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STREET NEWS



8 Industry bids farewell to Arvind Singh

Arvind Singh retired after a tenure of over two years, describing his experience as challenging and captivating.



12 Growing investor confidence in Tier II & III cities

Amruda Nair, Founder, Araiya Hotels & Resorts takes us through her journey of creating young Indian, female-founded hotel brand that blends finest international practices with local expertise.



16 Contracting: Boosting India's hotel industry

India's hotel industry has seen remarkable revival with RevPAR recovering to pre-COVID levels. This has led to paradigm shift in contracting models, writes Nikhil Shah.



20 Unfilled opportunities in hospitality colleges

Hotel management graduates are avoiding hospitality sector. To address this issue, govt should take remedial measures such as modernizing facilities in existing hospitality institutes, among others.

26 Hotels sizzle with success Summer season drives growth

There is growing feeling of excitement among Indian tourists as they take advantage of opportunity to explore country during current summer season.

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MOVING FORWARD STEADILY

Global hotel chains continue to witness substantial growth. Hospitality brands are launching fresh brands and implementing sustainable practices.

IHG Hotels & Resorts opens two new hotels in British Columbia, Canada



IHG Hotels & Resorts (IHG) has announced the opening of two new hotels in British Columbia, Holiday Inn Express & Suites Courtenay and Comox and Holiday Inn Victoria, offering modern accommodations with all the amenities to meet the needs of today's traveller to those traveling to Comox Valley and Victoria on Vancouver Island.

Marriott plans to launch an affordable midscale brand

Marriott International is planning to further expand in the affordable midscale lodging segment, following its recent entry into the segment with City Express by Marriott in Latin America. The midscale extended stay brand is intended to deliver reasonably priced modern comfort for guests seeking longer stay accommodations in the US and Canada. "Marriott has long believed in having the right accommodations in compelling destinations at the right price point. Whether our guests are travelling for business, leisure or a mix of both, our portfolio of 31 brands offers something for everyone. As consumers look for new, flexible accommodation solutions, we are thrilled to announce our plans to launch an affordable midscale extended stay offering to meet the needs of guests seeking long-term comforts at a moderate price point," said **Anthony Capuano**, President and CEO, Marriott International.



Hyatt Regency Kotor Bay Resort comes up in Montenegro

Hyatt Hotels has announced the first phase of opening for Hyatt Regency Kotor Bay Resort, which will offer guests a premium experience in Montenegro's Kotor Bay. The property will be the first Hyatt hotel in Montenegro, inviting both domestic and international travellers to embark on an authentic immersion of the destination. For enhanced wellbeing, guests of the resort will have access to a fitness centre, a dedicated space for yoga and expansive spa facilities.

Hilton signs franchise agreement to open Keight Hotel Opatija

Hilton has announced the signing of a franchise agreement with Katarina Line d.o.o. to open Keight Hotel Opatija, Curio Collection by Hilton. Expected to open in 2024, the hotel will be Curio Collection by Hilton's first property in Croatia and the latest in a series of openings and signings of hotels in resort locations under the brand in Europe. The hotel will be operated by Zagreb City Hotels d.o.o.



First trademark collection hotel in Türkiye by Wyndham



Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has opened 68-room Istanbul New Airport Hotel, its first trademark collection by Wyndham hotel in Türkiye. The hotel adds to Wyndham's standing as the largest international hotel company in Türkiye with more than 95 hotels open and operating and more than 20 under development. The brand caters to independently minded owners eager to leverage Wyndham's industry-leading scale alongside its world-class marketing, technology and distribution capabilities.



Minor Hotels to develop hotel projects in Saudi Arabia

Minor Hotels has announced the signing of a MoU with Saudi Arabia's Tourism Development Fund to jointly develop and operate high-quality hospitality and lifestyle projects focused on mountain resorts, wellness resorts and urban hotels within the Kingdom. The establishment of a strategic partnership between the two parties in exclusive regions in Saudi Arabia, will see the development of multiple hospitality projects over the next couple of years.

Six Senses Amaala to commence operations in Saudi Arabia

Six Senses Amaala is all set to open doors in Saudi Arabia. The 64 rooms, six suites, 30 villas, and 25 branded residences are inspired by the region's traditional coastal villages, which seamlessly integrate with the naturally occurring topography and use locally sourced materials. "Six Senses Amaala is part of a holistic hub for the arts, a leading diving destination, an extension of the Mediterranean yachting corridors, and an integrated wellness community, all of which we hope inspires guests to embark on transformative personal journeys," said **Neil Jacobs**, CEO, Six Senses.



Banyan Tree Krabi unveils luxurious longtail boat

Banyan Tree Krabi, has unveiled a luxurious new longtail boat, manned and ready for those who seek serenity upon a sapphire sea. The White Pearl was built by local craftsmen using materials sourced from around Krabi Province, and with specific modifications to enhance luxury and comfort on board. The boat will cater to day trips and island hopping, not only for guests at Banyan Tree Krabi but for private bookings. The White Pearl is ideal for a romantic getaway for two but can take up to eight passengers.

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ADVANCING SWIFTLY

The Indian hotel industry continues its successful run by registering steady rise in both average room rates and occupancy rates thereby demonstrating substantial potential.

The Fern Hotels & Resorts opens 100th property



The Fern Shelter Resort in Palghar, Maharashtra, which will be the company's 100th hotel, has announced its grand opening. Nestled amidst serene surroundings, the hotel has 81 tastefully appointed rooms that offer a blend of modern amenities and elegant décor. **Suhail Kannampilly**, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, expressed his utmost pride and joy as the brand reached this momentous milestone with the launch of its 100th hotel.

Holiday Inn Katra Vaishno Devi opens doors

IHG Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of Holiday Inn Katra Vaishno Devi in Jammu & Kashmir. Featuring 98 well-appointed modern, spacious rooms and suites with mesmerizing views of the tropical mountainous foliage,



the hotel is in the heart of Jammu—Katra and is 90 meters from Katra railway station and 60 minutes' drive to Jammu Airport. Commenting on the announcement, **Ritesh Sharma**, General Manager, Holiday Inn Katra Vaishno Devi said, "We are delighted to announce the opening of Holiday Inn Katra Vaishno Devi. Katra is a hotspot pilgrimage centre due to the presence of the Vaishno Devi shrine."



Sayaji Hotels expands its footprint in Maharashtra

Sayaji Hotels has opened its new property, Effotel Sarola in Pune. Centrally located on the Pune-Bangalore highway, the hotel is well-connected to prominent commercial and industrial zones including the Sarola, Shiwal, Khandala and Faltan MIDC. Announcing the launch, **Jameel Sayed**, Director, Business Development, Sayaji Hotels said, "We are delighted to expand our presence in Maharashtra with the launch of Effotel Sarola, our sixth property in the State."

Lemon Tree Hotels adds two new hotels



Lemon Tree Hotels has announced the opening of two of its latest hotels—Lemon Tree Hotel, Agra and Lemon Tree Hotel, Bhopal. With these two launches, the company makes its debut in both the cities and also adds more than 100 rooms to its inventory. Lemon Tree Hotel, Agra will open in two phases where 30 well-appointed rooms and suites are opening and 30 will open soon after. These will be complemented by a Citrus Café and two banquet halls. Located in the heart of Agra, the hotel enjoys excellent connectivity to different parts of the city.

Apeejay Surendra Park Hotels rolls out new hotel

Apeejay Surendra Park Hotels has announced the launch of its new hotel—Zone by The Park Pathankot. Strategically located on the banks of Chakki River, the hotel is well connected to all the



key places of city and just three km drive from the Pathankot Cantt railway station. Speaking on the launch, **Vikas Ahluwalia**, General Manager and National Head, Zone by The Park Hotels said, "We are extremely delighted to launch Zone by The Park in Pathankot for price-conscious design-conscious travellers. This hotel will be one stop for guests who want to hold official or social gathering or events in the city."

IHCL expands its presence in Assam

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has announced the signing of a Vivanta-branded hotel in Guwahati, Assam. The greenfield project is slated to open by 2026. **Suma Venkatesh**, Executive Vice President, Real Estate & Development, IHCL, said, "Vivanta Guwahati will be IHCL's fourth hotel in Guwahati. This signing reinforces our commitment to the region. The city, also known as the gateway to the North-East is a major hub for economic activities as well as tourism. We are delighted to partner with Asian Medical and Research." The 150-key hotel is strategically situated in close proximity to important commercial centres and to Dispur, the capital of Assam.



Royal Orchid Hotels reports income of ₹48.67 cr in Q4 FY 22-23

Royal Orchid Hotels has announced its financial results for the quarter and period ending on 31 March 2023. The hotel chain reported standalone income at 48.67 cr in Q4 FY 22-23 and consolidated income at 76.54 cr in Q4. **Chander K Baljee**, Chairman & MD, Royal Orchid Hotels expressed, "This year has been significant for us in multiple aspects—commemorating our 50 years in the industry, expanding internationally, and sustaining business success."

Radisson Hotel Group adds 11 new hotels in India

Radisson Hotel Group continues its ambitious growth and development plan in India with the signing of 11 new hotels across brands between January and April 2023. Located in key gateway cities and emerging destinations, these new hotels are present across Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Ujjain, Raipur, Sonamarg, Manali, Kerala, and Visakhapatnam. Commenting on the development, **Zubin Saxena**, Managing Director & Area Senior Vice President, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, said, "2023 marks a significant milestone for us at Radisson Hotel Group as we have successfully completed our 25-year journey in the Indian market."





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INDUSTRY BIDS FAREWELL TO ARVIND SINGH



Nisha Verma

Arvind Singh, on his last day in office at the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), described his tenure in tourism and aviation as “interesting and challenging.” He joined the Airports Authority of India as Chairman within a few months of India encountering the first wave of COVID.

“The majority of my tenure was focussed on how to battle COVID and get domestic aviation back on track, which we were able to do in 2020 itself. In January 2021, I shifted to MoT, and then came the delta wave

Majority of Singh’s tenure was focussed on how to battle COVID & get domestic aviation back on track

of COVID, which had a serious impact on both aviation and travel and tourism with widespread job losses, loss of revenue, and loss of business opportunities. There was a period of intense crisis and distress for a while, but luckily the tourism sector started bouncing back, especially domestic tourism. All major destinations are reporting very large footfalls, flights are full; and the roads and railway networks are being



Arvind Singh retired after a tenure of over two years, describing his experience as challenging and captivating.

fully utilized. Hotel accommodation is very difficult to get at popular tourism destinations because people are travelling in large numbers. That is a heartening situation, and because of all this, major companies and other businesses are reporting encouraging numbers and financial results every year,” he shared.

Tenure highlights

He said that India’s G20 Presidency was the major highlight of his tenure at MoT. “Organizing the three Tourism Working Group (TWG) meetings was a great experience as one had to really

plan a lot, work in close coordination with other ministries, the MEA, the G20 Secretariat, and the state governments where the meetings were organized. We got excellent responses from the government at Rann of Kutch and at Siliguri-Darjeeling, especially the last meeting at Srinagar because there were many challenges,” he said. Talking about other assignments, he said, “We could streamline ongoing schemes, push work on the National Tourism Policy a little bit further to take it up for industry consultations. We took it to the level of approval, and now it is at the final stage,” informed Singh. ➔

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NEW BENCHMARK FOR HOTEL INDUSTRY

Westin Hyderabad Hitec City, Hyderabad's first hotel operated solely by women, offers comprehensive wellness experiences aimed at empowering guests.



HT Bureau

Westin Hotels & Resorts has launched its second property, The Westin Hyderabad Hitec City. The hotel stands out for being the city's first all-women-managed hotel. The 168-key hotel, offers a holistic array of wellness experiences designed to empower guests to be the best version of themselves, regardless of their nature of travel. This hotel will run entirely on green energy produced from renewable resources to contribute to the development of a more sustainable future.

"We are thrilled to expand the brand's footprint in Hyderabad with the opening of The Westin Hyderabad Hitec City. This landmark opening marks the first all women-operated hotel within the city and heralds



Ranju Alex
Area Vice President,
South Asia, Marriott International



This landmark opening heralds a paradigm shift for the hospitality industry, breaking from conventional ways of operating

a paradigm shift for the hospitality industry, breaking from conventional ways of operating. Paired with the Westin brands signature programmes, adapted to the needs of the modern traveller, the hotel is set to deliver experiences designed to empower a better you," said **Ranju Alex**, Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International. ➔

FOSTERING TALENT

AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology has been providing high-quality hospitality education since 1997. With a global presence, the institute has trained over 5,000 students.



Dr Sonali Jadhav, Principal, AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology

The hospitality and tourism sectors are two of the most dynamic and growing areas in today's scenario. This phenomenal expansion is bound to create plenty of job opportunities that require highly skilled, educated and adequately trained manpower at all levels.

All India Shri Shivaji Memorial Society's (AISSMS) College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Pune, an autonomous and NAAC A Grade institute, has been at the forefront of imparting high-quality hospitality education since 1997.

The institute aims at the holistic development of the students and moulding them to match up with industry requirements. Providing quality education is possible because of dedicated and qualified staff, the best infrastructure, and a highly conducive environment for the teaching-learning process. Not only this, a lush green campus located in the heart of the city is one of the hallmarks of this professionally managed institution.

AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology is committed to nurturing talent, developing skilled profession-

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The institute focusses on holistic development, facilitating collaboration between academia and industry

als, and contributing to the growth of the hotel industry. The institute understands the importance of collaboration between academia and the industry, which is why it has established strong partnerships with top hospitality players such as Taj, CII and the Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne, Switzerland. Our

30 plus industry tie-ups enable students and the college to engage in professional development.

The institute provides a platform for all talented and enthusiastic students of Pune and other parts of the country to showcase their hospitality skills and create future hospitality leaders through flagship events such as ATITHYA – A Reflection of Hospitality. Keeping in view the advancements in the ever-evolving hospitality industry, the institute has been equipped with modern labs to effectively train the students in all aspects of hotel operations and management.

The institute has a global imprint with well-placed alumni in more than 22 countries.



In addition to this, recently the institute has successfully attempted the world record by preparing 100 curries in 250 minutes with the help of 250 students & faculty members, certified by the World Book of Records London. The college is committed to making strides and achieving new heights in the years to come with strategic planning to deliver quality success. ➔





GROWING INVESTOR CONFIDENCE IN TIER II & III CITIES

Building a legacy of her own, **Amruda Nair** takes us through her journey of creating a young Indian, female-founded hotel brand that blends finest international practices with local expertise.

**Amruda Nair**

Founder,
Araiya Hotels & Resorts

“Our guest chose to come back to us as our activities are bespoke & personalized to individual preferences”



Lipla Negi

The Founder of Araiya Hotels & Resorts, Amruda Nair, identifies herself as a third-generation hotelier, carrying forward the lessons and legacy of her grandfather, CP Krishnan Nair, the renowned hotelier and Founder, The Leela Group. Oftentimes, she is referred to as The Leela Group Heiress, but Nair's love and passion for hospitality goes beyond the moniker. “Both my parents studied at The Hotel School at Cornell before returning to India to open The Leela Mumbai. The hospitality element was therefore an integral part of my childhood,” she shared.

All roads led to Araiya

Nair received her very first lessons in hospitality at home. “My father, Vivek Nair, was instrumental in pursuing the asset-light strategy for The Leela brand, starting with The Leela Gurgaon, which

was the first for the Group and a very successful operation. The sale and manage back model worked for transactions in both Goa and Kovalam as well,” she revealed. Today, when most of the hotel brands are adopting an asset-light strategy, it only strengthens her beliefs. “I believe the change in strategy to asset light is global, primarily because of the number of transactions that are led by institutional investors in the sector who want to be asset owners but leave the operations to the brands. The COVID made the need for specialists more acute, and owners saw the value in the way experienced operators were able to manage costs, retain employees and switch gears quickly to cater to new segments and market opportunities,” she explained.

While she pursued a career in hospitality purely out of passion, the idea of developing brands only came to her in her 30s. She confided, “I was fortu-

nate to find a business partner from the Middle East who encouraged me to set up a brand for his hotels in Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The joint venture was my first foray into strategic brand programming, and it gave me the confidence to do the same for myself.” Araiya Hotels was thus launched in India in 2018 and Araiya Malta was set up for the restaurant business in Europe in early 2019.

An avid traveller herself, Nair prefers to have her finger on the pulse of new-age travellers with discerning tastes and preferences. She defines her target client as “an urban adventure seeker that is looking for an immersive, personalized experience adapted to their reason for travel.” Naturally, the spaces should cater to the increasing need for self-discovery through carefully curated immersive experiences. “We attract our target audience by designing the spaces to have a clear sense of place, using col-



ours and textures that are reflective of the destination, so that they have an immersive experience from the time they cross the threshold. Our guest chose to come back to us as our activities are bespoke and personalized to individual preferences,” she pointed out. Another aspect that makes Ariaya properties stand apart is their strong focus on food and beverage. “From bottling our own drinking water on site to sourcing within a five-mile radius,” said Nair, for whom resilience is a guiding light. She also credits the brand’s strong and integrated technology platform, which allows them to track guest preferences, customize stays, and drive direct bookings.

Talent & technology

Most of its hotel owners find comfort in the fact that Nair comes from an owner’s background, who appreciates the need for transparency and responsibility. “Most of these are first-time hotel owners for whom hospitality is a non-core business,” she stated. Furthermore, the brand prides itself to be a young Indian, female-founded brand combining the best of global practices with local know-how. Its first property, Ariaya Palampur, serves as a good representative of what the brand stands for—engaging, immersive, adaptive design that is reflective of the destination and technology that allows for seamless service delivery—even at 5,000 feet.

“Our endeavour is to execute best of global practices in local setting with highly trained teams powered by technology”

So how does this new brand aim to carve a niche for itself in the highly competitive Indian hospitality market? Nair stated, “When competing with bigger brands we have found our biggest strengths to be technical—with a focus on building efficiently, technology—cloud-based and cost-effective and training—adaptive and intuitive service delivery. Our existing hotel owners are our best proponents, as they have already realized the value we bring through our approach.” Undoubtedly, the focus is on applying the combined power of teamwork and technology. “Our endeavour as a young Indian brand is to execute the best of global practices in a local setting with highly trained teams powered by technology. However, for Nair, while technology can assist efficiency, it can never replace human intervention in hospitality. “We have integrated the AI elements to both, collect data and widen the data funnel as well as allow for better parsing of the data to streamline analysis and accurate forecasting,” she said.

The expansion roadmap

Currently, Nair has her mind focussed on two projects under construction in Alibaug, Maharashtra, “where we are currently providing technical services to the developers to ensure that what is built is efficient and sustainable,” she shared. The brand also aims to further supplement its presence



in Himachal Pradesh this year with a hotel under the 'Soul by Araiya' brand in Dharamshala as well as a resort under the same flag in Kerala.

Another key focus area has been the serviced apartments category. Under the Araiya banner, Nair and her team have been working with a developer on the design programming and space allocations for additional service elements required for a serviced apartment project in Alibaug, Maharashtra. Talking about the future growth of this segment, she said, "As a management company, we have provided technical services for a 180-key serviced apartment tower in Qatar. The model in the Middle East has been very successful, and in India, too there is a market for it, primarily catering to project-based long stays."

Hotel development

According to Nair, the hospitality market in India has seen steady recovery with strong performances in the past year driven by sustained patronage by domestic leisure guests, pent-up demand for socials and events led by weddings, and the resurgence of domestic business travel followed by international business travel. She places Indian hotel brands ahead of international chains in the country for demonstrating stronger recovery and credits "their stronger presence in Tier II & III cities, locally con-

tracted rates with companies, as well as a larger leisure footprint."

She feels that the demand from the domestic market, particularly for new, untapped leisure destinations, remains steady, which is translating into an expansion of resort capacity in Tier II & III locations, accounting for as much as 33 per cent of the future supply.

Sustainability

Talking about the brand's commitment to sustainability, Nair said, "When we conceptualized the Araiya brand, the entire team made a committed choice to eliminate as many single-use items as possible. Whether it is the toiletries in our bathrooms or water bottles, we adopt as many reusable and recyclable items and practices in our day-to-day operations as possible. One of the best examples of conscious consumption is the wall-mounted dispenser in every one of our bathrooms that is periodically refilled by our housekeepers. This also allows us to bulk-buy a higher quality of vegan, sulphate-free, and paraben-free toiletries that are customized for Araiya."

"Making our hotel operations sustainable is a very important cornerstone of our ethos and one that we have heavily invested. I have no doubt that this facet of our philosophy alone will reap tremendous rewards in the years to come," she concluded. →

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As a management
company, we have
provided technical
services for 180-
key serviced
apartment tower
in Qatar

CONTRACTING BOOSTING INDIA'S HOTEL INDUSTRY

India's hotel sector has seen remarkable revival with RevPAR recovering to pre-COVID levels. This has led to paradigm shift in contracting models, including management contracts, franchises and lease/revenue share contracts, writes **Nikhil Shah**.

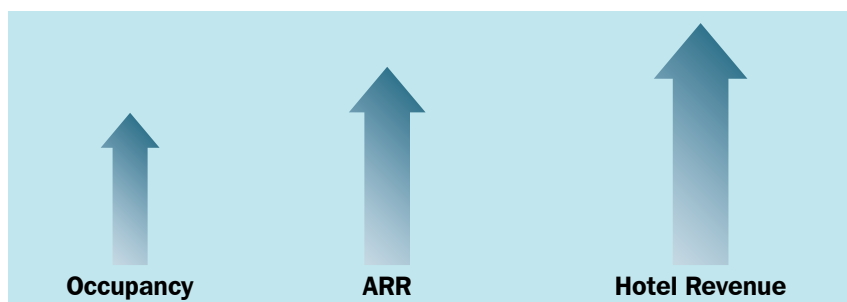
As India's hotel industry bounces back from the COVID-induced slump, an extraordinary revival has taken place. With revenue per available room (RevPAR) now fully recovered to pre-COVID levels, the year 2022 marked a significant turning point in occupancy and rates for the country. Although international travel is yet to fully resume, the surge in domestic consumption has been the driving force behind this remarkable wave of success. In this article, we delve into the captivating realm of hotel contracts and explore the evolving trends in how hotel brands operate in India.

A paradigm shift in contracting models:
In the realm of branded hotels, various con-

“
Homestays have gained popularity, attracting prominent brands such as Taj and Marriott to enter the segment

tracting models have emerged as preferred choices for hotel brands operating in India. These models, including management contracts, franchises and lease/revenue share contracts, have revolutionized the relationship between hotel owners and operators. International brands are partnering up with domestic chain/villa companies to offer more products.

Over the past decade, hotel brands and operators have increasingly pursued asset-light growth models to foster expansion through strategic partnerships with hotel owners. The conversion landscape of independent hotels to brands, along with the greenfield and brownfield upcoming hotels, stood at one-third each.



Hotel management contracts: In a win-win partnership under a hotel management contract, the owner of the hotel real estate appoints a management company to operate the hotel business on their behalf. This arrangement allows the owner to retain ownership of the real estate while delegating day-to-day management responsibilities to the management company. The owner



assumes most of the risk and reward from operations but pays a fee to the management company, which oversees the smooth functioning of the hotel. Elements such as base fees, incentive fees and additional charges such as sales and marketing fees collectively range from 6 per cent to 10 per cent of the hotel's revenue.

Ensuring performance and protection:

Hotel contracts often incorporate provisions to safeguard the interests of both parties involved. One common provision is the area of protection (AOP), which restricts the hotel operator from opening another hotel within a specified radius to prevent overlapping businesses. Additionally, an operator performance test establishes minimum performance benchmarks, granting the hotel owner the right to terminate the contract if the hotel underperforms against agreed-upon standards.

Hotel franchises: They offer a mutually beneficial arrangement wherein a hotel owner operates their property under a franchise agreement with a renowned hotel chain. By leveraging the franchisor's brand, distribution channels and intellectual property, the hotel owner maintains control and assumes the risks and liabilities of the property. In franchise contracts, brands usually charge three per cent to five per cent of the topline.

Lease/revenue share: On the other hand, the hotel chain enters into a contract with the owner, either through fixed or variable



Nikhil Shah
 Director, Hospitality, Capital Markets and Investment Services, Colliers India

lease agreements or hybrid structures such as revenue sharing with a minimum guarantee. As the P&L shifts from owner to hotel chain, the revenue share offered by brands is 20 to 25 per cent of the topline.

Emerging trends and prospects:

Hotel signings in the fiscal year 2023 have surpassed pre-COVID numbers, reflecting the industry's resilience and potential. International hotel brands, traditionally associated with larger room inventories, are now open to properties with fewer than 100 rooms. Moreover, domestic companies are increasingly exploring revenue share arrangements, indicating a dynamic shift in the market.

Conclusion

As India's hotel industry rides the wave of recovery, the landscape of hotel contracts has undergone a remarkable transformation. With a shift towards asset-light models, strategic partnerships and innovative accommodation options, both hotel owners and brands are poised for success. The future looks promising, with a surge of new contracts on the horizon, especially in Tier II & III locations, leisure destinations and metro cities. As the hospitality sector embarks on a promising journey, the captivating world of hotel contracts continues to shape India's thriving hotel industry. ➔

“
 Various contracting models have emerged as preferred choices for hotel brands operating in India”

	International chain	Domestic chain
Management contract	Yes	Yes
Franchise	Yes	Yes
Revenue share	No	Yes (select brands)
Lease	No	Yes (select brands)

HOUSEKEEPING INDUSTRY PRIORITIZING SUSTAINABILITY

COVID has significantly impacted housekeeping, requiring a reimagining of practices to ensure safety, well-being and sustainability, writes **Smritee Raghubalan**.

C COVID has had a profound impact on every aspect of our lives, including the way we approach housekeeping. From hotels to office buildings and residential spaces, cleanliness and hygiene have become paramount concerns. As we emerge from COVID, there is an urgent need to reimagine housekeeping practices to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals and get sustainability efforts, which had taken a backseat, back on track. This article explores the challenges faced by the housekeeping industry and the opportunities it presents in the post-COVID era:

Challenges

Enhanced health and safety standards:

With the increased emphasis on cleanliness and disinfection, housekeeping teams are required to implement clinically clean standards involving rigorous protocols such as frequent sanitization, proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and so on.

Mindful technological integration: Implementing technologies such as robotic cleaning, smart sensors and cloud-based management systems can streamline operations, enhance efficiency and improve the overall guest experience.

Workforce shortages: The COVID has caused significant disruptions to the workforce, leading to staff shortages in many industries, including housekeeping. Many workers were laid off or had to switch careers due to the economic downturn. This necessitates innovative recruitment strategies, competitive wages and



Smritee Raghubalan

Hospitality Educator,
Author and Consultant

improved working conditions to attract and retain talent.

Opportunities

Augmented training and certification programmes:

The COVID has underscored the importance of appropriate training in maintaining

cleanliness and hygiene standards. There is an opportunity to develop and implement comprehensive training programmes that focus on infection control, sanitization protocols and the correct use of PPE.

Embracing sustainable practices:

COVID has created increased awareness of the impact of our actions on the environment. As the housekeeping industry rebuilds, there is an opportunity to prioritize sustainability and eco-friendly practices. This can include using environmentally friendly cleaning products and promoting energy-efficient practices. →

“Embracing sustainability concepts in housekeeping operations can make significant contributions”



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Unfilled opportunities in **HOSPITALITY COLLEGES**

Hotel management graduates are avoiding hospitality sector. To address this issue, govt should take remedial measures such as modernizing facilities in existing hospitality institutes, among others.



Ananya Kukreja

The Indian hospitality industry is currently facing a two-fold challenge. Firstly, there has been a decline in hotel bookings due to the immediate impact of COVID. Secondly, there is a shortage of trained workers in the hospitality sector. Although there has been a gradual recovery in the number of hotel bookings, a concerning trend has emerged. Hotel management graduates are choosing to pursue careers in other industries, actively avoiding the hospitality sector. This trend has resulted in a scarcity of skilled work-



Nisheeth Srivastava
Principal,
IHM Mumbai



Due to union pressures, untrained staff members are often paid higher wages, which demotivates fresh graduates

force within the industry, which is a wasted opportunity. This trend is surprising, considering the significant size of the hospitality



industry in India, which contributes approximately 7 per cent to the GDP. Nithil Bhaskar, Director, Operations, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, advised, “With the amount of money, hospitality and tourism pump into our GDP, we must have a government regulated body to certify hospitality institutes much like we have for medical and engineering.”

Therefore, it is important to assess and discuss the factors leading to such a migration and the non-adoption of hospitality jobs. Remedial measures can follow. According to **Vimal Kumar**, Principal, The Lalit Suri Hospitality School, “There are two major factors that are leading to this situation: low pay-outs to fresh joiners for long hours and a lack of certainty in career progression. These issues are inter-connected and lead to freshers dropping out of the field that has deleterious impact on the hospitality industry.”

Low pay for new graduates

There has been a clear stagnation in the salaries offered to fresh graduates in the hospitality industry. Many newcomers are being offered salaries that fall short of covering the basic expenses required for a graduate to sustain themselves. This issue is particularly acute in metropolitan cities where the cost of living, including rent, food and health-care, is higher compared to other cities. Nisheth Srivastava, Principal, IHM Mumbai, highlights that the hospitality industry is not even meeting the minimum wage requirements for graduates. Ironically, due to union pressures, untrained staff members are of-



A K Singh
Director, FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management

“Working hours need to be strictly regulated to 8-9 hours only, and in metro cities, one off in a week is not appropriate”

ten paid higher wages, which demotivates fresh graduates and prompts them to explore alternative options within the service sector. This situation leads to the demoralization of hotel management graduates who have dedicated significant time to studying and training. The mismatch of skilled workers earning less than unskilled workers creates a negative growth trend.

The current generation has a wide range of career avenues and changing careers has become easier than ever before. In fact, other related fields offer higher starting salaries compared to the hospitality industry. For instance, jobs on cruise ships, in event management, the airline industry and mall management often provide more attractive compensation packages. **M K Dash**, Principal, IHM Lucknow, said, “Whereas the retail sectors and other allied sectors pay a bit higher, which reflects in the young minds—the peer pressure, the family pressure and the societal pressure for a high package soon after the course is normally desired for a job at the beginning. Ultimately, the candidate either goes for higher studies or changes their mind about joining the hospitality industry. Thus, the brain drains.”

The retail and allied sectors have realized that hospitality graduates are equipped with a defined set of client handling skills, decent communication abilities and empathy, which are crucial to their businesses. The costs incurred to train a fresh graduate from other domains is reduced and incorporated into packages offered to hospitality

students. The idea of waiting patiently for five to seven years to reach a supervisory position after having started at entry-levels has gone for a toss.

Fresh graduates realize that the cost-benefit analysis is skewed against them, giving them even more reasons to leave the industry and pursue a career switch.

Hazy growth trajectory

Another significant issue is the lack of clear growth pathways for hotel management trainees in contrast to professions such as consultants, doctors, or bankers. The expectations placed on fresh graduates in entry-level hospitality jobs are often inconsistent and dictated by immediate superiors. Work hours are frequently irregular and disorganized. **A K Singh**, Director, FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management, commented, "The working hours need to be strictly regulated to 8-9 hours only, and in metro cities, one off in a week is not appropriate and candidates are looking for two offs in a week. Few hotels in the metro have started this to retain existing officers, supervisors and entry-level staff."

Furthermore, fresh hospitality management graduates often face a skills mis-



Nithil Bhaskar
Director, Operations,
JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar

“
With the amount of money, hospitality & tourism pump into our GDP, we must have govt. regulated body to certify hospitality institutes

match. This is attributed to outdated syllabi in institutes that fail to address the specialized skills required for entry-level positions in the industry. According to Kumar, "The final years of academics should provide a profound understanding of an entrepreneurial mindset, opportunities to plan and execute events and clarity in choosing a career path that is not influenced solely by mentors."

Way ahead

The need of the hour is for policy intervention by the government to boost the growth of the hospitality industry while enabling the skilling of workers that may otherwise be out of the workforce. Secondly, the central government should also improve upon the infrastructure in existing hospitality institutes so that the technology access of students is on par with their global competitors in other nations. This will help hospitality graduates access better opportunities both in India and abroad. Singh feels that the Ministry of Tourism, the Govt. of India, state governments, hotel and restaurant associations and large hotel chains should set up a CSR fund for the promotion of job opportunities in the hospitality and service sectors. →





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ECO-FRIENDLY CLEANING

MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT

Due to rising demand for mechanized cleaning and environmentally friendly cleaning equipment, Nilfisk India's business recorded growth of 31 per cent last year, avers **Rajiv Bhatia**.



Rajiv Bhatia

Country Manager & Director,
Nilfisk India

Nilfisk is one of the world's leading manufacturers of professional cleaning equipment. The company's India subsidiary has reported growth of 31 per cent in last year and is expecting the same growth in the current year. "We see India's growth story reflecting in the fast-paced growth in the cleaning industry. Indians at large have become conscious of cleanliness at their workplaces, malls and retail places and want to see higher standards of cleaning at hotels they travel to. We grew at a phenomenal 31 per cent last year and are confident of growing similarly this year," said Rajiv Bhatia, Country Manager & Director, Nilfisk India.

Bhatia says post-COVID, the demand for cleaning equipment has grown. Bhatia said, "The mop and broom are now a passé, and we see all institutions actively adopting mechanized cleaning with scrubbers, which remove dirt and grime in one pass. Mechanized cleaning doubles the efficiency of cleaning (vs. manual methods)

and guarantees hygiene to all stakeholders. Employee and customer safety post-COVID is of paramount importance today. Floor scrubbers have witnessed a surge in demand, as many new customers have moved from manual to mechanical floor cleaning. Vacuum cleaners using genuine and certified HEPA filters also grew correspondingly, as the Air Quality Index became an important parameter for all closed air-conditioned environments."

According to Bhatia, hotels need to leverage sustainable cleaning equipment. "With the increasing focus on sustainable solutions in hospitality, it has become imperative for hotels to also use sustainable cleaning equipment, which reduces water and chemical consumption by 50 per cent," said Bhatia.

Talking about the highest selling products of Nilfisk, Bhatia said, "Our large and wide range of floor scrubbers with eco-friendly capabilities such as Ecoflex Smartflow and sliding deck technology bring value to our customers and are at the core of our solutions approach to cleaning challenges. In summary, I can say that Nilfisk's wide range of cleaning products and its sustainability efforts in cleaning, make our brand stand apart. We have recently launched the autonomous cleaning machines in India after the successful sale of these machines across the globe, in the last two years." →

““
Floor scrubbers have witnessed a surge in demand, as many new customers have moved from manual to mechanical floor cleaning

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Hotels sizzle with success Summer season drives growth

There is growing feeling of excitement among Indian tourists as they take advantage of opportunity to explore country during current summer season.



HT Bureau



Shiv Bose

General Manager, Double-Tree
by Hilton Goa Panaji

The summer season has always been associated with vacations, exploration and rejuvenation. This year, there is a palpable sense of excitement as travellers eagerly embrace the opportunity to rediscover the world and create cherished memories. At DoubleTree by Hilton Goa Panaji, we are witnessing this surge firsthand as guests flock to our picturesque coastal paradise, eager to bask in the sun, embark on new adventures and indulge in the vibrant culture of our region.

As General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Goa Panaji, I am delighted to welcome the summer season and witness the exciting trends that are shaping the travel landscape this year. As the world gradually recovers from past chal-

lenges, it is heartening to see a resurgence in travel and a renewed sense of wanderlust.

One of the prominent trends we are observing this summer is a return to nature. After spending an extended period indoors, travellers are seeking destinations that offer pristine beaches, lush greenery, and an opportunity to reconnect with the great outdoors. Goa, with its breathtaking landscapes and serene beaches, has become a preferred choice for those yearning for solace in nature's embrace. Our centrally located resort, close to Goa's capital, provides guests with the

“
Travellers
are seeking
destinations that
offer pristine
beaches and
lush greenery,
among others

perfect blend of tranquillity and convenience, enabling them to explore the region's natural wonders while enjoying the comforts of a world-class resort.



Gulshan Jhurani

Promoter, WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa

WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa opened its doors two years ago, this being its second summer. Building this property has been a passion project with extremely detailed planning, keeping in mind the environment, community, and of course our guests.

In terms of our number and occupancy, while outbound has opened, we have seen a 120 per cent growth in occupancy and revenue per room. Despite the ADR growth of seven per cent, we have seen domestic markets increase.

Here are some summer trends we see currently:

Weekend stays are still the flavor: Our occupancy rates and trends show us that weekends and specifically long weekend getaways (either by road or even if it involves air travel) are preferred.

Small group family holidays: Microgroups of families like to experience a luxurious, rejuvenating escape from the mundane urban chaos to connect and relax. We are seeing a demand for our cottages due to this.

“
We have observed a surge of 120% in occupancy and revenue per room in terms of quantity and occupancy since outbound has begun

A luxurious experiential resort beyond the hills: While hills will always be a hot favorite for the summer, we find many queries coming in from travellers who are looking at offbeat experiential hotels.

Accessibility: This always play a key role, especially for shorter holidays. Better flight connectivity to Jodhpur and Udaipur has also eased accessibility to our resort. We are very particular about the airport transfers, we offer our guests in making the journey to the resort extremely comfortable.

As for now, we are expecting positive summer at our resort.



Sumeet Sharma

General Manager, Renest River Country, Resort Manali

As summer heat sweeps the nation, one destination stands out as a refuge for travellers seeking respite and adventure—Manali. Nestled in the picturesque state of Himachal Pradesh, Manali witnesses a remarkable surge in tourist arrivals during summer. Let's delve into the reasons behind this surge and explore the top travel trends in Manali during the summer season:

The scenic beauty of Manali: During summer, when the weather is mild and pleasant, visitors flock to Manali to immerse themselves in its serene ambience.

Adventure tourism: Manali has emerged as a hub for adventure enthusiasts, attracting thrill-seekers from all over the country. Summer offers the perfect weather conditions for various adventure activities such as trekking, paragliding, river rafting, zorbing and mountain biking.

Cultural immersion: Manali is not just about natural beauty and adventure—it is also a cultural delight. The region is home to the indigenous culture of Himachal Pradesh and during the summer months, visitors can witness vibrant local festivals and traditional dance performances and also indulge in local cuisine.

“
Younger generation is willing to spend more on experiences believe influencer marketing better than traditional marketing

Wellness and Retreats: The summer season in Manali witnesses an increasing number of travellers seeking wellness and rejuvenation.

Sustainable travel: In recent years, sustainable travel has gained significant momentum and Manali is at the forefront of this trend. Manali's efforts towards sustainable tourism such as waste management initiatives and promoting organic farming have garnered appreciation from tourists. Travellers are opting for eco-friendly accommodations. →

Showcase your talent at a challenge by Association of Hospitality Professionals



AHM event will witness participants from hotels across India, who will compete in various competitions to be judged by F&B Managers, Directors, Executive Chefs and Executive Housekeepers.



HT Bureau

The sixth edition of the AHP Hospitality Challenge and Awards has been officially announced by the Association of Hospitality Professionals (AHP). This esteemed occasion provides a venue for supporting and honouring young people in the hospitality industry while showing their extraordinary ability and originality.

The AHP Hospitality Challenge and Awards - 2023 will commence with a series of competitions designed to test the skills and expertise of participants in various operational areas of the hotel industry. These include the culinary challenge, front office master, art of bed making, art of towel folding, war of spirits, art of table setting, hospitality challenge (student category), and hospitality challenge (specially-abled category). These events will take place at esteemed venues such as the Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, the Indian Hotel Academy and The Park, all located in New Delhi.

AHP will introduce the specially-abled category in the AHP Hospitality Challenge 2023, exemplifying their unwavering dedication to inclusivity and equal opportunities. This groundbreak-



“
By offering a dedicated platform for specially-abled individuals, AHP cultivates a culture of acceptance & understanding”

ing initiative celebrates exceptional talents, dismantles barriers and nurtures a more diverse and empowering hospitality industry. By offering a dedicated platform for specially-abled individuals to showcase their skills and compete alongside their peers, AHP cultivates a culture of acceptance, understanding and appreciation for all aspiring professionals. The introduction of AHP's specially-abled individuals in Hospitality Challenge 2023 marks a momentous stride towards shaping a future that is both inclusive and empowering for the hospitality industry. Following the competitions, AHP will host the highly anticipated AHP Hospitality Excellence Awards 2023 at the USI Auditorium, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi, on 8 July 2023. →

ADVANCING THE INDUSTRY

Professional Housekeepers Association drives progress

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Pradipta Biiswaas
VP, Operations,
Radisson Jaipur City Center

Pradipta Biiswaas, General Manager, Radisson Jaipur City Center has been promoted as Vice President, Operations. He is a seasoned hospitality professional having 25 years of work experience in various brands and standalone hotels. He has also worked in various capacities at Leela, Accor and IHG. His core areas of expertise are hotel operations, revenue optimization, talent acquisition and cost reduction.



Harish Gopalakrishnan
General Manager,
The Westin Goa

The Westin Goa has announced the appointment of Harish Gopalakrishnan as the new General Manager. With over 23 years of hospitality expertise, Gopalakrishnan as the General Manager will provide strategic oversight to the senior management and operations teams of The Westin Goa. His primary responsibility will be to develop business strategies and operations for the hotel.



Kris Reynolds
AGM,
Hyatt Place Vadodara

Hyatt Place Vadodara has appointed Kris Reynolds as their Assistant General Manager. As AGM, Reynolds will spearhead the Front Office and Housekeeping departments, along with overseeing the Sales & Marketing of the hotel. In 2012, he was appointed Sales Manager at the Grand Hyatt Goa and was subsequently elevated to Senior Sales Manager in 2014.



Rabindra Rai
Director, Ops, Courtyard
by Marriott Bengaluru

Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru has appointed Rabindra Rai as the new Director, Operations. As the Director, Operations, Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru, Rai will be responsible for overseeing the hotel's core departments, ensuring compliance with operating controls, SoPs and service standards. Rai has over 15 years of management experience in the luxury hospitality industry.



Saruth Anumas
General Manager,
Cross Pattaya Pratamnak

Saruth Anumas has joined Cross Pattaya Pratamnak as General Manager. Anumas has spearheaded Cross River Kwai for the past six and a half years where he has shaped the resort and made it a true definition of Luxury by Design. He will be leading Cross Pattaya Pratamnak, which has recently been ranked 13th in the hottest new hotels in the world.



Sunil Kumar
General Manager,
JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata

With over two decades of experience and strong leadership skills in the luxury hotel industry, Sunil Kumar, has joined JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata as General Manager. His primary responsibilities at the hotel include enhancing productivity, ensuring customer satisfaction and implementing strategic initiatives. Kumar had previously served as GM, The Westin Goa for over two years.



Tom Van Tuijl
General Manager,
Kandima

Kandima has appointed Tom Van Tuijl as the new General Manager. Tuijl brings over 20 years of experience in the leisure and business hospitality industries, having worked in various operational and managerial roles across Europe, Africa and Asia for hospitality brands such as Sheraton and FLC Hotels & Resorts.



Varun Mehrotra
Dir, S&M, Sheraton Grand
Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center has announced the appointment of Varun Mehrotra as the Director of Sales & Marketing. In his new role, he will be responsible for optimizing the hotel's revenue performance and leading its business development initiatives. He is an industry veteran with more than 17 years of experience.



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