

A Cut Above

Suraj Thodimarath (**ST**), MD, APAC Region, Wittur Group, shares his views with your author (**SSP**) on potential game changers in the VT industry for 2024 and India's role in the bigger picture.

by Sheetal S. Patil

SSP: What trends do you envisage shaping the vertical-transportation (VT) industry's development in India during 2024 and beyond? How do you see this influencing demand for offerings from the Wittur brand going forward?

ST: The elevator industry in India has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by rapid urbanization, infrastructure development and increased demand for VT solutions. As we look ahead, several trends will shape the industry in India. These are:

- ◆ **Regulatory Compliance and Standards:** The elevator market in India has been plagued by rampant non-adherence to standards and/or lack of enforcement of the same. With an increase in elevator fatalities across the nation, adherence to regulatory standards and certifications is becoming more critical. I see an increased focus by real estate developers on compliance with safety codes, energy-efficiency regulations and building standards. Wittur has always been compliant with safety standards internationally, as well as in India. In fact, our products are already in compliance with the soon-to-be-introduced IS 17900 codes.
- ◆ **Energy Efficiency and Sustainability:** There is a growing emphasis on energy-efficient elevator systems and sustainable design practices in India, as well as globally. Manufacturers are developing solutions that minimize energy consumption, incorporate eco-friendly materials and adhere to green-building standards. Since Wittur's inception, protecting people and the environment has always been one of its core values. Wittur is one of the very few elevator component manufacturers in the world that releases a sustainability report annually and has accountability targets to measure our progress toward becoming more environmentally responsible. Wittur winning the EcoVadis Silver Medal for 2023 is an important recognition that demonstrates our commitment to doing business in a sustainable way.
- ◆ **Focus on Safety and Security:** Safety remains a top priority, and the VT industry is witnessing slow and gradual innovation in safety features overall in India. From advanced door systems to state-of-the-art sensors and monitoring technologies, the industry is committed to ensuring the well-being of passengers. In this regard, elevator component manufacturers need to step up to ensure that all elevator components adhere to the highest safety standards.
- ◆ **Innovations in Material and Design:** Advancements in materials and design are influencing the construction and aesthetics of elevators. Durable and sturdy materials are

“Up to 97% of the materials in our new products are sourced locally, thereby aligning to the ‘Make in India’ growth story.”

being employed for both safety components and cabin design, contributing to improved performance and safety. Wittur is developing new cabin designs that focus on maximizing space and improving aesthetics to provide a more comfortable and visually appealing experience for passengers.

SSP: What is the significance of the India operations and market for Wittur in the present scenario? How has Wittur Elevator Components India Pvt. Ltd. developed further in recent years?

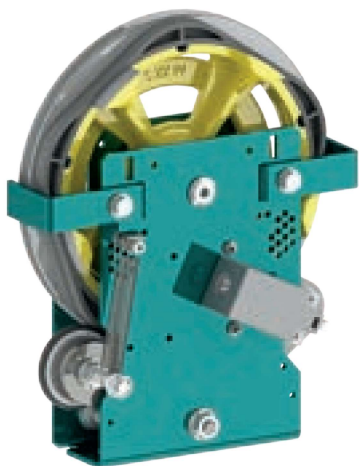
ST: India is a strategic market for Wittur. It has always been our commitment to bring the best technologies to the Indian elevator market. Our operations in India have witnessed substantial growth in recent years, and they easily represent the fastest-growing entity among all Wittur group companies.

While the industry compound annual growth rate for the last five years is around 8%, Wittur has grown at 2.5 times the market rate. We have been able to achieve this by significant investments in new products. Up to 97% of the materials in our new products are sourced locally, thereby aligning with the “Make in India” growth story. From the time of its inception, the Wittur India plant has expanded to three times its original size, while the number of employees at our Chennai plant has increased tenfold. We also have a team of 80 engineers who support the engineering requirements of our plants in Europe. All this has enabled us to introduce products that are tailor-made for the Indian market. Case in point is our flagship CORE elevator door, which is the top-selling elevator door system in India.

SSP: What has been the response to launches by Wittur during 2023? Which offerings have witnessed the greatest demand?

ST: They are:

- ◆ **The Stellar and Ecovision door launch:** In 2023, Wittur introduced two groundbreaking door solutions: Stellar and Ecovision, catering to diverse applications from residential to medium commercial buildings. Stellar is an entry-level door that offers high performance and durability at a very competitive price point. Ecovision is a full vision glass door



The OL20 compact overspeed governor

based on the Stellar platform that delivers outstanding value while maintaining the same commitment to quality for which Wittur is known. Customers, thus, may choose a quality Wittur door that is priced just marginally above locally fabricated contraptions that pass for elevator doors.

- ◆ The OL20 compact overspeed governor launch: Our commitment to local manufacturing and global quality standards is exemplified by the CE-certified OL20 overspeed governor, launched in 2023. This product is fully sourced and manufactured within India and caters to the export and domestic markets. The OL20 is a testament to Wittur's dedication to innovation and excellence, offering an extremely compact solution that goes a long way toward ensuring elevator safety. With the OL20 and the CSG01 safety gear, Wittur is probably the only elevator component manufacturer in India that exports from India to developed nations in Europe.
- ◆ Elevator Sense — smart Internet of Things (IoT) platform: Elevator Sense, unveiled in 2023, represents Wittur's foray into smart technologies. This IoT platform revolutionizes elevator installation and servicing by collecting data from all door components. Leveraging state-of-the-art algorithms developed through Wittur's extensive experience, this platform goes beyond traditional monitoring, enabling quick resolution of installation issues, real-time monitoring of elevator operations and proactive service intervention based on actual data. Elevator Sense embodies Wittur's commitment to smart, connected solutions that enhance both performance and efficiency in VT systems.

Response to our 2023 launches has been overwhelmingly positive, and we expect sales to increase dramatically once every customer completes their first round of installations.

SSP: Which geographical locations do you see driving demand for Wittur offerings during 2024?

ST: While demand for Wittur offerings is global, we anticipate strong growth in emerging markets. The Asia-Pacific, including India and Southeast Asia, continues to be a key driver. Additionally, in India we see opportunities in regions where urbanization and infrastructure development are accelerating, with pockets like the Ram-Mandir corridor in Uttar Pradesh; affordable housing developments in northern markets being driven by the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna subsidy scheme; and the commercial real estate boom in markets like Bengaluru,



Wittur's Quartz-i home elevator

Ahmedabad, the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) and Hyderabad being key locations for us. We have also seen great responses for our Stellar and Ecovision doors in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, and we expect the same to increase exponentially in the same markets in 2024 as word spreads.

SSP: What are your plans for Wittur Elevator Components India for the new year and demand expectations from the VT industry?

ST: As we start 2024, Wittur Elevator Components India is poised for a year of significant strides, steadfastly aligning with the vision of an "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and championing the "Make in India" initiative. Our commitment to fostering indigenous manufacturing remains unwavering, reflected in our dedication to sourcing and utilizing localized components for the majority of our products. Our plans for 2024 involve further investment in R&D, bolstering our manufacturing capabilities and expanding our product portfolio.

Wittur's commitment to maximizing local sourcing and manufacturing is a testament that our commitment to "Make in India" extends beyond mere rhetoric. This principle is ingrained in our ethos, and I advocate exactly the same for the VT industry in toto. We recommend a paradigm shift in the industry's procurement strategies, encouraging builders and architects to prioritize buying high-quality, locally manufactured products over imported alternatives that might be of questionable quality and safety. The Indian elevator industry has experienced a surge in substandard components, particularly in the ultra-commodity elevator category. Manufacturers in a certain country see huge potential in

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dumping their non-certified products on the India market to counter the slowdown of the elevator market in their home country. Wittur India intends to be a harbinger of quality and safety in this ecosystem, and I urge our colleagues in the industry to buy locally produced, quality products to ensure a safe and reliable VT landscape.

SSP: Which products in Wittur's portfolio do you see as potential game changers in 2024?

ST: Wittur's Quartz-i home elevator kit is an exemplary solution for meeting burgeoning demand for home elevators in the market. With an increasing number of residential projects incorporating elevators for convenience and accessibility, the Quartz-i has emerged as an ideal choice for modern homes. Complying with the Indian Lift Code IS 15259, the Quartz-i ensures that safety and quality are not just met, but surpassed. How many home elevator manufacturers in India can claim they comply with IS 15259?

What sets Quartz-i apart is its adaptability. Its single-phase operation is ideal for homes. Low pit depth makes it very compact and easy to install. At the same time, it offers premium aesthetics, energy efficiency and reliability to homeowners. The silent and comfortable ride of the Wittur Quartz-i adds a touch of sophistication to the user experience and creates a standout luxury experience.

This will not just be a game changer; it will also embody our vision of transforming VT in the residential sector and set new benchmarks in our industry. 🌐



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About Suraj Thodimarath

Suraj Thodimarath, a distinguished member of Wittur's executive management team and managing director (MD) for the Asia Pacific (APAC), is a seasoned professional with more than 28 years of extensive experience in operations, project planning, supply chain management, sales and service. With a stellar career that includes key roles in prominent multinational industrial corporations such as Danaher Corp., 3M India, NCR Corp. and Visteon, Suraj joined Wittur in 2015. In his current role, based at the Wittur Elevator Components India office in Chennai, he is at the helm of driving Wittur's growth and performance in the APAC region. His dynamic leadership continues to chart new heights for Wittur in the vibrant APAC market.

About Wittur Group

From doors to drives to cars to safety gears and exquisite home lifts, Wittur components are used extensively by the top elevator companies worldwide. Founded in 1968 in Germany, the Wittur Group, with its operating entity Wittur Holding GmbH, is the world's largest independent supplier of components for elevators. With a rich history spanning more than seven decades, Wittur has consistently set industry benchmarks, elevating the standards of vertical mobility. Staying true to its purpose of advancing the elevator industry, Wittur's success stems from an unwavering commitment to cutting-edge technology, ensuring its elevator solutions are not just efficient, but also highly safe, conforming to global standards. From state-of-the-art door systems to advanced safety components, Wittur's offerings redefine VT experiences worldwide. Pioneering a future where elevators are not just a means of ascent and descent, but seamless experiences, Wittur blends craftsmanship with modern engineering. The company's commitment to sustainability is evident in sustainable designs and energy-efficient solutions that align with global efforts to achieve a greener tomorrow. Wittur's dedication to excellence is reflected in every aspect of its operations, making Wittur the trusted choice for lift installers, developers and elevator manufacturers in India and globally. In an era where VT evolves, Wittur stands as an emblem of progress, seamlessly and safely connecting the world, one floor at a time.