THE OVERVIEW

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JUNE ISSUE 2021

When will I see you again?

The future of events P10

Featured inside

Welcome to THE OVERVIEW

We all want to get together again. We know this because we enjoyed it last summer when the UK took a deep breath and leaped back into all things social. So really, it would be nice to do it again and stop feeling like characters from Little House on the Prairie, enjoying just the one annual dance before hibernating and making our own bread and cheese for the other 364 days.

The weather this year hasn't been as wonderful as it was during Lockdown 1.0 and the reports from the initial opening of hospitality were of frozen fingers and rain-lashed finger sandwiches, which meant that, after the first half an hour of so, the bounce back wasn't as bouncy as had been forecast.

The events industry has suffered from even lower attendance and, as we report this month, it is facing a distinctly dampened reopening, with the 21 June lifting of resections subject to the India variant and those events reliant on overseas visitors subject to the reopening of international travel, which is not going to happen with any rapidity.

So far, so uninspiring and, with summer approaching, the events' sector's traditional quiet time is nearly upon us even as hopes of relaxed rules hove into view. So there is time. Hyatt, which is not lacking in meetings and events space, announced that it had partnered up with Paris-based AI startup Swapcard to offer Together by Hyatt, a hybrid offering which will see it host a 1,000-strong gathering in the US later this year, where only half of the attendees would be on the ground.

As we found last year with HOSPACE, you have to work with what you're given and it was a great credit to Jane and the team that the event was as much a must attend virtually as it was in the flesh. The hybrid still holds sway this year as we learn that the route out of the pandemic is heavy with dead ends. The sector must make like Greta Thunberg and embrace the hybrid.

Katherine Doggrell

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June 2021
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The Overview online
You can login to the membership area on the HOSPA website and read this journal online plus archived copies in the members' area are available at: **www.hospa.org**

Far from a maddening crowd

HOSPA CEO Jane Pendlebury looks forward to an events season bringing people and organisations together.

As everything begins to return to normal and we readjust to getting on the train, face-to-face meetings and social activities, the HOSPA team have formalised the plans for HOSPACE this year. The date (18th November) and the venue (Royal Lancaster London) remain the same. We have tweaked a few aspects to recognise the impact of COVID on hospitality, but we are delighted to be going ahead in a similar format to our 2019 event.

Another decision we have taken this year is to partner with Hospitality Technology Next Generation (HTNG), which many of you will be familiar with. HTNG is an US-based, global association which has recently joined up with the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA, oh all these acronyms).

Typically, HTNG would have a European event but given the pandemic and its knock-on effect on international travel, it made the decision not to run its own gathering this year, giving us an opportunity for a shared event. It will be streamed for the benefit of our international delegates, which will allow our sponsors and exhibitors to connect further and wider than in previous years.

The sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities are just being fine tuned and will be available by the time you are reading this! Please take a look at HOSPACE.ORG for further details.

One of the other big changes we have made is for our operator members. Anyone who is a member and is working in a senior operational role will be invited free of charge to the conference this year. The HOSPA team and the board are enormously conscious of current cashflow demands so are pleased to be able to offer this complimentary offer for HOSPACE 2021.

I know many of you are regulars on our series of webinars and masterclasses and we appreciate your dedication. The debate on the ethics of revenue management with Michael Heyward and Sarah Duncan certainly hit the spot at the end of May. We had many questions and comments as we delved into the rights and wrongs of dynamic pricing and overbooking. Have a listen – it is available on the HOSPA website.

On 10 June we will be hosting BDO's annual finance update, which is always well-attended and rich in knowledge and information. Accountants particularly value the event, but increasingly we are seeing other team members tune in too. The team at BDO have a knack of demystifying the intricacies of finance. With real life examples, even those not involved in finance benefit from BDO's update. Give it a go – I don't think you will be disappointed.

As I write this, the sun is shining, the rain of recent weeks is becoming a memory and the future is looking bright. I hope it is similar for all of you – we have been through a lot together so let's relish the good times together too. And let's keep our fingers firmly crossed for a smooth reopening on the 21st June!

Jane Pendlebury

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Meet the HOSPA Learners of the Year for 2020!

This month we catch up with two of our prize winners from 2020.

Alex and Jennifer have both been studying on the HOSPA courses in Financial Management and achieved the highest overall grades for Level 2 Financial Management and Level 3 Financial Management respectively which they completed in February 2020. The awards were presented at our Virtual Awards Ceremony in January 2021.

Alex Pop

Alex Pop, is currently working as an Assistant Financial Controller at Canopy by Hilton London City (Hilton Group). Alex continued his studies with HOSPA and completed Level Three Financial Management in August 2020.

Alex explains:

"I joined the hospitality industry in November 2015 as a night auditor at Holiday Inn Express London Southwark.

After 10 months of hard work and dedication at Holiday Inn Express London Southwark I was promoted to the Account Manager role. Since then, I knew that finance is what I want to do for the rest of my life.

The HOSPA Financial Management course is very well structured and I found it to be one of the most enjoyable courses I have ever taken. Everything is well explained, and you are pointed to all the necessary resources and readings about every single topic.

My employer recognised and congratulated me for achieving HOSPA FM certification. Now we are planning the next step of my career.

My aspiration for the future is to continuously work hard, gain experience and improve my knowledge in order to be a great financial controller in a self-accounting luxury hotel."

Jennifer Miller

Jennifer Miller, is the Payroll and Cashier Executive at Fairmont St Andrews, Scotland (currently on maternity leave). The 520 acre five star Fairmont St Andrews resort encapsulates luxury, elegance and truly breath taking surroundings in the 'Home of Golf'. A truly unique and special venue that makes your visit one to remember, with its lavish and stunning surroundings, peaceful setting and stunning cliff top views of St Andrews and the North Sea.

The resort prides itself with an array of fabulous facilities including two championship golf courses, The Kittocks and The Torrance, excellent dining experiences for every palette, ranging from our Italian eatery La Cucina to St Andrews Bar & Grill serving the freshest of steak and seafood. All our 211 luxury guestrooms are spacious and well-proportioned with thoughtful Scottish touches. Our sumptuous Fairmont Spa offers a range of treatments.

When Jennifer graduated from her degree in 2013 (English & Mathematics Joint Honours, Dundee University) she was looking to become a chartered accountant. Upon leaving university Jennifer decided to get some experience in an accounting department first to decide if this was the career path she wanted to take.

Jennifer joined Fairmont St. Andrews shortly after graduation and fell in love with the hospitality industry. She had a lot of friends who were working in practice and her experience was so different to theirs. Working in hospitality is so varied even for those in the office, it is an ever-changing environment and really does feel like a big extended family.

Jennifer explains what led her to her current role and hopes for the future:

"When I first joined the team, I was hired in the role of Income Auditor, within six weeks I moved to the Account Payable role, these were invaluable in giving me a grounding in hospitality finance. I then

left the company to pursue a chartered accountancy opportunity with an investment bank. I quickly realised how much I missed the 'buzz' of hospitality and knew that hospitality was the industry for me! I returned to the hotel in a Human Resources role to gain experience in another aspect of the business, but it wasn't long before the accounts department needed some cover, this time in the Account Receivable position. This allowed me to get the full picture having worked in all the junior positions within the office.

In 2016 it was decided the payroll position would be moved back into the Finance department and I was asked if I would like to take on this role alongside responsibility for the cash handling. I have immensely enjoyed this role as this was my first introduction into management accounts and having a role which is responsible for a process from end to end; from input to management account and reconciliation.

The HOSPA financial management programme has helped me in my current role already. Everything I have learnt about finance has been work based and although this has been a great way to learn HOSPA has given me the opportunity to gain a foundation knowledge which I can refer back to, this has given me more confidence in my own ability and confidence to query and ask questions.

The part of HOSPA which is so beneficial is that it is specific to hospitality and you can apply the knowledge you learn instantly to your working environment. Through HOSPA and the information I have learnt I have progressed very quickly in my career both on a personal level but also in the responsibility and projects I have been given. I recently ran a £35k capex project from the proposal phase along to implementation.

In the future HOSPA has given me a great foundation to move forward in my career. Through my performance in HOSPA and the skills and knowledge I have learnt, my employer has offered me the opportunity to complete a chartered accountancy qualification upon completion of HOSPA. This is the first time this has been offered to anybody in my company and is due in huge part to my HOSPA experience.

In my career I hope this will enable me to become a Finance Manager within the hospitality sector and encourage others to achieve their potential."

To find out more and to join the next intake for the HOSPA programmes starting in September 2021, please visit:

https://www.hospa.org/professionaldevelopment or email education@hospa.org

For more information about HOSPA visit:

https://www.hospa.org

or email hospa@hospa.org

Mobile Key, is it now or never for the hotel Industry?

History has proven that in times of great crisis technology develops much more quickly to try and mitigate its impact. During the Great Depression, when for the better part of a decade all seemed lost and just when it seemed like things couldn't get worse, WWII forced nationwide rationing and sent an entire generation off to war.

While I'm sure the world could have done without 15 years of despair, we saw an evolution in medicine, science, and technology. Penicillin was invented and the world's first computers helped crack codes that saved countless lives. Foundations were laid for years of innovation and perspective gave people a reason to think forward.

The receptionist greets you with a smile; you listen to the usual details of times for breakfast, the gym opening times and head off to your room impressed with the efficient and welcoming reception staff. The glass lift wafts you effortlessly up to your floor and you wander down a contemporary corridor to your executive room. You push the key card into the lock and all you get is the red light, you try a couple more times and then resign yourself to the long walk back to reception, the illusion of luxury shattered!

Sound familiar? Is the "you must have put the key card next to your phone excuse?" from the reception staff wearing thin? What sort of door system can't cope with a mobile phone being next to the key card you ask yourself? The answer is a door locking system that is 20 years old. The classic magnetic card is dangerously insecure and needs to be replaced and the manufactures have stopped making the locks so you can't get spares. Mag Card can't go fast enough for the guests; hoteliers are operating on borrowed time.

The industry is about to be forced to deal with some challenges that have been ignored for the last decade, failing legacy mag card systems with no upgrade path, the end of support for Windows 7 and rising guest expectations means that operators who have managed with their old mag card system will find it almost impossible to operate their hotels within the next two years if they don't make the move to the next generation of RFID locks. Senior decision makers need to start planning for the capital expenditure and implementations they will have to carry out over the next few years.

While the industry has been devastated by Covid those hoteliers who have the foresight and the money have used the crisis this as an opportunity to invest in technology and overhaul their processes. With HMRC now offering super deduction tax breaks for investing in new equipment this could be the ideal time to make the jump to RFID.

Even before the Covid crisis locking systems for hotels were undergoing a rare paradigm shift from the ageing Magnetic Stripe to RFID contactless technology. This will dramatically increase the security and reliability of the locks. It also opens the much-anticipated

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possibility of guests using their phone to unlock their bedroom door and bypass the reception desk completely. Self-Service Check-In is something the airlines caught onto over a decade ago. This will mean enhanced integration with booking and Property Management Systems and a change to the guest journey unlike anything the industry has ever had to deal with before. Well apart from dealing with Covid!

By using Contactless Free Check-in, you can eliminate some of the guest's concerns regarding COVID-19, but more importantly it shows you are adapting to the new normal and are planning for the future. For those working at any level in hospitality, success is built upon fostering enduring relationships with guests to maintain sustained growth and repeat bookings. In strengthening such bonds, the role of technology is a vital factor in promoting guest loyalty.

Keystep Solutions were the first lock supplier to fit the Bluetooth Board as standard in RFID locks, meaning that hoteliers who had installed our Opendoor Solution are ready to upgrade to Mobile Key without having to upgrade the locks. If you are serious about guest satisfaction and streamlining your check process Keystep Solutions should be your first point of call.

With our new "beaconing Mobile Key App" guests don't even have to get their phone out of their pocket to open the door. As the guest approaches the door the lock is opened automatically. In the long term as the guest enters the room, they will find their room amenities such as lighting, window shades, room temperature, music and TV. will be set to meet their preferences. Often called "building intelligence," these capabilities deliver a much smarter guest experience.

Hotels will also run smarter operations with RFID. By using the technology to track guest movements and the times a guest tends to be out of their room housekeeping can be done in a way that fits around the guest's day. This knowledge will not only help managers make smarter decisions around staffing, guest needs and room re-supply, but over the long term the information can be aggregated to spot opportunities for greater productivity and more efficient operations.

About the author

Andrew Evans is the Chief Executive Office of Keystep Solutions a leading supplier of doors access systems for hospitality. He has written several white papers on fire safety and door locking systems in the hospitality environment. He can be contacted by email at andrew.evans@keystep.co.uk if you would like any more information.

Hoteliers' top priorities revealed ahead of re-opening

New research from Guestline identifies how the pandemic has impacted hoteliers' re-opening plans as it announces latest upgrade to its contact-free check-in/out and payments solution GuestStay

As hoteliers prepare to open their doors later this month, new research by the leading hospitality software company Guestline released this month, reveals the future of operations and guest management is firmly digital and contact-free. Implementing effective digital marketing strategies alongside contactless and online solutions, both for staff and guests, are set to play key roles in re-opening plans in the weeks and months ahead. More specifically, of those hoteliers surveyed across the Guestline customer base in the UK and Ireland, when asked what their priority is in terms of technology and operations for the year ahead, over a quarter (27%) stated it was digital marketing (including enhancing the website and social media presence), whilst a fifth (20%) stated it was overseeing and managing a contact-free guest experience (including a more digital approach to guest communications, upselling, utilising feedback and check-in/out).

The impact of the pandemic, and shift towards a greater adoption of contactless and cloud solutions over the past year, looks set to have a lasting impression. A fifth (20%) of those surveyed confirmed that contactless payments was the technology that saw their biggest investment throughout 2020, followed by contactless check-in / check-out (18%) and a cloud-based property management system (18%). Likewise for those hoteliers planning to invest in technology in 2021, over a third

(38%) stated it would be in contactless payments, whilst 18% are planning to invest further in online check-in / check-out software.

The survey also revealed guests have responded positively to the innovations and advances in technology across the industry. The technologies that saw the greatest adoption by guests were identified as free Wi-Fi and TV streaming services available in-room (40%), followed by contactless payments (20%) and online check-in / check-out (18%). Encouragingly, across the board, over half (56%) of hoteliers also revealed guests have responded positively to the wider implementation of technology, whilst over two-thirds (68%) stated staff have had a positive response. Looking longer term, when asked how guest relations will change post-Covid, nearly half (42%) said they expected there will be an equal balance between technology and human / face-to-face interaction whilst over a third (38%) expected a greater shift towards the use of contactless / low-touch technology.

The results come as Guestline announces an upgrade to its online check-in solution GuestStay to include check-out and payments (available from 17th May). Built to offer hoteliers and their guests a frictionless experience, GuestStay delivers an online check-in and check-out process with the added benefits of reduced queues, more efficient administration and more sophisticated compliance against a host of regulations including GDPR and PSD2.

Guests will not only be able to check-in online but also digitally register key data including car registration, passport number, estimated time of arrival and any particular preferences as well as secure proof of residency, all in advance of arrival. Likewise, ahead of

departure and working in conjunction with Guestline's online payment solution GuestPay, guests can also review their itemised balance against items such as room service, drinks and spa treatments, with the option to pay their bill ahead of departure for a quicker, more efficient check-out.

Andrew Metcalfe, Chief Technical Officer at Guestline comments: "The last 12 months have necessitated the need for smarter and safer guest experiences. One of the lasting legacies of the pandemic will no doubt be the development of new technologies and platforms to achieve this, which are set to pave the way for recovery as hoteliers finally prepare to re-open and welcome guests back.

"Certainly the contactless experience, whether that be check-in, check-out or payments has been one of the defining developments of the past year. It is encouraging to see that both hoteliers and their guests recognise the benefits that this technology offers and have been keen to adopt it. Likewise, delivering a positive guest experience is at the heart of any decision for a hotelier in terms of operations, service and functions. Contactless software has been, and will continue to be, critical to achieving that as we now look forward. Ensuring we are delivering both a positive guest and hotelier experience was critical in the thinking and development of GuestStay. Guests can benefit from more time devoted to enjoying their stay rather than its administration, whilst hoteliers can enjoy the benefit of more time to devote to guests, the guest experience and building revenues, all important factors for what we sincerely hope are brighter days ahead."

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Outside of technology, the other main areas that hoteliers confirmed in the survey they would be focusing their budget on in 2021, are refurbishments and upgrades of leisure facilities, rooms and their F&B areas (36%) and property maintenance (26%).

In addition, when taking a retrospective view and hoteliers were asked what data they didn't have available which would have proved beneficial in light of the pandemic, cancellations data (18%), competitor data (13%) and business performance data (13%) were listed as the top three areas.

Going hybrid

The key to sustainable events will be a move towards hybrids as the industry endures an uncertain year, Katherine Doggrell reports.

A study from Umbrella Insight found that June, July and September were the most popular months when it came to event planning in the hospitality sector, with 77% planning to hold between one and four events within the next 12 months.

Central London was the most popular destination, which was good news for the hard-hit capital, with 66% of businesses choosing the city for their next event.

Ensuring customer and employee safety was high focus and when it comes to events many organisers surveyed said they would ensure hand sanitation points and enhanced cleaning regimes, increased ventilation and temperature screening as top priority safety measures.

Companies said their first events would most likely be held for up to 50 guests (29%). The remainder said they were considering 50 to 100 guests (16%), 100 to 150 guests (16%), 150 to 200 guests (4%) and 200-plus guests (5%).

The survey came as the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Events welcomed the publication of the government's Covid-19 roadmap, announced by the prime minister on 22 February, which set out the gradual lifting of restrictions and could see the events industry return to some manner of normality by 21 June.

However, the APPG raised what it described as important areas that required further clarification. The APPG has written to both the secretary of state for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Oliver Dowden and the chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak, requesting further detail on several key areas, including, it said:

Pandemic insurance: "As we have previously advocated, the introduction of a government-backed insurance scheme, as has been initiated by several other countries, would provide increased confidence and security to allow live events to return safely and viably. We therefore urge the government to implement this as quickly as possible."

G7 Summit: "Given the three-day G7 Summit is due to take place in Cornwall from 11 June 2021, how does the government plan to manage this, given the planned restrictions on large business events are not due to be fully lifted until 21 June 2021?"

Financial support: "While we again welcome the prime minister's statement and plan for recovery, it is vital that the chancellor gives full consideration in his forthcoming budget for further tailored support to the events sector, until such time as it is permitted to fully open and return to its pre pandemic operating levels."

A statement from the group read: "The events sector urgently needs additional clarity on reopening and critical targeted financial support from the government to ensure that events of all kinds can resume safely, that this vital £80bn world class industry is protected and that events can continue to support the economic recovery that our country so desperately needs, and we look forward to working in partnership with the government, and the wider events sector, in achieving our shared objectives."

The Meetings Industry Association said in January that business meetings and events organisations would only be viable for another 7.5 months, according to its research.

The study of almost 250 venues, hotels and suppliers, which was presented to the APPG, revealed how 90% believed they could not survive beyond the next two years without any additional government support, after enduring average revenue losses of over £2,560,000 to date.

It said that even if the government were to allow business meetings and events to proceed with limits to 50% of their capacity, 71% stated it would take beyond 12 months to return to profitability.

As a result of such losses, the impact of the pandemic on booking and enquiry levels and the government support packages currently available, nearly three-quarters (74%) have had to reduce their full-time employees by an average 38%. For 13% – this figure has risen to between 81-100% of their workforce being made redundant.

Most organisations (90%) had utilised the Job Retention Scheme and currently, on average, over half (53%) of the employees represented in the survey are on furlough. Of those, 81% listed operational roles (kitchen, catering, housekeeping) and 76% noted venue/event management staff were currently on furlough. Sales and marketing functions had also seen 66% placed on furlough alongside over two-thirds (39%) of leadership roles.

When it came to government support, almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents had found it relatively straightforward to obtain business rate relief from their local authority.

However, one third (33%) of respondents had seen their organisation rejected for government support that they felt it should have been provided – including business rate relief, CBILS, local grants, bounce back loans. Reasons for rejection included having a rateable value too high, being a not-for profit organisation and not being classed as a 'Hospitality' business for eligible grants.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) would like to see the responsibility for the sector switched from the government's department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to ensure its interests were correctly represented.

Trade associations, organisers and operators from across the events industry also signed an open letter confirming that they would welcome a blanket introduction of 'Covid-status certification' to get events running without mitigation

measures after 21 June in England.

The signatories, which include the Association of Event Organisers, Meetings Industry Association, Association of Event Venues and multiple organisers, said implementation would be subject to the provision of "clear and timely" guidance from the government and it being "simple to understand and be of little cost to businesses."

The condition of the industry accepting Covid-status certification, such as proof of vaccination or proof of negative test, would be on the grounds that is only temporary. Individuals would test themselves, rather than be tested on site.

The letter read: "The introduction of Covid-status certificates as a temporary measure could be a pragmatic solution that would enable events to resume at commercially viable attendance levels and will also give further confidence to customers that events are safe to attend.

"We recognise there are many issues to be addressed including how the technology would work, its viability for use at a range of different events and related data protection issues, for both the attendees and the organisers. It is essential that the industry has visibility and certainty as soon as possible on the form this government guidance will take so that it is able to plan effectively.

"This is particularly important given many major live music and business events are planned from late June onwards and the sector typically requires a lead time of anywhere between three to six months to successfully stage large scale, organised meetings, events and performances."

It is thought that the results of the Event Research Programme, which has seen a series of pilot events take place, will determine the requirement of Covid-status certificates.

The hotel sector has been moving to try and ensure that it can still accommodate the lucrative events market. Hyatt has partnered up with Paris-based AI startup Swapcard to offer Together by Hyatt, a hybrid offering which will see it host a 1,000-strong gathering in the US later this year, 500 attendees of which will be in the flesh.

Mark Hoplamazian, Hyatt's president & CEO, said that the strategy meant it was seeing increased interest from the pharma, information technology, and banking and finance segments and that it was "notable that larger in-person corporate and association events are occurring as early as June".

The agreement with Swapcard, he said, would allow Hyatt to "develop a robust and innovative integration of their platform with our proprietary meeting tools, one that will simplify event planning and execution, and unify in-person and virtual attendee experiences".

With events expected to come back gradually, rather than suddenly there will be a battle for what business there is. Innovating to accommodate the prevailing health situation and people's nervousness will be key to success.

We look forward to seeing you at the hybrid HOSPACE later this year.

Roadmap crashes

As The Overview was going to press, caution in Scotland was increasingly likely to spread to England and push back the full opening of hospitality.

The possible delay of the move by, it was rumoured, one month, was caused by growth of the India variant, renamed the Delta variant by the World Health Organisation.

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon postponed a planned 7 June relaxation of the rules across a swathe of the region including Edinburgh because of an increase in the number of cases of the variant.

Tracy Black, CBI Scotland Director, said: "Businesses across Glasgow will be relieved to see an end to level three restrictions finally in sight. For hard hit sectors like hospitality, leisure and tourism in areas now moving to level one, the further easing of restrictions will provide a much-needed boost as they look to make the most of the summer trading period.

"While support from the UK and Scottish governments has helped to keep many firms afloat, nothing can compete with normal trading and businesses will be looking to claw back revenues lost over the past 12 months.

"For those areas that remain under tighter restrictions, owners and staff will have their fingers crossed that health data allows for a further easing of restrictions in the very near future. Firms across the country are also looking for clarity as soon as possible on the Scottish Government's plans for social distancing requirements and Covid-status certification for the weeks and months ahead."

Businesses across Glasgow will be relieved to see an end to level three restrictions finally in sight. For hard hit sectors like hospitality, leisure and tourism in areas now moving to level one, the further easing of restrictions will provide a much-needed boost as they look to make the most of the summer trading period.

Commenting on the potential delay of further relaxation of restrictions, Kate Nicholls, CEO of UKHospitality, said:"Any delay in the roadmap would have a devastating effect on an already fragile hospitality sector. The latest market data shows a quarter of hospitality venues are still shut and those that are open cannot turn a profit because of the current restrictions – a delay would push many businesses closer to the cliff edge of failure, meaning more job losses.

"Should the timings slip and restrictions remain beyond 21st June, it's vital that further financial support from the Government is forthcoming, including business rates payments being postponed until at least October, and an extension of the rent moratorium while a long-term solution is found, as well as permanent lowering of VAT on hospitality goods and services. Businesses need a swift, publicly stated commitment that such support will be in place in the event of a delay, giving them much-needed reassurance after more than 15 months of closure and severely disrupted trading."

The Night Time Industries Association said that 90% of businesses were under threat from a delay. NTIA CEO Michael Kill said: "It's devastating for the industry. "They feel like they've been forgotten. They're at the very sharp end of a long-running roadmap which they've watched unfold, to almost feel like they've been duped out of their opportunity at the last minute."

What the sector - and the nation's health - needs now is clear and rapid decision making so that businesses can prepare and support can be put in place.

Premiumisation in the post-COVID on premise

As consumers' pent-up demand for drinking out is released, CGA's Phil Montgomery looks back on the premiumisation trend and considers where it might be headed next.

Britain's drinking-out market has seen a decade-long period of premiumisation, with multiple waves of the trend impacting virtually all categories and in-outlet sales mixes. Consumers have become accustomed to spending more for a higher quality of drink, and value has consistently outstripped volumes ales growth for many years.

Premiumisation has transformed categories like lager, where nearly half (47%) of all serves sold are now premium, up by 13 percentage points since 2010; and spirits, where premium and super-premium choices account for one in three of all purchases. Nearly half (48%) of consumers in Britain now say they typically spend more to get a higher quality of drink in the On Premise.

Operators have been quick to respond to the desire to trade up. Average stocking portfolios of spirits have increased in size by 80% since 2010—equating to an additional 19 brands on back bars, 14 of which are premium. In CGA's categorisation of the On Premise by quality, 'bronze' outlets now have the same volume and share of premium spirits that 'gold' venues did just five years ago. It shows how quickly and far the premiumisation trend has spread, and the extent of consumers' desire to treat themselves, especially if they are visiting venues less often than before.

In no category has this been better evidenced than in what is perhaps the On Premise's biggest success story in recent times: gin. The average outlet that stocks gin now lists over 13 brands, a figure that has more than trebled from just four a decade ago. Of these new brands, just 1.4 are standard quality, while eight are premium options. This has led to significant growth within the premium gin category, which now attracts nearly half (48.5%) of total gin sales.

Other categories have been embarking on their own premiumisation journeys. Rum and Irish Whiskey have seen particularly significant shifts, thanks to innovation and strategies tapping into consumers' demand for new flavour profiles and products with a heritage and interesting stories to tell.

However, despite continuing to increase in both volume and value terms, premium and super premium brands' growth did begin to slow towards the end of 2019, and the On Premise began to show signs of polarisation. While there was a surge in very high-end sales that year—including 21% growth in super-premium spirits—there was also a resurgence in mainstream options.

This polarisation was apparent when the market reopened after Britain's first national lockdown in July 2020. It was partly driven by a squeeze on spending, with more than a third (37%) of consumers reporting less disposable income than previously, while one in six (17%) had more. Drinks choices became increasingly divided between quality and value, and super-premium spirits saw their share drop by 0.6%, while standard brands regained some of the share they had been gradually losing over the past decade.

A similar polarisation is likely as the On Premise returns over Spring and Summer 2021, as some consumers seek treats after months of lockdown, and others take a cautious approach to spending. CGA's data from early trading in April has shown strong sales of premium beers, with two in five (41%) lager drinkers opting for premium brands.

However, the absence of visual cues in outside service has made it harder to encourage people to trade up. With in-outlet ordering limited and consumers using apps, QR codes and digital menus to browse and buy, the path to purchase has been fundamentally changed. Where once bartender recommendation and a highly visible back bar could prompt a trade up, the heavy lifting is now being done digitally.

Taking learnings from other sectors here could be one route to success here. In the QSR sector, self-serve machines have become engrained in customers' habits, and operators have encouraged a higher spend per head through 'go large' prompts and other mechanics.

With many consumers in celebratory mood as venues return for indoor service, we are likely to see a renewed willingness to spend more on higher quality drinks—but it will be important to avoid neglecting those for whom value will be a key driver. If we are to make the most of premiumisation, it is more important than ever to understand the drivers, dynamics and habits of consumer behaviour in the new-look trading environment.

About the author
Phil Montgomery is CGA's Director of Client Services UK & Ireland.

MP slams rogue rating surveyors

"A group of conmen" "exploiting businesses to sign unfair contracts". This is how Kevin Hollinrake MP, the Member for Thirsk and Malton described rogue rating surveyors in a Parliamentary debate focusing on the significant escalation in the number of cases of "cowboy" rating surveyors targeting struggling businesses looking to reduce bills during the pandemic.

Hollinrake named and shamed rogue agents who he claimed are "effectively conning" businesses, including those in the retail, hospitality and leisure industries into signing long term contracts, which are not in their interests, for reliefs they would have receive anyway and then pursuing them through the courts for payments.

The Westminster debate on the "Regulation of business rates reduction services" called for industry regulation to protect vulnerable businesses who are suffering financial distress, in part because of high business rates, from falling victim to such rogue rating surveyors. Mr Hollinrake has called for the Insolvency Service to step in, but so far this body has not agreed that it is their role to regulate. According to the rating team at Colliers, it should be the RICS, The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors that urgently needs to step in and regulate the ratings industry.

According to Colliers, and borne out by the debate today, an increasing number of businesses, including Colliers clients, are being approached by rogue rating surveyors promising to obtain a marked reduction in their business rates bills.

Some retail and hospitality businesses, unaware they are entitled to reliefs are being targeted by the rogue agents to secure Business Reliefs or "Covid" reliefs despite the fact the businesses are in sectors that would have received them for free – by purely writing to the local authorities. The business involved is then charged an annual fee of up to 52% of the "saving" for the length of the contract. In some cases, businesses have been tied in for 10 or 12 years.

"Businesses are getting desperate," says John Webber, Head of Business Rates at Colliers. "Some who are entitled to reliefs were not aware of them and have therefore been targeted by rogue rating surveyors. Others, often ancillary businesses to the sector who are not receiving any support, but with no announcement by the Government of any forthcoming, have been clutching at straws. Rogue agents are able to take advantage of this distress. The current business rates system with its high multiplier and complex system of reliefs has created an unsustainable system, as has the widely criticised and calamitous system of Check Challenge Appeal introduced by the Government in 2017. Both have played into the hands of cowboys extracting money up front."

"We believe the situation will only get worse after the end of June, when the 100% rates holiday comes to an end for businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure industries and Government support lessens. Businesses must beware of false promises."

Webber continued, "We have long been campaigning for the rating industry to be properly regulated and we are supportive of Kevin Hollinrake MP raising this issue in Parliament. We believe there should be a register of appeals professionals, which should be regulated by the RICS, in the same way the FCA regulates financial advisors."

He continued, "The lack of such a register gives a cowboy element the opportunity to gain credibility and persuade vulnerable businesses that it can save them serious funds. In the current crisis this situation is getting more out of hand. We call the RICS to take robust measures to effectively show these cowboys for what they are and to take some leadership on a problem which has existed for many years."

Some retail and hospitality businesses, unaware they are entitled to reliefs are being targeted by the rogue agents to secure Business Reliefs or "Covid" reliefs despite the fact the businesses are in sectors that would have received them for free – by purely writing to the local authorities. The business involved is then charged an annual fee of up to 52% of the "saving" for the length of the contract. In some cases, businesses have been tied in for 10 or 12 years.

Live Long, and Prosper

It's more than a Vulcan idiom from the well-known Star Trek franchise, it's an expression of support for both your business and the people within it.

In Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan, Mister Spock famously laid down his life to save the crew of the Starship Enterprise when they found themselves in a tight and terminal spot. As you get your post-pandemic business back on track, you may not be called to do something quite so final or dramatic as this, but there are things you can sacrifice to safeguard the wellbeing of your staff.

This is important. In a recent Barclays report called, "Bouncing Back, how hospitality and leisure is gearing up to seize post-pandemic opportunities," staff wellness was of notable concern.

In the report, Edward Walsh, Group Financial Director at Coaching Inns said mental health and the impact of the return to work will be something his business will continue to monitor coming out of the current lockdown. Especially as it caught them by surprise after the last one.

"This time around," he said, "we're really going to monitor fatigue among the teams, because some of our employees haven't worked since October. What we found last summer was that people got tired quickly, because it's a high energy job, and they were suddenly working 50-hour weeks having not done it for a while. We're thinking about how we can implement some safeguards around that to make sure they are not burning themselves out."

Well, one way to burn someone out is by making them work a 50-hour week. Or more. And science backs this up. In fact, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 765,000 people died in 2016 due to stroke and heart disease related to long working hours.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the choice, people would rather work far less. Research from Cambridge University found that people only need to work eight hours a week to feel healthy and happy. The same study also found that working a standard 37-to-40-hour week brought no additional mental health benefits.

Whilst no one is going to advocate an eight-hour working week, our current working patterns are throwbacks to the Industrial Revolution. In fact, back then, 12-to-16-hour shifts were common to maintain a factory's 24/7 output status. Things didn't reduce to a bog standard eight hours (partly based on Welsh activist Robert Owen and his 1817 slogan 'eight hours labour, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest') until about a century later.

Even on shifts, research shows that 12-hour sessions are bad, whilst eight-hour sessions are better. But still not that great. The Harvard Business review has already come out in favour of the six-hour working day. Sweden has been doing it since 2016. And for why? Because the research shows that it's good for not only improving staff wellness and morale, but also productivity.

In a standard eight-hour day, we are only productive for about for about three hours, according to the research. The rest of the time we tend to drift off or get stuck in interminable meetings. However, go down to six hours and we become more focussed. And, as we become more focussed, we become happier more productive.

Again, science says so. In a "no shit Sherlock" moment, researchers from Sanford University demonstrated that employees who are overworked are less productive than those who are not.

Another way to increase employee wellbeing and job satisfaction, whist decreasing incidents of absence (or overworking) due to stress, is to factor in a four-day working week. In those countries and businesses that have already trialled them (including New Zealand and Japan) the results have been tremendously life-affirming for all-concerned.

So, why are people so keen to engage with a 50-hour week? For the answer to that, let us turn to the elephant in the room. Namely, wages.

Do you pay your staff enough? Come on now, do you? Before you answer that question, you might want to look at your pre-COVID post-operating profits. There's minimum wage, for sure, even a living wage but, what about a flourishing wage?

In the Barclays report mentioned above, Walsh also said that "for obvious reasons, some staff are going to want to earn as much as possible – and our job is to protect their wellbeing."

Low wages are one of the biggest causes of stress for workers across all ages, cultures, and genders. Many studies have confirmed the link between money and wellbeing, which is why a universal basic income is cropping up more and more in conversation as a plan for the near future.

So shorter shifts, shorter working days, shorter working weeks and more money. Any and all of the above will improve wellbeing. And, as your staff return to work, you might want to bear some of this in mind. You are their captain, after all, and they are you crew. Part of your role is to look after them as much as you can, to put them first wherever possible.

You may think you are doing enough already but a recent report from on-demand mental healthcare provider Ginger found that whilst 96 percent of CEOs thought they were doing enough to support employee wellbeing, only 69 percent of employees agreed that they were.

And as a ship is only as good as its crew, you might want to rethink your wellbeing strategy before your ship flounders. Or loses a nacelle in the Mutara Nebula. After all, as Mister Spock famously said, "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. Or the one."

About the author

Daniel Fryer is a mental health and wellbeing expert and the founder of workplace wellness consultancy, How To Be. He is the author of The Four Thoughts That F*ck You Up...And How To Fix Them, published by Penguin Random House.

Are Brits staying at home or away?

The long-awaited list of countries that made the green list is finally available, but as of May, only 12 destinations made the cut. Even with the potential introduction of the EU passport, the question remains – where are those in the UK & Ireland looking to travel this summer? We use Amadeus Demand360® forward-looking, on-the-books hotel and flight data to find out.

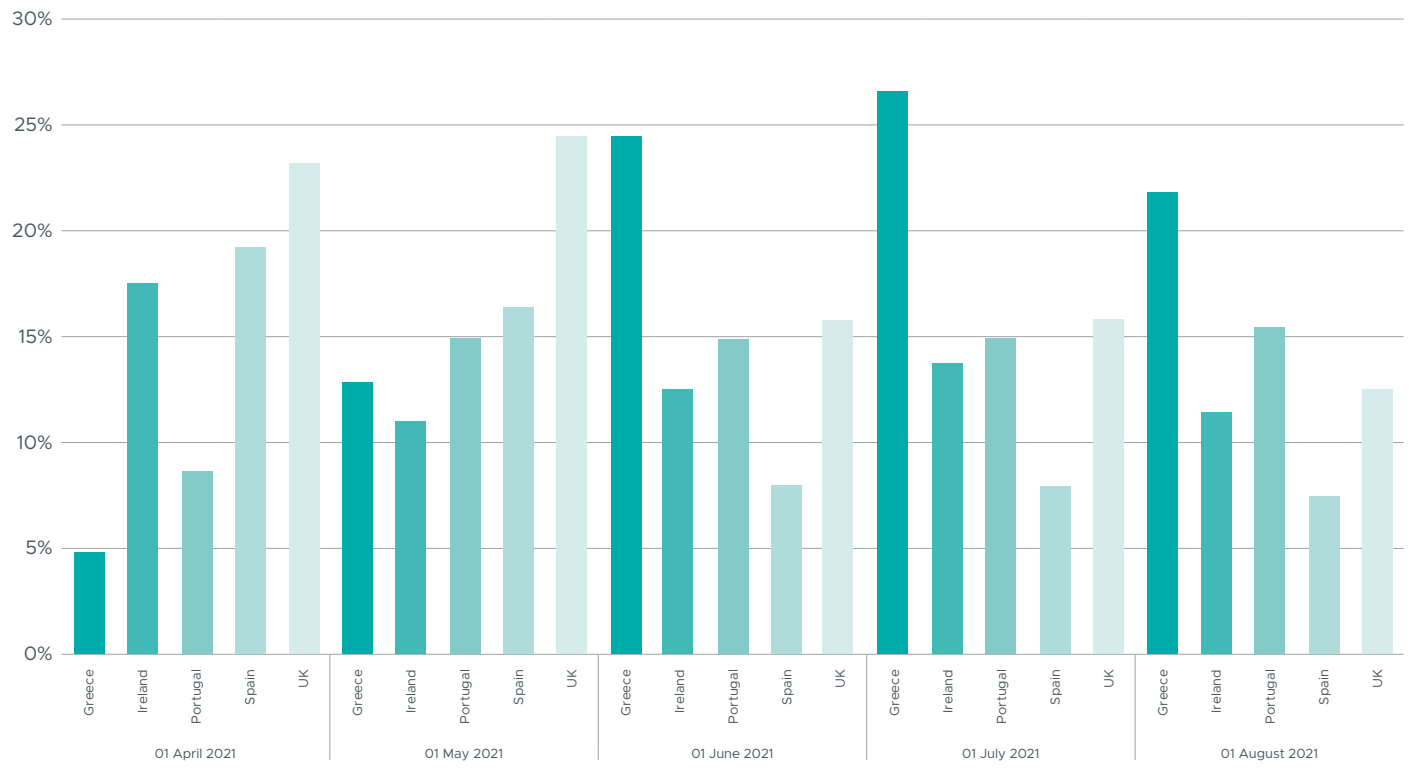
When comparing the UK and Ireland to other key European markets - including Portugal, the only typical summer hotspot on the UK's green list currently – UK occupancy is higher for the months of April, May and June. Greece and Portugal both increase then as we look further into the Summer months. Remember that this data is not predictive but represents real-time reservations.

Higher occupancy in the UK between April and July

However, one of the major trends that emerged out of the pandemic is a reduction in lead times. In the U.K., this is still an important indicator for demand. Currently, 56% of bookings are made within the one-week window, of which 27% are made on the day of arrival. Whilst this number is down from 2020, it's still a notable change when comparing with 2019. As for Ireland, travellers are taking a more cautious approach, with 67% of bookings made 31+ days in advance.

Another important factor to consider

Total Current Occupancy (April - August 2021)



Amadeus' Demand360® data as of 9 May, 2021

is the cancellation ratio - the rate at which hotel bookings are cancelled. For the UK, this number is sitting around 20% for the months of April and May. This is lower than the 40% average seen even before the pandemic (Phocuswire). This is good news for hoteliers as it suggests that, whilst travellers might be waiting longer to book, when they are booking, they are doing so with more certainty.

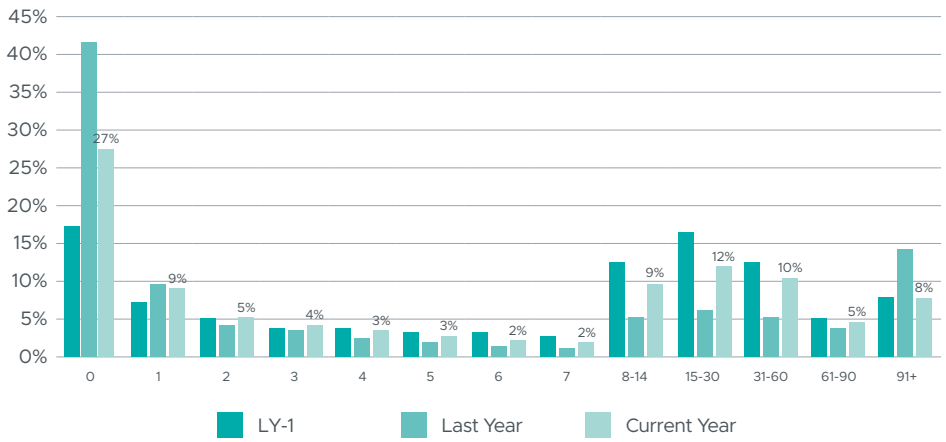
Stronger signs of recovery in leisure destinations as anticipated by hoteliers

The increase in occupancy in line with the reopening of hotels is a positive sign for hoteliers across the U.K. But which destinations are driving demand? In our latest Rebuilding Hospitality report, hoteliers believe that leisure will be the primary driver of recovery. Current bookings align with this expectation. For example, throughout May, seaside destinations are leading the way with highs of 40-50% occupancy in Blackpool and Bournemouth. As we look further out, Plymouth is showing strong signs of demand with occupancy reaching 60% for July and August. Similarly, in Ireland, occupancy in Galway is above 50% throughout these months. In comparison, for London, occupancy is lower the further out we look. However, that's not to say the demand isn't there. When drilling down on lead time, 21% of bookings in London are currently made either the day before or day of arrival. If you have properties in this area, think about how to encourage stays by combining them with value-add activities such as restaurant discounts.

Finally, our newest indicator now provides insight into length of stay. Where the number appears as higher than 100% in the graph, this shows an increase compared with the previous time period. For the UK, this means that, compared with 2019, stays are lengthening overall. With alternative accommodations coming back strong, it's important to think about how you can capture this market. Discounts on longer stays, remote office concepts or complimentary breakfast are examples of what could help your property stand out from the competition.

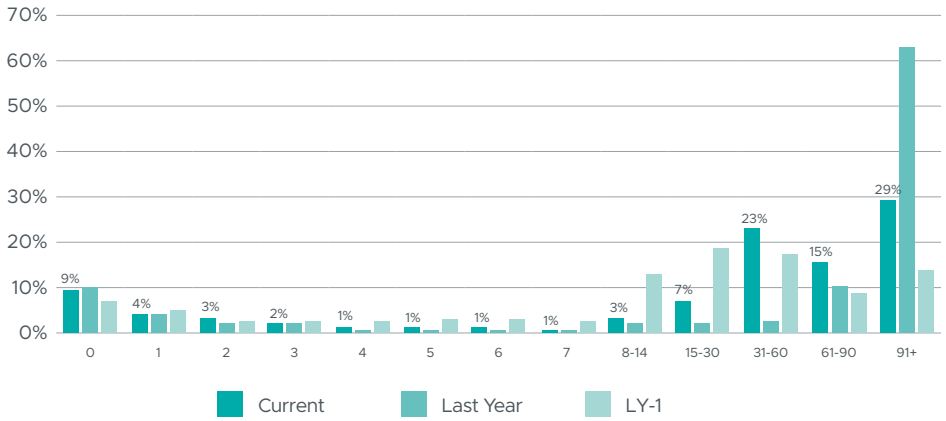
Understanding and applying data will be a key asset for hotels that want to effectively capture market share and stand out from the competition. For this reason, we have launched Amadeus Demand Generation. Combining insight from five solutions, hoteliers have the power to make informed decisions that can increase bookings in your direct channel.

Transient Booking Lead Times (UK)



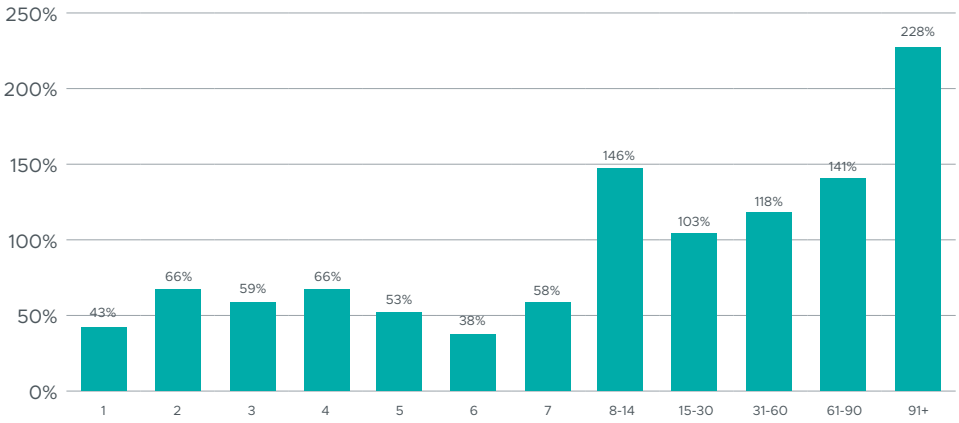
Amadeus' Demand360® data as of 9 May, 2021

Transient Booking Lead Times (Ireland)



Amadeus' Demand360® data as of 16 May, 2021

UK - Length of Stay (2021 vs 2019)



Amadeus' Demand360® data as of 16 May, 2021

Travel restrictions to hit jobs

WTTC warns government against a repeat of last year's summer of limited travel and changing restrictions 218,000 more jobs at risk - £22.3 billion could be lost in UK Travel & Tourism contributions to GDP this year.

Up to half a million jobs could be lost in the UK Travel & Tourism sector if the government fails to significantly reopen international travel as soon as possible, the World Travel & Tourism Council warned.

The warning came as EU Ambassadors agreed to remove restrictions in June, for those who have been fully vaccinated, when entering the EU.

The new figure from WTTC's latest economic modelling reveals the UK could suffer a near repeat of last year when travel restrictions prevented any significant international travel.

WTTC fears if that were to happen again, with limited travel between now and the beginning of September - even if domestic travel boosts revenues - the impact on the economy and the livelihoods of millions of those who work in the sector could be devastating.

The impact of prolonged travel restrictions this year could wipe out a damaging £22.3bn in the sector's contribution to UK economic growth.

However, if travel restrictions remain beyond the summer months, the impact on both jobs and GDP could be far worse.

The stark warning from WTTC comes as Brits begin limited travel abroad to the government's 12 green list destinations, some of which have closed borders to travellers, following an almost five-month complete ban on non-essential international travel.

According to WTTC's recent Economic Impact Report, 307,000 jobs were lost in the sector last year, and a further 218,000 are now at serious risk, if international travel continues to be off limits for most of the summer.

Virginia Messina, WTTC Senior Vice President, said: "We fear the embattled UK Travel & Tourism sector simply cannot cope with another 'lost summer' if there is no significant international travel allowed, without damaging restrictions and unaffordable test requirements.

"WTTC's latest research lays the consequences in the starkest way with a further 218,000 jobs at risk of being lost if the government continues to throttle the resumption of meaningful international travel.

"While we understand protecting public health is the number one priority, if the government continues its overly cautious approach, hundreds of thousands more jobs could be lost and travel businesses up and down the country face going bust.

"The UK should be making the most of its successful vaccination rollout to begin to restore international mobility safely.

"Staycations and domestic travel cannot fill the enormous financial hole left by the collapse of international travel and the trickle-down benefits it has across the supply chain."

The stark warning from WTTC comes as Brits begin limited travel abroad to the government's 12 green list destinations, some of which have closed borders to travellers, following an almost five-month complete ban on non-essential international travel.

WTTC warns against the UK losing its hard-won competitive advantage while the rest of Europe continues to re-open, leaving the UK isolated and the travel industry at risk of being decimated.

Earlier this month WTTC reported that the UK, which in 2019 ranked as the world's fifth biggest Travel & Tourism market, fell three places to number eight, sustaining a punishing GDP fall of 62.3%.

With the UK economy already facing a massive shortfall in contributions to the treasury, the loss of significant international travel will cause further huge financial concern for the government.

This year, Travel & Tourism contributions to the UK's GDP could reach as high as £153.1bn if international travel is resumed in time for the busy summer season.

However, should restrictions and changing rules continue, the UK could face a loss of at least £22 billion, significantly delaying the country's economic recovery.

WTTC warns the continuing lack of international travel could threaten London's position as one of the world's premier hubs for business and leisure travel, as Europe steals a march and re-opens its doors ahead of the UK.

The global body has continued to argue that unnecessary and harmful quarantines should be removed, and that travel can safely resume through rapid and cost-effective testing, coupled with enhanced health and hygiene measures, mask wearing throughout the traveller journey alongside the successful vaccination rollout.

Takeaway and delivery sales up on pre-COVID-19 levels

New Hospitality at Home Tracker from CGA suggests the market is set for more growth despite the easing of restrictions in eating and drinking out.

Leading restaurant and pub groups recorded a fourfold increase in delivery and takeaway sales in April from pre-COVID-19 levels, CGA's latest Hospitality at Home Tracker reveals.

Combined delivery and takeaway sales were 345% higher than in April 2019, when the sector was fully open for eating out. Sales grew by 11% from March 2021, despite the reopening of restaurants, pubs and bars for outside service in England from mid-April. Month-on-month growth in takeaway sales was notably higher than in deliveries.

The figures from the Tracker suggest that deliveries, takeaways and at-home meal kits, which have all soared in popularity during the lockdowns of the last 14 months, are likely to remain a major part of consumers' habits well beyond the full reopening of hospitality.

"Surging delivery and takeaway sales have been a major side-effect of COVID-19 lockdowns and a lifeline for many operators in the first few months of 2021," says Karl Chessell, CGA's business unit director – hospitality operators and food, EMEA. "As restaurants, pubs and bars reopen, the way consumers balance ordering in and eating out will be a major dynamic in sales and marketing strategies and a significant factor in profit margins."

CGA's Hospitality at Home Tracker is the leading source of data and insight for the delivery and takeaway market. It provides monthly reports on the value and volume of sales, with year-on-year comparisons and splits between food and drink revenue. It offers a benchmark by which brands can measure their performance, and participants receive detailed data in return for their contributions.

CGA's partners on the Tracker are: Azzurri Group, BrewDog, Burger King UK, Byron, Drake & Morgan, Gaucho Grill, Giggling Squid, Nando's, Peach Pub Company, PizzaExpress, Pizza Hut UK, Prezzo, Rosa's Thai, TGI Fridays UK, The Restaurant Group, Tortilla, Wagamama and YO! Sushi.

As restaurants, pubs and bars reopen, the way consumers balance ordering in and eating out will be a major dynamic in sales and marketing strategies and a significant factor in profit margins.

Total sales down at managed restaurants and pubs

Managed pub and restaurant groups recorded a 26% drop in like-for-like sales in April compared to the same month in 2019, the latest edition of the Coffer CGA Business Tracker shows.

The figure covers three full weeks of outside-only service in England as well as briefer trading in Scotland and Wales, and represents a solid return to trading for the sector. Operators enjoyed the benefit of generally good weather and strong consumer confidence in the first fortnight of trading, though low temperatures and rain dampened sales towards the end of the month.

The Tracker shows pubs have outperformed restaurants since reopening, thanks in part to greater availability of outside space. Pubs' April sales were 21% down on April 2019, compared to a 30% drop for restaurants. Bars were the weakest segment, with like-for-like sales down 39%.

On a total sales basis, with the majority of sites still closed, groups saw a 60% drop in April 2021 from April 2019. Restaurants (down 51%) performed better than pubs (down 67%) on this measure, due to strong delivery and takeaway sales.

The latest edition of the Coffer CGA Business Tracker also highlights the scale of damage to groups' sales since the start of the pandemic. Total sales over the last 12 months have been 56% lower than in the previous year

"Managed groups made the best they could of trading opportunities in April, amid some tough restrictions and the vagaries of the British spring weather," said Karl Chessell, business unit director - hospitality operators and food, EMEA at CGA, the business insight consultancy that produces the Tracker in partnership with The Coffer Group and RSM.

"They have been very resourceful in their use of limited space, and for pubs in particular it has been a good springboard for a fuller reopening from 17 May. But the drop in sales of more than half versus the 2019 pre-pandemic benchmark is a reminder of just how hard the industry has been hit by lockdowns and restrictions. While consumers are eager to get back to hospitality, it is clearly going to be a long and uneven road to recovery, and the sector will need sustained support from government if it is to help reignite the UK economy over the rest of 2021."

Mark Sheehan, managing director, Coffer Corporate Leisure, said: "These like-for-likes are testimony to the creativity of hospitality. The imagination to create outside areas has been inspiring and plays to the strengths of the sector. The support of consumers across the country shows appreciation of the sector generally and operators individually. Undoubtedly there has been pent up demand and it will take some time for businesses to understand where trade levels really are."

Paul Newman, head of leisure and hospitality, RSM, said: "Operators will be greatly encouraged by the response they have had to the reopening of their outdoor spaces and will now be turning their attention to welcoming back customers indoors from Monday. Many businesses remain in a financially precarious position and are unlikely to be back in profit before 21 June when all Covid-19 related restrictions are finally lifted. Despite these financial pressures, I've been amazed by the resourcefulness to seek out new revenue opportunities during lockdown. A whole business eco-system continues to be reliant on our support - from suppliers to operators and landlords - and I urge consumers to rediscover real hospitality in person at their local pubs and restaurants over the coming weeks."

Operators will be greatly encouraged by the response they have had to the reopening of their outdoor spaces and will now be turning their attention to welcoming back customers indoors from Monday. Many businesses remain in a financially precarious position and are unlikely to be back in profit before 21 June when all Covid-19 related restrictions are finally lifted. Despite these financial pressures, I've been amazed by the resourcefulness to seek out new revenue opportunities during lockdown

Confidence on the rise

New survey from CGA and Fourth reveals strong trading during outdoor-only service, but concerns about staff shortages.

Four in five leaders in the managed restaurant, pub and bar sector feel optimistic about the next 12 months—the highest number for more than six years.

The latest Business Confidence Survey from CGA and Fourth shows 79% are optimistic about prospects for the eating and drinking out market in general. Confidence levels have not reached that level since February 2015, and have risen very sharply from the quarterly survey's results in October (18%) and February (50%). Slightly more leaders (83%) say they feel optimistic about prospects for their own business over the next 12 months.

The dramatic upswing in confidence coincides with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and reopening of hospitality. The Business Confidence Survey indicates a solid start to trading since outside service was permitted from mid-April, with 58% of leaders rating their performance since then as ahead of their expectations, and just 8% below.

Despite the strong return only two in five (41%) businesses are now either trading at a profit or expect to do so by the end of June, the survey shows. However, it also highlights some big issues facing hospitality over the remainder of 2021, especially around staff recruitment and retention. Concerns over the Indian variant of COVID-19 and the risk of extended restrictions will also temper optimism in the weeks ahead.

Karl Chessell, CGA's director - hospitality operators and food, EMEA, said: "After the immense challenges of 2020 and early 2021, it is very encouraging to see confidence levels riding so high across the managed sector. The figures are testament to the resilience of operators and the enduring appeal of restaurants, pubs and bars to consumers, and we can be optimistic that sales will follow confidence in bouncing back strongly this summer."

He added: "There's no escaping the fact that COVID-19 has taken a massive toll on hospitality, with thousands of businesses closing for good and many more still in a precarious position. The road to recovery could be long and uneven, and the sector is going to need sustained support on challenges like rent, rates and recruitment."

Sebastien Sepierre, managing director – EMEA, Fourth, said: "It's incredibly encouraging to see optimism levels increase amongst business leaders. This positivity is tempered somewhat by the challenging labour market, with many operators struggling to recruit in the current climate as the demand for workers accelerates with the easing of restrictions. As the industry slowly returns to full capacity, the recruitment challenge will be further exacerbated, so it's never been more important for businesses to look at driving efficiencies and productivity in their management of labour."

After the immense challenges of 2020 and early 2021, it is very encouraging to see confidence levels riding so high across the managed sector. The figures are testament to the resilience of operators and the enduring appeal of restaurants, pubs and bars to consumers, and we can be optimistic that sales will follow confidence in bouncing back strongly this summer.

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