future.



“ WE ARE FOCUSING ON HIGH-VALUE TOURISM OVER VOLUME. HENCE, WE NEED TO ENSURE THE PERCEIVED VALUE IS DELIVERED FROM THE MOMENT THE TOURIST DEPARTS FROM HIS OR HER COUNTRY ”

Airlines will introduce new destinations, some of them unheard of to cater to niche demand.

How long have you been in this industry? In the next 10 years, what kind of compulsory skills and additional traits you are expecting from graduates who want to build their careers in the airline industry?

I have been in the industry for nearly 2 decades and witnessed how airlines shifted from paper tickets to e-tickets, using booking terminals to the usage of PCs, laptops and now mobile devices. Also, I have witnessed how ground handling and border control shifted from long queues to faster processing procedures adapting to online check-in and biometrics.

Airlines are very sensitive to new

technology as consumer behaviour shifts are quite visible. Advanced digital marketing skills have become a requirement for anyone joining the industry. Consumers resort to online search results for almost anything. Basic digital marketing skills will no longer qualify you to be a candidate, so you understand the emphasis.

A nick on data analytics is a sure slingshot to your next promotion as airlines invest heavily in predictive analytics. The majority of the tools available are quite expensive, and skilled manpower remains scarce. The pandemic pushed digitization and increased collaboration. Collaboration skills will need leaps of development as they will be compelled to work with global teams

consisting of multiple countries and cultures. Online collaboration is far more challenging. Many skills and traits combined are needed to be successful.

Multi-disciplined education and knowledge will continue to be useful. The more non-related aviation knowledge that can be used to innovate or improvise to add value to customers will surely help new graduates to make an impactful change in the industry.

Your willingness to learn a foreign language will surely help in the near future as the language opens the doors and windows of culture.

Any other suggestions and recommendations for the Sri Lankan tourism industry related to your professional sector?

Sri Lanka Tourism and the Aviation Sector of Sri Lanka work hand in hand as we are an island nation. The growth in tourism is directly indicated by the increased number of flights or increase of capacity. Any new airline that flies into Sri Lanka is mostly a joined effort of the two sectors.

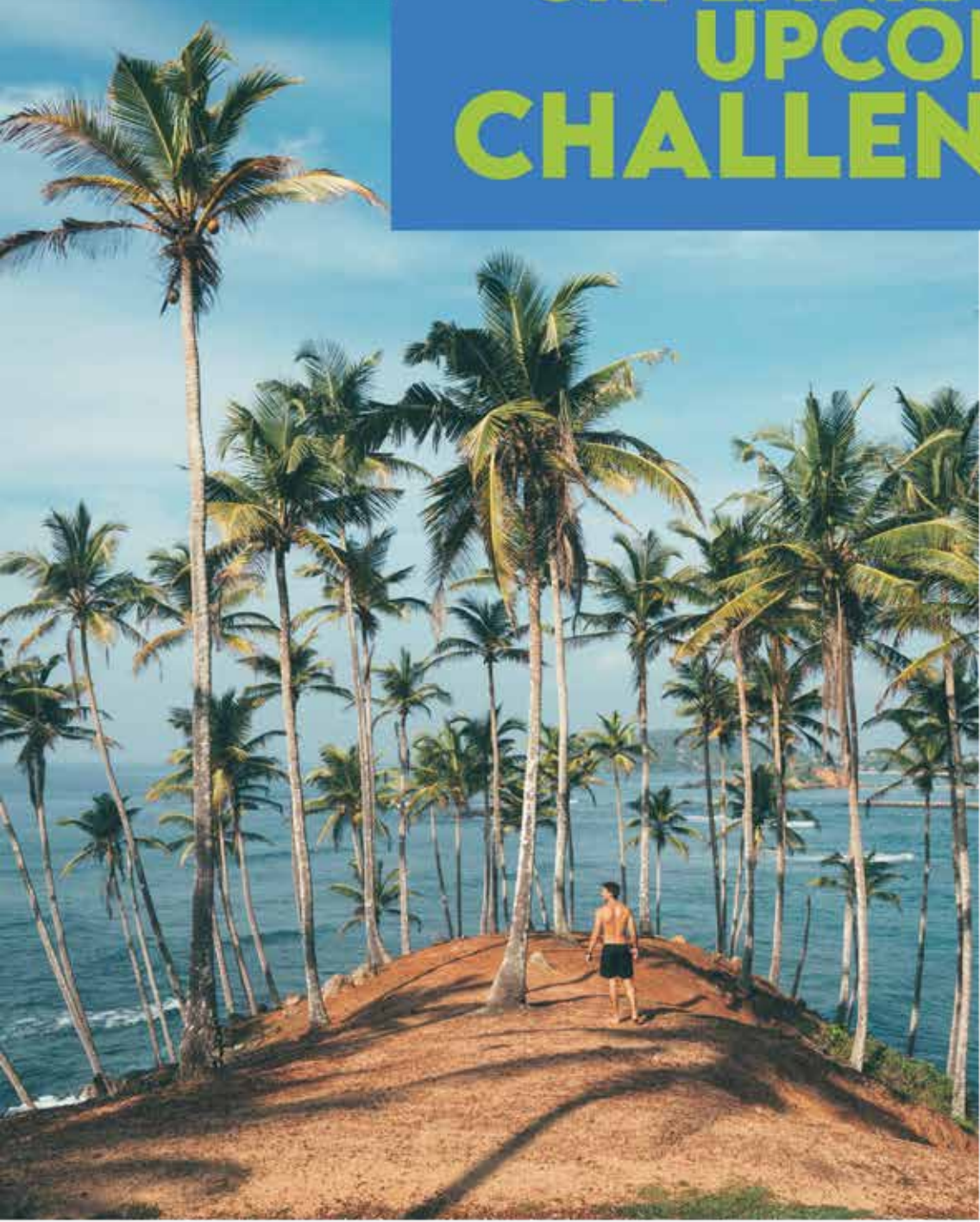
We must work very closely, the health authorities, Sri Lanka Tourism and the Aviation

Industry stakeholders on focus countries when opening borders for tourism. We are focusing on high-value tourism over volume. Hence, we need to ensure the perceived value is delivered from the moment the tourist departs from his or her country. So, airlines, airports, tour operators, hotels all need to be well-coordinated by Sri Lanka Tourism. The work carried out so far are commendable during the pandemic to help the country to maintain some flow of tourism revenue while adhering to the health and hygiene guidelines. All stakeholders are supporting each other very well.



Tourism has been described as one of the key foreign currency generating channels in the Sri Lankan economy. The country has made significant efforts to promote the tourism industry through the development of new products, resource markets and other strategies.

RESTARTING TOURISM IN SRI LANKA AND UPCOMING CHALLENGES



In this situation, a properly integrated approach with the tourism industry's key leaders is highly important. Conversely, small and medium-sized businesses which make up a big part of the tourism industry might struggle to stay alive. As the tourism industry depends on visitors and the movements of people, there will be some difficulties in the present time which the stakeholders need to bear up until things get back to normal. Uncertainty arises as a consequence of market closures and fluctuations in demand. The time has come to consider opportunistic movements and begin considering actions in conjunction with resistance methods. To deal with unexpected and risky situations, the industry must define core competencies and capabilities.

In thinking about industry recovery, scientific control for the pandemic is required nationally and internationally. The government needs a well-developed resilience plan to deal more effectively with the tragedy. At the same time, effective

Eventually, the industry came to an abrupt halt after a major crisis erupted due to the rapid outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic. By now, not only the Sri Lankan tourism industry but also global

tourism has been directly affected by this global pandemic situation.

During this pandemic, business operations have been confronted with four major difficulties.

1) Regaining business

operations

2) Re-hiring their employees

3) Redeveloping company relationships with all types of supply chain providers

4) Reaching out to their regular clients



social protection, health legislation and health care systems are required to deal with post-pandemic problems.

During the recovery phase, priority should be given to all the stakeholders whose earnings have dramatically decreased, especially those whose jobs are currently at risk in the tourism sector. Once the context is established, the next step is to determine the positive effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and apply them to the tourism industry. The industry has recognized the value of long-distance business operations, such as reducing unnecessary flights and increasing the use and adaptation of technology for meetings and conferences. This could be the beginning of a new era for business travellers

and the MICE tourism industry. As a short-term solution, domestic tourism will also play a significant role. As a result, in the future, the tourism sector will focus on different forms of tourism such as eco-tourism, nature-based tourism, agro-tourism and homestay tourism. These types of tourism will focus more on the natural environment and society. This will be an opportunity for the Sri Lankan tourism industry to explore a reformation of the tourism system that should be more closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Controlling the pandemic and re-establishing the tourism industry will depend on how our country copes with this situation and finding an effective way out of the Covid-19 pandemic. Domestic tourism for destinations should be nurtured through low package



costs, foreign tourism should be developed, and a strategy of safe alternative travel should be approached. Additionally, the industry needs to take steps to assure the job security of the employees, and companies can develop new products and services using modern marketing while reducing costs and increasing revenue. The most important thing is to keep going.

This is an interview-based article taking on the insight of Mrs Sudharshi Kanchana Dissanayake, the manager of STEF LANKA

**ARTICLE BY
DASUNI KUMARASINGHE
AND PASINDU HAPANGAMA**





GENTLE GIANTS OF SRI LANKA

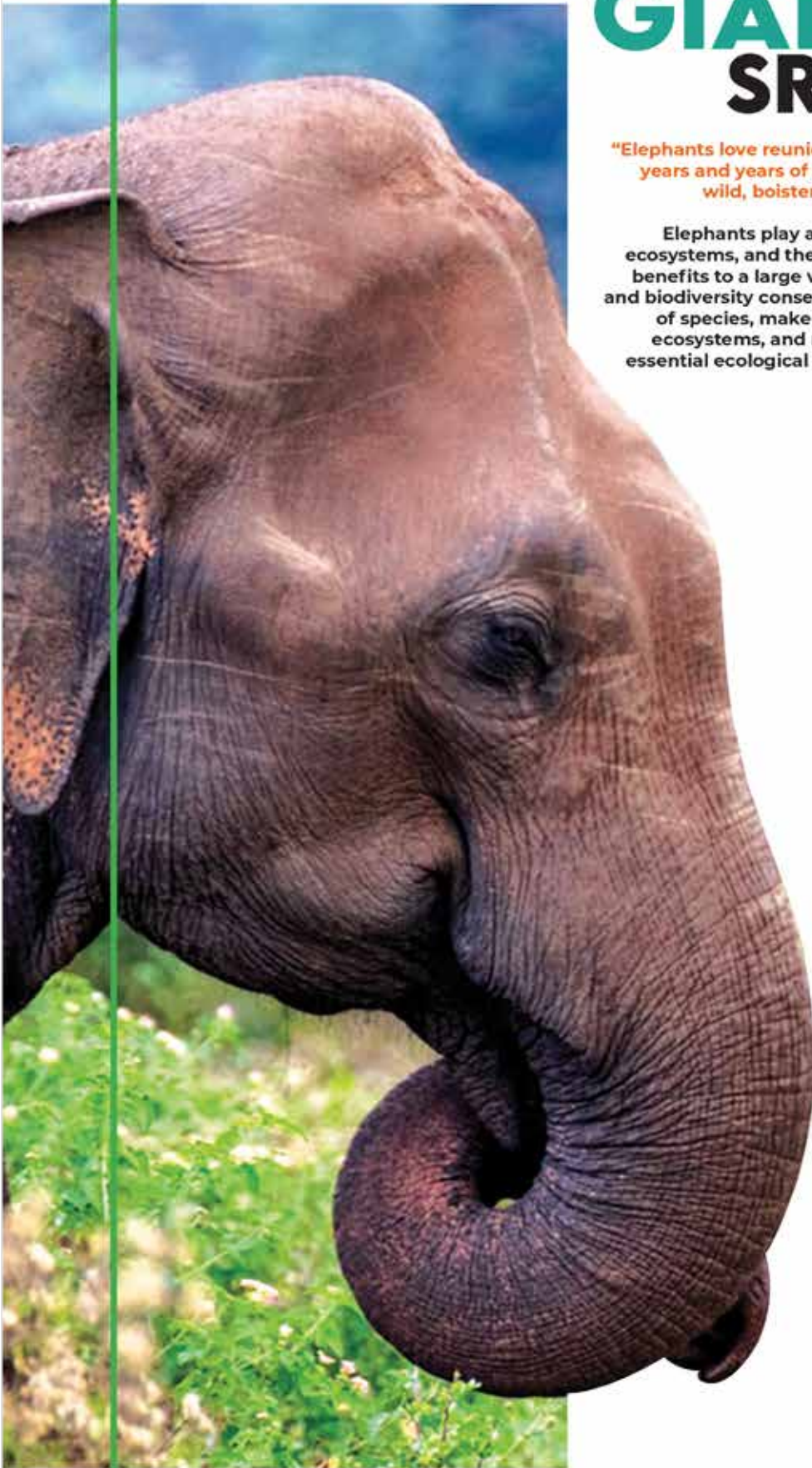
"Elephants love reunions; they recognize one another after years and years of separation and greet each other with wild, boisterous joy." – Jennifer Richard Jacobson

Elephants play an important role in balancing natural ecosystems, and their role as a keystone species provides benefits to a large variety of other species. Sustainability and biodiversity conservation aims to preserve the diversity of species, make sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems, and maintain life-supporting systems and essential ecological processes. Therefore, sustainability is necessary for elephant conservation.

World Elephant Day is celebrated every year on 12th August, and it was officially launched in 2012 by Patricia Sims (a Canadian film director and writer) to bring attention to the urgent plight of Asian and African elephants. Elephants are loved and respected by people and cultures worldwide, yet we balance on the brink of seeing the last of these marvellous creatures.

Currently, there are two living species of elephants: the Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*) and the African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*).

The Sri Lankan Elephant subspecies is the largest and also the darkest of the Asian elephants, with patches of depigmentation on its ears, face, trunk and belly. The herd size in Sri Lanka ranges from 12-20 individuals and is led by the oldest female or matriarch. Their lifespan is said to be around 55-70 years. The Sri Lankan elephant population has fallen almost 65% since the turn of the 19th century. Today, the Sri Lankan elephant is protected under Sri Lankan law and killing one carries the death penalty. Currently, there are around 200-250 elephants, in captivity.



Physical Traits of the Sri Lankan Elephant:

The male has a broader head between the eyes and the forehead, whereas the female's forehead forms a sharper angle

Adult females have mammary glands located between their front legs

Fully grown males tend to be bigger than fully grown females

Behavioural Traits of the Sri Lankan Elephant:

Males tend to roam on their own or in small groups as they leave the breeding herd at puberty (13 to 14 years old)

Females are strongly bonded to the breeding herds and are surrounded by their relatives of the natal herd

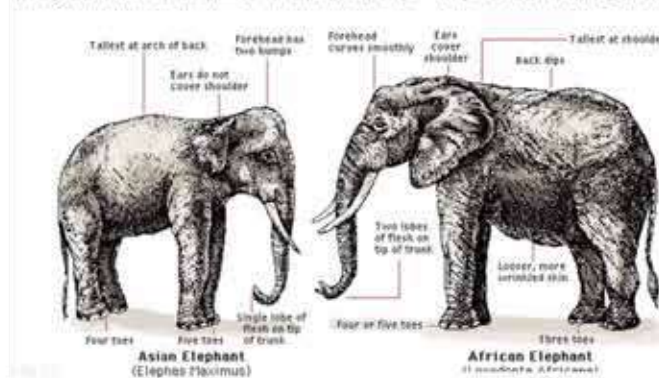
The Economic Value of Elephants in Sri Lanka: creates income from tourists and visitors to the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC), to hotels and to safari jeep drivers.

Commercializing elephants for economic gain is quite controversial as it opposes the motive of World Elephant Day. Wildlife experts argue that these animals deserve to live in peace in their natural habitats with no human interaction.

Moreover, elephants in captivity are denied everything that gives their life meaning. Many become neurotic, unhealthy, depressed, and aggressive as a result of the inhumane conditions in which they're kept.

Poaching, habitat loss, human-elephant conflict as well as mistreatment in captivity are just some of the threats faced by both African and Asian elephants. Working towards better protection for wild elephants, improving enforcement policies to prevent the illegal poaching and trade of ivory, conserving

ASIAN ELEPHANTS VS AFRICAN



elephant habitats, better treatment for captive elephants and reintroducing captive elephants into natural and protected sanctuaries are the goals that numerous elephant conservation organizations are focusing on around the world.

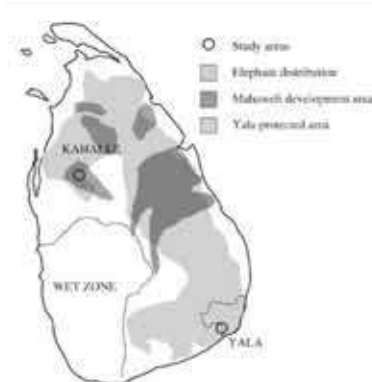
The Human-elephant Conflict:

The Human-elephant conflict (HEC) is an intricate interaction between humans and elephants. It represents the damaging impact, and unfavourable effects both species have on each other. HEC challenges elephant conservation.

The data collected by the DWC states that nearly 400 elephants and 50 people are killed annually due to HEC in Sri Lanka. Causes of elephant deaths were mainly due to electrocution, explosive baits and gunshot wounds.

Conservation and/or HEC Prevention Measures:

Certain measures can be taken to evade the HECs. This includes establishing elephant corridors to allow safe passage from one habitat to another, habitat enrichment to increase the carrying capacity, increasing the size of conservation areas and establishing new national parks, controlling Poaching through wildlife scouts, trackers, tougher



laws and zoning, bio-fencing (Palmyrah fences, beehive fences), combining elephant conservation and economic development, in-situ conservation (national parks and sanctuaries) and ex-situ conservation with breeding programmes (zoos, captive breeding, gene banks), electrical fencing and elephant deterrence (the use of noise, light flashes, shock tactics)

The aim of humanity must be to protect elephants and admire them from afar because they demonstrate what we consider the finest

human traits: empathy, self-awareness, and social intelligence. The way humans currently treat them demonstrates the very worst of human behaviour, which should be immediately stopped.

Footnote: Mr. Chandula Hettiarachchi, the Environment Management & Sustainability Executive at Theme Resorts & Spas, provided insight for this article via a webinar hosted by NSBM's ICTH Sustainability Club.

SENELIE GUNARATNE (20.3 BATCH) ICTH SUSTAINABILITY

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Jeson Buultjens joined NSBM in 2014, and he's come a long way since then. In just four and a half years, he has accomplished more than you can imagine! In this article, you will learn about how students not wanting him and his friends on their team and how a group of lecturers keeping him in check all the time was the turning point in his life that he needed to get him where he is now.

“THE CORPORATE WORLD IS LIKE A JUNGLE AND YOU HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING.”

A STORY OF HOW A BACK BENCHER BECAME A MANAGER AT ONE OF THE LEADING TEA COMPANIES IN SRI LANKA

JESON BUULTJENS

MANAGER- MARKETING & OPERATIONS (DILMAH TEA)
BSC. MARKETING MANAGEMENT – GRADUATING CLASS OF 2016

What motivated/ inspired you to pursue a career in marketing?

When I was learning HR, it was not my thing; all you had to do was follow what a book said, and everyone followed the same rules, which is the basic structure of HR; but, in marketing, you must constantly learn and do new things to ensure you are meeting the requirements of the contemporary market.

My father is a

marketeer as well, and I was definitely influenced by him too, and I believe it was a good decision.

What is the biggest achievement in your career path that you have achieved so far?

It was a great achievement for me to be working at a company like Dilmah Tea and becoming a manager in a short period of time, starting as a Management Trainee and getting promoted

to Marketing Executive, Assistant Marketing Manager, and now Manager of Marketing Operations all in the span of four and a half years. Another achievement is that I've been able to increase the number of Dilmah Food & Beverage outlets. With the support of my team, I was able to expand the concept I was aiming for from one to four F&B outlets in just three years. Thousands of people can come up with thousands of ideas, but it

is the execution of those ideas that matter.

How do you think Dilmah sets itself apart from other local brands in the country?

Dilmah is special because we follow our own set of principles and do not stray from them. We make sure our operations, manufacturing process, how we handle and treat our employees, the marketing, and ethical and sustainable initiatives are all in line with our concepts and principles.

In Dilmah, everything

is done with a sense of purpose, exclusivity, and ethics. That's why Dilmah is a global brand that distinguishes itself from others.

How would you describe Dilmah's current marketing strategies given the current situation of the country and local brands being pushed to adapt accordingly?

With the pandemic, the current marketing strategy aims to raise brand awareness, particularly for the infusion range, which is designed to boost immunity while also enhancing the freshness and goodness of the tea. We make sure that our marketing strategies are contemporary, all while maintaining Dilmah's

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principles.

What are the most significant challenges of being a manager, and what have you learnt from them?

I used to be great with people because I thought I had to make sure that everyone was happy with everything, but after I became a manager, I realized that wasn't the case. I didn't want to complain, but I realized that to be a good manager, I had to be transparent and honest when something went wrong. It's important to

know how to control and monitor.

What skills would you look for if you were to hire fresh graduates? What advice would you give them in order to stand out?

When hiring, I would look for someone who can work well in a team, be innovative, and communicate well.

Also, be yourself, be honest, be willing to learn, and be ready to be openly criticized. If you can't handle that, you won't be able to survive in the corporate world. One of my lecturers, once told me that the corporate world is like a jungle, and you have to be prepared for just about everything.

What is a general & professional life advice

you would give to an undergraduate?

In general, my advice is to enjoy your time at university. I'm glad I genuinely enjoyed my time in university and do what you want to do when you can because in the corporate world, you might not always be able to do what you want.

Professionally, I advise that you should not focus on your income during your first few years of working. You should instead focus on establishing yourself and exploring all of your options and career fields, even if you're enrolled in a specialized degree. It is also very important to have a work-life balance once you start working.

**ARTICLE BY:
THASHIYA REBEIRA**



“
A DEGREE IS LIKE A DRIVER'S LICENSE THAT ALLOWS YOU TO START DRIVING, BUT ONCE YOU'RE OUT ON THE ROAD, IT'S ALL ABOUT EXECUTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND HOW YOU PUT IT TO PRACTICE”

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