

# Hotel TALK

hoteltalk.in

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**KUNAL  
VASUDEVA**  
talks about  
**skilling**  
for future

**KB KACHRU**  
emphasizes **FAST-  
TRACKING**  
Hotel Classification

**POURING**  
**personalisation**  
**GEN Z'S SPIRITED CHOICES**





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# Hotel industry thrives on expansion



66

*The festive season presents the perfect opportunity for hotels and catering companies to showcase their culinary skills”*

**H**otels continue to remain in an energetic and vibrant mode, both in terms of operating results and development with record breaking new hotel openings in the branded segment. Reports indicate that midscale brands continue to dominate, followed by upper and upper upscale brands. Infrastructural development at the national level in terms of easy connectivity with better highways, faster trains and more airports has triggered travel to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities for both tourism and business. This, in turn, has encouraged hotel brands to aggressively enter the sub market to meet the increasing demand for hotel rooms.

At this moment, one of the most compelling concerns is that of sustainability, a subject being implemented in varying degrees. Being Earth conscious and efficient towards minimalistic consumption should become a philosophy in all hotels at all levels, should we hope to achieve any significance.

Dear readers, before I end, I would like to offer a short prayer for all those people facing unimaginable suffering in the Middle East and on the Russian borders and do hope that better sense prevails and governments find a peaceful solution through dialogue. We sincerely appreciate your continued readership and look forward to your feedback and comments.

Cheers,  
**Sunil Ghadiok**



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Cover picture credit  
The Leela Palace Bengaluru

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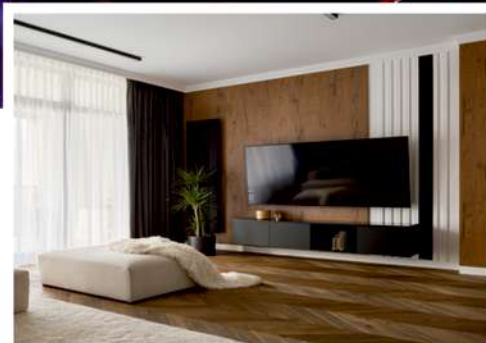
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Indian luxury catering trailblazers transform hospitality norms, redefine standards, share tales of exploration, embracing, and shaping this exclusive niche.



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# Prioritizing sustainability in hotel industry

Travel for LiFE program has been initiated with the goal of advancing sustainability, profiting local economies and communities.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

The Union Ministry of Tourism (MoT) celebrated the World Tourism Day 2023 with the global launch of Travel for LiFE programme, at the recently opened Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Travel for LiFE is a sectoral programme under Mission LiFE, targeted towards the tourism sector, which the MoT has unveiled in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

A booklet on Travel for LiFE was launched with its digital inauguration by **Ajay Bhatt**, Minister of State of Tourism and

Defence, Government of India. He said, “The recent G20 Leaders’ Summit has demonstrated India’s commitment to forging global unity and collaboration, and the deliberations echoed the collective aspirations of nations

for a sustainable future. Every traveller, every business, and every citizen to adopt this programme and pledge to travel responsibly, to respect our environment, and to understand and appreciate the diverse cultures that make our world so beautifully complex. The Travel for LiFE programme, which is a part of Mission LiFE, sets out the path to a sustainable planet Earth.”

**V Vidyavathi**, Secretary, MoT, Government of India, also spoke at the event and said, “This shows our commitment towards a sustainable resilient and inclusive tourism sector. This programme will encourage tourists to take simple actions that result in conservation of the environment. It aims to create mindful and deliberate utilisation of resources by the stakeholders.” Also present on the occasion were **Leena Nandan**, Secretary, MoEFCC and **Rakesh Kumar Verma**, Additional Secretary, MoT. HT



Digital Inauguration of ‘Travel for LiFE’ booklet by Leena Nandan, Secretary of MoEFCC, Ajay Bhatt, Minister of State for Tourism and Defence, and V Vidyavathi, Secretary, MoT.



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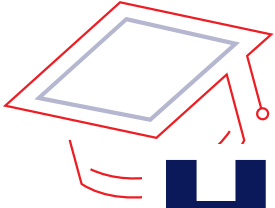
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# HOSPITALITY Education

## STEERING TOWARDS AN EXPERIENCE-LED ECONOMY

**Kunal Vasudeva**, Co-founder & Managing Director, Indian School of Hospitality delves into the impact of hospitality education on enhancing India's potential in the experience economy.

**In conversation with Sunil Ghadiok**

**T**

he perception of hospitality education limited to roles & opportunities in hotels and restaurants only is rapidly changing. One of the leading transformative voices altering this perception and shaping the future of hospitality education is the Co-founder & Managing Director of Indian School of Hospitality Kunal Vasudeva.

Recently, Vasudeva was invited as the Introductory keynote speaker at the 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly, where he spoke about exploring the opportunities and challenges in tourism and hospitality education. As he continues to advocate the need to transcend the conventional contours of education, **HotelTALK** caught up with him to know more about how he envisions the future of India as a global leader in tourism.

### **How can educational reform contribute to making India a global leader in the 'experience economy'?**

India's leadership in the experience economy requires a skilled, ethical, and globally aware educational system. This involves reimagining curricula, emphasizing emotional intelligence, and understanding global consumer needs. Hospitality educational reform is essential for India to become a global architect of sought-after experiences.

### **What strategies can be employed to alter misconceptions about the hospitality industry?**

The traditional view of hospitality education as limited to hotels and restaurants underestimates the diverse range of skills it can provide. These include

customer relationship management, efficient operations in manufacturing, and ethical and social responsibility skills. Hospitality education also fosters emotional intelligence, team collaboration, and leadership, making it a versatile field with numerous career opportunities across various sectors. Parents should challenge outdated perceptions and embrace the full breadth of hospitality education.

### **AI has a transformative role in education, including hospitality. What distinct challenges and opportunities does AI present, particularly for 'skilling at scale'? Challenges & opportunities**

The hospitality sector is a tapestry of skills and competencies that extend far beyond





“

*Skills gained from a robust hospitality education are foundational competencies that can be applied across various industries”*



*It's not just about immediate job roles; it's about creating a resilient, future-proof talent pool*

the traditional roles often associated with it. Incorporating AI into this complex educational landscape presents exceptional opportunities and specific challenges. While the advantages of personalized learning paths and real-time skill mapping are evident, challenges such as infrastructural disparities and data privacy concerns remain, especially in a diverse setting like India.

#### **Skilling at scale**

To effectively address these challenges and harness the opportunities, we envision a Dynamic, Adaptive Learning Ecosystem—a 'Triple Bottom Line Stack' for talent development in hospitality.

#### **Local competency mapping**

AI plays a vital role here, aligning real-time skill requirements with the curriculum, ensuring that our educational offerings are directly mapped to local and global market needs.

#### **Just-in-time reskilling**

Agile response to industry changes, creating a resilient talent pool.

#### **Personalized upskilling**

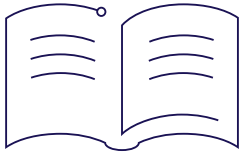
AI customizes learning paths based on career goals, performance, and trends, offering a unique educational journey.

With this holistic approach, we aim to democratize hospitality education while offering adaptability, scalability, and deep personalization. This has the potential to redefine not just the perception of what hospitality education is but also the myriad pathways it can lead to.

#### **How does India's hospitality sector support global sustainability goals, and how are educational institutions contributing to these efforts?**

Sustainability is no longer a buzzword; it's an imperative that transcends industries and borders. In the Indian context, the hospitality sector has a pivotal role to play in aligning with global sustainability goals, such as responsible consumption and ethical sourcing. Educational institutions must lead by example. At the curricular level, the inclusion of sustainability studies, ethical decision-making, and corporate governance is crucial. Beyond that, active partnerships with industry stakeholders to develop and implement green





## Going beyond the curriculum

Here's how we can redefine the role and impact of hospitality education in preparing students for specific roles and building a resilient, adaptable, and future-ready workforce.

**Universal skill set:** Hospitality education equips students with foundational competencies that are universally applicable, breaking the outdated perception that this field is confined to traditional roles in hotels and restaurants.

**Future-proofing talent:** The curriculum is designed to instil adaptability and resilience, skills that are increasingly recognized as invaluable in our fast-paced world. These aren't merely 'soft skills'. They are the essential skills for tomorrow.

**Leadership in experience economy:** We believe that educational reform is not a choice but a necessity if India is to become a unique global leader in the experience economy. Our focus is on nurturing skills, ethical grounding, and global awareness.

**AI-driven skilling at scale:** The application of AI in hospitality education presents unique opportunities for dynamic, personalized learning paths. While challenges exist, especially in a diverse landscape like India, they can be overcome with a strategic and adaptive approach.

**Alignment with global sustainability goals:** Beyond the classroom, we are committed to leading by example in sustainability, ethical decision-making, and corporate governance. Our educational model aims to produce graduates who are agents of sustainable transformation in the global business landscape.

initiatives are essential. We aim to instil a sense of responsibility in our students, preparing them to be agents of change in the sustainable transformation of the hospitality sector and the global business landscape.

### Lastly, for parents on the fence, what measurable outcomes can they expect for their children from modern hospitality education?

The question of return on investment in education often defaults to monetary outcomes, but the calculus should be broader. While earning potential is undeniable, the tangible assets acquired are adaptability and resilience. These are not soft skills; they are essential skills. According to the World Economic Forum, competencies like 'emotional intelligence' and 'people management' will be among the most sought-after skills by 2025. Hospitality education is not merely a preparation for specific roles, but a comprehensive curriculum designed to equip students with these universally applicable skills. In essence, hospitality skills are foundational competencies that can be applied universally across various sectors. The real question parents should be asking is not what their children stand to gain but what they stand to lose if they are not aligned with future expectations.

HT





# Pioneering contextual design and innovation

**Abhimanyu Dalal**, a distinguished architect, has been recognized as one of South Asia's top 50 influential architects by Architectural Digest for seven years. He is well-known for his contextual design, meticulous detailing, and innovative technology.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

**F**ounded in 1989 by Abhimanyu Dalal, Abhimanyu Dalal Architects (ADA) has gained a notable standing for its contextual design, thorough attention to detail, and the use of cutting-edge technology. ADA has crafted numerous institutional buildings, residences, and hotels, showcasing a commitment to utilizing local materials and craftsmanship. When tasked with designing buildings within heritage environments, Dalal focuses on creating new, modern, and efficient structures that harmoniously coexist with their surroundings. ADA's work on projects like the Chandni Chowk redevelopment, Sheila Cinema conversion in Delhi, Mayo College in Ajmer, Lawrence School in Sanawar, HRH Garden Hotel in Udaipur, Pansal Fort in Bhilwara, and Hotel Rawalkot in Jaisalmer exemplifies this design philosophy.

## Embracing sustainability in development

According to Abhimanyu Dalal, while hotels have historically focused on service quality and room design, they share similarities with historical 'sarais' and contribute to a city's public life. He further explained, "Embracing this perspective, contemporary hotel planning and design should be thoroughly re-evaluated. Hotels must address pressing concerns, particularly related to climate change. This includes implementing environmentally responsible practices. These elements should be integral to the design process, thus creating a departure from conventional concepts."

## Incorporating local elements for leisure and corporate guests

Traditional hotel design, aiming for a 'home away from home' experience, has resulted in







a repetitive cookie-cutter approach. Today's travellers seek immersion in local culture. This necessitates a shift from standardization to a contextual approach, where hotels represent their locations and incorporate local elements. Abhimanyu Dalal champions this for more enriching guest experiences.

“

*Contemporary hotel design should be re-evaluated, focusing on addressing environmental concerns such as climate change”*

#### **Anticipating the preferences of modern customers**

Dalal pointed out that millennials and Gen Z travellers still expect the traditional comforts offered by hotels. However, this generation craves deeper engagement with their surroundings and seeks entertainment and enriched experiences through the design of public areas in hotels.

#### **Benefits of global collaboration**

Modern hotels have western origins, giving

their designers a head start but also leading to a well-established, repetitive tradition. Dalal points out, “Contemporary Indian hotels have the advantage of bypassing a few stages, requiring a fresh professional perspective. However, they often still engage professionals adhering to older methodologies, failing to meet contemporary expectations and opportunities.”

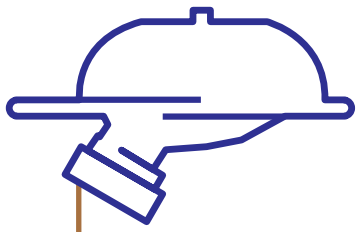
#### **Revitalizing public places**

The hotel's public spaces can be viewed as an extension of the city's public areas, encompassing street activities, markets, and plazas, as well as galleries, museums, performance venues, and dining establishments. He highlighted, “Many of these elements can be integrated into the hotel's public areas to meet the expectations of today's hotel guests and city residents, creating a vibrant atmosphere. This, in turn, can contribute to increased revenue for the hotel.”

#### **Creative freedom in question**

Dalal highlights that hotel design often originates from western standards and principles. He advocates the need for local talents who can embed the local essence into hotel designs, acting as curators of the culture. While budget constraints limit complete artistic freedom, he underscores the importance of open-minded clients who are willing to explore innovative approaches. HT

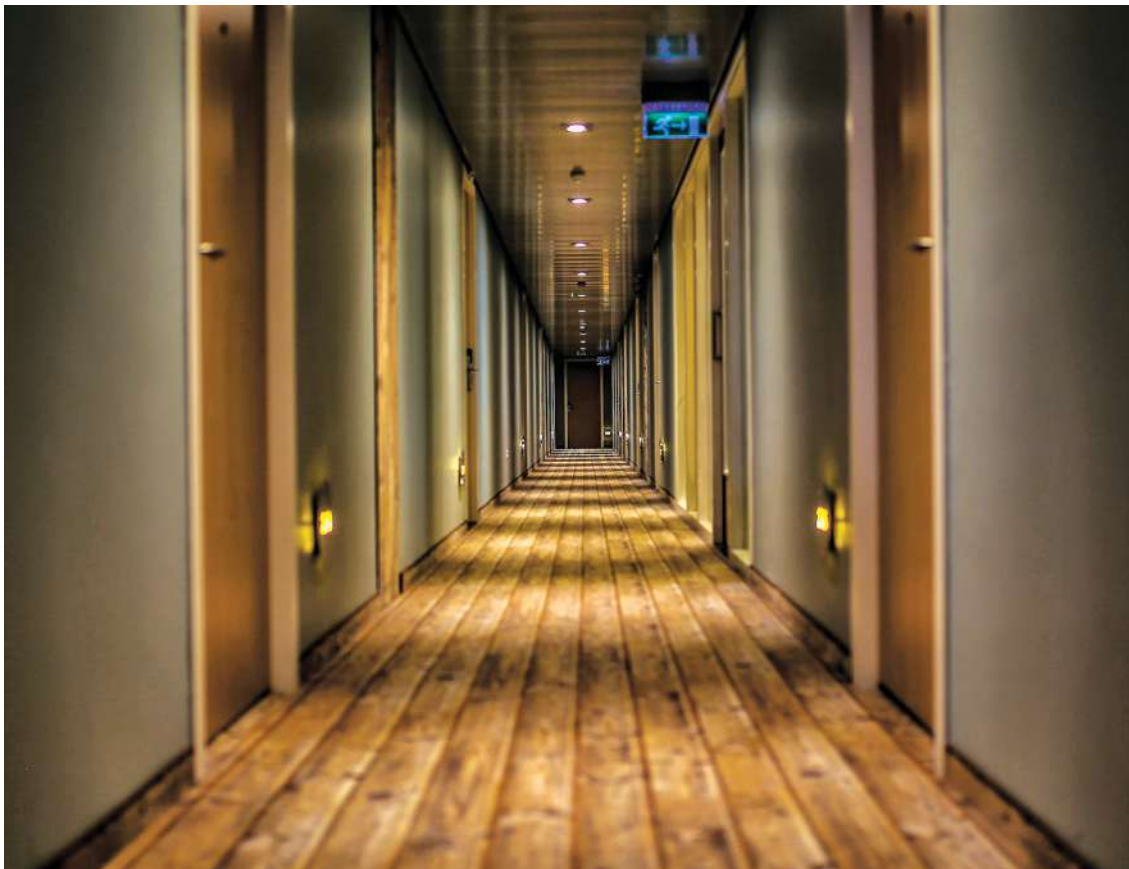




Fast-track

# hotel classification

The delay in classification is affecting hotels from getting the industry status benefits already announced by several state governments, writes **KB Kachru**.



**A**mended in the realm of hospitality, the perception, proper categorisation & classification of hotels plays a pivotal role in establishing uniformity and enhancing the quality of services within the hotel industry. The Tourism ministry's system for classifying and reclassifying hotels holds significant importance for the hotel industry.

The branding & classification of hotels into categories assists customers in gauging the amenities and service levels they can expect, based on a hotel's positioning. Furthermore, various governmental benefits, subsidies,

licenses, and No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from relevant authorities are exclusively granted upon receiving the ministry's approval and classification certificate. Recently, several state governments have introduced specific advantages for classified hotels within their respective regions.

The Hotel Association of India (HAI) has been actively advocating for the hospitality sector to be granted industry status, and some states have indeed extended industry status and related benefits solely based on hotel classification. Maharashtra Government has



already initiated and is aggressively expediting the process. However, the basic process of classifying and reclassifying hotels is currently experiencing substantial delays.

While this delay is somewhat understandable due to the scheme's popularity, the backlog exacerbated by the pandemic and the rapid expansion of hotels across the country due to economic growth and the development of new tourist destinations, it is imperative to expedite inspections and allocate additional resources in terms of time and dedicated personnel to address pending applications. These delays are depriving hotels of significant financial incentives and necessary approvals from other authorities. The delay in classification is also affecting hotels from getting the industry status benefits already announced by several state governments.

We are concerned that prolonged delays may also ultimately impact industry revenues and its profitability. Additionally, today's tourists actively seek assurances regarding quality standards, perceived positioning.

“

*Prolonged delays may also ultimately impact industry revenues and its profitability”*

**KB Kachru**

Vice president, Hotel Association of India (HAI),  
Chairman Emeritus and Principal Advisor,  
Radisson Hotel Group South Asia

I would like to emphasise that if investors are deprived of incentives impacting the profitability of the projects, growth of the industry will certainly be impacted.

For 2047, India aims for a USD3 trillion tourism economy and a million international tourist arrivals. Hospitality sector will play a pivotal role. While the road ahead has its share of challenges, policy interventions are required to support the rapid growth of hotels to meet the targets of tourist inflows-both domestic and international. HT

## Indian hospitality by 2047

Direct contribution of hotel industry to GDP was **USD 40 billion in 2022**

Hospitality sector is expected to reach **-USD 1 trillion** by 2047

Domestic tourists inflow is estimated to grow **15 billion** in 2047

Tourism & hospitality industry are expected to create **53 million** jobs by **2029**

FDI inflows in both sectors reached **USD 16.4 billion** in **April-June 2022**

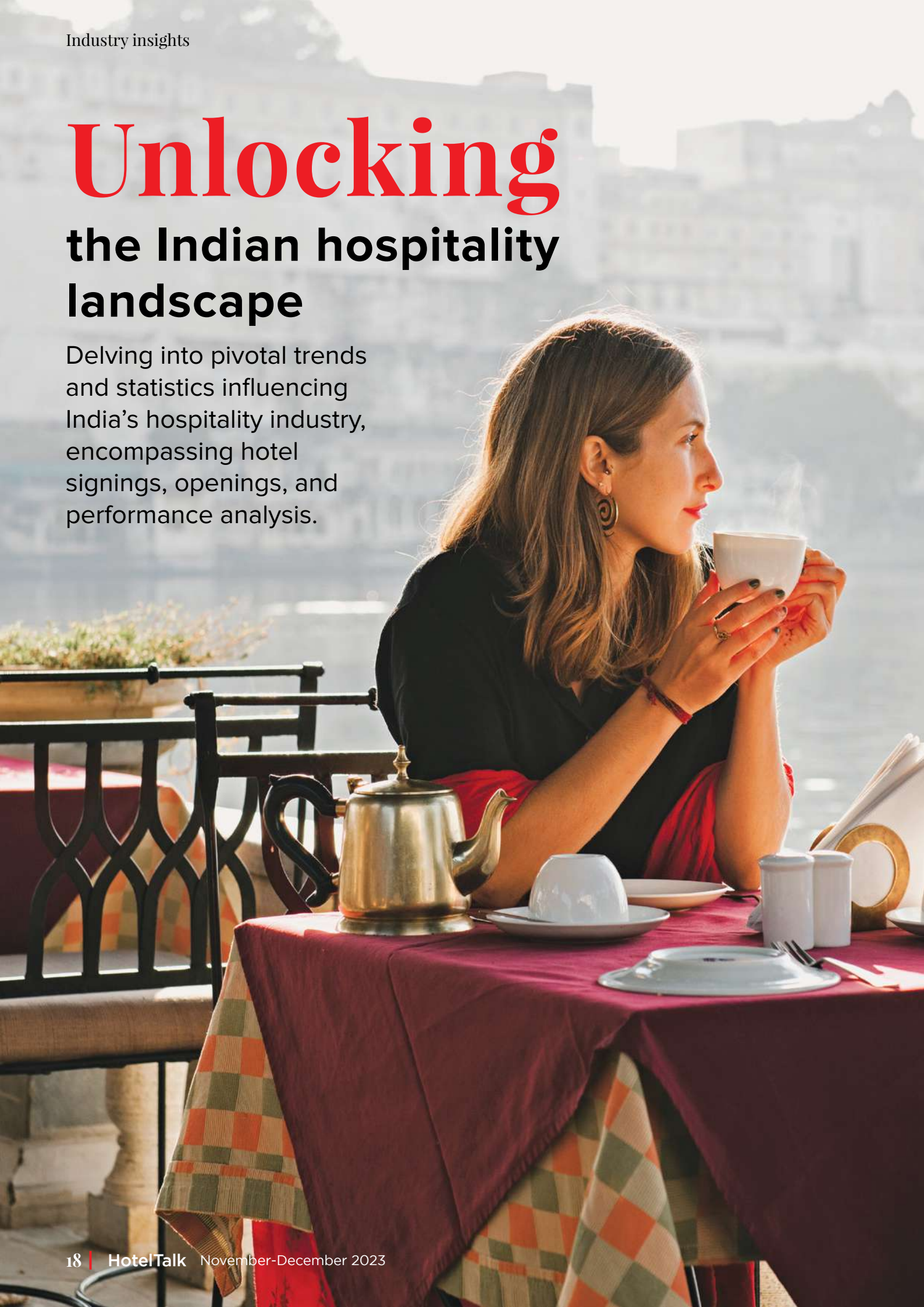
India ranked **54<sup>th</sup>** in the Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021

HAI: Vision 2047



# Unlocking the Indian hospitality landscape

Delving into pivotal trends and statistics influencing India's hospitality industry, encompassing hotel signings, openings, and performance analysis.







**Jaideep Dang**  
Managing Director, Hotels and Hospitality Group, JLL India

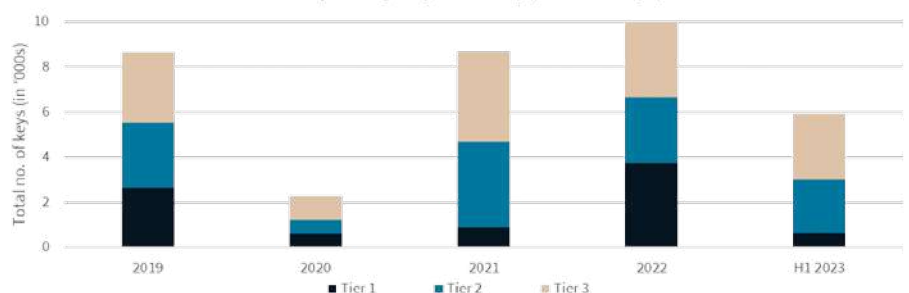
**I**ndia's hospitality industry has been experiencing an upward trend, marked by a significant increase in branded hotel openings in the last five years. In CY 2022, the sector achieved a historic milestone by adding more than 9,900 keys. This trend has persisted into the first half of 2023, with approximately 5,900 keys introduced. The midscale segment remains the dominant force in the market, followed by the upscale, upper upscale, and luxury segments. Particularly noteworthy

is the substantial contribution of tier 3 cities in fuelling this growth.

### **Branded hotel openings**

The sustained prominence of the midscale hotel segment in terms of new openings reflects the desire for economical yet comfortable lodging. Meanwhile, the upscale, upper upscale, and luxury categories have exhibited noteworthy expansion. This pattern eloquently underscores India's diverse and inclusive hospitality sector, dedicated to serving the unique needs of travellers.

**Hotel Openings By Tier City (No. of Keys)**



Source: Hotel Investment Trends – India H1 2023; JLL Hotels & Hospitality Group

**Overall signings**

In CY 2022, the branded hotel signings in India set another record with over 19,800 keys. Similar to openings, the midscale segment led the way in signings, followed by the upscale, upper upscale, and luxury segments. Notably, there has been a gradual increase in brownfield projects, which accounted for 32% of the signings in CY 2022. Tier 1 cities are increasingly exploring lease/revenue share agreements to minimize risk exposure for hotel owners.

Hotel brands are displaying confidence in the Indian market, particularly in the mid-market and luxury sectors. Recent agreements, including the debut of Radisson Collection in Hyderabad and

India's first Waldorf Astoria in Jaipur, reinforce this optimism.

**Overall performance**

The Indian hospitality industry has consistently demonstrated year-on-year growth, particularly in Q3 2023. This growth is primarily attributed to a significant increase in the Average Daily Rate (ADR) countrywide. Several factors contribute to this positive trend, including the emergence of business districts, airport-centred hospitality hubs, and the government's simplified e-visa regulations. The revival of corporate travel, the return of festivals and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) events have also bolstered the sector's performance. Recent G20

events held in various Indian cities further stimulated demand, setting the stage for future growth.

While corporate room demand experienced a slight decline in Q2 2023 due to the summer holiday season, the sector displayed strong growth in ADR levels in Q3 2023. Looking forward, Q4 promises a favourable performance, driven by domestic corporate demand, MICE events, weddings, and other social gatherings.

In the medium term, India's room demand is projected to surpass room supply. While Tier 1 markets have matured, Tier 2 and 3



*The Indian hospitality landscape is thriving, with a robust pipeline of openings and signings, coupled with impressive performance metrics”*



Source: Hotel Investment Trends - India H1 2023; JLL Hotels & Hospitality Group



cities still hold untapped potential. Enhanced tourism and connectivity infrastructure will continue to support sustainable sources of demand, such as MICE events, social gatherings, and leisure activities.

In conclusion, the Indian hospitality landscape is thriving, with a robust pipeline of openings and signings, coupled with impressive performance metrics. As the sector continues to evolve and adapt to changing dynamics, it remains an attractive destination for investors, hoteliers, and travellers alike.





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# EMPOWERING

## hotels with eco-friendly cleaning

Nilfisk is actively broadening its footprint in emerging markets in response to increasing demand for cleaning solutions.



**N**ilfisk, a prominent provider of cleaning solutions, has been actively expanding its presence in emerging markets to meet the growing demand for cleaning solutions. The hotel industry's increasing focus on efficient and eco-friendly cleaning solutions has contributed significantly to this demand. Maintaining cleanliness and

higher levels of cleanliness and hygiene in order to meet customer expectations and preferences. This includes regular cleaning of guest rooms, public areas, dining facilities and back-of-house spaces. Nilfisk's cleaning equipments such as vacuum cleaners, floor scrubbers and carpet cleaners are essential tools for hotel staff to maintain these

***"As hotel industry expands, hotels are required to maintain cleanliness to meet customer expectations"***



**YC Quok**  
GM, India & Singapore, Nilfisk

hygiene is a top priority for hotels to ensure guest satisfaction and safety, and Nilfisk's products such as commercial vacuum cleaners, floor scrubbers and pressure washers are in high demand in countries such as India, Thailand and Indonesia.

"As the hotel industry expands, hotels are required to maintain

areas efficiently and effectively. Many hotels are also focussing on sustainability and reducing their environmental footprint where in Nilfisk offers eco-friendly cleaning equipment that reduces water and energy consumption with our Ecoflex patented technology, aligning with the sustainability goals of hotels. To

top it up, our high-quality cleaning equipment is built to withstand heavy usage in commercial environments such as hotels. Investing in durable equipment can extend the lifespan of cleaning machines, reducing the need for frequent replacements," stated **YC Quok**, GM, India & Singapore, Nilfisk.

HT



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# The resilient pathbreaker

Often referred to as the ‘turnaround man’ for scripting the revival stories of ITDC and Air India, **Gallery of Legends Inductee: Ashwani Lohani** is known for his exceptional crisis management skills.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

A name synonymous with gritty spirit and disciplined approach, **Ashwani Lohani**, CEO, GMR Aero Services is an inspirational visionary known as much for his gentle demeanour as he is for his ‘to-do’ mindset. From Indian Railways to Air India, he leaves his mark wherever he goes. Who can forget the heart-winning campaign of Madhya Pradesh Tourism, positioning the state as ‘Hindustan Ka Dil’? As the Managing Director of Madhya Pradesh Tourism, Lohani has been instrumental in positioning Madhya Pradesh as the leading state in tourism in the country.

He has been responsible for the spectacular turnaround of Ashok Hotel in Delhi as the Chairman & Managing Director of the India

“*As the Chairman of the Indian Railways, he is credited with stimulating growth and transformational reforms*”

Tourism Development Corporation and single-headedly piloting the successful encryption of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. As the Chairman of the Indian Railways, he is credited with enhancing safety, stimulating growth and carrying out large scale transformational reforms.

An acclaimed author, he has penned two books: ‘Winning at work against all odds’ and ‘Smoking Beauties’ and several newspaper columns. He made notable contributions as the Director of Tourism in GoI and the Director of the National Rail Museum. He also worked as the Chairman of Andhra Pradesh Tourism, and Advisor Tourism to the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand.

HT





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# NILFISK



# IHCL sets sights on East and Northeast expansion



IHCL is expanding in India, opening in Jaipur, Jammu, Kolkata, Kerala, and Mumbai, with plans for new destinations and brand diversification.

WORDS BY NISHA VERMA

**K**eeping a tab on the demand for hotels across the country, IHCL is on an expansion spree and is tapping new markets, as well as growing in existing ones. Sharing details on upcoming properties, **Parveen Chander Kumar**, Executive Vice President, Sales and Marketing, IHCL, said, “Unlocking the true

potential of India’s numerous destinations is reflected in IHCL’s recent signings and openings of new hotels. Jaipur saw the addition of Sawai Man Mahal, a heritage-palace celebrating the best of Rajputana heritage and Taj Amer with a façade reminiscent of Amer Fort. From a stylish Vivanta in Jammu to SeleQtions-branded hotels—Baragarh Resort & Spa in Manali and Jaagir Manor at Dudhwa National Park and Norbu The Montanna in Dharmshala—IHCL offers distinct experiences in North India. With glimpses of snow-topped Kanchenjunga at Guras Kutir, Gangtok, to Taal Kutir Convention Centre, IHCL is expanding its footprint in the East of India.”

### Tertiary markets in focus

When it comes to luxury brands expanding in tertiary markets, especially the Northeast,



“

*IHCL's Indian expansion strategy involves a pipeline of 80 hotels, with plans to introduce Taj in Tier II & III cities, IHCL SeleQtions and Ginger properties in various locations”*



**Parveen Chander Kumar**  
Executive Vice President,  
Sales and Marketing, IHCL



IHCL is the first mover. “IHCL’s brandscape lends itself to scaling in a heterogenous market such as India. With a strong pipeline of 80 hotels, we will enter new destinations and scale our brands. Our pipeline has a good representation of Tier II & III cities including a Taj planned in cities such as Patna, Puri, Dehradun and Raipur. IHCL SeleQtions in cities such as Bhubaneswar, Bekal, Tirupati, Kanpur, Rajkot and Munnar, among others, Vivanta in Haridwar, Tawang, Manipal, Jammu, Nashik and Lucknow, among others and Ginger in Srinagar, Nagpur, Coimbatore, Agra and Durgapur, among others,” Parveen averred.

Claiming that IHCL is committed to the Northeast of India, he informed, “IHCL has signed and is opening a slew of hotels in the region. The company has five hotels in Assam, including three under development. We are present in Tripura, Agartala, with a Ginger-branded hotel. Vivanta Shillong in Meghalaya opened last year. In Sikkim, we launched Vivanta Pakyong and this will be followed by the opening of Taj Guras Kutir Resort & Spa and a Ginger in Gangtok this month.”

HT





**BACK ON TRACK**

# Hospitality education

NEP 2020 and JNU collaboration to boost hospitality course demand, believes **KK Pant**.

WORDS BY **LIPLA NEGI**

**A**fter the severe impact of COVID-19 led to a substantial drop in admissions, IHMs faced their worst crisis in 2022 with over 60% of seats vacant. However, the industry is recovering, with hotels highlighting the urgent need for skilled workers. **KK Pant**, Principal, IHM Pusa, New Delhi, believes the media has exaggerated the situation and assures that the future looks promising. Although there has been a decline in JEE test takers for IHM admissions in recent years, the long-term trend shows an increasing interest in the sector.

## **An array of options**

In the last two decades, IHMs have offered a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Hotel Administration degree, providing numerous opportunities for graduates. He adds, "IHM, Pusa, has alumni in diverse sectors like civil services, armed forces, media, and MNCs. Opportunities in the broader hospitality sector have grown, extending beyond hotels to areas like retail, high-end real estate, and e-commerce, all seeking graduates for their strong soft skills. The curriculum is adapting to the National Education Policy 2020."

The collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru University has modernized the curriculum, emphasizing not just core hospitality skills but also environmental awareness, wellness, entrepreneurship, and employability. He states, "IHM graduates' well-rounded personalities and aptitude make them suitable for various sectors. The entrance exam includes a 20% section dedicated to testing





hospitality aptitude, evaluating empathy, analytical ability, and decision-making. Other segments assess environmental awareness, communication skills, and logical deduction, ensuring that top performers in the entrance test tend to excel in their careers.”

### **Filling the trust deficit**

In discussions about training new hospitality professionals, Pant advises against blame games. Having experience as a hotel manager and educator, he believes finger-pointing is unproductive. He sees the divide as a result of misunderstanding and a lack of mutual trust. Pant adds, “I envision a significant opportunity for collaboration between industry professionals and educators, highlighting the potential of the National Education Policy (NEP) to bring experienced hotel managers into academia as professors of practice and provide educational institutions with opportunities for their faculty and staff to gain experience as practicing hotel managers.”

### **Normalize course correction**

Pant observes that switching careers midway has become increasingly common in today’s professional landscape. Experts predict that in the coming decades, people may change their professions multiple times, driven by a desire for freedom and self-actualization. He explains, “This trend is not limited to hospitality; it mirrors the movement of engineers, doctors, and architects into management and civil services. It’s entirely reasonable for individuals to make course corrections if their careers are

not aligned with their aspirations or if better opportunities emerge in related sectors.”

### **IHMs are at par**

In evaluating the competition between IHMs and standalone hospitality institutes,

“

*The last few months have witnessed multiple job offers chasing a handful of competent people”*

### **KK Pant**

Principal  
IHM Pusa, New Delhi

Pant emphasizes, “The industry’s reception of graduates is the ultimate measure of an educational institution’s success.” He views state-funded institutes as equal opportunity platforms, noting that private institutions, despite modern facilities and international partnerships, may lack the quality, excellence and determination found in government IHMs. He concludes, “Quality education is a proven path to social mobility, and IHMs play a vital role in offering this opportunity to disadvantaged individuals.”

HT





## Recipe of success from 1947

**Amit Bagga**, the co-founder and CEO of Daryaganj, talks about the brand's aim of reaching 100 outlets in 5 years in the country and overseas expansion.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

**I**n the bustling landscape of the Indian restaurant industry, I began a unique culinary journey. Despite my family's background in the automobile business, my true passion lay in the restaurant industry. In 2010, I co-founded a restaurant bar chain to explore the restaurant world. By 2016, I realized bar-oriented establishments struggled to build loyalty so I shifted focus to family-oriented casual dining. This

marked the beginning of Daryaganj Restaurant, where families could enjoy memorable dining experiences, and my passion for the restaurant industry found its true home.

### **Daryaganj: the beginning**

In 2019, my childhood friend Raghav Jaggi and I embarked on a culinary journey with a mission. We launched our brand, 'DARYAGANJ - By the Inventors of Butter Chicken & Dal Makhani', to revive the legacy of the

late Mr. Kundan Lal Jaggi, who also happened to be Raghav's grandfather.

Our goal was clear- to reintroduce the authentic flavours of North Indian cuisine to a world that had begun to forget its culinary heritage. We recognized a void in the market, an unmet need for a North Indian casual dining restaurant brand. We aspired to offer consistently top-notch cuisine, warm and inviting service, and a unique dining experience, all while maintaining affordability.





dining restaurants and 3 Cloud Kitchens, we plan to expand to 8 more CDR outlets and 7 Cloud outlets in North India, totalling 25 stores. Our future goals include South and West India expansion and an international store in Thailand, with the ultimate aim of reaching 100 outlets in 5 years and exploring international opportunities in Singapore, UAE, UK, and Australia.

### Expansion plans

While success is indeed a tantalizing taste, our primary focus remains on nurturing the growth of Daryaganj. However, our expanding operational team and valuable experience have positioned us to consider the creation of more brands within the same segment in the coming year. Our commitment to excellence will remain unwavering as we embark on this journey of creating more brands, while keeping affordability in mind. HT



*Daryaganj has excelled in mall and high-street locations, meeting the demand for quality retail spaces”*

### The strength of Daryaganj’s cuisine

Daryaganj is renowned for its classic North Indian cuisine, rich in history and robust flavours. Our menu showcases exquisite kebabs and sumptuous curries like Butter Chicken and Dal Makhani, expertly prepared to let every ingredient shine.

Our food is crafted using fresh, hand-picked ingredients, including tandoor-grilled meats, seafood, and vegetables prepared to perfection. We use local produce to capture the flavours of post-independence North India. Our reconstructed dishes proudly bear the names ‘The Original 1947 Butter Chicken’ and ‘The Original 1947 Dal Makhani’.

### Growth and future

Daryaganj has excelled in mall and high-street locations, meeting the demand for quality retail spaces in India. Our unique growth strategy, the FICO model – ‘Franchise Invested, Company Operated’, has investors sharing revenue while the brand handles daily operations and expenses, ensuring quality standards. Currently, with 7 casual



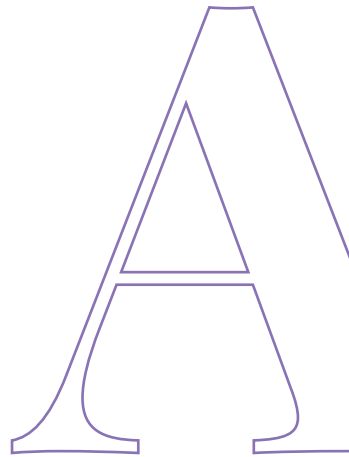


# Pouring personalisation

From indigenous ingredients to infused flavours, personalisation emerges as the key trend driving the 'spirited' choices of Gen Z, reveal top mixologists.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI





At the helm of things, **Archita Gupta**, Asst. Food and Beverage Manager, Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa assumes the role of conceptualizing and crafting unique cocktails at House of Nomad, located in the Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa, Goa. As a devoted mixologist, she observes that modern consumers are increasingly open to exploring new flavours. She points out, “An array of trends is taking over the spirit world such as portable RTD cans, infused and flavoured spirits, colourful spirits like yellow gin, pink gin/vodka,



*To stay ahead in this competitive market, you need to have an out of the box story”*

**Archita Gupta**

Asst. Food and Beverage Manager,  
Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa



not to miss the advent of small batch craft spirits, making indigenous brands premium and preferred.”

**Customised choice**

Gupta highlights that Gen Z places a premium on health, more so than millennials. They prefer drinks perceived as healthier, including natural fruit juices, low-sugar options, and non-alcoholic beverages. This trend has led to the increased popularity of drinks like kombucha. She adds, “Low-alcohol variants such as 0 ABV G&Ts and Rum Colas are the favoured choices of the current generation.”

**Sustainability matters**

There’s an increase in demand for plant-based, vegan and sustainable choices of drinks such as almond milk, oat milk, and other eco-friendly options. The premier bars have already shifted their focus in this direction and are working towards curating customised drinks. Gupta explains, “The Paathya initiative by IHCL focuses on sustainable initiatives in day-to-day operations. Our bar House of Nomad uses homemade syrups made using homemade ingredients, procured from local producers, eliminating the use of plastic straws and stirrers. We use glass bottles for storage of ingredients.”

**Pairing to perfection**

In the realm of bartending, flavour pairing is a thoughtful endeavour. However, Gupta emphasizes that there are no strict rules governing flavour pairing; it largely depends on individual preferences and creativity. She elaborates, “When it comes to crafting cocktails, the decision often revolves around contrasting or harmonizing flavours within the drink to achieve a balance of the five tastes. It involves aligning intensities and a continuous process of tasting and adjusting—a perpetual cycle of trial and



error. The possibilities are boundless, allowing you to explore and uncover your unique combinations.”

She further notes that for a curated cocktail, a typical 60 ml pour is the standard practice, with exceptions made for cocktails with a strong emphasis on the spirit.

### A cut above

Besides traditional methods like right marketing, social media plays a crucial role in driving the popularity of a bar. “To stay ahead in this competitive market and increase your visibility, you need to have an out of the box story,” Gupta suggests. Second comes maintaining consistency. “To achieve that, it is not only imperative to have brilliant bites & drinks, but also a wholesome experience which takes in account everything from the service, hospitality, little collaterals, lighting, ambience, vibe to the design of the menu, approachability of the space, competitive pricing, element of storytelling, a well thought name or logo that establishes the identity and leaves its imprint,” she advises.

### A toast to captivating narratives

Embodying the speakeasy concept, ZLB23 thrives on the power of word-of-mouth marketing. **Rajib Mukherjee**, Head Mixologist ZLB23, The Leela Palace Bengaluru describes his core strategy as ‘building genuine connections with the guests, ensuring their comfort,

and fostering a sense of belonging’. He believes in the power of collaboration when it comes to curating a global experience for guests. He explains, “We are also making a mark by introducing global cocktail culture through collaborations with renowned bars and beverage professionals. The magnetic music ambience, delectable food offerings, and unique twists on prohibition-era cocktails contribute to ZLB23’s distinctive and captivating identity, positioning it as the ‘talk of the town’.”

### Embracing minimalism

While it’s essential to acknowledge the diversity of individual tastes within any generation, there are discernible trends that set Gen Z apart from millennials in their drink preferences. Mukherjee describes, “Gen Z tends to favour cocktails with lower sugar content, embracing the minimalist concept, and exploring unconventional flavour profiles. They seek not just a drink but a captivating narrative to accompany their beverage, making the overall drinking experience more immersive and engaging.”

### Top choices

In the dynamic world of cocktails, current trends point to a growing preference for white spirits, with tequila taking the lead in today’s cocktail landscape. “It’s worth noting that in India, whisky remains a dominant force in the cocktail market, reflecting a strong and enduring



“

*Perception of the amount of alcohol can vary  
due to the diverse flavours & styles of cocktails”*

**Rajib Mukherjee**  
Head Mixologist  
ZLB23, The Leela Palace Bengaluru





preference. Interestingly, rum is also making a significant mark on the modern cocktail scene, adding diversity to the spectrum of spirits,” Mukherjee shares.

According to him creating a well-balanced cocktail through flavour pairing is an art. He explains, “It’s crucial to identify the primary and supporting flavours. Technical knowledge and experimentation are the key to concocting a popular drink. Some flavours benefit from temperature, while others shine under pressure, also known as sous pression or ice infusion.” He defines the winning formula as a harmonious balance between sweetness and acidity, which can also enhance the overall taste of the cocktail.

### Funky flavours in demand

Recently, Mukherjee has been immersing himself in the realm of carbonated cocktails, with a particular focus on highballs that demand meticulous



*Maintaining a harmonious flavour profile while ensuring responsible service is the continuous endeavour”*

### Ranjeet Singh

Beverage Manager  
Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield  
Hotel & Convention Centre

preparation techniques. “I have also been exploring the art of fruit fermentation, blending fruits with an assortment of spices and herbs to introduce distinctive and unconventional flavours into cocktails,” he reveals. The enthusiastic response from customers has been overwhelmingly positive, serving as a catalyst for his team to craft outstanding cocktails enriched with captivating narratives.

He further adds, “Cocktails typically contain 60 ml of alcohol, following an industry standard that includes spirits, liqueurs, aperitifs, digestifs and bitters. However, the perception of the amount of alcohol can vary due to the diverse flavours and styles of cocktails.” He advises bartenders to ask relevant questions when taking cocktail orders, as different cocktail styles suit different preferences. “For instance, those who prefer spirit-forward cocktails may perceive less alcohol in a tall and refreshing highball drink. Regardless of how fancy a cocktail may seem, the critical factor is asking the right questions to ensure patrons receive the drink that best suits their taste,” he suggests.







### Maximize resource utilization

Sustainability is a broad and vital aspect of bar operations at ZLB23. “Closed-loop cocktails are an integral part of our sustainability journey, ensuring that we maximize the use of all ingredients, from fruits to herbs and spices, by creating oils or pickles and exploring preservation methods,” he reveals. Additionally, he advocates use of chipped glassware recycling, which provides a second life to glass products. He adds, “We have made the shift to metal and stainless-steel straws and stirrers, emphasizing our commitment to eco-friendly choices in all aspects of our bar operations.”

### Demand for homegrown spirits

Renowned for his profound expertise in wine varieties and quality, **Ranjeet Singh**, Beverage Manager at the Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre, boasts an esteemed WSET Level 3 certification. His passion lies in the realm of flavour experimentation, leading to the curation of distinctly unique beverages. As he conveys, “One of the most captivating facets of my mixology career is the chance to master the world of flavours. I’ve consistently had the privilege of connecting with individuals from diverse backgrounds, crafting unforgettable experiences for patrons at bars, lounges, and events. Through tailor-made cocktails, I’ve forged relationships, nurtured

connections, and evolved into a trusted confidant, catering to the individual tastes of my patrons.”

### It’s all about experience

While millennials largely prefer indulging in a cocktail to relax, Gen Z with their love for Insta-ready locations and showy features like molecular gastronomy – seek experience. “In the competitive bar scene, creating an inviting ambiance, offering creative cocktails with locally sourced ingredients, delivering exceptional service, embracing sustainability with in-house garnishes, and hosting engaging events have significantly boosted our bar’s footfall. When determining liquor quantity in cocktails, our focus remains on the recipe, glassware, and customer preferences. We aim to strike a balance that maintains a harmonious flavour profile while ensuring responsible service. We have become the ‘talk of the town’ by carving a niche that revolves around sustainability and unforgettable experiences,” Singh explains.

### Homegrown spirits find favours

Singh further adds, “In a bid for sustainability, the bar is incorporating in-house grown ingredients for cocktail garnishes, enhancing with dehydrated fruits like grapefruit and oranges, as well as dry herbs. These steps have been instrumental in elevating the bar’s offerings and promoting sustainability.”

HT



# Luxury caterers

## The gamechangers

Indian luxury catering trailblazers bring a paradigm shift in hospitality standards. Two pioneer brands share their stories of exploring and shaping this niche segment.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI





# Planning is paramount in this business

**Puneet Sikand**  
Director - JPS Catering® Ltd  
The Kitchen Art Co™



**P**uneet Sikand was truly visionary when he recognized the disparity between food preparation and presentation, and he took it upon himself to narrow that gap. He introduced a sense of elegance and top-notch service to the field of food catering, effectively pioneering the concept of upscale catering in the nation. “Twenty years ago, there existed a significant divide between five-star hotels and the ordinary ‘*halwais*’ who prepared food without any finesse. International cuisines, aside from those offered by five-star hotels, were a rare sight. This presented a substantial opportunity, and I seized it. I successfully bridged the gap between the ‘*halwais*’ and five-star hotels, and the response was instantaneous,” he recounts.

With commitment and consistency is how he and his team

clawed their way to success in the narrow niche of luxury catering. He believes it’s the constant urge to learn and innovate that sets his brand apart. “My team & I worked tirelessly for over a decade, leaving no stone unturned to establish ourselves. We always dwelt in the luxurious style of our food & presentation, with constant upgradation. Even today, we are on our toes to upscale our brand with our innovations & the current trends,” he explains.

In a capital-intensive business, it is not easy to break even and turn cash positive operationally too soon. So how did he manage to taste success? He says, “This business is both capital & labour intensive. When I started the business, the menus were small and did not have any other paraphernalia attached as compared to today. However, it did take about 4 years to break even then.”





He underlines ‘styling of buffets and developing new recipes’ as extremely significant because the first impression is always the last. “The food must be beautifully and artistically displayed and more importantly the servers must be knowledgeable and proficient in the art of selling,” he upholds.

When it comes to brainstorming for new menus, he credits ‘travel’ as a vital source of inspiration & exploration. From HNIs & business houses to movie stars & politicians, his clientele includes the crème de crème of the country. “The largest catering that we have catered is for a reception dinner for 8000 guests with 12 identical buffet stations and over 700 servers,” he says. His catering enterprise also takes overseas assignments during peak summers & monsoons in India. “It has become a trend to do international destination weddings and usually in beautiful locales,” he shares.



“

*We catered for a reception dinner for 8000 guests with 12 identical buffet stations”*

## *Authenticity of every dish is vital*



**Arjun Puri & Sahiba Puri**  
Co-founders  
XO Catering by Design

**I**t began as a passion project back in 2006 with the Chatwal wedding in Udaipur, a high-profile one that was featured on NDTV Good Times. The project turned into a turning point of introspection and inspiration for the founder of XO Catering by Design. Co-founder Arjun Puri shares, “We realized the scope of bringing together the knowledge of traditional & global cuisine with creativity to form the fundamental pillar of catering.”

The brand has catered events for the esteemed Amitabh Bachchan, Shahid Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra and other leading names like Kiran Nadar, Munjal & Shriram. Recently, at the Dior Spring/Summer Campaign 2023 in Udaipur, it catered to over 1500 guests, showcasing a diverse menu, keeping in mind dietary restrictions from 8 different cuisines.



“We also work closely with various embassies in India & consider it an absolute privilege. Overseas, we have had the honour to cater at the Burj Khalifa in Dubai,” he adds.

### **Creativity coupled with consistency**

Mastering diverse cuisines requires a deep understanding of their origins and nuances, and the company has mastered this art. “We source our chefs from various regions, ensuring authenticity in every dish. Our team undergoes rigorous training and attends sample workshops to keep updated with global culinary trends,” he informs.

To add cultural uniqueness to their work, the team works closely with local artisans, sourcing unique serving platters that complement the aesthetic of each dish. It certainly helps to have his daughter and co-founder Sahiba Puri with a



background in Fashion Styling, that enables the team to learn and execute the latest trends in food aesthetic.

Explaining the brand’s creative strategy she says, “We must consistently diversify our platters, crockery & cutlery to keep up with & create new market trends.




*Most of our capital is put back into procuring materials”*

Especially with catering in Delhi being a seasonal business, with each season we have managed to keep our clients extremely satisfied and excited for what is to come next. Most of our capital is put back into procuring materials and ensuring that the next event is just as good, if not better, than the last.”

### **Melting pot of global influence**

According to Sahiba, food has a remarkable ability to foster a sense of harmony, be it through culture, rituals, celebrations, social gatherings or emotional comfort. And food goes hand-in-hand with travel, especially for her – it keeps the fire alive.

“Through our travels across the globe, our passion for exploration usually extended beyond the landscape, to the heart of each culture – its food. This enabled us to put together a feast for the senses, bringing the indelible mark that each destination left on our palates for everyone to enjoy. It was a long journey filled with hurdles to make our kitchen a melting pot of global influence, however an extremely rewarding one,” she says. 





# Indulge in unforgettable romantic getaways



Kayon Hotels & Resorts in Bali are renowned for their expertise in curating intimate vacations, offering an array of enchanting properties, showcasing Bali's stunning natural landscapes.

WORDS BY **SARA HAQUE**

**T**he Kayon made a noteworthy mark in Delhi by hosting an exclusive roadshow at The Lalit Hotel, Barakhamba. **Wayan Sucitra**, the CEO of Kayon Hotels & Resorts, expressed their anticipation for this India visit, emphasizing the significance of the Indian market which consistently ranks among the top seven for all three of Kayon's premium properties. He further remarked, "As a gesture of gratitude to our valued partners and to amplify the reach of our offerings, the event aimed to showcase our unique properties."

The Kayon Hotels & Resorts, Indonesia, are premium properties located in the lap of nature in Ubud, Bali. This brand is known for its expertise in providing romantic escapes tailored for honeymooners and couples, and they maintain an age restriction, not permitting children under the age of fifteen to ensure an undisturbed experience. The three beautiful properties—The Kayon Ubud Resort, The Kayon Jungle Resort, and The Kayon Valley Resort, are all located amongst the lush greens of Ubud, Bali. Ubud is popular for wellness and nature retreats, and the brand offers a tropical indulgence for intimate experiences.

**Komang Arta Wirawan Sarba**, Cluster Sales Manager, adds, "We want Indian tourists, especially honeymooners and couples, to visit our resorts and explore the wonderful natural landscape of Bali, and particularly Ubud. We would highly recommend the Kayon Jungle Resort as our top choice. The picturesque surroundings and the atmosphere at all of our resorts ensure a delightful and unforgettable experience for couples." HT





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# Strategic Indian collaboration fuels Ovolo's growth

**Joel Bartlett**, the General Manager of MAMAKA by Ovolo, unveils his forthcoming goals, with a strong focus on expanding within the Indian market.

WORDS BY SUHANI SOOD



**N**estled amidst the vibrant neighbourhoods of Kuta and Legian, MAMAKA by Ovolo boasts a strategically positioned beachfront location, making it a coveted destination for travellers seeking a tropical paradise in Bali. With its luxurious accommodations, well-appointed rooms, and unique

offerings, this beach hotel stands out as a distinctive retreat. Notably, it is conveniently surrounded by renowned attractions such as Waterbom Park, Bali Sea Turtle, Kuta Theatre, Beachwalk Shopping Centre, Discovery Shopping Mall, and the famous Hard Rock Café. Furthermore, its close proximity to Bali Ngurah Rai International

Airport, just a 15-minute drive away, ensures it caters to the needs of both short-term and long-term guests.

## **India market – tailor-made offerings**

Ovolo Hotels' presence extends beyond Bali, encompassing Hong Kong and Australia. In particular, the Indian market holds significant



importance for all Ovolo properties. Bartlett emphasizes, “The Indian market is very important to us, and Indians are regular guests at all our properties. To cater to this clientele and foster loyalty, we have crafted tailor-made packages and introduced a diverse array of Indian cuisines prepared by Indian chefs, enhancing Ovolo’s offerings.”

Notably, a key focus for Ovolo is providing 100% vegetarian hotels, representing a crucial Key Performance Indicator (KPI). He added, “We have recently unveiled a dedicated Indian-style buffet options for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, targeting groups of 20 or more.”

### Agenda for 2023-24 – focus on Indian market

With 2024 looming just around

the corner, Bartlett shares insights into the forthcoming year’s objectives. “Our plan is to persist in our current path and expand our presence in the Indian market. We are meticulously studying the preferences and demands of this market, aiming to adapt and evolve accordingly,” he stated.

He stressed the importance of their collaboration with Indian sales offices, stating, “What’s particularly beneficial is our close partnership with Indian sales offices, which allows us to stay informed about evolving trends. This collaboration is instrumental in our efforts to enhance the overall guest experience for our Indian clientele.” In essence, the vision for the future underscores a commitment to meeting the unique needs of Indian guests and

ensuring Ovolo Hotels’ continued growth in this key market.

### Guest queries

When queried about the specific demands and inquiries originating from the Indian market, Bartlett addressed the key points. He stated, “Queries revolve around our provision of Indian cuisine, the presence of Indian guests, family accommodations, airport transfers, and the organization of excursions, activities, and cultural trips. We consistently receive substantial group inquiries from the Indian market, which is remarkable. This demonstrates that our current offerings adequately meet their requirements, and we find ourselves well-equipped in terms of room availability.”

### Preserving for future – Sustainability goals

Bartlett expressed tremendous enthusiasm for the sustainability efforts implemented throughout all Ovolo properties. He stated, “I am deeply dedicated to the sustainability aspect of our business. Bali is an island with exceptional beauty, and holds significant importance in terms of preserving the island for both present and future generations.” HT



*To cater to the Indian clientele and foster loyalty, we have crafted tailor-made packages and introduced a diverse array of Indian cuisine”*







# WOFX 2023 returns to Mumbai

Showcasing the latest in furniture and design.

**W**orld Furniture Expo 2023, the dedicated international B2B event for the furniture market and industry in India will take place once again from 28-30 November 2023 at the Bombay Exhibition Centre, Mumbai, showcasing the latest trends, innovation and craftsmanship in the furniture and design industry.

WOFX serves as the exclusive networking and business platform dedicated to enhancing opportunities in the furniture and décor industries. It is uniquely designed to align industry objectives and bring the target audience together in one place. With India being the world's 4<sup>th</sup> largest furniture consumer and the 14<sup>th</sup> largest furniture market, WOFX 2023 is set to significantly boost the growth of the furniture industry by connecting over 400 brands from 13 countries with key industry stakeholders.

To further catalyse the furniture and décor industry, WOFX 2023 will

feature international country pavilions and global industry participation. This includes exhibitors from countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Turkiye,

distributors, and clients, fostering networking and collaboration.

**Rajesh Bhagat**, Chairman & Managing Director of Worldex India, the organizer of WOFX said,

“

*As a show singularly dedicated to the Indian furniture and design industry, WOFX is the best regional business platform for this industry”*

France, Italy, Hong Kong, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India. WOFX serves as an international sourcing marketplace connecting professionals, designers, builders, buyers, retailers, and ecommerce companies with potential suppliers,

“WOFX dedicatedly assists suppliers to capitalise on India's market demands. We strongly believe that as a show singularly dedicated to the Indian furniture and design industry, WOFX is the best regional business platform for this industry.”

HT



# HOTREMAI convenes 41<sup>st</sup> AGM

Meeting covered report acceptance, audited account approval, and executive committee elections.



Nitin Kumar, the newly elected President of HOTREMAI, expressed gratitude for his appointment and paid tribute to those who passed away in 2023. He welcomed the newly elected Executive Committee Members and expressed appreciation for members' participation and contributions. He aspired for HOTREMAI to attain new milestones and presented the 2022-2023 report with audited financials, underscoring teamwork and outlining future plans.

The past President, Anil Malhotra congratulated the newly elected team and stressed upon the need of expanding HOTREMAI's presence across different regions of India. HT

**T**he 41<sup>st</sup> Annual General Body Meeting of HOTREMAI took place on September 22, 2023, in New Delhi. The meeting included the acceptance of the previous year's report, the approval

of audited accounts, and the election of the new Executive Committee. It began with a welcome address and a presentation, followed by the announcement of election results by R. Kumar, the Election Officer.

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# Discover the uncharted jewel of Rajasthan

Nestled in Rajasthan's Aravalli Range, Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh offers a unique blend of heritage, culture and luxury.

**T**he Radisson Hotel Group is redefining hospitality with the Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh. This resort seamlessly combines tradition with modernity, paying homage to Rajasthan's rich heritage. Set in a spectacular location with a mountainous backdrop, the resort is accessible from Maharana Pratap Airport Udaipur and Udaipur City Junction Train Station within two hours.

The resort is located in proximity to the illustrious Kumbhalgarh Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage

site renowned for its architectural splendour. Its strategic location ensures convenient access to other prominent attractions, including the revered Ranakpur Jain Temple and the captivating wildlife of Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary. Just a 2-hour drive away from Udaipur, life at Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh is all about the simple pleasures – waking up to warm sunshine, strolling through lush gardens, savouring local culinary delights, and exploring tales of bravery with guided treks and trails to sites undiscovered.



“We are thrilled to unveil Radisson Blu Resort Kumbhalgarh, a true gem in our growing portfolio. With its captivating setting, thoughtful amenities, and Rajasthan's warm hospitality, we are confident that Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh will become a preferred destination for travellers seeking an unforgettable experience. Radisson Hotel Group, in the past 25 years of operations in India, has become a part of the country's social fabric. We derive deep inspiration from this and will continue to add more such magnificent hotels to our portfolio that are an embodiment of India's rich heritage,” said **Zubin Saxena**, Managing Director & Area Senior Vice President - South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group.

The resort is a serene oasis spread across 5.18 acres. Surrounded by diverse flora and fauna, including multiple-aged banyan trees, it offers a refreshing change of pace. It is the only IGBC-certified property in the region. The resort boasts







spacious rooms and suites that are elegantly designed with thoughtful touches offering stunning views of the picturesque landscape, ensuring a tranquil retreat for every guest. The resort offers three unique dining

Flute recitals, Ghoomar dance, and Sandhya aarti for a memorable stay.

“We are delighted to collaborate with Radisson Hotel Group for the opening of Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh. This partnership

Rajasthan. We are committed to providing unparalleled hospitality and ensuring that every guest enjoys a memorable stay,” said **Sharad Mishra**, Director & Owner of Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh.

“

*The resort boasts spacious rooms and suites that are elegantly designed with thoughtful touches offering stunning views of the picturesque landscape”*

options, comprising a pizzeria, an all-day diner, and a lounge bar.

The resort also features a fitness centre, rejuvenating spa, and an outdoor pool. It has expansive meeting and banquet facilities, recreational activities like workshops, guided treks, jungle visits, and cultural experiences like Nagada,

marks a significant milestone in our journey as a hospitality brand, as we join forces with a renowned global leader in the industry. Through this collaboration, we are confident in delivering an exceptional experience that allows our guests to immerse themselves in the rich culture and heritage of

**Gourav Deb**, General Manager of Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh stated, “Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh is designed to offer a perfect blend of tranquillity, luxury, and cultural immersion. We are excited to host our guests with the Group’s signature Yes, I Can! Service ethos.”





# Fine dining

## takes a tech-licious leap

Welcome to the age of tech-powered luxury dining, where environment-conscious innovations aim to redefine your culinary experiences.

WORDS BY SARA HAQUE







**T**he luxury food and beverage sector in India has witnessed significant growth, particularly in the post-COVID era. The industry has undergone positive transformations and advancements, thanks to the integration of global technologies and enhanced guest accessibility.

**Haramohan Bora**, Assistant Director, Food & Beverage, Aloft Outer Ring Road, Bengaluru, mentioned, “One of the biggest trends now is the adoption of technology in fine dining, where guests can order and view the food plating digitally before placing an order. Technology is playing a major role with AI, and it can assist guests with things such as 3D viewing for a particular dish, thus enhancing the ordering experience.”

The most emergent trend in the F&B industry across the country is the demand for farm-to-table menus with locally grown ingredients. There has been a growing insistence on sustainability and local sourcing for luxury dining post-COVID and is a possible long-term trend that the industry is taking seriously. **Noel Mendes**, Manager, Food & Beverage, Four Seasons Hotel, Mumbai, said, “Sustainability and ethical sourcing are gaining importance in the luxury food sector. Fine dining restaurants are increasingly sourcing their ingredients locally and emphasising sustainability in their menus. This includes using organic and seasonal produce, reducing food waste and supporting local farmers and artisans. Chefs and restaurateurs are also exploring the diverse culinary traditions of the country, showcasing

“*The adoption of technology in fine dining is transforming the ordering experience, allowing guests to view food plating digitally*”



**Haramohan Bora**  
Assistant Director, Food & Beverage, Aloft Outer Ring Road, Bengaluru





**Amit Chawla**  
Director, Food & Beverage,  
Hyatt Regency Delhi



*Chefs across the country in luxury dining are exploring innovative fusion cuisines that combines traditional with global culinary influences”*

lesser-known regional dishes and ingredients in their menus. This trend aims to provide a more immersive and culturally rich dining experience for consumers.”

Chefs have also been focussing on regional cuisines and local flavours in luxury dining. It is increasingly being favoured by consumers across the country, with a heightened preference for menus that incorporate unique regional flavours and locally sourced ingredients. **Amit Chawla**, Director, Food & Beverage, Hyatt Regency Delhi, expressed, “Luxury restaurants and fine dining establishments have been increasingly collaborating with local farmers and artisans to provide fresher, more sustainable and unique ingredients. Chefs across the country in luxury dining are exploring innovative fusion cuisines that combine traditional Indian flavours

with global culinary influences. This trend has gained momentum especially after COVID, when more and more travellers are experimenting with a lot of traditional flavours mixed with a touch of global cuisine.”

Similarly, in the beverage sector, locally sourced and crafted beverages are gaining popularity amongst consumers, along with an attraction towards specialty drinks with customisation, which include craft beers, wines and spirits. “Customers are moving towards innovative specialty cocktails. Creative and unique cocktails are becoming the focal point of hotel beverage menus. A lot of hotels have been employing the best mixologists to craft signature cocktails that reflect the hotel’s identity. We at Hyatt Regency Delhi have also been laying emphasis on weekly trainings and hiring the



best talent, so we are able to offer our guests world-class cocktails,” Chawla added. **Rahul Chaudhary**, Director, Food & Beverage, Conrad Pune, added, “Sustainable and technique-forward cocktails supported by storytelling are gaining more interest. Zero-proof beverages are slowly gaining interest in India. Worldwide, the popularity of sour cocktails made with fermented, gut-healthy ingredients such as kombucha, miso and sake are also predicted to rise. Simultaneously, local spirit is gaining interest in India and will continue to develop.”

As mentioned, the creative reimagination within the F&B sector also seems to extend to building an experience that is both creative and experiential for the luxury F&B consumer. Guided tours which let the guest see every step in the spirit-making process,

“*The luxury food sector is prioritizing sustainability and ethical sourcing, supporting local farmers and artisans, aiming for a culturally rich dining experience*”



**Noel Mendes**  
Manager, Food &  
Beverage, Four Seasons  
Hotel, Mumbai

cooking sessions with chefs that give them an insight into the intricacies of food up to its plating, among others, are recent innovations adopted by hotels. “Today, people are open to experimental dining and love to try new innovations. Conceptual dinners in collaboration, food and wine pairing events, and beverage appreciation sessions will continue to engage patrons,” Chaudhary believed. Fine dining is now considered a serious affair, with focussed efforts from hotels towards curating a wholesome experience for their customers, which includes providing distinctive menus, a wide range of options to cater to different palates, and heeding sustainability along with nutrition.



According to Mendes, the most important thing for hotels right now is to encourage these trends and keep a regular tab on shifting consumer needs. “The emphasis on health and wellness is a global trend and consumers are seeking healthier and more sustainable dining options. We will also have to continue prioritising sustainable practices—from sourcing ingredients to waste reduction, as environmentally conscious practices are increasingly attractive to consumers. It is very important for us as hoteliers and chefs to stay attuned to evolving consumer preferences and adapt menus and offerings accordingly, so as to meet the demand for healthier, sustainable, and unique dining experiences,” he said.

HT



# Emerging tech transforms hospitality kitchens

AI, IoT, and blockchain are revolutionizing F&B, while advanced order systems, digital invoicing, and real-time inventory management are transforming the hotel sector.

WORDS BY SAKSHI SINGH

A few decades ago, the idea of connecting kitchens with data sets and integrating food with blockchain technology was beyond comprehension. Even the most visionary leaders in the hotel industry could not have predicted a future where the kitchen would evolve into a hub of diverse technologies. The food & beverage sector has quietly found itself at the epicentre of a technological

technologies that are likely to witness increased adoption in the F&B space. Besides AI and IoT, advanced order management systems, digital invoicing and real-time inventory management have found widespread acceptability in hotels.

“In the ever-evolving landscape of the hotel industry’s F&B segment, several noteworthy technological breakthroughs are shaping the way hotels provide their services. These include contactless ordering and payment systems,



**Ranjan Rajani**  
Director, Food &  
Beverage, Sahara Star



*Kitchen automation technologies have expedited food preparation and minimised errors, ensuring consistent quality”*

revolution. Technology adoption has been on the rise across various aspects, spanning from customer-facing departments such as food delivery and ordering to behind-the-scenes areas such as kitchen operations and sourcing.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven solutions primarily in kitchen automation, the Internet of Things (IoT) and the use of blockchain to improve traceability are some of the major

AI-driven personalisation, smart kitchens, sustainability initiatives and food safety technologies,” said **Ranjan Rajani**, Director, Food & Beverage, Sahara Star. An industry that thrives on impeccable service quality with zero tolerance for error was the perfect fit for a technological disruption. For instance, digital order and inventory management systems help improve the uniformity of the processes starting





from sourcing to delivery of the prepared food. “Kitchen automation technologies such as advanced cooking equipment and order management systems, have expedited food preparation and minimised errors, ensuring consistent quality,” Rajani pointed out.

The impact of new-age technologies on the food and service quality can be gauged only if one takes into consideration the level of disconnect that prevailed between the various departments of large F&B operations. Without an integrated system, procurement, ordering, preparation and delivery all used to take place separately. The advent of digital solutions such as integrated order and inventory management systems has ensured that procurement is synchronised with the order volume. Digital screens are replacing

printed tickets inside kitchens. It has ensured that the front end, i.e., the restaurant floor, is integrated seamlessly into the back-end kitchen. With an integrated system, outstanding orders, inventory level, necessary checks and processes and the estimated time besides other key information are displayed clearly. It helps in simplifying operations in a high-pressure zone like the kitchen which has to handle scores of unique orders at any given time.

The use of integrated systems in F&B operations also helps in capturing relevant data which is sorted by AI-powered software leading to the identification of patterns that help in operating efficiently. “Data analytics plays a pivotal role in understanding guest preferences and behaviour. Hotels leverage this data to tailor their F&B offerings, optimise





**Gaurav Bisht**  
Assistant Food & Beverage Manager, Hyatt Regency Pune



*Data analytics helps understand guest preferences and behaviour. Hotels leverage this data to tailor their F&B offerings and optimise pricing strategies”*

pricing strategies, and allocate resources effectively,” said **Gaurav Bisht**, Assistant Food & Beverage Manager, Hyatt Regency Pune. With the right merger of hardware and software coupled with data, hotels have been able to personalise orders for high-value guests. A recent incident at a large hotel in NCR has become the talk of town within hospitality circles. The AI-powered system deployed by the hotel uses available data to inform the kitchen staff about the guests’ preferences going as far as identifying ingredients that a guest is allergic to. The data is relayed in real time ensuring

that guests do not have to inform the hotel staff about their preferences on every visit.

Efficiency gains are at the core of every emerging technology solution for the F&B industry and one of the most critical issues plaguing the sector is food wastage. IoT-enabled appliances and devices have emerged as a sought-after solution to limit wastage. Connected pods for cooling and heating devices automatically maintain the optimum temperature and alert the hotel staff in case of microbial or bacterial growth. It helps in better utilisation of resources and reduces wastage.





*Blockchain guarantees supply chain transparency in the hotel industry and assures food and beverage authenticity and quality”*



**Mihir Kane**  
Executive Chef,  
Fairmont Jaipur

A tight control on spoilage and wastage coupled with traceability ensures that guests are served quality products. Some hotels have started using blockchain technology to ensure the authenticity of suppliers and the purity of ingredients. “Blockchain ensures transparency in

the hotel industry’s supply chain by creating an immutable record of every step in the sourcing and distribution process. This transparency allows hotels to verify the authenticity and quality of their food & beverage, reducing the risk of counterfeit products and ensuring that guests are served only the highest-quality item,” claimed **Mihir Kane**, Executive Chef, Fairmont Jaipur.

The returns from investment in technology accrue in the form of cost savings in the long run, but the savings in time are apparent immediately. “By digitising a few aspects of restaurant and hotel kitchens, such as daily safety checklists, business owners of small premises alone can save more than 10 hours per month by removing paper-based reporting,” Bisht pointed out.

With the rapid emergence of new technologies, it is hard to predict the evolution of food technologies and their adoption. However, technology has seeped into the core of F&B operations and it is likely to remain the same for the foreseeable future. An increasing number of routine tasks such as cleanliness and hygiene checks are going to get automated, freeing up crucial human resources for more important tasks. And if one looks at the cost of technology, it will come down as the technology matures. It has happened in other sectors such as energy and consumer durables and it will happen in hospitality too.

HT



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# A light tête-à-tête with Pratima Badhwar

Conversations on life, work,  
and everything in between.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

## Your latest read?

Recently, I read 'Becoming' by Michelle Obama. Multiple leaders' works have inspired my leadership style, and mentors aided my growth.

## Adventure or relaxation - your favourite destination for vacation?

I enjoy a mix of relaxation and exploration. Phuket is my favourite destination, offering relaxation, culture, cuisine, and retail therapy.

## Your most recent trip? How do you pick your next travel destination?

We visited Japan for cherry blossoms. It was our first post-COVID family trip. Travel choices depend on planning, logistics, and companions.

## What are your travel essentials?

Laptop, chargers, phone, sunscreen and a good series to binge.

## How do you describe yourself as a traveller?

I prefer to pack light and explore new towns.

## One change that you would like to bring to your industry?

I would like to see more diversity in this dynamic industry and more women considering it as a long-term career path.

## How do you maintain your energy and fitness levels?

I make an effort to lead an active life on and off work.

## What's your favourite sport?

I enjoy all sorts of games and love cricket.

## How do you manage daily work-life balance?

Weekdays are filled with travel, meetings, and occasional urgent matters, while weekends are reserved for family and chores.

## Crisis management – what has been the biggest leadership less?

Maintaining calmness and agility is crucial in handling crises, and empathy is a vital component when dealing with certain situations. HT



**Pratima Badhwar**  
Head of Commercial  
India & South Asia  
at Accor

# Movements



**Barun Gupta**  
General Manager,  
Expo Inn Suites  
and Convention

Expo Inn Suites and Convention has appointed Barun Gupta as the new General Manager. He's adept at revitalizing businesses and tailoring solutions to clients' needs. His commitment, adaptability, and foresight have garnered recognition, including being named one of the event industry's 100 most influential people.



**Andreas Fuchs**  
Director Of Food  
and Beverage, Grand  
Hyatt Gurgaon

Grand Hyatt Gurgaon has appointed Andreas Fuchs as its Director of Food and Beverage, bringing his expertise and knowledge from various global culinary hubs. With eight years of experience at Grand Hyatt Tokyo, he will oversee food and beverage services, market positioning, team training, and guest experiences.



**Timothy M. Kelly**  
President of  
Atlantis, Kerzner  
International

Atlantis Dubai has appointed Timothy M. Kelly as the President of Atlantis, Kerzner International, succeeding his six-year tenure at Atlantis Dubai. Timothy will lead and represent the Atlantis brand globally. He will also oversee resort operations, design planning, brand alignment, sales and marketing.



**Chandrashekhar Belose**  
Corporate Chief  
Engineer, Pride  
Hotels Group

Pride Hotels Group has appointed Chandrashekhar Belose as the Corporate Chief Engineer, bringing over 26 years of experience in the hospitality sector. He will lead sustainability measures across the portfolio, aiming to make Pride Hotels more energy-efficient, reduce its carbon footprint, and implement green technologies.



**Hemendra Singh Kushalgarh**  
General Manager,  
The Claridges New Delhi

The Claridges New Delhi welcomes Hemendra Singh Kushalgarh as its new General Manager. With over two decades of experience in the Indian hospitality industry, he brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the role. He also holds the position of Vice President- Operations for Claridges Collection.



**Himanshu Sharma**  
Director, Sales and  
Marketing, Pullman &  
Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity has appointed Himanshu Sharma as the Director of Sales and Marketing. With over 21 years of experience and expertise, Sharma will lead the sales, marketing, and brand communication mandate, driving commercial objectives and enhancing brand positioning.



**Asim Mamgain**  
Resident Manager,  
Shangri-La Eros  
New Delhi

Shangri-La Eros New Delhi has appointed Asim Mamgain as Resident Manager, bringing over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, focusing on food and beverage operations. With a history of leadership and innovation, his core competencies include F&B operations, guest service excellence, budgeting, etc.



**Vineesh Kurup**  
General Manager, Novotel  
& ibis Chennai OMR and  
Novotel Chennai Sipcot

Vineesh Kurup has been appointed as the General Manager of Novotel & ibis Chennai OMR and Novotel Chennai Sipcot. With over 14 years of hospitality experience, Kurup began his career with Accor in 2009 and later became General Manager of Formule 1 Pune Hinjewadi and Formule 1 Pune Pimpri.



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Enhanced productivity and increased profits are standard features of Panasonic



### COMMERCIAL MICROWAVE OVEN NE-1853

1800W Cooking Power  
Double Magnetron  
SS Cabinet and Cavity  
30 Preset Menu Programs  
15 Power levels; 5 stage cooking  
Dual power feed for consistent & even cooking

### COMMERCIAL MICROWAVE OVEN NE-1037

1000W Professional microwave  
10 Programmable Memory Pads  
22 Litre cooking space  
3 Power levels  
SS Cabinet and Cavity

### HIGH SPEED CONVECTION OVEN NE-SCV2

Combination technology for rapid cooking  
Easy user-interface  
Compact size & stackable  
Easy maintenance



### JUMBO COOKER

SR-972D  
o White  
2500 W | 7.2L | 4.5kg of Rice



Ideal for Counters



No shocks absolute safety



Open up Anytime



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