

Singapore hotels gearing up for the 'new normal' in the hospitality industry

Innovation and a domestic focus have been the keys to surviving the upheaval.

With the "new normal" for the hospitality industry arising, hotels in Singapore are now challenged to implement new and innovative business activities to recover from the economic effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Some hotels have continued their daily operations with stricter health and safety regulations, as well as different marketing strategies to attract more customers.

Hotels were among the hardest hit when Singapore's nationwide circuit breaker (CB) measures were implemented in the second quarter of 2020. But the pain was set to continue as the other phases of the recovery were put in place without any movement on international borders.

With tourists effectively banned from entering Singapore, the vast majority of hotel rooms were being left unslept in - but relief of sorts was made through the increase in "staycation" promotions.

In spite of such, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has allowed hotels to operate during Phases Two and Three of resumption of activities subject to compliance of safe management measures (SMM) and other appropriate guidelines.

STB has approved 234 hotels to resume service as of 27 November.

Amidst slow economic recovery and the decline in people's trust in going out, different hotels in Singapore are now strategising their own "new normal" activities post-circuit breaker. Hotels now have to be creative in enticing customers to stay and avail hotel packages, whilst still complying with safety guidelines.

Maximising digital technology

For Shangri-La Hotel Singapore, its focus remains on resuming operations cautiously despite gradual relaxation of restrictions. Underpinning all their efforts is their commitment to create a

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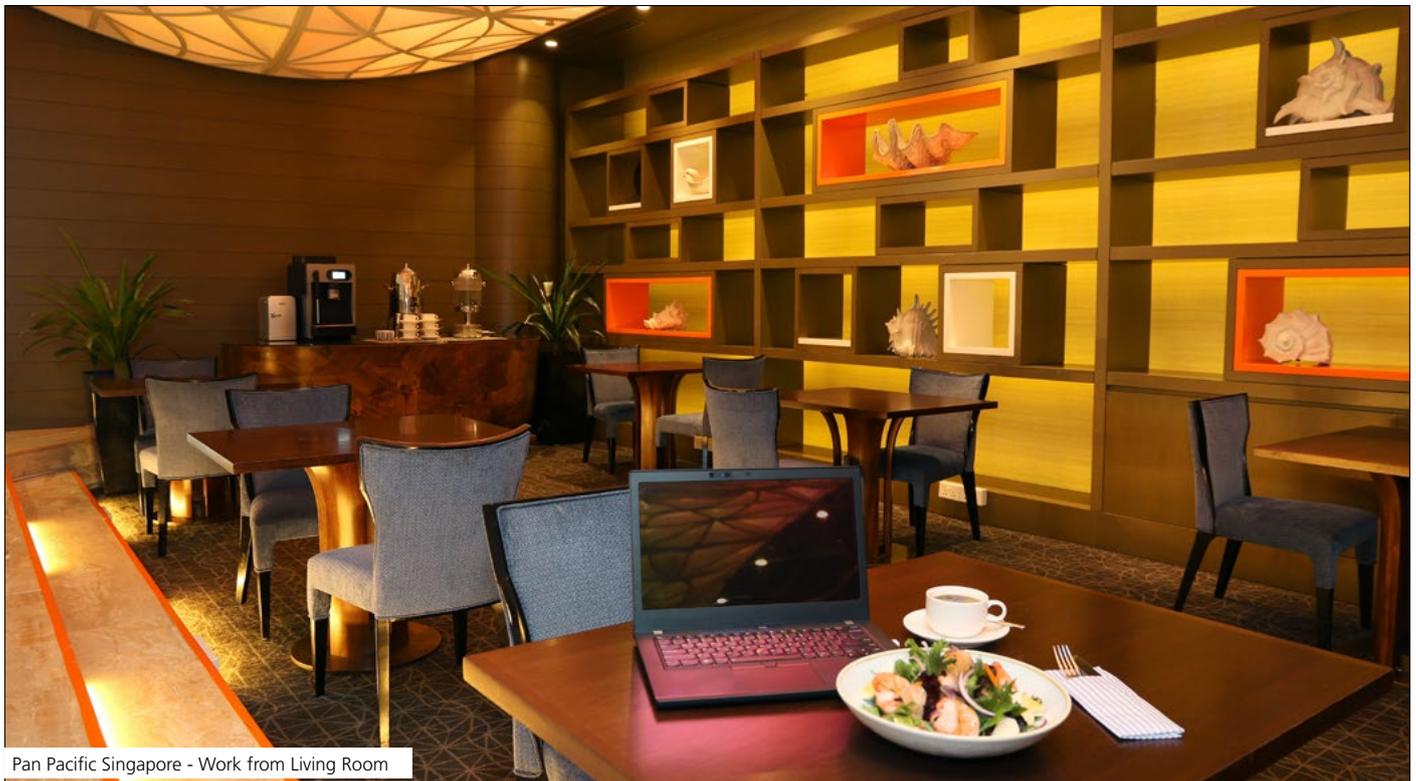


trusted and safe environment for guests and hotel employees.

General Manager Tane Picken mentioned that the hotel has to ensure that all staff associates are comfortable and familiar with the new technologies and processes upon launching new initiatives, which include digital compendiums, holding virtual events, contactless order systems, amongst others.

"In order to uphold the level of service that the hotel is known for, we embarked on a series of training and simulation resulting with our team being fully fluent and embracing the new formats with full confidence," Picken said.

The hotel is going contactless for restaurant menus and launching a digital concierge and compendium. Guests can now request for housekeeping services and amenities, and in-room dining. They can also find out more information about the hotel through a simple QR scan and a



Pan Pacific Singapore - Work from Living Room



Shangri-La launches digital concierge and compendium

couple of clicks on their smartphones or other mobile devices.

Clients may also conduct their hybrid virtual meeting events with ease in the hotel's safe and comfortable spaces equipped with professional video-streaming capabilities. The hotel offers the option of catering meal experiences to the virtual event attendees' satellite locations.

Shangri-La's popular "buds" birthday party experience goes online as well. The celebrants can gather with their friends online as a buds ambassador hosts them through the event, complete with themed craft activities, birthday cake cutting, and singing along from the safe comfort of home.

The virtual birthday party package also comes with a selection of themes and activities that are bundled up in a lovely birthday box delivered to each guest's home, to celebrate this milestone real-time over a video call.

Aside from the mentioned projects, Shangri-La Hotel also looks forward to bringing their digital initiatives as part of the 'new normal.' Such initiatives include implementing new languages and a chatbot system for the hotel's recently launched digital concierge and compendium for the hotel, which will allow for a more immersive guest experience.

"We hope that these initiatives will help to elevate our guest experiences in the hotel as well as ensure a peace of mind for the health and safety of our guests and colleagues. We want to provide a hassle-free experience for our guests and allow them to fully enjoy the unique experiences that the hotel has to offer," Picken said.

Leveraging on domestic market

With the gradual recovery for the hospitality industry set in 2021, hotels are starting to cater to locals first.

For Pan Pacific Hotels Group, they have to ensure they uphold their core philosophy of serving and caring for their guests whilst they launch new initiatives in meeting challenges to keep their business afloat amidst the crisis.

"Despite business activities being affected by the pandemic, we have been looking at our long-term plans to prepare ourselves for recovery and when business returns. We leveraged on this downtime to work on asset enhancement initiatives," Chief Executive Officer Choe Peng Sum said.

The Pan Pacific Hotels Group has launched its Pan Pacific Cares programme formed by four pillars—caring for guests, caring for the community, caring for the associates, and caring for the environment.

Amongst their projects under the programme is the HERO (Healthcare Employees Recognition & Ovation) initiative launched in August. It aims to recognise healthcare professionals for their dedication to the nation amidst the pandemic by contributing 25,000 complimentary room nights.

The group also curated staycation experiences for locals amidst travel restrictions. This is in line with STB's campaign to encourage Singaporeans in rediscovering the city.

"Our hotels are offering an array of experiences for Singaporeans such as offering interesting activities in partnership with local operators at Arab Street such as Batik Tulis workshop and Perfume Discovery workshop," Choe said.

Hotels need to rise to the occasion and identify opportunities and innovations in times of crises and seize them



Pan Pacific Hotels Group also has launched their "work from hotel" daycation package, which include an 11-hour room access, secretariat services, in-room dining credits, complimentary afternoon tea set, and access to the gym and swimming pool, for those who are experiencing work-from-home fatigue.

Corporate businesses can also avail of Pan Pacific Hotels Group's "Ezymeet" virtual meeting service. The project allows professionals to conduct virtual meetings with ease as the hotels organise the necessary coffee/lunch breaks and meeting amenities that will be sent to the location of their clients.

Taking it slow

The industry may still be recovering from the impact of the pandemic, but recent events have certainly brought new lessons, especially in the hospitality management sector.

Picken noted that hotels need to rise to the occasion and identify opportunities and innovations in times of crises and seize them.

"These include identifying new ways to reach and interact with our guests, introducing new processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and supporting the health and safety of our colleagues and guests," he said. "In this period, we have also witnessed the resilience and selfless spirit of our fellow hoteliers, who are staying in the frontlines for the passion for what they do," Picken added.

Meanwhile, Choe believes that even as the pandemic upended the hospitality industry, organisations have been forced to rethink their operational structure.

Organisations like Shangri-La Hotel Singapore and the Pan Pacific Hotels Group remain optimistic in welcoming the world back the soonest as they initially focus their services on locals in early 2021.

"We will be poised to receive international guests with value-added stay offers complemented with local travel experiences as travel restrictions ease and borders reopen over time," Picken said.

"Hospitality organisations need to unify and rally together to overcome these challenges as another lockdown or circuit breaker will impact the industry in the long-term," Choe noted.