

Hotel TALK

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PURPOSE LEADS THE
WAY AT MARRIOTT FOR
Anthony Capuano

Exploring
the new
travel
mindset
**Dr Sanjay
Sethi**

DECODING
HILTON'S
tailored India
strategy with

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AI: The balancing act of efficiency and empathy



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Sustainability was never meant to be a story to tell but a standard to live by.”

India's hospitality sector stands at a pivotal point. As part of the larger Asia-Pacific (APAC) ecosystem, the country is now more connected than ever through regional travel, investment, and brand partnerships. The APAC region, home to some of the world's best known and most progressive hospitality markets, has to some extent influenced Indian hotels in design intelligence, culinary innovation, and digital transformation.

Destinations such as Singapore and Thailand demonstrate how strategic policy, infrastructure discipline, and consistent service culture can elevate a nation's hospitality brand. Their lessons are valuable, yet India's strength lies elsewhere: in emotional intelligence and deeply personal service. The challenge is not to imitate APAC efficiency, but to adapt its best practices while preserving India's cultural warmth.

India is also rapidly emerging as a key driver of growth in the APAC hospitality sector, as the region is transitioning from recovery to stabilisation in 2025. Indian travellers are playing a significant role in fuelling travel across the region thanks to higher disposable incomes and a strong appetite for experience-led travel.

Alongside this comes another force reshaping the industry — automation. From AI-driven bookings to contactless check-ins and data-led personalised service, technology has become integral to hotel operations. But in chasing efficiency, many risk eroding the essence of hospitality — the human connection.

Before I sign off, I would like to touch upon a subject that needs our deepest attention — sustainability. Here again the industry is at a crossroads. As climate regulations tighten and consumer literacy rises, hollow claims won't survive. The next generation of travellers, who are informed and skeptical, can spot the difference between genuine responsibility and green theatre. The hotels that will lead this decade are not the ones with the most visible sustainability slogans, but the ones that quietly and relentlessly rewire their operations for long-term balance. Sustainability was never meant to be a story to tell; it is meant to be a standard to live by.

Dear Readers, I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a wonderful season ahead and a very happy and successful 2026.

Cheers,
Sunil Ghadiok



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Bengaluru tops ARRs, posts 25–27% surge

The hospitality industry saw growth in ARR in August, with a double-digit leap compared to the previous year in key markets, while hotel occupancy slipped slightly.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

According to the September report released by HVS Anarock, India's hotel sector in August was impacted by heavier-than-usual monsoon showers, which disrupted travel across several regions and led to a marginal dip in occupancy. However, long weekends

during the month boosted leisure travel, while corporate travel also showed signs of recovery, supported by conferences and business events in key markets. Steady growth in average room rates (ARRs) helped sustain revenue performance across most markets.

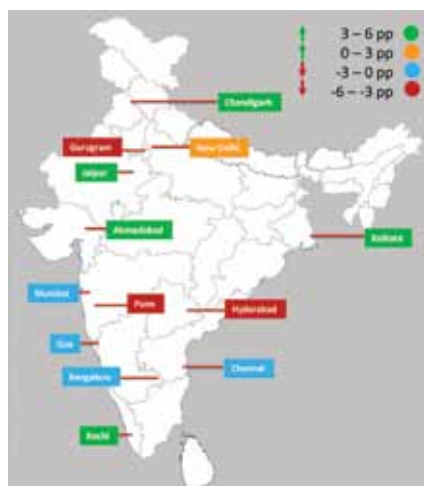
ARR trends

ARRs sustained strong growth momentum, with several major markets posting double-digit increase over last year. Bengaluru emerged as the frontrunner, registering the sharpest year-on-year growth of 25-27 per cent, supported by large conferences and events, such as NASSCOM Future Forge and Tech Developer Confluence. Mumbai despite showing slowest growth among major markets, upheld its premium status, with ARR rates above ₹10,000. Goa remained an exception to the overall upward trend and recorded a decline in average rates.

ARR trends across key Indian markets (YoY growth: August 2025)



Occupancy trends across key Indian markets (YoY growth: August 2025)

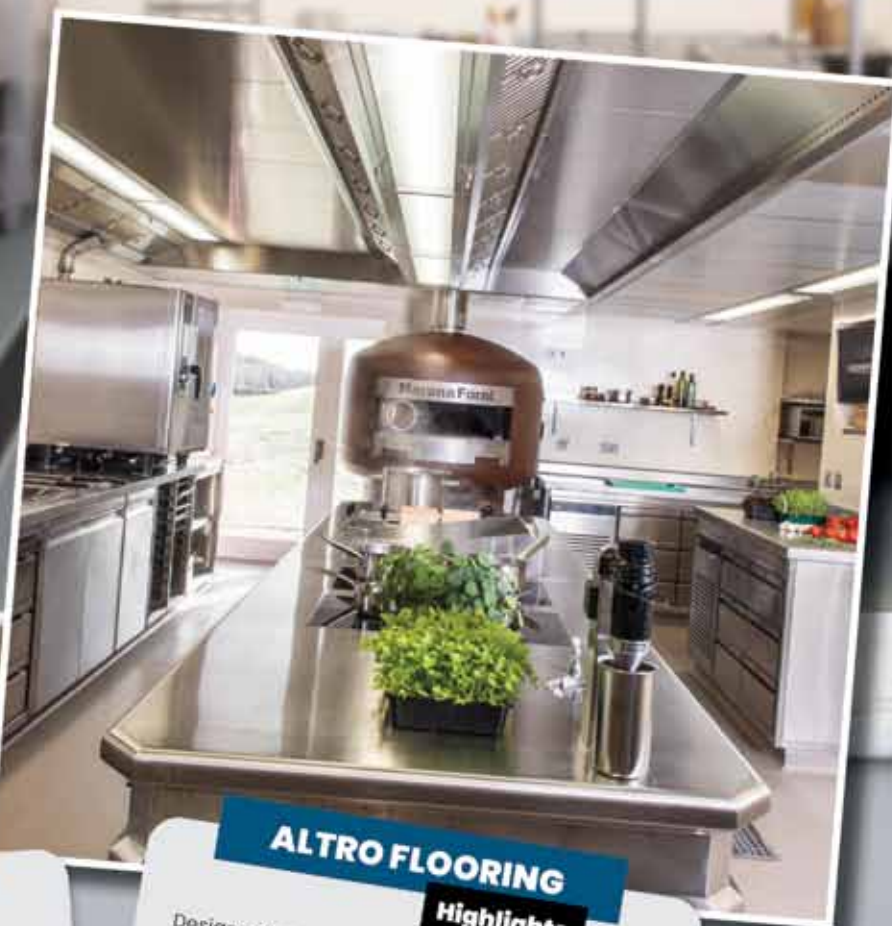


Occupancy trends

Occupancy declined marginally in several key markets — largely to heavier-than-usual monsoon conditions that disrupted travel plans across several regions.

Most major markets in South India, except Kochi, recorded a decline in occupancy, while those in the North, except Gurugram, experienced growth.

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Surendra K Jaiswal

elected as FHRAI President

The new President of FHRAI chalked out detailed action plans for 2025–2026, prioritising full industry status and ITC restoration.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI



At the 69th Annual General Meeting of FHRAI, **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal** has been elected as the new President of the association. Outlining his vision for the 2025–26 tenure, he called for immediate government action to safeguard the future of hospitality, a sector that directly and indirectly supports over 60 million livelihoods and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

In his powerful address, Jaiswal highlighted that 90 per cent of India's hotels operate below a room tariff of ₹7,500 and are now subject to a GST at 5 per cent without ITC. He noted that the recent revision in the GST rates has turned into an added cost for guests and created structural cost burdens on hotels, particularly in tier II and tier III cities.

“

We are not seeking concessions but fairness, clarity, and parity.”

Seeking government's support, he said, “The GST framework without ITC has created inequities that threaten our competitiveness. We are not seeking concessions but fairness, clarity, and parity.”

Workforce empowerment

Outlining FHRAI's broader vision, he emphasised the push for infrastructure and full industry status for the hospitality sector — a move that could unlock low-cost financing,

spur balanced regional growth, and attract fresh investments in smaller cities and emerging destinations.

Strategic roadmap

Kumar also shared a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen the industry engagement and policy advocacy. He stated that FHRAI plans to organise state-level conclaves in partnership with various regional associations to ensure that local voices shape national priorities.

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Hospitality leaders chart new road

Mumbai set the stage for HRAWI's 20th Regional Convention, where key leaders reaffirmed their commitment to hospitality growth.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU



(L-R) Mohamed Farouk, Dr Shashi Tharoor, Neelesh Gatne, Jimmy Shaw, and Surendra K Jaiswal

HRAWI inaugurated its landmark 20th Regional Convention at Taj Lands End, Mumbai, marking a significant milestone in its journey. It coincided with the association's 75th Platinum Jubilee, celebrating decades of excellence in the hospitality industry. The event brought together industry leaders, government dignitaries, and hospitality stalwarts on one platform.

In his keynote address, **Dr Shashi Tharoor**, Chief Guest, MP, and Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, urged the industry to focus on three foundational pillars — image, infrastructure, and immigration to achieve the vision of India's Viksit Bharat@2047.

With Maharashtra Tourism as the state partner for the convention, HRAWI welcomed an illustrious

“

The industry must focus on three foundational pillars — image, infrastructure, and immigration.”

gathering of dignitaries, including **Mohamed Farouk**, Regional Director (Western & Central Region), India Tourism Mumbai, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; **Neelesh Gatne** (IAS), Managing Director, MTDC; and **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, FHRAI, along with past presidents and industry stalwarts. **Dr Atul Patne**, Principal Secretary, Tourism Department, Government

of Maharashtra, emphasised that the event, coinciding with the association's 75th Platinum Jubilee, is an ideal platform to discuss the next era of sustainable and technological growth for our industry.

HRAWI President **Jimmy Shaw** stated, “This milestone convention is not just a celebration of HRAWI's 75-year legacy but also a reaffirmation of their commitment to shaping the future of Indian hospitality.”

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mirrors India's hospitality diversity

From curated experiences to smart builds in emerging cities, Hilton is shaping a portfolio that reflects India's full demand spectrum.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI



Q: From Curio Collection in Bengaluru to Waldorf Astoria in Jaipur and mid-market expansion through Spark and Hampton brands, how is Hilton's India strategy addressing both premium and emerging market demand across city tiers?

A: India does not lend itself to a one-size-fits-all approach and neither does Hilton's strategy here. This market is extremely diverse demographically, economically, and culturally. For instance, we are strengthening our luxury footprint in destinations where there is both aspiration and spending power, such as Waldorf Astoria in Jaipur and New Delhi, Conrad Hotels & Resorts in Jaipur, Signia by Hilton in Jaipur, and LXR Hotels & Resorts in Bengaluru. These are markets where luxury is not just viable but poised for long-term growth, especially in the MICE, weddings, and leisure segments.

In parallel, we are unlocking scale where there is high demand and low branded supply. Our strategic licensing partnerships with NILE Hospitality for Hampton by Hilton and Olive by Embassy for Spark by Hilton are accelerating Hilton's entry into tier II and III cities with products tailored to India's rising middle class and infrastructure-led travel surge.

Q: Hilton's presence in India has grown steadily but cautiously over the years. What are the key challenges that shaped this pace?

A: India presents extraordinary opportunities and challenges in equal measures. There are well-known complexities, including inflation, regulatory variability to fragmented markets and uneven development cycles. But we have never seen those as roadblocks but a part of the terrain when you are building for the long-term in a market this layered.



Zubin Saxena

Senior Vice President & Regional Head,
South Asia, Hilton



Conrad Hotels & Resorts Pune

You are right to point out that our pace has been measured, but that is also deliberate. Identifying the right brand, for the right location, at the right time, with the right partner is not something you rush. It is how you build for resilience, not just rapid expansion. And today, we are seeing that approach pay off. Owner confidence is strong as reflected in repeat signings on occasions, our brand equity is deepening, and our pipeline is scaling across both gateway and emerging cities.

Because in a market this nuanced, it is not about going fast everywhere. It is about going deep where it matters — with conviction, clarity, and the right long-term partners by our side.

Q: As you now aim for 300 hotels in 10 years, what strategic levers are you activating to accelerate growth in India through strategic signings and the introduction of sub-brands? What role does India play in Hilton's broader Asia Pacific expansion strategy?

A: In the broader APAC context, India is now a core growth engine, both as a domestic market and,



*“It is how you build
for resilience, not just
rapid expansion.”*

increasingly, as a source of outbound travel. We are clear-eyed about what it takes to scale meaningfully in India. The 10X ambition reflects the confidence we have in our approach, not just the size of the opportunity.

We have set up the right growth engines — multi-property platform deals that give us speed, but also consistency. Our pipeline today reflects stronger quality control, faster conversion timelines, and better owner alignment than ever before.

But growth also comes down to product-market fit. We are deliberate about which brand goes where, and we are now backing that with the right development formats,

local adaptations, and cost-efficient build models. We have brought in brands like Spark by Hilton and Hampton by Hilton at a time when India is seeing a surge in demand for quality, reliable stays in emerging cities. At the same time, we are expanding our luxury and lifestyle presence in high-aspiration destinations like Jaipur, New Delhi, and Bengaluru, where the demand is real and sustained.

Q: What are the key drivers behind Hilton’s choice of long-term real estate partners like Baani Group, Embassy Group, NILE Hospitality in tier I and II cities expansion plans?

A: Our choice of partners is guided by three core filters — alignment, agility, and ambition. All our partners, including Baani Group, Embassy Group, and NILE Hospitality bring different strengths, such as institutional scale, operational depth, and understanding of the market. But what we share in common is a deep understanding of our portfolio, laser sharp focus on quality, and a commitment to growth with purpose. These partnerships are built on mutual trust, performance, and a shared ambition to create value over time.

“In the pipeline are 75 Hampton by Hilton and 150 Spark by Hilton.”

Defining the launch of 75 Hampton by Hilton hotels as a “mid-market moment” for India, how are you aligning your brand portfolio to tap into the rising middle class and capitalise on the country's infrastructure-led growth? Do you anticipate domestic demand will continue to be the dominant force driving the Indian hospitality sector?

This is most definitely India's mid-market moment. The data speaks for itself. India's middle class is projected to grow by 100 million by 2031. With 75 Hampton by Hilton and 150 Spark by Hilton hotels in the pipeline, we are bringing brands for a rising consumer base that is traveling more, expecting more, and looking for quality they can trust. These brands will now be available at the right price points, in the right locations across cities that were previously underserved.

What is powering all of this is the demand from the domestic market. With over 2.5 billion domestic trips annually and a major infrastructure push underway, we are not waiting for the market to evolve but building for where it is already going.

Q: As sustainability and tech integration reshape hospitality, how is Hilton embedding these priorities into the design and guest experience, especially for new-age travellers?

A: At Hilton, sustainability is not a side initiative, it is built into how we see the future of hospitality. Our global framework, Travel with Purpose, commits us to cutting our environmental footprint in half and doubling our social impact by 2030. What that really means is that every Hilton hotel, no matter where in the world, is guided by clear, measurable goals on energy, water, waste, and community impact.

In India, the focus is on embedding sustainability from day one, not retrofitting it later. We work with owners and our development and design teams to integrate efficient systems, reduce operational footprint, and leverage location-specific data to optimise resource use.

Q: How has your deep understanding of the evolving Indian travellers shaped Hilton's strategy in identifying high-potential destinations and forging partnerships across the country?

A: The biggest advantage of being on the ground for so long is pattern recognition. You begin to spot not just where demand exists, but where it is about to emerge. Having spent time in India and globally, I have had the privilege of seeing Indian travellers evolve — from price-sensitive to experience-driven. That lens helps us make more grounded decisions, whether it is identifying growth corridors beyond the obvious or matching brands to real demand, not just real estate.

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ATHIVA Resort & Spa, Khandala

Rates & occupancy set to skyrocket

India's hospitality industry is poised for a solid bull run, with demand far outpacing the current supply, opines **Dr Sanjay Sethi**.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

Sharpening its focus on the upscale and upper-upscale segment, Chalet Hotels introduced ATHIVA Hotels & Resorts, a premium lifestyle hospitality brand debuting with over 900 keys across six hotels. Derived from the Sanskrit word for 'abundance,' ATHIVA is built on the ethos of joy, sustainability, and wellness. The brand makes its debut with the transformation of the iconic The Dukes Retreat in Khandala, now reimagined as ATHIVA Resort & Spa, Khandala. The launch marks a new chapter in Indian hospitality,

at a time when young travellers, empowered by rising incomes and a desire for authentic experiences, are reshaping the market.

"Travel is no longer a discretionary spend. Around 85 per cent of millennial and Gen Z travellers say they will spend significantly more on travel and F&B than they did last year, which is a strong indicator of the trend we are moving towards. Travel is now a lifestyle," said **Dr Sanjay Sethi**, MD & CEO, Chalet Hotels Limited, who sat down for an exclusive chat with **HotelTALK**



Dr Sanjay Sethi
MD & CEO
Chalet Hotels Limited

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We are priced 40% lower than next-tier global cities like Dubai, Singapore, and Hong Kong

to discuss what is driving Indian hospitality's robust growth cycle.

India is witnessing one of its strongest hotel development cycles in years. How do you read this post-pandemic hotel movement — is it more of an expansion or simply an evolution?

We have got a very good cycle ahead of us — I think the next four or five years look extremely strong. There will be pockets that may be oversupplied, but overall, the India story is very bullish. The headroom for growth, both in rates and occupancy, is massive right now.

On the rate side, while everyone says we are becoming expensive, if you really look at it today, even a city like Mumbai, which is operating at around US\$ 160–US\$ 170, is still discounted by at least 30 per cent to 40 per cent. So, I am not talking about the top cities in the world. Here, I am talking about the next layer of cities globally. I am excluding New York, London, and Paris from this. But if

you look at the next tier — Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Berlin — we are priced about 40 per cent lower than those cities. That is the gap we will eventually fill, and we see that as a key opportunity for rate growth.

There has been a fresh wave of investor confidence in the luxury and upscale segments. What is fuelling this momentum, and can it sustain over the long term?

I believe that the upper-upscale and upscale slot that we have, which is just below luxury, is probably the most rewarding segment to invest in. We are investors, and remember, we are not an asset-light company. We either buy land and build our hotels or buy ready hotels.

All our growth has been in the upscale and upper-upscale segment, and zero below upscale. We have one or two luxury hotels, but primarily, that slot offers stability of growth in income, revenue, and leadership. It also keeps costs under control, both construction (capex) and operating



ATHIVA Resort, Aksa Beach, Mumbai

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The 18 % GST slab for rates above ₹7,500 is still too high, and it needs to come down to 12%.”



Chalet Hotels leadership (L-R): **Sahil Khare**, Chief Projects Officer; **Nitin Khanna**, Chief Financial Officer; **Dr Sanjay Sethi**, Managing Director & CEO; **Shwetank Singh**, Executive Director; **Gaurav Singh**, Chief Operating Officer

costs, because you have the flexibility to manage the cycles as they go up and down.

Given the ongoing discussions around GST rationalisation and industry status, what are the most crucial policy adjustments that could drive sustained growth in Indian hospitality?

The GST reduction in the recent announcements was a welcome move. But the withdrawal of ITC has created a huge challenge for many hotel operators and restaurants. At Chalet, we do not have any hotel below ₹7,500, so it does not affect us.

However, the 18 per cent GST slab for rates above ₹7,500 is still too high, and it needs to come down to 12 per cent. Crucially, the ₹7,500 cutoff has been in place for several

years without accounting for inflation in travel rates. The ₹7,500 threshold should be reset by about 4.5 percent every year since it was introduced and then linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as an annual adjustment. That way, we would not have to keep going back to authorities for a revised cutoff. It would automatically adjust with inflation.

As the domestic juggernaut rolls on, what strategic shifts are needed to make India as magnetic to global travellers as it is to domestic ones?

India's marketing needs to be far stronger. We have virtually vanished from the global travel and tourism scene. There is a need for renewed focus from the Ministry of Tourism to promote India more actively.

And it is very important that the tourism product we have in our country evolves to the level of quality that global travellers are used to.

As you prepare for the next chapter of your professional journey, what excites you most about the future of Indian hospitality, and what gives you the greatest optimism?

A solid bull run lies ahead for the hospitality industry. We are already on a strong wicket, and I see this getting even stronger as we move forward. The supply side in India is very weak — less than 2,00,000 rooms. India should have around 4,00,000 to 5,00,000 rooms to meet the market potential. As we continue to add to our portfolio, we expect to benefit from this growing market. HT



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Global vision rooted in local empowerment

Sébastien Bazin shared his future vision where hospitality must go beyond mere brand expansion and focus on people, purpose, and responsible growth.

WORDS BY DEVIKA JEET

Accor Group Chairman and CEO **Sébastien Bazin's** journey over the past twelve years has been one of bold expansion and reinvention. From a European-centric portfolio of 12 brands, Accor today stands tall with 48 brands across 110 countries, nearly 40 per cent of which fall under luxury and lifestyle.

"We believed early on that the future lay in experiences, in personalisation, in moving away from commodity products, and it is working," he said.

Meaningful engagement

The company's strategy is not just about scale but about depth and meaning. A prime example is the



Sébastien Bazin
Group Chairman and CEO
Accor

revival of Orient Express, a century-old brand reborn as a modern symbol of ultra-luxury. "In luxury, most start with a product and evolve into an experience. We are doing the reverse, starting from experience and creating products around it," he explained. From opulent trains to yachts and hotels, the brand aims to redefine how the



Raffles Udaipur

world's most discerning travellers experience movement.

But Bazin's most striking perspective is in his understanding of people. When asked about tailoring hospitality to different regions, he was unequivocal — trust the locals. "Wherever you go, the locals know better. We have Indian leadership in India, Egyptian leadership in Egypt. It is about trust, understanding culture, geopolitics, and legislation. That is what builds great hotels."

opportunities for people who did not have a chance to go to university or have access to formal training. When we open a hotel, we must show them our hand."

Sense of responsibility

Accor today hires 120,000 people every year, 50,000 for new openings, and another 70,000 to replace turnover across its 350,000-strong global workforce. In several countries, including Saudi Arabia,

the same human-centred philosophy. "Our purpose is pioneering the art of responsible hospitality, connecting cultures with heartfelt care," he shared, emphasising that there is nothing about margin or performance, but about our responsibility towards the industry.

Bazin acknowledged the paradox of hospitality's growth — while new hotels drive opportunity, they also draw on scarce local resources such as water and power.



Hotels must step in through education, training, and jobs to give them dignity and purpose."

For India, this approach resonates deeply. As one of the world's fastest-growing travel markets and a strong base of domestic and outbound travellers, Accor's local empowerment strategy positions it well to capture opportunity while staying true to regional character. "Our job is to bring guests in," Bazin said, adding, "But also to create

Accor is the largest private-sector employer. Bazin called on the industry to see this as a shared duty. "Within nine years, 800 million young people globally could be without work. Hotels must step in through education, training, and jobs to give them dignity and purpose."

His reflections on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) echoed

"The only honest approach is to sit with local communities and ask — what can we give back? Whether through education or the local economy, our contribution must balance consumption," he said. He also urged collaboration among global hotel groups to advance sustainability efforts and share knowledge, resources, and solutions to drive change.

HT

Purpose over profit

Marriott's fourth CEO in 98 years shared lessons on leadership, loyalty, and the dignity of service.

WORDS BY DEVIKA JEET

Anthony Capuano, President and CEO, Marriott International, spoke about hospitality with the kind of conviction that only comes from a lifetime of living it. In a recent fireside chat at the 25th Global Summit of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), he reflected on what it truly takes to lead a company that spans 143 countries, 9,600 properties, and 1.7 million rooms and yet remain guided by the same values it was founded nearly a century ago.

"For our first 30 years, we were a food and beverage company," Capuano said. "Those core values

established by our founders have been the guiding principle." Nearly 98 years later, that foundation still shapes Marriott's global culture. He added, "Bill Marriott, after 93 years, says what he is most proud of is the opportunities we have created for people and their families."

People-centric approach

Marriott's commitment to people first has helped the company weather every major disruption — from financial crises to the pandemic. "Our true north has always been our people," Capuano said.

When asked about managing such a vast operation, he answered

with his trademark humour, "Don't sleep and drink a lot of sugar-free Red Bull." But the real secret, he explained, is empowerment. "We give our continental teams the right tools and training, and then we get out of the way." His point was clear — great service comes from trust, not control.

Deeper connections

Highlighting how the luxury traveller is changing, Capuano noted, "The highest income consumer continues to prioritise travel and spend meaningfully on experiences."

Marriott's move into ultra-luxury, from Bulgari Hotels to the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, is part of



Monsoon hotel



Anthony Capuano
President and CEO
Marriott International

that shift. He cautioned, “If we do not offer those experiences within our ecosystem, we are sending our travellers into the warm, welcoming arms of our peers.”

“*Luxury may define the business, but people define its purpose.*”

Equally transformative has been the evolution of Marriott Bonvoy, which has helped nurture its relationships with customers. What began as a points-based loyalty programme has now grown into a global community of over 250 million members. “Bonvoy is the connective tissue,” said Capuano, adding, “It allows us to expose our members to the full breadth of our portfolio.” He further explained that the

brand now focuses on creating emotional connections rather than just transactional ones — offering members access to concerts, sporting events, and curated culinary experiences. “Recognition and personalisation are the true currencies of loyalty,” he averred.

Beyond transactions

Drawing from his time in Italy, he described the pride of waiters and staff who have spent decades honing their craft. “There’s such recognition of the dignity of careers dedicated in the service of others,” he said, emphasizing, “There’s nothing like going to Harry’s Bar in Venice and seeing a waiter who’s been there 20 or 30 years, taking pride in their service.” Growth and luxury may define the business, but people define its purpose. He also reminded that true hospitality is not about rooms or revenue, but about respect for guests, for teams, and for the calling of service itself.

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(L-R) **Vikram Berry**, Area Director, Marketing & Communications, Radisson Hotel Group, South Asia; **Rakhshanda Jalil**, Indian writer, translator, critic, and literary historian; **Elizabeth Kuruvilla**, Publishing Director, Simon & Schuster India; **Chema Basterrechea**, Global President and Chief Operations Officer, Radisson Hotel Group.

Check-in culture

With Literary Escapes, RHG turns literature, culture, & travel into a vibrant crossroads.

WORDS BY **LIPLA NEGI**

While global series like *The White Lotus* and *Game of Thrones* have transported viewers to stunning destinations and iconic hotels, sparking wanderlust on screen, books have long been the truest source of that urge to explore. Celebrating the power of words to inspire travel, Radisson Hotel Group (RHG) hosted the fifth edition of Literary Escapes, its signature cultural initiative in collaboration with Simon & Schuster India, at Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Delhi Airport.

The idea is to tap into the growing global trend of bibliotourism, where modern travellers seek not only

luxury but also authentic cultural connections and storytelling experiences. “I believe that investing in literature and in nurturing people’s ability to think, grow, and evolve is a truly meaningful opportunity. I am confident we will continue to attract and create more such initiatives,” said **Chema Basterrechea**, Global President and Chief Operations Officer, RHG.

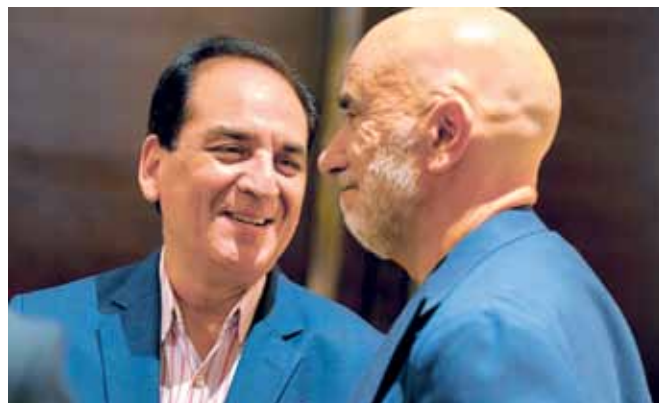
Talking about how both books and travel offer life’s enriching experiences, **KB Kachru**, Chairman, South Asia, RHG, “Escapes are about creating leisure destinations where people can truly relax and disconnect — free from numbers, deadlines, and constant business thinking. For that to happen, you need people on the other side who can provide those experiences, teach, and inspire you to see and do things differently.”

From extended stay options to special packages for writers and readers, RHG is currently developing Literary Escapes packages. “These stays will be location-driven, across our iconic properties — from leisure destinations to offbeat locations under Radisson Individuals,” said **Nikhil Sharma**, MD & COO, South Asia, RHG.

HT

“

The initiative taps into the growing global trend of bibliotourism



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CORNELL INDIA stresses a seamless blend of functionality & aesthetics in food service equipment to meet modern hospitality needs.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

With a customer-first approach at its core, CORNELL INDIA remains steadfast to its commitment, “Customers at the centre of everything we do.” By engaging continuously with chefs and end-users, their product innovations are shaped directly by their insights and requirements. **Oommen Matthew**, Founder, CORNELL INDIA, shared, “The dialogue helps us decide what to develop next, so our products effectively address real-world challenges and opportunities.”

Innovative designs

CORNELL INDIA ensures that every equipment delivers not only operational efficiency but also

enhances the guest experience. Matthew emphasised, “Our company is consistently working on engineering our machines to be lighter, more ergonomic, and user-friendly, without compromising quality and performance.” This will help facilitate ease of handling for staff while maintaining the visual appeal expected in modern hospitality environment.

Strategic investments

In pursuit of balancing budgets, what often gets compromised are the essentials of a well-functioning kitchen — food service equipment, ventilation systems, and other critical back-of-house infrastructure. Matthew stressed, “These are



Oommen Matthew
Founder, CORNELL INDIA

not optional add-ons; they are fundamental to food quality, safety, and overall guest satisfaction.” These essentials should be viewed as long-term investments because well-designed equipment directly impacts efficiency and the guest experience.

Invisible, integrated tech

Over the next decade, product innovation will be shaped by several powerful disruptors that go beyond aesthetics. One of the most significant shifts will be the seamless integration of technology into spaces. Rather than overt gadgets and touch panels, technology will become invisible, embedded into surfaces. Matthew noted, “Our equipment is designed to be invisible and seamlessly integrated into the interiors. This will allow spaces to serve multiple purposes beyond food service.”

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Dastaan Lounge, Fairmont Udaipur Palace

Net-zero design, carbon positive hotels

Without sacrificing luxury design, hoteliers must integrate net-zero architecture, not as a secondary option but as the standard norm.

WORDS BY REEMA DIWAN

Every year, World Architecture Day encourages us to think about how our surroundings can meet the urgent needs of today. This year's theme, "Design for Strength," reminds us that resilience in architecture goes beyond just structural safety. It also includes environmental responsibility. In this regard, the hospitality sector leads the way in moving towards net-zero design, driven by both necessity and opportunity. You might wonder how this transition can be an opportunity. Hotels and resorts use much more energy, water, and materials than offices or homes, and they also create

a lot of waste. This complexity makes the hospitality industry perfect for testing net-zero solutions.

Hospitality interacts directly with millions of guests each year. Thus, the industry must adopt sustainable practices and showcase them, driving large-scale behaviour changes.

Signs of a sector-wide shift

Globally, we are already witnessing innovative projects that change the definition of "sustainable luxury." Some properties are designed to produce more energy than they use over their lifetimes, using locally sourced materials, and zero-emission construction. Others achieve verified net-zero status decades ahead of

international climate goals. These successes show that even existing hotels can become climate positive. These are not just isolated cases; they indicate a shifting industry that proves sustainability and hospitality excellence can coexist.

Despite the progress, challenges still exist. High initial costs, divided ownership structures, and worries about affecting guest experiences often slow down adoption.

The way forward involves collaboration among developers, operators, architects, and policymakers to align incentives and share knowledge. Financial innovations like green bonds and sustainability-linked loans can help



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The way forward involves collaboration among developers, operators, architects, and policymakers to align incentives and share knowledge



Fairmont Udaipur Palace suite bedroom

tackle cost issues by rewarding long-term efficiency.

Net-zero design

The main design principles of net-zero hospitality do not sacrifice luxury; they redefine it. Passive design strategies, such as maximising natural light, improving insulation, and optimising building orientation, lower energy demands without affecting comfort. Biophilic design connects guests to nature while reducing reliance on mechanical heating and cooling. Water recycling, waste reduction, and integrated renewable energy systems have become central elements of design, not just extra features. Net-zero architecture goes beyond carbon; it also embraces cultural authenticity. Rethinking traditional building methods and using low-carbon, locally sourced materials strengthen a hotel's bond with its surroundings. Whether through clay plasters that regulate temperature or green roofs that support biodiversity, design choices can honour traditions while incorporating future technologies.

Tech-driven sustainability

Technology enhances impact — IoT

sensors and AI-based management systems allow real-time monitoring of energy, water, and air quality, ensuring resources are used efficiently without manual effort. From predictive maintenance to smart lighting and HVAC systems, intelligent tools provide operational efficiency in hotels.

Though sustainable design can seem costly upfront, the long-term benefits are clear. Energy savings, lower operating costs, healthier indoor spaces, and increased brand loyalty — all lead to measurable returns. More importantly, net-zero design prepares assets for stricter regulations and changing guest expectations.

The hospitality industry currently contributes about one per cent of global emissions, a number expected to rise as travel increases. To stay resilient, the industry must view net-zero architecture not as an optional move but as the standard. By building with foresight, creativity, and responsibility, we can ensure that the experiences we create are both sustainable and memorable. HT

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)

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BUILDING FUTURE-READY hospitality professionals

Relying solely on theory is obsolete in today's fast-evolving hospitality industry; **Romie Dutt** avers that experiential learning is crucial for equipping and empowering students to excel in real-world hotel environments.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

Breaking away from the conventional norms of lectures, textbooks, or passive learning, A-Star Academy sets a new benchmark in hospitality education. Staying true to its core belief, “Star Academy is not just about learning hospitality; it’s about living it from day one.” As

India’s first hotel school of its kind, the academy equips students to train as professional hoteliers from the outset.

The academy blends rigorous academic learning with immersive, hands-on experience, ensuring that every student is actively engaged in real-world scenarios. **Romie Dutt**, Executive Director, Aamby

Valley City and Hotel Sahara Star, said, “The curriculum, crafted collaboratively by our academic team and hotel professionals, is truly for the industry, by the industry, and of the industry. By bridging theory with practical exposure, A-Star Academy produces not just graduates, but capable leaders ready to excel.”



A-Star Academy Classroom

“We ensure that India's next generation of hospitality professionals is not simply job-ready but industry-ready.”



Romie Dutt
Executive Director
Aamby Valley City and
Hotel Sahara Star

The vision

The idea of A-Star Academy began as a thought — a vision shaped by years of experience running two of India’s leading 5-star hotels. Dutt witnessed first-hand how rapidly the hospitality sector was evolving and recognised a significant gap in traditional hotel management education. He pointed out, “Students were often left underprepared for the real challenges of a 5-star hotel environment.”

An IHM alumnus himself, he reflected on how training has changed since his time as a student. The next generation of hoteliers needed more





A-Star Academy - Mumbai Campus

than just academic knowledge — they needed practical skills, leadership exposure, and the ability to handle the complex demands of modern hospitality. This realisation gave birth to A-Star Academy.

Experience-first learning

With its out-of-the-box approach, the academy redefines traditional hospitality programmes through a 1:3:1 learning model — one day of intensive theory followed by three days of hands-on training in a live five-star hotel, and regrouping on the fifth day to discuss the learnings. This ensures that from day one, students

are not just learners — they are hoteliers in training.

In a traditional academic set-up, real-world exposure comes much later. But A-Star Academy's "learning by doing" model gives students direct access to live hotel operations. Dutt said, "Every concept taught in class is immediately tested and reinforced in real situations, giving students the ability to think critically, adapt quickly, and innovate naturally."

Partnerships with purpose

To build a bridge between academic learning and the ever-evolving hospitality industry, A-Star Academy

forged strategic collaborations with Aamby Valley City and Sahara Star. Its flagship tie-up with Sahara Star offers students hands-on training across departments, while support from Aamby Valley City adds exposure to luxury hospitality and large-scale events. The academy is also in collaboration with Savitribai Phule Pune University, offering certificate, diploma, and degree courses in hospitality management. Dutt noted, "We are also in the process of establishing tie-ups with global hotel schools and hospitality brands to expand our students' exposure and career pathways."

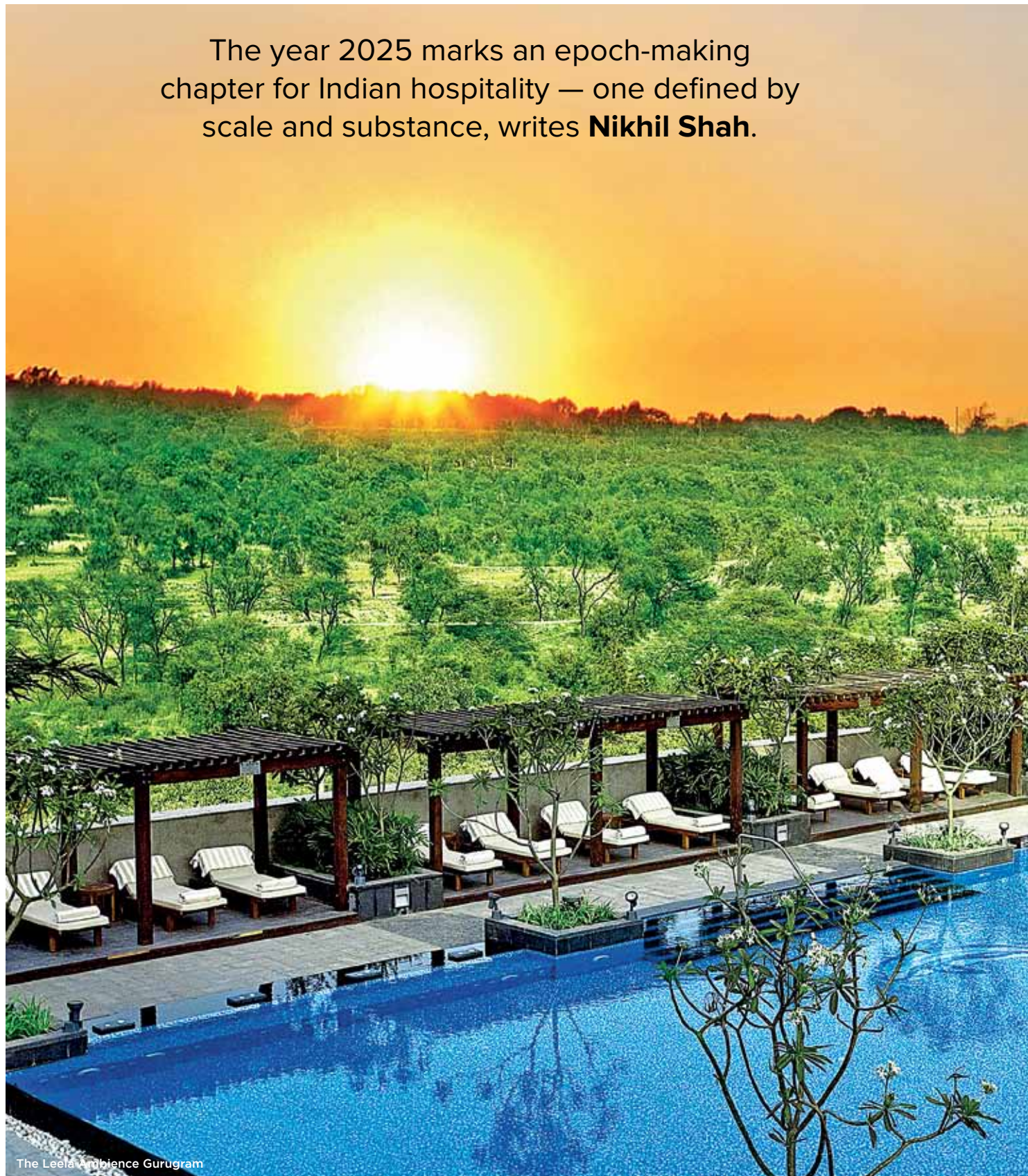
Driving change

Many hotel brands today run skill development programmes, but dedicated institutes like A-Star Academy play a transformative role. They do not just train employees; they build adaptable, well-rounded professionals, who understand the true essence of hospitality. "By providing real exposure in five-star hotels, we aim to equip students with a leadership mindset instead of just job skills. We ensure that India's future workforce is industry-ready, not just job-ready," said Dutt.

Visit: www.astaracademy.in

A new dawn arises

The year 2025 marks an epoch-making chapter for Indian hospitality — one defined by scale and substance, writes **Nikhil Shah**.



The Leela Ambience Gurugram

The Indian hospitality sector is poised for a defining phase in 2025, characterised by a powerful blend of rapid expansion and strategic consolidation. The narrative is no longer solely about rising revenues but also about evolving business models and building a more resilient industry foundation.

Steady demand drives performance

The market continues its strong performance from previous years. Nationwide occupancy remains robust at 68-70 per cent, with major hubs like Mumbai and Delhi reaching or exceeding 80 percent. Average Room Rates (ARRs) are strengthening across the board, and leisure destinations consistently command higher premiums than business cities, underscoring the enduring consumer preference for experience-driven travel.

Expansion & listings

Investor faith has never been higher. The sector recently created nearly US\$ 5.5 billion in value through a wave of public listings. Notably, this capital has been used

strategically to pay down debt and solidify balance sheets, with promoters largely retaining control (often above 70 percent ownership). With several more listings anticipated, the industry is just beginning to unlock its potential in the public markets.

Tier-II & III cities lead growth

The expansion of branded hotel rooms continues at a healthy pace, with 40,000–50,000 new keys signed and 20,000 rooms becoming operational each year. This growth is increasingly fuelled by tier-II and tier-III cities, marking a significant democratisation of branded hospitality. While Radisson was once the primary international player in these markets, it now faces fierce competition from giants like Marriott, IHG, Wyndham, and Hilton.

Partnerships & consolidations

A major trend of 2025 is the rise of strategic partnerships. High-profile collaborations, such as Taj with Clarks, Marriott with Series, and Accor/Radisson with Treebo —

“

Nationwide occupancy remains robust at 68-70%, with major hubs like Mumbai and Delhi



Nikhil Shah
Managing Director
Hospitality & Alternatives
Colliers India

are becoming commonplace. These alliances allow global brands to leverage domestic partners' distribution and agility, and vice-versa, a dynamic set to redefine the mid-market segment.

Real estate convergence

Hospitality is increasingly integrated into larger real estate projects. Branded residences and sale-and-leaseback (SLB) models are particularly hot, offering asset-light growth for operators and stable returns for developers. The Della Group's township concept has become a blueprint, with many players now developing resorts featuring branded villas managed by hotel operators.





Marriott Executive Apartments
Bengaluru UB City

“

The next phase of growth will hinge on smarter asset management, sustainability, and technology integration

Rise of the luxury segment

The luxury segment is booming. International brands like Waldorf Astoria, Raffles, and Six Senses are expanding their footprint to cater to affluent, experience-seeking travellers. Simultaneously, domestic leaders like the Oberoi Group are innovating with new wellness-focused brands (e.g. ASMI by Oberoi), signalling India's readiness to compete on the global stage for high-end tourism.

Spiritual tourism booms

Pilgrimage and cultural tourism have become powerful growth engines, fuelled by developments like the Ayodhya temple and the rejuvenation of Ujjain. Similar projects in Varanasi, Somnath, and Shirdi are set to amplify this trend, attracting new investment.

Hurdle to resolution

Despite the overall optimism, structural challenges persist. Acquiring distressed assets through bank auctions remains a cumbersome process. Even after successful bids, prolonged legal disputes with former owners often delay final possession, which erodes investor confidence and slows down the revitalisation of these properties.

Emerging risks

The sector also faces the dual threats of oversupply and cost overruns. Some emerging markets are seeing a potential doubling of new inventory, which could suppress room rates and occupancy. Furthermore, developers sometimes underestimate total project costs by excluding key expenses, severely impacting profitability once the hotel opens.

Road ahead

While strong demand currently buffers these risks, the future will demand greater financial discipline. The next phase of growth will hinge not just on adding rooms, but on smarter asset management, sustainability, and technology integration. In essence, 2025 finds the sector at a crossroads of ambition and accountability. Its ultimate success will be measured not by the scale of its expansion, but by the maturity with which it sustains it. The year 2025 is not over and these trends will continue to evolve.

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Crafting a global identity

Industry think tanks discussed effective strategies that can boost domestic hospitality and establish India as a strong global brand.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

While Ayurveda has grown into a US\$ 9 billion business worldwide, India is yet to market its 5,000-year-old science to its fullest potential. Moderating the first panel discussion on Day 2 of the 55th FHRAI Annual Convention,

in Bengaluru, **Vikram Cotech**, CEO, GRT Hotels and Resorts, set the tone of the discussion by spotlighting the urgent need to market “Brand India” more effectively.

The panellists were also joined by **V Vidyavathi**, Secretary Tourism, Government of India, who urged

the industry to be co-creators of solutions. “How do we build India into a strong global brand in the tourism space? Beyond that, how do we create world-class destinations within the country? What does it take, what should our priorities be, and more importantly, how do we



ensure effective implementation? What are the challenges we are likely to face, and how can we overcome them? These are some of the questions we continue to grapple with, and we look forward to your solutions and insights,” she appealed.

Kick-starting the deliberation with striking comparisons, Cotah



said, “Lululemon sells yoga pants worth US\$ 60 billion. Globally, yoga has become a US\$ 115 billion economy. Yet, we cannot claim to have a single brand that truly represents our oldest and most precious tradition.” Despite India’s wealth of culture, heritage, and centuries-old traditions, Cotah pointed out the absence of an iconic Indian hospitality brand with global recognition and acclaim.

Brands beyond logos

When asked to name that one defining belief that will shape Indian brands as they step onto the global stage by 2047, **KB Kachru**, Chairman, South Asia, Raddison Hotel, said, “What really is significant

“

When we put in a global brand, it ensures a worldwide traveller what to expect and what not to expect.”



V Vidyavathi
Secretary Tourism,
Government of India



KB Kachru
Chairman, South Asia
Raddison Hotel



Vikram Cotah
CEO
GRT Hotels and Resorts



Anil Chadha
Managing Director
ITC Hotels

“

You build it on predictability, promise, belief, and trust.”



Kapil Chopra
Founder and CEO, The Postcard Hotel and Founder, EazyDiner

“

When a country becomes more affluent, consumers grow more discretionary.”

is the trust, promise, and consistency. It is ultimately a question of strategy and priorities. India is a vast market, and the exponential expansion of tier II and III cities post-COVID has changed the market dynamics. With rising disposable incomes, people are willing to spend more. Post-COVID, the domestic market became the low-hanging fruit, which not only grew quickly but also aligned with the government's push for citizens to explore their own country.”

Praising Hilton's recent ad campaign, which earned 5.8 billion views, he opined that global brands instill confidence in travellers. He explained, “When we put in a global brand, it ensures a worldwide traveller what to expect and what not to expect.” According to him, global brands have a larger loyalty base, which brings a lot of traction for their Indian partners.

It's your story

Excited to return to the FHRAI Convention stage after many years, **Anil Chadha**, Managing Director, ITC Hotels, emphasised the importance of taking the brand story to the market. “You build it on predictability, promise,

belief, and trust. You need to understand which segment you are pitching your brand to, and the entire culture of the organisation should live the brand,” he said.

Chadha recalled how the phrase “responsible luxury” was coined and has since become synonymous with ITC Hotels. With younger generations prioritising sustainability, ITC's brand story, he noted, resonates deeply with them. “Today, we are the largest chain in the world where all hotels are LEED Platinum certified. Twelve are LEED Zero Carbon and nine are LEED Zero Water. The US Green Building Council recognises us for operational excellence,” he shared.

Build in India for the world

Tracing back the inception of Postcard Hotels, **Kapil Chopra**, Founder and CEO, The Postcard Hotel and Founder, EazyDiner, explained, “We take a very simple binary decision while building a Postcard Hotel — either it could be insanely great, or it cannot be a Postcard hotel. When a customer comes to us, they already know that they have thought it through, and that then becomes a brand promise.”





Amrapali Kata, IAS
CEO, Andhra Pradesh
Tourism Authority

“

The real challenge is making visitors stay longer and experience the rest of the state.”

While building uber-luxury remains the core focus, a multi-brand strategy is off the table for the brand. Chopra explained that as markets evolve, success depends on refining offerings rather than multiplying them. “When a country becomes more affluent, consumers grow more discretionary. You need to apply that discretion to what you are offering,” he said.

Partnering for storytelling

Sharing a bureaucratic perspective on state branding, **Amrapali Kata, IAS, CEO, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority**, emphasised the importance of consistency in communication. “The reason we all remember Kerala’s tagline is consistency, and that is usually where states fall short in terms of branding,” she noted. To address this, she suggested that states should collaborate with strong hospitality brands to elevate their own image and destinations. “Our approach in

the past year has been to onboard as many hospitality brands as possible and bring in large-scale investment. When Postcard goes to a destination, it puts that place on the global map. When Oberoi builds a hotel, suddenly that destination gets noticed,” she explained.

Using Tirupati as an example, Kata pointed out that despite being a major religious tourism hub, Andhra Pradesh has struggled to extend visitor stays. “People go to see the deity and leave the same day, often within hours. The real challenge now is making visitors stay a little longer and experience the rest of the state,” she said.

Highlighting Andhra Pradesh’s strategic advantage, she added, “We are within driving distance of five state capitals — five cities with disposable income and travellers looking for weekend getaways. The only challenge now is building destinations, and that is exactly what we are focusing on.”

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The bleisure revolution

As bleisure travel continues to gain traction, hotels are reimagining their corporate offerings by balancing work amenities with curated experiences.

WORDS BY SAKSHI SINGH

Bleisure travel, the blend of business and leisure, is no longer a side note in India's corporate travel market. Valued at US\$ 38 billion in 2022 and projected to reach US\$ 93 billion by 2030, the segment is being fuelled by a younger workforce, hybrid work cultures, and a growing appetite for experiences beyond the boardroom.

Hotels that once treated business travel as a functional affair of rooms and meeting halls are now reimagining it as an opportunity to deliver culture, wellness, and lifestyle. The old template of conferences and formal dinners is giving way to itineraries that combine strategy sessions with spa breaks, curated dining, and local experiences. For employees, bleisure has become a perk that adds value to corporate life. For hotels, it has become a reliable revenue stream and a way to

differentiate in a crowded market. The subtle shift is visible in how hotels design their event spaces. MICE spaces are moving beyond a large, air-conditioned hall with a projector model to more immersive experiences that include specialised menus, spa sessions, and curated cultural experiences. Even the spaces have become modular, catering to various group sizes simultaneously.

"Hotels are bundling meetings with wellness sessions, cultural activities, and city experiences to attract travellers mixing business with leisure. Partnerships with local artisans, curated retail, and destination-inspired programming make events more memorable and place-specific," said **Harjeet Wasan**, Chief Operating Officer, Spectra Hospitality Services. His observation points towards a broader industry-wide shift. Hotels are consciously reshaping their MICE offerings to go





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Hotels are bundling meetings with wellness sessions and cultural activities to attract travellers



Harjeet Wasan
Chief Operating Officer,
Spectra Hospitality
Services

beyond technology interventions like cutting-edge projectors and superfast internet. On the other hand, for corporates, it is no longer just about the agenda but also how meaningfully employees connect with each other.

Pavan Kumar, Commercial Director, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, explained, “Today’s MICE traveller is no longer satisfied with just a projector and Wi-Fi. They want experiences that inspire collaboration, creativity, and connection.” At Hilton, this has meant integrating sustainable practices, immersive culinary showcases, and tools like the Meeting Impact Calculator, which helps planners measure environmental and social outcomes. These innovative changes have made events at Hilton memorable and also project an idea that business travel itself is a perk.

This recalibration has also changed the revenue model. MICE was once an add-on to rooms, now it is a standalone driver. Hotels design packages where meeting rooms are paired with curated dining, wellness sessions, and cultural immersions. Every add-on has become a revenue stream, and corporates see value in offering employees a programme that feels rewarding. Offsites resemble retreats these days, balancing productivity with engagement.

Food has emerged as the sharpest marker of this change. Kumar recalled an event where a strategy session at the Hilton was followed by a traditional South Indian lunch and a live Kathak performance. The experience, he said, stayed with the participants long after the meeting



Pavan Kumar
Commercial Director,
Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn
Bengaluru Embassy Manyata
Business Park



Vinesh Gupta
General Manager
The Den Hotel Bangalore

ended. Menus today move between regional thalis, chef-driven tasting plates, and themed dinners that double up as cultural immersion.

The Den Hotel in Bengaluru has also realigned its packages. “We have revolutionised MICE packages to transcend the conventional ‘room + meeting hall’ model. We are all about flexibility, customisation, and accessibility, so that each event is bespoke,” said **Vinesh Gupta**, General Manager, The Den Hotel Bangalore. In practice, this means hybrid-ready spaces, modular setups, and add-ons like wellness breaks or city tours. The hotel positions these not as extras but as part of the core experience, ensuring delegates leave feeling both productive and engaged.

Corporates have quickly recognised the value of this shift. A three-day offsite is now judged on whether teams return refreshed and connected, not just with a stack of meeting notes. Morning workshops are followed by evening walks through local markets or festive dinners that showcase the city. For employees, this feels like a perk; for companies, it strengthens retention and engagement.

Bleisure has become a weekday anchor for revenue, especially in cities like Bengaluru and Gurugram, where corporate events sustain occupancies. What was once a side business has become central to financial planning. The bleisure trend has added momentum. Both Kumar

and Gupta pointed out that festive seasons often see families accompany delegates. Hotels have responded with itineraries that mix work and leisure, co-working lounges next to children’s activity zones, or banquet halls dressed for celebrations once meetings wrap up. The result is that MICE feels less like a transaction and more like a lifestyle extension.

Besides, sustainability has moved to the centre of planning. Corporates expect hotels to cut waste, source locally, and provide tools to track environmental impact. Wasan highlighted that eco-friendly practices being central is already playing out on the ground, with hotels marketing their green credentials as aggressively as their connectivity.

Driven by bleisure, the geography of MICE is also expanding. With new airports, expressways, and faster rails, tier II cities are firmly on the map. Hotels in Kochi, Varanasi, and Khajuraho are investing in purpose-built spaces that rival those in metros. For corporates, the improved access makes it viable to look beyond the usual hubs.

MICE is no longer about four walls and a projector. It is about building an ecosystem where work, culture, and wellness come together. Success will depend on how well hotels translate corporate agendas into experiences that employees take back as memories. The sector’s future rests as much outside the meeting room as it does inside. HT

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MICE is about building an ecosystem where work, culture, and wellness come together



AI, sustainability & skills

Future recipe of hospitality

From tech to green practices, the industry is reinventing itself to lead India on the global stage, underscored **Vivek Saggar**.

WORDS BY **SURBHI SHARMA**

The hospitality industry has entered a dynamic recovery phase post-pandemic, fuelled by the resurgence of both global and domestic travel. Growth is especially robust in tier-II city markets, where demand for boutique stays and experiential travel is soaring. However, the sector faces challenges such as labour shortages and rising wage costs, which are prompting businesses to adopt automation and invest more in employee engagement, operations, and event management.

Technology as game changer
Explaining how tech is transforming



Vivek Saggar
General Secretary
Indian Culinary Forum (ICF)

the business of hospitality, **Vivek Saggar**, General Secretary, Indian Culinary Forum (ICF), said, “Technology is transforming the very foundation of hospitality operations. Artificial intelligence, automation, and data analytics are driving smarter decision-making and hyper-personalised guest experiences. From contactless check-ins to IoT-enabled smart rooms and dynamic pricing powered by AI, the future of hospitality is digital-first.”

To stay competitive, he underscored that students and professionals must focus on digital literacy, sustainability, and soft skills. Continuous upskilling through short-term courses, internships, and industry exposure is essential for thriving in this fast-evolving landscape.

Key trends for next decade

According to Saggar, the next decade will be shaped by three key trends, such as sustainability, intelligent technology, and experiential travel. Sustainability will evolve from token practice to operational philosophy, while intelligent tech will drive seamless service delivery. Experiential travel will integrate wellness, local culture, and authenticity, transforming hospitality into holistic lifestyle experiences.

ICF's vision

ICF is dedicated to nurturing globally competitive culinary talent. With focus on innovation, Saggar noted, “We aim to cultivate chefs who are creative, ethically grounded, and ready to lead India’s hospitality sector on the world stage.”

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Technology is transforming the very foundation of hospitality operations.”





Poetic elegance

Poltrona Frau partnered with Six NFive to bring his poetic digital vision to life through two sculptural lamps. The Moonbeam table lamp creates the illusion of a solar eclipse. Crafted with Poltrona Frau's signature materials, the Foliage floor lamp is a sculpture that interacts with light, creating luminous silhouettes.



Timeless treasures

HollyBelly Food Boutique unveiled its "Signature Gifting Collection 2025," inspired by the conch (*shankh*). The collection is a timeless emblem of Vishnu & Lakshmi, signifying new beginnings, harmony, and abundance. The Conch Box is a tribute to divine resonance — carrying with it the blessings of prosperity, the warmth of community, and the elegance of thoughtful gifting.



Art of craftsmanship

Artistic design

Add a touch of artistry to your celebrations with Pret Homes' exquisitely crafted cake platters and servers. Adorned with stone brooch embellishments and gold foil wiring, each piece reflects refined craftsmanship and creative elegance. Designed by skilled Indian artisans, Pret Homes transforms everyday serveware pieces into timeless décor.

ITW set for expansion in Mumbai

ITW India's new Gurgaon facility features a cutting-edge experience centre, allowing consumers hands-on engagement with its products.

WORDS BY AMITA PANDEY

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The new Gurgaon facility is designed not just for administrative operations but also as an interactive experience centre.”



Razi Haider
Country Manager
ITW India (FEG Division)

ITW India (FEG Division) has inaugurated a new office in Gurgaon, which will serve as the company's headquarters in the country. The new facility features a state-of-the-art experience centre, purpose-built for live cooking demonstrations, warewashing systems, and food preparation innovations — underscoring their ongoing commitment to excellence and innovation in the industry.

Talking about its growth, **Razi Haider**, Country Manager, ITW India (FEG Division), said, “As the team has grown now, we have opened a new spacious office here in Capital Business Park, Tower II, Gurgaon. The new facility is designed not just for administrative operations but also as an interactive experience centre.”

Expansion strategies

ITW India has been strengthening its foothold in the southern market, with a

growing demand in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. He said, “We currently have an office in Bengaluru and will soon be relocating to a larger facility nearby. We are performing strongly in the Bengaluru market. We have also seen promising growth in South India, where we have been active for several years.”

He further revealed, “Soon, we will be opening an office in Mumbai in 2027 to serve the Western India region.”

AI-powered products

On the innovation front, ITW recently launched its FLOW Line flight-type dishwashing machine, featuring AI-based technology for improved efficiency and automation. The product will be showcased at the upcoming Milan Show. “Our customers increasingly seek AI-driven solutions, and we have already incorporated these technologies in both our dishwashing and cooking equipment,” he stated.

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Movements



Dr Paresh Pant
Chief Executive Officer
Tourism Fiji Board

The Tourism Fiji Board has appointed Dr Paresh Pant as its new Chief Executive Officer. Dr Pant, who previously held senior leadership roles with Tourism Fiji as Regional Director in New Zealand and Australia, is recognised for transformative destination marketing strategies and sustainable visitor growth.



Allen Machado
Interim Chief Executive
Officer, Niraamaya

Allen Machado has rejoined Niraamaya as the Interim Chief Executive Officer. He will continue to lead Himalia Prime Assets. With close to three decades of experience across premium and ultra-luxury brands in India and the Middle East, Machado is equipped with extensive expertise in business strategy and hotel operations.



Pradipta K Mohapatra
Vice President
Development & Liaison
Atmosphere Core

Atmosphere Core has promoted Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra to the position of Vice President, Development & Liaison for its operations across South Asia. In this new role, Mohapatra will work closely with the leadership team to drive the company's ambitious goal of signing 25 hotels in India by the end of this year.



Sandipan Bose
General Manager
ITC Mughal

Sandipan Bose has been appointed as the General Manager of ITC Mughal. Over the years, he has held key positions within ITC Hotels. He has also worked with several hospitality brands across India. He is recognised for his operational expertise, strategic leadership, and guest-centric approach.



Vineet Kumar
Director of Rooms
Courtyard by Marriott
Bengaluru Hebbal

Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal has appointed Vineet Kumar as the Director of Rooms. With over 14 years of experience in hospitality, Kumar has built a distinguished career across renowned global brands. His expertise lies in operational excellence, team leadership, and crafting personalised guest experiences.



Abhinav Agarwal
Chief Engineer, Radisson
Blu Hotel Paschim Vihar

Radisson Blu Hotel Paschim Vihar has appointed Abhinav Agarwal as its new Chief Engineer. With over a decade of experience in engineering across renowned brands such as Taj Hotels, Marriott, Fairfield, and Courtyard, he brings expertise in electrical & electronics engineering, energy conservation, and sustainable practices.



Urvashi Jha
Cluster MarCom Manager
Fairmont and Raffles
Jaipur

Urvashi Jha has joined Fairmont and Raffles Jaipur as the new Cluster Marketing and Communications Manager. With extensive global experience in luxury hospitality and brand communications, her expertise covers influencer partnerships, content marketing, and consumer engagement initiatives.



Sahil Joshi
Director, Operations
Hilton Gurugram
Bani City Centre

Sahil Joshi has been appointed as the Director of Operations of Hilton Gurugram Bani City Centre. With nearly two decades of rich experience across leading hotel brands, Joshi brings a strong operational acumen and a track record of enhancing guest satisfaction and profitability in the luxury hospitality segment.



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INSP20D	230VAC 50HZ	500	296x370x75mm	Inbuilt	275x350mm	Inbuilt	4.5Kg
INS2BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1000	800X400X100mm	Inbuilt	787X387mm	Inbuilt	9.700Kg
INS3BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1500	1200X500X82mm	Inbuilt	1205X505mm	Inbuilt	25.338Kg

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