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A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE

By DDP Publications



Tourism Minister
**Gajendra Singh
Shekhawat**
to inaugurate
FHRAI Convention

Hospitality Highwire

Patu Keswani
on Indian hotels
embracing innovation

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President's Note



Dear esteemed FHRAI Members,

As the Union Budget draws near, the tourism and hospitality industries are keenly awaiting policy changes and financial provisions that can breathe new life into the sector. The anticipation stems from the industry's desire for targeted measures that address its unique challenges.

On June 25, I had the privilege of meeting with **Nirmala Sitharaman**, Union Finance Minister, during the pre-budget consultation meeting with the trade and service sector industry associations. At the meeting, FHRAI presented recommendations from the tourism and hospitality industries. These included granting infrastructure status to the hospitality sector, streamlining GST, boosting MICE tourism, and allocating a higher budget for tourism branding. Sitharaman assured support in addressing the industry's crucial needs.

I also had the privilege of meeting and extending warm congratulations to **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** upon his appointment as Union Minister of Tourism on June 26, 2024. The meeting was characterised by optimism and a shared commitment to collaboratively elevate India's tourism and hospitality sectors. The tourism minister also graciously agreed to inaugurate the 54th Annual Convention of FHRAI in Goa.

Continuing its tradition and commitment to the industry, a delegation from FHRAI attended a meeting with **Pragya Sahay Saxena**, Member of Legislation at the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) within the Department of Revenue, Union Ministry of Finance, to submit the pre-budget recommendations. Furthermore, FHRAI held a constructive conversation with the Vice Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority to address the difficulties faced

by Delhi hotels concerning the use of the extra Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

“

I had the privilege of meeting with Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance Minister, during the pre-budget consultation meeting with the trade and service sector industry associations. At the meeting, FHRAI presented recommendations from the tourism and hospitality industries

To mark the 10th International Day of Yoga, FHRAI organised an event themed 'Yoga for Self and Society' on June 21, 2024, at Hotel Andaz – The concept by Hyatt, New Delhi with the support of the Ministry of Ayush and the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga.

As we move forward toward the upcoming 54th Annual Convention, FHRAI is thrilled to announce that we will have the privilege of hosting dignitaries, including the Union Minister of Tourism, the Chief Minister of Goa and senior officials from the Union Ministry of Tourism.

We deeply appreciate your steadfast trust and support. As we move forward together, our commitment to achieving excellence and reaching important milestones remains constant.

With best regards,
Pradeep Shetty
President, FHRAI

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Tech advancements: Key to hospitality progress

Hospitality sector must promptly adopt technological advancements such as AI and robotics to keep pace with modern world, writes Rajesh Berry.

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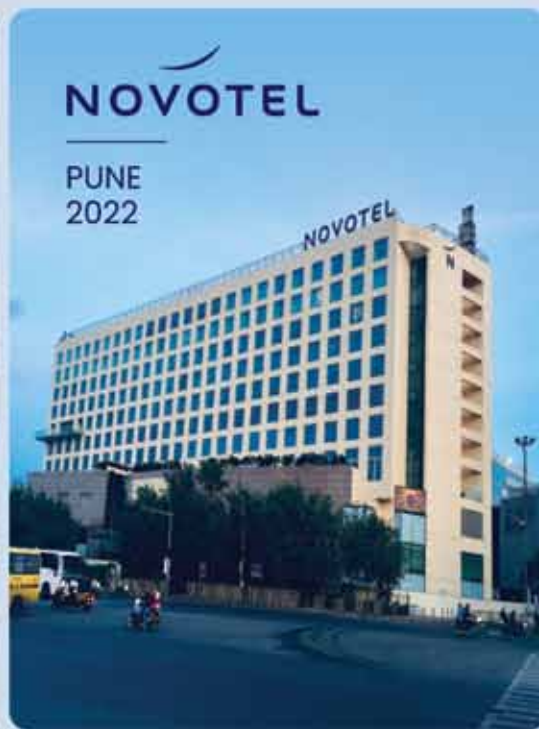
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FHRAI's annual convention & awards garner MOT's admiration

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Tourism, will inaugurate upcoming 54th FHRAI Annual Convention, to be held in Goa.

FHRAI's upcoming 54th Annual Convention would be inaugurated by **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Minister of Tourism, Government of India. The convention is scheduled to be held at Goa in Taj Cidade de Goa, Horizon from October 16 to 18, 2024.

Pradeep Shetty, President, FHRAI, commented on the convention's significance in shaping the future of India's hospitality and tourism sectors, stating, "The 54th FHRAI Annual Convention in Goa is positioned to be a landmark event, where leaders from across the industry will converge to strategise, innovate, and collaborate towards steady

FHRAI welcomes the dynamic Tourism Minister



and sustainable growth of our industry. Aligning with its theme, this convention will mark the beginning of our sector's journey towards 2047, by which time the tourism industry is likely to become a US\$3 trillion powerhouse. The convention aims to showcase our industry's prowess to be the key growth engine of our nation's economy, inspiring new initiatives that will define the future of tourism in India. We are honoured to have the Minister Shekhawat and other guests joining us. Around 1,000 delegates from India and abroad are expected to attend the convention and enjoy Goa's cultural richness and natural beauty."

The convention promises to be a celebration of India's vibrant tourism landscape under the theme 'Tourism @2047: Incredible to Inevitable India-Driving Growth and Sustainability in a Mission Mode'. The theme focuses on driving sustainable growth and innovation in the country's tourism sector. This theme aligns with the vision of a developed India by 2047, as envisioned by the Government of India.

Dr. Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister, Goa, **Dr. Mohan Yadav**, Chief Minister,



Pradeep Shetty
President
FHRAI

The 54th Annual Convention of FHRAI will be significant on account of a host a diverse range of programmes, including Business Sessions, B2B and B2G Meetings, Hospitality Exposition and cultural showcases, among others.

FHRAI Hospitality Awards will be another significant attraction of the annual convention. These awards have been instituted by the Federation to encourage young industry professionals and recognise excellence in the hospitality industry.

Over the years, these awards have established themselves as being among

“

We are honoured to have Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat among others joining FHRAI at its upcoming 54th Annual Convention

Madhya Pradesh, **V Vidyavathi**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, **Suman Billa**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and **Manisha Saxena**, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, will also attend the convention.

the coveted accolades in the hospitality industry. With this convention, the objective of FHRAI is to set the right tone for the country's hospitality industry, which is expected to welcome 100 million tourists by 2047. □

FM engages in pre-budget discussion with FHRAI



On the exclusive invitation of Union Finance Minister, FHRAI presents its pre-budget recommendations, advocating infrastructure status, GST rationalisation and enhanced budget for tourism branding.

FHRAI was recently invited for the pre-budget consultation with **Nirmala Sitharaman**, Union Finance Minister. Along with trade and service sector associations, **Pradeep Shetty**, President, FHRAI, represented the federation. He touched upon various challenges that the hospitality sector is facing and the solutions to address them. Following are the recommendations:

Infrastructure status

- In 2013, infrastructure status granted to hotel and hospitality sector. Benefits only available for hotels project worth ₹200 crore, convention centres with project costs of ₹300 crore, or 3-star and higher category hotels outside cities with population of more than one million people
- Hotel projects typically have project costs between ₹10 crore and ₹50 crore
- Population of under one million is too restrictive for growth of tourism
- Infrastructure status should be granted to the hotels of all categories and convention centres, which were constructed with a project cost of ₹10 crore and above
- Infrastructure status should be awarded irrespective of the city's population

GST rationalisation

- High indirect tax rates (GST) in India make both domestic and inbound tourism expensive
- Competitiveness from neighbouring countries because of high GST rates
- GST shifting to different slabs in hotels creates compliance issues and spills over to F&B

Following measures should be introduced:

- ▶ Introduce one flat GST slab @12 per cent all times to all hotels in the country
- ▶ The GST rates for restaurants should be delinked from any room tariffs if they are part of the hotels
- ▶ Treat all F&B revenue as bundled services to be charged GST on the following manner:
 - a) 5 per cent composite scheme for units that are not availing ITC
 - b) 12 per cent GST for units that are using ITC
- ▶ Not to levy GST on staff food and accommodation provided
- ▶ Not to disqualify corporates from claiming GST for hotel expenditure incurred outside their state of registration. This measure ensures that businesses can fully benefit from the GST system



b) 12 per cent GST for units that are using ITC

▶ Not to levy GST on staff food and accommodation provided

▶ Not to disqualify corporates from claiming GST for hotel expenditure incurred outside their state of registration. This measure ensures that businesses can fully benefit from the GST system

Promotion of MICE

MICE tourism, can play a pivotal role in positioning India as a global tourism power house and make India a prominent MICE destination. Introducing incentives for industry players aligned with the MICE sector will enhance sustainability and drive growth in the global landscape and to strengthen MICE tourism, budgetary allocation should be done on the following areas:

“Hotels of all categories and convention centres costing ₹10 crore and above should get infra status





The state level single-window system should set a common national standard and protocol for hospitality sector projects

- **Promoting eco-friendly accommodations and tourist sites:** Allocating budget for the promotion of eco-friendly accommodations and tourist sites can attract environmentally conscious tourists and businesses.
- **Incentives for industry players:** Introducing incentives for industry players aligned with the MICE sector can encourage more businesses to invest in and prioritise MICE tourism.
- **Infrastructure development:** Investing in convention centres, hotels, and transportation can improve the overall experience for MICE tourists
- **Marketing and branding:** Effective marketing and branding strategies can help position India as a top MICE destination

Enhance budget for tourism branding

By the 100th year of Indian Independence in 2047, the tourism sector aspires to transform from an enchanting tapestry of experiences into a US\$3 trillion economic powerhouse. To achieve this target, a lot of concerted efforts are required along with sustained branding and marketing of India as global tourist destination. The Incredible India brand needs to be repositioned and rejuvenated domestically as well as globally across conventional and digital media. It is equally critical to create structured global awareness of multiple Indian tourism verticals such as MICE, Leisure, Cruise, Weddings and Medical, among others. This will involve comprehensive global focus on creating segment brand ambassadors, country-wise



customised content, mass and social media buying and significant creatives.

Implement uniform sectoral reforms

The following reforms are suggested under the Ease of Doing (EoDB) measures to be undertaken in the hospitality sector:

- **Single window clearance systems at Centre and state levels:** Two separate single-window clearance systems for the state government licenses and central government approvals need to be established
- **e-Central repository for tourism and hospitality:** To prevent tourism and hospitality enterprises to fill paperwork for different permissions, certifications and licences across the central and state governments, an e-central repository of such information may be created
- **Promotion of self-certification:** A post facto compliance review can be undertaken after self-certification through mutual understanding
- **Deemed approvals:** For all permissions and approvals for new projects or greenfield enterprises, they should be made available on a deemed approval basis against pre-defined timelines published on a national approval checklist state-wise for tourism. A *post facto* compliance review can be undertaken after the deemed approval through mutual understanding
- **Common national tourism ID:** A common national tourism ID must be generated for enterprises. It must be applicable across India such as the GST ID. This will reduce fragmentation across the tourism industry in India.

Tourism on Concurrent List

Declaring tourism and hospitality as an industry by the Centre and placing it in the Concurrent List would incentivise states to align their policies. It would ensure coordination between the Centre and states for fund allocation and implementation of projects etc aimed at the holistic development of the tourism sector in the country. ❑



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Hotels push for fairer GST rates

FHRAI urges Union Ministry of Finance to separate GST taxation of food services in restaurants from unrelated room rates charged for accommodation.

FHRAI has written a letter to **Nirmala Sitharaman**, Union Minister of Finance, raising concerns about the application of Goods and Service Tax (GST) on food services in hotels. “The current practice of linking taxation of food services in restaurants to the room rates charged for accommodation is erroneous and poses several challenges. It is requested to separate the GST taxation on food services in restaurants from unrelated room rates charged for accommodation.”

Separation of GST taxation

The GST taxation on food services in the restaurants should be separated from the unrelated room rates charged for accommodation. “The current system not only results in discrepancies and unnecessary complexities but also burdens businesses

“

Current practice of linking taxation of food services in restaurants to the room rates charged for accommodation is erroneous

as well as consumers. The lack of clear differentiation in taxation between these distinct services exacerbates administrative challenges,” FHRAI stated.


Proposed GST rates

A practical approach to GST on restaurants and banquets involves linking the tax rates to input credit availability. For establishments that do not avail input credit, a GST rate of 5 per cent is proposed. Conversely, for those claiming input credit, a higher rate of 12 per cent could be applied.

Interim relief

An interim relief by way of clarification effective from the retrospective date should be issued to tackle the issue of “value of services received” and “declared tariff”.

Regularisation of past GST pay-offs

The Government should also consider regularising the payment of GST for the past period on an ‘as-is’ basis. This regularisation will provide relief to the industry and allow it to focus on growth and customer service without the looming threat of punitive tax actions. 

Strategic management leader joins FHRAI

Utpal Kant, with 13 years of diverse experience including policy advocacy, has been appointed as Head of FHRAI Centre of Excellence.

Utpal Kant has recently assumed the role of Head of the FHRAI Centre of Excellence, marking a significant addition to the team. With over 13 years of diverse experience, Kant brings a wealth of knowledge in strategic management, trade, research, and policy advocacy to his new position.

Throughout his career, Kant has demonstrated a strong ability to collaborate effectively with government bodies, industry associations, and leading corporations. His proficiency in fostering partnerships and his deep understanding of industry dynamics have been instrumental in his previous roles.

Prior to joining FHRAI, Kant held the position of Senior Assistant



Utpal Kant
Head
FHRAI Centre of Excellence

Director at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) India, an allied body of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). Here, he played a pivotal role in advancing advocacy efforts and promoting policy initiatives that impacted India’s business landscape. Kant’s career journey has also seen him engage extensively with research institutions and think-tanks, further enriching his insights into strategic planning and industry trends. His appointment underscores FHRAI’s commitment to enhancing industry standards and fostering innovation within the hospitality sector. 

“

Kant’s career journey has seen him engage extensively with research institutions & think-tanks

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Yoga day event promotes healthy living

‘Final Countdown Programme’ celebrating 10th International Day of Yoga on June 21, highlighted effects of it on individual and societal well-being.

On June 21, the ‘Final Countdown Programme’ commemorated the 10th International Day of Yoga (IDY) with the theme ‘Yoga for Self and Society’. The event unfolded at Andaz-The Concept of Hyatt in Delhi, emphasising the transformative effects of yoga on the mind, body, and soul through various sessions and activities.

IDY represents a global initiative initiated by Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. Its primary objective is to promote the practice of yoga and highlight its multifaceted benefits for physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. It underscores the dual impact of yoga, benefiting both individual well-being and the broader community.

Inderjeet Sehrawat, Councillor, Mahipalpur, was the chief guest of the event. Other notable guests included **Avantika Tokas Midha**, Vice Chairperson, Council of Royal Roots, and **Dr. Rajarshi Bhattacharjee**, Chief Medical Officer, Times News Network and Hindustan Power. The programme commenced with a felicitation ceremony, followed by speeches emphasising the benefits of yoga.

Sehrawat emphasised that yoga plays a crucial role in maintaining good health and reducing mental stress. In today’s culture, where diseases are prevalent worldwide, dedicating just one hour a day to yoga can enhance energy levels, overall well-being, and prevent illness.

increased power, enhanced clarity, and a sense of mental peace amid the hustle and bustle of daily life.


The highlight of the event was the enthusiastic participation of community members, including seniors, adults, and

The event’s highlight was enthusiastic participation of community members, including seniors, adults and children from Delhi NCR region

Dr. Bhattacharjee highlighted yoga goes beyond mere exercise. It encompasses a holistic journey involving the mind, body, and soul. Originating from India, yoga promotes overall well-being when practiced under proper guidance. Dr. Bhattacharjee encouraged everyone to incorporate yoga into their daily lives for lasting health benefits.

Midha stressed yoga has ancient origins, dating back to Rig Vedic period. It is more than just an art; it teaches us a way of life. Incorporating yoga into our everyday routines offers numerous benefits, including

children from Delhi NCR region. Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga’s social media platforms promoted the event, which aimed to encourage the integration of yoga into daily routines, fostering physical well-being, and spiritual awareness.

Rahul Bador, a yoga expert, shared various yoga asanas, focusing on poses, breathing exercises, and meditation techniques to improve physical fitness and mental clarity. Overall, the event underscored the transformative power of yoga and encouraged its adoption for a healthier lifestyle. 



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INDIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Changing with the times

In Hospitality Highwire this month, **Patanjali (Patu) G Keswani** writes about the Indian hospitality sector embracing innovation through technology and sustainable practices.

In recent years, India's hospitality industry has experienced a resurgence, characterised by heightened demand for accommodation in major cities and tourist destinations. The aftermath of Covid-19 has accelerated domestic travel, driven by a surge in leisure trips, business travel, and a growing preference for staycations and short getaways. This shift in consumer behaviour has reshaped booking patterns, with travellers increasingly opting for last-minute reservations and flexible travel dates.

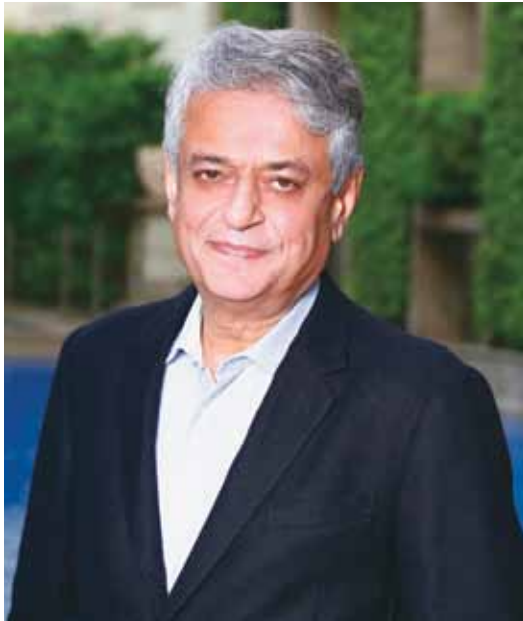
The sector has witnessed a significant increase in occupancy rates and Average Room Rates (ARRs) across urban and leisure markets. Some cities have even reported double-digit growth in occupancy, underscoring a robust recovery and sustained

demand-supply dynamics. This impressive performance indicates a resilient and flourishing market.

Moreover, supportive infrastructure developments such as the expansion of domestic air travel, growth in airport capacities, and improved connectivity through modern highways have bolstered tourism prospects. The proliferation of mid-sized and large SUV sales signifies rising middle-class affluence, signalling potential growth in mid-market and luxury hotel segments.

Talent acquisition and retention

The surge in tourism post-COVID has intensified the demand for proficient professionals from different backgrounds across various operational domains. A motivated, diverse and inclusive work-



Patanjali (Patu) G Keswani
Chairman & Managing Director
Lemon Tree Hotels

force is essential for fostering innovation and providing superior guest experiences. However, the industry faces a talent deficit, and there is a need for proactive recruitment strategies and robust talent development programmes.

Hotel chains are making efforts to attract and nurture diverse talent through comprehensive training initiatives, apprenticeship programmes and leadership development opportunities. The companies are also implementing training programmes to promote cultural sensitivity and inclusive leadership, thereby creating an environment, where every employee feels respected and valued. Recognising the critical role of human capital in delivering exceptional guest experiences, these initiatives aim to cultivate a skilled workforce capable of meeting evolving guest expectations and industry demands.

Harnessing technology

Technological innovation stands at the forefront of the hospitality industry's evolution, revolutionising operational efficiencies and guest experiences alike. Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning

(ML) and other advanced technologies are pivotal in enhancing service delivery, optimising resource allocation, and driving revenue growth.

AI-powered solutions are transforming various facets of hospitality operations, from automated check-ins and personalised guest interactions through virtual assistants and chatbots, to dynamic pricing strategies based on real-time demand forecasts. These technologies enable hoteliers to streamline operations, reduce administrative burdens and allocate resources effectively, thereby enhancing overall productivity and profitability.

While technology augments efficiency, the essence of hospitality lies in human interaction and personalised service. Striking a balance between technological advancements and the human touch remains paramount, ensuring that technology complements rather than replaces the intrinsic value of guest-centric hospitality.



Hospitality sector has witnessed a significant increase in occupancy rates and ARR across urban and leisure markets

Environmental stewardship

Sustainability has emerged as a core principle guiding the hospitality industry's ethos globally and in India. Increasingly, travellers prioritise eco-friendly accommodation options that prioritise sustainable practices, ranging from energy-efficient building designs and water conservation measures to waste management initiatives and community engagement programmes.

Leading hospitality groups in India are adopting sustainable building standards and integrating environmentally friendly practices into their operations. This commitment not only aligns with global sustainability goals but also resonates with mindful travellers who prioritise eco-conscious choices in their travel decisions.

Driving diversity in hospitality

Patanjali (Patu) G Keswani is recognised as a trailblazer in India's mid-scale hospitality sector and a champion for diversity & inclusion (D&I) within the industry, leading Lemon Tree Hotels' strong efforts in D&I, which encompass hiring persons with disabilities. His visionary approach drives Lemon Tree towards greater heights, balancing profitability with a commitment to inclusivity and sustainability. As the hospitality landscape evolves, he remains at the forefront, steering Lemon Tree Hotels with a blend of innovation, compassion, and strategic foresight.

Sustainable design initiatives include the adherence to the regulations of green building certifications such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA). These certifications validate a hotel's commitment to sustainable construction practices, energy efficiency and reduced environmental impact. By leveraging sustainable design principles, hotels not only minimise their carbon footprint but also enhance operational efficiencies and guest satisfaction.

“

Hotel chains are attracting diverse talent through comprehensive training initiatives, apprenticeship programmes and leadership development opportunities



According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), sustainable tourism practices are essential for preserving natural resources, supporting local communities and mitigating environmental impact. By embracing sustainability, hotels enhance brand reputation, appeal to a growing segment of environmentally aware guests and contribute positively to sustainable development goals.

Best practices & innovations

Best practices in the hospitality industry encompass a spectrum of initiatives aimed at fostering excellence in service delivery, operational efficiency and guest satisfaction. Collaborative partnerships with local communities promote cultural authen-

ticity and enrich destination experiences, positioning hotels as integral stakeholders in regional tourism ecosystems.

Revenue management strategies

AI-driven analytics to optimise pricing strategies, maximise revenue per available room (RevPAR), and anticipate market demand fluctuations. Personalised marketing campaigns tailored to individual guest preferences enhance customer engagement and loyalty, driving repeat business and fostering long-term guest relationships.

Furthermore, advancements in digital marketing, social media engagement and online reputation

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By leveraging sustainable design principles, hotels not only minimise their carbon footprint but also enhance operational efficiencies and guest satisfaction



management empower hotels to enhance brand visibility, attract new clientele, and cultivate a loyal customer base. By leveraging data-driven insights and technological innovations, hotels remain agile in responding to evolving market trends and guest expectations.


Vision forward

Looking ahead, the future of India's hospitality industry is characterised by resilience, innovation

and sustainable growth. Technology can be leveraged to find more efficient and effective solutions for enhancing transparency in booking processes, ensuring data security and facilitating seamless transactions across global markets.

Personalised wellness experiences and eco-friendly tourism initiatives are poised to gain prominence, catering to health-conscious travellers seeking rejuvenation and sustainability in their travel choices.

Collaborative efforts between public and private sectors to develop infrastructure, enhance connectivity and promote sustainable tourism practices will be pivotal in fostering inclusive growth and unlocking new tourism potentials in emerging destinations.

In conclusion, the hospitality industry in India stands poised for transformative growth, driven by innovation, sustainability, and a commitment to excellence in guest service. By embracing technological advancements, nurturing talent and prioritising environmental stewardship, we can chart a course towards sustainable tourism development and enduring success in a dynamic global landscape. 



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It is crucial to find ways to 'rediscover': Saxena



Manisha Saxena, stresses enhancing India's tourist footfall by curating new products and services with the help of industry professionals.



Surbhi Sharma

Manisha Saxena, Director General, Tourism, Ministry of Tourism has expressed confidence in the industry's stakeholders emphasising that to enhance India's tourism potential, the Ministry of Tourism, with the help of industry professionals,

Saxena highlighted their target to increase tourist footfall and explained how the ministry, with the help of industry experts and stakeholders, is preparing a roadmap to achieve this goal.

She emphasised that religious tourism has reached an all-time high and breaking new grounds, and it is now time to



Government has placed significant emphasis on tourism as driver of economic growth, particularly as means of generating employment

needs to curate new products and services. "This effort should not be limited to tier I cities alone, but should include tier II and III cities. Additionally, there should be a focus on budget travel and packaged tours," Saxena pointed out.

make wildlife a major tourism offering in India. "The Government of India has placed significant emphasis on tourism as a driver of economic growth, particularly as a means of generating employment," she mentioned.

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Manisha Saxena
Director General, Tourism

Key agendas

- **Budget travelling:** This year's travel and trends survey by various travel and tourism websites showed an increase in young travellers, including college students, seeking budget travel due to financial constraints and young professionals willing to spend on luxury stays for memorable experiences. Considering the demand for both categories, Saxena advised the hospitality

- **International marketing:** Speaking about the MOT's role in increasing the publicity of its campaigns abroad, Saxena said, "We are participating in international fairs and festivals, and we are working through Indian missions to promote India's tourism offerings. Since India is such a vast destination with so much variety, we are also trying to segment the offerings according to the interests of different countries."



MOT is participating in international fairs, and it is working through Indian missions to promote India's tourism offerings



sector to cater to both clientele and improve the quality of budget hotels by meeting basic needs.

- **Rediscover heritage sites:** Highlighting that New Delhi alone has 42 World Heritage sites, according to ASI, she said, "It is important to find ways to rediscover the heritage sites in India." She added that this year, many foreign tourists from Malaysia visited the heritage sites in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and gave wonderful reviews of those places.

- **Segment offerings to boost MICE:** Emphasising that one cannot be offered everything, Saxena said, "It is important to segment the offerings across India," and noted that "India has 60 G20 locations, and it is essential to curate the types of events—whether big or small, artistic or corporate—that can be hosted at various venues."

Regarding international marketing, promotion, and cooperation, we have been participating in fairs. With the new government in place, the upcoming Union Budget will soon address the recurring issues related to our overseas representation, marketing, and promotion."

- **Identify new source market:** India's foremost offerings in tourism are its culture and heritage, but as a subcontinent, it has much more to offer. Speaking about the source markets for India, the Director General, Tourism said, "We need to segment our offerings not only to the traditional source markets but also identify newer ones. There is a lot of interest in India from South Africa and many Southeast Asian countries that were not part of our traditional source markets. To support this, Indian aviation firms are launching flights to every conceivable corner of the world to cater to the increasing two-way traffic." □



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Industry leaders felicitated at HRAWI hospitality conclave

HRAWI's Empowering Hospitality Conclave in Ahmedabad highlighted significant advancements in the hospitality sector of Gujarat, recognising industry leaders for their contributions.

HRAWI recently hosted its Empowering Hospitality Conclave at The Grand Bhagwati in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. This event was graced by **Nalinkumar Chaudhary**, Director, Gujarat State Fire Prevention Services, who was the Chief Guest. The conclave aimed to highlight the advancements and contributions within the hospitality industry in Gujarat.

Narendra Somani, Executive Committee Member, HRAWI, and CMD, The Grand Bhagwati, Ahmedabad, was awarded for his services to Gujarat's hospitality industry was the event's high point. Furthermore, the sustainable property awards were presented to **Manohar S Gurung**, President, Madhuban Resort & Spa, Anand; **Puneet Baijal**, GM, Hyatt Regency, Ahmedabad; and **Keenan McKenzie**, GM, ITC Narmada, Ahmedabad, in recognition of their

efforts to integrate sustainability into the hotel properties.

"I extend my appreciation to all the hotel professionals in the state of Gujarat for their efforts and remarkable contributions. As we witness unprecedented growth and transformation in the sector, it is imperative that we prioritise sustain-

Pradeep Shetty, President, HRAWI. The event honoured **Atul Budhbraja**, GM, Sankalp Group; **Koustuv Mukherjee**, GM, Pride Plaza, Ahmedabad; and **Naveen Tomar**, GM, Taj Vivanta, Ahmedabad, who received the Best General Manager Award. Chef **Sujit Vora** from The Grand Bhagwati, Chef **Surya Narayan** from Hyatt Regency, Ahmedabad, Chef **Sudev**

“

Over the years, Gujarat has witnessed progress and development in hotel sector and has become a beacon of excellence and innovation

ability and responsibility in our hospitality practices. For this, HRAWI has carved a special recognition for the hospitality establishments and its managers who lead by example. The industry congratulates and draws inspiration from you," said

Sharma from Taj Skyline, Ahmedabad, and Chef **Archit Arora** from Yi Jing, ITC Narmada, with the Best Chef Award, were also recognised. Additionally, ITC Narmada, Ahmedabad was acknowledged as the Best Performing Hotel. □



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HRAWI names **Trupti Pawar** as Secretary General

Trupti Pawar brings over two decades of international trade and business development experience to her new role at HRAWI.

Trupti Pawar has been appointed as the new Secretary General of HRAWI. With a career spanning 22 years in international trade and business development, Pawar brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her new role.

“I am honoured to join HRAWI as the Secretary General and look forward to working with the team to further enhance the hospitality industry in Western India. Apart from my core role in the organisation, I will engage in policy advocacy with the government and facilitate membership services. I am committed to driving initiatives that will contribute to its development and success,” Pawar said.

Pawar’s responsibilities at HRAWI will include facilitating office processes and functions to ensure efficient management.



Trupti Pawar
Secretary General
HRAWI

Her extensive background in delegations, conference management, networking, and corporate communication will be instrumental in enhancing the association’s operations and outreach.

Prior to joining HRAWI, she served as the Director at the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC), where she promoted bilateral trade and fostered business ties between India and the USA. Her career also includes contributions at the Indian Merchants’ Chamber (IMC), where she furthered bilateral trade initiatives with countries, including Singapore, UAE, UK, USA, South Africa, Canada, Belgium, Turkey, Vietnam and Israel. □



I want to work with the team to enhance the hospitality industry in Western India

FoSTaC training raises hospitality standards

HRAWI and FSSAI partnered for a FoSTaC training programme in Nagpur, educating 34 hospitality professionals on food safety practices.

In a collaborative effort aimed at enhancing food safety standards in the hospitality sector, HRAWI joined hands with FSSAI to conduct a Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) programme.

The event, hosted at Hotel Airport Centre Point in Nagpur, attracted 34 professionals, eager to bolster their expertise in ensuring safe food practices. Led by **Dr. V Pasupathy** from Parikshan, the training session delved deep into aspects of food safety and management. The participants were equipped with knowledge regarding food handling, preparation techniques, hygiene protocols and waste management. The training programme also aimed to educate professionals to implement food safety measures within their establishments.



Led by Dr. V Pasupathy from Parikshan, the training session delved deep into crucial aspects of food safety and management

Highlighting the significance of such training initiatives, HRAWI emphasised its commitment to raising the industry standards and ensuring compliance with the national food safety regulations. Through partnerships with FSSAI and training initiatives such as FoSTaC, HRAWI has trained and certified more than 3,000 hospitality professionals across Western India region. These strenuous efforts underscore the association’s framework in fostering a culture of excellence and safety within the hospitality sector. □



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Partnering for tourism excellence

Delegation from HRANI, recently met with India's newly appointed Tourism Minister, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, to extend their best wishes and support.

A delegation from HRANI recently met India's newly appointed Tourism Minister, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**. The delegation, led by **Garish Oberoi**, President, HRANI, included **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, Honorary Secretary, HRANI, President, UPHRA, and Vice-President, FHRAI, and **Renu Thapliyal**, Secretary General. They felicitated Shekhawat and extended their best wishes on behalf of the entire hospitality fraternity.

The meeting was marked by a sense of renewed hope and a commitment to collaborate closely to elevate India's tourism and hospitality sectors to new heights. The hospitality industry is optimistic that under Shekhawat's leadership, significant strides will be made in promoting India as a premier tourist destination. The collaborative efforts between industry bodies



Gajendra Singh Shekhawat
Minister of Tourism
Government of India

and the government are expected to drive sustainable and inclusive growth.

Oberoi expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "HRANI looks forward to collaborating with the Tourism Minister on projects that would benefit the hospitality industry as a whole, given his wealth of experience and strong Rajasthani origins."

These collaborative efforts are expected to bring about transformative changes, fostering a more vibrant and competitive hospitality landscape in India. ■

“HRANI looks forward to collaborating with the tourism minister on projects that would benefit the hospitality industry

UP bylaw revision: Big win for hospitality

HRANI applauds UP govt's move to revise building construction bylaws, which aims to create two lakh more hotel rooms using 30% less land.

The Uttar Pradesh government has revised its 2008 building construction and development bylaws to boost tourism and hospitality growth. The revised bylaws aim to create two lakhs more hotel rooms using 30 per cent less land, facilitating nearly 70 per cent of the projects pledged during the Global Investors Summit. This will save land, reduce costs, and increase hotel room availability.

Garish Oberoi, President, HRANI & General Secretary, UPHRA, said, "The UP government's innovative approach to revising building construction bylaws is expected to significantly boost the hospitality and tourism industries by increasing hotel rooms on less land and stimulating economic growth."



Garish Oberoi
President, HRANI & General
Secretary, UPHRA

“UP govt's revised building construction bylaws aim to boost hospitality sector by increasing hotel rooms efficiently

"The UP government's new bylaws are a positive development for the tourism and hospitality sectors, aiming to optimise land use, stimulate new investments, and create employment," noted **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, UPHRA, Honorary Secretary, HRANI & Vice President, FHRAI. ■



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Puducherry Roadshow sets precedent



SIHRA kicked off first TTE roadshow at Puducherry, garnering support from 44 local stakeholders, underscoring enthusiastic participation to TTE initiatives.

Tamil Nadu Travel Expo (TTE), a buyer-seller meet is scheduled to take place from September 20 to 22, 2024, at Grand Madurai by GRT Hotels, which is supported by SIHRA and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Travel Club Madurai organised the biennial event to promote Tamil Nadu as the most preferred destination in India and globally, similar to Kerala Travel Mart. Veterans in Tamil Nadu's tourism fraternity participated in a meeting hosted by Grand Madurai by GRT



Hotels on May 25, 2024. **T Natarajan**, Honorary Secretary, SIHRA, **Vikram Cotah**, CEO, GRT Hotels & Resorts, **Aswin Desai**, Vice Chairman, CII, **Dr G Vasudevan**, MD, Fortune Pandiyan Hotels, EC Members, SIHRA and Raja Graham, President, Travel Club Madurai participated in the meeting. Natarajan is the Convenor, and Dr Vasudevan is the TTE Co-Convenor.

SIHRA held the first TTE roadshow at Puducherry at The Residency Towers, Puducherry. Forty-four stakeholders from Puducherry, including hotel owners and GMs, attended the event. The GM of The Residency Towers, welcomed the gathering. **Sundar Singaram**, Director, Operations, SIHRA, welcomed all the guests. **Asha Gupta**, DGM, Puducherry Tourism, addressed the gathering. The members engaged enthusiastically,

pledging their support and active participation in TTE initiatives.

Discussing healthcare

On invitation from the World Bank, **Sundar Singaram**, Director, Operations, SIHRA, participated in a workshop held at Taj Coromandel on June 18, 2024. The workshop was attended by top bureaucrats of Tamil Nadu, including the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **MK Stalin's** Secretary. The World Bank project aims to help medical value travel businesses in Tamil Nadu grow,



thereby creating more employment in the region. SIHRA has actively contributed to the project by providing various inputs.

Securing special privileges

B.D. Prabhushankar, EC Member, SIHRA, participated in the press meeting for the 9th edition of the HoReCa Expo in Coimbatore. SIHRA has secured a unique advantage for its members by facilitating direct connections with the top management of 300 brands participating in the exhibition. SIHRA has arranged discounts exclusively for its members. These discounts will apply to various services and products offered by the exhibitors. ▢

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Human-robot collaboration Will it shape hospitality future?

Hospitality sector must promptly adopt technological advancements such as AI and robotics to keep pace with modern world, writes **Rajesh Berry**.

The world is constantly changing, and so are our skills. The perception of reality is the latest trend. Should the hospitality industry lag behind others? What if we redefine hospitality as “HospitAllity” and innovate new facets to adapt to the evolving world?

The hospitality industry is rapidly evolving by adopting the latest hotel robots, thereby improving operations, reducing reliance on human labour, and ensuring high-quality management. It facilitates the easy application and utilisation of the organisational structure and procedures.

How do you feel about transforming restaurants into “roborants” and food/kitchen production areas into “robokits”—a rapidly growing trend?

Robots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) boost guest confidence and satisfaction, replace human labour for more efficient production and management and reduce costs associated with staff facilities and daily expenses. Robotic kitchens, combining robots with chefs, are set to become the trend of the day. Robots primarily assist in basic food preparation and cooking tasks such as cutting vegetables, stirring, grill-



Rajesh Berry
VP & GM
Quality Hotel D V Manor, Vijayawada

efficiency and convenience, among other benefits. The procedure involves using QR Code for menu selection, placing orders, and settling the bill, with your order being served by a robot.

Robots are being used for heavy lifting activities such as delivering heavy loads of linen to the floors, collecting dirty linen, and vacuuming. Robotic floor cleaning is becoming essential nowadays. AI plays a crucial role not only in the structural hardware and software of robots but also in their specific functionalities.

AI can streamline the process of guest arrival and RFID collection as follows:



Robots and Artificial Intelligence boost guest confidence and satisfaction, replace human labour for more efficient production and management

ing, boiling, frying, sautéing, and baking, among others.

The process of food & beverage service aspects is being adopted in bars and restaurants to ensure quick and precise operations,

Upon approaching the entrance, the guest presents the credit card used for booking at the Guest Recognition Post (GRP). This action triggers the door to open and sends the details of the guest to the front desk.



At the front desk, the guest displays his or her credit card on the screen, clicks his or her face for ID verification, and then views his or her name, assigned room number, arrival and departure dates, and any specific requirements the guest noted during booking. After confirming the details, he or she clicks OK to receive his RFID keycard.

All hotel details, including knowledge, information, facts, figures, and reservations are integrated with platforms such as Alexa, Google, and Siri, among others.

No doubt, AI assists the hospitality industry in numerous ways, such as enhancing customer service, improving guest experience and retention, bolstering financial and operational efficiency, and reducing

operational costs. However, concerns persist regarding potential job losses, loss of control due to robot autonomy, safety and security issues, and challenges related to communication and interaction between robots and humans.

Surely enough, management will save on following expenses currently allocated for staff welfare:

- Management commitments such as compliance with ESI and EPF norms, annual bonuses, gratuity as per government guidelines, and leave encashment are essential corporate obligations



While robotisation may still take some time, the introduction of AI and system automation is the need of the hour

- Staff facilities such as medical insurance, life insurance, uniforms, cafeteria, annual increments, and optional regular medical check-ups for employees and their families
- On duty meals and staff accommodation

Despite the presence of robots, human workforce will still be necessary for operational aspects, maneuverability, and professional control of robotic systems. The growing popularity of robotisation is evident from projections that the hospitality robots market will reach US\$500 million by the year 2028.

While robotisation may still take some time, the introduction of AI and system automation is the need of the hour. It streamlines hotel operations and creates a more amiable ambience, particularly in front office operations and for valued patrons. The enhancement of AI will result in stronger and better-personalised services such as check-in and out processes, room assignments, addressing specific guest needs, managing loyalty reward programmes and providing hotel and city information. This not only saves time but also improves staff responsiveness and enhances overall operational efficiency of the hotels.

According to experts, AI in the hospitality industry is becoming a universal trend and necessity. Numerous AI-preferred systems and technologies have been developed to effectively enhance systems, economy and technology implementation. AI applications may increase systematic values, revenue, and growth but they lack the personal touch that the hospitality industry values. Let us continue the tradition of sharing smiles with our valued patrons, ensuring a touch of elegance and a sense of service finesse.

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same) □



Religious tourism: Bigger & better

India's religious tourism beckons not just devotees but also those yearning for inner peace, offering enriching experiences across its spiritual landscape.

Spiritual tourism soars, enriching journeys: HRANI

“

Innovations in hospitality sector such as virtual temple tours and spiritual wellness retreats are enhancing overall experience for religious tourists



Garish Oberoi
President
HRANI

In recent years, India has experienced a significant increase in religious tourism, shaping the sector into a dynamic tapestry of spiritual journeys. This evolving trend attracts seasoned pilgrims and new spiritual seekers alike, seeking inner peace. What was once exclusive to dedicated travellers is now a beacon for those seeking deeper connections and spiritual enrichment.

The roots of this transformation can be traced back to several visionary initiatives, most notably the PRASAD initiative, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015. This programme has catalysed the development of India's religious sites, nurturing ancient cities and sacred locations into thriving spiritual hubs.

From the majestic temples of Varanasi to the serene shores of Rishikesh, India's spiritual landscape is as diverse as it is enchanting. A landmark event this year, the inauguration of the Ram

Mandir in Ayodhya, has significantly strengthened India's tourism prospects. This historic development is expected to drive holistic growth, creating employment opportunities and contributing to the nation's GDP. The Ram Mandir's inauguration not only marks a monumental moment in India's spiritual history but also paves the way for the enhancement of numerous other pilgrimage destinations.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, India's religious tourism sector attracted 1,439 million tourists in 2022. Projections indicate that this sector will continue to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 16 per cent by 2030. The symbiotic relationship between religious tourism and the broader travel and tourism industry is evident as each sector drives growth in the other.

Innovations in the hospitality sector, such as virtual temple tours, spiritual wellness retreats, and culturally infused accommodation, are enhancing the overall experience for religious tourists.

In conclusion, India's religious tourism is not only thriving but also reshaping the country's travel landscape. With continued investment and innovation, India is poised to remain a global leader in spiritual tourism, offering unparalleled experiences to travellers from around the world.

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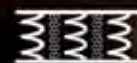
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Hospitality sector grows with spiritual tourism: HRAEI

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With an eye on burgeoning revenue, the eastern region of the country has geared up to attract more spiritual tourists



Sudesh Poddar
President
HRAEI

India's two schemes launched in 2014-15: PRASHAD and the Swadesh Darshan.

With an eye on the burgeoning revenue, eastern region of the country has geared up to attract more spiritual tourists. Three of the largest pilgrimage circuits in eastern India are centred around Puri-Bhubaneswar in Odisha, Bodhgaya-Nalanda in Bihar and Kamakhya in Assam.

In recent years, India has witnessed a significant increase in spiritual tourism, which received a big boost with the opening of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. This event marked a milestone for the hospitality and tourism industries. The hospitality industry, comprising both big and small players, rose up to the occasion to attract more pilgrims and tourists.

According to the data of the Ministry of Tourism, religious tourism has generated a revenue of ₹1.34 lakh crore in 2022. It is also expected to create 140 million temporary and permanent jobs by 2030. It is estimated that 60 per cent of domestic travel undertaken in India is for spiritual and religious purposes. The surge of religious tourism gains support from Government of

These three circuits draw both domestic and international tourists all the year round. In addition, the Durga Puja celebration in Kolkata—recognised by UNESCO as a cultural heritage—also attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and tourists.

Hospitality industry of the region has developed hundreds of hotels and restaurants for the travellers. HRAEI supports its members in hosting tourists and provides guidance for proper care and assistance. The association liaises with various government agencies, including ministries, to fulfill this task. HRAEI also encourages new entrants into the hospitality sector to cater to the growing number of spiritual tourists.



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Investing in pilgrimage sites boosts economy: **HRAWI**

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Indian hospitality players are strengthening their presence in religious tourism by building properties at spiritual destinations nationwide



Pradeep Shetty
President
HRAWI

India, a country where millions seek spiritual fulfilment, deeply integrates religious tourism into its tourism sector. India's rich religious tourism landscape boasts numerous sites such as Varanasi's Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Ayodhya's Ram Mandir, Punjab's Golden Temple, Mysore's St. Philomena's Church, Delhi's Jama Masjid and Lotus Temple, Rishikesh for yoga, Odisha's Konark Sun Temple, Rajasthan's Dilwara Jain Temple, Bihar's Bodhi Gaya, Uttarakhand's Haridwar and Odisha's Jagannath Temple.

Religious destinations have significantly boosted India's tourism industry. The Ram Temple in Ayodhya has ignited a spiritual renaissance that transcends its physical structure. Over 50 million tourists are expected to visit the temple annually, revitalising local businesses, especially hotels, eateries and souvenir shops.

According to the Union Ministry of Tourism, India's religious tourism sector saw 1,439 million tourists in 2022, up from 677 million in 2021. This growth also led to a rise in revenue, with religious tourism destinations earning ₹1.34 lakh crore in 2022, compared to ₹65,070 crore in 2021. The sector is expected to continue to grow, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16 per cent projected by 2030. By then, it could generate US\$59 billion in revenue and create 140 million direct and indirect employment. Indian hospitality players are strengthening their presence in religious tourism by building properties at spiritual destinations nationwide.

The growth of India's religious tourism underscores its integral role in the nation's cultural and economic landscape. As we look to the future, it is crucial for both the government and industry stakeholders to invest in and support this sector. By doing so, we can ensure that religious tourism continues to flourish, promoting deeper cultural understanding and delivering substantial economic benefits.

At HRAWI, we are committed to promoting and enhancing this vital aspect of Indian tourism, recognising its profound impact on national heritage and economic prosperity.





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Religious tourism fuels South India's economy: **SIHRA**



K Syama Raju
President
SIHRA

“

Rameswaram, Kanchipuram, and Sringeri with proper attention and infrastructure and have the potential to attract several visitors.”

South India, with its rich tapestry of history, culture, and spirituality, stands as a beacon for religious tourism in India and across the globe. As President of the South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA), I am privileged to witness firsthand the profound impact this unique form of tourism has on our region.

Religious tourism in South India is not merely about visiting temples, churches, or mosques; it is an immersive experience that allows travellers to connect deeply with the heritage and traditions preserved and celebrated for centuries. From the grand architecture of temples such as Meenakshi in Madurai, Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, and Brihadeeswara in Thanjavur to the churches of Kerala and the ancient mosques of Karnataka, each destination offers a distinct spiritual journey.

The influx of religious tourists significantly contribute to the local economy, providing livelihood to thousands of people. Hotels, restaurants, transport services, and local artisans all benefit from the steady stream of pilgrims and spiritual seekers. This symbiotic relationship underscores the importance of religious tourism as a catalyst for economic growth and community development.

Our association is committed to ensuring that the hospitality industry keeps on changing to meet the needs of religious tourists. We strive to offer accommodations and services that respect and enhance the spiritual experience. This includes providing information on local customs, offering traditional South Indian cuisine, and ensuring accessibility to various religious sites.

However, the growth of religious tourism also brings with it specific challenges. Preserving our spiritual sites, managing the environmental impact of increased footfall, and ensuring the safety and comfort of visitors are paramount. Collaborative efforts between the government, local communities, and the hospitality industry are essential to address these challenges effectively.

Furthermore, promoting lesser-known pilgrimage destinations can help distribute the benefits of tourism more evenly across the region. Places such as Rameswaram, Kanchipuram, and Sringeri hold immense religious significance and, if given proper attention and infrastructure, have the potential to attract more visitors.

In conclusion, religious tourism in South India is a powerful force that transcends mere travel. It cultivates a deeper understanding of our cultural and spiritual heritage while contributing significantly to the socio-economic fabric of our society. As President of SIHRA, I am dedicated to promoting and nurturing religious tourism, ensuring that every visitor leaves with a sense of fulfilment and a deeper connection to the spiritual heart of South India. ▣



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HOTELS RECEPTIVE TO TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES

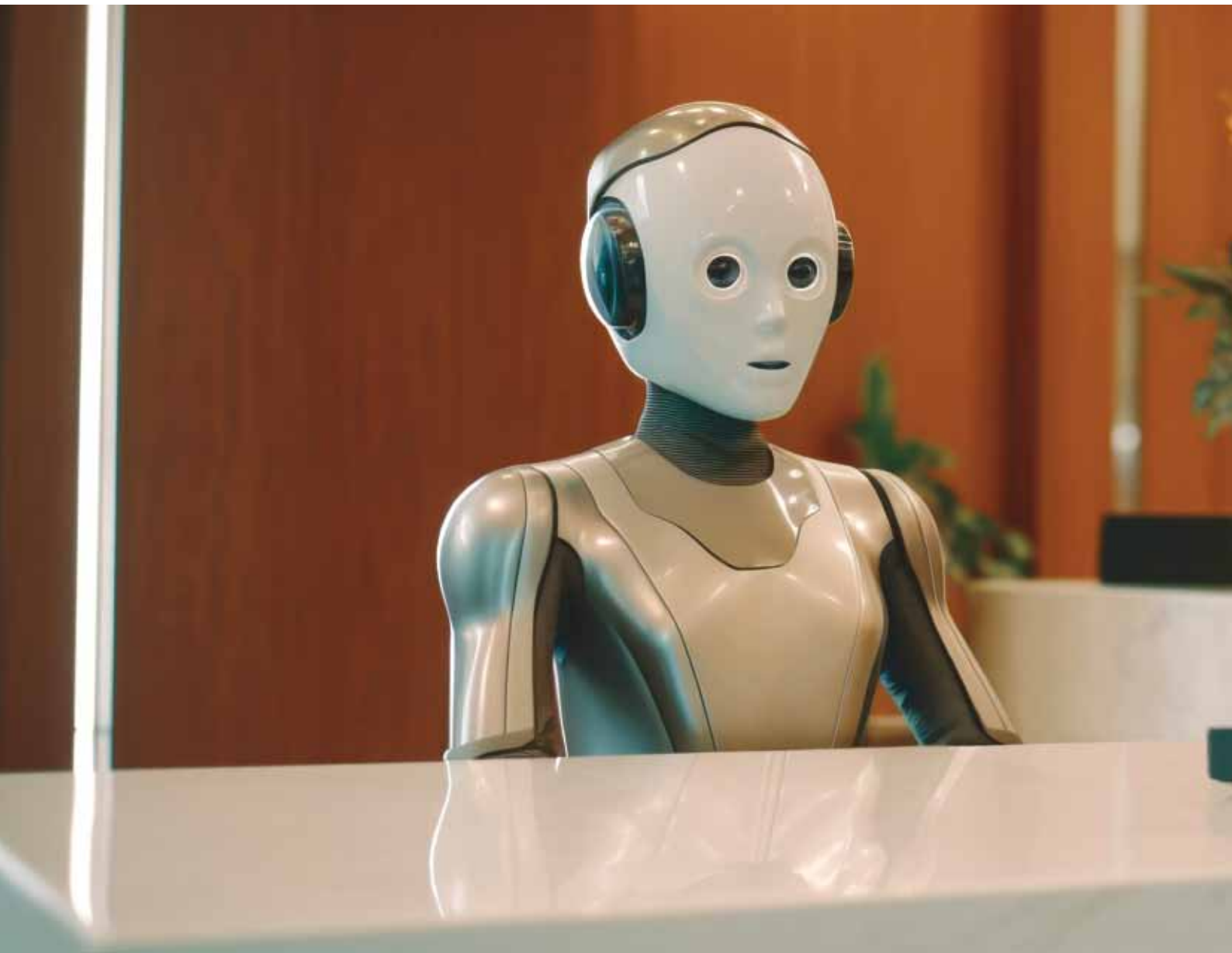
Facing challenges in cost and adoption, hotels recognise technology's pivotal role in achieving operational efficiency and sustaining growth.



Sakshi Singh

The Indian hospitality sector is experiencing a Goldilocks period, with most players reporting strong growth and profitability. Revenue for the industry is likely to rise by 11 to 13 per cent in the current financial year. Improving

profitability and strong domestic demand are attracting newer participants to the sector, with investments rising four times to US\$400 million in 2023. Despite the hospitality sector witnessing interest and attracting substantial investments in the recent years, technology investment remains low compared to other sectors.





Low investment in technology does not mean that the hotel industry lacks cutting-edge solutions or that they are unreceptive to technological changes; it is likely due to the industry's human-dependent nature. Many hospitality chains are implementing large-scale technological solutions such as cloud-based customer and property management systems.

Even though the sector prides itself on the importance of human interaction, integrating new-age technologies has become unavoidable for efficiency and growth. Previously, scaling up hospitality businesses without compromising operational efficiency would have taken decades. However, solutions such as channel management, booking engines, data



Ajay Kanojia
Cluster General Manager
Sayaji Hotels



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Embracing new technologies can be costly but the benefits in operational efficiency and guest satisfaction make it a worthwhile investment



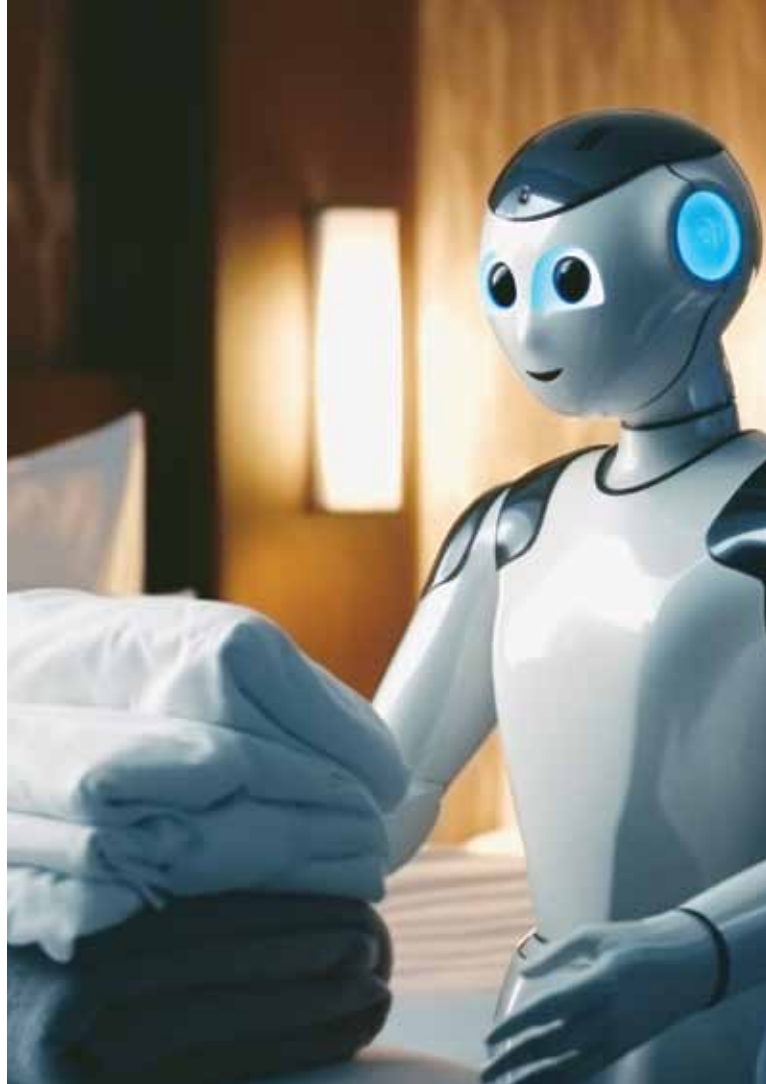
Somesh Agarwal
Chairman & MD
Radisson Blu Palace
Resort, Udaipur

“
We have introduced QR codes on our website to help our guests navigate to the application, providing them access to lucrative deals

analytics, POS software, and centralised inventory management have made it possible much sooner.

Several hotels are turning to technology to standardise customer-facing tasks such as booking, payments and check-ins. “We aim to introduce express check-ins that allow guests to seamlessly check-in and access their rooms directly using Internet of Things,” **Ajay Kanojia**, Cluster General Manager, Sayaji Hotels, said. A typical customer’s initial interaction with hotels is generally being handled by technological tools. Tools such as booking engines and channel management help hotels efficiently distribute inventory across online travel agencies and manage offers and discounts based on demand. The use of automated channel managers is helping hotels reach a wider market, reduce the risk of overbooking with real-time inventory updates, and secure better rates to improve revenue.

The automation of marketing and booking is just one piece of the technological puzzle. Hotels are utilising tools to personalise customer interactions, offering data-driven discounts and unique QR codes for personalised offers among other technological advancements. “We have introduced QR codes on our website to help our guests navigate to the



application, providing them access to lucrative deals and exclusive app-only offers,” **Somesh Agarwal**, Chairman and MD, Radisson Blu Palace Resort, Udaipur, said. Hospitality players are investing in advanced customer relationship management tools to analyse the booking history and other preferences of clients to design offers and discounts. CRM systems handle everything from booking to feedback, and one unexpected result of using technology is that guests are more forthcoming and straightforward in giving feedback when no human interface is involved. This helps owners better understand customer preferences and address issues promptly. “We have noticed a greater level of transparency and honesty from guests when they share their experiences now, which was lacking earlier. With the help of technological solutions, we have been able to resolve their grievances instantly,” Agarwal said.

Along with customer engagement and acquisition, another department that has seen impact from technological transformation is the food & beverage operations of the hotels. Hotels are achieving substantial savings with technology-based inventory management that integrates hardware tools such as thermostats and sensors. This has led to timely resource utilisation and optimised purchasing based on demand. “These technologies streamline order-taking, reduce wait times, and





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Aditya Sanghi
CEO & Co-founder
Hotelogix

minimise errors. These systems offer valuable insights into guest preferences and consumption patterns, enabling personalised dining experiences and more effective menu planning,” **Aditya Sanghi**, CEO & Co-Founder, Hotelogix, explained. F&B departments of large hotels handle significant amounts of perishable items and technology helps reduce waste and increase cost savings. Many hotels are also focusing on kitchen automation to achieve energy savings and reduce their environmental footprint.

Depending on the level of technology adoption and the size of the hotel, new-age tools can be expensive. However, according to industry experts, the quantum of cost savings usually justifies the high

price of these technological advancements. Property owners should take into consideration various factors while considering a solution. Technology solutions do increase operational efficiency and drive growth; however, investing large amounts in technologies that do not directly lead to efficiency gains should be avoided.

“Implementing new technologies can be costly, but the benefits in operational efficiency and guest satisfaction make it a worthwhile investment,” Kanojia said, while elaborating on the need for hotels to continuously evolve and seek newer solutions. Large hotels often have an advantage when it comes to technology, as deploying a tool across

“Technologies offer valuable insights into guest preferences and usage patterns, enabling personalised dining experiences and more effective menu planning



several properties leads to economies of scale and lower costs.

Technology has become a major point of discussion among all stakeholders in the hospitality sector, including owners, managers, suppliers, and other connected individuals. The emergence of AI has added a hint of uncertainty, especially among workers. Industry veterans believe the use of AI will be limited to tasks that have already been automated or have no scope for human intervention. “I do not see technology as a competition for manpower. There should not be a battle or a debate as to who is superior. Humans have their own capabilities, such as domain expertise, soft skills, social traits, people management skills, and emotional intelligence,” Agarwal explained. □

Heritage meets modern luxury

Raffles Jaipur connects and entices guests with local culture through a Shikar tent and hand-carved sandstone columns.



Raffles Hotels & Resorts has opened Raffles Jaipur. The hotel is a blend of Mughal and Rajputana architecture, featuring 50 guestrooms and suites with unique layouts and décor. Each room features an expansive balcony with an outdoor soaking tub or plunge pool, and intricate details such as painted corniced ceilings, golden murals, furniture featuring camel bone inlay, locally sourced artifacts, and carpets woven in Jaipur.

destinations rich with history, beauty, and culture, which is what led us to grow our presence in Rajasthan—whose ancient heritage of forts and palaces continues to inspire and capture the imagination of international travellers.”

Raffles Jaipur invites guests to connect with local culture at every corner of the hotel. Upon arrival, a Shikar tent evokes memories of Royal Mughal expeditions, while hand-carved sandstone columns in the courtyard provide a glimpse




Raffles Jaipur is blend of Mughal and Rajputana architecture, featuring 50 guestrooms and suites with unique layouts and décor

Commenting on the launch, **Omer Acar**, CEO, Raffles Hotels & Resorts, said, “At Raffles, we look for world-renowned

into the past. The brand’s Butler Service offers curated healing rituals traditional to Rajasthani culture, including botanical

infused bathing, health elixirs made from local spices, and plant-based ointments.

Guests can enjoy a 620 square-metre spa featuring indulgent treatment rooms and mineral pools, as well as a state-of-the-art fitness studio. 

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CYBERSECURITY IN HOSPITALITY

Need of the hour

Recent cyber-attacks highlight urgent need for robust defences; proactive measures must mitigate potential breaches.

 **Charmaine Fernz**

In today's interconnected world, cybersecurity is critical for all industries, including hospitality. Hotels, resorts, and similar establishments are especially vulnerable due to technological advancements and reliance on online systems, risking data breaches, financial loss, reputational damage, and legal issues.

Several major cyber-attacks have targeted the hospitality industry. These attacks serve as a reminder of the significant impact that data breaches can have on the hospitality sector and highlight the importance of being prepared for cyber threats.

Adequate measures

The hospitality industry must remain vigilant in its recovery amid evolving cyber threats. With increasing frequency and sophistication, businesses must implement robust security measures to safeguard data. Failure may lead to costly breaches with far-reaching consequences.

Aditya Sanghi, CEO & Co-Founder, Hotelogix, explains that the hospitality industry is highly susceptible to cyberattacks. There are many reasons, including deploying a seasonal or temporary workforce during high-demand seasons without proper cybersecurity training, high staff attrition and weak networks, among others. Another important reason concerning hotel groups or chains is the franchise



Rayan Aranha
VP, Hospitality & Commercial
Brigade Group

Our staff undergoes training regularly to identify and prevent cyber threats, complemented by a comprehensive plan to mitigate data breaches when they occur," pointed out Aranha.

Elaborating further, **Pinkesh Kotecha**, MD & Chairman, Ishan Technologies, is of the view that a comprehensive approach is required such as enhanced cybersecurity measures, tailored services and regular audits, compliance checks, vulnerability assessments, ensuring adherence to industry standards and regulations, while proactively identifying and remedying system weaknesses. Robust perimeter security measures such as firewalls, VPNs, and sin-



We employ a multi-layered approach, utilising industry-standard cybersecurity protocols to safeguard guests' information

model. Apart from many other things, it leads to inconsistencies in implementing group-wide cybersecurity measures. Elaborating further **Rayan Aranha**, Vice President, Hospitality & Commercial, Brigade Group adds that ensuring the security and privacy of guest data is very essential and a top priority. "We employ a multi-layered approach, utilising industry-standard cybersecurity protocols and data encryption to safeguard guests' information. Additionally, we regularly update our software to address vulnerabilities.

gle sign-on authentication must be implemented to fortify guest networks, preventing unauthorised access and streamlining secure authentication processes.

Furthermore, bespoke AI or ML-enabled SASE and secure SD-WAN solutions are designed to bolster network resilience, connectivity, and security for hospitality organisations. By leveraging advanced technologies, companies optimise application and data delivery globally, ensuring consistent and secure connec-

check-out to streamline guest interactions, while adhering to health and safety protocols, smart room controls to offer personalised room experiences.

Sanghi believes that in India, chains or groups have increasingly adopted cloud-based hospitality solutions, including



Pinkesh Kotecha
MD & Chairman
Ishan Technologies

Hotel PMS, channel managers, booking engines, revenue management systems and point of sale, among others. Compared to on-premises solutions, these cloud solutions can protect hotel data with robust network security tools, anti-virus, real-time data intrusion, and others.

However, Kotecha delves further saying hospitality chains are increasingly exploring advanced technologies such as AI and cloud services to streamline opera-



tions and enhance guest experiences. The adoption of cloud-based solutions, allowing hospitality chains to efficiently manage reservations, streamline check-in processes, and optimise inventory management is increasing. Additionally, the integration of Internet of Things (IoT)

However, there is a growing recognition that hospitality chains need to partner with ICT providers for enhanced security and connectivity. These companies are investing in advanced security solutions that enhance guest safety and integrate with their overall experience. Technologies



Facial recognition and AI-backed video analysis offer enhanced security protocols without compromising guest convenience


devices, such as smart thermostats and keyless entry systems, offers guests greater convenience and personalisation during their stay.

Investment landscape

“Traditionally, cybersecurity responsibilities have been handled by IT teams.

such as facial recognition and AI-backed video analysis offer enhanced security protocols without compromising guest experience and convenience,” Kotecha stated.

Aranha explains that Indian hospitality chains prioritise IT security to protect guest data and maintain trust. They use advanced software such as firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and endpoint protection. Regular security audits identify vulnerabilities and ensure compliance with regulatory standards. Staff education on cybersecurity best practices fosters a culture of security awareness.

Goyal emphasises the importance of IT security in hospitality chains, focusing on key areas such as data protection, network security, endpoint security, and compliance management. Data protection includes encryption, secure storage, and access control measures. Network security includes firewalls, intrusion detection systems, VPNs, and network segmentation. Endpoint security protects devices from malware and unauthorised access. 

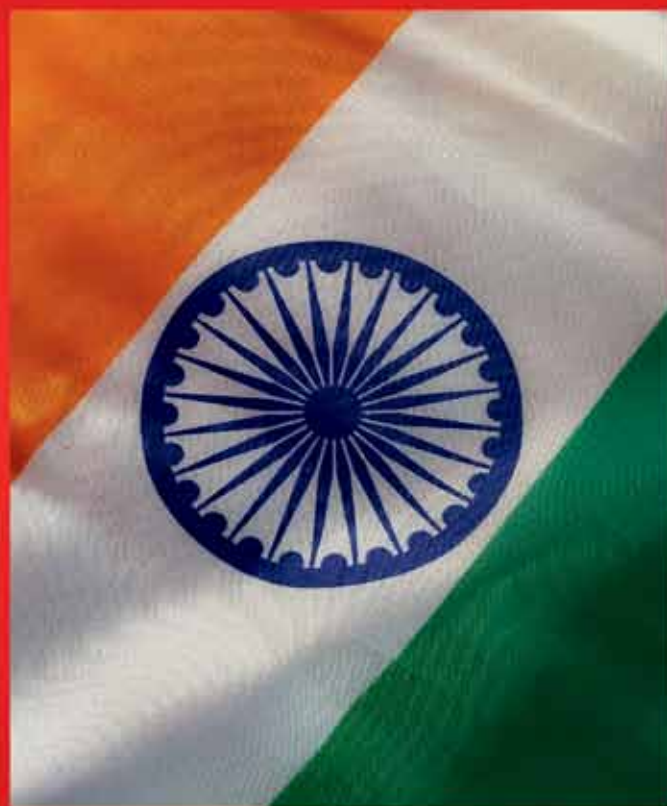


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INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Augmented reality and virtual reality technologies are no longer just futuristic concepts. While once considered expensive, they are gaining traction in hospitality industry.

 **Ananya Kukreja**

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies are garnering hospitality industry's attention, despite their reputation for being costly and not readily available. These innovative technologies are changing the hospitality sector by offering cutting-edge customisation and real-time feedback, benefiting both hotels and their clientele. "VR can significantly enhance the hospitality, tourism, and restaurant industries because these sectors are fundamentally about creating experiences for customers," said **Vishal Puri**, Co-founder, Spalba.

VR's potential expands to Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) and wedding segments, allowing event companies to showcase their offerings as well as the features of event destinations and venues. They may be used for:

- **Increased engagement:** VR experiences are inherently immersive, allowing users to interact with products and environments in a way that static images or videos cannot. This deeper engagement can create a more lasting impression and a stronger connection with a brand.
- **Improved product demonstrations:** Imagine showcasing the latest products at a trade show using VR. Customers could virtually explore the features, interact with different functionalities, and even experience the product in a simulated real-world setting. This would create a far more engaging and memorable experience compared to traditional product displays.
- **Targeted marketing campaigns:** One could develop VR experiences that allow potential customers to explore the brand story, interact with products in unique ways, or even



participate in virtual events. This personalised approach can significantly increase brand awareness and product interest.

Sales, revenue & cost impact

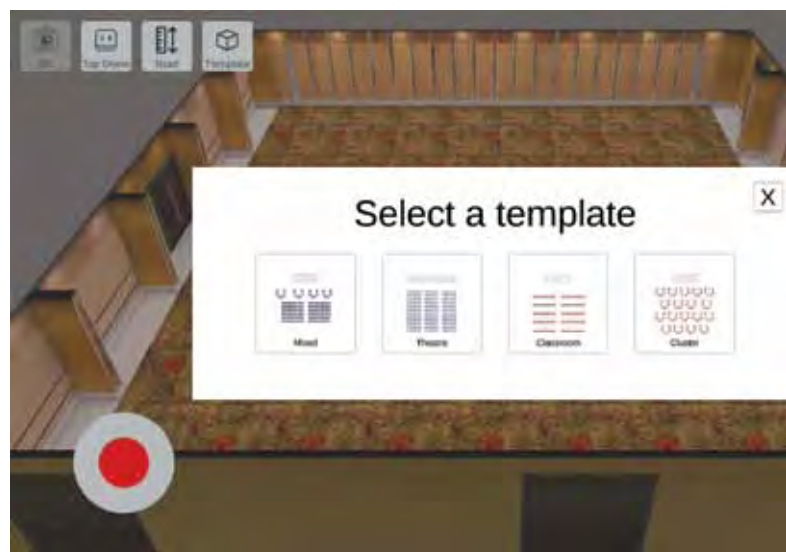
Virtual reality integration in the hotel sector has the potential to greatly affect both the top and bottom lines. "By leveraging AR and VR technologies, we can streamline our processes, enhance data accuracy, and make more informed decisions," said **Amit Damani**, Co-Founder, StayVista.

“

VR can significantly enhance hospitality, tourism, and restaurant industries because these sectors are fundamentally about creating experiences for customers

VR has the potential to boost marketing initiatives and improve brand visibility, ultimately increasing revenues. Virtual tours that highlight distinctive characteristics and experiences increase the likelihood of persuading prospective visitors about the property's services.

Virtual reality tours can also emphasise expensive accommodations, suites, and extra features to entice customers to upgrade and boost sales. VR-based training programmes have the potential to decrease the time and expenses linked to conventional training approaches in terms of operations. Offering virtual walkthroughs and setups for event



planning can lead to more event bookings and quicker decisions, as clients can more clearly visualise their events. “Using VR for reconnaissance and site inspections can set the hotel apart from their competition,” said Pradeep Shekhawat, **Partner, Stotrak Hospitality**.

The adoption of virtual reality in hotels enhances guest experiences, boosts operational efficiency, and strengthens marketing efforts, ultimately leading to increased revenue and customer loyalty. While the initial cost may be high depending on the chosen product to meet specific requirements, it ensures achievement of short, medium, and long-term goals with quick returns on investment.

“

Using VR for reconnaissance and site inspections can set the hotel apart from their competition

Future projection

VR holds potential in the hospitality and tourism sectors. It has the potential of offering customised visitor experiences, allowing visitors to personalise their virtual tours and focus on their specific interests. This could include VR in-room experiences offering personalised entertainment and virtual concierge services. Advancements in haptic technology will allow users feel textures and items in the virtual world. AI-driven VR will personalise experiences based on user preferences and actions, ensuring that every visitor enjoys a customised and engaging experience. □



Resilience meets retention

Roseate Hotels & Resorts is shifting focus from burnout to brilliance with launch of Resiliency Programme, aimed at empowering its workforce.



Lipla Negi

Known for its demanding work shifts, the hospitality industry often grapples with high employee turnover. However, things are changing now. An increasing number of hotels are prioritising employee well-being as a core policy to boost retention and loyalty among their staff. Leading this change, Roseate Hotels & Resorts has launched Resiliency Programme under its Care by Roseate initiative. A mobile app that brings wellness at fingertips, helping employees with fitness and nutrition advice.

Citing recent research indicating that 72 per cent of hotel employees globally experience stress, **Kush Kapoor**, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, expresses hope that the 'Resiliency Programme' app will significantly help employees monitor and manage their stress levels. Launched as a pilot project, the app is now available to all 700 employees at Roseate Hotels & Resorts. The app provides comprehensive support, offering guidance on diet and nutrition, yoga, and fitness tips to help employees achieve work life balance. Kapoor added, "The app sends timely notifications and reminders, which employees find engaging and look forward to, given our collective tendency to anticipate updates. You can connect with Ayurvedic experts, doctors, or consultants, who are available round-the-clock to assist you."



Kush Kapoor
CEO
Roseate Hotels & Resorts

At work, Kapoor advocates for streamlining tasks to reduce stress and prevent burnout among employees. Talking about employee-centric policies, he informed, "We do not schedule back-to-back events



By not compromising on our employees' health, we enhance the overall service quality, ensuring guests enjoy an exceptional experience

in our banquet spaces. Instead, we host just one event per day in each hall, either in the morning or the evening. This approach ensures our employees work for a focused nine hours, avoiding the long, exhausting

12, 14, or 16-hour shifts that are common in the industry. By limiting the hours, employees can deliver their best performance during nine hours of work while maintaining their health and well-being."

According to Kapoor, this strategy offers a dual benefit: employees deliver their best within a manageable 9-hour shift, which in turn allows guests to receive exceptional service.

He affirmed, "By not compromising on our employees' health, we enhance the overall service quality, ensuring guests enjoy an exceptional experience. Our staff, knowing they have a finite and manageable workday, are motivated to provide top-notch service consistently." Indeed,

the service industry needs to prioritise employee well-being because happy and healthy employees are key to delivering impeccable service quality and creating memorable experiences for guests.



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Suman Gahlawat
General Manager, Le Meridien Gurgaon

Guests preferring personalisation over traditional luxury

From mobile check-ins to smart room controls and personalised digital concierges, integration of technology has transformed guest experiences, affirms **Suman Gahlawat**.



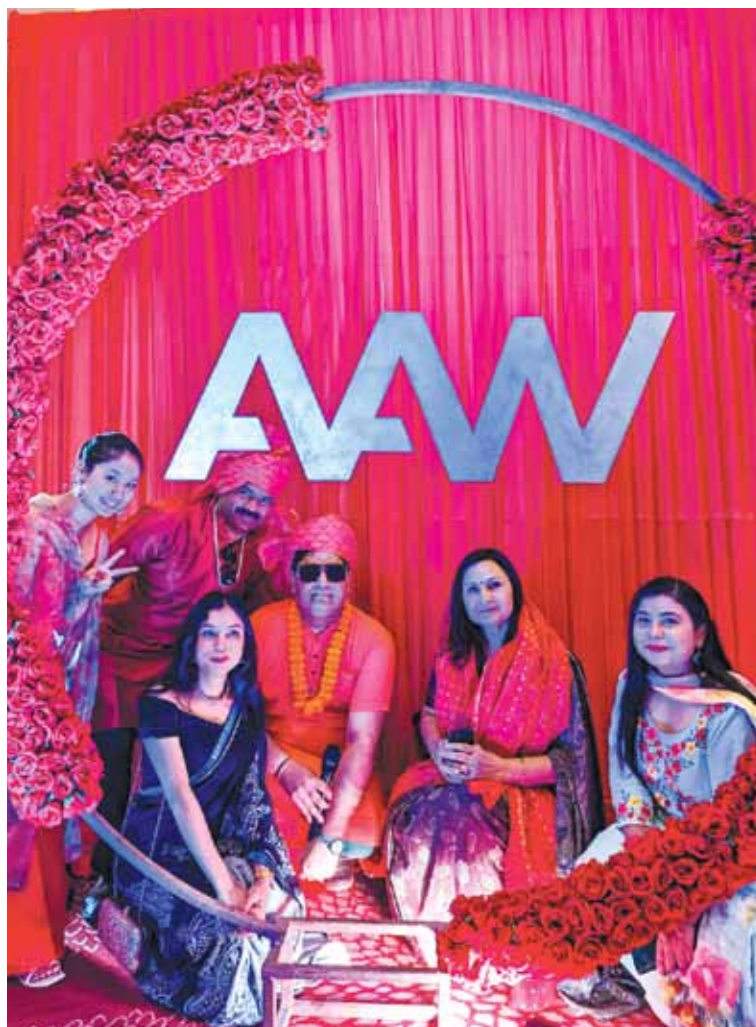
Lipla Negi

Q How are you maintaining your competitive edge in the Delhi-NCR region? Could you underline a few strategies that work for city hotels to grow their business?

Develop targeted marketing campaigns that highlight the hotel's proximity to key business districts, transportation hubs, and city attractions. Use social media, email marketing, and partnerships with local businesses to reach both business and leisure travellers. Offer comprehensive business amenities such as high-speed internet, meeting rooms, business centres, and express check-in/check-out services. Providing a seamless experience for business travellers can drive repeat bookings and corporate partnerships.

Leverage available spaces for hosting events, conferences, and weddings. Offering customisable event packages and exceptional service can position the hotel as a premier venue for various events. Collaborate with local businesses, restaurants, and attractions to create exclusive offers for hotel guests.

Implementing sustainable practices such as energy-efficient lighting, waste reduction programmes, and locally sourced food options can attract environmentally conscious travellers and enhance the hotel's reputation. Utilise customer relationship management (CRM) systems to gather guest preferences and customise services accordingly. Personalised experiences can enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty. Maintain





gies for revenue management as a General Manager?

We have a three-pronged approach to operating a hotel. Our endeavour is to ensure every interaction, every detail and every experience is meticulously crafted to exceed expectations. This steadfast focus of service excellence not only distinguishes us in a fiercely competitive market but also fosters enduring loyalty among our guests.

Same focus applies to hiring of right talent, retention strategy through focussed training, work like balance of nine hours working day, highest level of engagements and opportunities to learn and grow within the organisation.

One enduring strategy that has stood the test of time is dynamic pricing. It involves pricing and offerings based on demand and supply conditions.

Automation of systems has revolutionised revenue management through enhanced analysis. Analytic tools for historical data, market trends, and real-time

a strong online presence through an updated website, active social media engagement, and positive management of online reviews. Encouraging satisfied guests to leave positive reviews can significantly impact booking decisions.

Q How has the hotel tweaked its strategies to enhance guest experience? How does the guest experience vary from conventional to new age/millennial travellers?

Today's traveller in general and millennials or Gen-Z in particular, seek personalised experiences. Using data analytics, we tailor services to individual preferences, offering bespoke experiences that cater to specific needs and desires. There is silent stress on time and rushed services are common due to borderless life taking over quiet evenings and savouring food in plush surroundings.

From mobile check-ins and keyless room entry to smart room controls and personalised digital concierges, technology enhances convenience and efficiency. Modern travellers prioritise unique and

memorable experiences over traditional luxury. This includes curated local experiences, wellness programmes, and adventure activities.

Today, guests are socially conscious and care about sustainable practices. We have adopted sustainability as our core theme of operations. Understanding the blend of



Using data analytics, we tailor services to individual preferences, offering bespoke experiences that cater to specific needs and desires

work and leisure, we have introduced co-working spaces, high-speed internet, and wellness centres to cater to the needs of modern professionals. We see a clear shift towards personalisation, technology integration, unique experiences, sustainability, and work-life balance amenities.

Q How do you simplify hotel operations and what are your key strate-

information are greatly facilitated to predict demand with greater accuracy. This enables more precise pricing and inventory decisions.

Integration of various data sources such as market demand indicators, competitor pricing, and booking pace, provides comprehensive insights into market conditions. □



HOTELS EMBRACE 'PAWSITIVE' VIBES



Doubling as both travel companions and hotel guests, pets now represent niche segment that hotels are eager to attract with tailormade services.



Lipla Negi

Ask any pet parent, and they will tell you how much easier it is these days to find a pet-friendly hotel than a dog walker nearby. Known for their adaptability to changing trends, hotels have swiftly embraced the trend of pet-friendly travel as pet ownership continues to rise post-COVID. "The COVID accelerated the trend of pet-friendly hotels, and it has the potential to evolve into a long-term standard within the hospitality industry. As more people view pets as integral members of their families, the demand for pet-friendly accommodations will continue to grow," agreed **Afzal Khan**, General Manager, President, IHCL SeleQtions, Mumbai.

Tail-wagging the revenue

Most hotels view this as a strategic business move. By accommodating pets, they expand their customer base, attracting a niche segment of travellers who might otherwise postpone their plans or seek out accommodations that specifically cater to pets. Moreover, every pet-friendly check-in opens the gateway to a range of additional services that the hotel can curate and offer, ensuring ancillary revenue streams.

Interestingly when people are travelling with their pet, the length of the stay also increases as **Stephen D'souza**, General Manager & Associate Vice President, Cluster Operations, Chalet Hotels, revealed, "Our pet-friendly policy has attracted a broader range of guests, particularly those who prefer travelling with their pets. This has led to higher



Afzal Khan
GM, President
IHCL SeleQtions, Mumbai



occupancy rates, especially during holidays and vacation seasons when people are more likely to travel with their pets. Additionally, guests travelling with pets often book longer stays, as they do not have to worry about finding pet care back home.”

Boosting brand image

Some ‘furry’ content for your social media feed is guaranteed to earn you a noticeable number of likes. In this day and age of social media, likes could easily translate into loyalty. As customer satisfaction for pet owners goes hand-in-hand with how their pet is treated, there is a significant opportunity to earn the loyalty of this specific segment. **Mantu Sonkar**, General Manager, Regenta Place, Cunningham Bangalore, highlighted, “Introducing pet-centric loyalty programmes or perks for guests travelling with pets, such as complimentary pet amenities or discounts on future stays offer long-term benefits. These initiatives can further incentivise pet owners to choose the hotel repeatedly, strengthening guest loyalty.”

“
COVID accelerated pet-friendly hotels, and it has potential to evolve into a long-term standard within industry



Stephen D'souza
GM & AVP, Cluster
Operations, Chalet Hotels

“
Guests
frequently
leave
positive
reviews on
our
pet-friendly
services,
which
boosts
our online
reputation



Offering pet-friendly amenities works as a great differentiator. According to D'souza, the decision has strengthened the brand reputation and appeal as he explained, “Guests frequently leave positive reviews highlighting our pet-friendly services, which boosts our online reputation and attracts more



bookings. The combined effect of higher occupancy rates, increased dining reservations, and enhanced guest loyalty directly contributes to our overall revenue growth and stronger brand positioning.”

Wooing furry friend

As furry friends drive hotel revenue, the industry is sparing no effort in providing exceptional service and amenities for pets. From pet-friendly zones to pet toiletries and grooming services, hotels are rolling a red carpet for their furry friends. Khan explained, “Our pet-friendly amenities include plush pet beds and bedding, engaging toys, and a gourmet pet menu crafted by our culinary experts. To foster a sense of community, we also host pet events such as birthday celebrations. Guests can further enhance their pet's stay by indulging in our hi-tea sessions or take advantage of our on-call pet caretakers, available for an additional fee. For mealtimes, designated pet dining areas allow furry friends and their human companions to enjoy a relaxing and social dining experience.”

To further expand this segment, hotels are considering introducing more services. “Partnerships with pet food, toy, and accessory brands can offer exclusive deals, welcome kits, or special promotions to guests travelling with pets. Organising pet-centric events, such as pet meetups, training sessions, or pet-friendly festivals, can attract guests and build a community of pet owners,” shared D'Souza. Most importantly, pet owners appreciate staff who are





Mantu Sonkar
General Manager
Regenta Place, Cunningham Bangalore

“
Organising pet-centric events, such as pet meetups, training sessions can attract the community of pet owners

knowledgeable about animal behaviour and can interact with their pets in a friendly manner. So, hotels are also investing in training their staffs to better accommodate pets. “The team underwent comprehensive training programmes to understand animal behaviour, hygiene protocols, familiarisation of pet amenities, proper handling procedures, and clear communication regarding pet policies. We invite external pet trainers and behaviourists to train the staff on a regular basis,” said Khan.

For hotels, understanding and treating pets as cherished members of the family has helped resonate with the clients— making both their holidays and memories unforgettable.

Pet-friendly luxury

From offering pet incentivised stays to building a community of pet-parents, hotels are increasingly focusing on strategies to enhance their appeal to pet travellers. This concentrated focus has led to an increase in luxury services for pets. These luxury offerings carefully curated by hotels typically appeal to a diverse demographic, including High Income, No Kids (HINKs), young professionals, and families. Agreed D’Souza, “Introducing pet health and wellness services such as grooming, veterinary check-ups, and pet massage therapy can provide comprehensive care for pets. Customised experiences such as pet photography sessions, guided pet walks, or in-room pet entertainment packages can enhance the guest experience.”

Furthermore, hotels can partner with pet food brands, toys, and accessory brands and offer exclusive deals, welcome kits, or special promotions to guests travelling with pets. “Organising pet-centric events, such as pet meetups, training sessions, or pet-friendly festivals can attract the community of pet owners,” added D’Souza. The segment is expanding and there is room for more as Sonkar pointed out, “By recognising and capitalising on this growing market segment, hotels can position themselves as leaders in providing inclusive and personalised guest experiences.” □



Products & Services

Adding flair to decor


The Cora Collection, created by Spin, is a minimalist and functional design brand that aims to revolutionise everyday objects. The Cora Collection features products that blend premium materials with classic design principles, such as sleek trays and versatile organisers. Each item is designed with a specific purpose to enhance our lives and interactions with the surroundings. The collection's clean lines, minimalist aesthetic, and thoughtful features make it a holistic approach to modern living, offering solutions for organising spaces and adding flair to decor.



Personalise your bath space

GROHE has launched the Atrio Private Collection, a bespoke collection that combines cutting-edge water technology with masterful designs to personalise bath spaces. The collection spans various aesthetic styles, from minimalist to classic, and features levers, Caesarstone quartz inserts, and finishes. The collection is available in three distinct finishes and sizes, allowing customers to design the ideal bath space. The faucets are designed to deliver ease of use and longevity, embodying contemporary architecture in the heart of bathroom design.

Creativity in every glass

Lucaris' RIMS collection offers a range of fine crystal barware, inspired by vintage elegance and modern creativity. The collection includes four categories: Pillars, Proud, Classic, and Orient. Pillars provide a versatile foundation for mixology, while Proud offers beautiful saucer, coupe, and tulip glasses for shaken cocktails and sparkling wine. Classic features vintage-inspired shapes, while Orient captures Southeast Asian essence with flowing lines and intricate detailing. Whether a mixologist or enthusiast, the RIMS Collection allows creativity to shine and elevates the barware experience. 



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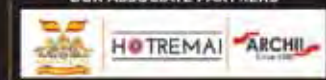
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MOVEMENTS

GAGAN KATYAL

Commercial Head
Ananta Hotels & Resorts



Ananta Hotels & Resorts has promoted Gagan Katyal to the position of Commercial Head. Katyal, previously VP Sales & Strategy, has been instrumental in driving brand and

distribution growth and achieving business objectives. As Commercial Head, Katyal will focus on driving brand expansion through new hotel openings and revenue growth. He has extensive experience and proven track record in sales and strategy.

SAMARTH AGARWAL

Head, Development
Fortune Hotels



Fortune Hotels has appointed Samarth Agarwal as Head of Development, bringing over 20 years of experience in hospitality business development, investments, and

consulting. Agarwal has worked in equity research, hotel and real estate consulting, and InterGlobe Hotels. He led the Asset Light growth strategy for Lemon Tree Hotels in India, successfully executing over 50 contracts.

POONAM NAIR

VP, Commercials
Radisson Blu Palace Resort and Spa, Udaipur



Radisson Blu Palace Resort and Spa, Udaipur has appointed Poonam Nair, Vice President, Commercials. Nair will oversee integral functions such as projects, purchasing,

accounts, and sales and marketing. She will also focus on business development and growth opportunities by working closely with domain such as food & beverage, banquet, spa and transportation. Nair's association with brand spans over a decade.

SANDIP NALAWADE

Director, Engineering
The Ritz-Carlton Pune



The Ritz-Carlton Pune has appointed Sandip Nalawade as the new Director of Engineering. With over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Nalawade brings

technical, analytical, and management expertise to the property. He has a strong background in hotel engineering, addressing the needs of luxury hotels, apartments, and commercial properties. Nalawade is known for building high-performing teams.

SHAAD ANSARI

Director, Catering Sales
JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar



JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar has appointed Shaad Ansari as Director of Catering Sales. With 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Ansari has a strong

track record of success at The Ritz Carlton Bangalore, The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake and Courtyard Mumbai International Airport. He will focus on enhancing the catering sales operations and enhancing the overall guest experience at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar.

SUPRABHATH ROY CHOWDHURY

General Manager
voco Jim Corbett



Suprabhath Roy Chowdhury has joined voco Jim Corbett as General Manager. Chowdhury, with 24 years of experience, has held senior roles in Indian hotel chains and

was General Manager at Holiday Inn Mayur Vihar. At voco Jim Corbett, he will lead the positioning and operational excellence of the property, focusing on exceptional guest experiences, innovative service standards and sustainable practices. □



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