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A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE

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FHRAI SPOTLIGHTS J&K TOURISM POTENTIAL WITH LANDMARK EVENT AFTER FOUR DECADES



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Dear esteemed FHRAI Members,

On behalf of FHRAI, I express my sincere gratitude to all our industry members who have been steadfastly supporting us in our various endeavours. Your unwavering commitment for the growth of tourism and hospitality is our biggest strength. I am delighted to share about some far-reaching initiatives where FHRAI actively participated or pioneered while making strides in addressing industry challenges and advocating for the hotel sector.

On 10 April 2024, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) organised a brainstorming session with tourism industry stakeholders to garner viewpoints, suggestions and feedback on specific agendas and themes for the development and growth of tourism in India. The deliberations encompassed a wide array of critical aspects related to destination development, marketing and promotion, skilling and capacity building and facilitation and standards. FHRAI shared inputs with MOT on these critical pillars of tourism development in the country.

We warmly embraced Japan's decision to implement e-Visas for Indian travellers. This step will unequivocally improve travel ease and boost tourism between the two nations which will further exemplify the collaborative efforts to enhance travel experiences.

It is highly encouraging to witness the wider adaptation of sustainable practices by the tourism sector stakeholders, with the understanding that each tourist is truly a treasured guest. On this note it was an honour for me to participate as a Guest Speaker in an engaging session hosted by the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation, which fostered the ethos of 'Atithi Devo Bhava'.

While continuing our efforts to tackle industry disparities and to provide relief to our distressed members, FHRAI proactively shared its concerns with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs by emphasising the problems faced by the hotel members in utilising available additional Floor Area Ratio in Delhi. This strategic utilisation is not only essential for sustainable growth but also to ensure efficient resource management.

After four decades hiatus, the Federation together with its regional associate HRANI, hosted a Stakeholders' Meet on 3 May 2024 in Srinagar. The event was designed to cultivate groundbreaking collaborations and accelerate advancement of tourism in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. During the event, an MOU was executed between FHRAI and the Hoteliers Club Srinagar, emphasising policy advocacy, networking, and governmental liaison between the two organisations. This Meet marked an important stride in rejuvenating Jammu & Kashmir's tourism industry, with the goal of forging new alliances and opportunities that will foster enduring growth and development in the region. At the event, FHRAI also honoured **Mushtaq Chaya**, CMD, Mushtaq Group of Hotels and Chairman, Hotelier's Club Srinagar with an Excellence Award, for his outstanding contributions to the tourism and hospitality sectors in Jammu & Kashmir.

FHRAI remains committed to advocating for the interests of its members and fostering a conducive regulatory environment for the growth of the hospitality sector in India. Together, we can overcome obstacles and emerge stronger than ever before.

Thank you for your continued support.

With best regards,
Pradeep Shetty
President, FHRAI

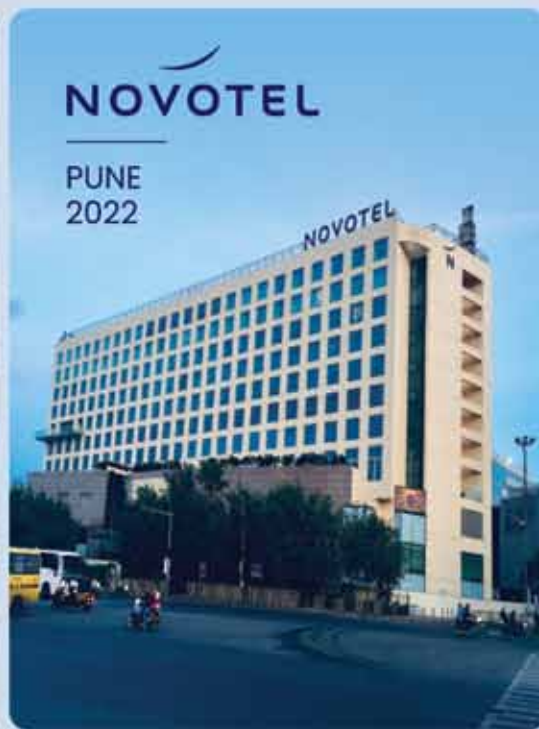


Pradeep Shetty
President,
FHRAI

“After four decades hiatus, FHRAI together with its regional associate HRANI, hosted a Stakeholders' Meet on 3 May 2024 in Srinagar. The event was designed to cultivate groundbreaking collaborations and accelerate advancement of tourism in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir”

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THIS MONTH

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FHRAI-IHM's inaugural batch secures placement offers even before completing their final examinations in top-notch hotel chains and hospitality firms.



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Learning curve 32 boosts revenue graph

Hospitality sector can ensure its competitive edge by investing in employee development, writes Dr A Ahluwalia, Area Director, Operations, IHCL, Goa.

Hotel IPOs signal 44 buoyant market

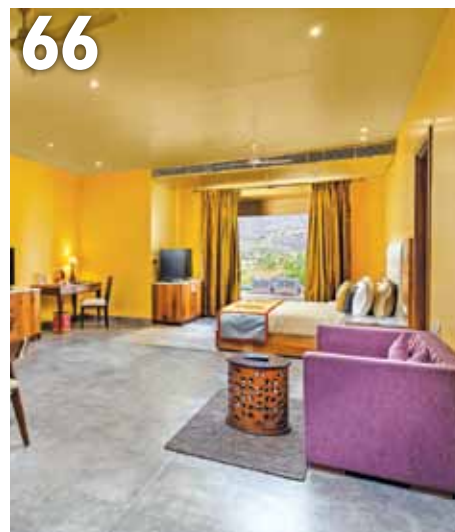
Indian hospitality sector is gaining significant investment interest due to its potential for cash yields and capital appreciation.

Can Indian hotels 50 maintain positive momentum?

Scorching summer season and ongoing general elections serve as a reality check for Indian hotel chains striving to maximise profits.

Tier-II cities lead 66 hotel investment boom

India witnessed four-fold rise in hotel investment volume in 2023 due to successful IPOs & premium listings of hotel companies.



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FHRAI HERALDS A NEW ERA OF TOURISM IN J&K

After a hiatus of four decades, FHRAI's Tourism Stakeholders Summit unlocks the tourism potential of Jammu & Kashmir, hails the destination for its hospitality growth.

In a bid to rejuvenate the hospitality landscape of Jammu & Kashmir, FHRAI and HRANI organised a stakeholders' meet on 3 May 2024 at Radisson Collection Hotel & Spa, Srinagar. The programme served as a catalyst for forging meaningful partnerships for hospitality development, igniting innovative business ideas and paving the way for a brighter future for tourism in Jammu & Kashmir.

Vikramjit Singh, Commissioner & Secretary to Government Industries & Commerce Department, Government

of J&K graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

FHRAI is planning to undertake a host of initiatives including a hospitality investors summit in J&K

Luminaries of the hospitality industry and key stakeholders from various sectors integral to tourism development attended the event. Among the distinguished attendees were **Raja Yaqoob Farooq**, Director, Tourism Department, Government of Jammu & Kashmir; **Baldev Prakash**, MD & CEO, Jammu & Kashmir Bank; **Mohammed A Shah**, Director, Department of Handicrafts & Handlooms, Government of Jammu & Kashmir; **K B Kachru**, President, Hotel Association of India and Chairman





make use of its national platforms and advocate with the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Civil Aviation and other relevant ministries and authorities for resolving the structural issues that are imperative in promoting tourism in J&K.

FHRAI felicitated Mushtaq Chaya with Hospitality Excellence Award for his outstanding contributions to the tourism and hospitality sectors in J&K

He further said, “FHRAI is also planning to undertake a host of initiatives including a hospitality investors summit in J&K as an exclusive platform where the leading brands and hospitality entrepreneurs shall have the opportunity to get apprised of the various avenues for tourism investments, investable projects in hospitality sector and the investor friendly policies of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir.”

Shetty also presented a curtain raiser of the 54th Annual Convention of FHRAI before the industry stakeholders of J&K at the event. □

Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group; **Mushtaq Chaya**, CMD, Mushtaq Group of Hotels; **Pradeep Shetty**, President, FHRAI; and **Garish Oberoi**, President, HRANI.

As a significant step towards enabling more collaborative efforts towards development of tourism in J&K, FHRAI and Hoteliers Club Srinagar signed an MOU with a primary objective of supporting each other in policy advocacy, networking and govt liaisoning for matters relevant for tourism development in J&K.

The highlight of the event was the Hospitality Excellence Award presented by FHRAI to Chaya for his outstanding contributions to the tourism and hospi-



ality sectors in Jammu & Kashmir. The award was presented by Vikramjit Singh to Chaya.

In his address, Shetty mentioned that going forward, FHRAI and HRANI will



Championing hospitality excellence since 1955

FHRAI celebrates its 69th year of service, envisioning hospitality industry's future with personalised guest experiences and sustainable practices.

Celebrating its 69th year of dedicated service, FHRAI stands as a leading force in India's hospitality sector. Since its establishment in 1955, FHRAI has played a pivotal role in shaping the hospitality industry, serving as the representative body for 60,000 hotels and 500,000 restaurants nationwide. Federation's vision extends beyond mere representation: it aspires to propel India's hospitality industry to the zenith, aiming to transform it into a three trillion-dollar industry by 2047, in alignment with the Government of India's visionary goals.

"As we celebrate FHRAI's 69th anniversary, we not only mark a milestone but also honour a legacy of unparalleled hospitality excellence. Our commitment stands resolute: to foster tourism and hospitality through transformative experiences that promote cross-cultural interaction and drive socio-economic growth. The dedicated efforts of FHRAI and its members



Pradeep Shetty
President
FHRAI

Our commitment stands resolute: to foster tourism & hospitality through transformative experiences & drive socio-economic growth

have played a pivotal role in elevating our nation's reputation as a beacon of hospitality excellence. On this momentous occasion, we also pay tribute to the rich legacy of extraordinary individuals and forefathers who made immense contributions to the growth of the Federation," said **Pradeep Shetty**, President, FHRAI.

FHRAI's multifaceted activities encompass a broad spectrum of endeavours. From policy advocacy and education to research studies and skill enhancement, FHRAI leaves no stone unturned in nurturing and advancing the industry. Its initiatives, such as the FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management and the Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality, underscore its commitment to fostering talent and innovation within the sector.

Central to FHRAI's mission is the steadfast adherence to industry standards and the promotion of experiential tourism. With an unwavering focus on sustainability, FHRAI champions environmentally conscious practices and endeavours to forge strategic partnerships to further this cause. The Federation's MoUs with key entities such as the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, the Indian Plumbing Association, and the Indian Green Building Council of the Confederation of Indian Industry exemplify its dedication to fostering collaboration towards sustainable development.

FHRAI envisions a future where personalised guest experiences, sustainable practices, and technological innovations converge to redefine hospitality. The Federation not only strives to elevate the industry but also enhance the overall tourism experience in India. □



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PREPS ON FOR GOA CONVENTION

FHRAI's upcoming 54th Annual Convention in Goa aims to transform India's hospitality landscape through collaboration, innovation and collective action.



Amita Pandey

After a six-year hiatus, FHRAI will host its 54th Annual Convention in Goa from 16 to 18 October 2024, at Taj Cidade de Goa Horizon. The convention is expected to serve as a landmark event, providing a platform for collaboration, innovation, and collective action towards shaping a dynamic and resilient hospitality landscape for India. The event will feature a gathering that brings together a cross-section of influential voices, policymakers, and eminent luminaries from the industry.

The convention is expected to host more than 750 hotel and restaurant owners, as well as promoters from across the country. Over 1,000 delegates representing prominent hotels and industry stakeholders will grace the event, alongside more than 50 national and international speakers who will share insights about the industry's future. Additionally, the convention will feature a special zone for investment facilitation and an exclusive B2B pavilion.



Pradeep Shetty
President
FHRAI

in a Mission Mode,' is going to be in alignment with the Government of India's vision for making India, a developed country by 2047. With this convention, FHRAI aims to set the right tone for India's hospitality industry, which is expected to welcome 100 million tourists by 2047. Interestingly, the theme of the convention not only focuses on the aggressive growth of the hospitality industry but also underscores the urgency of implementing sustainable and responsible measures to ensure its development without depleting resources.

FHRAI's upcoming 54th Annual Convention will host more than 750 hotel & restaurant owners, promoters from across India

This year, the convention's theme, "Tourism @2047: Incredible to Inevitable India: Driving Growth and Sustainability

Pradeep Shetty, President, FHRAI, stated, "The Federation is dedicated and focused on making sustainable tourism a pivotal agenda for advancing the tourism and hospitality sectors in the country. We aim to embrace it as a mission, ushering in a paradigm shift by intensifying efforts towards sustainable practices. These efforts encompass climate action, energy and appliance efficiency, plastic reduction, biodiversity preservation, and efficient resource consumption." □





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DELHI HOTELS Stuck in takeoff mode

FHRAI outlines that despite provisions laid out, the hospitality sector in Delhi has been struggling to increase Floor Area Ratio.



FHRAI has sounded the alarm on a significant challenge plaguing the development of hotel infrastructure in New Delhi—stagnation in the utilisation of increased Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Despite the provision for enhanced FAR in the Master Plan for Delhi 2021 (MPD 2021), the promised growth and development in the hotel industry in the capital remain elusive as no hotel in New Delhi has been able to increase the FAR even after a decade since its notification.

Federation emphasised, “As the demand for accommodation swells, driven by a sharp increase in airline passengers from four crore to seven crore in 2024, the inability of hotels to leverage increased FAR exacerbates the gap between supply and demand. Despite airlines ramping

up capacities, with IndiGo and Air India alone ordering over 1,000 planes, there are no active pipelines of hotel development in Delhi, Federation.”

FHRAI supported dynamic parking norms relaxation for existing hotels for availing additional Floor Area Ratio

Elaborating further, **Pradeep Shetty**, President, FHRAI, pointed out, “Once Terminal 1 at the Indira Gandhi International Airport opens, its capacity will increase from 70 million to 110 million passengers per year, solidifying New Delhi’s status as an important regional hub. The government’s initiative to establish new convention centres in Delhi further under-



Pradeep Shetty

President
FHRAI

scores its ambition to position the city as a MICE hub. The current challenges faced by hotels in Delhi regarding the utilisation of additional FAR are hindering the sector's ability to keep pace with the dynamic demands of the hospitality industry."

FHRAI supported the dynamic parking norms relaxation for existing hotels for availing additional FAR, aligning them with the criteria for new hotel constructions. "The current approach to parking norms fails to differentiate between new and existing hotel structures, leading to an inequitable usage of parking requirements," the Federation said.

Delhi hotels struggle with Floor Area Ratio utilisation, hindering industry's pace to meet hospitality demands

The Federation further underscored that "the unchanged ground coverage limit poses a significant hurdle to the practical implementation of the FAR policy, stifling the potential for growth and innovation in the sector".

It also emphasised the unavailability of rates for additional FAR for hotels, say-

ing that it far exceeded those applicable to commercial activities. "Despite the DDA's approval of revised rates in 2021, the notification has been pending for three years, exacerbating the challenges faced by the hospitality industry in Delhi. It needs to rectify the anomalies in the rates for additional FAR between commercial and hotel properties, bringing them into compliance with 2008 guidelines," Federation noted.

To guarantee sustainable asset creation and lessen the cyclical vulnerability inherent in the hospitality industry, FHRAI requested for expansion in the commercial component of hotels. ❑

Big placements for FHRAI-IHM



FHRAI-IHM's inaugural batch secures placement offers even before completing their final examinations in top-notch hotel chains and hospitality firms.

Embarking on the journey from academia to the professional world is a pivotal milestone for students, and nowhere is this transition more crucial than in the realm of hospitality. It is a moment where they could showcase not just their acquired knowledge but also their skills, passion, and potential for a career dedicated to serving guests with excellence.

The inaugural batch of FHRAI-IHM, a collaborative effort between NCHMCT, Noida, and IGNOU, New Delhi, faced unique challenges as they set out their academic journey amidst the backdrop of COVID. However, the small batch of 10 students secured placement offers even before completing their final examinations. This success not only reflects the confidence that industry leaders have in the calibre of talent nurtured

at FHRAI-IHM but also serves as a testament to the institution's commitment to grooming future hospitality leaders.

Opportunities for industry exposure for students are facilitated. This allows students to gain insights into industrial workings

Gulnaar Homa Tahseen, Navneet Batsalya, Nayan Shaw, Parth Chawla, Prashant Singh Rawat, Rishi Raj, Uditanshu Pandey, Varun Pun, Vijay and Zaid Qureshi secured placements in top-notch hotel chains and hospitality firms such as Radisson, Jubilant Foods, Oberoi Group and the Taj Hotels as Management Trainees and Operations Associates.

The faculty at FHRAI-IHM sharpens students' sense of responsibility and leadership skills by assigning them tasks regularly, exposing them to the industry through selective outdoor catering events at hotels, and providing them with strict guidelines regarding industrial exposure during their second year of studies.

Faculty development is a key aspect of any professional education programme, and FHRAI-IHM sends its faculty members to participate in the faculty development programmes organized by NCHMCT, Noida, and other organizations from time to time. Opportunities for industry exposure for students are facilitated by member hotels. This allows students to gain valuable insights into the industrial workings which enhances their chances of securing better placements in the industry.



FHRAI-IHM received affiliation with NCHMCT, Noida, to offer a three-year B.Sc. programme in hospitality and hotel administration, as well as an 18-month diploma in hospitality focusing on areas such as food production, bakery, and F&B service. Following accreditation from the National Council for Hotel Management, Noida, the institute embarked on its journey during the challenging COVID phase, undertaking significant renovations and repairs to enhance its infrastructure with support from FHRAI. ■

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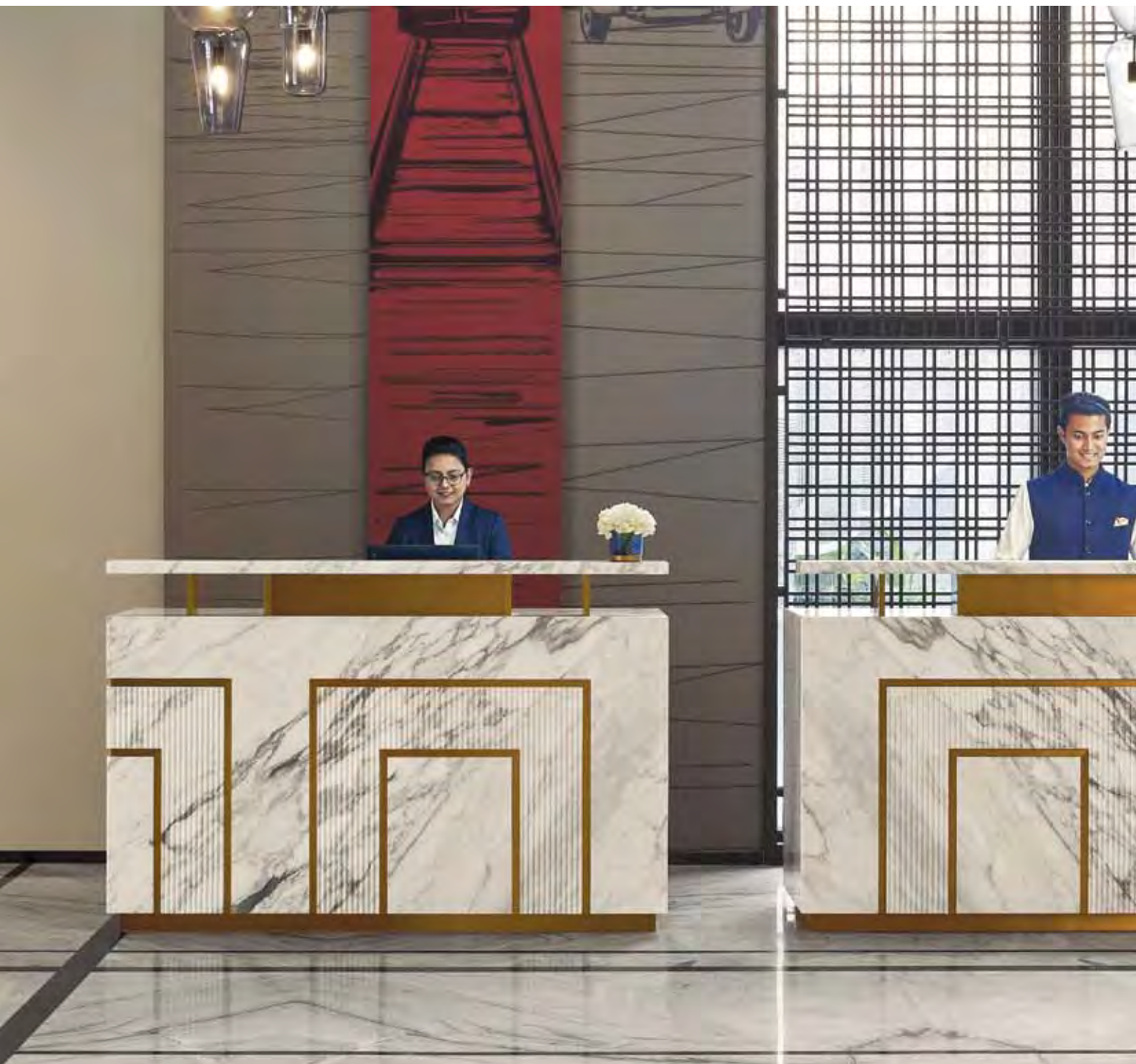


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Sustaining growth India's hotel sector vision

Govt support, infra development & addressing sectoral challenges are critical for Indian hotel industry's continued success, opines **Sanjay Sethi**.



The Indian hotel industry is one of the biggest employers of human resources in the country, employing 10 per cent of the total employment directly and millions indirectly, providing 8 per cent of the GDP. It provides jobs to 4.5 crore people and livelihoods to around 16 crore people. When the hotel industry thrives, green shoots are seen in the economy. Think of the period when people indulged in revenge travel after the second wave of COVID. The entire country sensed the prospect of a rebound. The sudden fluctuation in social contact, along with the need for maintenance during visitor-less periods, caused significant

stress to the industry. This resulted in a ₹1.30 lakh crore dent to the sector in the fiscal year 2021.

What quickly became evident post-COVID was the industry's ability to innovate, adopt, and adapt. This involved training and motivating the workforce in new technology, building consumer trust, discovering new and flexible methods to meet consumer demand, preparing for sudden bookings and cancellations, and demonstrating leadership in responsible and sustainable practices. In many ways, the industry showed resilience. The so-called "plentiful, low-wage employment"

sector remains the winner in plentiful services that leave deep imprints on the imagination.

Hospitality serves as one of the primary pillars of the tourism sector, and infrastructure development, such as the expansion of roadways and railway networks, enhances the entire ecosystem, resulting in a multiplier effect on growth. Therefore, the government's focus on infrastructure development, plans to develop new generation Vande Bharat trains and the expansion of national highway networks under the Gati Shakti scheme, are welcome signs.



Sanjay Sethi
CEO & MD,
Chalet Hotels Limited

What quickly became evident post-COVID was the hospitality industry's ability to innovate, adopt, and adapt

Simplifying procedures

Some pain points of the sector are yet to be addressed. What is needed is improving ease of doing business, relief from excessive licencing, implementing fair and equitable e-commerce policy, granting infrastructure status to hotels, extending moratoriums, restructuring debts, extension of LTA perks for hospitality, waiving e-Visa fees, and implementing similar measures that would propel the sunshine sector to shine even brighter.

Currently, hotel construction, which constitutes 70 per cent of project costs, undergoes depreciation at a rate of 10 per cent. To make hotel accommodation comfortable and appealing, reno-





compliances. From initiating a hospitality project to managing daily operations, bureaucratic hurdles become a nightmare. It is important to untie the knots, by implementing a single-window clearance system, promoting self-regulation, consolidating approvals and licences, and enforcing a minimum five-year validity period for licences. Midscale and economy hotels are the backbone of the economy, form the cornerstone of accessible travel, and deserve governmental support, similar to that extended to the manufacturing industry.

Midscale and economy hotels are backbone of the economy, form the cornerstone of accessible travel, and deserve governmental support

variations are needed routinely, requiring substantial investments. The taxation benefits under Section 35AD should be extended to hotels undergoing capacity enhancements, reconstruction, and brownfield projects.

To realise the government's vision of a US\$3 trillion tourism economy and welcoming 100 million visitors, granting industry and infrastructure status to the hospitality sector is crucial. The sector faces challenges due to the absence of a uniform system for approvals and

The Ministry of Tourism is sensitive to the industry's challenges. The states too have the power to give some relief, and some have already granted infrastructure status to the hotel sector. More advocacy is needed now for uniformity and to clear the bottlenecks. Such interventions will help millions of hoteliers, artisans, craftsmen, semi-skilled and skilled workers, part-time workers, musicians, tour operators, tour guides, transporters,

drivers, cleaners, and so on, who bank on the tourism and hospitality sectors for employment.

Policy acknowledgments

It is worth noting that 32 years after the initiation of planned development started in the country, in 1982, the first National Tourism Policy was adopted. It took many more years and considerable advocacy from the National Tourism Committee of 1989 to acknowledge the impact of tourism on the economy, the necessity for strategic sectoral development, and the pivotal role of the private sector. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) breathed new life into tourism by emphasising the primary role of private initiatives in driving the sector's growth.

Being hugely capital intensive, with high operating costs, the losses in the hotel industry have a multiplier effect, every time there is a downturn in travel sentiment. Recent challenges, including heightened expenses for sanitisation and other COVID-related protocols, have strained the industry's financial resources. However, COVID underscored the importance of physical resilience and mental well-being. There is thus an explosion in experiential categories, such as experiential retail, wellness holidays, and so on. We need many more additional destinations to cater to the evolving pref-



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The real work of this highly capital-intensive industry is employment creation, resource efficiency, infrastructure enhancement, preservation of heritage assets, and fostering inclusivity, and building a strong reputation in global markets. This entails addressing cultural misconceptions, combatting prejudices, ensuring facilities remain modern, and authentic, reflecting local heritage. The ultimate objective is to cultivate sustained demand from domestic and

international tourists, thereby maximising the economic benefits derived from cultural assets for the nation. The travel and tourism market in India is expected to generate a revenue of US\$23.72 billion in 2024. The projected CAGR of 9.62 per cent (2024-2028) is expected to result in a market volume of US\$34.25 billion by 2028. The Vision 2047 report forecasts the sector's contribution to reach US\$1 trillion by 2047, creating 50 million direct and indirect jobs. That is five times the population of Sweden right now.

While smaller chains entice visitors with package deals, top-end hotels up the ante in personalised luxury

Saving people & planet

As sustainability emerges as the principal theme of our times, several top hotel chains are setting examples. They are not only eliminating plastics from their premises and investing in green energy but also spearheading cleanliness campaigns and initiatives. These efforts aim to maintain cleanliness in hills and beaches, showcase local handicrafts and skills, and create more livelihood opportunities for local communities.

Tailored services

While smaller chains entice visitors with package deals, top-end hotels up the ante in personalised luxury. Travel is deeply personal, and with a desire to move away from the tried and tested, customers must be treated as micro-segments and not as monoliths. Companies often exhort their employees to “know the customer,” but customers are human beings with moods and desires that change. Hotel guests want to interact and connect with customers as individuals, not as data points. Hence, distinctive and superior service is more important now than ever.

As we prepare for the Amrit Kaal of high growth, business leaders and organisations must contend with major disruptions, increased digitisation, the pressure of inflation, geopolitical turmoil, climate burdens, and need for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

Going forward, it is certain that skill requirements will overtake degree requirements. Organisations today are embracing skills-based hiring—and that is good news for the hospitality sector that draws a lot of local talent. DEI is set to become more embedded into our work culture, just as sustainability will emerge as dominant theme, saving precious resource for both present and future generations. ▣



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Aurangabad hospitality seeks infra boost

HRAWI's Aurangabad chapter held discussions with top political leaders in Maharashtra to address hospitality industry concerns in the state.

Maharashtra's top leaders from across political parties recently met with HRAWI's regional chapter in Aurangabad to discuss grievances within the hospitality industry. Representing HRAWI, **Harpreet Singh Nirh**, President, Aurangabad Hotels & Restaurants Association, engaged in discussions and proposed recommendations for improvement with the BJP-Sena Mahayuti candidate, along with **Eknath Shinde**, Chief Minister, Maharashtra; **Atul Save**, Minister of Housing, Other Backward Bahujan Welfare, Government of Maharashtra; and **Dr. B K Karad**, MoS, Finance, Government of India, among other MLAs. Subsequently, another meeting was held with the Shiv Sena-INDIA candidate, joined by the leader of the Opposition party, **Ambadas Danve**. Nirh is also expected to meet with **Satish Chavan** of the NCP and **Prithviraj Chavan** of the Congress to present the current status of the industry and outline expectations for its progress.

Absence of well-maintained hotels and infrastructure is detrimental to the hotel industry's growth and viability in Aurangabad

"The immediate and most pressing concern for the hospitality industry is the non-implementation of industry status. Despite being accorded the status of an industry, effective April 2021, the resolution merely remains on paper and the benefits are not being applied to the industry. The hospitality sector continues to pay electricity, water tax and other utility bills at commercial rates. Also, there are delays in issuing approval and eligibility certificates under the Tourism Policy 2016. Hotels are facing financial burdens due to higher utility charges and lack of subsidies, including interest subvention and capital subsidies, which are crucial for their sustainability," pointed out **Pradeep Shetty**, President, HRAWI.

The Association emphasised that hospitality, as a major stakeholder in tourism, faces challenges such as high capital expenditures, expensive funding, lack of ease of business and minimal support from concerned authorities.

"Aurangabad, as a tourist destination has been suffering due to poor connectivity. Additionally, to operate a business in hospitality is strewn with hurdles and challenges that impact business continuity. Also, there is a pressing need for skill development initiatives to enhance employment opportunities within the hospitality sector, particularly in hotels and restaurants. These issues require urgent attention and resolution to support the industry's growth and viability. The absence of well-maintained hotels is as detrimental as the absence of infrastructure to attract tourists and business traffic to the region. Industries also rely on well-kept and efficiently managed hotel and restaurant properties to attract major investments," explained Nirh. □

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CONCLAVE ADDRESSES HOSPITALITY CONCERNS

9th edition of HRANI Conclave facilitated discussions among leaders in hospitality & underscored Uttarakhand's potential as tourist destination.

The 9th edition of the HRANI Conclave took place in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, bringing together leaders from the hospitality and tourism sectors for a comprehensive discourse on industry trends and strategies. Themed 'Dekho Apna Desh – Chalo Uttarakhand', the conclave, provided a platform for discussions, networking, and recognition of excellence within the industry.

The event was graced by **Rajendra Kumar Suman**, Regional Director, North, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India serving as the chief guest. **Garish Oberoi**, President, HRANI; **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, Honourary Secretary, HRANI and Vice President, FHRAI and President, UPHRA; **Amarvir Singh**, Treasurer, HRANI; **Rakesh Roy**, Vice President, HRANI; **Vinod Gulati**, Vice President, HRANI; **Deepak Parihar**; **Pradeep Narayan Singh**; **Pranay Aneja**, Managing Committee Member, HRANI; and **Renu Thapliyal**, Secretary General, HRANI.

Oberoi set the event's tone with a welcome speech focusing on the theme. He

Two engaging panel discussions formed crux of conclave, delving into vital topics pertinent to industry's growth

emphasised Uttarakhand's transformative potential beyond its natural beauty and cultural heritage, citing its emerging status as a popular wedding destination as expressed by Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**. He called for concerted efforts to develop alternate tourist destinations to ease pressure on Mussoorie and Nainital.

Two engaging panel discussions formed the crux of the conclave, delving into vital topics pertinent to the industry's growth and development. The first panel discussion, 'Dekho Apna Desh – Chalo Uttarakhand', featured speakers including **K N Tripathi**, Member, Managing Committee, HRANI and Managing Director, Ahana – The Corbett Wilderness; **Sandeep Sahni**, President, Uttarakhand Hotel and Restaurant Association; **Mahendra**

Ghildiyal, Chairman, Uttarakhand Chapter, ADTOI; **Manu Kochhar**, Director, Hotel Madhuban, Dehradun; and **Sunil Singh Rana**, Chairman, IATO Uttarakhand Chapter, who advocated for initiatives to position Uttarakhand as a premier tourist destination. They emphasised promoting lesser-explored areas and sustainable tourism to address overtourism and boost local employment.

The second panel discussion explored the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in hotel operations and guest experiences. Moderated by **Harish Chandra**, Founder, GHTP; **Sanjay Sood**, COO Leisure Hotels Group; **Jaspreet Singh**, General Manager, Six Senses Vana, Dehradun; and **Rahul Singh**, Regional Director, North, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts discussed how AI-driven technologies are revolutionising service delivery and enhancing operational efficiency. From personalised services to streamlined operations through big data analytics and blockchain, AI was hailed as a cornerstone in reshaping the hospitality landscape. □

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IMPACTFUL OUTREACH AT CII MEETING

SIHRA advocates for industry status to hospitality sector to access govt subsidies during sectoral association meeting on Ease of Doing Business.

Sundar Singaram, Director, Operations, SIHRA participated in the sectoral association meeting on Ease of Doing Business, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in Chennai on 10 May 2024. In the meeting, Singaram highlighted the significance of the hospitality sector and advocated for industry status to access government subsidies, addressing the CII Chairman and other delegates. The Chairman was impressed by the facts presented and assured his support in giving policy guidance to the government on the hospitality sector.



K Syama Raju
President
SIHRA

Sundar Singaram & Vikram Cotah held meeting with CII Chairman to discuss importance of the hospitality sector to the government

Department, convened 13th Board of Governors Meeting of SIHMCT & AN, Tirupati on 1 May 2024. Singaram, participated in the meeting and gave inputs to strengthen the human resources for hospitality sector in Andhra Pradesh.




Vikram Cotah, CEO, GRT Hotels and Resorts, was appointed Chairman of the tourism task force for the CII Tamil Nadu chapter. Singaram and Cotah held a meeting with the Chairman to discuss the importance of the hospitality sector to the government.

Focus on industrial training

Dr. Rajath Bhargava, Chairman, Board of Governors, SIHMCT & AN, Tirupati and Special Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh, YAT & C(T)

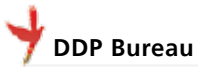
TNSDC industry connect

Singaram was invited to the Industry Connect Meeting organised by the Tamil Nadu Skills Development Corporation (TNSDC). In the meeting, Sundar emphasised the importance of the hospitality sector and the opportunity to generate jobs for the Tamil Nadu's youth.

The managing director of TNSDC assured the government support in skilling, reskilling, and upskilling to produce manpower for the hospitality sector. 

MOT participates in **Arabian Travel Mart**

Introduces the 'Cool Summers of India' campaign, strategically crafted to showcase India as a holistic year-round destination.



Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Government of India participated in Arabian Travel Mart 2024 from May 6 to 9 May 2024 in Dubai. The event marks a significant step in strengthening India's presence in the Middle East tourism market.

Incredible India pavilion was inaugurated by **Satish Kumar Sivan**, Consul General of India to Dubai. The pavilion made a resounding entry, aiming to capture the entirety of the UAE market. Leading a delegation comprising tour operators, luxury hotels, wellness resorts, and the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation, India showcased itself as a 365-day destination. Highlighting lesser known yet refreshing destinations, the

Leading a delegation comprising tour operators, luxury hotels, India showcased itself as a 365-day destination

MOT launched the 'Cool Summers of India' campaign at Arabian Travel Mart 2024. The campaign challenges the notion of India being too hot for summer travel, emphasising its offerings in hill resorts, including the Himalayas. The campaign seeks to promote India as a holistic destination throughout the year.





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Learning culture leads to staff retention

Hospitality sector can ensure its competitive edge by investing in employee development, writes **Dr A Ahluwalia**, Area Director, Ops, IHCL, Goa.

The hospitality industry, particularly the world of luxury resorts, thrives on exceptional service. Guests expect not just beautiful settings and luxurious amenities, but also personalised attention, anticipation of needs, and a seamless experience. An aging workforce, coupled with a lack of skilled individuals entering the hospitality field, creates a void, a significant talent gap.

Believing firmly in a three-pronged approach: teach, train and retain by investing in employee development, hospitality industry can cultivate a skilled and loyal workforce, ensuring their competitive edge.

Technology is changing guest expectations, demanding a workforce adept at digital tools and platforms. Sustainability initiatives are becoming increasingly prominent, requiring knowledge of eco-friendly practices. Additionally, guest preferences lean towards personalised experiences, necessitating strong interpersonal and communication skills.

Investing in comprehensive training programmes is key to bridging the talent



Dr Anmol Ahluwalia
Area Director
Operations, IHCL, Goa

gap. Training equips employees with the specific skills they need to excel in their roles. Skilled employees anticipate guest needs, providing a truly personalised experience. Their confidence translates into seamless service interactions, exceeding guest expectations. Training also fosters a culture of continuous learning, preparing employees to adapt to changing industry trends and thrive in an ever-evolving landscape.



Continuous training benefits beyond skills, creating a ripple effect. Employees feel valued, actively engaged and empowered to contribute their best fostering a positive work environment. Mastering new skills builds confidence and a sense of accomplishment, leading to increased morale and job satisfaction. This investment in employees demonstrates a commitment to their growth, fostering loyalty, reducing turnover and the associated costs of recruiting and re-training new staff.

Aging workforce, coupled with lack of skilled individuals entering the hospitality field, creates a void, a significant talent gap

Through training, skilled taskforce are transformed into loyal brand ambassadors. Employees crave growth, and establishing clear career paths that offer opportunities for advancement within the organisation motivates them to stay and contribute toward long-term goals.



The hospitality industry, particularly luxury resorts, offers a dynamic work environment with exciting career prospects. By investing in training and retention strategies, luxury resorts can position themselves as leading employers and can attract talented individuals seeking professional development, build a loyal and skilled workforce, and ultimately, deliver exceptional guest experiences.

It is imperative that a “learning culture” must be created. This fosters a continuous cycle of knowledge sharing and development. By adopting a “teach, train and retain” approach, luxury resorts can bridge the talent gap. Through well-designed training programmes, commitment to employee growth, and fostering a positive work environment, hospitality industry can build a loyal and skilled workforce. This ultimately translates to a

Mastering new skills builds confidence and a sense of accomplishment, leading to increased morale and job satisfaction

competitive advantage in the luxury hospitality sector, ensuring guest satisfaction and continued success.

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





BIG LEAP FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Responsible tourism remains key force behind sustainable development in hotels, prioritising economic prosperity alongside environmental conservation.

Green investments are crucial for industry's growth: **HRAEI**



Sudesh Poddar
President
HRAEI

With the rise of luxury tourism that focusses more on guest comfort and luxury hospitality, environmental consciousness and sustainability sometimes gets neglected. In

an effort to make stay in luxury hotels a memorable experience, eco-friendly practices must never be overlooked.

Looking at the miserable state of the planet's health, responsible tourism beckons hospitality brands to rise beyond the allure of financial gains and invest in practices that champion sustainability. Not just brands, but guests or travellers must also help nurture responsible tourism. The hospitality industry is not just a business, it is intricately woven with threads of culture, nature and human warmth. Industry leaders must follow the practices that help minimise our ecological footprints. This involves energy-efficient power supply to efforts of water conservation, from usage of sustainable materials to implementation of waste reduction strategies. In addition, there must be sincere endeavours to support local communities and, if possible, involve them to enable employment generation.

On the other hand, guests must also play a key role in shaping the landscape of responsible tourism. They must recognise

that every journey leaves an indelible mark on the places visited. It is their imperative to opt for eco-friendly accommodations, embrace local cultures with respect, and practice mindful consumption to collectively contribute to a greener tomorrow.

Responsible tourism beckons hospitality brands to rise beyond the allure of financial gains and invest in practices that champion sustainability

By championing practices that prioritise sustainability, the industry creates a legacy of profound impact. Responsible tourism is not just an ethical choice, it is a strategic imperative. For that matter, with the growing number of travellers espousing the need for sustainable practices to save the planet, immersive experiences of responsible tourism can serve as unique selling points for the hospitality industry. Thus, the industry can forge an alliance with guests and turn them into partners of green investments.

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Responsible tourism boosts sustainable hospitality: HRAWI



Pradeep Shetty
President
HRAWI

As we navigate the dynamic landscape of tourism and hospitality, the concept of responsible tourism emerges as a guiding principle crucial for the sustainable growth of our industry. Responsible tourism embodies a holistic approach that prioritises not only economic prosperity but also environmental conservation, cultural preservation and social inclusivity.

HRAWI firmly believes that responsible tourism is not just a trend but a fundamental ethos that should underpin every aspect

of our operations. It goes beyond mere compliance with regulations; it entails actively seeking ways to minimise our environmental footprint, preserve local cultures and uplift communities.

One of the key pillars of responsible tourism is environmental stewardship. We must adopt sustainable practices that reduce waste, conserve water and energy and promote eco-friendly initiatives such

“Responsible tourism embodies holistic approach that prioritises not only economic prosperity but also environmental conservation & cultural preservation

as renewable energy adoption and waste management strategies. By embracing sustainability in our day-to-day operations, we not only contribute to environmental conservation but also appeal to eco-conscious travellers who seek responsible travel experiences.

The recently launched initiatives such as granting industry status to hospitality and promoting sustainable tourism through initiatives such as ‘Travel for LiFE’ underscore the commitment to driving positive change in the sector. The Mission

LiFE campaign pledges to make all possible changes in daily life to protect the environment while also committing to continuously motivating family, friends and others about the importance of environmentally friendly habits. Mission LiFE is an India-led global movement to protect and preserve the environment, aiming to promote sustainable living and combat climate change.

Closely intertwined with environmental stewardship is the preservation of cultural heritage. As stakeholders in the hospitality sector, we have a responsibility to respect and promote local cultures, support traditional artisans and craftsmen, and ensure that tourism activities do not undermine the authenticity and integrity of cultural experiences.

Moreover, responsible tourism emphasises social inclusivity and community engagement. It involves empowering local communities by creating opportunities for employment, skill development and entrepreneurship within the tourism sector. Collaborating with local stakeholders, promoting fair trade practices and supporting community-based tourism initiatives are essential steps towards promoting inclusive growth and shared benefits.

As we look to the future of tourism and hospitality, embracing responsible tourism practices is not just a choice but a necessity.



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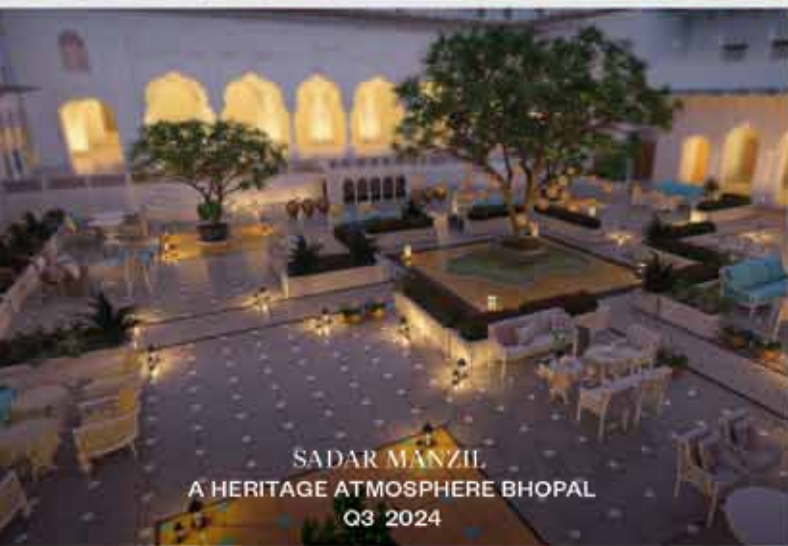
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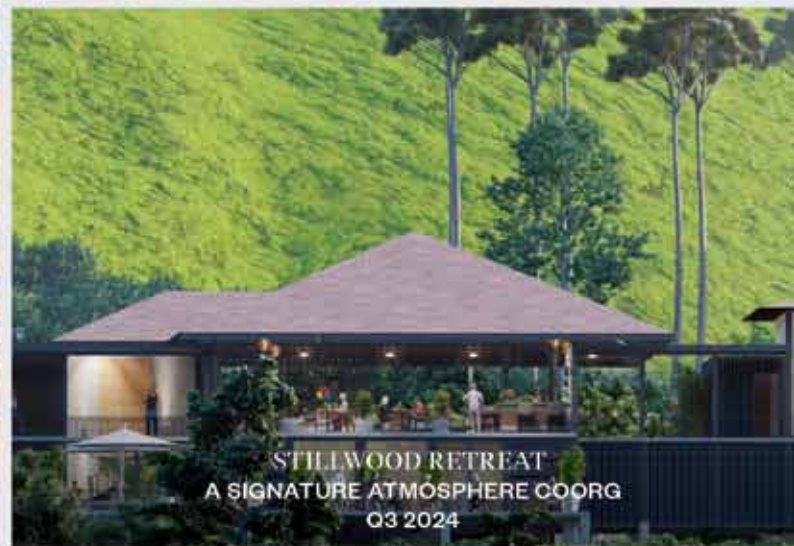
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India is emerging as model of responsible tourism: HRANI



Garish Oberoi
President
HRANI

In the dynamic landscape of modern tourism, a paradigm shift is underway where responsibility, sustainability, and authenticity take center stage. This evolution towards responsible travel not only shapes the future of tourism but also deeply influences the hospitality industry.

In recent years, the ethos of responsible travel has blossomed into a guiding principle for mindful globetrotters. They understand that their wanderlust should

not come at the expense of the environment, local communities, or cultural heritage. Rather, they seek experiences that foster sustainability, support local economies, and celebrate the rich tapestry of human diversity.

India, with its kaleidoscopic array of landscapes, cultures, and traditions, is emerging as a beacon of responsible tourism. Travellers are increasingly drawn to off-the-beaten-path destinations, where they can forge genuine connections with nature and local communities. This trend not only diversifies tourism offerings but also redistributes economic benefits to marginalised regions, thereby fostering inclusive growth.

For the hospitality industry, embracing responsible tourism is not just a moral imperative; it is a strategic necessity. Hotels and resorts are reimagining their operations to minimise environmental impact and maximise social contribution. From investing in renewable energy sources to championing local artisans and craftsmen, the industry is taking proactive steps towards sustainability.

Preserving local cultures lies at the heart of responsible tourism. By immersing travellers in authentic cultural experiences, the hospitality sector becomes a custodian of heritage, fostering mutual

understanding and respect across cultural divides. Moreover, by empowering local communities through employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, hotels and restaurants become catalysts for socioeconomic development.

As we navigate the challenges of climate change, responsible tourism emerges as a potent tool for environmental stewardship. By embracing eco-friendly practices, the hospitality industry not only mitigates its environmental impact but also sets a precedent for sustainable business models.

For the hospitality industry, embracing responsible tourism is not just a moral imperative; it is a strategic necessity

As stakeholders in the hospitality industry, we have a pivotal role to play in shaping the future of tourism. By championing responsible travel, we not only safeguard the integrity of our destinations but also enrich the lives of those who call them home.

In conclusion, responsible travel is not just an option—it is the imperative of our time, and the cornerstone of a resilient and thriving hospitality industry.



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Embracing eco-friendly practices by hotels are essential: **SIHRA**



K Syama Raju

President
SIHRA

As President of SIHRA, I firmly believe that responsible tourism is not just a choice but a necessity for the sustainable development of Southern region. Responsible

tourism encompasses a holistic approach that considers the environmental, social, and cultural aspects of travel. In South India, where tourism plays a significant role in boosting the economy, we must prioritise practices that minimise negative impacts on the environment and communities while maximising the benefits for all stakeholders involved.

Responsible tourism in South India entails embracing eco-friendly practices such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and sustainable water management in hotels and restaurants. It also involves promoting cultural sensitivity and respect for local traditions among tourists, thereby preserving the rich heritage for future generations.

Furthermore, responsible tourism allows us to empower local communities by creating employment opportunities, supporting small businesses, and involving them in tourism-related activities. By fostering partnerships between the tourism industry and regional stakeholders, we can ensure that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably and

contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the region.

Responsible tourism in South India entails embracing eco-friendly practices such as waste reduction & energy conservation in hotels & restaurants

In the hospitality industry, SIHRA plays a crucial role in promoting responsible tourism practices and setting an example for others to follow. By embracing sustainability as a guiding principle, we can enhance South India's attractiveness as a tourist destination and safeguard its natural beauty and cultural diversity for generations to come. I am glad to share that various hotel chains, including Evolve Back Resorts, CGH Earth, Tamara Leisure Experiences, and many individual resorts, have followed the responsible tourism model and made South India proud. □



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		MAR 2024	MAR 2019	MAR 2023	FEB 2024
 ADR	₹ 8,100 - ₹ 8,300		↑ 31-33%	↑ 6-8%	↓ 8-10%
 Occupancy	63-65%		↓ 1-2 pp	↑ 1-3 pp	↓ 7-9 pp
 RevPAR	₹ 5,103 - ₹ 5,395		↑ 28-30%	↑ 10-12%	↓ 18-20%
			Change over (Pre-COVID)	Change over (Post COVID-19)	



Source: HVS Research

Mar 2024 sees dip in hotel occupancy

Hotel occupancy rates in India declines seasonally in Mar 2024 compared to Feb 2024, according to HVS Anarock's 'Hotels & Hospitality Overview'.

According to HVS Anarock's 'Hotels & Hospitality Overview', despite a surge in domestic air traffic, hotel occupancy rates across India witnessed a seasonal decline in March from the previous month. March 2024 witnessed growth in both occupancy rates and Average Room Revenue (ARR) compared to the same period last year.

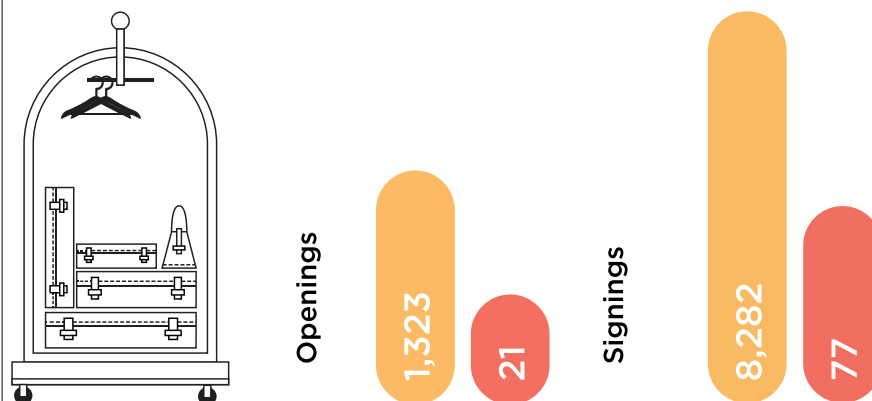
March 2024 witnessed growth in both occupancy rates & Average Room Revenue compared to the same period last year

Chandigarh and Kolkata emerged as the top performers among the country's top 10 markets, showcasing the highest year-on-year growth in occupancy rates. While hotel occupancy rates may have experienced fluctuations, the average hotel rates in India continued their upward trajectory. Kolkata experienced the most significant year-on-year growth, closely followed by Hyderabad. Destinations such as Goa, Mumbai, and New Delhi saw average rates soar above ₹11,000, signalling robust demand despite the evolving landscape. □

Branded Hotels

(Openings & Signings Year-to-Date Mar 2024)

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Source: : HVS Research; Data collated by HVS from 14 hotel operators and media reports as of 25th April 2024; all data is for calendar year



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HOTEL INVESTMENTS SOAR IPO ACTIVITY PEAKS

Indian hospitality sector is gaining significant investment interest due to its potential for cash yields and capital appreciation.

The hospitality sector, often referred to as the sunrise industry, has seen a remarkable surge in attractiveness beyond mere hotel development. With cash yields ranging from 6 to 8 per cent and capital appreciation potential of 4 to 5 per cent over a possible 15-year cycle, hotel assets have become increasingly appealing.

Financial institutions are showing a growing interest in extending debt, evidenced by frequent calls from bank relationship managers to brokers in search of potential deals—a stark contrast to the past, where the hotel sector was considered a pariah in the banking industry, with banks hesitant to lend. However, over the last two years, there has been a significant uptick in credit offerings from banks and non-banking financial companies, along with heightened interest from credit restructuring firms in evaluating transactions within the hospitality sector. Notably, there has been a flurry of hotel IPO activity, with companies such as Juniper Hotels, SAMHI, and Park Hotels raising substantial capital through public offerings, indicating a buoyant market environment.

According to the latest STR report, India achieved an average occupancy rate of 63.6 per cent in 2023, a marginal 90 basis points below the 2019 figures.



Nikhil Shah
Senior Director
Hospitality, Capital Markets &
Investment Services

Financial institutions are showing a growing interest in extending debt to hotel companies—a stark contrast to past, where it was considered a pariah

However, the average daily rate (ADR) soared to ₹7,479 in 2023, resulting in a 30 per cent increase in revenue per available room (RevPAR) compared to 2019. This robust performance is further underscored by the substantial surge in hotel

investments, reaching ₹3,000 crore in 2023, nearly quadrupling the previous year's levels. The year also witnessed the signing of over 25,000 hotel keys, with approximately half already opened. India's inbound tourism sector is experiencing a significant resurgence, with foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) surging by 64 per cent in 2023 compared to the previous year, translating to 9,236,108 visitors between January and December 2023, compared to 6,437,467 in the same period the previous year.

The following are key factors driving investment interest in the hospitality sector for hotel owners:

- **Tourism surge:** The post-COVID era has witnessed a substantial uptick in tourism, fuelled by India's rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and historical sites, catering to the increased demand from domestic travellers who are now venturing out more frequently.
- **Business travel revival:** With economic activities bouncing back post-COVID, major metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad are experiencing a resurgence in corporate activities and commercial ventures, leading to heightened demand for accommodation from business travellers, surpassing pre-COVID levels.





catering to the demand for luxury villa accommodations.

- **Investment opportunities:** There is currently significant potential for property construction, especially in the luxury and MICE segment, as more than half of the new signings are occurring within this category.

Post-COVID, consumers preferred more spacious accommodations to facilitate social distancing & began opting for boutique hotels with fewer but larger rooms

In conclusion, the Indian hospitality sector is poised for continued success over the next 4-5 years, with demand for hotel accommodations expected to consistently outpace supply. These favourable market dynamics will contribute to sustained high demand for hotel rooms, fostering an environment, where hotels can thrive and perform exceptionally well. As the industry embraces evolving trends, adapts to changing consumer preferences, and leverages government initiatives, Indian hotels are well-positioned to capitalise on opportunities for growth and profitability in the years to come.

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

- **Quality budget stays:** There is a heightened awareness regarding hygiene in branded hotels, bolstered by advocacy efforts from tech companies such as OYO and Treebo. Modern designs and sanitisation technologies are attracting both domestic and foreign guests.

- **Remote work trends and staycations:** COVID has normalised remote work, resulting in a rise in workcations, where individuals combine work and leisure travel, creating opportunities for hotels in scenic or remote locations, catering to guests seeking both work and relaxation.

- **Government initiatives:** The Indian government may introduce incentives or support schemes to stimulate investments in the hospitality sector post-COVID, further driving hotel construction projects, with destinations such as Lakshadweep, Ayodhya, and J&K witnessing increased tourist footfall.

- **Infra development:** Infrastructure development remains constant, encompassing the expansion of airports, highways, and metro systems, thereby improving accessibility to remote regions and making them appealing for hotel investments. The surge in new airport constructions has doubled over the past decade, further fuelling the demand for hotel developments in their vicinity.

- **Changing consumer preferences:** In the aftermath of COVID, consumers preferred more spacious accommodations to facilitate social distancing, and began opting for boutique hotels or resorts with fewer but larger rooms. Brands such as Taj Hotels, offering AMA stays, ITC with Storii, and Marriott with Tribute, are actively adjusting to meet these evolving preferences. Additionally, villa rental companies such as Lohono, Saffron Stays, and Stay Vista have experienced significant growth over the past four years,





Is there an **OFF SEASON** anymore?

Driven by robust domestic demand and improved connectivity, people are travelling throughout the year, making the lean season a thing of past for hotel sector.

 **Sakshi Singh**

A confluence of factors such as social media, rising disposable incomes, better infrastructure and a propensity to travel more have shrunk the off-season period for hotels. Tourist footfalls in the off-season had been on the upswing for several years, but COVID has accelerated it to an unseen level. As per a report, Indians embarked on a staggering 1.7 billion domestic leisure trips in 2022 and it is estimated that the figure may touch five billion trips by 2030. The unprecedented upswing in domestic travel is pushing up footfalls in Tier-II & III destinations as well as helping hotels beat the off-season blues. Hotels across the country are witnessing improved occupancy in the off-season months. A decade ago, a lean period for a hotel would mean occupancy rates dropping to below 20 per cent and days with no occupancy were not surprising.

The travel boom has ensured that many hotels even in Tier-II cities are registering occupancy rates of over 50 per cent in the off-season. “Off-season scenario is a rare phenomenon in the hospitality industry now. Overall, the sector’s ADR is rising and post-COVID, “you live only once” has affected the mindset. With the gov-



Sarbendra Sarkar
Founder & MD
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

ernment investing in infrastructure, more money is pumped in Tier-II & III cities. Overall travel is at its all-time high,” said **Sarbendra Sarkar**, Founder and Managing Director, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts.

The overall trend of increased travelling is fuelled by the easy availability of information, which has led to the globalisation of the travel industry. Earlier, it was not easy for a person sitting in London or Prague to plan a trip to Jaipur or Goa on short notice. With only a handful of travel books, it used to take months to plan a trip, however, the democratisation of information through YouTube vlogs and Instagram

Reels has ensured that a person living in the remotest corner of the world can access relevant information and plan a trip at a click of a button. As per a survey, nearly 35 per cent of people use social media for travel inspiration. In the case of people below 40 years of age, nearly 50 per cent of travellers decide on their destination taking inspiration from social media. “Off-season period has indeed shrunk considerably for hotels. Factors contributing to this include the rise of shoulder seasons, where demand remains relatively steady, as well as the globalisation of travel, which has led to a more even distribution of visitors throughout the year,” explained **Srivatsa Allampalli**, General Manager, Hyatt Place Jaipur Malviya Nagar.

In hospitality industry, off-seasons are rare. Sector’s ADR is rising and post-COVID, “you live only once” has affected the mindset

Even though the off-season period for hotels has reduced, it would be a fallacy to think that the line between the peak and the lean season has been completely





erased. Hotels witness a fall in occupancy during certain months, but the decline is not as steep as a decade ago. It is bewildering to think that the reason why off-season would lead to abysmal occupancy rates is the same as why people prefer off-season now. Travelling was a social activity earlier and crowds used to attract more crowds, but the younger generation perceives travel differently. Travelling is more about exclusivity, personalised services and differentiated experiences for the current batch of travellers. “During the off-season period, travellers can save on flights, accommodations, and attractions, while also experiencing fewer crowds at popular destinations. Travelling in the off-season gives you scope to explore more,” **Akaal Singh Manchanda**, Founder and Director, Zuper Hotels & Resorts said.

The surge in footfalls during the lean period is organic but seeing the opportunity hotels too are capitalising on the trend and many organised players have come out with packages and campaigns specifically targeting people who like to travel during the off-season. Marriott International, for instance, has introduced a ‘Resort Escapes’ offer for the members of its loyalty programme Marriott Bonvoy. Marriott is offering a host of benefits such as daily



Akaal Singh Manchanda
Founder & Director
Zuper Hotels & Resorts

During off-season period, travellers can save on flights, accommodations & attractions, while also experiencing fewer crowds

hotel credit up to ₹2,000 per stay, daily buffet breakfast and a 20 per cent discount on spa treatments at its 45 properties before the holiday season starts. Interestingly, the global hospitality chain will continue to offer the benefits till September, which is often considered the off-season for most of the destinations in the country due to the monsoon.

Promotional campaigns and offers act as a sweetener for travellers, who seek the peace and tranquility of the off-season. “We offer off-season rates to clients as





Manish Goyal

Director
Stotrak Hospitality

Revenue growth during off-seasons can be subtle, with strategies such as package deals employed to stimulate business

part of their pricing strategy to attract guests during quieter periods. Off-season rates typically involve discounted room rates, special packages, and promotions aimed at incentivising travellers to book accommodations during traditionally slower times of the year thereby fostering customer loyalty,” pointed out **Anoop Vijayraj**, General Manager, Kairali The Ayurvedic Healing Village.

The emergence of year-round travel is helping hotels shore up revenue and profitability making the sector more stable. “We have seen non-peak season revenues up by 30 per cent in recent years,” Manchanda claimed. In a similar vein, Allampalli said, “We do experience a noticeable increase in bookings during traditionally quieter periods. Our strategic pricing and promotional efforts have helped maintain healthy occupancy rates and revenue growth.” Targeted campaigns and a broader trend are helping hoteliers build a robust business, but the improvement in key metrics is not uniform for all destinations and properties.

“During the off-season, our business has seen a 30 per cent increase. In both Uttarakhand and Rajasthan, room rates typically decrease to attract more visitors and maintain occupancy levels. Despite this, there is a moderate rise in occupancy rates in Uttarakhand during quieter off-seasons, while Rajasthan sees slight increases during its off-seasons, such as summer or monsoon. Revenue growth during off-seasons can be subtle, with strategies such as package deals and promoting local events employed to stimulate business during quieter periods,” informed **Manish Goyal**, Director, Stotrak Hospitality.



Anoop Vijayraj

GM, Kairali The Ayurvedic
Healing Village

Hoteliers must position their property smartly to capitalise on the trend. Infrastructure improvement has ensured that even smaller towns and offbeat destinations get a steady flow of travellers all year round. Hotels in Tier-II cities have also capitalised on non-core revenue streams to improve off-season business. Elaborating on the changing dynamics of the off-season months, Sarkar stated, “Rates do go down in the off-season but it is never a complete “off”. Even if tourist footfall is low, we get a lot of business for birthdays, anniversaries and special personalised events, where people book 10-20 rooms at a time. So, if we are doing 85 per cent business in good times, off-season may see 65 per cent business, which is not that bad.” □



STABLE DEMAND DESPITE CHALLENGES

Scorching summer season and ongoing general elections serve as a reality check for Indian hotel chains striving to maximise profits.





Ananya Kukreja

Hotel brands in India are consistently experiencing year-on-year growth in performance, with comparison figures from the same time last year indicating a projected increase. Over the last four years, business hotels have experienced both their lowest lows and highest highs due to multiple factors. During 2022-2023, as the hospitality industry was emerging from the impacts of COVID, demand was fuelled by the IPL bio bubble in 2022 and subsequently by local corporate demand in 2023.

“With the ongoing elections, hotels are seeing a more stable demand but with shorter booking window,” said **Girish Divekar**, Commercial Director, Business Development, Hilton Mumbai International Airport. The current demand is still fuelled by domestic corporate travel, and a steady increase in international travel. The aim is also to increase rates while maintaining occupancy levels and meeting revenue targets. It is anticipated that average daily rates (ADRs) will rise following the announcement of election results, reflecting the business sentiment and global outlook that India is anticipating.

Business and convention hotels down south are anticipating a growth of over 20 per cent and occupancy of over 80 per cent in this quarter.



Chirag Zubin Lacca

Director, Sales
Taj Wellington Mews, Mumbai

In 2024, our occupancy rate has risen, indicating a 11 per cent growth compared to last year

In 2023, during the first quarter (April-June), Taj Wellington Mews, Mumbai experienced an average occupancy rate of sub 85 per cent with an Average Room Rate (ARR) of growth by 10 per cent over previous year. “In 2024, our occupancy rate has risen, indicating a 11 per cent growth compared to last year. Additionally, our ARR has also seen a significant uptick, now standing at 12.5 per cent increase from the previous year, solidifying our position as a premier destination of choice,” pointed out **Chirag Zubin Lacca**, Director, Sales, Taj Wellington Mews, Mumbai.



Jai Chugh
General Manager
DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square

“Travellers are increasingly drawn to star hotels that offer not only discounted packages but also curated itineraries, unique experiences

In this season, some hotels anticipate a slight softening of room rates due to relatively flat demand over the next couple of months. “With the summer season approaching and high temperatures potentially affecting expat travels and events, we expect a cooling off on rates,” explained **Jai Chugh**, General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square.

The pricing of a hotel in terms of pricing does fluctuate on demand-supply analytics which is reviewed daily. “We do see a drop in occupancy curve in summer months, especially due to

long weekends. However, rates are stagnant and not cooled off keeping in mind the MICE demand which is shaping up from domestic corporates and weekend leisure business,” said **Prithvi Anand**, Director, Sales & Marketing, Novotel and Hyderabad International Convention Centre. Therefore, there is natural balance that is created on weekends and weekdays which helps us to maintain the pricing with minimum fluctuation.

Regional demand

“While business hotels show lower growth percentage in summer months, demand is elevated, prompting an increase in rates, particularly in destinations offering cooler climates or distinctive summer experiences,” explained **Abinash Manghani**, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels. First quarter for hill station or nature properties experiences a significant boost coinciding with school holidays, however this year is seeing a slight dip due to reduced travel from government sector employees and their work during general elections. Given the heightened demand from leisure travels to such destinations, hotels refrain from offering discounted packages.

For hotel in business capitals of the country, corporate demand continues. To continue weekend demand at par with weekdays, business hotels are curating summer packages attracting families and business travellers to extend their stay toward relaxation. The aim is to create resort like experiences with geographical boundaries without people having to travel long distances. “Travellers are

increasingly drawn to star hotels that offer not only discounted packages but also curated itineraries, unique experiences, and personalised services,” elaborated **Jai Chugh**, General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square.



Abinash Manghani
CEO
WelcomHeritage Hotels

“Summer months see lower growth in business hotels, but demand rises, leading to rate hikes in cooler destinations

Predominant segments

Hotels and resorts situated in leisure-oriented destinations across India are experiencing a surge in demand, primarily driven by school and college holidays. Many business hotel models focus on MICE and social segments. City hotels are significantly affected by the abundance of medical conferences and association conventions being held. Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru are the largest domestic MICE source markets nationally. As the new financial year begins, numerous companies are preparing for rewards and recognition events, product launches, and strategic meetings for the upcoming year.

Strategies

Surge in occupancy and ARR can be attributed to several factors. “We have revamped our marketing strategies, focusing more on digital channels and targeted advertising to attract a broader audience,” elaborated **Lacca**. He further added, “Secondly, our enhanced guest experience initiatives for key segments that we cater to, including personalised services and curated experiences for expats, premiums offerings for GCC clients have resonated well, leading to increased bookings.” □

Industry experts' mantra for maximising profit

- Diligently analysing market segments and target demographics, understanding their needs, one must continuously tailor offerings and marketing efforts effectively.
- Enforcing dynamic pricing, adjusting room rates based on demand fluctuations, seasonal trends, and other factors. This helps optimise revenue by ensuring pricing reflects market conditions and consumer willingness to pay.
- Cross-selling and upselling is implemented is not just to boost revenue but also to enhance the overall guest experience. A spa treatment or signing up for adventure activities and excursions adds value to the guest experience.
- Processes such as optimising inventory management and leveraging technology through revenue management systems, online booking platforms, streamlines operations and improves efficiency.
- Employee training and development is integral to the brand to keep delivering world-class levels team output, enhance guest satisfaction, and drive overall success.

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Hospitality Partner





Reliability & consistency in quality is crucial

Decision makers at hotels are constantly seeking cutting-edge solutions that not only elevate guest experience but also align with sustainability goals.



Lipla Negi

As the General Manager of The Claridges, New Delhi, I prioritise investments in AI technology to enhance both guest experience and operational efficiency. AI-powered solutions offer personalised services, streamline operations, and ensure a seamless and memorable stay for our guests. Our goal is to find products that strike a perfect balance between top-notch quality, groundbreaking technology, and dependable after-sales service.

While selecting suppliers, budget is indeed a consideration, but not at the expense of compromising on quality or sustainability. Sustainability is integral to

our ethos, making it a non-negotiable criterion in supplier selection. We prioritise suppliers, who align with our commitment to sustainability, ensuring that our procurement practices reflect our values of environmental responsibility and ethical sourcing. For instance, we serve alkaline water in sustainable glasses and have shifted from plastic bottles to reusable glass bottles to minimise environmental

We prefer products that strike perfect balance between top-notch quality, innovative tech & dependable after-sales service



Hemendra Singh Kushalgarh
GM
The Claridges, New Delhi

impact. Our hotels are proactive in engaging in cleanliness drives, taking active measures to ensure a hygienic environment for our guests.



There is an increased commitment to ethical and natural practices which is becoming more evident in the customers requesting for vegan skincare products formulated with clean ingredients. Additionally, the conscientious guests insist on cruelty-free products, rejecting any involvement in animal testing, and opt for formulations devoid of parabens, sulphates, and harmful chemicals, including drying alcohols and fragrances.

Safety measures such as the provision of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are essential for demonstrating the supplier's commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of consumers. Moreover, the integration of digital consultation



Dr. Jazzy Nepram
Director, CHI the Spa & Health club, Shangri-La Bengaluru

services is poised to streamline communication and accessibility in the wellness sector. This advancement allows for con-

Safety measures such as provision of MSDS are essential for demonstrating supplier's commitment to ensuring safety of consumers

venient remote consultations, enabling clients to access expert advice and guidance from the comfort of their homes.

Furthermore, the incorporation of eco-friendly amenities underscores a commitment to sustainable practices, enhancing the overall wellness experience while aligning with the values of environmentally conscious clientele.

The unique requirements from suppliers in our area of work revolve around the need for high-quality, luxury-grade products and services. We seek suppliers who can consistently provide premium linens, toiletries, cleaning agents, and other amenities that match the standards of a 5-star hotel. Additionally, we value suppliers who offer customisation options to tailor products to our specific needs and branding requirements.

By assigning unique codes to linens and supplies, we streamline tracking processes, ensuring optimal stock levels to promptly meet guest needs. Real-time inventory monitoring minimises stock-outs or overstocking, guaranteeing that



Kishor Bhagat
Executive Housekeeper,
Sayaji Hotel, Pune

guest rooms are always equipped with fresh linens and amenities. This efficiency allows our team to focus on deliv-

ering personalised services, enhancing overall guest satisfaction. Barcode integration with property management system ensures seamless coordination with room assignments and guest requests. In summary, leveraging barcode technology not only improves operational efficiency but also plays a vital role in elevating client satisfaction through consistent and high-quality service provision.

Leveraging barcode technology not only improves operational efficiency but also elevates client satisfaction

We dedicate resources to implementing solutions that embody excellence, care, storytelling, and innovation, ensuring our guests indulge in exceptional stays while maintaining operational efficiency. While it is crucial to consider our budget, we also prioritise sustainability, in line with Marriott's Serve 360 initiative. We actively seek out suppliers, who offer eco-friendly options, aligning with our commitment to responsible business practices. By striking a balance between our financial objectives and environmental stewardship, we ensure that guests at Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield enjoy a pleasant and responsible stay, contributing to a positive and sustainable impact guided by our 2025 Sustainability



Vivek Sharma
GM, Bengaluru Marriott
Hotel Whitefield

and Social Impact Goals as well as Chalet Hotels' initiatives such as RE100, EP100, and EV100.

Our goal is to craft unforgettable stays. We aim to elevate the experience of personalised service, and seamless integration of advanced technological

We dedicate resources to implementing solutions that embody excellence, care, storytelling & innovation

solutions. We demand products that seamlessly complement our pet-friendly accommodations, luxuriously spacious contemporary rooms, and extensive array of amenities.

When looking to enhance guest experience and operations, I am always drawn to top-tier products and services such as property management software, Opera and MICROS. Additionally, immersive apps that allow guests to navigate the resort, reserve tables, order room service, book spa sessions, and even consult with a doctor are investments that greatly interest me. These technologies not only streamline operations but also greatly improve the overall guest experience.

Financial sustainability is crucial when making investments in products or software. It is also important to consider if the vendor is committed to ESG and sustainability goals while selecting a brand.



Ashley James
GM, Angsana Oasis Spa &
Resort

We must also carefully assess the scalability and data protection provisions of the product to ensure maximum potential.

A product that combines seamless designs with cutting-edge technology has the potential to enhance the overall guest experience

A product that combines seamless designs with cutting-edge technology has the potential to significantly enhance the overall guest experience, capturing our attention. In addition to this, investing in a robust CRM system for after-sales service is essential. Such a system ensures timely and effective support, contributing to overall customer satisfaction. □





A SERENE ADDITION TO **JIM CORBETT** LANDSCAPE

voco Jim Corbett, India's first voco hotel, offers guests a comfortable stay, epitomising luxury in the heart of nature.



DDP Bureau

IHG Hotels & Resorts has unveiled India's inaugural voco hotel, introducing voco Jim Corbett to the scenic landscape of Dhilkuli in Jim Corbett. Nestled amidst lush forests and thriving wildlife, the resort promises a haven of serenity for its guests.

Boasting 70 contemporary and generously appointed rooms, voco Jim Corbett exudes sophistication with its elegant décor, sumptuous bedding, and an array of modern amenities, ensuring a comfortable stay for every visitor.

Commenting on the launch, **Suprabhath Roy Chowdhury**, General Manager, voco Jim Corbett said, "We are thrilled to introduce the inaugural voco hotel in India, bringing the brand's unique offerings to locals and travellers visiting the

country. Situated amidst lush wildlife and forests, voco Jim Corbett encapsulates the natural charm of its surroundings, offering guests a unique opportunity to unwind, rejuvenate, and embrace the essence of this iconic destination."

Beyond its luxurious accommodations, the resort offers an array of facilities designed to elevate the guest experience. An alfresco lounge bar invites guests to unwind amidst nature's beauty, while a sparkling pool beckons for a refreshing dip. The Tattva spa, drawing inspiration from ancient healing traditions and contemporary wellness practices, pampers guests with rejuvenating treatments.

For those seeking recreation and relaxation, the resort's expansive lawns, amphitheatre, and fully equipped fitness centre provide ample opportunities for leisure pursuits. Moreover, its indoor and outdoor

Tattva spa, drawing inspiration from ancient healing traditions, pampers guests with rejuvenating treatments

banqueting spaces cater to both corporate gatherings and leisure events, boasting excellent road connectivity to accommodate MICE activities with ease.

Embracing the ethos of the voco brand, voco Jim Corbett embodies the hallmark principles of 'come on in', 'me time', and 'voco life'. Guests are welcomed with a seamless check-in process, while fast Wi-Fi connectivity ensures they stay connected throughout their stay. Premium amenities and a laid-back ambiance further enhance the overall guest experience, inviting them to immerse themselves in voco living. □

CRAFTING COMFORT, EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Room Division team is unsung hero in fostering guest loyalty. By personalising comfort & anticipating needs, they create lasting impressions.

In the ever-competitive world of hospitality, where countless hotels vie for guest attention, loyalty programmes and exclusive benefits often take center stage. While these initiatives play a crucial role, there is an often-overlooked department that silently shapes the guest experience—the Room Division.

The Room Division team is the best-kept secret to fostering guest loyalty. It is the heart of the guest journey, the touch-point where expectations are met and exceeded at every turn. The team needs to go beyond providing just basic services to create experiences that keep the guests coming back for more:

Crafting personalised comfort

When a guest steps into their room, their perception of the entire stay begins to take shape, and the team needs to understand this very well. It should take the time to personalise each room based on guest preferences garnered from pre-arrival communication and loyalty programme data. Imagine a guest walking into a room adorned with balloons and finding a handwritten note on the day of his or her birthday, or a business traveller discover-



D Duttagupta
Room Division Manager
JW Marriott Bengaluru
Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa

ing a well-equipped workspace with his or her preferred newspaper. These small gestures set the tone for a personalised and memorable stay.

Art of anticipation

Anticipation is a key to exceeding expectations. The team should proactively identify guest needs and preferences. For families with young children, one might

provide cribs, child-proofing measures, and welcome amenities such as colouring books. Business travellers may appreciate a complimentary bottle of water and power adapters in their rooms. The team must pre-set the thermostat to a comfortable temperature and ensure the room is well-lit, eliminating the need for guests to adjust settings upon arrival.

“Anticipation is a key to exceeding expectations. The Room Division team should proactively identify guest needs and preferences”

Weaving seamless experience

The Room Division's influence extends beyond the four walls of a guestroom. It plays a vital role in ensuring a smooth and efficient guest experience across the resort. Room Division team needs to collaborate closely with other departments such as housekeeping, concierge, and F&B to ensure prompt responses to guest requests. Whether it is an extra towel, a restaurant reservation, or a late checkout,





culture of care and dedication that shines through in every interaction.

Metrics that matter

While guest satisfaction surveys and online reviews provide valuable feedback, one should go beyond those metrics to gauge the effectiveness of Room Division strategies. Tracking guest preferences and requests, analysing room allocation patterns, and monitoring guest feedback on specific amenities. This data helps to refine the personalisation efforts and identify areas for improvement. More importantly, it allows to showcase the impact the Room Division has on guest retention metrics such as repeat stays and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Unsung heroes

One should recognise the Room Division department as a strategic pillar in the guest loyalty strategy. It is not just about luxurious rooms or impeccable housekeeping; it is about creating a haven, where guests feel valued, understood, and cared for. It is about exceeding expectations and leaving a lasting impression. In a world where guest loyalty is paramount, the Room Division department steps out of the shadows, transforming into the unsung hero that keeps guests coming back for more.

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

the team acts as a central point of contact, guaranteeing a seamless experience for the guests.

Building relationships

Technology is transforming the hospitality industry while recognising the value of human interaction. The Room Division team members are not just service providers; they are friendly faces who take the time to connect with guests. They inquire about their plans, recommend local attractions, and share insider tips about the resort's facilities. These interactions forge connections and create a sense of warmth that guests remember long after their stay.

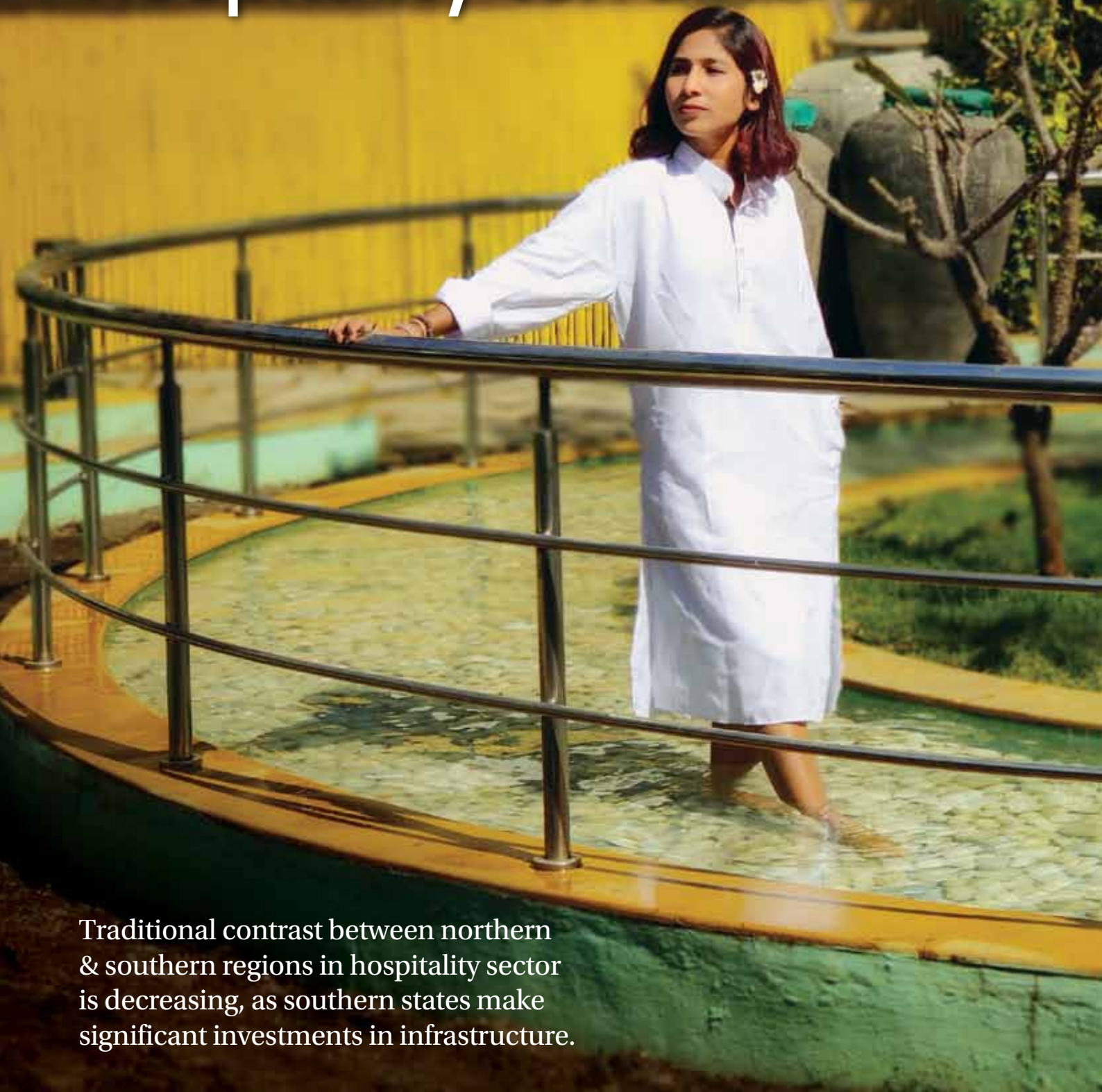
Secret sauce

The success of any division hinges on its people. To ensure the team consistently delivers exceptional service, one should invest heavily in their training and development. It entails programmes focusing on communication skills, guest psychology, and the latest hospitality trends. And empower the team members to take ownership of guest experiences and make on-the-spot decisions that enhance guest satisfaction. This sense of ownership fosters a

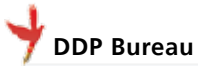
To ensure Room Division team consistently delivers exceptional service, one should invest heavily in their training & development



Leveraging South India's hospitality terrain



Traditional contrast between northern & southern regions in hospitality sector is decreasing, as southern states make significant investments in infrastructure.



India is a country rich in culture and history, which is beautifully reflected in its vibrant hospitality industry. From the designs to the services and hotel decor, every aspect of the industry showcases the country's unique and colourful identity. However, when it comes to discussing the hospitality industry, the focus often remains on the northern and western regions, while the southern states are overlooked. This raises the question: What aspect of the southern hospitality industry can change perceptions of North and South dynamics?

Saravanan Dhanabalu, Area Manager South, Brand Operations, Fortune Hotels believes that hotels located in Southern India have several advantages over their counterparts in other parts of the country. The southern region boasts of numerous popular tourist destinations, including Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. The hotels in this region leverage the rich culture and heritage of the area to offer guests authentic cultural and culinary experiences. Furthermore, the states in Southern India enjoy a moderate climate throughout the year, which attracts tourists from across the world. Lastly, the abundance of lush flora and fauna is a blessing for the southern states.

According to **Chander K Baljee**, Chairman and Managing Director, Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels, Delhi and Mumbai have always been the major players in the hospitality industry. However, Baljee believes that hotels located in the southern states of India are more proactive in catering to changing customer preferences. In addition to their cultural diversity and natural beauty, these hotels are constantly innovating to offer a wide range of experiences, including boutique, heritage and modern luxury properties.

He further states that many southern hotels have established a strong presence by leveraging their proximity to key tourist attractions, historic sites and business hubs. Besides, their commitment to exceptional service, local culinary experiences, and a warm and welcoming milieu sets them apart from the competition.

Sharing similar sentiments, **Narendra Prabhu**, Senior General Manager, Signature Club Resort by Brigade



Saravanan Dhanabalu
Area Manager South, Brand
Operations, Fortune Hotels

Hotels in South India leverage rich culture and heritage to offer guests authentic cultural & culinary experiences

Hospitality avers that hotels in Southern India have an advantage in showcasing the region's ancient traditions, festivals and art forms such as classical dance and music to their guests. Many properties are situated in picturesque locations, including marvelous beaches, lush hill stations, and iconic backwaters. One can indulge in a diverse range of aromatic cuisines, from vegetarian to non-vegetarian menus. However, South India is particularly renowned for its wellness and ayurvedic resorts, which offer holistic health experiences.

Number game

When we think of iconic properties in India, we tend to focus on the north and west. However, this creates a challenge in terms of hotel positioning.

According to Baljee, it is important not to overlook the progress that southern cities have made in the hospitality sector. Cities such as Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kochi have become increasingly popular due to their dynamic business ecosystems, cultural attractions and connectivity. Moreover, cities such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad are renowned for their technological advancements.

Cities with hotels that have embraced innovative solutions and digitalisation have established themselves as regional business and commercial centres. These cities boast a robust corporate presence and access to skilled professionals, which contribute significantly to their decision-making prowess. It is worth noting that the hospitality landscape is dynamic, and the rankings may change over time as cities continue to evolve and adapt.

According to Dhanabalu, several southern cities in India, including Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mysore, Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Chettinad, and Kochi, have the potential to become top destinations in terms of the number of guests, technological advancements and decision-making capabilities. These cities possess strong infrastructure, tourism and technology, and are home to a rapidly growing middle class. Furthermore, they have the backing of both the government and the private sector.

Equal opportunity

The hospitality industry has expressed the need for equal opportunities for growth across properties in India and specific states. Prabhu believes that streamlining certain aspects such as government support



in the form of incentives, tax breaks, and regulations can encourage investments in the southern hospitality sector. The government and industry associations can work together to enhance skill development and training of the workforce to ensure high-quality service. Infrastructure improvements such as transportation should also be invested in to make southern destinations easily accessible. Additionally, promoting southern hospitality brands globally and encouraging eco-friendly practices and sustainability in the industry can attract responsible travellers.

Baljee believes that to foster growth and innovation in the hospitality industry, it is important to create an equal competitive platform. This can be achieved through a combination of government initiatives and collaboration with hospitality associations. It is essential to create a level-playing field and prevent any specific segment from having an undue advantage. The entire industry can benefit from improved infrastructure and connectivity. Better infrastructure can open new regions to tourism and business travel, creating opportunities for all players. Baljee also emphasises the importance of ensuring fair access to markets. This requires avoiding monopolies or unfair business practices that hinder competition.

Anti-trust regulations can also be enforced, and associations can advocate for fair market access.

Perception or fact

The question of whether there is a north-south divide in the hospitality industry in India is a topic of debate. Prabhu believes



Chander K Baljee
Chairman & MD, Royal
Orchid & Regenta Hotels

Many southern hotels have established strong presence by leveraging their proximity to key tourist attractions, historic sites

that regional differences in culture, cuisine, and customer preferences contribute to a certain level of distinction; however,

it is not a strict division. Historical sites such as Delhi and Agra draw visitors to the north, while Mumbai is a hub for business and entertainment.

With more than 50 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Baljee acknowledges that regional disparities and variations exist, which are often referred to as a north-south divide. These disparities are influenced by various factors, including geographical, economic, cultural, and historical considerations. However, he emphasises that the hospitality industry is highly dynamic and these disparities can change over a period of time. Governments, corporations, and industry associations work together to promote balanced growth and development across regions, ensuring a more equitable distribution of opportunities and benefits. Moreover, market forces, tourism trends, and evolving consumer preferences can impact the competitive landscape and the industry's development in both the north and the south. □



SPORTING EVENTS

drive hospitality surge

As appetite for sports tourism continues to grow, the hospitality sector must steer evolving landscape to capitalise on emerging opportunities.

The hospitality industry in India has witnessed an exhilarating surge in demand, thanks to the euphoria surrounding sporting events. The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 season, in particular, proved to be a gamechanger, propelling significant growth across various segments within the hospitality sector.

During the ongoing IPL, cities such as Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad witnessed an unprecedented spike in both room rates and occupancy rates. This surge in demand not only underscored the fervent enthusiasm of sports aficionados but also highlighted the symbiotic relationship between sports and the hospitality industry.

Customers worldwide continue to demand new experiences and sports tourism is an upcoming trend that has emerged at the intersection of two powerhouse industries: sports entertainment and tourism. From the IPL to the Cricket World Cup to the FIFA World Cup to



Chirag Agrawal
Co-Founder
TravClan

During ongoing IPL, cities such as Ahmedabad, Lucknow witnessed immense spike in both room rates & occupancy rates

Formula 1, these events are becoming grander and more popular, fuelled by growth in popularity due to easy online

streaming. A live sporting tournament no longer caters solely to locals but to a global set of fans who travel to watch their favourite teams in action. This surge in global mobility has not only provided a significant boost to tourism in host locations but has also given birth to an entire new industry catering to the desires of sports enthusiasts.

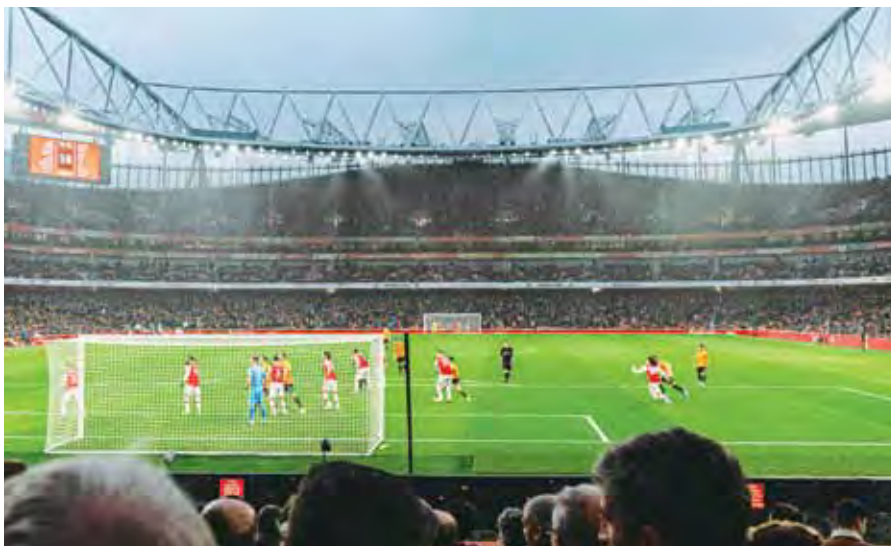
New travel products

The marriage of sports and tourism has led to the rise of comprehensive sports tourism packages, bundling event tickets with accommodation, transportation, and additional services. These experiences cater to those seeking premium experiences and are willing to invest accordingly as they ensure a seamless and memorable experience.

The influx of visitors stimulates economic activity, resulting in increased spending on accommodation, dining, transportation, and services. This ripple effect impacts the entire travel ecosystem, from hotels to local businesses. Hosting sporting tournaments offers a unique opportunity for a destination to elevate its global profile by capturing the attention of audiences worldwide, thereby increasing its visibility and fostering greater awareness among potential tourists.

The rise of sports tourism presents opportunities for travel companies to differentiate themselves and offer tailored experiences to sports enthusiasts. In doing so, they not only stand to reap the financial rewards but also play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the travel and tourism industry in the years to come.

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



WELLNESS appeals to all age groups

Prioritising family-centric retreats, Namaste Dwaar resort offers diverse experiences fostering health, harmony, and rejuvenation in a rural setting.



Lipla Negi

Recognising the steadily increasing demand for wellness retreats, Namaste Dwaar Resort embraces the concept of family-centric wellness retreats, signifying a collective pursuit of health and harmony over pursuing individualistic wellness goals. **Erika Rathi**, Director, Namaste Dwaar Resort, said, “We have noticed that people are becoming more health-conscious and are now seeking holistic experiences that promote physical, mental and emotional well-being.



Erika Rathi

Director
Namaste Dwaar Resort

We have ditched strict retreat schedules, aiming to assist guests in integrating practical wellness methods into their daily lives

This trend has been further accelerated by COVID, as individuals have learned to prioritise preventive wellness and self-care as essential components of maintaining physical and mental well-being.”



Self-drive getaway

Located midway on the Delhi-Haridwar highway, Namaste Dwaar is more than just a wholesome family holiday destination; it serves as a gateway to India's rich rural culture. Founded by Arvind and Charul Rathi, this pet-friendly resort boasts of 45 rooms, meticulously designed with eco-friendly materials. Guests can rejuvenate with Ayurvedic treatments amidst thatched-roof tranquillity, engage in indoor entertainment, or luxuriate in the emerald outdoor pool inspired by Mughal Char Bagh gardens. Culinary delights include personalised satvik diet plans as well.

Long stay packages in demand

While wellness retreats appeal to a broad range of age groups, older demographics, particularly those in the 40-65 age range, often prefer them. However, a short trip to a wellness retreat promises rejuvenation for everyone. The resort recognised a unique demand coming from children with old parents who wish to spend some quality family time together. "We have developed special family packages that allow children to spend quality time with their parents while they are treated at our wellness centre. We have also created long-stay wellness packages, which chil-



Founded by Arvind & Charul Rathi, Namaste Dwaar resort boasts of 45 pet-friendly rooms, designed with eco-friendly materials

dren in and out of India find extremely beneficial in helping maintain their family members' well-being."

Spa: Restoring harmony

What sets this retreat apart from its competitors is its non-regimented approach towards health and wellbeing. "We have decided to forgo the stringent scheduling and restrictive nature of retreats of

the past to help our guests find real and practical ways to incorporate wellness into their lives. All packages give guests access to tractor rides into the sugarcane fields, stargazing, Yoga, live movie screenings, pottery and farming," pointed out Rathi.

To cater to the corporate business, the retreat offers well-appointed conference rooms, event spaces and open banquet spaces providing a picturesque setting for functions of up to 130 guests ideal for both small and large gatherings. With its open spaces enhanced by luxury wellness offerings, the retreat aims to provide conducive environment to encourage creativity, critical thinking, rejuvenation, and team building. □





HOTEL INVESTMENT MOMENTUM CONTINUES

India witnessed four-fold rise in hotel investment volume in 2023 due to successful IPOs & premium listings of hotel companies.



DDP Bureau

According to JLL's recently released report 'Hotel Investment Trends in India', the hotel investment landscape in India witnessed significant growth in 2023, with a four-fold increase in investment volume compared to the previous year. This surge in hotel investments was resulted by IPOs and premium listings of hotel companies. The positive momentum is expected to continue into 2024.

Hotel signings

- CY 2023 witnessed the highest number of signings till date (25,176 keys). Most

Highest number of hotel signings was recorded in 2023, with 25,176 keys, primarily in tier-II & III cities

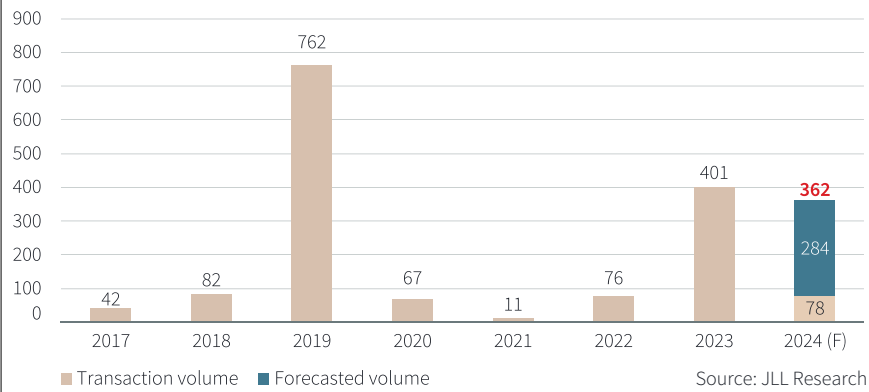
of these signings are concentrated in tier-II cities (54 per cent).

- While management contracts continue to hold the higher share of signings (78 per cent of the total number of keys), there has been a significant uptick in lease or revenue share models (4 per cent) across cities.

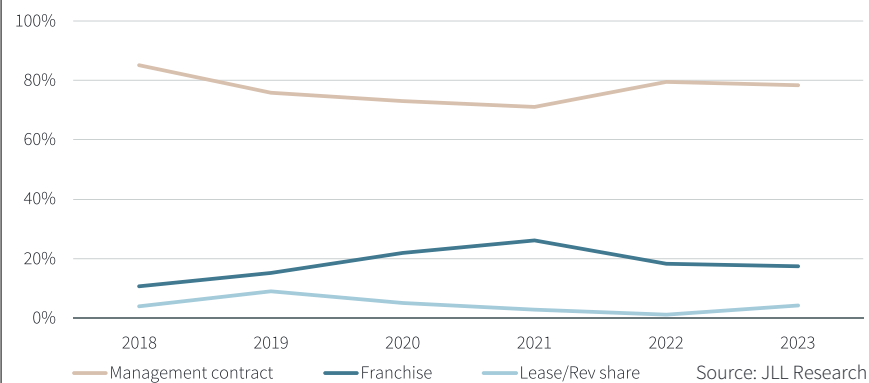


Hotel investment sales

USD Mn



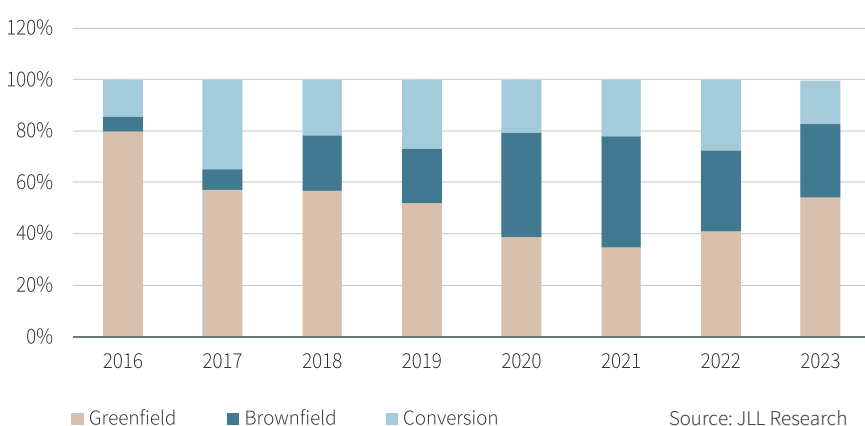
Share (%) of different contract types in total signings (2018 - H1 2023)



- The rising share of lease or revenue share agreements in tier-I cities indicate hotel developers' increased confidence and hotel owners' growing interest in models with less risk exposure.
- The number of greenfield projects in 2023 (13,600 keys) crossed that of 2022 (8,000 keys), indicating the sustained confidence of hotel developers in the sector's long-term growth.
- Strong commercial sector performance has directly benefited key urban centres—tier-I cities saw the highest number of keys signed since 2020.
- Leisure destinations have moved beyond their traditional offerings, now emerging as hubs for MICE activity. This was evidenced by the signing of three large format hotels with a total of 900 keys, suitable for catering to such demand.

Type of development

% No. of keys



Outlook 2024

According to the report, 2024 would ride on the tailwinds of 2023. Q1 2024 has already begun on a high note with an 80 per cent y-o-y growth in trade volumes as compared to Q1 2023. This year is expected to be characterised by a variety of transactions ranging from marquee hotels in tier-I markets to land leases in airport properties and greenfield developments in emerging markets. Hotels located within mixed-use developments and growth corridors in proximity to key infrastructure will also contribute to the next phase of the hotel investment story. 

Products & Services

Crafting outdoor luxury

The Garden Room (TGR) has launched outdoor furniture collection showcasing a commitment to craftsmanship, innovation, and sustainability to create enchanting spaces. The 'Two Seater Swing' called Manes Swing epitomises this ethos, offering patrons a whimsical retreat amidst the beauty of nature, crafted from wicker and premium outdoor-friendly fabric, with an organic cotton throw adding a touch of cosiness. The company aims to simplify home design through curated luxury furnishings and lighting, transforming outdoor areas into exclusive retreats reflecting individual lifestyles.



Fusion of functionality & beauty

Diade, an Italian brand, emerges as a beacon of aesthetic exploration, dedicated to infusing beauty into everyday living, transcending mere functionality within the fabric of contemporary design. It has embarked on a mission to redefine opulence and sophistication in the country's market, offering a curated selection of products to elevate the homes and lifestyles of connoisseurs nationwide. It has introduced Cocky armchair, which features wing-like armrests and a polished gold-finished claw base, exuding opulence and whimsy.



Bold and beautiful

Mohh offers a range of bar units designed to create unforgettable memories for summer gatherings. The collection features bold colours, sleek lines, and soft ambient lighting, blending clean aesthetics with practical elements. The units are designed to cater to various needs, sizes, and functionalities, from space-efficient solutions to larger entertainment pieces. Mohh's storage solutions ensure every bottle, glass, or accessory finds its place, merging form and function. These installations also double as functional counters, inviting hosts to showcase their favourite summer cocktails with style and flair.

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MOVEMENTS

KARTIK R BHAT

Director, Talent & Culture,
Raffles Udaipur



Raffles Udaipur has appointed Kartik R Bhat as the Director, Talent & Culture. With over two decades of experience in the hospitality sector, Bhat brings a wealth of expertise to his new

role. As Director of Talent and Culture at Raffles Udaipur, Bhat will ensure a culture of excellence, focussing on talent nurturing. His previous roles include General Manager, HR & L&D, Red Apple (Toscano & SALT), where he demonstrated exceptional leadership.

SYED SUMSUDEEN

Director, Finance & Business Support, Holiday Inn
Chennai OMR IT Expressway



Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway has promoted Syed Sumsudeen to the role of Director, Finance & Business Support. Sumsudeen, who joined the hotel in February

2022 as the Financial Controller, has over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry. As Director of Finance & Business Support, Sumsudeen will continue to drive financial excellence at Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway.

MANMEET SINGH

General Manager
Novotel Guwahati



Manmeet Singh has been appointed as new General Manager at Novotel Guwahati. Singh brings 25 years of experience across various hospitality segments. Singh has

a strong background in F&B segment. He has made significant contributions to brands such as IHG, Hyatt, Starwood, Marriott, and Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels. He has also served as the Director, Operations at Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach for two years.

NARAYAN THAROOR

Cluster GM, Courtyard by Marriott and Port
Muziris, Kochi Airport Hotel



Courtyard by Marriott and Port Muziris, Kochi Airport Hotel has appointed Narayan Tharoor as the new Cluster General Manager. With over two decades of experience

in the hospitality industry, Tharoor will provide strategic oversight and operational guidance to both properties. His primary focus will be on upholding service standards, enhancing guest satisfaction, and driving operational efficiency.

DARIO TREVISAN

Italian Chef De Cuisine, JW Marriott New Delhi
Aerocity



Dario Trevisan has joined as Italian Chef De Cuisine at JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity. With over a decade of experience in Italy and the UK, Trevisan has worked in various

restaurants, including Noizé, Fenchurch restaurant, and Lightman. He has a proven track record in food preparation and culinary management. Trevisan blends traditional Italian flavours to create contemporary dishes that celebrate the Italian heritage.

AMIT ANAND

Front Office Manager
Eros Hotel New Delhi



Eros Hotel New Delhi has appointed Amit Anand as the Front Office Manager. With 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Anand brings a wealth of knowledge and

expertise to the role. He will set up high protocols for emergencies, monitor security precautions, and ensure adherence to health norms. Anand will communicate with other departments to improve guest services and address guest concerns. □

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