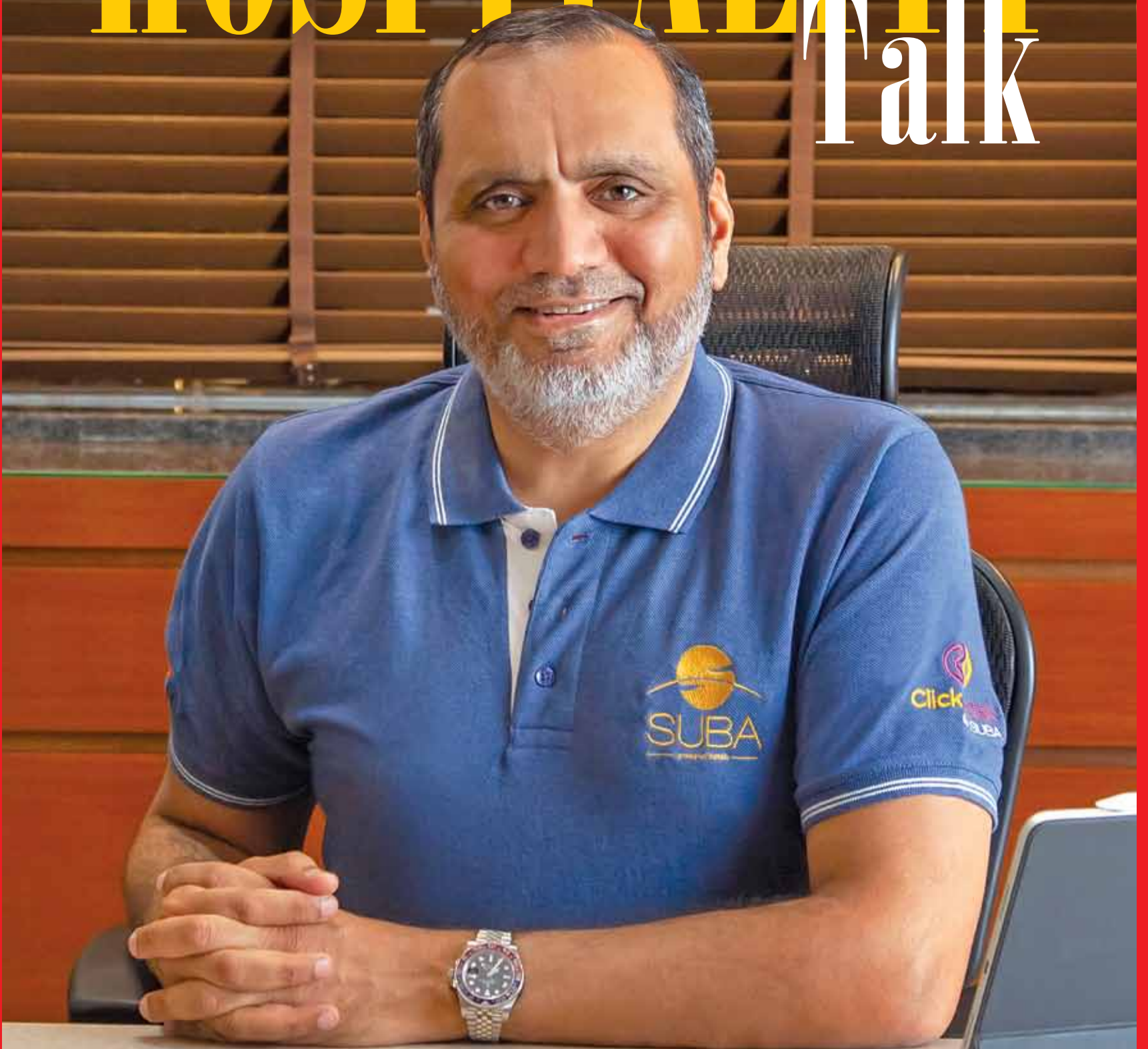


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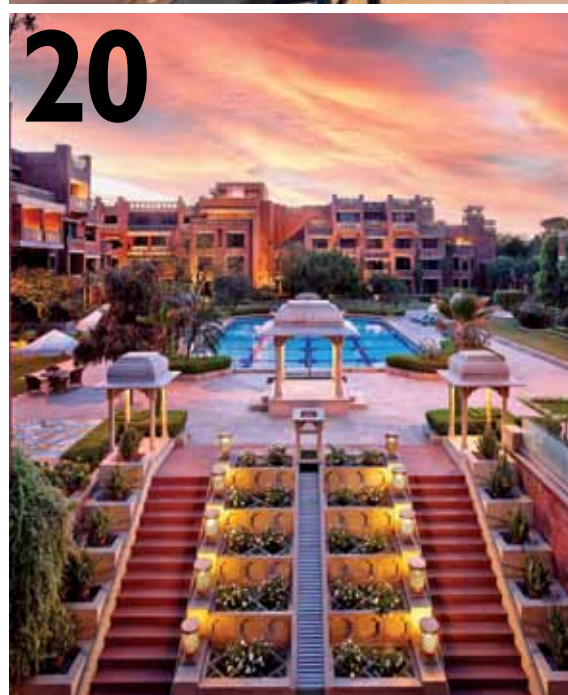
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Hospitality Talk is printed, published, edited and owned by Sanjeet, printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase - I, New Delhi - 110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001

Staying resilient

With global regulations being eased, the hospitality industry is experiencing some spectacular growth rates. The only way to stay ahead of the tide is to spot opportunities and adapt to changing trends.

Radisson rebrands its hotel in Istanbul



Following an extensive renovation, Radisson Hotel Group (RHG) rebranded and reopened Radisson Blu Hotel in Istanbul as a Radisson Collection hotel. The Radisson Collection Hotel, Vadistanbul, will be the group's second Radisson Collection hotel in Turkey and the first in Istanbul. **Yilmaz Yildirimlar**, SVP-Central, Eastern Europe, Russia & Turkey, RHG, said, "The hotel's strong service standards and our global expertise will bring additional value to its guests. We are proud to reinforce our presence in Istanbul as the largest brand."

Jumeirah Group debuts in Indonesia



Early in 2022, the Jumeirah Group expanded its international portfolio with the launch of Jumeirah Bali. The property has 123 spacious villas. The one- and two-bedroom villas start at 210 sq. m., and include a private pool, an outdoor living area, and a landscaped tropical garden. The specialty restaurant, Akasa Gastro Grill, is located on the highest level. The restaurant will boast a unique underground cellar. It is a 1,705 sq. m., haven of tranquility, equipped with Bali's first royal Turkish hammam, steam and sauna facilities, including five private treatment rooms.

Steady growth in Europe's hotel openings

At the end of Q2 2022, Europe continued to show steady growth in new hotels opening in 2022, opening 188 new hotels with 28,350 rooms in 1H, as per Lodging Econometrics. The region is expected to open another 259 hotels in the next two quarters, for a 2022 year-end forecast total of 447 new hotels. In the next two years, 421 new hotels would open by the end of 2023, with 419 new hotels set to open in 2024. The UK leads Europe's construction pipeline with 309 projects, Germany with 258 projects, France with 152 projects, Portugal with 123 projects, and Poland with 85 projects in Q2. At the end of Q2 2022, these five countries account for 54 per cent of the projects and 51 per cent of the rooms in Europe's total construction pipeline. The largest brands are Accor's Ibis brands with 92 projects,



Marriott's Moxy brand with 51 projects, Hilton's Hampton by Hilton brands with 69 projects, IHG's Holiday Inn Express with 60 projects, and Radisson's Blu brand with 13 projects.

First Tapestry Collection by Hilton in Carib



ROK Hotel Kingston, Tapestry Collection by Hilton recently debuted in Kingston, Jamaica. The 168-room property is owned by PanJam Investment Limited and managed by Highgate. The hotel is the Caribbean's first Tapestry Collection by Hilton. It boasts contemporary design, cutting-edge facilities, extensive F&B options, and cultural expression based on Downtown Kingston's creative vibrancy and historic legacy, and will offer an authentic and upgraded Jamaican experience. The property is part of Hilton Honors, the award-winning guest loyalty programme for Hilton's 18 world-class hotel brands.

Cross Hotels and Evergreen go green

Cross Hotels & Resorts is ramping up its environmental awareness credentials with the recent signing of two new hotel management agreements in Bangkok and Pattaya. The twin deal with Evergreen Hospitality Co., Ltd. ushers in a sustainable drive towards reducing overall emissions. The signing witnessed executives from both companies plant trees to endorse the dynamism of the agreement. "These two

properties are a clear fit for our brands Away and Cross Vibe as they align with our strategy of investing in the world-class destinations of Bangkok and Pattaya," said **Harry Thaliwal**, CEO, Cross Hotels & Resorts. "The convergence of our views and values will create a new benchmark for service quality, while at the same time raising the profile of our properties destination," added **Sukhit Narula**, Chairman, Evergreen Hospitality.





ART set to boost distribution in APAC

Ascott Residence Trust (ART) is proposing to acquire nine quality serviced residences, rental housing, and student accommodation properties across five countries from its sponsor, The Ascott Limited. At an estimated total capitalised cost of US\$318.3 million, the yield-accretive acquisition is set to boost ART's distribution by US\$9.2 million and its pro forma FY21 Distribution per Stapled Security by 2.8 per cent. The acquisition will strengthen ART's presence in its existing markets. The assets are predominantly located in APAC, with seven of the assets in Australia, Japan, and Vietnam, and two each in France and the USA. ART's portfolio will exceed 100 properties.

Noble buoys up its hotel portfolio

Noble Investment Group has announced the acquisition of a 14-asset Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt hotel portfolio. Noble will invest in physical enhancements across the portfolio while optimising operations to drive market share and increase profitability. "Since the second quarter of last year, Noble has invested more than US\$1.5 billion across the US in 40 hotels with approximately 6,000 rooms as we continue to capitalise on the thematic opportunity in travel and hospitality," said Noble's CEO, **Mit Shah**.



"The acquisition of these premium-branded hotels is consistent with our strategy to invest in well-located assets in high growth markets with healthy business and leisure demand," said Noble's Chief Investment Officer, **Ben Brunt**.

Pulse Hotels & Resorts opens Nova Maldives

Nova Maldives is the newest addition to Pulse Hotels and Resorts' portfolio. It is located on the Maldives' renowned South Ari Atoll. The island has 76 spacious over-water and beach villas divided into 10 categories. Each villa has been meticulously designed in a contemporary minimalist style. Private terraces, limitless ocean vistas, and pared-back interiors drenched with custom-made furnishings are also available.



IHG debuts global campaign, Guest How You Guest

IHG Hotels & Resorts is reminding the world what it feels like to be a guest. The company's newest global marketing campaign, Guest How You Guest, is a celebration of hotels and taking a break from having to do it all. Through the campaign, the company is sharing that message loudly through vibrant images and fresh storytelling. The multimillion-dollar campaign amplifies true-to-life travel moments and shows how guests can define their own journey at IHG hotels. It reflects a playful perspective of a personalised stay at an IHG hotel. It is designed to inspire the next generation of travellers while engaging with current IHG One Rewards members.

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Making headway

The hospitality industry in India is turning a new leaf with acquisitions and new launches, as well as innovations in hotel spaces, after the most challenging two years of the pandemic.

Hyatt Centric debuts in Mumbai

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has opened the Hyatt Centric Juhu Mumbai. The 60-room hotel has been designed with a modern approach, giving a lively and artistic rendition of the city's essence. "Hyatt Centric Juhu Mumbai embodies Mumbai's adventurous spirit and fully embraces the energy of the bustling city," said **Swarendra Sahay**, GM, Hyatt Centric Juhu Mumbai. "It is the first Hyatt hotel to open in Mumbai in 18 years, which makes the opening a momentous occasion," said **Dietmar Kielnhöfer**, Area VP, Hyatt West India and GM, Grand Hyatt Mumbai.



IHCL launches Vivanta in Gujarat

IHCL has opened its first Vivanta hotel in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in partnership with the Leela Group of Companies. **Deepika Rao**, EVP, IHCL, said, "The opening of this hotel is in line with IHCL's strategy of strengthening its presence in India's key cities." The hotel has 176 elegantly designed rooms and suites, as well as a variety of eclectic culinary offerings. Mynt, the all-day diner, serves international and Gujarati delicacies. Swirl, the delicatessen, meets sweet cravings, as well as a selection of coffees and teas from across the world.

Airport hotels, a growing trend: HVS

Airport hotel supply in India, like in other countries, expanded as airport infrastructure improved. There are now over 12,000 branded airport hotel keys in operation, with over 4,600 more in the pipeline in various cities across the country. In recent years, new-age concepts such as small hotels and capsule hotels have also emerged. Furthermore, as airport cities have emerged, airports have become destinations, offering great venues for commercial and hotel development. Several airport hotels now offer world-class meeting and conference facilities.



Stotrak Hospitality, Kool-Stays to operate Rishikesh Grand

The property features two wings: a pool view with 16 rooms and a scenic elite hill view with 20 rooms. **Manish Goyal**, Founder, Stotrak Hospitality, said, "Hotel Rishikesh Grand is the seventh hotel in our portfolio and allows us to offer a completely new travel experience for our guests." The hotel also has a banquet space with a capacity of 60–80 guests, a yoga deck with an in-house yoga teacher, and an outdoor pool. The hotel boasts a multi-cuisine restaurant with specialised local and Indian food options.



Marriott International to bring Courtyard by Marriott to Punjab

Through a partnership with Turnstone Realty LLP (Medallion Group), Marriott International Inc., will bring Courtyard by Marriott to Mohali, Punjab. The 130-room Courtyard by Marriott Mohali will provide business travellers with a continually elevated experience that meets the generational shift in how guests work and travel today. The hotel will have three modern dining options, including an all-day dining restaurant, a bakery, and a bustling café and bar. The Courtyard by Marriott Mohali will also provide 600 sq. m., of versatile meeting and function space, including two meeting rooms, making it ideal for both business meetings and social events.



New Delhi gets its first Golden Tulip

Sarovar Hotels has opened its first Golden Tulip in New Delhi. This marks Golden Tulip's debut in the capital city of India. This will be Sarovar's second Golden Tulip in Delhi NCR after Golden Tulip, Gurgaon. The hotel is located in the heart of West Delhi, close to the district centre and within easy access to the business hubs of Delhi NCR. The property has aesthetically designed 69 rooms, offering modern comfort and enhancing the guest experience. The hotel offers seven multipurpose events and meeting spaces for hosting everything from large social gatherings to board meetings.

Lords Hotels' new launch in Jaipur

Lords Hotels and Resorts has expanded its presence in India with the opening of Lords Inn Malviya Nagar, Jaipur. Lords now has two properties in Jaipur. This will be Lord's seventh property in Rajasthan; the other hotels being in Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Nathdwara, and the recently signed hotel in Sumerpur. The hotel offers 36 spacious and well-designed guestrooms, comprising Superior and Deluxe rooms that are equipped with the latest amenities ideal for a comfortable stay. **Vikas Suri**, Senior Associate VP, said, "With its prime location and comfortable amenities, Lords Inn is a perfect destination for your next leisure trip or dream destination wedding."



Brij Hotels beefs up its Raj portfolio

Brij Hotels is set to launch another hotel in Rajasthan. From 1 October, Brij Gaj Kesri, Bikaner in Rajasthan, will open its doors to guests. The property is being refurbished to integrate Brij Hotels' brand ethos. Featuring 41 rooms and suites, the property is a modern-day manor house that spans 16 acres and is testament to the Rampuria family's passion for art and architecture. One can savour the delights of the recipes passed down through generations of the Rampuria family at Polki, or enjoy a cup of freshly brewed coffee at the in-house cafe, Coffee & Co. The property is built on five levels with sprawling gardens, three beautiful drawing rooms, a courtyard, Ananda-The Spa, and a luxurious pool on the topmost level.



Pride Group of hotels to expand its presence in North India

The Pride Group of Hotels is scaling up its operations in North India with the launch of additional new properties by 2022. The new portfolio includes hotels and resorts in Agra, Rishikesh, Haldwani, Jim Corbett, Gurugram, Nainital, Dehradun, and Jaipur. The Pride Amber Vilas Resort & Convention Centre Jaipur is an exclusive resort popular with domestic and international tourists and has now been extensively refurbished and is set to reopen in September 2022. Pride Suites Gurugram will be the first property under the brand Pride Suites, marking Pride Group's foray into the premium service apartment space. **SP Jain**, Chairman and MD, Pride Hotels Ltd., said, "This wave of new openings in the region will further diversify Pride Hotel's presence across prominent destinations nationally. The focus will be on an asset-light model for our expansion, with a major slice of the portfolio managed directly by us. Collectively, these new openings in North India will add 500 keys to our existing portfolio."

12th ITC property opens its doors in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

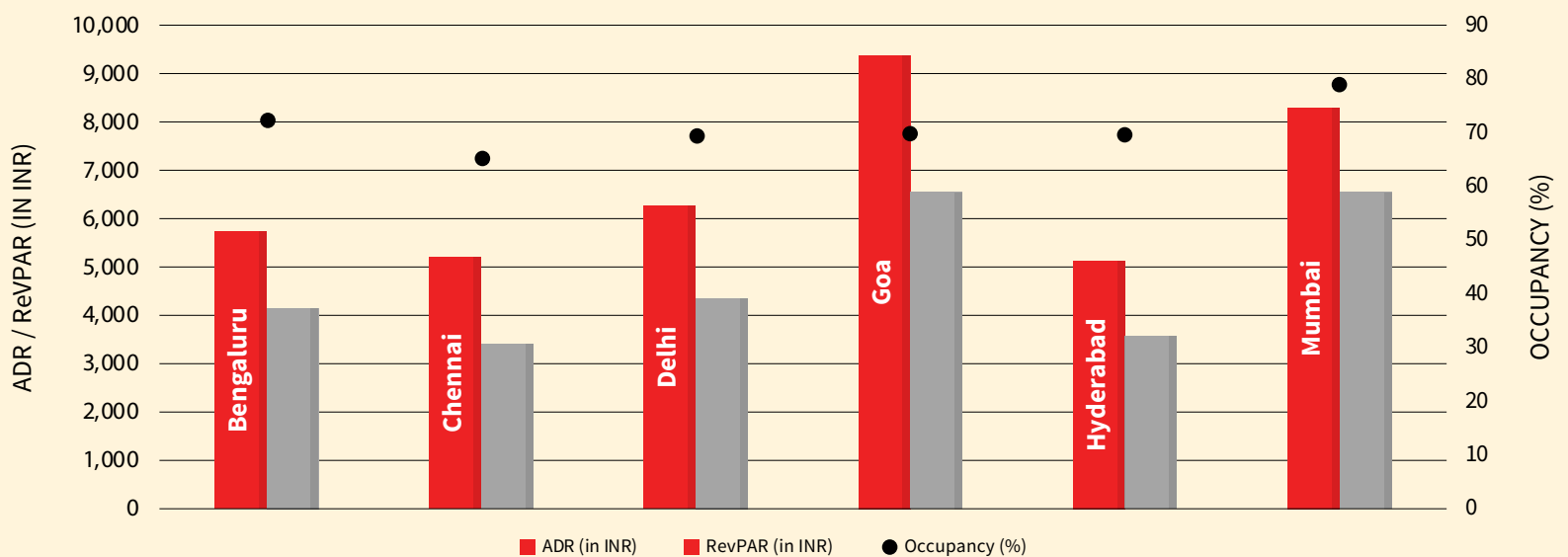
ITC Hotels has inaugurated its first premium luxury hotel – the ITC Narmada in Ahmedabad. The Chief Minister of Gujarat, Bhupendrabhai Patel, inaugurated the property situated at the heart of the city. ITC Narmada is Gujarat's first LEED Platinum certified hotel and is ITC Hotel's 15th Luxury Collection Hotel in India. ITC Narmada is ITC Hotels' 12th property in Gujarat. Conveniently located in the business district of the city, this 291-key, 19-storey, 70-meter grand structure is an architectural marvel towering over Ahmedabad's skyline with its fine indigenous grandeur and contemporary design. The hotel celebrates Gujarat's spirit and the unique fervour of its people through its premium offerings, which include spacious rooms, 5 signature culinary brands, convention spaces, and Kaya Kalp-The Spa. ITC Narmada is set to transform Ahmedabad's hospitality landscape with its exquisite offerings, making it an ideal destination for global MICE tourism and events. The property also boasts versatile meeting, banquet, and events space with over 10,820 sq. ft., of collective area.



Q2 RevPar notches up to 339.3 per cent

Bengaluru witnessed highest growth in RevPAR in Q2 2022 at 660.1 per cent, primarily due to low performance witnessed in Q2 2021 amidst second wave of pandemic, observes JLL's HMI Q2, 2022.

Q2 2022 Performance Trend Chart



Source: STR

The Indian hospitality sector witnessed strong growth in Q2 (April–June) 2022, primarily driven by demand for weddings and events as well as a stellar recovery in corporate travel. The country was amidst the second wave of the pandemic in Q2 2021, which had a significant impact on the performance of the hospitality sector. As a result, revenue per available room (RevPAR) witnessed an exponential growth of 339.3 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in Q2 2022 over Q2 2021. Furthermore, the sector witnessed a stellar 44.6 per cent growth at a pan-India level in RevPAR compared to Q1 2022, when the sector was still emerging from the third wave of the pandemic, according to JLL's Hotel Momentum India (HMI) Q2, 2022.

The demand across the sector soared during Q2 2022, primarily driven by weddings and MICE, and business travel. Furthermore, corporate MICE demand also witnessed a recovery in the form of corporate off-sites, team meetings, training, and so on. Domestic leisure continued to be an important segment during this period, driven by the pent-up demand of travellers who had not experienced a summer vacation for the past two years.

The next two quarters are expected to remain busy on the back of domestic leisure amidst long weekends and festivals. Business travel will continue to grow and will remain the main demand driver for the sector. While wedding and social function demand will remain a significant driver, MICE demand is expected to witness

an uptick in the coming months, with many corporate meetings and large-format conferences being planned.

The total number of hotel signings in Q2 2022 stood at 47 hotels with 4,010 keys. The hotel signings witnessed a significant increase of 90.9 per cent as compared to signings in Q2 2021. Domestic operators dominated signings over international operators with a ratio of 52:48 in terms of inventory volume.

All six key markets witnessed exponential growth in RevPAR levels in Q2 2022 as compared to Q2 2021, due to the low base witnessed last year during the second wave of the pandemic coupled with the stellar performance of the sector this year. Bengaluru emerged as the RevPAR growth leader in Q2 2022, registering a growth of 660.1% over Q2 2021, followed by Goa and Hyderabad with y-o-y growth of 564.5% and 326%, respectively.

“Q2 2022 marks the revival of investor interest and stakeholder profitability in the hotel industry”

“With exponential growth across all performance indicators in business and leisure destinations, Q2 2022 marks the revival of investor interest and stakeholder profitability in the hotel industry. As business travel and corporate off-sites continued to grow, summer holidays offered a further impetus to the overall demand, resulting in a renewed confidence in the sector. We expect this momentum to continue over the next few quarters on the back of long weekends, festivals, weddings, events, and business travel evenly contributing to this growth story,” said **Jaideep Dang**, Managing Director, Hotels and Hospitality Group, South Asia, JLL.

Maharashtra hotels' 'INDUSTRY STATUS' PROCESS BEGINS

The Maharashtra government has begun the inspection process for hotels seeking industrial status in the state. The state government has appointed QualStar to conduct the state-wide inspection.

QualStar is India's first and only approved certification body for hotels by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, through the Quality Council of India (QCI) and National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB). All the auditors are professionals who are ISO 17065 qualified. QualStar certificates are recognised in over 100 countries, which will give these hotels the extra benefit of global recognition.

The agency was appointed for inspection of hotels by the Department of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra. An inspection of hotels kicked-started in the Pune region from 3-4 August 2022. So far, they have started inspections on 3 August and have completed eight hotels. Some of the hotels inspected include Vivanta by Taj, Hyatt Place, Sayaji Pune, Tamanna Hotels, and Sadanand Regency, among others. They have made the roadmap for completing all the hotels registered



DR. DHANANJAY D SAWALKAR
Joint Director
Directorate of Tourism
Govt. of Maharashtra

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So far, 446 applications across the state have been received by the DoT
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for industry status. In the next round of inspections, some very prestigious brands such as Marriott and Ritz-Carlton are being scheduled.

Dr. Dhananjay Sawalkar, Joint Director, Department of Tourism, said, “So far, 446 applications across the state have been received by the Department of Tourism. If the registered hotels fulfil all the criteria, they will be eligible to get industrial status, which will make them entitled to electricity charges, water bills, property tax, and non-agricultural tax on industrial rates.”

The government committee, chaired by the Deputy Directors of respective regions, comprises a QualStar representative, a Food & Drug Administration department member, an MPCB regional member, a local Hotel and Restaurant Association member, and a Tour Operator Association representative. It may be noted here that non-classified hotels have applied for classification since June 2021 in the Pune region. In April 1999, the government awarded industry status to the hospitality sector, but it remained only on paper. In 2020, the state government issued a government resolution (GR) announcing the criteria for levying taxes and charges at the industrial rate for non-classified hotels. Meanwhile, the hotels can continue to register themselves with the Maharashtra Tourism Department and avail the benefits attached to the industry status.





HOTEL DESIGN at the forefront

To meet evolving needs of their guests, hotels are reviewing their lodging options. Hotel's design is being evaluated closely in attempt to boost profitability.



Charmaine Fernz

Today's spotlight is on how hotels are profitable in terms of room occupancy. Many hotels are intentionally making their rooms into more comfortable spaces for not just leisure or work, but a mix of the two, coined b-leisure. **Alexandra Woop**, Executive Director, Interior Design, IMEA, Accor, says that today's travellers need a flexible, comfortable setting in which to work, rest, dine, entertain, and recharge. Today's rooms offer multi-layered experiences with built-in wellness solutions, express office and dining, entertainment and gathering areas, a private bar, and a playground. The same rooms can be modified to meet the demands of guests with no limits. The layout and functionality of hotel rooms are becoming more flexible.

Nikhil Sharma, Regional Director for Eurasia, Wyndham Resorts & Hotels EMEA, feels that most companies have adopted a hybrid model that lets people vacation while also working. Catering to this trend, the industry has devised specific methods to provide maximum flexibility and ease.

Trent Fraser, CEO, Choice Hotels Asia-Pacific, believes that from a global perspective, the industry

“



ALEXANDRA WOOP
Executive Director,
Interior Design,
IMEA, Accor

Functionality of
rooms are now
more flexible

”

is seeing some subtle changes in the makeup of rooms, with some properties introducing business suites within their room options. High-quality in-room amenities are being offered, including high-speed internet with a one-time login, smart TVs with access to subscribers' platforms and content, larger work desks, permanent screens, and office furniture. He adds, “Our metro properties are strong across Australia, with YTD RevPAR rising sharply in 2021 and occupancy levels 17 per cent above comparable upper midscale market competitors. Visitors staying for an extended period prefer apartments and suites with more amenities, located further away from the central business district (CBD) to accommodate the transition from workweek to weekend leisure. There is also a shift in CBD properties toward apartment-style stay. Choice Hotels is planning a new development in Melbourne's CBD in the coming months that will appeal to longer-stay guests.”

Jacobo San Nicolas Lopez-Bosch, SVP, Head of Technical Services, Radisson Hotel Group, says, “In the new normal, many industries have realised that remote working can work. So, hotels have revisited their room designs to adapt to this traveller's needs.

In 2020, we launched our hybrid rooms and meetings. Hybrid rooms offer a modern office with the comforts of a contemporary hotel room. Hybrid meetings combine the best of meeting in-person and virtually with an image and AV conferencing system, dual screens, wireless presentation clickers, and high-speed internet. A common design technique is to ensure that rooms are convertible and adaptable to become multifunctional.”

Chander K Baljee, Chairman and MD, Royal Orchid Hotels, says the concept of co-working spaces has gained immensely. A shift from traditional ways of working is seen as a noteworthy opportunity for the industry to generate more revenue.

Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, says, “Hybrid is the new norm. With the current uptick in corporate travel, luxury hotels have been adept at ensuring guests enjoy all the facilities and services for efficient business meetings. With many guests looking for b-leisure, we are offering more family dining, upgrades to luxury suites, lifestyle activities, and wellness experiences at the spa, all adding up to the revenue stream.”

THE DESIGN CHANGE

Today, business and leisure are intertwined, and families are included. In such cases, hotels are now trying to modify space to best fit in. As Baljee points



TRENT FRASER
Chief Executive Officer,
Choice Hotels
Asia-Pacific

Our corporate stays have increased from an average of four days in 2019 to an average of five days in H1 2022



out, developing a unique space and design for a hotel or undergoing renovation is a long and daunting task. With rising competition, the city offers hundreds, if not thousands, of guest rooms. It is thus critical to put your best foot forward when it comes to hotel room space and interior design. The space and interiors should be functional and sophisticated.

Woop explains that a lack of circulation space in the room is a barrier for projects with a business model centred on public area revenue or high room quantity, especially in historical buildings with smaller rooms. Even in the luxury and upscale segments, we require a certain number of functions and areas that are essential for a product. It is vital to keep the number of furniture items in the room to a minimum while also making them versatile. We always ask architects to enlarge façade windows if it is possible. Small rooms can be designed to emphasise their boutique essence while maintaining comfort and décor. Cutting-edge technology such as circadian lighting, sound speakers, a walk-in shower, and inspiring amenities are also on the agenda.

From a traditional design standpoint, Lopez-Bosch adds that rooms can have fixed furniture equipment (FFE) allocated to walls, such that a bench can be added as part of the headboard extension, minimising the need for an armchair and allowing the room to have more free space and footprint. The room’s size must also have an ‘aspirational aspect’.



From a more b-leisure view, Sharma says that one of the main reasons b-leisure travellers extend their business trips is to unwind, which ultimately improves the quality of their work. This novel idea often entails family trips. Thus, it is crucial for hotels to design their rooms today with convenience in mind, including kitchens, private outdoor areas, neighbouring rooms, and designated workstations. Seamless technology is also key.

However, Fraser believes that hotels are starting to look at how to reconfigure rooms to allow for a shift from a working week to weekend family leisure. High-speed internet, ethernet access, and Wi-Fi are essential, followed by built-in furniture strategically placed in the room to take advantage of natural light. Access to better in-room kitchen facilities beyond tea and coffee is also vital.

Kapoor says that hotel rooms, especially in the new narrative, are meant to be sanctuaries that offer unparalleled comfort and efficiency. There is now a heightened emphasis on comfort, safety, smart connectivity, and efficiency without compromising on design and luxury.

THE PROFITABILITY TWIST

The hospitality industry was the hardest hit during the pandemic, but the new concern is whether design changes are impacting the bottom line. Fraser feels that renovations and upgrades to rooms are an ongoing cost for hotel owners. "As rooms are refitted, considerations such as working space and kitchen facilities are being factored in. For most of our mid and upper-scale properties, many of these features are already in place; it is just a matter of reconfiguring the use of the space to cater for work during the week and leisure at weekends." Delving deeper, Kapoor believes that the design of a hotel defines the overall business plan of a hospitality project. If a hotel is a small business property, it will focus on simple, clean spaces with enhanced business efficiencies, not luxury. While luxury properties will focus on design and bespoke comfort, these come at a cost and, hence, will definitely impact the commercials. It is part of a larger picture, a deeper story. It ultimately depends on who the target guest is and the positioning we have in mind. The success of a hotel depends on many factors. Design plays a massive role in a hotel's cost of construction and operations. Professional designers and design elements like flooring, fixtures, textures, and facilities, among others, impact business plans in a huge way.

Sharing similar sentiments, Sharma says many factors impact the total cost of the property, including location, size of the property, use of technology, state of the economy, number and types of rooms, and hotel design. Hotel design includes many factors, such as infrastructure, interiors, furnishings, and more, which depend on the mandated requirements of the brand.

But Lopez-Bosch thinks that hotel design has a significant impact on the total build cost of a property as well as the ADR, which can be chargeable, but at the same time, guests have an increased expectation for certain design details and amenities at the base

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JACOBO SAN NICOLAS LOPEZ-BOSCH
SVP, Head of Technical Services, RHG

Weatherproof outdoor spaces are emerging that are desirable in both winter and summer

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NIKHIL SHARMA
Regional Director-Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts EMEA

Lobbies have elevated their design aesthetic to offer a relaxed environment

”

level, so one needs to be clever. Smart design has a big impact on F&B operations, as it dictates how many covers can be served, capacity levels, and revenue generation per square footage.

At Radisson Hotel Group, we have professional agreements with suppliers in place to ensure we get the best prices based on the volume of orders. Hotel design allows us to incorporate new materials and, in many instances, reuse materials. For example, we can overlay some materials on top of existing ones that remain as a base. Nowadays, a natural stone laminated material can be 1 mm thick. If we add a finish on top of an existing one, it can prevent damage, thus saving time and funds by being more environmentally friendly. A similar design intention can be achieved by using new materials, which can also significantly reduce costs.

Woo shares light on several other factors that have cost implications in a hotel project. "If we talk about long-term investment in the design, a good quality design will influence overall operational success and will have a high RoI in the short term. Design is not only an interior project; it also requires the involvement of consultants such as food and beverage and wellness, kitchen, IT, acoustics, lighting, and FLS, among others. Working with professional teams of such specialised nature will always pay off, as they will always suggest valid optimizations and customised solutions for each unique property."

Woo further adds that when we talk about interior and F&B design, the paradoxical thing is that within the same budget you can create a destination place with high revenue or an empty wasted space without a vibe. It's all about strong concepts, market studies, and the right people in the design process, never compromising on the consultants who develop the project. Another critical part of hotel design is engineering, which can influence the building's operational cost and, in some years, savings can cover the equipment cost by reducing water consumption, energy saving, intelligent systems, and GRMS.

THE DESIGN STUDY

First impressions are the best, is the adage, and the same goes for any hotel too. In many cases, guests decide on a property based on their impressions of the property, which also includes functional designs. As Woo says, unique designs refer to unique, bespoke concepts, where authenticity is the key to guests' hearts. The crafted design inspires guests to experience captivating stories through the spaces, making their journey unforgettable and exciting. We are innovating and experimenting with public space functionality. The latest projects we are currently working on in the region reflect the philosophy of unique concepts with a strong expression of brand DNA. Some of the best current design examples in the region are Movenpick Baghdad, Grand Mercure Riyadh, MGallery Nairobi, Swissotel Bursa in Turkey, and Novotel renovation in Dubai.

Kapoor shares his views, saying the design philosophy across Roseate Hotels & Resorts focuses on



minimalism, harmony with natural surroundings, quality, efficiency, and attention to detail. The colour palette is neutral shades with pops of colour to create calm, sophisticated and timeless spaces. Minimalism is often misinterpreted as bare, cold, and stark. On the other hand, minimalism simply means decluttered spaces that induce a sense of tranquillity and harmony. The Roseate New Delhi showcases architecture and design that is timeless and iconic, with a natural landscape of over a thousand trees and calming waterbodies. The Roseate Ganges has villas, designed with classic elegance in natural colour palettes and surroundings. Each is a fine blend of minimalism and luxury. The design philosophy across each of our properties is unique to each location, with a respect for its surroundings and the ecology at large.

TRENDS TO FOLLOW

Fraser observes, a major new trend is catering to long-stay travellers, who may spend part of their official working week in their room to allow for fewer but longer stays. “Our corporate stays have increased from an average of four days in 2019 to an average of five days in the first half of 2022,” he adds. Catering to the long-stay business segment means giving them the same level of comfort as at home—better workspaces and better in-room amenities. On the other hand, Kapoor feels that hotels with well-appointed wellness and fitness spaces are a trend that will only grow. Given the demands of modern life, guests prefer all-encompassing experiences during their stay. Hotels with mindfully curated dining concepts are also becoming extremely popular.

Woo feels it is all about a multi-layered, multi-faceted, experiential, sensory design approach. “We often take the risk of experimentation with colours, materials,



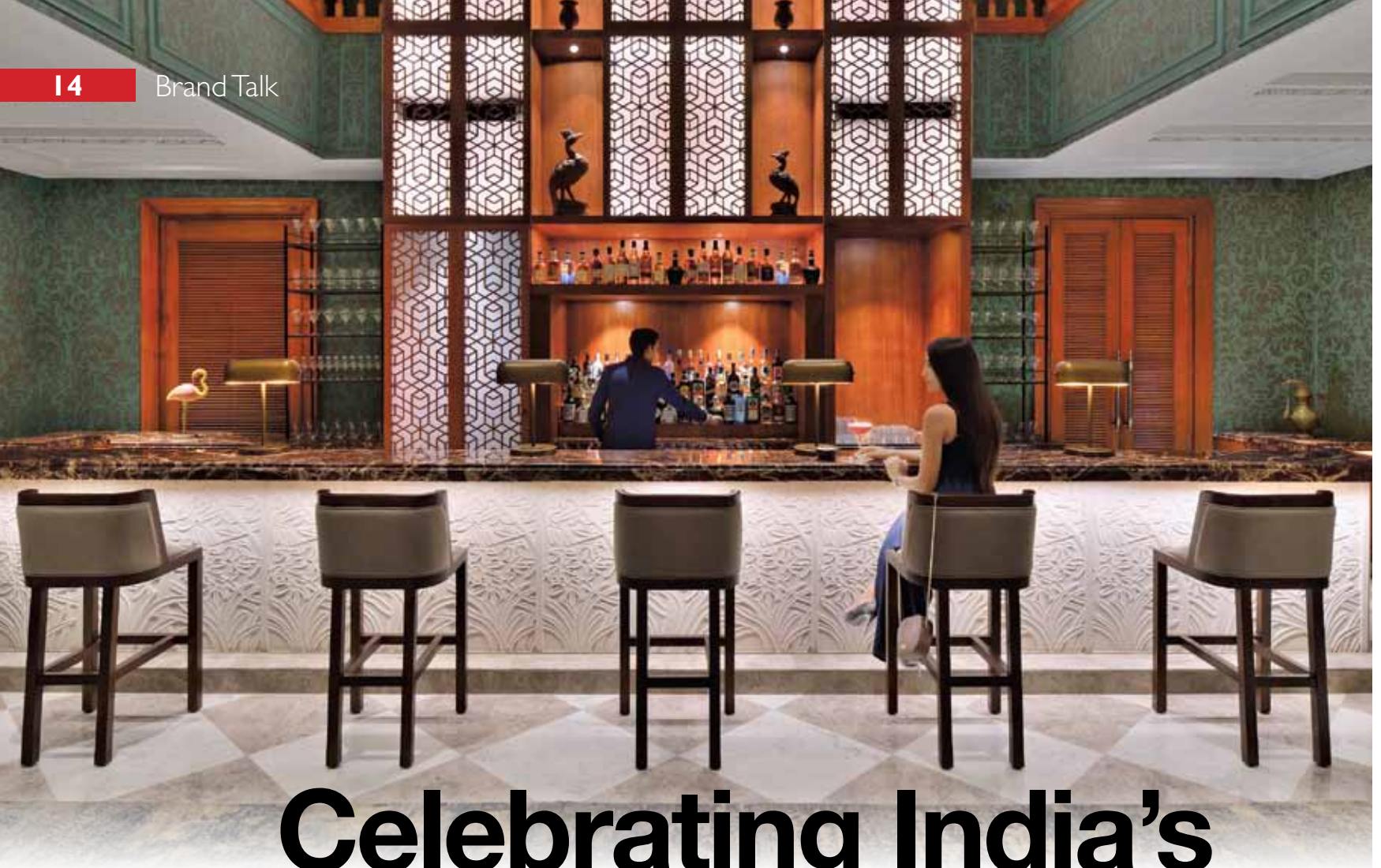
KUSH KAPOOR
Chief Executive Officer,
Roseate Hotels &
Resorts

**Hotels with
wellness and
fitness spaces
will grow**



lines, and forms when working with design teams across the region. The constant evolution of brands and experiences—this is inspiring,” she adds. Woo further explains that when we talk about hotel functionality, the key to each unique space is to respond to the needs of the environment. We are also inventing new functionalities and experiences within each property, reflecting unique stories, from art galleries and libraries to theatre and fashion shows, followed by vibrant F&B spaces and tasting rooms. The great outdoors has become the preferred option during the last few years for drinking, dining, and entertaining. While interior elements are being brought outdoors, many hotels are also bringing the outside in. “Biophilic” design elements and interiors with raw, organic roots are serving as an antidote to too much time spent indoors and tapping into mental well-being.

Lopez-Bosch shares his view that many venues have designed weatherproof outdoor spaces that are as desirable in the depths of winter as in the height of summer. Within the rooms, contactless technology is a growing trend. From controlling music and lighting in their room before they even get inside, to calling lifts with their smartphones, the contactless possibilities of guest-focused technology are constantly expanding. Concluding Sharma says that a massive shift in consumer preferences determines today’s top hotel industry trends. Inputs from today’s top travellers have transformed how hoteliers treat and attract guests. These shifting tastes are impacting hotels and their interior design, building materials, F&B offerings, furniture, artwork, lobbies, and more. In particular, lobbies have typically, in the past, served as a place to check in to your room. But, lobbies have now transformed to engage guests as well as offer a relaxed environment for guests to socialise.



Celebrating India's royal opulence

Pratima Badhwar, Head-Commercial, Accor India & South Asia, shares how the mystical oasis, located on a private island, coupled with the legendary world-renowned Raffles service, has proven to be an instant hit.

Raffles Udaipur is celebrating its first anniversary, which fills us with delight and gratitude. Raffles Udaipur has received overwhelmingly positive response. We are excited to welcome guests from across the globe as we celebrate our first anniversary with zeal.

TRIUMPHS AND CHALLENGES

Making a name for ourselves in a saturated market was one of the main challenges we faced in our first year. The luxury market in Udaipur is well-known, but our mystical retreat on a private island spanning 21 acres, has been a huge success. Raffles is the first global luxury brand in the region, and Raffles Udaipur is a sought-after destination due to its unrivalled service and holistic experiences.

LESSONS OF RESILIENCE & GROWTH

There 2021 was a year of learning that paved the way for a vital evolution in the sector. We adhered to Accor's core values and kept our strategy focused on our guests. With better resources and advancements, we entered 2022. Organic growth resulted from our focus on our product and the renowned Raffles service. This, along with tactical events and other strategic activities, helped us attract the right audience and solidify our place as the luxury getaway for the well-travelled.



**PRATIMA
BADHWAR**
Head-Commercial,
Accor India & South Asia

We focused on our product and the legendary Raffles service, which led to organic growth



STRENGTHENING THE POSITION

With its expansive gardens and ballrooms, Raffles Udaipur is well-suited to cater to grand celebrations, which are at the core of Indian weddings. With wedding season right around the corner, we are in for a busy rest of the year. Family vacations and staycations are also vital for us as we see compound growth over long holidays.

STRATEGISING MARKETING

Raffles is a globally renowned luxury brand that needed no introduction to the market. Since the day it opened, guests have been lining up to experience the famed Raffles service. We already have strong market relations, and with the help of Accor's network, we have been able to build trusting relationships with our trade partners, which has aided both sides' growth.

IMPACT OF ECONOMIC DISRUPTION

While inflation has many direct and indirect implications for all industries, leisure travel is one that never fully ceases. As people continue to work, so does the demand for getaways and breaks. While the numbers may fluctuate in the next few months as a result of this, we remain optimistic about our property's prospects for the rest of 2022. On account of the overwhelming positive response to Raffles Udaipur, we are planning to open Raffles Jaipur next year.

An opportune time for leisure market

MICE and destination weddings will drive domestic leisure demand thanks to rise in discretionary spending when economy recovers, opines **JB Singh**, President & CEO, InterGlobe Hotels.



HT Bureau

Where do you see your clientele?

Our USP has always been offering incredible value for hotel rooms in key markets across India. Our product is designed for everyone, including families, seniors, couples travelling for leisure, and the discerning solo traveller. Our current network of 25 hotels spans 13 cities in nine states and includes brands such as Pullman, Novotel, ibis, and ibis Styles. We want to prevent becoming too thinly spread out in a country the size of India. Our major growth plan will continue to focus on tier 1 areas across the country while also looking at high-growth tier 2 cities. While our primary clients are corporates and business travellers, our goal with the ibis product is to also cater to non-business travellers and create an experience for guests.

What has been your strategy for recovery so far?

Ancillary revenues currently account for 13–15 per cent of airline revenue, while hospitality revenue remains in the low single digits. It is high time for the hotel industry to revisit its business model and operating structures in order to focus on ancillary revenues. When regular business was unpredictable in the last two years, our team came up with a variety of new revenue-generating ideas, which we tested and implemented, including the dark kitchen delivery model, dark stores, and converting meeting spaces into co-working spaces, among others.

When will you meet 2019 ARR levels?

This year's performance in the industry has already surpassed pre-COVID-19 levels. The decline of COVID-19 cases, the resumption of domestic and international flights beginning March 2022, robust leisure and wedding demand, and the gradual return of corporate travel all contributed to this. Full-year ARR and occupancy recovery, which were previously forecasted for FY23-24, will now be exceeded in FY22-23.

How are you enticing your trade partners?

We continue to focus on expanding our distribution reach by adding new distribution channels such as online aggregators for the business segment, travel agents' network, as well as direct booking channels. We aim to leverage our brand recognition and focused offers and campaigns to grow the travel agent network, including faster tie-ups and onboarding and a dynamic commission structure, among others.

“
Hotel industry should revisit its business model in terms of focusing on ancillary revenues
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What are the major challenges?

We believe that one of the biggest threats at present is the uncertainty around COVID-19 and the resulting restrictions on business continuity and momentum. High inflationary trends in building materials and retail commodity products have resulted in substantial increases in project and operating costs for the industry. As occupancies have risen, the industry is facing a serious labour shortage, but it has also become more efficient in terms of processes and operations. To meet consumer demand, we must prioritise digitalisation and technology in distribution and customer segmentation in the new normal.

What are the key drivers for the leisure segment?

Over the last two years, we have seen the real potential of India's leisure market. As seen in recent months, leisure markets will grow with both domestic and international travellers. Domestic MICE and destination weddings will drive domestic demand. Another key driver for this segment is that discretionary spending will rise when the economy recovers. With a solid GDP growth rate and rising per capita income, people's spending capacity will increase, and they will use their time and energy to step out and continue the trend of staycations.

How are the numbers looking for your brand in 2022?

Total revenue in Q2 2022 generated a surplus as compared to Q2 pre-COVID-19 levels. The monthly run rate of portfolio ADR has already increased by 10 per cent over pre-COVID-19 levels, and this trend is will continue in the following months. Maximum rebound has been seen in business segments in tier 1 cities' key markets.

How is the brand working towards creating an all-encompassing experience for guests?

With great food offerings, trendy and energetic public spaces, comfortable rooms, well-landscaped outdoors, and Instagrammable indoor spaces, hotels today offer a refreshing and pleasant stay. The new hotel design has been conceptualised for the modern traveller with spaces that are more fluid and inviting. We have now included specially curated libraries and art curated by young and upcoming artists, which appeal to millennials and Gen Z, and for both business and leisure travellers.



JB SINGH
President & CEO,
InterGlobe Hotels



Mid-segment hotels see the fastest rebound

From 500 keys in 2020 to turning into a 4,800-key brand in 2022, the Suba Group of Hotels, headed by Mansur Mehta, is a lesson in resilience, risk-taking, and crisis management.



Lipla Negi

A crisis can be an exceptional tutor in both resilience and risk-taking. That is, if you are a keen observer and an earnest learner like **Mansur Mehta**, Managing Director, Suba Group of Hotels. When COVID-19 brought the world to an absolute standstill and became a major disruptor for the hospitality industry, Mehta did not let pessimism seep in. “I knew tourism would bounce back and surpass the pre-pandemic level,” he says. “This very belief defines our vision for the brand.”



In the next six months, we will see complete normalcy with ARR



With the pandemic subsiding somewhat in early 2021, the tourism industry was trying to get back on its feet. Mehta, however, did not see just the recovery. He saw the opportunity. The risk-taker in him realised that when the markets were down, it was the right time to make some strategic investments and expand the footprints of the brand. In 2021, Suba acquired a controlling stake in 1589 Hotels, a leisure budget hospitality chain. This was followed by Suba becoming the Master Franchise for Choice Hotels in India in 2022.



The two additions have taken the brand's collective inventory from 500 keys to 4,800 plus keys. The two moves, almost like a great leap, have propelled Suba into the league of big boys and have raised its stature in a significant way. With the patience of a birdwatcher, Mehta watches the twists and turns of the industry to assess the flight of his investments. A combination of instinct, experience, and vision makes him stand apart from his competition. He calls both the deals "a risk worth taking". But it was not a risk taken entirely on the matter of faith. Reading trends is an art as difficult and delightful as tarot reading, if not more. There is no guesswork. "I knew local demand for accommodation would return quicker than others. After all, the joy of going on vacation or even going to a restaurant cannot be replicated. You cannot shift it online," he says. "Pandemic is temporary and so are the sentiments that come with it."

AFFORDABLE LUXURY

As they say, we are what we believe. His trust in the brand (and its ascent) is singularly absolute. "Mid-segment hotels are the fastest to return to pre-pandemic levels. Economy and budget hotels will tap all segments of demand better than upscale hotels," he believes. When we talk about consumer perception, Suba Hotels



MANSUR MEHTA
Managing Director,
Suba Group of Hotels

**We are primarily
rooms and F&B-
focused**



are perceived as hotels that are economically priced and conveniently located with good service. However, Mehta, however, tags it as 'affordable luxury'. His vision for the brand remains committed to delivering the highest standards of hospitality.

The brand's primary goal is to increase the number of rooms and improve the guest experience. "Each year, Suba Hotels adds new properties via acquisitions or new creations to our portfolio in India, the Middle East, and Africa with an aspiration to be the clear market leader," he explains. Passion for guest service also gets a large share of attention in the growth strategy. "While this growth reflects the success and strength of the brand, the team remains dedicated to progressing with a focused goal of compassion, commitment, and creativity in all that we do," he declares.

The march of expansion goes hand-in-hand with a passion for hospitality. "We aim at offering excellent hospitality services with sheer passion and respect for our guests. Our focus is to offer affordable luxury, mark our presence in key destinations and embark on a network of properties that are within the reach of our customers," he states.



MAKING THE RIGHT 'CHOICE'

Under the Master Franchise arrangement with Choice Hotels, Suba Group of Hotels gets the exclusive right to lead and develop the Clarion, Quality, and Comfort brands in the Indian market. With almost three decades of history in the region, the move appears naturally in sync with Suba Hotels' brand proposition of affordable luxury. The signing is also significant because it brings with it higher brand recognition and recall, thanks to the Choice Hotels' global network. Quite modestly, Mehta does not forget to mention "access to innovative international processes" while listing the advantages of this deal.

To put it simply, the move offers a bigger playing field for an industry leader like Mehta. "Suba Group will now be able to pursue a multi-segment type of positioning and target more than one segment of guests at the same time with different brands within our portfolio. We will be able to cater to different segments, with better penetration and a larger market reach," he proudly adds. Currently, Suba Group manages over 85 hotels and resorts across 60 destinations under the Clarion, Quality, Comfort, Suba, Click, GenX, and RnB brands.

ROOMS IN FOCUS

Setting clear-cut goals for the team is one of the strongest characteristics of Mehta's robust expansion plan. While the pandemic forced many hotel chains to relook at their revenue streams and turn towards ancillary revenue channels, Suba Group remained focused on rooms. "We are majorly rooms and F&B focused," he affirms.

The action plan is as clear as the goal. "First and foremost, premium rooms should not go empty. The guests can avail themselves of an attractive offer to meet their needs." The room upselling strategy comes packed with detailed attention to the guest experience. "Check-in has to be a super smooth process. Front office and guest relations staff are trained in basic



ADR and room occupancy have gone up from 45 per cent to 55 per cent for 2022-23



sales to understand guest requirements and make them aware of a variety of services, including the F&B products."

REVIVAL OF ARRS

As per Mehta, the full recovery of the sector is bound to happen, and it will happen sooner than we anticipated. Dissecting the recovery trajectory of the sector He says, "It began with leisure travel initially, and now, gradually, business travel is picking up as restrictions have been removed. In the next six months, we will see complete normalcy with ARR." Talking about bringing customisation in all kinds of offerings to the partners as well as customers, he says, "Our offers cater to each segment of customers, and we are happy to customise and tailor-make our offerings for each of our partners." While a balanced customer base of corporates, wedding planners, event companies, and travel agencies defines the crux of the goal strategy, flexibility drives customer confidence. He says, "We have been very flexible with last-minute cancellations and immediate refunds with our partners,"

DEMAND FOR DOMESTIC TOURISM STAYS STRONG

Scooping the industry out of the pandemic, domestic tourism continues to drive the recovery march of the sector. The rise of the domestic market as the pandemic subsided is something that Mehta had foreseen. However, he credits the uncertainty, a by-product of the pandemic, for changing the way people travel. "One trend that we are observing currently is people making their hotel bookings within two weeks of their travel or even a day before the travel date. Basically, guests want to be sure of being able to travel given the changing restrictions that happen from time to time," he explains.

Would domestic tourism continue to maintain the scoreboard once international travel opens? Taking a pragmatic approach, Mehta responds, "Domestic



travel gained momentum from the second half of last year. With international borders opening now, we will surely see corrections in domestic arrivals, mostly by 2023.”

He further highlights the rising cost of air travel, fuelling travel trends such as drivecations or staycations. “Flights are still expensive. Drive-ins to our hotels in destinations such as Goa, Jaipur, Nashik, Dharamshala, and Dalhousie are at peak demand.” He adds that religious travel to holy destinations, such as Varanasi, Deoghar, Jamui, and Amritsar, is also on the rise.

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Precision in plans, design, and services is something that comes naturally to Mehta. Ask him about expansion plans for the brand and he pinpoints ADRs bouncing back as corporates are shifting from Zoom to

“

The plan is to grow by 400 to 500 rooms every year

”

physical boardrooms and offices. “Most of our hotels have shown steady recovery since February 2022. The ADR and occupancy have gone up from 45 per cent to 55 per cent for the current year 2022–23. Corporate travel is back not only in Mumbai and Bengaluru but even in smaller cities such as Dehradun, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Vadodara, and Aurangabad.”

In the next few months, the brand has a fantastic lineup of new hotels coming up in cities such as Bangalore, Abu Road, Bodhgaya, Udaipur, Kochi, Patna, and Indore. “The plan is to grow by 400 to 500 rooms every year,” he says. “Non-metro markets are set to play an important role in the expansion plans of Suba Group by discovering and promoting tier 2 and tier 3 cities. While increasing brand awareness in diverse settings shapes the brand vision, Mehta is quick to add, “If we get a good project in tier 1, we may consider it.”



Domestic tourism reshapes the **FUTURE** OF HOSPITALITY

Domestic tourism has turned out to be a godsend for the hospitality industry. But the question remains: Will it continue to gain traction or will it eventually lose steam?



Lipla Negi



SAMIR MC
Managing Director,
Fortune Park Hotels Ltd.

A PREFERRED TRAVEL CHOICE

Despite the eased international travel protocols, we have seen an unprecedented domestic response so far. People seem to seek experiences rather than destinations. People have become more open to newer, smaller towns and cities that had previously been unexplored. As more people travel within our geographical bounds, new sites that are financially and distance-wise accessible are being explored, which is a perfect trend for our space. They want to visit calm locations that were not previously considered 'touristy.' They prefer to spend more time in one location, away from crowds, rather than travelling between multiple destinations. However, domestic travel is their preferred option. Domestic travellers are likely to be a lucrative growth driver for the sector, whereas international travel has yet to take off. It is now our duty to create and curate experiences for our guests wherever they may be—whether in a metropolitan area, a pilgrimage site, the hills, or an undiscovered, unspoilt small town.

FUTURE OCCUPANCY LEVELS LOOK STRONG

The pandemic opened new doors for domestic tourism, aided by efforts that promoted local travel and experiences. Despite the fact that international borders are open, we continue to see high demand for domestic destinations. The robust domestic tourism network, with globally benchmarked standards and immersive local experiences, will continue to entice Indian travellers, especially given India's diversity and range of tourism offers. In India, RHG has had strong summer bookings, with occupancies across the board exceeding even 2019 levels. Both leisure and corporate travel drove domestic demand, with MICE, MSME, and social bookings gaining traction, especially in tier 1 and tier 2 cities—Bengaluru, Pune, Mumbai, Goa, and Chennai. Footfalls in leisure destinations such as Mussoorie, Dharamshala, Lonavala, Pondicherry, and Vishakhapatnam have also climbed. Future occupancy levels appear to be robust as well. Taking advantage of domestic prospects, our India expansion plan aims to more than double our current portfolio of 143 hotels and resorts by 2025. Focus areas will include launching hotels in tier 3, 4, and 5 locations, as well as expanding new market-relevant brands—Radisson Individuals Retreats, Radisson Collection, and Radisson RED.



ZUBIN SAXENA
Managing Director & Vice
President of Operations, South
Asia, Radisson Hotel Group



PUNEET DHAWAN
Senior Vice President-Operations,
Accor

GROWTH DRIVER FOR TOURISM SECTOR

The outlook for domestic travel has changed in the last two years. Restrictions and the changing landscape of travel regulations have pushed local destinations to the forefront. People are willing to pay well for premium and luxury properties in coveted domestic destinations. While the more lucrative international travel has yet to pick up, domestic travel will be a growth driver for the industry. With rise in disposable income, there is a heightened curiosity about the country's own travel spectrum. Travellers are now looking for meaningful experiences under one roof to create deeper connections with their loved ones and the environment. Our hotels, especially in leisurely locations, are in demand, and staycations at holiday destinations are sought after. This is also reflected in an increase in FIT and demand across Sofitel BKC, Raffles Udaipur, and Fairmont Jaipur. We will continue to focus on domestic leisure travel, staycations, and workcations, and expect our properties that are geographically positioned in popular destinations to cater to the diverse demand.



ABINASH MANGHANI
Chief Executive Officer,
WelcomHeritage Hotels

BACKBONE OF TOURISM

Despite setbacks in the pandemic years, the Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key drivers of growth in the services sector. The Indian economy has shown resilience and has seen demand from both leisure and corporate segments, which indicates the hospitality sector is on the right track. The Ministry of Tourism as well as private stakeholders are promoting domestic travel, which we can assure, will remain the backbone of tourism and hospitality in the coming years. Given India's strategic and inherent advantages, domestic tourism has tremendous opportunity. The industry has realised the need to prioritise products and destinations that would be of interest in the target market and ensure that they deliver value for money. New segments such as rural, wellness, tribal, adventure, MICE, and religious can be developed. Currently, the outlook is that inbound tourism will begin with a moderate flow by Jan 2023 onwards. Inbound inflow is also subject to airline capacity and visas, which is currently an issue. Domestic tourism remains the key to growth in the medium term.

UPTICK IN CONSUMER SPENDING

The tourism sector in India has staged a significant revival since the COVID-19 cases lessened in number, giving a much-needed fillip to the domestic travel segment. This trend is anticipated to persist as the hospitality industry has witnessed a significant increase in demand for premium rooms on account of rising consumer spending. The sector is currently witnessing a boom on the back of better connectivity of highways and the UDAN scheme, which has improved flight connectivity to various tourist destinations. The Indian tourism sector is in a much better situation than other countries, which are more dependent on foreign tourist arrivals. For every beautiful tourist destination in India, there's an equally attractive alternative that remains unexplored. Hence, the situation is not likely to change even if international travel fully gains momentum. The country will continue to lead as a sustainable destination amid demand for safe and environmentally sustainable travel across the globe.



SATYEN JAIN
Chief Executive Officer,
Pride Hotels



ANURAAG BHATNAGAR
Chief Operating Officer,
The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

A MIX OF BOTH

It is both a bubble and a boom to witness this surge in tourism, not only for hospitality as an industry but for guests and supplementing industries as well. At the time of the numerous restrictions, domestic tourism offered a plethora of choices with the comfort of short-distance travel and the assurance of safety provided by the hotel brands. Staycations turned out to be the first vantage point to break the lockdown monotony, followed by drivecations with family and friends, and even workcations to make the most of WFH, and the options only progressed from there on. Hotels have indeed gone out of their way to create meaningful packages catering to the needs of such evolving guest segments. Domestic travel will continue to thrive as more people invest in travel experiences and discover previously unknown destinations. But while domestic travellers will have the option to explore their destinations abroad once again, we will also see a growth in inbound travel from the international markets. We focused on generating demand by creating compelling and meaningful offers. We also took this time to work on our key brand projects, devising strategies and initiatives.



SUDEEP JAIN
Managing Director-South West
Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts

LOCAL EXPERIENCES GAIN GROUND

Domestic business has always been a significant growth driver for the tourism industry in India, and it will continue to remain an important segment for us in years to come. Even with the ease of restrictions on international travel, we know that people will continue to look for more indigenous experiences and travel to offbeat domestic destinations. In addition to metros and other established tourist destinations, tier 2 and tier 3 markets are increasingly gaining momentum as more travellers are stepping out to explore

these cities. We will continue to focus on tapping into the emerging trends such as staycations and the weekend leisure travel demand by way of running targeted campaigns. Given the hybrid working model of many companies, we will also continue to offer a seamless and comfortable workcation experience with customised packages that include a mix of accommodation, use of meeting space, high-speed internet, business centre facilities, discount on dining, gym access, and recreational facilities.

‘MUST EMPHASISE EXPERIENTIAL STAYS’

Domestic tourism will be stronger than it has ever been. However, the real test of whether we are going to see sustainability of the kind of demand we have seen in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Kashmir in the last couple of years will only come in sometime through the middle of next year. Flights remain expensive; visas are taking longer than usual to clear, and they are also costly. Hence, international travel has not really taken off. Domestic demand is robust, but whether it can keep up its insane buoyancy in the coming year remains to be seen. It is currently booming, but I would call it a steady increase. When international travel opens, there will be an impact on domestic tourism, but how much is unknown. People have awakened to what is available in the country during the last two years. Sarovar has always had a prominent presence in the domestic market. We bring in a fair amount of local gastronomy. We are now aware that there is a high demand for resorts in the domestic market. We are growing into tier 2 and 3 cities. Most areas experiencing a boom have relatively little inventory. Srinagar, for example, does not even have 300 quality accommodations. Gulmarg

does not have a hotel with 100 rooms. So, boom, since they do not have any more rooms to sell. Demand is growing because people are selling the same rooms for ₹50,000 that they used to sell for ₹10,000. Similarly, supply is limited in most parts of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The current trend has come to light as a result of the scarcity of available rooms in most places. There are a few decent-quality accommodations to choose from in Mashobara, Pahalgam, and Palampur. It is changing, but only gradually. So, there will be more supply added to resort locations, and they will perform better than before. Domestic tourism is heavily reliant on connectivity. Wherever there is improved road infrastructure, airports, and air connectivity, there is increased business. The industry must place an emphasis on experiential stays. Before the traveller checks into the room, you should offer him additional information about what they can explore around the destination. Curated holidays will shape domestic tourism's future. Rising inflation will have little effect. It is difficult to predict if the trajectory of domestic tourism will remain as vertical as it has been in the last two years. But, we anticipate strong, sustained demand.



AJAY K BAKAYA
Managing Director,
Sarovar Hotels



IHE 2022 toasts revival

The hospitality industry showed up in strength for the fifth-anniversary edition of the India International Hospitality Expo (IHE). The next show is scheduled for 2–5 August 2023.

The curtains came down on the fifth-anniversary edition of the India International Hospitality Expo (IHE 2022) on 6 August, with the announcement of the dates for the next year's event. IHE 2023 will be held on 2–5 August 2023, at the India Expo Mart & Centre, Greater Noida. About 400 vendors of food service and hospitality products attended the four-day event, which also featured an industry conclave, masterclasses, and competitions. **Rakesh Kumar**, Chairman, India Exposition Mart Limited (IEM), said, "IHE 2022 has demonstrated

Clear Water, Maspar, Kohe, Watergen, and many more. The food products brand, Naturin, was the sponsor of the IHE Masterclasses, which saw celebrated chefs, including Harpal Singh Sokhi and Ajay Chopra from Mumbai, share their best-kept secrets. And two reputed academic institutions—International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM) and Delhi Skill & Entrepreneur University—were on board as the education partners. Food service students got an opportunity to present their culinary skills at the Young Chefs Challenge organised by the Indian Culinary Forum

(ICF). The show's associate partners included AH International, Food Service India, Haks, Venus Industries, Loom Crafts Furniture India, Multi Seats, Saimex Exim, and Sunny Overseas. The range of products and services that were on display at IHE 2022 were kitchen and catering equipment, kitchenware, crockery and cutlery, F&B products and ingredients, furniture and furnishings, housekeeping and laundry essentials, and varied water technologies.

Nitin Nagarale, Founder, Hospitality Purchasing Managers' Forum (HPMF), said, "IHE helps you get to know more about what is happening in the industry now and what is expected in the next few years. IHE introduces us to a world that exists beyond our imagination." **Abinash Manghani**, CEO, ITC WelcomHeritage, opined, "IHE helps us hoteliers to update our knowledge and upgrade our offerings." **Hari Dadoo**, President, IHE, said, "In its fifth anniversary year, IHE continues to be a knowledge fest for professionals engaged in the hospitality and food service sectors."

One of the high points of the show was the IHE Conclave, which was attended by industry thought leaders, such as Jatin Khanna, CEO, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts; Vikram Aditya Singh, CEO, The Claridges Hotels & Resorts; Sanjoy Bose, EVP and Head-HR, ITC Hotels; Girish Sehgal, SVP & Head-Luxury Operations, DLF Limited; Greesh Bindra, VP-Operations, The Surya New Delhi; Chef Davinder Kumar, President, ICF; Chef Manjit Gill, President, Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (ICFA); and some of the country's leading hospitality educators, notably Satvir Singh, NCHMCT; Arun Singh, FHRAI-IHM; Abdullah Ahmed, IIHM; Dr. Manohar Sajjani, Amity; and Dr. Rajiv Mishra, Galgotias.



that India can become a sourcing hub for the global industry, offering an array of sustainable products developed by our MSMEs. And the fifth-anniversary show was a celebration of the industry's revival."

Speaking at the inauguration on 3 August, **BB Swain**, Secretary, Ministry of MSME, Govt, announced that on the previous day, India had achieved the milestone of one crore MSME registrations, "out of which 20 per cent belong to hotels or hospitality". IHE benefited from the support extended to the exhibitors by the MSME Ministry, the One District One Product (ODOP) programme of the UP government, National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC), and Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH). **Sharad Upadhyay**, GM, Crowne Plaza, Greater Noida, said, "Platforms such as IHE create a synergy by bringing together all the hospitality stakeholders. Events like these have the potential to drive innovation." **Ajay Khanna**, CEO, Eagle Forgings, said, "B2B shows that are so professionally run like IHE will continue to grow and do well." Sharing a chef's point of view, **Parvinder Bali**, Corporate Chef, Oberoi Centre for Learning & Development, added, "Shows such as IHE keep us in touch with each other and also with the latest global F&B trends."

Several organisations came forward to partner with IHE 2022, including Spice Board of India,

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the high points of the show was the IHE Conclave, which was attended by a galaxy of industry thought leaders.





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Turning point for hotels

With the rise of bleisure and work-from-anywhere travel, more and more hotels are blending work, fun, and dining under one roof. Hotels are now more than just a place to sleep for travellers.

Hotels becoming destinations in themselves is the travel trend of combining work commitments with entertainment. Having emerged around a decade ago, it continues to grow. Increasingly, more people consider exploring new places while travelling for business. The trend could bring new opportunities to the travel and hospitality industry. Such trips require more thorough planning. In this situation, travellers could use help from OTAs, hotels, and other travel providers.

RIGHT LOCATION IS KEY

Location is one of the top selection criteria for travellers. And yes, location has a big impact on the demand the hotel will generate, and therefore, will influence the price we can ask in the market for rooms. Proximity to demand generators and transportation connectivity are the factors that determine the success of a hotel location. New social media platforms, such as TripAdvisor and Google and guest reviews on the other OTAs give us valuable insight into how consumers evaluate the location of hotels around possible locations.

DIFFERENTIATING FACTORS

Hotels must offer much more than a room to be competitive in the sector today; they must deliver an experience. We work hard to differentiate our guest



PANKAJ GUPTA
General Manager,
Crowne Plaza New Delhi
Mayur Vihar Noida

To be competitive in the hospitality sector today, hotels must provide much more than a room



experience from that of our competitors. We can begin by segmenting it into phases that touch different points in the journey of the traveller:

Pre-stay: It can include the booking process when potential guests are still evaluating your property, which is why it is important to have an online booking engine on website so you can own the booking experience.

In-stay: Here, the experience can vary broadly by property type and services offered.

Post-stay: This is an opportunity to encourage guests to continue to engage with your property by joining your loyalty programme or following your property on social media channels if they have not yet.

BLEISURE IS BOLSTERING HOSPITALITY

Recent trends that mix work with travel that is not strictly business travel—workcations, b-leisure travel—are redefining business travel while also helping to keep the travel industry afloat while waiting for full-scale business travel to return. The fusion of work and life can be hard and cause conflicts, but it also brings the traveller new opportunities. The separation of paying for business and leisure will only get easier as new solutions come into play.

Travel, in its essence, has changed a lot in the past few years. Guests now look for wholesome experiences rather than just a hotel that can provide them with accommodation. They now look for added perks, amenities, and touchpoints that make their travel more comfortable, warm, and personalised. This can be incorporated through local experiences, recreational activities in and around the property, or by curating F&B packages.

BECOMING THE MAIN ATTRACTION

The current travel habits of guests suggest that they look out for hotels and resorts that provide them with tailor-made experiences. The food and beverage service plays a huge role in shaping a guest's experience by showcasing that region's authentic dishes. At Courtyard Aravali Resort, we have the perfect urban experience for our guests—The Chaupal, wherein the guests are given a complete local experience through rural tea stalls, refreshments, and games. We are in the process of growing our own vegetables to be able to provide our guests with a farm-to-table experience. All our rooms have chromecast enabled televisions, which makes us the only resort to have the facility.

MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE FOR GUESTS

The main attraction of the resort is our pool, which is situated right in the centre. The Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort is designed keeping in mind the new age of travellers who want unique and exclusive experiences. The resort is spread across eight acres of land surrounding the striking Aravali hills, which are at a drivable distance from Delhi-NCR. Our Executive Chef, Shibendu Choudhary, has extensively worked on F&B menus for all our outlets to be able to provide the guests with an experience that is both gastronomical and instagrammable. We have recreational activities, which include bicycling through the resort, pool Zumba,



RAJNEESH KUMAR
General Manager,
Courtyard by Marriott
Aravali Resort

Guests look for hotels and resorts that provide them with tailor-made experiences with added perks, amenities, and touchpoints



yoga sessions by our in-house certified yoga instructor, and a complete solution for kids through Giggles, the kids room. We have kept our focus on the local cuisine as well as world cuisines that are showcased at Huang, our Pan-Asian restaurant, and The Aravali Kitchen.

THE URBAN RETREAT

The Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort has been strategically located, making the connectivity from Gurugram easy and comfortable. It not only serves as the ideal weekend getaway for guests to unwind and relax after a long week at work, but it also serves as the ideal off-site destination for corporations. It acts as the perfect urban retreat, which has the capability of being a resort and a workstation at the same time, courtesy of our versatile and flexible board rooms. The Levo spa at the property is an excellent addition for guests to be able to de-stress fully, along with our health club that is modern and contemporary, made to cater to fitness enthusiasts.

WORK-LIFE HARMONY VIA BLEISURE

As an industry, we have seen a rise in the trend of b-leisure travellers not only for millennials but for the entire workforce. For a lot of organisations, it has become an unconventional perk to offer their employees, and it is also an answer to achieving work-life balance. We have seen corporate travellers add a leisure component to their business trips. With business travel on the rise, it is imperative that hotels start adapting to their needs. Talking about the Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort, it is designed to be functional with a complete 360-degree approach. The resort is equipped with functional meeting rooms that come with modern audio and video technology, along with comfortable connectivity to the airport, making it an easy commute for all business and leisure travellers.



ProWine Mumbai 2022 slated for October

ProWine Mumbai, to be held on 17-18 October, will enable international and Indian wine, spirits, and craft brands to showcase themselves via storytelling and tastings as well as meet industry peers and connoisseurs.

Following the rousing success of ProWine Mumbai 2021, The Organisers, Messe Düsseldorf, and All Things Nice are gearing up for the next edition of ProWine Mumbai. It will be held on 17 and 18 October 2022, at the Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai. The two-day B2B and B2C event for the wine, spirits, craft beverage, and hospitality industries, as well as consumers, will enable international and

Indian wine, spirits, and craft brands to showcase themselves through conversations, storytelling, and tastings, as well as access to both industry peers and consumers through meaningful engagement. It brings together the country's community of brands, importers, distributors, wholesalers, and retailers with international brands looking to enter the Indian market and large-scale buyers, including hotels, restaurants, and bar owners.

The 2021 edition was the first in-person trade fair for the wine and spirits sector in India since the start of COVID-19. The show featured over 200 brands from 70 companies across 13 countries with 2,017 attendees. The event kickstarted with dignitaries from the US Consulate, the Consulate General of France, the Australian High Commission, the South African Consulate, the Trade Centre of Argentina, the Republic of Mauritius, corporate heads, media, and industry associations.



Platforms such as ProWine Mumbai are instrumental for wine and spirit sellers and buyers, as well as consumers

Several steps have been taken by the wine and spirits industry and policymakers to fortify e-commerce and home delivery channels for alcoholic beverages with a strong regulatory framework that will fortify the state exchequer, protect the lives of millions of industry workers, and prevent retail store overcrowding. The Maharashtra Cabinet has permitted the sale of wine in state supermarkets and walk-in stores. Such progressive initiatives will boost wine production and sales by 20-30 per cent. This move will improve the accessibility and the profile of high-quality domestic and imported wines. The evolving drinking habits of the younger generation, as well as the growing liquor market in the Indian subcontinent, have resulted in a significant shift in the way people consume alcohol.

Platforms such as ProWine Mumbai are instrumental for wine and spirit sellers, buyers, and consumers. Face-to-face business meetings with Indian and international labels, introductions to new products and trends, tasting over a thousand brands, and attending masterclasses led by old mentors and young trailblazers make the platform a one-stop-shop for the best of knowledge, tasting, and business.

India Market Place organised by Marriott

Marriott organised its signature event—India Market Place—at Westin Hyderabad, which saw over 30 hotels from across country come together for B2B meetings with the corporate, wedding, and travel trade partners.





◀ SEEMA TAJ

Director of Sales, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore
Taj will be responsible for sales, revenue management, marketing, and business operations and will oversee all aspects of the sales department. She has over 17 years of expertise and has been key in initiating and organising several successful sales campaigns.



◀ PROJWAL GHOSH

Director of Sales & Marketing, Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Gate
Ghosh will lead strategic sales, marketing, and business operations and oversee all aspects of the sales and marketing department. He will also strive to create new and sustainable business streams for the hotel and drive revenue performance and brand positioning.

▶ AIJAZ AHMAD

GM of Sales-Mumbai & Gujarat Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels
Ahmad is promoted from Director of Sales to GM of Sales-Mumbai and Gujarat. He started his career as an Assistant Sales Manager with nine hotels in the group and rose to the level of GM-Sales West with 76 hotels now in the chain.



▶ ANOOP VIJAYARAJ

GM, Kairali - The Ayurvedic Healing Village, Palakkad
Vijayaraj has over 20 years of experience in the industry. Previously, he worked as a Consultant GM and Resort Manager at Kimmane Golf Resort & Munjoh Ocean Resort in Karnataka and the Andaman Nicobar Islands.



◀ AVINASH KUMAR

F&B Manager Hilton Garden Inn, New Delhi
Kumar has over 11 years of experience and was the Assistant F&B Manager at DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram. He would be in charge of the award-winning multi-cuisine restaurant India Grill and the High Spirits Bar, as well as the in-room dining experience.



◀ ONKAR SINGH

VP-Hospitality & Wellness Ops, Fazlani Natures Nest
Singh will oversee the entire ops of the property to establish the resort as a go-to wellness destination. He will bring his proficiency to bear on managing the entire gamut of the wellness resort management ops to achieve the desired business targets.



▶ PRABHNEET KAUR SODHI

Guest Services Manager The Imperial New Delhi
Reckoned for managing bespoke guest experiences, Sodhi has earned several accolades for her organisational dexterity. She enjoys a reputation for structuring and training performance-oriented guest service teams across many luxury hotels.



◀ PUNEET SHARMA

Wellness Manager, Angsana Oasis Spa & Resort, Bangalore
Sharma will head the wellness division and curate wellness menus. He was instrumental in developing wellness offerings for ultra-luxury resorts such as Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton (LVMH)'s Cheval Blanc Randheli and Four Seasons Resort, Maldives.



◀ CHEF FERROZ PATEL

Executive Chef, Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan
Chef Patel's has 15 years of expertise in the culinary field and is well-versed in all aspects of F&B ops. He will oversee the hotel's overall culinary operations; designing the menu; handling and managing the restaurant; and curating special occasion menus.



▶ BHARATHI PERUMAL

Operations Manager, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort
Perumal will drive and execute the F&B strategies and oversee ops at the resort. He has been recognised as the Top 5 F&B Heads of Power 25 in IMEA by Hoteliers Web and won the Hoteliers Award by the International Hospitality Council, London.

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