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Talk

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50

**CRAFTING
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Contents

- 16 **Human Touch: A differentiator**
Excerpts from HICSA session by David P Berg, CEO, Carlson Hospitality Group
- 18 **Brand Conversions**
Experts speak on brand conversions in the hospitality sector
- 26 **World of mid-market hotels**
Experts speak on how mid-market hotels have moved beyond pilgrim and business destinations
- 30 **Our product is futuristic**
Interview with Altaf Chapri, MD, AB Chapri Retreats
- 32 **Menu engineering**
F&B heads speak on the relevance of menu refurbishment



32



15



30



26



22

HANDICRAFTS INDIA YEAR BOOK

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The Fern opens in Pune with 40 rooms

The Fern Hotels & Resorts announced the opening of a mid-scale business hotel—The Fern Residency, MIDC, Pune. The hotel has 40 rooms, a multicuisine cafe, a rooftop global cuisine restaurant and state-of-the-art banquet hall. The unit is owned and promoted by Mhaske Leisure and managed by Concept Hospitality, part of CG Hotels and Resorts portfolio.

Chototel to build its first ₹100 per day hotel

Chototel, a London-based technology start-up, has chosen India to set up its pilot 'super-budget' hotel where tariffs will start at ₹100/day and offer uninterrupted electricity, water, gas and social infrastructure including daycare, infirmaries and community kitchen and gardens. The first project has broken ground and construction is underway in Nagothane, an industrial town 70 km south of Mumbai, situated on the new Mumbai-Goa expressway.

Golden Tulip Salt Lake Hotel to open in Kolkata

Golden Tulip Hotels South Asia announces the launch of its first property in the eastern region of India. Golden Tulip Salt Lake Hotel Kolkata, a four star contemporary luxury hotel will offer 55 rooms along with a multi cuisine restaurant and a coffee shop. A variety of different styled meeting rooms are an ideal choice for social and corporate events in the region.



Grand Mercure opens in Mysuru with 146 rooms

AccorHotels and Brigade Group, Bangalore has announced the opening of Grand Mercure Mysuru. Set in the historical city's heartland, north of the Mysore Palace, the hotel boasts 146 rooms and suites and features a viewing gallery on the sixth floor that overlooks the Dasara processional pathway, giving guests the opportunity to enjoy an exclusive view of the magnificent festivities, the city is globally renowned for.



My Fortune, Guntur to open with 144 rooms

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N Chandrababu Naidu laid the foundation stone of the 144-key upscale hospitality destination in Guntur, which will be called the 'My Fortune, Guntur'. Y C Deveshwar, Chairman, ITC, was also present on the occasion.



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Shortage of hotel rooms in India

As per the report of the 'Working Group on Tourism' for the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) set up by the Planning Commission, for a projected annual growth of 12 per cent in Foreign Tourist Arrivals, the requirement of additional hotel rooms under classified category in 2016 over 2010 is estimated to be 1,90,108. Construction of hotel is primarily a private sector activity. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India only classifies operational hotels under its voluntary scheme of classification/approval of hotels.



Sarovar signs new hotels in Delhi and Palampur

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts has announced the signing of two new hotels in North India. The group has signed an 81-room Sarovar Portico at Kapashera New Delhi and a 43-room Sarovar Portico at Palampur in Kangra Valley, HP. Sarovar has over 72 operating hotels in its portfolio.



RezNext enhances booking engine

RezNext enhances its RezE booking engine with a dynamic package and promo functionality to offer direct bookings. Key among the new features is a three-step booking process for faster conversions. RezNext's booking engine - RezE has been built to provide a great booking experience across devices. The solution has custom built designs for all devices to ensure optimum usage of the booking engine across any platforms.

NRAI supports boxes for 2 wheelers

The restaurant industry had been facing challenges in operating delivery two wheelers, since fitment of boxes on bikes was not included in the motor vehicles act /rules. NRAI had been actively following up on this matter with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways since 2012. NRAI's consistent efforts have been successful and the Ministry has agreed to the suggestion of including boxes fitted on two wheelers in the relevant rules.

Preferred Hotels & Resorts expands partnership with Fortune Hotels

Preferred Hotels & Resorts expands its partnership with Fortune Hotels by announcing the addition of seven new properties to its portfolio within the first quarter of 2016, bringing its partnership with the group to nine total properties across key destinations, including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Gurgaon, Navi Mumbai and Noida.



Saurabh Rai



JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar: Environmental Month 2016

JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar has been contributing to the society through its 'Spirit to Serve the Environment' initiatives. April being the Environmental Awareness Month across Marriott Hotels, the hotel reinforced its commitment to safeguard the environment by conducting and participating in various activities like a plantation drive, PUC drive for guests and associates and reduction of the consumption of electricity at the property.

B.Sc. in Culinary Arts at ICI Tirupati from August 2016

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on the May 5, 2016, by and between Dr Preeti Srivastava, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Ex-Officio Director, Indian Culinary Institute Society (ICI) and Sudhir Budakoti, Registrar, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in the presence of Vinod Zutshi, Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, and Prof. Ravindra Kumar, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, for launching the collaborative degree programme of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Culinary Arts from the August 2016 academic session at ICI, Tirupati. The admissions to this collaborative programme between ICI and IGNOU will be through a national level Entrance Test.



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HNA Tourism Group to acquire Carlson Hospitality Group

HNA Tourism Group, a Fortune Global 500 company with operations across aviation, tourism, hospitality, finance, and online services among other sectors, and Carlson Hospitality Group, Inc. announced that they have entered into an agreement for the acquisition of Carlson Hotel. The combination of HNA Tourism Group and Carlson Hotels will have increased ability to accelerate growth through investments in areas such as digital, owned assets in major gateway cities, building of Radisson RED and other new brands.

Under terms of the Agreement, which were unanimously approved by the Carlson Board of Directors, HNA Tourism Group will acquire all of Carlson Hotels, including its approximately 51.3

per cent majority stake in Rezidor Hotel Group AB, Carlson Hotel's master licensee based in Brussels, with hotels in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

"Carlson Hotels own a powerful set of global brands and this historic agreement provides tremendous opportunities for growth," said **David P. Berg**, Chief Executive Officer, Carlson Hospitality Group. "We look forward to working within HNA Tourism Group, a greatly respected global enterprise, in what will be an exciting new chapter in the history of Carlson Hotels. As part of HNA Tourism Group, Carlson Hotels will have an opportunity to advance our commitment to providing guests with hospitality worldwide," added Berg.

"We have great respect for the Carlson family and a deep appreciation for its history and special culture," said Haibo Bai, Board Member, HNA Tourism Group, and Chairman and CEO, HNA Hospitality Group. "Carlson Hotels' global success and strong, sustainable growth potential is a testament to their world-class brands, continuous innovation, excellent management, and unique employee-focused culture, all of which we will build upon as part of this combination to establish our presence in the U.S. market and expand our footprint in hospitality internationally. We look forward to working together with their management team, employees, franchisee partners, suppliers and customers to accelerate growth by investing substantially in the business."



INDUSTRY'S VIEW

Ajay Bakaya
Executive Director, Sarovar Hotels

The industry's shift from owning properties to managing hotels has created the need for greater global reach. Mergers and acquisitions is definitely one of the best vehicles for growth. Increasing the size is the best way to compete in an increasingly globalised hospitality sector and to create a foothold in the highly competitive price negotiations with the OTAs, competition with online start-ups and shifting traveller preferences. The easiest ways for a hotel group to access new customers and new markets is to take advantage of already established assets. A wide network of brands and hotels across different price points enables in reaching out to different customer segments. However, it is shrinking the industry on the other hand. This would mean fewer options for travellers when planning their trips while reducing competition for hotels groups.

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St. Regis debuts in Malaysia

St. Regis Hotels & Resorts debuts two new hotels in the popular South East Asian destination. The brand's first Malaysian location, on the idyllic Langkawi islands, accepted its first guests in April, while a destination in the heart of the capital, dynamic Kuala Lumpur, opened in May.



Soneva Jani to open in October 2016 in the Maldives

Inspired by a word that means wisdom in Sanskrit, Soneva Jani is located on the island of Medhufaru, which is part of an uninhabited five-island cluster in the Noonu Atoll. It will comprise 24 water villas and one island villa, with additional island villas planned at a later stage. The highlight of the resort is its location within a 5.6 kilometer lagoon of crystal clear waters with uninterrupted 360° views of the Indian Ocean. The main island is fringed by pristine beaches and blanketed with lush tropical greenery. Every water villa has a private pool and opens to its own stretch of lagoon, with some villas featuring slides going directly from the top deck into the lagoon below.



Corinthia Hotels to acquire Grand Hotel Astoria, Brussels

The Corinthia Grand Hotel Astoria will comprise 121 bedrooms and suites, as well as extensive banqueting, dining and spa facilities. Situated in a prime location on Rue Royale in the heart of the city, the hotel was built in 1909 at the request of King Leopold II. It was for many years considered to be among the world's finest luxury hotels and has welcomed a number of illustrious guests during the course of its history including former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill and former US President Dwight Eisenhower.



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‘Sense of Freedom’ at Six Senses Laamu

There can be no better way to enjoy the turquoise lagoon and deep-blue ocean waters of the Maldives than cruising on a private yacht. And now Six Senses Laamu makes this a reality with the latest addition to its experiences offerings - a day on the Sense of Freedom. This is a 37-foot (12.80 meter) Riviera 37 Flybridge; a luxury yacht with a large cockpit and two cabins able to accommodate six guests plus crew. The cabins include a master bedroom, an adjacent cabin with bunk beds and bathroom facilities inclusive of a shower. It also features a living room area and a small galley.



Aloft Veracruz to debut in 2017

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide announced that Aloft brand will soon debut in Veracruz, the main commercial seaport in Mexico, and Queretaro, one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. The hotels are additions to the brand's existing portfolio in the region, which includes Aloft Bogota Airport in Colombia, Aloft San Jose in Costa Rica, Aloft Panama, Aloft Cancun and Aloft Guadalajara in Mexico; and the recently opened Aloft Asuncion in Paraguay.

W Hotels unveils W Sound Suites

W Hotels Worldwide, part of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide in partnership with Coca-Cola debuts the first-ever W Sound Suite at W Bali – Seminyak. This private music studio and writer's room will be the place for professional recording artists, studio musicians and producers, in addition to hotel guests, to record in style while on the road.



Wyndham Rewards launches member levels

Through four distinct levels—Blue, Gold, Platinum and Diamond—Wyndham Rewards members can now take advantage of a host of new benefits that increase by level, from free Wi-Fi and rollover nights to annual point bonuses and more. And, when members redeem their points for a stay in one of the programme's top 25 destinations, they now automatically receive an additional enhancement to their award night for no additional points, helping them take advantage of exciting local experiences near their destination.



Sofitel Kunming opens in Yunnan, China

The opening of Sofitel Kunming is the latest addition in the luxury arm of AccorHotels in Yunnan province. The 400-room property is the tallest hotel in the city of Kunming to join the Sofitel network in Greater China. Located in the city's new business district, the hotel occupies the 27th to 52nd floor of the building tower. Kunming city has earned its reputation as the City of Eternal Spring in China.



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AHIC concludes at Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai

The Arabian Hotel Investment Conference marked 12 years of offering an unrivalled platform for the hotel investment industry in the Middle East where the future of the industry was discussed.

AHIC gave an exclusive data and research to delegates with studies coming from HVS Dubai and Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP (BLP) this year. In light of the political and economic challenges facing the hospitality industry globally and regionally, HVS Dubai shared its annual publication for 2016 - Middle East Hotel Survey, 'Sailing Through Rough Seas'. In addition to an analysis of occupancy and RevPAR of the branded hotel market, a summary of revenue mix and achievable gross operating profit for the key cities in the region was also presented.



BLP's MENA Hotels Survey Results 2016 offered insights from 200 hotel industry professionals from 25 countries who were surveyed in March this year. Highlights from the findings include that 43 per cent of respondents believe that RevPAR will grow in MENA and 74 per cent believe a third party operator with a franchise brand could be a more profitable proposition for an owner, over a brand managed hotel.

AHIC 2016 saw 38 sponsors from across the industry and from connecting industries, 600+ pre-registered delegates, delegates including 269 senior level individuals (Vice Presidents, Principals, Partners and Managing Directors, C Suite) from industry companies and sponsors, 540 minutes of dedicated live networking, three days of programmed events in seven creative and productive formats, 120+ speakers, current trends and observations shared from six business briefings held across the Middle East in the past six months, multiple signing announcements expected on site from attending companies, exclusive findings and insights from HVS's Middle East Survey 2016 including USD140 billion – investment worth of projects in GCC forecast for 2016 and exclusive data unveiled by BLP from its MENA Hotels Survey Results 2016 including findings that Dubai was voted 'No.1' for best value for hotel investment/development.



India is one of our strategic markets

With 25 years of experience, **Andre A. Gomez**, Head of Operations - India, Hilton Worldwide says that the group is going to expand its footprints through strategic partnerships.

HT Bureau

What does your new role entail?

I am very excited to be in India! I oversee the 15 hotels and resorts in the Hilton Worldwide portfolio in the country as well as our current pipeline of nearly 20 properties. Presently, we operate 15 hotels and resorts with over 2,000 rooms across five brands and 11 cities in India. We recently launched our luxury Conrad Hotels & Resorts brand in the country with the recent opening of Conrad Pune. The response to Conrad Pune has been exceptional and it is fast becoming the first choice in the city.

What projects do you have in the pipeline in India? What are the main Tier-II/III cities that you are considering?

We are committed to India, one of our key strategic markets, and continue to explore opportunities to increase our footprint through a multi-brand and multiple-partner strategy,

while staying committed to delivering exceptional guest experiences and extending our industry-leading best practices to our guests in the country. Currently, we have a pipeline of nearly 20 hotels and resorts and more than 2,500 rooms.

Some cities that we have identified for expansion include Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad, Gurgaon, Goa, Cochin, Jaipur and Surat. Additionally, the religious circuits present tremendous opportunities for mid-market hotels.

What are the main challenges of running hotels in India?

One of the major challenges is the acute scarcity of trained, experienced and motivated talent. We see this primarily in emerging markets. However, we have a robust strategy in place to attract talent, especially

youth, and provide them with learning and development opportunities to excel in their work. We also have a partnership with Room to Read in India to support their literacy efforts and have formalised a Job Shadowing programme to educate girls on opportunities in the hospitality industry.

How would you define the role of the GM of a hotel in the current competitive scenario?

Firstly, a renewed focus on driving the right culture is important. A strong culture leads to inspired team members, greater guest satisfaction and loyalty, and commercially stronger hotels.

At Hilton Worldwide, our recruitment philosophy is centred on finding team members that embody the Hilton values and demonstrate the core competencies including customer focus, leadership and result

orientation. Secondly, with economic fluctuation becoming the norm, greater commercial acumen and understanding of the market is an imperative to be able to negotiate the crests and troughs.

Hilton as a Managing Partner for hotel owners – what difference can it make to their hotels and how would you ensure ROIs?

A powerful portfolio of brands clubbed with a global footprint that is backed by area and regional expertise, an extensive distribution and sales network, an industry leading guest loyalty programme and pioneering innovation is what Hilton Worldwide brings to the table.

The 'Hilton' brand is the most recognised name in the industry around the world. It brings with it a strong global lineage and that alone passes on a huge responsibility to hotel owners.



Andre A. Gomez





Human touch a differentiator

David P Berg, Chief Executive Officer, Carlson Hospitality Group believes that despite a huge leap in technology, human touch still remains the core value of hospitality and can be a differentiator in the business.

Anupriya Bishnoi

The choice of consumers in the recent times has evolved a great deal, so much so that the hotels which fail to keep up with the pace of their guests see themselves getting ticked off their list of 'Preferred hotels'.

We are in an era of consumer choice in which our customers choose how they engage with us and how we engage with them. What food they like, what kind of pillows they like, their preferences are within our data and because they know more, they expect more. If something is missing or if something is not up to their expectations and if something doesn't look exactly the way it looked online, they will know about it. Couple of years ago, nearly half of the things hotels do today, were nearly impossible then.

The first interaction of customers was a call to make a reservation. Today, a customer goes through 38 websites on an average before booking the trip. Also the impact of third parties matters a lot which may or may not feel the same way as we do. These travellers are becoming reviewers themselves. They post, they chat, they tweet, they snap about their experiences, all in real times. Gone are the days when we used to wait for some cocktail party to discuss our experiences. Now they happen in the moment. When we meet or exceed our customer expectations, they reward us, not with just their loyalty but with their higher recommendation. In today's world that reward is very important. Earning those recommendations in today's business environment is critical and hard.

Use of technology has come a long way whether it's about booking a cab, laundry services, getting a cab. Also these companies will now deliver faster, cheaper and more efficiently than ever before. Customers expect more choice, more personalisation, more recognition and more individualised services. Let's take an example, today Uber operates in 500 cities with over 60 countries across the world and provides million of rides annually and is estimated at US\$62 billion and the

company is just seven years old. Uber has truly changed the way transportation business is done. Everything is now just a click away. A consumer will know the time in which the cab will reach him, he will get the cab details along with the picture of the cab driver.

Similarly he thinks Airbnb is making all the businessmen think how we conduct our businesses and how we can compete to serve our guests. US food chains like pizza delivery services have re-invented themselves. The customers can see when their pizza goes for preparation, when it is out of the oven, when it's going to be delivered and at what time the pizza boy will show up at the door. Many banking applications now allow us to make purchases, pay bills, transfer funds from our phone and soon enough from our watches. Services like Amazon make personalised recommendations based on our past experiences and make the entire process convenient.

The latest technology we talk about today will quickly move from an idea to a rare experience to a pleasant surprise, to expectations. However, in the hospitality business, irrespective of high-tech minded consumers, the power of human touch will not go away and truly it can be a differentiator for all of us in this business.

At Carlson Rezidor, we believe, we will succeed by making exceptional authentic connections with our guests, our owners, our franchisees and our team members. We are still into the fundamental concept of hospitality. We still have the opportunity to delight our guests. I remain convinced that genuine hospitality is ageless.

We must invest in technology and digital platforms that enable us to deliver exceptional experiences to our guests and know more about them, but we are not going to lose our core value of caring. Technology is here, but the human touch is not going away.

“
We are still into the fundamental concept of hospitality. We still have the opportunity to delight our guests. I remain convinced that genuine hospitality is ageless
”

Excerpts from HICSA 2016

Brand conversions

India recently witnessed many conversions. There are huge benefits that a brand can bring to an independently owned hotel. Industry experts shares what's bringing the onset of this trend and when is the right time for 're-branding'.

HT Bureau



L - R: Manav Goyal, Suma Venkatesh, Sunil Ghadiok

Many factors are triggering brand conversions in the Indian hotel space. **Suma Venkatesh**, Senior Vice President Real Estate and Development, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces says, "Every brand has a certain positioning. It is probably when an owner is looking at maximising rates and occupancies. They think, if they reposition their brand or rebrand, they can achieve this. Also, at the end of the day if there is no alignment in what the owners expect and what the operators are delivering, then of course it's going to create a friction and there will be a relationship that will not be able to stand the test of time. People are now exploring conversions as a solution to this."

Talking about the right time of when the owner should look for a brand conversion, Venkatesh says, "If you are independently operating a hotel then with the growing

competition, it's going to be difficult to combat the increasing supply. Also, while considering the brand for your property, the fit between the brand and the property is going to be very crucial."

But why would an independent hotel affiliate with a brand? Venkatesh answers, "Large brands bring distribution and positioning. They also render talent and right kind of people. There are definitely many benefits that a brand can bring to an independently-owned hotel."

Sunil Ghadiok, President & COO, Shanti Hospitality, says, "The trend of brand conversions is only going to accelerate with time. I think markets are maturing in India and so are the travellers and the latter know what they want. Branded hotels and culture are going to be the norm so I think it is just going to accelerate. Also, as the tier II cities are maturing, this trend will grow more."

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“

Large brands bring distribution and positioning. They also render talent and right kind of people. There are definitely many benefits that a brand can bring to an independently owned hotel

Suma Venkatesh

”

About the ideal time of when an owner should consider moving on with another brand, Ghadiok says, “Owners who see competition growing stronger immediately feel the need to get in with the brands and get conversions which would give them better and strong positioning, especially if it’s an independently operating hotel. The other factor is if an owner is getting into a period where he is contemplating renovation, he thinks of tying up with a brand to use that strength to achieve specifications.”

Ghadiok also feels that owners should think about the long term profits of getting involved with a brand. “Your additional cost is one time but your incremental value is pretty much in perpetuity. And that’s what the owners need to consider: We should not think about what the immediate cost would look like; we should see the long term growth for the hotels while affiliating with a brand.”

According to **Manav Goyal**, Executive Director Projects and Business Development, Adyar Gate Hotels, “We talk about the costs but we tend to forget the value a

brand gives. I know of an independent owner who is considering converting into a brand for a very simple logic. He is into the real estate business apart from being an hotelier but he would still want to expand his portfolio. He thinks a brand will help his growth. I guess ‘to each his own.’”

About guiding an owner on how to choose the right brand, Manav says, “First of all you have a different kind of owners and you need to understand what your market is like. After that, probably you have to invite brands evaluate their business models. You have a lot of owned operating brands and then you have others who are working on an asset light model. Subsequent to that, we then probably look at the operator’s value like how strong they are globally, their historical performance.”

He further opines, “Also, you need to evaluate how culturally alike you both are going to be with each other as it is going to be a long-term relationship. Once you are past that stage, you are only left with the usual negotiations.”

L - R: Kevin Wallace (MD, SE Asia & Australasia), Manav Goyal, Suma Venkatesh, Sunil Ghadiok and Dhruva Rathore (VP Development- South Asia, Hyatt Hotels)



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Authentic cuisine with a Hearty twist



Suveer Sodhi

Suveer Sodhi, Director, Food and Beverage, Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi tells **HospitalityTalk** how and why Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi opened four new restaurants in the last five months.



HT Bureau

Tell us about the three new restaurants in your hotel?

In December 2015, the hotel launched **Mister Chai** – a one of its kind tea restaurant, that has been curated to give patrons a local 'tea shop feel' focusing on regional Indian street food and beverages with a strong focus on tea. Unlike a conventional tea lounge. Popular Indian street food has been re-invented and presented in exceptional style. Mister Chai is the perfect place to relax and enjoy international tea, traditional Indian chai or a freshly brewed cup of coffee.

This year Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi is excited to bring to its patrons three new food and beverage concepts – Sorrento, Shang Palace and Grappa.

Sorrento, named after a beautiful coastal town in the southwest region of Italy, is a brilliant specimen of true Italian culture and cuisine. Designed by the eminent Dubai based Stickman Design, Sorrento takes an innovative approach on Neapolitan dining, which is one of the most recognisable aspects of Italian cuisine. Emphasising comfort and creativity, the menu features **Chef Luigi Ferraro's** greatest hits—re-inventing classic dishes by infusing his eclecticism. The Sorrento experience is a perfect combination of Italian cuisine and fine dining complemented by an extensive wine selection in a stylish dining environment.

Shang Palace is Shangri-La's signature award winning Chinese restaurant that we have finally brought to Delhi. The menu is being dished out by three expatriate Chinese chefs showcasing **Sichuan, Cantonese** as well as **Yunnan cuisine** as they bring to you the best of the wok, barbeque and dimsum options. For the first time in Delhi, the menu offers an exciting barbecue section that showcases grilled skewers from Northern Yunnan and mains from the 'Dai' province in Southern Yunnan. Designed by Stickman from Dubai, Shang Palace has three Private Dining Rooms and a

wonderful alfresco area overlooking the hotel lawns. Shang Palace promises a unique culinary journey full of genuine Asian traditions in the heart of New Delhi.

The third concept is **Grappa**, the hotel's newly opened bar inspired by the adjoining Italian restaurant. Our in-house mixologists Mario Gonzalez Cabildo from Ibiza and Gaurav Dhyani have created magic with our very own 'Barrel Aged Cocktails', a section of House Negroni's and Sours, that include the signature Grappa Negroni, the Pisco Sour and lots more. Grappa is seamlessly woven into its surroundings with an easy access to Sorrento and provides a symphony of various little details put together to create a fun space that transforms from day to night. Overlooking a lovely alfresco deck and lush green gardens, it provides a picturesque setting for sundowners.

What was the driving force behind the opening of these restaurants?

Delhi has seen some very exciting food and beverage concepts over the past few years many of which are outside of hotels and we wanted to give our guests the best food and beverage experience within a 5-star hotel environment. Shangri-La is known for its restaurant concepts globally and we wanted to capitalise on that, especially by bringing our signature Chinese restaurant brand to the city. Shangri-La New Delhi has been operational for over 10 years and in today's dynamic environment we needed to re-create our food and beverage keeping in mind the current guest expectations.

How competitive is the F&B space in Delhi/NCR?

The competition in the food and beverage space is constantly and evidently increasing. Everyday new and unique concept-driven restaurants are coming up targeting similar customers as us. There are numerous dining options in Delhi/NCR reaching out to patrons and offering a plethora of choices.

“
In today's dynamic environment we needed to re-create our food and beverage keeping in mind the current guest expectations
”





Gilles Bragard - Executive Secretary & Founder, Club des Chefs des Chefs



(L to R) Montu Saini - Executive Chef to the President of India, Gilles Bragard - Executive Secretary & Founder, Club des Chefs des Chefs, Venu Rajamony - Press Secretary to the President of India, Vijay Wanchoo - Sr Executive Vice President & General Manager, The Imperial, New Delhi



Club des Chefs des Chefs comes to India

Chefs of the world, catering to the heads of states, will converge in Delhi this autumn to host a general assembly of the Club des Chefs des Chefs.

Anupriya Bishnoi

The elite confederation comprising two dozen members from different countries where they work as the principal chef for their constitutional head will meet for six days beginning October 23 in New Delhi at the Club des Chefs des Chefs. A demonstration of Indian cooking and *sari* draping, high tea with the President at Rashtrapati Bhavan and charity dinner to channel the money thus raised for a philanthropic cause will be the highlights of the October 23-28 event.

Venu Rajamony, Press Secretary, President of India, says, "Club des Chefs des Chefs (CCC) is bringing top chefs from all over the world to India in October. In this event chefs working with royalties or the head of the states of different countries come together and try and promote friendship, co-operation and understanding through food. In India, apart from having diversity in the food options, people are extremely fond of their cuisines. We thought it's time for Club des Chefs des Chefs to come to India and organise their activities so that they can discover the best of the food traditions that India has.

We, in Rashtrapati Bhawan, pay a great deal of attention to the food we serve to our guests to make sure the food is the best India can offer; to ensure it is tasty as well

healthy and it represents diverse food traditions of India. It is palatable to the foreign guests who visit us. The president will meet all the chefs coming from the different countries."

Gilles Bragard, Executive Secretary & Founder, Club des Chefs des Chefs, adds, "It is great for the Club des Chefs des Chefs to host its meet in India. The first meeting consisted of only seven chefs in 1977 and there were so happy to meet each other as they realised that what they were doing was different from the other chefs working in hotels or restaurants. Since then, we have visited many countries. Chefs are working behind the scenes. And this is a great platform to recognise their value. I think the right kind of food is very important for political negotiations and these chefs are able to achieve just that. This red carpet is for them. I am sure Mr. President will be very happy to meet the chefs."

Montu Saini, Executive Chef to the President of India, says, "Working for a President and working in a restaurant is completely different. I found it a matter of pride for the country to host the culinary ambassadors across the globe. CCC is a non-profit organisation which is working for a cause."

“

The right kind of food is very important for political negotiations and these chefs are able to achieve just that

Gilles Bragard

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Asset management for enhanced profitability

Shwetank Singh, Vice President – Development & Asset Management-InterGlobe Hotels tells how the role of an asset manager has evolved over time, why they are important and who can be a good asset manager.

HT Bureau

What are the main challenges in managing assets in today's time?

We are all focussed on enhanced profitability from the operator. The operator is paid to do that. They are supposed to be experts. To me, enhanced profitability should be the operator's job and that unfortunately is the most difficult task to handle because they try to be experts when it suits them. That I think is very difficult to do but besides that you can make money in an asset like if you get the right depreciation tax shield, you can leverage your property and get the right debt levels and a tax benefit on that or if you have the right capital structure, you can bring in the right capital partners and enhance your profitability as well. As an asset manager, my job is to keep an eye on all of these and also ensure that my property is maintained at the right levels.

What is the role of aggregators and OTAs?

Aggregators and OTAs have taken the advantage of the market gap. There weren't branded hotels in the locations where people wanted to stay. And they have setup a market place which allows the owners to win and they have made a good system to begin with. They have fair amount of inventories under them and they are serious players but they are not trampling any spaces. We all are in different spaces. They provide convenience. We provide safety and security. We are in different spaces. They have a good model going, they will make money but will they make money in the long run, that time will tell.

Can a GM be a good asset manager? Or do you need asset management firms or asset managers?

You know in an operating and ownership separated model where the owner is different and the operator is different, GM still reports to the operator. And that's fine because the culture dominance in a hotel should be that of an

operator. So it's perfectly acceptable but by the nature of how the GMs are awarded, they are rewarded for producing profitability out of their operations. They are all restricted to GOP level return. What they have never ever been rewarded on is what happens below that line, and therefore what ends up with the owner. They are more likely to focus on day to day activities with very little long term vision either for the asset or for what is happening below the profitability line. But there are GMs who are extremely smart. So GMs cannot be great asset managers until they are rewarded rightly.

How is InterGlobe managing its assets?

When I joined the hospitality industry, there was no asset management in the country. This science didn't exist in the country before, I have learnt it. We have been able to create science out of it; we have now very set system in place which can run independently. We run on monthly basis with the general managers and the sales team. I can't be on every property every month but at least once a quarter, I walk through all my properties including the backend. We look at all the maintenance schedules and we end up with minutes,



we follow on that and we ensure that the job is done. The last piece is that we are very keen; we are consciously trying to raise the positioning of all our properties.



Shwetank Singh



As an asset manager, my job is to keep an eye on many factors and also ensure that my property is maintained at the right levels



World of Mid-Market Hotels

A new trend shows the rise of mid-market hotels. However there are many grey areas around the rise. **HospitalityTalk** engages in a conversation with some hotel groups to tap into these areas.

HT Bureau



Ajay Bakaya, Director
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts



Domestic
leisure travel
is growing
significantly



BEYOND RELIGIOUS AND BUSINESS DESTINATIONS

There has been a major shift in the nature of the hotel industry for the last decade with the mid-market hotels forming a larger percentage of the total room inventory. Surprisingly, they now account for nearly half of all the hotel rooms in the country. But are they just limited to business and pilgrim destinations? Are they going to stay here in the long run? Are they going to be found beyond pilgrim spots? Answering these, **Jean-Michel Cassé**, Senior Vice President, Operations, AccorHotels India, says, "Besides the relatively low cost in development, the segment has witnessed an unprecedented upsurge owing to the rising number of corporate travellers, a large portion of which are mid-level executives, and a fast growing domestic travel segment, largely comprising the middle class. Another reason why this segment is gaining popularity is the fact that its nature makes it viable across not only top tier cities but also secondary cities. They can be easily be taken to tier II and III cities, beyond just pilgrim and business destinations, and unlike luxury hotels, they can be flexible with pricing and still be profitable."

With a current network of 38 hotels spanning seven brands, AccorHotels is present in all tier I cities and

majority of tier II cities, across India. "We have projected a strong future demand for mid-scale and full service hotel brands such as Novotel and Mercure in India," adds Cassé.

Ajay Bakaya, Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts explaining the scope of mid-market hotels beyond pilgrim and business destinations, says, "Domestic leisure travel is growing and we are seeing a rise in demand of mid-scale hotels in leisure destinations as well. Increase in disposable incomes and the burgeoning middle class have set the progress of tourism in the country. Then there is the growing population of young professionals who are looking to travel extensively and look for safe and affordable stay."

According to **Rishi Puri**, Vice President, Lords Hotels and Resorts, leisure travellers are looking at value for money options. "A growing middle class has created demand for affordable avenues for the domestic traveller. It is not just about business and religious destinations but the leisure travel demand is on a significant rise too," he adds.

For **Vilas Pawar**, Chief Executive Officer, Choice Hotels India, business and leisure tourism remain the main revenue generating sectors but medical, religious and wildlife tourism are picking up too. He says, "With corporates becoming cost-conscious and leisure travellers always





Jean-Michel Cassé
Senior Vice President
Operations, AccorHotels India



Mid-market hotels can easily be taken to tier II and III cities



looking at value for money options, mid-market hotels are emerging as the preferred choice."

Choice Hotels cater to both the markets of MICE and FIT's. Their present market mix is 75 per cent corporate and 25 per cent leisure. "Although MICE has not been a significant contributor to the Indian hospitality sector so far, this trend is likely to change with better planning as well as improved infrastructure. In the coming one or two years, a growth of around 80-85 per cent is forecasted in the business section, around 50-55 per cent in the MICE section and 40 per cent growth in the leisure section," he adds.

Rohit Vig, MD, StayWell Hospitality Group says, "Mid-market hotels mostly cater to leisure travellers. Yes, pilgrim towns play a huge role but you have to be in larger towns first. You have to be in NCR, Hyderabad, Bangalore and once you have your sales network set up in these cities,

then you can sell to Shirdi or Katra because the business is driven from tier I and II cities."

THE FUTURE

The mid-market segment is growing rapidly in secondary and tertiary cities, as it is linked to the growth of low-cost carriers, who are increasingly reaching out to the smaller markets. Casse says, "The Indian tourism industry is expected to double in revenues by 2020. The increase in the number of domestic travellers and domestic trips will support the demand for mid-scale hotels."

Bakaya is expecting strong growth in the mid-market segment. "The increase in the number of domestic travellers and domestic trips will support the demand for mid-scale hotels. The dependency is largely on business travellers but tourist traffic is also on the rise. Various



Rishi Puri, Vice President
Lords Hotels and Resorts



A growing middle class has created demand for affordable avenues





Rohit Vig, MD
StayWell Hospitality Group

“
Pilgrim towns
play a huge role
but you have
to be in larger
towns first
”



domestic and international brands investing in this segment signify its potential,” he adds.

Puri believes that even though the hospitality industry is seeing sluggish demand due to the economic slowdown, the mid-market branded hotels will be the biggest growth driver. “Today, you have the young profile of Indians travelling across the country. For them, it is not the luxury segment, but a brand like Lords Hotels and Resorts that is more attractive. Growth of this segment will be helped by the growing number of corporate travellers, patrons of five-star hotels, shifting to these hotels as part of cost-cutting measures. Even as the slowdown has hit construction of the hotel segment, we have grown relatively faster being in this category,” he adds.

According to recent research by HVS India, of the 93,000 hotel rooms being added to the existing 14,000 hotels by March 2017 across major Indian cities, almost 50 per cent will be in the mid-market and budget range as demand for mid-market hotels is increasing. Pawar says, “The budget and the mid market sections have also emerged as the



Vilas Pawar, CEO
Choice Hotels India

“
Corporates are
becoming
cost-conscious
and look at value
for money
”





most preferred investment categories. Luxury hotels call for a huge investment (per project) and have longer gestation periods, as compared to mid-scale budget hotels given the investments involved in projects. However, overall investment is likely to be maximum in the mid-scale hotels.”

Vig says, “Earlier, whenever people travelled, they used to stay with their relatives but now everyone wants a sense of freedom so they might visit the family whole day but at the end of the day they will check-in in their hotel.”

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

While there are no direct provisions from the government for the mid-market hotels, the segment will benefit from the government’s substantial focus on infrastructure and tourism. While some find solution in the budget allotment for the infrastructure, for some government needs to pay more attention to this particular segment.

Casse says, “In the recent Union Budget, the government has earmarked a massive ` 221,246 crore outlay for infrastructure development, ` 97,000 crore investment in road constructions and ` 50-100 crore to revive 160 non-functional airports. Increased connectivity and accessibility will give a boost to domestic travel in tier II and III cities, offering growth avenues for mid-market hotels.” He also believes that enhancing regional and last mile connectivity to untapped regions in the North-East, will open up fresh avenues for expansion of mid-market hotels in these destinations. Bakaya believes that the best support will be stronger infrastructure, airport, ports, roads and GST. According to Puri, the government needs to bring in more incentives for the budget and the economy segments as these categories are ignored. He says, “Policies are designed to suit luxury hotels and the sector has not yet become a powerful lobby to influence policy making. We hardly see any initiatives taken by the government.”

Pawar says, “The government has initiated ‘Project Mausam’ under which it has proposed to establish cross cultural linkages and to revive historic maritime cultural and economic ties with 39 Indian Ocean countries. Further, the government plans to cover 150 countries under e-visa scheme by the end of the year. The government has released a fresh category of visa—the medical visa or M-visa, to encourage medical tourism in India,” he adds.

Showing the downside, Pawar adds, “Obtaining licenses still remains a long and a tedious process. The high interest rates and high real estate prices are hurdles.” Vig cites the example of development of Delhi-Jaipur Express Highway and Delhi-Agra highway which helped boost business. “We get less than 0.7 per cent of the global tourist coming to India. Taking care of social issues, sense of security for women is important. I think this government will make a difference in the tourism sector.”





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Our product is futuristic

Altaf Chapri, Managing Director, AB Chapri Retreats, talks about the Indian hospitality scene and what makes his brand a class apart.

HT Bureau

What is the brand's portfolio?

We represent four inspiring properties—Neeleshwar Hermitage and The Lotus Boat in Malabar, Kerala; Sukoon Boat and Sukoon Safairs in Kashmir—created by a team of passionate and experienced travellers. Each offers an award-winning service and is set in different locations—pristine beach, tranquil lakeside and unexplored backwaters, insightful safari. All of them sparkle with distinguished and unique qualities. Our endeavour—'Silence, Space and Restfulness'.

How would you define the Indian hospitality scene? What are your predictions for 2016-17?

The Indian hospitality scene is moving towards quality service and experiential travel. It is going beyond the decor of hotel rooms to what is around and what is unique. To sum it up the Indian hospitality scene is improving with many experiential properties run by passionate hoteliers. As the digital era is picking up, it is easier to portray

India to the world. More hotels and brands are moving towards experiential travel and there is no place in the world with more history, culture and experiences like India.

Our prediction for 2016-17 is that domestic and international business shall grow despite a few economies collapsing.

Who are your clients?

At Neeleshwar Hermitage and The Lotus Boat in Malabar, we thrive on inbound business, 56 per cent of the business is from the UK. Europeans appreciate our concept of simplistic luxury. We customise every meal and do not offer buffet in any property. We also do not have televisions in the rooms.

What are your expansion plans for 2016-17?

In terms of business development, we are looking to open a new property in Srinagar, Qayaam Gah,

with eight luxury rooms, operational by the summer of 2017. The property will also embrace our group theme of 'Silence & Restfulness'. We are also working on a unique experiential property in the pink city of Jaipur but it is too soon to say when we plan to open it.

What steps have you taken to be ahead of the competition with the hotels in the same segment?

It is difficult for us to compare ourselves with others. Our products are futuristic and beyond competition. We focus on less is more, simplistic hospitality which is a new concept today.

Our endeavour is to give back to our environment and move closer towards offering responsible eco-luxury to our guests. Our food is simple yet focussed on nutrition rather than quantity and our guests are family. At ABChapri Retreats, silence has the right to be heard.

The INDIA STORY

India is slated to grow faster than China in the next few years. Even as optimism reigns, expectations fluctuate on long-term growth in hospitality.

Kanchan Nath

On the first day of HICSA, 2016, held at JW Marriott, Aerocity, New Delhi, at 'The Leaders' Panel', the moderator was **Kapil Chopra**, President, The Oberoi Group. Panellists included: **Craig Smith**, President-Asia Pacific, Marriott International, **Jan Smits**, Chief Executive Officer-AMEA, InterContinental Hotels Group, **Peter Fulton**, Group President-EAME and SW Asia, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, **Ratnesh Verma**, President and MD, Whitbread Hotels and Restaurants International and **Thorsten Kirschke**, President-Asia Pacific, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group

The new government having been in power, close to two years, the GDP forecast for India is still healthy at 7.5 per cent and expected to grow this year. Chopra enquires from the panelists how things have changed for their respective brands over the last two years. **Peter Fulton** says, "That one has to be optimistic and the world has to keep moving forward in India. We saw a pretty rough four to five years in India. If you were to rank it, I would put 2014 as six in a scale of 10 and 2016 as seven. If you look at what the government is attempting to do, finally there has been talk on the infrastructure Visa on Arrival; all these things are great and things will improve. We are linked to whatever else goes on in the world so it will not be a meteoric rise."

Jan Smits adds, "One can feel the energy and the momentum that is starting to build. The occupancies and arrivals, everything is starting to move in the right direction. People are positive; projects are starting to be revisited again. There is definitely a positive momentum."

Thorsten Kirschke reverts, "The feel factor, the sentiment is

more positive with all the efforts of PM's administration, trying to put in place improvements, whether it's promoting tourism or infrastructure development. The big challenge is of course the execution from theory to practice. If we believe in India, we have to be more patient, do our part and support wherever we can as well. It is definitely a notch up from the sentiment perspective."

Craig Smith comparing China and India, says, "For the most part things are looking great for India. The forecast for next 10 years for India far outstrips China. The PM has created this atmosphere of confidence in India. Infrastructure is moving but is it moving fast enough? Probably not, but it's moving in the right direction. What you have in India over China is demographics, a lot many young people in India, while older generation in China. Next three years we want to open more hotels in India. We feel that the pace in India is going to grow, while it might slow down a tiny bit in China."

Ratnesh Verma says, "There is a lot of feel good factor. India continues to be a long-term story. I often think back and wonder when it is going to be a now story. Do we believe in India in the long-term? Absolutely! But where is the depth outside of the five six cities?"

He continues, "The construction activity is kind of very marginal for the size. Perennial development issues continue, very expensive debt, the regulatory framework, lack of professional project management, all those issues remain. While I would love to believe in the long-term story, I would like to see the actual transition to the 'now' story."

“

For the most part things are looking great for India. The forecast for the next 10 years for India far outstrips China

Craig Smith

”

From L-R: Thorsten Kirschke, Jan Smits, Peter Fulton, Craig Smith, Kapil Chopra and Ratnesh Verma



MENU ENGINEERING

Menu revamp is based on technicalities and market demand. Some hotels do it frequently but some stick to their signature menus. **HospitalityTalk** asks the F&B spokespersons of various hotels about the deciding factors for their menu refurbishment and how it helps in boosting the revenue.

Anupriya Bishnoi



Rajneesh Maller
F&B Manager
ITC Rajputana

The need

A revamp in the menu is often necessary to incorporate changing market trends and adding new concepts which are uniquely differentiated; thereby lending freshness and distinctiveness to the restaurants' offering. However, in restaurants where customer trends and brands are built on tradition like Peshawri; the menu has remained constant for decades since inception. Successful legacy brands like the Bukhara/Peshwari are in existence for more than 35 years. Dumpukht and Dakshin are 25 years old and the menu has been constant.

Revenue boost

Responding positively to customers' trends and keeping the menu contemporary results in generating top of mind recall for the restaurant, thereby enhancing footfalls and revenues. The more contemporary brands of ITC like the Pavilion, Ottimo and Pan Asian are constantly refreshed based on market dynamics. It also challenges our chefs to innovate and display their culinary skills resulting in increased revenues due to creativity rather than increase in prices.

Chef Alessandro
Chef De Cuisine
Grand Hyatt Mumbai

The need

While the existing menus may be doing extremely well, it is always good to create newer and more evolved offerings for the guests. It helps expose guests to newer food cultures and traditions. In addition to enhancing the dining experience for guests, it also gives our chefs the platform to experiment and upgrade their culinary skills.

Revenue boost

Change is not only well received by our regular diners but also entices new diners as new experiences help drive higher revenue.

Rajesh Khanna
F&B Head
The Metropolitan Hotel
& Spa

The need

It is very important to have the menu updated as you need to offer different tastes to your regular guests. Your menu defines your restaurant. The availability of ingredients also pushes us to change the menus. Virtually everything you do in your



restaurant and how you are perceived in your market is linked to your food. The menu of your restaurant is unknowingly the non-living spokesperson of your eatery. How attractive it looks and how much justice it does to the theme of your restaurant is vital. Menu is something that customers always look forward to. To keep yourself at par with the changing F & B trends we need to revamp the menus.

Revenue boost

Change in the menus helps us to up-sell new dishes which help us to increase the APC of the restaurant. Acceptance of the guests also goes up high as everybody wants to try new and changed menu.

Dinesh Varma
EAM F&B
The Leela Ambience
Gurgaon Hotel & Residences

The need

It is a fast changing world with competition all around and the consumer is on a lookout for new destinations to explore the culinary delights. He needs to be offered different culinary experiences to be hooked to the particular restaurant. To engage the guests and to ensure that



Rajneesh Maller

“
A revamp in the menu is often necessary to incorporate changing trends

”



Chef Alessandro

“
It is always good to create newer and more evolved offerings

”





Rajesh Khanna



The menu is unknowingly the non-living spokesperson of your eatery



Dinesh Varma



The new menu hones the skills of the chefs and customers get new offerings



the guest doesn't get bored of the offerings we need to make sure that we revamp the menus consistently. It hones the skills of the chefs and the customer gets something new to try.

Revenue boost

Revamping menus ensure the flow of customers and when customers are consistently visiting the restaurants it ensure consistent revenues.

Rohit Srivastava
Assistant Director
Food & Beverage
Hyatt Regency New Delhi

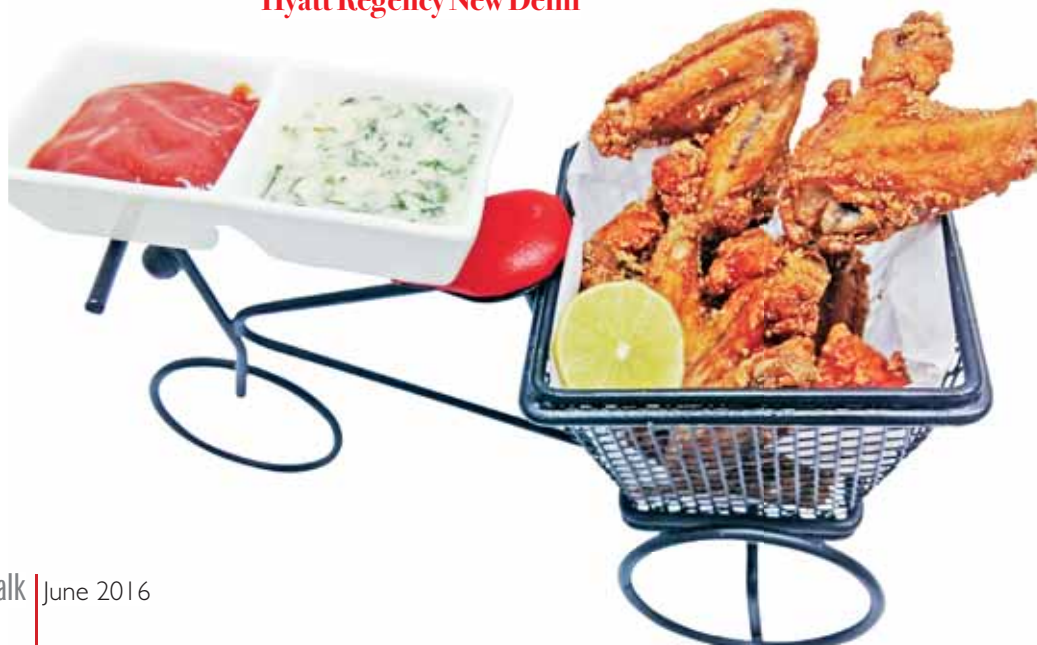
The need

The menu is the most important marketing and sales tool that a restaurant has to market its food and beverages to customers. Not only does the menu play a major role in establishing market position and customer expectations; it is probably the single biggest merchandising and profit tool you've got. It is imperative to revamp menu frequently as an updated menu design gives our patrons a fresh look and feel wherein we try highlighting customer

favourites, or eliminating dishes that aren't big sellers. As pioneers of food and beverage in the city, we always try to innovate unique and international dishes with focus on current and seasonal trends.

Revenue boost

A well-designed menu can educate and entertain the customers as well as be a communication, cost control, and marketing tool for our restaurant and help in achieving sales goals. A properly designed menu can direct the attention of the diner to specific items and increase the likelihood that those items will be ordered. These items should be the ones with the highest gross profit, lowest food costs



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Rohit Srivastava

“
The menu is probably the single biggest merchandising and profit tool
”



and help achieve the average check needed to return the desired sales. We can improve our sales without changing any menu item or price. All we have to do is reposition the items and employ menu psychology techniques on our menu.

There are several different menu formats and each has a different area of sales concentration. The items we put in the area of sales concentration should be selected with care and purpose. They should be items that we want to feature and do better than the competition. This is where we want to list our house specialties and signature items.

In addition to the format, the menu items are typically grouped into menu categories. The number of and names used for the various menu categories will be greatly influenced by the type of restaurant, the price range, and number of menu offerings.

Parvez Sheikh
F&B Manager
Hotel Marine Plaza,
Mumbai

The need

Menu revamps need frequently because the expectation of our guests and their palate changes due to market demand and experience with the competition. In today's business there is a trend of doing different

in terms of doing dishes and their taste, colour and presentation. So by



Ashish Bagul

“
Revamping increases the footfall thereby increasing the overall revenue
”



doing this our loyal guests and the part time visitor guest gets an experience of the menu change.

However, the signature dishes are just kept untouched. Also, it helps the F&B department to discontinue the dishes which are not moving and look for nice and different creations and innovations.

Revenue boost

The changes in the menu keeping in the mind the factors like colour, taste, pricing, authenticity and competition are the major game changer in boosting the revenue. Moreover the footfall ability also increases due to selling something fresh, authentic, unique and acceptable with strong marketing tools.

Ashish Bagul
Executive Chef
Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences

The need

The menu of a restaurant is the heart and the soul of that place. There are a lot of factors which need to be accounted for before changing a menu, the primary factor being guest feedback. In order to keep the guests excited about the place the menu needs to be constantly changing. On an average a biannual pattern works well for any restaurant.



Parvez Sheikh

“
In today's business there is a trend of doing different in terms of doing dishes
”

Revenue boost

A lot of people get associated with a certain restaurant and become patrons. Revamping the restaurant re-ignites the same old love for the restaurant and all that it stands for, which in turn increases the footfall thereby increasing the overall revenue.

Harleen Singh Rawal
 Director, Food & Beverage
 Le Meridien Gurgaon

The need

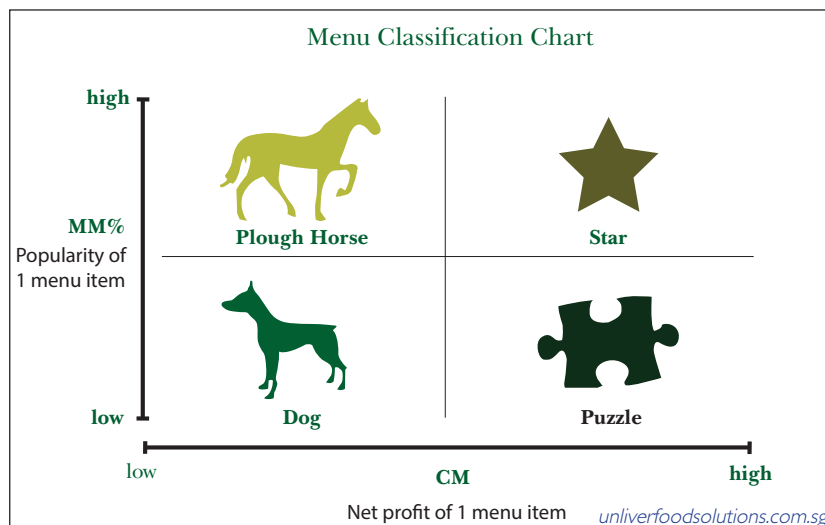
Ideally menus are revamped twice a year, once usually after March and second in October. But most of the hotels just do this once a year because many hotels believe in repeat guests. So if you change the menu frequently then of course the repeat guests will be disappointed. Every hotel does a menu engineering as explained in the chart.

Revenue boost

Pricing plays an important role. So sometimes you are not changing the dishes but just tweaking the prices,

keeping the competition in mind. For example a Kingfisher pint was costing us ` 50-60 till last year, now the Haryana government has done a

price revision in which a pint is costing me around ` 75-80. This is a 30-40 per cent rise so I have to increase my selling price as well.



In menu engineering there are few dishes which are called Stars, these are the dishes which are your hot-sellers and are bringing good profitability to you. Then there are some dishes called as Puzzles, these are the dishes which sometimes do well and sometimes they just keep sitting on the menu. Then there is Plough Horse, these are the ones which are alright to keep; as in they are not incurring any losses. Then there are dishes called as Dogs, which are non-performing and non-profitable so we remove them and replace it with more Stars and Plough Horses.



Harleen Singh Rawal

“ Sometimes you are not changing the dishes but just tweaking the prices ”

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Transition from traditional food

Gaurav Malhotra, Executive Chef, Novotel Pune Nagar Road on evolving palates and more.



Gaurav Malhotra

What is the high point of each restaurant in the hotel?

Fuzion offers the best of Indian cuisine with a contemporary twist. Menus are inspired by using traditional Indian cuisine infused with the finest western ingredients, more along the Mediterranean touch. It also adds a tinge of other cuisines around the world to offer variety and create a balance.

Soak Lounge Bar is a mesmerising outdoor lounge which offers an immensely relaxed atmosphere at the poolside with variety of beverages along with the comfort food and appetizers.

Also, our new concept Soak Sunday Sundowners keeps the guests on their toes with the live music of heartthrob DJ Abhishek Mantri.

How strong is F&B at Novotel Pune?

Food being our USP, we are continuously evolving with new menus and concepts for restaurants being more creative with fusions and world cuisines. Continuously focusing on consistency and quality, keeping the authenticity of the food is important. Weddings and social events are where we offer quality food and lots of variety.

'Lunch boxes' is something which is an area of focus for us now which will give us a mileage and visibility in the corporate segment.

According to you, how has the palate of Indian diners evolved over the years?

Whenever it comes to eating out in a joint or a restaurant, most of the Indians prefer to experience the varied dishes from different regions which are

authentic, nutritious as well as delicious. Due to the emerging change in the food and beverage trends as well as changing preference of the consumers, most of the restaurant hubs are going to experience the next growth trajectory in the Indian restaurant industry.

Cuisines like African, Japanese, Mediterranean, South American are quite popular among the Indian diners. Food fusions have also been one the major turnarounds for these new cuisines evolving in India.

The transformation of cuisines from simple and traditional food to a menu that offers diversity in taste, style and origin is also the reason for the changing palate of Indian diners.

With the evolving restaurant market, how are you dealing with the competition?

We operate on a market model which is extremely price sensitive. We are positioned in such a geographic segment which has approximately 300 standalone restaurants and five hotels in a radius of 3 km.

This has led us to emerge with new themes in the market in terms of formats, cuisines, menu, ingredients and technology in the bid to attain and retain consumers and to stand out in the competition.

We continuously brainstorm on the offerings of food ensuring the consistency in food quality keeping the authenticity of food intact. One of our major focuses is to retain our customers and in order to make that happen we take care of their tastes and preferences.

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Ensuring efficiency

Efficiency in the hotel kitchen is one of the prime factors for a hotel combined with reliability it can make a brand. **Hospitality Talk** speaks to **Hiroshi Akai, MD, RATIONAL India** on what makes his brand popular among hotels.

HT Bureau



A close link to customers and master chefs all over the world keeps us updated with every changing concept in the industry

Hiroshi Akai



Please explain the portfolio of your brand.

RATIONAL is the chef's company and a leader in the combi-steamer market and more than 300 chefs worldwide are working in the company. It has the biggest research and development process in the industry, focusing on the future development and meeting the customer needs. A close link to its customers and to master chefs all over the world keeps us updated with every changing concept in the industry. The company has been setting up new innovations for 40 years.

How are the RATIONAL products well-suited for the hospitality industry?

Automatic cooking processes has definitely made it possible that with just one push of a button; the operator reaches his desired result, without any supervision. The current product, the SelfCookingCenter 5 Senses is the only intelligent cooking system that senses, recognises, thinks ahead, and learns from the chef and even communicates with him. RATIONAL SelfCookingCenter replaces almost all the appliances traditionally found in a professional kitchen. It can grill, steam, bake, rise, roast, simmer, stew, poach and tandoori. Being the first cooking system with five senses, it recognises, thinks with the chef and ahead, learns from the chef and even communicates with him. It is not only a standard for western food, but also for traditional Indian cuisine.

RATIONAL assures top food quality even for bulk cooking. To give a few cases of successful bulk cooking which also ensures saving electricity and labour costs, you can cook up to 320 *samosas* in 25 minutes, 80 kg chicken *malai tikka* in 11 minutes and 130 kg portions *biryani* in 50 minutes.

What is the USP of your brand?

The primary objective of RATIONAL is not sales or profits, but maximum customer benefit. RATIONAL regards itself first and foremost as an innovative problem solver rather than an engineer. We have endeavoured to develop RATIONAL very well in terms of traditional and local Indian cuisine. We have been successfully building our built our presence in the Indian market.

Can you name some of the hotel chains you are supplying your products to?

The Oberoi Group, Radisson Blu, Shangri-la, ITC Group of Hotels, Taj Group of Hotels, Hilton group and many more leading hotel chains of the country are happy customers of RATIONAL India.



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The Gateway Hotel
Residency Road
Bangalore



The Leela
Palace
Bengaluru



Hospitality Talk creates a collage of meeting spaces in the hotels of Bengaluru



The Oberoi, Bengaluru



Vivanta by Taj -
Yeshwantpur, Bangalore

Mövenpick Hotel &
Spa Bangalore



Sheraton Grand
Bangalore Hotel at
Brigade Gateway



The Italian legacy

With an aim to boost Italian cuisine in India, the Trade Promotion Office at the Italian Embassy organised a workshop on fine Italian food and wine.

HT Bureau

The workshop, 'The Sweet Taste: Business Opportunities & Perspectives for Italian Food and Wine in India' was aimed at promoting the concept of Italian food and wine, spreading knowledge and showcased new ways of expanding the Italian products in the Indian market, thereby creating awareness about fine Italian products and promoting Italian companies to explore new business avenues in India and foster an even stronger cooperation with Indian companies.

Dr Francesco Pensabene, Italian Trade Commissioner and Director, Trade Promotion Office of the Italian Embassy says, "The idea behind organising this event was not to teach something. I am fully

aware India is an extraordinary market with a long and ancient tradition in food and cuisine. The idea is to envisage and foster partnership with the Indian companies. It is a workshop on the prospect of Italian food and wine in India. That's why it's not only about promoting our brands, it's also about market opportunities along with showcasing the typical Italian food industry."

Pensabene believes that India is a cosmopolitan country with huge variety of cuisines available from all over the world. "We know Indians appreciate other cuisines. The idea is not just to promote something and go away; the idea is look at business partnership and be stronger together."



The idea is not just to promote something and go away but look at a business partnership as India is a cosmopolitan country



Talking about how well accustomed the Indian palate is to authentic Italian food, Pensabene says, "People will ask for modification in every cuisine according to their palate and this is everywhere in the world. If you go to the US or Japan, local diners ask for modifications. I reckon authentic food should be served the way it is to understand its true essence. On the other hand, it is normal, that people ask for differences. Even for Italians, when we dine at international restaurants, we tend to ask for modifications."

On Italian restaurants in India pulling off the Italian culinary legacy, Pensabene says, "The last few months I have been travelling, went to South India, Pune, Mumbai and also Rajasthan. I have visited some Italian restaurants in Delhi. I remember a superb experience in Pune and by these experiences I deduce that India has come up with pretty good Italian restaurants with good Italian chefs."

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Let there be light

Lighting accounts for an average of about 20-25 per cent of total electricity used in the hotel. To ensure cost effectiveness, hotels are adopting energy saving lightings as the budgets become tighter and going green becomes imperative.

HT Bureau



MONICA SURI
General Manager
Le Meridien Kochi

Recent developments in lighting technology combined with planned lighting control strategies can result

“Electric design affects visual performance and comfort”

in significant cost savings. There can be additional savings (indirect savings) in energy consumption from air-conditioning, because the modern LED lamps emits lesser heat when compared to traditional incandescent and halogen lamps. By retrofitting the existing traditional lamps with modern CFL and LED lamps, the payback will be about two to three years. Also, the LED lamps have 10 times longer life than the incandescent lamps.

Energy efficiency contributes in more than one way towards the economy and the environment. Enormous energy savings are possible using energy efficient equipment, effective controls and careful design. Using less electric lighting reduces heat gain, saving air-conditioning energy and improving thermal comfort. Electric lighting design affects visual performance and visual comfort by aiming to maintain adequate and appropriate illumination while controlling reflection and glare.

ANAND NAIR
General Manager
Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere

We have used a good mix of lights all across the hotel with LED lights as well as halogens and CFLs. For periphery lighting, we brought in solar lamps. Type of lighting in the hotel plays a big role in making the property energy efficient. Given the sheer number of hours that the light has to function, it is better to use LED lamps in the public areas.

Depending on the lux levels required, the rooms tend to use a mix of halogens and LEDs. Such decisions make a huge impact on the energy efficiency of the hotel. Due to the ever increasing power tariff, energy efficiency is a mantra that is not just preached but practiced by all hotel managers and it is something that we cannot ignore. This trend is here to stay whether we like it or not.



“For the differently-abled, we have installed lights that flicker when the door bell rings”

In our rooms for the differently-abled, we have installed lights that flicker when the door-bell rings. We have increased the lux levels above the bed and the study table in these rooms to make it brighter and to make it easier for the senior citizens to read comfortably.



“We use LEDs, CFL, cathode tubes, halogens”

BETTY REMEDIOS

Director of Sales and Marketing
Grand Hyatt Goa

We use LEDs, CFL, cathode tubes, halogens, conventional fluorescent tubes and some incandescent lighting and metal halide fixtures which are in the process of conversion to LED. The change in type of lighting from incandescent to CFL or to LED is over 70 per cent for the same luminosity. This on a global scale makes a huge impact. Power Plants using non-



renewal sources of energy will reduce consumption drastically. For example the usage of coal would reduce by millions of tonnes. As a hotel also the energy consumed and consumption costs would reduce.

SANTANU GUHA ROY

General Manager
Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Alibaug

Hotel lighting, once a basic function, now provides more than illumination - it complements architecture, furniture and artwork. For hotels, lighting is as important as salt in a dish. While saving energy, it provides the finishing touch that brings a room to life. Lighting affects the mood and value of our hotel. Proper thoughtful lighting creates the theme, thought, feeling and uplifts mood. At present the most efficient lighting system is LED which can reduce the lighting load/cost by 70-85 per cent. Though the initial investment is high compared to conventional lighting but the running cost compensates the high investment cost. For hoteliers LED is the best solution as the rates of electricity are climbing high adding



“LED can reduce the lighting load/cost by 70-85 per cent”

on to more operational cost and lesser profits. Hence, it is not a mere trend but a necessity which increases the profitability of hotels.



KUNAL SHANKER

General Manager
Holiday Inn Cochin

We use high performance lighting, LED and CFL for all the guest rooms and public areas including all meetings rooms. The external path way and swimming pool also has LED installed. At the car parking, laundry and plant room the hotel is using fluorescent lamps (each lamp is

36 watts). For areas like external yard lighting we have sodium vapour lamps which are being replaced to CFL in a phased manner. In our industry, 20-40 per cent energy is consumed by lighting with the use of incandescent, metal halides, cold cathodes. The investment and use of high performance lighting like LED, CFL's, save up to 60-70 per cent energy and reduces carbon footprints. For senior citizens table lamp/reading lamp should be available with LED or CFL with higher level of illumination needed for reading. Night lamps (LED Strips) can be fitted under bed side lamps. High level illumination is needed in bathrooms.

“For senior citizens reading lamp should be available with LED or CFL”



PUNEET MAHAJAN

General Manager.
Sayaji Hotels | Kolhapur

Interior lighting represents about one-third of electricity consumption in hotels. Installing energy efficient light bulbs can reduce electricity consumption and result

“LEDs use around 87% less energy than halogen lamps and have a life span of 25-50,000 hours”

in energy and cost savings. LEDs use approximately 87 per cent less energy than halogen lamps and have a life span of 25-50,000 hours. Installing energy efficient lighting systems is an important part and maximising lighting quality along with minimising lighting costs should be top priorities.





St. Regis

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Always welcoming, forever stunning, the opulent lobbies of The St. Regis hotels have enchanted guests since their inception.



The St. Regis Doha (Left)

Rich sandy tones and regal stonework are used to complement the azure waves of the Persian Gulf, the team created an elegant space that connects to both land and sea



The St. Regis New York (Right)

The timeless glamour featuring chic and sophisticated interiors with delicate designs stand this lobby apart from the rest



 **The St. Regis Istanbul**
(Extreme Left)

The swathes of brass-clad cabinet wall in the Atrium showcase objects d'art created by local designers. The display cases are inspired by the 1920s fashion for exhibiting one's treasures for guests to admire in the drawing room, and recall the Art Deco lines of the finest Nisantasi private salons.

 **The St. Regis Mumbai**
(Top Left)

Antique charm accompanied by unique and luxurious furniture makes this lobby unique and plush

 **The St. Regis Cotai Central**
(Below)

The grand staircase with luxe furniture and artefacts make the lobby unique



 **The St. Regis Bali Resort**
(Above)

An elegant open-air lobby, lavishly furnished with contemporary design

Franke launches Mythos Fusion sinks

Franke launches Mythos Fusion sinks which is an exclusive combination that only Franke can offer. The purity of steel meets the warmth of Fraganite for the very first time, bringing a unique and distinctive sink to life. Following extensive testing and development, new Fraganite tackles the humble cleaning problem associated with composite sinks.



GAIA launches Crunchy Muesli Real Fruit

Bid the breakfast blues goodbye with Gaia's latest offering, Gaia Crunchy Muesli Real Fruit, which is a delicious combination of healthy multi-grains and succulent pieces of papaya, apple, pineapple and raisins. While the rolled oats, wheat flakes and corn flakes provide you with a good dose of fibre, the added chunks of fruit give nourishment and bursts of flavour in every bite.



VitrA brings its latest Istanbul Series

VitrA, the bathroom solutions brand of Eczacıbaşı Building Products Division in Turkey introduces its spectacular and organically designed series- Istanbul. Designed by the pioneer of the 21st century industrial design Ross Lovegrove, the collection is inspired by "nature". The collection is a continuation of natural and sophisticated line of Istanbul series which includes sink cupboard, Infinit sink, Istanbul washbasin and fixtures. The design gets an elegant ambiance with three lacquered colour options: Burgundy high gloss, white and olive green.



Karcher India launches malleable scrubber drier

Karcher India announced the launch of its highly malleable scrubber drier with disc technology in Clean India Pulire 2016, Mumbai. The machine is very affordable with high-quality features: like impressive working width of 43 cm, with 40 litre large tank capacity for long cleaning periods and comes with compact in its size with good overview and is highly agility. Its yellow controls features are user-friendly with an easy operation button which needs low training efforts.

Victorinox announces Chef Ranveer Brar as 'Brand Friend'

Victorinox has announced Celebrity Chef Ranveer Brar as the Brand Friend. Brar said, "I have always used the knives and have a lot of respect for the brand's finesse, craftsmanship and attention to detail. Victorinox has a lot to offer to Indians in general and cooks in particular (whether amateur or professional). My first interaction with Victorinox watches and travel gear, albeit recent, has impressed me as it combines functionality with a unique sense of precision and style."



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MOVEMENTS

ANDREAS STREIBER

General Manager
Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru

Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru has announced the appointment of Andreas Streiber as new General Manager. Andreas Streiber, a native of Germany brings with him over 32 years of hospitality, operational and management experience and has spent the last 10 years in senior management positions at several reputed international companies around the world such as Europe, North America, South East Asia and China. He has worked with six Shangri-La group properties in Asia – Shangri-La Hotel, Hangzhou; Shangri-La Hotel, Surabaya; Shangri-La Hotel, Jakarta; Shangri-La Hotel, Chengdu; Golden Flower Hotel, Xian and Shangri-La Hotel, Changchun.



MANOJ DEV

General Manager
Shraddha Sarovar Portico, Shirdi

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of Manoj Dev as General Manager of Shraddha Sarovar Portico, Shirdi. Dev brings with him an experience of about two decades in the hospitality industry. Some of his previous assignments include roles as Managing Partner – Chakla Belan, Dubai; Managing Partner – The Palace Belvedere, Nainital; General Manager – Vikram Vantage Inn, Nainital; General Manager – Pine Retreat, Mussoorie and Quality Inn Presidency, Kochi.



SACHIN MALHOTRA

General Manager
Hotel Grand Mercure, Mysuru

Grand Mercure Mysuru has announced the appointment of Sachin Malhotra as General Manager of its recently launched property in the city. Malhotra brings with him 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry with specialisation in hotel operations. He has an avid interest in Food and Beverage. He holds a diploma in Business Administration & Marketing and holds The India Leadership Development Program (ILDLP) certificate by Accor Hotels.



MOHAMMED SHOEB

General Manager
Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Dwarka

Mohammed Shoeb brings to Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi Dwarka over 25 years of hospitality experience having held senior management positions in premium hotel brands across the country in the past. In the last 10 years, Shoeb has been involved in successful pre-opening projects for at least four hotels in southern part of India including the hotels within Accor group, ITC WelcomGroup and Intercontinental hotels chain. A mention can be made for his remarkable achievement during his tenure at the Accor Hotels, where he was involved in the opening of Novotel Vishakhapatnam and Novotel Chennai.





SUMIT GOGIA

Director of Events
Hyatt Regency Delhi

With over 15 years of experience, Sumit Gogia joins Hyatt Regency Delhi as Director of Events. Gogia is a Graduate from Institute of Hotel Management, Catering and Nutrition, Panipat. He started his career in the year 2000 as a Food & Beverage Attendant at the Grand Hyatt Delhi followed by Imperial, New Delhi as Assistant Manager- Food & Beverage and The Grand, New Delhi as Convention Sales Manager.



SHYAM CHAUDHARY

General Manager
Leisure Inn West Gurgaon

Leisure Inn West Gurgaon announced the appointment of Shyam Chaudhary as the General Manager of Leisure Inn West Gurgaon. He will be responsible for all aspects of short and long-term planning and preparation of the marketing hotel policies, procedures, relevant legislations, overall operations and the annual budget. Chaudhary is a graduate from IHM Bhopal with Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management. He is a travel enthusiast, an avid sportsperson and loves light music.



VIJAY DUTT

General Manager
The Ashok, New Delhi

India Tourism Development Corporation has announced the appointment of Vijay Dutt as General Manager for its flagship hotel The Ashok, New Delhi. Dutt is known for his excellent leadership skills, innovative thinking and creative approach. With 28 years of extensive experience, he brings a wealth of industry knowledge in the luxury hotel segment. In his previous role he held Senior Management positions as General Manager, Lalitha Mahal Palace, Mysore; Resident Manager of The Ashok, New Delhi and Corporate Marketing where he led the operation teams to drive sales and service to excellence.



KARANBIR GULATI

Assistant Director of F&B
Pullman Novotel New Delhi
Aerocity

Karanbir Gulati has been appointed as the Assistant Director of F&B for Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. In his new role at Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, he will look after the entire F&B division that includes signature restaurants and bars of both the hotels. He will be responsible for managing guest satisfaction, bringing in new F&B trends, maintaining a good wine and beverage list along with quality service, and offering an innovative cocktail and beverage menu. His passion for wine will add value to the hotel's wine offering.

MOVEMENTS

HARDIP MARWAH

General Manager
Hyatt Regency Mumbai



“My two-year-old daughter and my dog are both my source of energy”

My idea of destressing is playing with my two-year-old daughter and my dog. They are both my source of energy. Working in hospitality has given me the opportunity to travel extensively and luckily my family enjoys it too. My favourite destination is Istanbul and while on vacation I enjoy visiting local cafes, exploring the culture and cuisine like the locals do. An ideal holiday would be sitting at a café and watching the sunset.

**MICHEL KOOPMAN**

General Manager
The Leela Ambience
Gurgaon Hotel &
Residences



“I love to play golf at Ambience Greens Golf Club whenever I get the time”

I love to play golf at Ambience Greens Golf Club whenever I get the time as I work six days in week. I love to watch my favourite series on Netflix—*Suits* and *Narcos*. I have seen most of India, as I have already been here for three years and I would like to travel to Mussoorie and Leh/Ladakh for domestic and international to Bhutan. Also, I love going to Thailand as I have my house there. I like Yunnan and Italian cuisine. I like going to Yauatcha restaurant and Sorrento restaurant in Shangri-La's Eros Hotel, New Delhi.

**T.V. MADHUPAL**

Director of Talent and
Culture
Novotel Hyderabad
Convention Centre & HIC



“Long distance driving is always relaxing as it is absolute freedom”

I really enjoy long-distance driving as the experience has always been fairly relaxing. It is associated with absolute freedom and escape from everyday obligations. I utilise every opportunity I get to drive down to other cities like Bangalore and Mumbai. Driving aside, spending time with my pet dogs has a very calming effect. I look forward to vacationing in Singapore during the winter season as the pleasant weather augments the surreal scenes of this destination. Domestically, I like traveling to Bangalore for soaking in its trendy culture and refreshing myself over a few beers at classy pubs. I am allured by the mystical flavour of Pan-Asian cuisines.

**AMRUDA NAIR**

JMD and CEO
Aiana Hotels & Resorts



“My grandfather Captain Nair has always been my source of inspiration”

I have studied German as a second language and live by a phrase by Nietzsche: *Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker* (That which does not kill me makes me stronger). My grandfather Captain Nair has always been my source of inspiration. My favourite holiday memory is a family holiday to Kenya for a safari in the Masai Mara. I was also fortunate to travel with my grandparents and I will never forget the trip to Paris and the magnificent flower display in the lobby of the George Sanc Hotel. My current favourite is the breathtaking island of Malta which has incredibly well-preserved historic sites, stunning vistas and rich cuisine.





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