

HOSPITALITY Talk[®]

A man with a mustache, wearing a blue checkered blazer over a white shirt, stands in a restaurant or hotel lobby. The background is softly blurred, showing chandeliers and interior decor. The overall color scheme is warm, with yellow accents on the left and right sides of the page.

Re-imagining Hospitality

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Chugging along

Global hospitality industry is poised to witness continued growth notwithstanding global challenges. Hospitality chains continue to expand base, introduce new brands & adopt sustainable practices.

Marriott to launch St. Regis in Xiamen

Marriott International has announced that it has signed a management agreement with Shengyuan Cultural Tourism to bring St. Regis brand to Xiamen in 2027. This signing will debut the first St. Regis hotel in Fujian Province, which is expected to feature the brand's celebrated rituals, glamorous spirit, storied heritage and Butler Service. The St. Regis Xiamen will be located in the eastern part of Xiamen Island's Huli District, part of the cross-strait financial centre, offering ease of access to two international airports and a railway station. "Xiamen has long been a destination favoured by global luxury travellers and as one of the most important economic hub cities in Southeast China, is an ideal location for the St. Regis brand's bespoke guest experience," said **Yibing Mao**, President, Greater China, Marriott International.



Hyatt launches first upper-midscale brand in Americas

Hyatt Hotels has unveiled Hyatt Studios, the newest addition to Hyatt's portfolio of brands. The brand, which marks Hyatt's entry into upper-midscale lodging in the Americas, was conceived through direct collaboration with hotel developers and listening closely to the needs of target guests. "We are proud to launch the Hyatt Studios brand and bring the high-quality experience and level of care promised by the Hyatt brand to smaller markets and submarkets where we do not have Hyatt hotels. We identified a white space for Hyatt, creating a compelling opportunity to significantly accelerate our industry-leading net rooms growth, care for World of Hyatt members on more stay occasions and introduce World of Hyatt to new guests in a new segment which we expect will drive increased direct bookings for all properties across the Hyatt portfolio," said **Jim Chu**, Chief Growth Officer, Hyatt.



IHG to bring Holiday Inn Express in Saudi Arabia

IHG Hotels & Resorts has signed a management agreement with Riyadh-based Al Woroud Real Estate to bring Holiday Inn Express to Saudi Arabia. The latest signing will strengthen the company's mainstream offering in Riyadh and provide an elevated, smart offering to cater to new international and Saudi guest segments, as part of Saudi Vision 2030 strategy for tourism. **Haitham Mattar**, Managing Director, India, Middle East & Africa, IHG Hotels & Resorts said, "The government has been progressively investing in the tourism sector and will bring ever more diverse guest segments to the market, across business, leisure and spiritual tourism."



Pullman Hotels unveils 50th hotel in Greater China

Accor has announced the opening of Pullman Hotels & Resorts' 50th hotel in Greater China—Pullman Haining Hotel. "China is one of the fastest growing and most competitive economies in the world for hotel development and we are immensely proud to lead the market with one of the most diverse portfolios of hotel brands in the industry," said **Jean-Jacques Morin**, Deputy CEO, CFO & CEO, Premium, Midscale & Economy. "Accor set down roots in China nearly four decades ago, and today we are more optimistic about the opportunities here than ever—particularly with Pullman, which is on track to become the most preferred and sustainable premium hospitality brand with the fastest growth trajectory in the world—and nowhere is it more successful than here in China," he concluded.

BWH strengthens pledge to sustainable hospitality

BWH Hotel Group has created a new global sustainability strategic initiative, called Because We Care, which will focus on three important pillars: Earth, People and Community. "With each passing year, the need for more responsible and sustainable travel increases in importance," said **Larry Cuculic**, President & CEO, BWH Hotel Group. Adding to this, **Ron Pohl**, President, International Operations and WorldHotels, said, "I am proud of the steps we have taken with even bolder changes at BWH Hotel Group with the evolution of our Because We Care program, and in the meantime, I am thrilled to support our hotelin areas of sustainability."



Wyndham expands Manufacturer Direct Programme

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has announced the expansion of its Manufacturer Direct Programme. First launched in 2022 for Days Inn by Wyndham, the programme helps hotels undergoing renovations save an average of 20 per cent or more in cost versus traditional renovation programmes. “This programme delivers on greater transparency and higher savings in the renovation process, particularly for franchisees who want to be more hands-on. By enabling hotels to order everything directly and serve as their own project manager, we are helping them unlock substantial cost-savings—as much as \$50,000 on a 90-room Days Inn renovation—all while delivering an updated, high-quality, modern guest experience that aligns with Wyndham brand standards,” said **David Kellam**, Vice President, Design and Construction, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts.



Minor Hotels heralds strategic expansion of Avani

Minor Hotels has announced the expansion in Europe of its lifestyle brand targeted at millennial-minded travellers: Avani Hotels & Resorts. Part of a strategic expansion of the brand into new regions of operation, Avani will add five properties in key cities in Europe—one in Spain, two in Italy, one in Germany and next year, one in the Netherlands. **Dillip Rajakarier**, CEO, Minor Hotels, said, “Avani is now a well-established brand in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and known for its great value proposition, its design philosophy and unique service offering. The work of recent years has prepared us to commit strategically to the expansion of Avani’s footprint into new regions of operation and marks a significant milestone for Minor Hotels.”

Radisson introduces next phase of digital transition

Radisson Hotel Group has launched the next phase of its comprehensive digital transformation with the introduction of a successful customer-first and innovative digital strategy based on immersive and localized experiences. Guests can now view the Group’s hotels virtually from their laptops, mobile phones and VR headsets. Guests will be able to experience online journeys in 29 languages, personalized for more than 60 regions. “Thanks to these virtual and interactive tours, our customers can discover our hotels from anywhere in the world. This technology has been invaluable, especially to our Meetings & Events business, as it allows us to show busy meeting planners the different flexible. Localization and immersive experiences have helped us to strengthen the trust and relationship we have with existing customers and have proven to be great long-term investments, as they have contributed to increased customer satisfaction and higher conversion rates,” said **Raul Alvarez Barrera**, Vice President, Global Digital Experience, RHG.





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Going forward

Indian hospitality industry continues to see strong recovery & growth post-COVID as domestic demand remains robust. Industry will further gain momentum, especially from Tier II & III cities.

ITC Hotels strengthens its luxury portfolio

ITC Hotels has announced the opening of its first property under the new brand Mementos. Nestled near Nathdwara and Eklingji temple, 40 minutes from Udaipur airport and 20 kms from the city, Mementos by ITC Hotels Ekaaya is spread over an area of around 50 acres. **Anil Chadha**, Divisional Chief Executive, ITC Hotels said, "The addition of brand Mementos to our luxury hotels segment further strengthens ITC Hotels luxury portfolio. Building on the legacy of ITC Hotels properties in India, Mementos Udaipur is a befitting tribute to the rich heritage, grandeur and vibrant spirit of Rajasthan. We are confident that this world-class property will make a meaningful contribution to the tourism landscape of Rajasthan." The resort has cluster villas with 117 keys; every villa opens to a beautiful view of the panoramic Aravali bringing fine modern heritage set amidst an uninterrupted landscape which provides all the ingredients for an invigorating or intimate relaxed getaway.



MAYFAIR Spring Valley comes up in Guwahati

MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of MAYFAIR Spring Valley, Guwahati in Assam. The resort boasts of over 240 rooms with enticing options for the guests to choose from which includes Executive Rooms, Deluxe Rooms, Cottages, Pool Cottages, Suites, and Villas. It will also have state-of-the-art banqueting and conferencing facilities that would be the largest in the entire North East and a helipad within the complex. The hotel also features a range of dining experiences that capture the essence of the state's culture. MAYFAIR Spring Valley, Guwahati houses one of the largest convention centres in the city. With multiple open to air event spaces spanning from 25,000 to 35,000 square feet, the resort is designed to host a range of large and small-scale events in both indoor and outdoor settings—be it an intimate celebration, wedding or corporate conference. The hotel encourages guests to indulge in modern and traditional wellness approaches through Western and Eastern therapies.



Clarks Exotica comes to Dechu

The Clarks Hotels & Resorts has opened Clarks Exotica in Dechu, Rajasthan. Clarks Exotica comprises of 40 luxury deluxe Swiss tents, equipped with all the modern amenities, catering to different travel needs. The camps are located within the Thar Oasis campsite and offers a desert safari, picnic, campfire, camel ride, village walk, dinner on dunes, desert sports, and stargazing. **Rahul Deb Banerjee**, Vice President, The Clarks Hotels & Resorts said, "Travellers are seeking out new and different experiences. We are price-conscious and believe in providing value for money to our travellers." The rooms are appointed with elegant interiors and regal furnishings, ensuring the guests have a remarkable time in the Thar Desert.

Waldorf Astoria set to debut in India

Hilton and Dangayach Group have unveiled the signing of a branding and management agreement for the launch of Waldorf Astoria Jaipur, marking the debut of Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts in India. **Christopher J Nassetta**, President & CEO, Hilton said, "India is a key market for Hilton, and this hotel will set a new benchmark for luxury in Jaipur. This signing reaffirms our commitment to working with strong local partners and extending our signature hospitality to discerning travellers in sought-after destinations around the world. Jaipur has a rich culture and history, and we look forward to creating unforgettable experiences." The upcoming hotel will also feature a luxurious spa, an outdoor swimming pool, a state-of-the-art fitness centre, and five distinctive dining experiences, including the world-famous Peacock Alley, the iconic lounge and bar synonymous with the Waldorf Astoria brand.



Ramada Encore by Wyndham opens in Indore

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has launched Ramada Encore by Wyndham in Indore. The hotel has a modern design and features 100 contemporary rooms, meetings and event spaces, a business centre, refreshing wellness areas and an outdoor rooftop swimming pool. **Nikhil Sharma**, Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts EMEA said, "This opening adds to our existing portfolio of Wyndham-branded hotels in Madhya Pradesh and reaffirms our commitment to continued growth in this important market. We look forward to our partnership and to adding an internationally recognized hotel brand to the city of Indore."

Sarovar launches Golden Tulip, Tirupati

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts has opened Golden Tulip, Tirupati. Strategically located at the foothills of Tirumala hills, the hotel is within a kilometre from the bypass road near Alipiri Toll Plaza, nearly 4 km from Tirupati Railway station and enjoys proximity and seamless connectivity to the bus terminal, prominent commercial and corporate hubs and leading hospitals. "We are delighted to add a second hotel to our growing portfolio in Tirupati. The opening of the hotel demonstrates our commitment and relentless focus on the growth of the Golden Tulip brand in India. We are confident Golden Tulip's refreshing, youthful and modern spirit will be welcomed by the city and are thankful to the owning company, Grand Continent Hotels for reposing trust and partnering with us in the continued growth of the most popular brand like Golden Tulip," said **Ajay K Bakaya**, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts.



Espire Hospitality announces new resorts

Espire Hospitality Group has launched its first property in Himachal Pradesh, Country Inn Maple Resort, Chail. The Group also announced the opening of its first Country Inn Premier resort, Country Inn Premier - Pacific, Mussoorie. Country Inn Maple Resort, Chail is located on Kandaghat-Chail road. With over 30 spacious rooms, tranquil views, lush green lawns, recreational activities, kids play area and cuisine at Sky High, the resort is a tasteful amalgamation of sublime nature and modern aesthetic. Nestled amidst the picturesque hills, Country Inn Premier - Pacific, Mussoorie is an oasis for those on a constant quest for peace and calm. The mountain resort boasts of 48 well-appointed rooms, promising guests a rejuvenating and soul-filling stay.

Concept Hospitality expands portfolio

Concept Hospitality has opened The Beacon Hotel, Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. This is the 21st hotel the company has opened under its Beacon brand. **Noshir A Marfatia**, Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Concept Hospitality said, "With this new opening, we now operate eight hotels in South India, in the cities of Belagavi, Bengaluru, Hubballi (Hubli), Kakinada, Shivamogga, Udupi, Vijayapura and Visakhapatnam under our Fern and Beacon brands." The Beacon Hotel, Visakhapatnam offers 37 well-equipped modern rooms, with 19 Deluxe rooms, 16 Executive rooms, and 2 Suites.



Ayatana launches second resort in Ooty, Tamil Nadu

Ayatana has opened its doors in Ooty, Tamil Nadu providing a luxurious and culturally rich experience. Derived from the Sanskrit word Sanctuary, Ayatana is more than just a premium full-service hospitality establishment. Commenting on the launch, **Vishal Tony**, Founder, Ayatana, Ooty said, "Given the post-COVID world, we wanted to keep in mind that people crave the outdoors even more than before. It is essential to weave the fact that Ayatana offers an escape from everyday life into the design and language of the Ooty property. Our aim is not just to let people consume a single product or service, but a combination of experiences. We want to make Ayatana Ooty dedicated to creating unforgettable memories as we recognize the need to emphasize the unique and authentic qualities that make a weekend memorable." Elevating the experience, the culinary journey at Ayatana is truly sensorial. The Tycoon Restaurant offers a gourmet menu with indulgent cocktails, enhanced by a serene hillside view.



Pride Hotel Rishikesh welcomes guests

Pride Hotels has announced the opening of Pride Hotel Rishikesh in Uttarakhand. Centrally located at Tapovan, Badrinath Road, this hotel can easily be accessed by road, rail, and air via Dehradun airport. Announcing the launch, **Atul Upadhyay**, Senior Vice President, Pride Hotels Group, said "We are delighted to announce the opening of Pride Hotel Rishikesh in Devbhumi Uttarakhand. Popularly referred to as the world's yoga capital, the holy city is renowned for some of the most famous tourist attractions including the Ram Jhula, Laxman Jhula and Triveni Ghat. The region attracts tourists from across India and many parts of the world. Pride Hotel Rishikesh with its luxurious accommodations and world-class amenities, will present a one-of-a-kind experience for travellers to the region." It offers scenic valley views. Dining options includes a Sky Deck, rooftop elevated dining experience, multi cuisine restaurant and Mr. Confectioner, just the warm cosy round-the-clock coffee shop needed in the vicinity.



SETTING PRIORITIES

Manisha Saxena, who recently took over as Director General, Tourism, exudes positive outlook for hospitality biz in India & reckons G20 Presidency provides great opportunity to it to unlock its potential.



Nisha Verma



Manisha Saxena, Director General, Tourism, MoT, Govt. of India is not new to the sector, having served as the Principal Secretary, Tourism, Government of Mizoram, before moving to the central ministry in March. Sharing her views on the sector, she said, “I think there is an overall focus on tourism and the Hon’ble Prime Minister has been constantly underlining the need to develop India as a tourism hub, so that it can lead to better livelihoods and better jobs in this sector. The idea is to tell all those stories in a way that entices foreign tourists and encourage domestic tourists to see the country. Even one lifetime is not enough to see all of India. I think the sooner one starts, the better it is. I have been posted in Delhi, Goa and even Northeast. Thus, I feel that it is a country of such diversity that people living in one region cannot even imagine what the other region would be like. Hence, it will be good if everybody can travel a lot and learn about the diversity in the country. My endeavour in this ministry would be to facilitate that process and become a part of it in whatever way possible.”

G20 PRESIDENCY

Talking about India’s G20 Presidency, she shared, “It is a big opportunity to leverage tourism as one of the foremost economic activities and let the world see what we have to offer. Accordingly, the strategy for G20 events has been planned in such a way that we are going to 56 cities with so many events happening. Every ministry is doing an event in a new destination. Hence, I think it will be a huge showcase for the international community with the kind of efforts that are being taken. As part of G20 events, many cities are improving their infrastructure. It is not just one event. A lot of effort is being put into making that destination more beautiful, pre-sustainable, more attractive for all kinds of tourists.”

KEY FOCUS

In her new role, informed Saxena, “My focus would be to facilitate the tourism sector in as many ways as possible, as



MANISHA SAXENA
Director General, Tourism,
MoT, Govt. of India

My focus would be to facilitate tourism sector in as many ways as possible, as part of MoT’s overall policy



part of MoT’s overall policy. I just want to be a part of the team which delivers tourism as one of the foremost economic activities in India.”

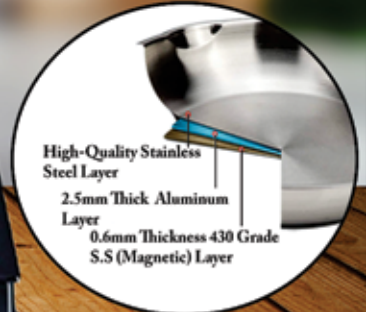
TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Talking about the power of technology in today’s travel industry, she commented, “In earlier days, when you planned a trip, you consulted a travel agent or you spoke to someone who has been on that side of the world. Now everybody just picks up their phone or laptop and browse. Hence, a digital presentation of your strengths is very important as a destination and a lot of states have done some good work on it. Almost everyone has a website and a tourism app. However, challenge of digitalization is how to combine all of it with the places where all the action is. I think, we are working keenly on it, and we will be able to bridge that gap. We are leveraging the strength of social media and using digital media, AR, VR, evidence-based studies from the visitors from various countries. All that is in process. It will throw up some very good insights and we will be able to work on those.” →



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Expanding horizons



Ministry of Tourism convenes roundtable interaction with Heads of Missions in precursor to first Global Tourism Investors' Summit, to be organized from 17-19 May 2023.



Janice Alyosius

India has become a prime destination for tourism and is now gearing up for investment to further boost its growth in the sector. The Union Ministry of Tourism (MoT) is celebrating Visit India 2023, highlighting the diverse experiences that India has to offer. The government, taking a mission mode approach to promote tourism and attract private sector investments, will organize the first Global Tourism Investors' Summit from 17-19 May 2023. The summit will provide a platform for collaboration between the public and private sectors, leading to increased investments in the sector. In a precursor to the summit, the MoT recently organized a roundtable interaction with Heads of Missions, which was chaired by G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and DoNER. Addressing the meet, Reddy said that guided by the Prime Minister's vision, tourism development in the country is being undertaken by the government in a mission mode. "Our Prime Minister has stated that India is entering a robust phase of tourism and has been gaining global attention in recent years. Our aim is to make the most of the opportunities available and promote tourism through a mission mode approach that involves active participation from state governments, as well as the convergence of government programmes and public private partnerships. This Summit will sig-

nificantly aid us in achieving these goals," he said.

The Minister said that after a significant growth in tourist arrivals, which jumped to 6.9 million in 2022 after two years of negative growth, India is working hard to achieve a resilient growth in the sector. He added that the first Global Tourism Investors' Summit is aligned with India's new national tourism policy, which is designed to improve the competitiveness of the tourism sector and attract private sector investments. "International investors will be able to explore India's tourism and hospitality sectors at the Summit, which will also facilitate collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote growth in the country's tourism industry," he said.

He also stated that the current investment landscape of the country makes it an appropriate destination for investment in various sub-sectors of the Indian tourism industry such as hospitality & lodging, wellness tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism and others. The Minister thanked all the participating Missions for attending the roundtable interaction and invited them to actively participate in the forthcoming Investors Summit and be a part of India's growth and development in the tourism sector.

HYDERABAD WORKSHOP

Earlier, the MoT, aiming to develop sustainable and responsible tourism in the country, organized the third regional workshop on Development of Sustainable and

Responsible Tourist Destinations in Hyderabad. Senior government officials and tourism industry stakeholders from the States/ Union Territory of the Southern region namely Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and Telangana took part in the workshop. The event started with an inaugural speech by Mohamed Farouk, Regional Director, India Tourism, Bengaluru, who highlighted the need to target the tourism sector growth while keeping in mind the limitation of resources and protecting the ecosystem.

Alok Sharma, Director, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, said that the aim behind the regional workshop was to give shape to the concept of sustainable tourism.

Representatives from tourism departments of various states and UTs made presentations and highlighted their best sustainable tourism practices. They talked about the positive economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts of their interventions such as getting Blue Flag Certifications to many beaches and economic growth. →

G Kishan Reddy said first Global Tourism Investors' Summit is aligned with India's new national tourism policy



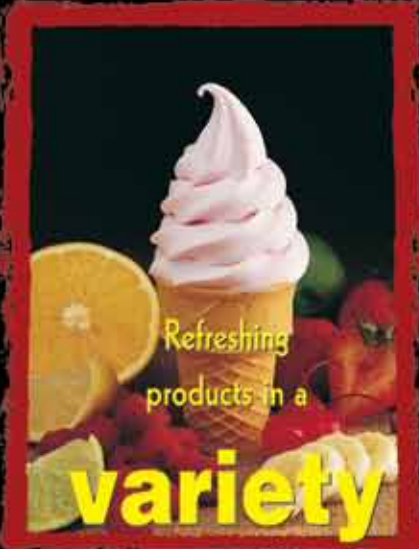
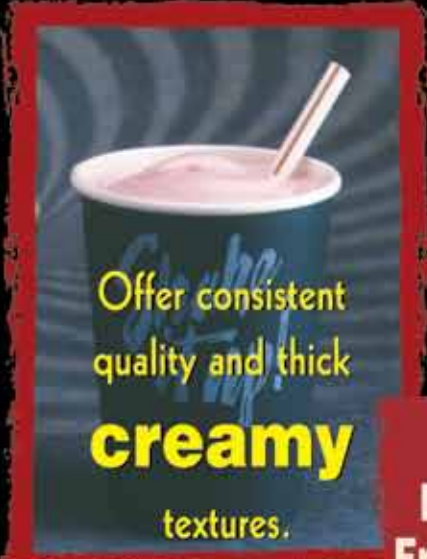
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Ironing out roadblocks

Indian hospitality industry will further gain momentum if all spheres & departments are aligned & government is working towards it, assures **Rakesh Verma** while moderating post-Budget webinar.



Nisha Verma

Tourism cannot move forward without convergence because it is a cross-sectoral thing, as it has many more domains and support of many other departments is necessary, said **Rakesh Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India. He moderated the second breakout session—Convergence – The Power of Collaboration of the post-Budget webinar on Developing Tourism in Mission Mode, organized by Union Ministry of Tourism recently.

Speaking about the session on convergence in the tourism sector, Verma shared, “In this session, all departments of Central Ministries, whose initiatives impact the tourism sector were present. Apart from that, at state government level, we had inputs from Principal Secretaries of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. We also invited two district collectors to see at the implementation stage how this convergence and synergy is there. Apart from that, to represent the industry, office-bearers of our industry associations and leaders were there. It was visible that tourism cannot move forward without convergence because it is a cross-sectoral thing, as it has many more domains and support of many other departments is necessary. If this support is taken properly, then a multiplier effect can be created and the challenges in the tourism sector can be removed well.”



RAKESH VERMA
Additional Secretary,
Ministry of Tourism,
Govt. of India

Communities are very important for projects & plans that we make. Every ministry needs to keep community event



Verma highlighted a few suggestions given during the session. “There is a group that has been made, called the Project Monitoring Group, which monitors important infra projects and same way since tourism is complex and needs support from different departments. Thus, a portal should be developed where project related information and from

which agency they need clearance and we should align it with the PM Gatishakti Portal,” he said.

DESTINATION MASTERPLAN

Verma also shared that a masterplan for destinations should be created, “whereby doing SWOT analysis, we should know in advance, which are the areas where support is needed and then the programmes of that ministry and department should be plugged into it. Then the convergence and synergy will come out in a much better way.”

He added, “Same way infrastructure gap is there, which has been mapped via masterplan or otherwise, so that the involved ministries are updated that these are our priority destinations and where is the missing link, like in road, railway or airport. Thus, if infrastructure mapping is done, convergence can be done in a better way.”

QUALITY OF SERVICES

He informed that the Bureau of Indian Standards and Ministry of Commerce is working on National Standard of Quality of Services. “They have also suggested that if we take the standards forward in a good way, the ministries can also contribute very well in the same by getting those standards in different segments such as skills, marketing and promotion. For everything we should have standards and practices.” In the same way, said Verma, “Funding, convergence, programme objectives were highlighted. At many places, the funds of schemes can be



dovetailed, if we can pool funds at district level and achieve a common objective.”

ENVIRONMENT & WILDLIFE

He also said that environment and wildlife is a sensitive segment. “On this, Ministry of Environment and Forests have a lot of plans to develop wetlands, ecotourism and the vision is to develop them for high-end tourists. In that there is involvement of many departments—not just infrastructure, but even departments related with skills and livelihoods. In this way, they are taking all the ministries who want to do development in wetlands and ecotourism,” he shared. Another suggestion, Verma said, was of joint participation in events. “It was mentioned that there can

be a taskforce at the state level to fast-track the issues. Another suggestion was to sensitise every department about the importance and value of tourism and the peculiar issues that tourism has. There is a need to create awareness on all this, and based on that we should design a programme where all stakeholders can be sensitised because this convergence is very important aspect, but achieving it is not easy. The suggestion was for continuous education and sensitisation.”

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

He said that the objective was that if we can document with clarity what the destinations need, and which ministry can offer what, everyone will have their role clear. “Communities are very important

for the projects and plans that we make. Every ministry needs to keep community event,” he said.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Another issue that was highlighted was capacity development for guides. “In Arth Ganga, they have used the ashrams at Ganga to develop spiritual tourism. In Arth Ganga, there are many components that are tourism relevant. They are making intangible and tangible heritage directories. Hence, MoT can use it and make good tourism products and experiences around it. We can use their support to promote the same,” suggested Verma.

INDUSTRY VIEW

“From industry, it was suggested that we need to have convergence from the regulatory side as well, whether it is from our hotels, restaurants and other tourism related businesses. What are the touchpoints of those businesses, will also have to be raised with different departments and different regulatory authorities. We need to give them ease of doing business and how the compliance burden can be reduced. Compliances should be there, but the process should be efficient, so that businesses do not have any problem,” he said. ➔

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Re-imagining Hospitality

Newly-elected President of FHRAI, **Sudesh Kumar Poddar** outlines his priorities for hospitality sector & says hospitality sector is all set to boom banking on India's G20 Presidency & other national & international events.



Nisha Verma

In his new role as President, FHRAI, Sudesh Poddar claims that the key area of focus will be to urge the government to have more MICE tourism on the lines of G20 events as well as national and international games in India. "Once such mega events happen in the country, the direct benefit goes to the transport and the hospitality industry. Recently, the 2023 Men's FIH Hockey World Cup happened in Bhubaneswar. All the hotels were full for almost 45 days and with the G20 meetings happening in the country, right from Arunachal Pradesh to Leh-Ladakh and Kashmir, and down to Kerala, all the hotels in small and big places are being benefitted. Thus, the government should focus more on MICE tourism, so that the hospitality sector gets its share of business," he suggested.

MANPOWER CHALLENGE

Poddar highlighted that the biggest challenge in the hospitality industry is shortage of manpower, which would be another focus for him. "To me, it appears that this shortage is due to the lower payscale in the hospitality industry. The people working



SUDESH KUMAR PODDAR
Director,
Manthan Bar & Restaurant &
Natraj Hotels & Resorts

Government should focus more on MICE tourism, so that hospitality sector gets its share of business



in the hospitality industry are skilled workers, just like lawyers, MBAs, engineers, among others. Skilled workers include chefs, captains, stewards, front office managers, among others as they all come from hotel management institutes. However, their pay is on the lower side. Hence, my focus would be urging the hotels and restaurants to increase ₹10–120 on a plate of food or drink and then increase

Under the PPP model, thousands of properties that are lying idle & not being utilized or under-utilized can be developed

the salary structure, so that people from other fields are keen to work in hospitality industry. Currently, there is an exodus from this industry and people are going to different industries, resulting in acute shortage of manpower,” he added.

HOSPITALITY FUTURE

Claiming that hotel rates have gone up and availability is an issue, he said, “Any tourism place in India today has acute dearth of hotels. As we are poised for a huge growth in the hospitality industry, we are trying to request more entrepreneurs to come into the hospitality industry and bring more hotels, homestays, guest houses and places of accommodation.”

POST-COVID OUTCOMES

Saying that the industry has changed drastically after COVID first hit the world, Poddar suggested, “The most important thing we have learnt is not to jump and go overboard in terms of money. During COVID, many industrialists or hoteliers who did not have big pockets, had to shut their businesses. We cannot repeat this mistake in future. Hence, our expenses should be limited as far as day-to-day running of the hotel is concerned. Also, we must look into our pockets and then go for expansion.”

JOURNEY

Sharing his journey in hospitality, Poddar said, “I started very early in this industry, with a nine-room hotel in Dibrugarh, Assam, which was a very small hotel. Now it is a recognized four-star hotel with 55 rooms. I have four restaurants in Kolkata, including the 70-year-old Chinese restaurant, Songhai. We are coming up with another four-star hotel in Kolkata.”

FOCUS ON NORTHEAST

Poddar says that Northeast is closest to his heart. “I was born and brought up in Dibrugarh in Assam and now I am based out of Kolkata.

All my businesses are in Northeast and Eastern India. The region has so much to offer for tourism and now with PM Modi’s focus for growth of tourism there, I am sure there will be a growth boom. Be it Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Kaziranga, Kolkata, Darjeeling or Sandakphu, Northeast is going to be the sought after destination for all the tourists in the country and abroad. Most importantly, it is still a virgin territory which needs to be explored,” he mentioned.

DEMANDS FROM GOVT.

On behalf of FHRAI, there are many demands from the government, and Poddar will be taking them forward. “We have been talking about industry status and infrastructure status for the hospitality industry. We are doing a lot about it and many states have already given infrastructure status to the hospitality industry. While these things will come eventually, for the hospitality industry to thrive and do well, people in huge numbers must visit the country. G20 Presidency is a gamechanger. Hotels in small places like in Arunachal Pradesh have been filled, which was never thought of, and such numbers cannot be brought in by individuals. All this can only be done by the government. Projects of such magnitude are needed for the country to grow its hospitality industry. This is my topmost priority and very soon we are meeting the Hon’ble Tourism Minister also for the same agenda. We will ask the government to continue doing this,” he shared.

SPORTS TOURISM

Poddar believes that sports tourism is one of the major tourism growth engines for any country. “The recent hockey matches in Odisha were successful. There are many Tier-II cities such as Guwahati, Indore, Jaipur, among others, which have stadiums and tournaments can happen there. There is no dearth of space, and only some renovation or upliftment is required. However, it is a gradual process. Once there is an event, it keeps improving and gets bigger. We cannot just build up huge infrastructure and then wait for people to come in,” he claimed.

PPP MODE

Speaking on the importance of Public Private Partnership (PPP), Poddar suggested, “There are thousands of properties with the government, which were either lying idle or not being run properly. The only option in such cases is PPP model. The investor or the entrepreneur does not need to invest in the land or the structure that comes from the government, but he must improvise, revamp, renovate or add on to that. Thus, his investment becomes lesser, and the property becomes a destination property. There are thousands of properties that are lying idle and not being utilized or under-utilized and under the PPP model, those can be developed very well.” →



G20 Presidency is a gamechanger. Hotels in small places like in Arunachal Pradesh have been filled, which was never thought of, and such numbers cannot be brought in by individuals. All this can only be done by the government. Projects of such magnitude are needed for the country to grow its hospitality industry.



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Hospitality sector in India will get major boost with 50 new tourist destinations announced by government as complete package of tourism, says **Puneet Chhatwal** in his recommendations after post-Budget webinar.



 HT Bureau

In his recommendations after the post-Budget webinar by Ministry of Tourism, Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, IHCL and President, Hotel Association of India (HAI) shared that as a company, they have created destinations such as Goa, Kerala or more recently Havelock in Andamans. He also commended the government for creating such destinations in the recent past. “A very good example recently of creating a destination would be that of Ekta Nagar in Kewadiya or Statue of Unity. I think doing 50 new destinations would be like building 50 new Ekta Nagars in the country,” Chhatwal observed.

He claimed that with all the potential India has, the six Ps of Planning, Place, People, Policy, Process and Promotion is very critical. “Under Planning, we must ensure seamless connectivity and transport options for all our destinations. We have also recently won the bid for building Lakshadweep and planning of connectivity and transport to Lakshadweep is as important or even more important

than just building the islands of Swahili and Kadmath. We must focus on enhancement of aviation capacity with 80 new airports expected in five years. We expect a huge positive development for the travel and tourism industry. Obviously the other ecosystem also needs to grow with MICE, F&B and other 360 degree attractions,” he said.

Secondly, Place is very important in choosing these destinations, he said. “We must however, in these places have an inclusive responsible and sustainable development. While everything is being rooted locally, I think responsible destination management would be the main area under Place,” he added.

Thirdly, he said it is the people. “We should ensure skilling and development of human capital and bring in schemes for reward and recognition as well as tie-up with global partners to take skilling to the next level. Today, we have announced our 17th skilling centre, which we have built. The last one being in Lucknow and recent one in Jamshedpur. On skilling, we have committed to skill hundred thousand people by 2030, of which 25,000 must be women,” he claimed.

“



PUNEET CHHATWAL
MD & CEO,
IHCL

Under Planning, we must ensure seamless connectivity and transport options for all our destinations

”



“On Policy, we must make requisite policy intervention including tourism. With your support, we have tried very hard for the infrastructure status and industry status in many states. We have succeeded with the industry status, but we still have a long way to go in getting full infrastructure status at the central level,” he pointed out.

Fifth being Process, Chhatwal commented that there is still need to streamline processes to enhance ease of doing business, ease of travel, visa, immigration and customs and focus on the national digital tourism mission as well as tourism MSMEs.

Finally for Promotion, he said, “We must promote key tourism teams, which we had always outlined in the past and also promoting India as a destination internationally. There has been a lot of discussion on that issue in how that should be done. Obviously, this year we will get a lot of assistance in showcasing India through the G20 events, but we need to have a mid-term and a long-term view on this,” he advocated. ➔

Fulfilling demands of domestic travellers



Following travel boom in India post-COVID, hotels are constantly adjusting to needs of domestic travellers, avers Nirav Akshay Oza.

India's hospitality sector is undergoing a significant shift in travellers' preferences, as more people opting for domestic travel due to COVID's impact on international journeys. As a result, hotels are adapting to cater to the evolving needs of domestic travellers. The Indian Tourism Statistics 2023 report reveals that domestic visitors constituted about 87 per cent of all tourists in India in 2022, a trend expected to continue in 2023. The report also estimated around 2.4 billion domestic tourists in 2022, marking a 27 per cent increase from the previous year. Factors such as rising discretionary income and a growing middle class have made travel more accessible, fuelling this surge in domestic travel, the report suggested.

To accommodate the increase in domestic travellers, India's hotel industry has made several adjustments. A recent HVS ANAROCK report projects the Indian hotel market to grow at a CAGR of 10.8 per cent between 2023 and 2027. In 2022, Indian hotels experienced an overall occupancy rate of around 55 per cent, a significant improvement from the previous year's 37 per cent. The average room rate for hotels in India was approximately ₹6,500 in 2022, with a predicted CAGR of 2.7 per cent from 2023 to 2027. To cater to the growing number of domestic travellers, hotels in India are employing various strategies, such as:

- **Affordable accommodation:** Budget hotels have gained popularity among millennials seeking authentic experiences over luxurious amenities. These hotels provide essential services such as Wi-Fi, air conditioning, and toiletries, as well as breakfast and other meals. By offering clean rooms, friendly ser-

vice, and convenient locations, many budget hotels successfully deliver a comfortable and enjoyable stay for guests.

- **Hygienic and safe accommodation:** COVID has heightened travellers' awareness of hygiene and safety. Hotels have implemented stringent safety protocols and hygiene standards to ensure guests' well-being. Measures include regular cleaning and sanitization of rooms and public areas, contactless check-

in and check-out, temperature checks, and increased availability of hand sanitizers and other disinfectants.

- **Local experiences:** Domestic travellers increasingly seek unique experiences that showcase local culture and traditions. To meet this demand, hotels offer activities such as culinary tours, heritage walks, and cultural shows. These immersive experiences provide travellers with a deeper understanding of the places they visit, making their trips more memorable.

- **Digital transformation:** COVID has accelerated the adoption of digital technology in the hotel industry. Enhancing guest experience and safety, hotels have introduced digital solutions such as contactless check-in and check-out, digital menus, and mobile payments. These technologies offer guests greater convenience and flexibility while streamlining hotel operations and reducing costs.

- **Wellness and sustainability:** With growing emphasis on health and sustainability, hotels invest in facilities and services that promote well-being and environmental responsibility. This includes fitness centres, spas, healthy dining options, and eco-friendly practices such as water and energy conservation, waste reduction, and locally sourced materials.

In conclusion, India's hotel industry is evolving to meet the needs of domestic travellers. As domestic travel continues to drive the growth of the hotel sector in India in 2023 and beyond, hotels that provide affordable, safe, and unique experiences will thrive in this new era. →



NIRAV AKSHAY OZA
CEO
Efcee Hotels

Recent HVS ANAROCK report projects Indian hotel market to grow at CAGR of 10.8 per cent between 2023 and 2027





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Future forward

Driving growth and innovation, Mittal International showcases its stellar line up of tech-powered products, including combi steamer ovens, commercial blenders & ice cream & shake machines at AAHAR 2023.

It is a name synonymous with product excellence. Recognized as pioneer in F&B products, Mittal International is one of the leading importers of kitchen & refrigeration equipments for hotels and other institutions catering to the needs of the hospitality industry in the country. With its state-of-the-art experience centre in Noida, the brand has been driving new trends and ideas for decades. A glimpse of its product innovation was seen at AAHAR 2023 where the brand left no stone unturned to awe and inspire visitors with its tech-driven business strategy and product range. “We have good number of products that cater to the demands of domestic as well as international hotel chains. Interestingly, our products are not just used and appreciated by big hotels but also restaurant chains, coffee shops and bakery counters,” said **Rajendra Mittal**, Partner, Mittal International.

Delivering quality equipment and elevating customer experience, excellence has been a constant endeavour of the brand. Under its umbrella, it offers a wide range of services such as consultation, kitchen planning & design, project management installation and dependable after sales service. “We have been in the business for over 42 years. We are the first ones to introduce imported products to hotels here,” he

added. Talking about the new trends, he highlights the surge in quick service restaurants. “The La-Cimbali coffee machine is one of our iconic products. The combi steamer ovens, gas & wood fired oven, commercial blenders and ice cream & shake machines are also a few of our hot selling products,” he said as the brand displayed its latest range of products at the show.

Crediting the hospitality industry for a phenomenal recovery in the past two years, he said, “The hospitality business is back on track. Room occupancy has gone up and it has encouraged the industry for further expansion. It is encouraging to see how domestic and international hotels are aiming to expand their portfolio in the country. To achieve this vision, they are looking for premium suppliers that offer them the best combination of advanced products and excellent value-added services.” Over the years, AAHAR has become a significant platform for the brand to forge new associations and strengthen existing ones as this show is religiously attended by scores of hoteliers, restaurateurs, caterers, and distributors from all over the world. “Every year, AAHAR brings buyers and exhibitors from all around the world under one roof for an invigorating exchange of ideas that eventually shape the future of the hospitality industry,” he concluded. →



RAJENDRA MITTAL
Partner,
Mittal International

We have good number of products that cater to demands of domestic as well as international hotel chains





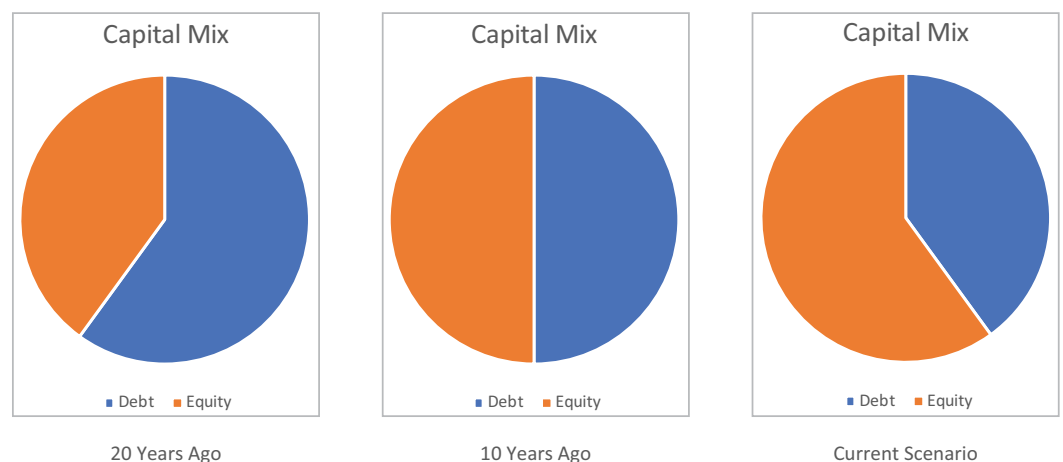
Constructing or purchasing hotel involves key financial aspects, including right capital mix of debt & equity which should be duly considered by stakeholders, writes **Nikhil Shah**.

Dreaming of building or buying your own hotel? It is not just about location and design, but also about finding the perfect capital mix to make your investment thrive in the long run. Hotel property financing is a delicate dance of equity and debt and getting the right blend can be the key to success.

Imagine this: You have found the perfect piece of land for your hotel, with the potential for breathtaking views or a prime location outside the hustle and bustle of the city. You have crunched the numbers and have a vision of the type of hotel you want to create—a budget-friendly economy option, a cozy mid-scale getaway, a luxurious upscale experience, or even a top-tier luxury resort. But now comes the challenge of financing your dream.

Hotel debt can be a double-edged sword. A well-thought-out capital mix can give you the power to expand your portfolio and unlock the potential of multiple properties. But if you are not careful, the wrong cycle can

lead to a double dip in equity, leaving you struggling to fund interest and principal repayments. The below diagram displays the ideal move of capital over the years to have sustainable debt:



If available equity is significantly below the above-mentioned levels, it is recommended to refrain from purchasing and building a hotel. The cost of funds varies from the institution and is currently in the following range:

- Bank: 9 per cent to 10.5 per cent
- NBFC: 11 per cent to 15 per cent
- Credit funds: 18 per cent to 25 per cent

KEY ASPECTS

LAND COST

One of the critical factors to consider is the cost of land. Ideally, the land cost should be at most a 1:1 ratio of the overall development cost for hotels located outside main areas or metros. In non-metro or at leisure locations, land cost can be curtailed to 20–30 per cent of the total development cost. So, it is important to carefully evaluate the land cost and its impact on your overall capital mix.

COST PER ROOM

Another key factor to keep in mind is the cost per room for different types of hotels, ranging from budget to luxury. Here is the typical range of cost of hotel rooms:

Type	Cost per room in lakhs (excluding land)
Budget/Economy	25 to 40
Midscale	45 to 65
Upscale/Upper Upscale	70 to 100
Luxury	125 plus

TIME EFFICIENCY

If you are constructing a new hotel, time is of the essence. Delays in construction can accumulate interest during the construction phase, making the project financially unviable and potentially wiping out the existing owner’s equity. It is crucial to stick to your construction schedule and ensure timely completion to avoid these pitfalls.

LOAN REPAYMENT

Another challenge with hotel debt is the loan repayment obligations. Lenders typically provide loans for 10 to 11 years, but for greenfield projects, it can take 3 to 4 years just for construction and another four years to stabilize occupancy. This means that in the initial years, the repayment obligations can be quite challenging.

Moreover, higher interest rates during the near-term maturity of hotel loans can intensify the consequences of debt service coverage ratio (DSCR) requirements. A hotel that



NIKHIL SHAH
 Director, Hospitality, Capital Markets and Investment Services, Colliers India

Hotel property financing is delicate dance of equity & debt. Getting right blend can be key to success



may have maintained a healthy DSCR of 1.5x or higher during profitable times can face a higher interest rate and potentially have a DSCR closer to 1.0x during a down cycle. This can compound the challenges of cash flow impairment, making it even more difficult to meet DSCR requirements.

STRUCTURING & RESTRUCTURING

Structuring the hotel debt is an important element—not only the hotel should have a tenure of more than 10 years or more but also the principal payment should be ballooning. There are different financing options available depending on the stage of the hotel project. It is also essential to remodel/restructure the bank debt once the hotel is operational, gradually moving to a sustainable interest level.

Let us look at financing options at various stages.

GREENFIELD

For developing a greenfield hotel, a bank is the best source of financing. These lenders tend to cap their lending at 60 per cent LTV, depending on the borrower’s profile and other businesses/ho-

tels they have, and usually fund 5x to 6x, the EBIDTA of another operating cash flow.

Bank funds for greenfield construction are usually available to select owners (borrowers) who have other business sectors or prior hotel holdings. Even existing hotel owners can get bank funds based on the existing cash flows.

BROWNFIELD

The development of a half-built hotel is a very cost-efficient option for hotel owners because it can be less expensive than building a new hotel from the ground up and takes a shorter time to achieve cash flows. Renovation/redevelopment loans can generally be obtained from banks or NBFCs. They usually provide 6x the projected EBIDTA.

OPERATING

The acquisition can be done via banks and NBFCs and special situation/credit funds. Credit funds generally come for a four-year period, and it is advisable to give them an exit within two years to maximize the returns for the acquired property. Credit funds usually fund 4x the EBITDA multiple.

NBFCs usually are aggressive and consider projects which banks are unwilling to fund. There are some institutions that fund under construction hotel assets based on the project itself without any additional cash flow. However, the owner is required to bring in a larger portion of the equity upfront before disbursement.

But do not despair! Despite the challenges, there are still plenty of lenders willing to provide hotel financing, even in the post-COVID situation. With the right capital mix and careful planning, you can unlock the secrets to successful hotel financing and bring your dream hotel to life.

So, if you are an investor, developer, buyer, or owner seeking hotel financing, remember that it is not just about the location and design, but also about finding the right capital mix. It is an art that can make your hotel investment thrive in the long run. →



Augmenting growth

Hospitality businesses can leverage AI technologies to great effect in various tasks, such as housekeeping, maintenance, reception, transportation, and room service, writes **Reza Etemad-Sajadi**.

Many companies are undergoing digital transformation and automation to reduce costs, create a unique customer experience, and improve productivity. The challenge is to strike a win-win balance, where the company reduces its costs, adapts the activities of its employees, and the customer feels the added value of using this technology. The societal impact of this transformation is likely to be significant, and several ethical questions will be at the heart of discussions in this field.

In just a few months, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a trending topic since the introduction of ChatGPT and several other AI tools. AI technologies can replicate human abilities, such as learning and problem-solving, to enhance guest experiences, optimize operations, and increase revenue. With AI, hotels can automate and optimize various tasks, such as maintenance, housekeeping, transportation, reception, and room service. This leads to efficiency and cost reduction, as well as personalized guest experiences, data-driven decision-making, and automated repetitive tasks. Pepper, a robot from Soft Bank Robotics, is an example of how AI can improve a hotel's day-to-day operations by interacting with guests, assisting with check-ins and check-outs, and completing other tasks. AI technologies can enhance the guest experience

at every phase of their journey, from purchasing to staying to post-trip chatbots that simulate human conversations through text or voice interactions, providing personalized recommendations.



REZA ETEMAD-SAJADI
Associate Professor,
Marketing, EHL

With AI, hotels can automate and optimize tasks such as maintenance, housekeeping, and room service



The use of AI will become a fundamental aspect of daily business operations. However, the industry needs to adapt its workforce to these new practices. Emotional intelligence, which includes managing one's own and others' emotions, remains the most crucial skill set for hospitality employees. Even though new technologies are entering the industry, employees can display better empathy and kindness than any machine built to date through their soft skills, allowing them to adapt to various situations without requiring training. However, employees with high emotional intelligence also need to be tech-savvy to monitor all AI tools implemented in the industry.

The challenge is to ensure that companies integrate AI in a fair and equitable manner. There are six ethical dimensions to consider: replacement, privacy and data protection, responsibility, trust and security, social presence and degree of humanization, and autonomy.

The EHL Hospitality Business School has been studying the potential applications and implications of AI in the hospitality industry for several years. We need to teach both hard and soft skills to prepare future employees with the necessary expertise to utilize, monitor, and evaluate technology applications in the industry. As a result, the workforce will experience a significant shift, requiring managers to provide thorough training to their current staff. →

Year-round weddings drive biz



Top wedding planners reveal trends that wedding industry is going to witness in 2023 & reckon off-season weddings, personalisation décor will take lead in big fat Indian weddings.



Lipla Negi

Food has always been the centerpiece of the big fat Indian wedding. It is often used as a benchmark for a memorable wedding and it continues to remain so but with an interesting twist. Explained **Rajiv Jain**, MD & Founder, Raashi Entertainment, "It is no more about a quick grab and go lunch or dinner at wedding. It is now a well-thought curated experience for the guests and family." According to him, sit-down dinners are finding more favour among clients. "A whole restaurant set-up is now being created at weddings as people are willing to spend up to five hours at the lunch or dinner table celebrating their big day. They go with a minimum five-seven course meal where food has to be unique and unforgettable," he stated. This food fetish is not just limited to weddings! The anniversary celebrations are also thinking big when it comes to food. "At my own wedding anniversary celebration recently, we had curated an exquisite avocado station for our guests among many other cuisines," he shared.

BIG IS BACK

"Small and intimate is out, big fat is in! With COVID mostly behind us now, we are seeing a

surge in larger gathering sizes and demand for more elaborate wedding celebrations. This includes requests for more luxury wedding venues, elaborate food and beverage requirements, wedding decor and more meticulously detailed weddings," said **Nanki Chawla**, Wedding Planner, Nanki Chawla Events. Echoing similar sentiments, Jain said, "The whole experience needs to be mega magnificent nowadays. From budgets to expectations, big rules the checklist for a grand wedding celebration."

PERSONALISATION

The imprint of bride and groom on every aspect of their wedding celebration is the key focus nowadays and this is achieved with the help of personalisation. "A big trend here is couple personalised theme-based stationery, which includes entire story-based invites. An element which ties the couple together, their common interest or something they both relate to. Even hangover kits are personalised," revealed **Minnat Lalpuria**, Founder & MD, 7Vachan. Besides stationary, the décor has to be personalised. "Couples prefer personalisation of various elements at functions such as event furniture, table scapes, bar designs, among others," agreed Chawla.

OFF-SEASON WEDDING

"Off-season weddings or non saaya weddings are catching up with the new generation. One of the key advantages of picking an off-season wedding date is attractive discounts at desired venues (resorts/hotels). The costs are more competitive on non saaya dates. Availability of hotels, photographers, planners, decorators, among others is less of a challenge and therefore allows you the flexibility of going with who you want instead of having to settle for someone or someplace due to non-availability," stated **Arpita Gandhi**, Director & Co-founder, Weddingline. Off-season offers a better scope of negotiation, agreed Lalpuria, "We are in a



RAJIV JAIN
MD & Founder,
Raashi Entertainment

People are spending up to 5 hours at lunch or dinner table celebrating their big day



demand supply game when it comes to pricing. So, the off season is beneficial, even for flight tickets. The only thing you are probably compromising is on the weather, which you can compensate for by choosing a different destination," said Lalpuria. Moreover, a discounted rate at hotels makes it an attractive option. "City hotels tend to charge a 15 to 20 per cent premium during the wedding season. The lower spend at the hotel, gives the couple the additional monetary benefit which could be used towards their honeymoon travel or setting up their new home," stated **Nihal Kurian**, Director, Sales and Marketing, Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel. →

Top Wedding Destinations

- Domestic
- Jaisalmer
- Jodhpur
- Udaipur
- Mussoorie
- Darjeeling
- Dehradun
- Goa
- Mamallapuram
- Kovalam
- International
- Oman
- Qatar
- Bahrain
- Vietnam
- Portugal
- Turkey
- Thailand
- Ras Al Khaimah
- Abu Dhabi



Embracing diversity & inclusivity

Hospitality heads harp upon leveraging of diverse workforce in hospitality businesses & what steps be employed to facilitate inclusive environments in today's challenging world.



HT Bureau



MANISH DAYYA
General Manager,
Sofitel Mumbai BKC

Diversity and Inclusivity (D&I) are essential values in the hospitality industry. As a General Manager, I believe it is our responsibility to create a culture of inclusivity where guests and ambassadors feel valued. We take accountability for upholding our high standards of hospitality and ensuring that everyone who walks through our doors feels welcomed. The hospitality industry is one of the most diverse industries, with guests from all over the world. It is in our DNA to embrace this diversity and create an environment where everyone feels respected and appreciated. This includes actively recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce to bring a variety of perspectives, experiences and ideas to the table. At Sofitel Mumbai BKC, we understand that diversity and inclusivity go beyond just checking boxes. It is a continual effort through our ongoing training and development to educate ourselves, our ambassadors, and our guests to ensure that we create an

inclusive environment and understand the importance of D&I. We have a wonderful initiative called RiiSE that symbolizes a woman and a man sharing the same ambition for a more inclusive workplace. RiiSE means raising yourself up; going beyond equality towards equity; being and becoming better; being fulfilled and developing as an individual, but also, and above all, collectively. These powerful concepts reflect the values dear to our Group and create a network motivated to inspire women and men within Accor, a driver to combat stereotypes and achieve gender equality, and a solidarity and mutual support network where we all RiiSE to new heights together. In summary, D&I are not just buzzwords in the hospitality industry; they are critical values that we strive to uphold every day. By embracing diversity and promoting inclusivity, we can create a better experience for all our guests and a comfortable workspace for all our ambassadors, whom we affectionately call Heartists.

It is in our DNA to embrace diversity & create environment where everyone feels respected & appreciated



SANJAY GUPTA
General Manager, Sheraton
Grand Bengaluru Whitefield
Hotel

Diversity in the hospitality domain means not just recognizing and accepting differences but also valuing them in everyone. An increased focus on diversity is most certain to bring more benefits and opportunities to every workplace. In our field, however, the importance of diversity is especially pronounced.

In hotels, success and recognition of a brand is largely dependent upon employee-client interactions. Tourists come from all walks of life and our innate ability to connect with people of different age groups, genders, sexual orientations, disabilities, socio-economic statuses and belief systems help us make a foreign person feel welcomed to our country and our establishment.

Essentially, diversity in the hospitality industry means not just recognizing differences but valuing them and understanding how these differences may impact individual performances. At Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center, both associates and clients come from unique background, cultural history and skillset—

appreciating each of these aspects help foster efficient teamwork, collaborate and communicate effectively. At the same time, our clients are able to enjoy inclusive services, individual to every want and need.

The cultural paradigm is shifting, as travelling becomes easier and more accessible, low-cost airlines and a diverse range of hotel offerings—it is the responsibility of every hotelier to be sensitive to cultural differences when dealing with guests from unique diverse backgrounds.

In the end, I just have to say diversity and inclusivity when handled right can be one of the greatest strengths in the hospitality industry that can create a culturally rich and healthy environment. This also unravels a golden chance to uniquely innovate, offer bespoke experiences and not to forget, it positions the brand a remarkable notch above the competition. I swear by a strong school of thought that diverse teams encourage healthier workplace cultures and better convergence of ideas.

Diversity is not just recognizing differences but valuing them & understanding how these differences may impact individual performances



MEHUL SHARMA
Founder & CEO, Signum
Hotels & Resorts

Diversity and inclusivity (D&I) in hospitality can lead to a more welcoming and positive environment for both employees and customers. It also allows for a wider range of perspectives and ideas, leading to innovation and growth within the industry. This can be achieved by implementing training programmes for employees to understand and respect different cultures and backgrounds, as well as actively seeking out diverse candidates for hiring and leadership positions. Additionally, creating a welcoming environment for all guests through language accessibility, menu options and accommodations can also promote inclusivity in the hospitality industry.

Since it is founded on a complicated structure of multiple enterprises and a broad group of employees and clientele from various backgrounds, the hotel sector is a uniquely diverse pitch. While this may provide some issues, it also presents an enormous opportunity to create a more effective, creative and inventive workplace that serves all consumers. Making cultural diversity a priority and incorporating it into company culture can yield significant benefits. One can learn more about cul-

tural diversity and how to create and manage a diverse workforce effectively.

In essence, diversity at Signum Hotels and Resorts not only identifies but also values differences and understands how these variations may affect the individual experience. Our employees and customers each have their background, set of experiences and cultural heritage. Understanding this will help to create stronger cooperation, allowing staff to communicate and collaborate more successfully. It will also result in higher job satisfaction, which will increase our company's turnover and produce loyal and productive employees. At the same time, clients will be able to take advantage of all-inclusive services that cater to their specific wants and needs.

Businesses frequently employ for cultural fit, or persons who will fit in with the current team. This becomes a problem when our team consists of people who all appear and act the same way. Our guests are diverse, and so should our workforce. It is time to reconsider hiring for fit and look for people that have new and different experiences than us and the rest of our team. ➔

Making cultural diversity priority & incorporating it into company culture can yield significant benefits

Exchanging ideas

Marriott International recently held its annual flagship event, The Exchange - India roadshow & brought together Marriott's global representatives to share ideas and information on one platform.



Celebrating talent

IHM Pusa marks 58th Annual Day with much fanfare & sees inspiring turnout of dignitaries, alumni, among others along with stellar performances from students thereby garnering accolades from audiences.



Showcasing lavishness

Dusit International presented its portfolio of hotels and resorts at India Roadshow 2023. Thai hospitality company showcased its worldwide properties, catering to weddings, honeymoons, business, and leisure segment.



Navigating opportunities

Fifth edition of TrèS 2023 featured 60 of region's most exceptional boutique hotels, retreats, lodges, and camps, and innovative travel concepts in luxury & mindful tourism segment.





◀ SANDEEP SINGH

Vice President, Sales,
Brij Hotels

With over 25 years of experience in the luxury hospitality industry, Sandeep Singh is a seasoned professional with extensive knowledge of the market. Prior to joining Brij Hotels as Vice President, Sales, Singh served as Director, Sales and Marketing for the Gujarat region at The Leela Palace Hotels and Resorts.



◀ SANJAY GUPTA

General Manager,
Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield
Hotel & Convention Center

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center has appointed Sanjay Gupta as their new General Manager. A seasoned hospitality professional with a career spanning over two decades, Gupta has worked with brands such as Hilton, Hyatt and Oberoi Hotels and Resorts.

CHANDAN SHARMA ▶

Director, Sales,
JW Marriott Kolkata

Chandan Sharma has been appointed as Director, Sales at JW Marriott Kolkata. In this current role, Sharma will be planning and implementing the hotel's sales strategy, maximizing revenues, exploring new business opportunities, setting annual budgets, and putting together strategies amongst other duties.



GAGAN KATYAL ▶

Vice President,
Sales & Strategy,
Ananta Hotels and Resorts

Gagan Katyal has been elevated to the position of Vice President, Sales & Strategy, Ananta Hotels and Resorts. He is a seasoned hotelier who applied a well-crafted strategy to lead the resorts to achieving 30 per cent over budget. Under his stewardship, Ananta Ajabgarh is being planned.



◀ SANDIPAN BOSE

General Manager,
Ekaaya Udaipur

Bringing along over two decades of experience of working in hospitality sector, Sandipan Bose will lead the operations at Ekaaya Udaipur and develop and strengthen the brand. He joined ITC Maurya in 2000 and since has worked in different roles at various hospitality brands across India.



◀ GAURAV TOKAS

Rooms Division Manager,
Kochi Marriott

Gaurav Tokas brings multiple skills and experience to ensure guest and employee satisfaction, as well as maintain the quality standards of the Rooms department. As Rooms Division Manager, Kochi Marriott, he will be responsible for financial management within the department.

SHARAD DATTA ▶

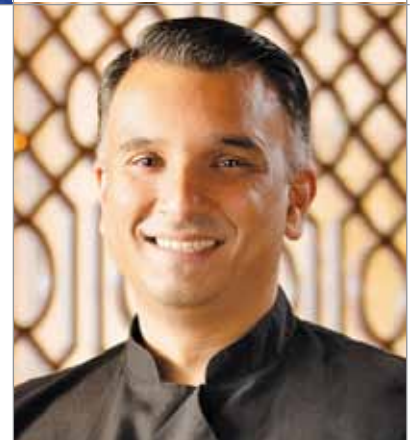
General Manager,
JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity
JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity has announced Sharad Datta as its new General Manager. With more than two decades of experience as a hospitality professional with brands such as Marriott, Hyatt and Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, Dutta is a seasoned leader who brings a wealth of expertise to the new role.



NISHESH SETH ▶

Executive Chef,
Shangri-La Bengaluru

With over fifteen years of experience working in some of the luxury hotels in the country, Chef Nishesh Seth brings table creativity and exemplary culinary skills. As Executive Chef, Shangri-La Bengaluru, he will be overseeing dining experiences for guests with his creative new concepts and use of locally sourced quality produce.



◀ REMIL RAVEENDRAN

Manager, Food & Beverage,
Holiday Inn Cochin

Remil Raveendran has joined as Manager, Food & Beverage, Holiday Inn Cochin. Raveendran is a passionate hotelier having wealth of experience in hospitality industry with career spanning over 17 years. Raveendran has a proven track record of driving revenue growth and profitability in his previous roles.



◀ PANKAJ BISHT

Executive Assistant Manager, F&B,
Hyatt Regency Danang Resort & Spa

Pankaj Bisht has been appointed as new Executive Assistant Manager, Food & Beverage, Hyatt Regency Danang Resort & Spa. A talented hospitality expert, Pankaj brings over 23 years of experience. Having kickstarted his career in 1999, Bisht honed his skills in the kitchens of leading hotels including Burj Al Arab in Dubai.



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