

HVS Monday Musings: Food Delivery – Wrapping it Up with Sustainable Packaging

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The **Indian online food delivery market** is growing at a CAGR of 30% and is expected to reach INR 1,845.76 Bn by 2027. Modern food delivery apps today make it incredibly simple for customers to order their favorite foods from a variety of cloud kitchens, standalone restaurants, and even their favorite hotel restaurants and have them delivered quickly to their doorsteps. This trend has grown stronger since the pandemic, especially in tier 1 and tier 2 cities, where food delivery has become even more convenient and efficient. However, the growth of food delivery has also led to an increase in the consumption of packaging material. As companies and people around the world become more environmentally conscious, restaurants have been experimenting with more sustainable methods of food packaging, which is a trend to watch for in the near future.

Most restaurants in India now use bio-degradable packaging, cutlery, and straws. However, there are some teething troubles when it comes to their adoption as they do not keep the food as fresh as plastic packaging, and paper straws, which are gaining popularity, do not last long enough and become soggy very quickly in liquid, defeating the purpose of having straws.



Source: [Freepik](#)

Some Indian companies are already working on resolving these issues and making sustainable packaging more "sustainable". **Yash Pakka**, for example, has come up with an initiative called Chuk, which makes a 100% compostable food packaging container. They are already working for brands like **Haldiram's**, **Bikanervala**, **Chai Point**, etc. These containers come with snug-fit lids and are also spill-proof, which is a strong stance against plastic containers. When compared to plastics, they are also microwavable and freezable. The company is also making sure that they are completely toxin-free. Another brand gaining traction with sustainable packaging is **Pot Pot Yum Yum**, which serves North Indian and Coastal Cuisine, along with street food like chaat in pots and potlis. Their delivery range consists of cardboard boxes, terracotta and glass containers, and paper bags. Similarly, Madam Curry is a new delivery house that is also using glass jars in extension to earthenware and birchwood cutlery - all of which are reusable. While glass containers are a suitable replacement for plastic, regular customers may face the problem of an overflow of glass containers, which may act as a deterrent.

Summary

The majority of Indian restaurants now use bio-degradable packaging, cutlery, and straws; however, we need creative thinking to make sustainable packaging more "sustainable". Read on to know more.

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Slightly tweaking and improving the current practices may make them truly sustainable. The glass containers being used for delivery, for example, could function like the milk bottle delivery systems. The customer can return the containers on the next delivery, and they can be reused by the company, while the customer can avail discounts, complimentary dishes, or gain loyalty points, etc. thus, also encouraging loyalty of the customer to the brand.

Clearly, creative thinking is required if we are serious about sustainable packaging. Fortunately for us, "sustainable" cutlery has long been in use in India, with our tradition of using banana, sal, and other leaves as plates and our street vendors still using these methods to serve food to customers. Wooden spoons and terracotta containers are two other things we are used to seeing all around us. For the longest time, biryani has been served and is still delivered in mud pots. If we dig deep enough, we will find more such instances of environmentally friendly food packaging in the country. Utilizing cutlery, packaging, and utensils made of terracotta, bamboo, leaves, and other biodegradable materials can also aid in the survival of small cottage industries in the country. Moreover, hotels that are now looking at food delivery with a renewed focus need to set standards for eco-friendly packaging. Perhaps, in order to advance along the road to sustainability, we should look back in time and rediscover the ancient sustainable practices rather than just looking forward.

About Mandeep S Lamba



Mandeep S. Lamba, President – South Asia, oversees the HVS global hospitality practice for South Asia. He has spent over 30 years in the hospitality industry of which the last 19 have been in CEO positions. Having worked with leading International and domestic Hotel Companies such as IHG, Radisson & ITC Hotels, he also set up joint venture companies with Dawnay Day Group UK and Onyx Hospitality, Thailand to own and operate hotels in India giving him a broader exposure to the hospitality business.

An established industry leader, Mandeep has won several awards and recognitions in India and abroad for his accomplishments and contribution to the hospitality industry. He is a Certified Hospitality Administrator from the American Hotels Association (CHA), a member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, UK (MRICS) and a member of the Tourism Council of CII (Northern India). His views are often solicited for television and print media as a spokesperson for the hospitality & tourism sector.

Prior to joining HVS in 2018, Mandeep was the Managing Director, Hotels & Hospitality Group for JLL.

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Dipti Mohan, Vice President - Research & Corporate Communication with HVS South Asia, is a seasoned knowledge professional with extensive experience in research-based content creation. She has authored several 'point of view' documents such as thought leadership reports, expert opinion articles, white papers, and research reports across industries including hospitality, real estate, infrastructure, cement, and construction. Contact Dipti at [\[email protected\]](mailto:).

About Dhwani Gupta



Dhwani Gupta, Associate - Research with HVS South Asia, studied literature for her undergraduate and believes that you can do anything with the right amount of research. After graduating, she pursued a course in Management and Liberal Arts which gave her a wider perspective of the world. As a result, the more difficult a topic is, the more fun she has writing it. Contact Dhwani at [\[email protected\]](mailto:)