

HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA

fhrai magazine

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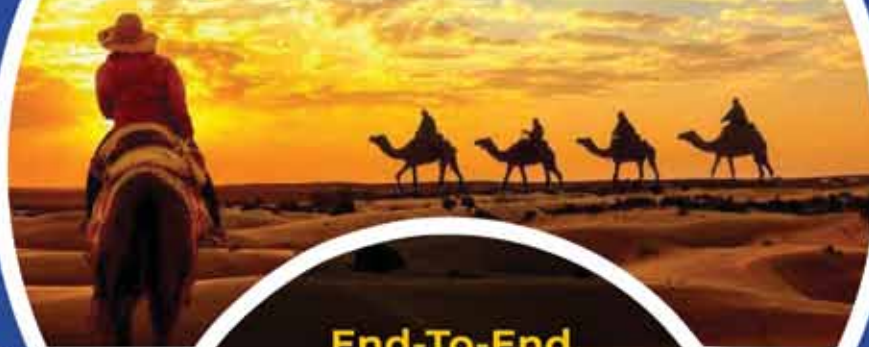
A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE
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DOMESTIC TOURISM: **BOOM OR BUBBLE?**



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My Dear Members,

The world finally opens up once again, and so does travel. Though scepticism still prevails regarding international travel, domestic travel is resuming quicker than expected. It is estimated that post Diwali, i.e., around November 2022, all travel, domestic and international, is slated to bounce back at near pre-pandemic levels.

Hotel bookings are on the rise. Though holiday destinations still remain the most sought after, business travel is also resuming satisfactorily. ARR's have gone up and are looking promising. Banquet bookings and functions, which were also badly hit, are seeing a resurgence in October-November, the season for the same.

You will be glad to know of the Union government's decision to approve an additional ELCGS of ₹50,000 crore specifically for the hospitality, travel, and tourism sectors. This additional line of credit was much needed by our sector, which is still gasping from the after effects of the pandemic, i.e., massive debts while simultaneously trying to keep businesses afloat. This will buy some time to keep the wheels turning. FHRAI thanks the union government for this decision, which we have been advocating, representing, and following up for a very long time.

Another long-standing demand of the FHRAI regarding GST refund to foreign tourists on the lines of many countries has been announced. This will give an additional boost to make our country competitive as against other destinations. While the initial applicability may be limited to shopping from cottage industries and the like, FHRAI has proposed to the government to make all shopping-related purchases made by foreign tourists come under the ambit and thereby attract a GST refund when they leave the country. We have also recommended offering free visas on arrival to encourage international corporates to hold MICE events in our country.

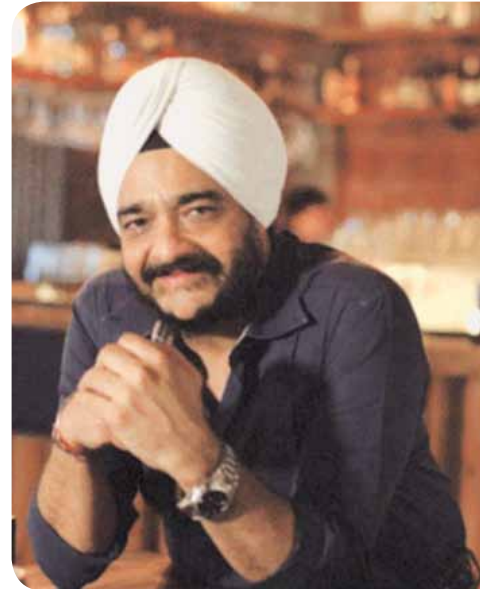
The nation celebrated our 75th independence day with aplomb. The *Har Ghar Tiranga* campaign had all hotels and restaurants display our tricolour proudly on their premises.

In the service charge petition, the government's appeal to stay the orders of the lower court was dismissed. A new short date has been set where the parties will argue the matter before the court.

Now is the time to pull up our socks and get ready for a new inning, which I am confident the industry will bat confidently in.

With kind regards,

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli

Vice President
FHRAI

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SECRETARY GENERAL

Jaison Chacko - sg@fhrai.com

PUBLISHER

Devika Jeet - devika@ddppl.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Lipla Negi - lipla.negi@ddppl.com

DESK EDITOR

Devika Seth - seth.d@ddppl.com

CREATIVE DESIGN

Sanjeev Kumar

MARKETING & SALES - DELHI

Nikhil Jeet - Nikhil.jeet@ddppl.com
Director Advertising (+91 9910031313)

Meetu Malhotra - meetu.malhotra@ddppl.com

Manager Marketing (+919650911399)

Jaspreet Kaur - jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com

Marketing Manager (+919650196532)

MUMBAI

Harshal Ashar - harshal@ddppl.com
General Manager (+919619499167)

Samantha Pereira -
Samantha.pereira@ddppl.com
(+919987550769)

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anil Kharbanda

ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNER

Nitin Kumar

Aditya Pratap Singh

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Hotels today are relooking at accommodation facilities. Design element of hotel is being looked at with microscope in a bid to be more profitable



FHRAI

B-82, 8th Floor, Himalaya House
Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi 110001
Tel: 91-11-40780780, Fax: +91-11-40780777
Email: fhrai@fhrai.com

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Editor: Devika Jeet

Email: fhraimag@ddppl.com
Tel: +919818767141

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Court relief on CCPA norms

Hearing the FHRAI's plea, the Delhi HC has stayed the CCPA's directives, which forbid hospitality establishments from levying a service charge.

The Delhi High Court, on 20 July 2022, stayed recent government directives that forbade hotels and restaurants from adding service charges to customers' food bills. The court solicited government comments and scheduled the case for the following hearing on 25 November 2022, after stating that the matter warrants consideration. However, Justice Yashwant Varma ruled that establishments that collect service charges must prominently declare them on their menu cards.

The High Court order stated, "The matter requires consideration. Until the next date of listing, the directions as contained in para 7 for the impugned communication/guidelines of July shall remain stayed. The members of the petitioner association shall ensure that the levy of service charge in addition and the obligation of customers to pay the same are duly and prominently displayed on the menu or other place where it may be deemed to be expedient."

Following the development, **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI, said, "The Hon'ble Delhi High



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

“FHRAI AND ITS MEMBERS WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT CONSUMERS/PATRONS ARE WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE SERVICE CHARGE LEVY”

Court's order granting a stay on the Central Consumer Protection Authority's (CCPA's) recent guidelines has come as a major relief to the hospitality industry. FHRAI had filed its writ petition in the Delhi HC contesting CCPA's guidelines as they were curtailing hospitality establishments' right to conduct business in a manner suitable to them. As per today's order, all directions under the guidelines in para 7 have been stayed subject to no service charge to be levied on takeaways, and all restaurants shall prominently display in the restaurant that a service charge shall be levied. FHRAI stated that it is entirely the prerogative of a hotel or a restaurant to decide on the structure of the menu and its pricing to best suit the business model. Furthermore, hotels are bound by wage contracts with employees that specify service charge benefits. The new guidelines are against the very grain of doing business in a fair environment and have erroneously proceeded on the basis that a service charge is akin to a tip or gratuity and therefore optional. FHRAI and its members will make every effort to ensure that consumers/patrons are well informed about the service charge levy. We are glad that our employees will continue to avail themselves of the agreed benefits under the service charge."

The CCPA had issued the following guidelines on 4 July 2022 to prevent unfair trade practices and protect consumer interests in hotels and restaurants that levy service charges:

- No hotel or restaurant shall include a service charge in the bill automatically or by default.
- Consumers shall not be levied a service charge under any other name.
- No hotel or restaurant shall force a consumer to pay a service charge and shall clearly inform the consumer that the service charge is voluntary, optional and at the consumer's discretion.
- Consumers should not face any entry or service provision restrictions based on the collection of service charges.
- The service charge shall not be collected by adding it to the food bill and imposing GST on the total amount.





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HRANI organises 7th conclave

HRANI's 7th conclave, held recently at Radisson Blu Kaushambi, Delhi NCR, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad, focuses on the food safety initiatives.

HRANI organised its 7th conclave on 12 July 2022 at Radisson Blu Kaushambi, Delhi NCR, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad, UP, with the goal of educating and raising awareness on the nuances of food safety and standards. Inoshi Sharma, Executive Director-Regulatory Compliance & SBCD, FSSAI, graced the conclave as Chief Guest. Vikas Talwar, Deputy Director, FSSAI, was also present at the event.

In his welcome address, **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI, made submissions on industry issues and requested the making of FSSAI License Perpetual, which had been announced earlier by the CEO, FSSAI. He added, "We have been holding the association's board meeting alongside the conclave. The conclave aims to raise industry challenges. We are also pushing to have some government officials present in order to apprise them of the issues and propose solutions."

An overview of the food safety initiatives such as menu labelling for hotels and restaurants; Eat Right India Movement; Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC); Hygiene Rating Scheme; Eat Right Campus and Save Food, Share Food were presented by Dr. Heena Yadav, Technical Officer, FSSAI.

A panel discussion by eminent speakers followed by a Q&A session was held, which was moderated by Sourish



“THE 8TH HRANI CONCLAVE IS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT RAMADA AGRA”

Bhattacharyya, Op-Ed Columnist and Restaurant Critic, Mail Today (India Today Group) and Founding Director, Tasting India Symposium. The panellists included were Dr. Khurshed Alam Khan, Divisional Manager (R&D), ITC Maurya; Davinder Kumar, President, Indian

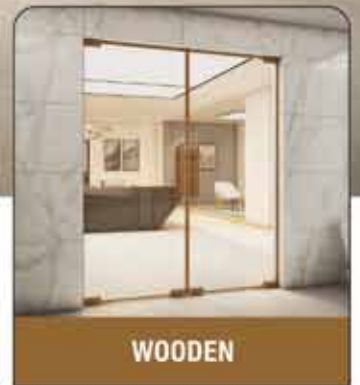
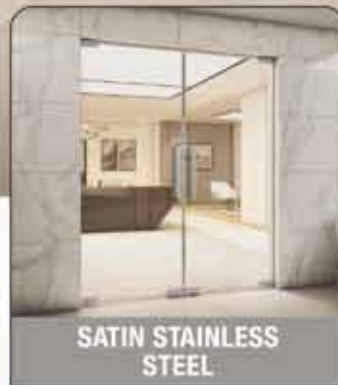
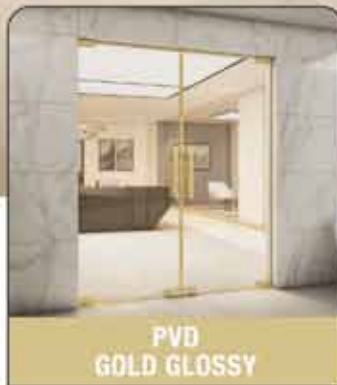
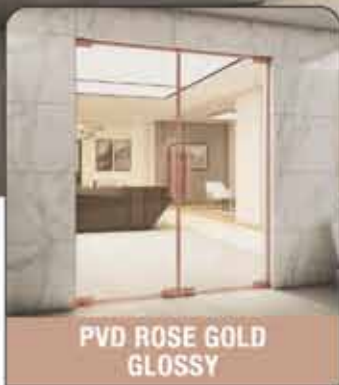
Culinary Forum and Vice President-F&B (Production), Le Meridien, New Delhi; and Vineet Manocha, Senior Vice President-Culinary at Lite Bite Foods Pvt. Ltd., Director of Culinary Excellence, Thunderbird Resorts.

Presentations were given by Hungama Artist Aloud, ITC, and Adani Wilmar. An award ceremony was also held to recognise and encourage industry professionals. The awards consisted of institutional awards, individual awards, and special awards.

The dignitaries from the industry included Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President, HRANI; Garish Oberoi, Treasurer, HRANI and former President of FHRAI and HRANI; Rakesh Roy, Vice President, HRANI; Nikhil Sharma, Member, Managing Committee, HRANI and Regional Director (Head-South Asia), Wyndham (Ramada); Amarvir Singh, Honorary Secretary, HRANI; Ankit Gupta, Honorary Joint Secretary; Renu Thapiliyal, Secretary General, along with senior members from the HRANI Managing Committee: Arun Dang; Bharat Aggarwal; Vidup Agrahari; Amarjeet Singh; Paramjit Singh; Vineet Taking; Vinod Gulati; Mansoor Adil, Senior Executive Vice President, Sarovar Hotels; and Sushil Chugh, General Manager, Country Inn. The event was well attended by the leaders of hospitality, decision makers, industry shapers, media and members of HRANI.



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Making tourism accessible

While applauding the Ministry for drafting 'Accessible Tourism Guidelines for India,' FHRAI expresses concerns on a few 'mandatory requirements'.

In its representation to Arvind Singh, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, FHRAI congratulated the ministry on devising 'Accessible Tourism Guidelines for India', with the mandate to improve accessibility of public places in the interests of differently-abled people. The association also expressed concerns about mandatory requirements for the maintenance of dedicated universally accessible rooms.

The draft proposes that a minimum of 5 per cent of rooms be made universally accessible, while all other rooms have adaptive features to accommodate guests with special needs. A minimum of two accessible room units is required for smaller establishments with fewer than 20 rooms. However, the number of rooms proposed to be kept for differently-abled people is quite high when compared to current requirements, which require all star hotels with at least 10 let-able rooms to keep at least one room for differently-abled guests.



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

DRAFT GUIDELINES

Some examples of how the draft guidelines will compromise the sector are:

Non-preference by general guests:

Such rooms are always in short supply across all hotel categories and are not preferred by general guests, so they are frequently vacant when not booked by differently-abled people.

“THE INDUSTRY IS CUSTOMER-FOCUSED, SO IF ANY HOTEL FEELS THE NEED TO ADD ONE OR TWO MORE UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE ROOMS, THEY WILL DO SO RIGHT AWAY TO MEET DEMAND”

Requirement of structural changes:

Meeting the requirements, such as accessible door and minimum passage widths, and enough space for a wheelchair to turn, and other specifications, would be impractical for the majority of hotels. These hotels must undergo major structural changes. Hence, hotels would have to seek permission from various government departments, which would be a cumbersome process for the hotels. It would also cause significant disruptions to these properties' day-to-day operations.

Additional maintenance costs: Apart from the cost of setting up dedicated rooms with universal accessibility, there would be ongoing costs associated with maintaining these rooms, regardless of booking/demand. This cost would be added to the overall operational cost.

“We understand and appreciate the noble intent of the government with regard to the said guidelines. However, the reasons stated clearly show that the guidelines would be unreasonable for the sector. The industry is customer-focused, so if any hotel feels the need to add one or two more universally accessible rooms, they will do so right away to meet demand. While the initiative of the ministry is laudatory, the demand for such rooms does not seem to be consistent with the proposal to enhance the requirement. Therefore, we request the ministry to remove the mandatory requirement,” said **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.



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‘Need to curb fake reviews’

FHRAI has made recommendations to DoCA and the Ministry for preventing, identifying, and banning fake reviews on e-commerce platforms.

Following its meeting with the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) on the need for a regulatory framework to enable a robust system to control fake reviews on e-commerce platforms, FHRAI has submitted its recommendations to Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce & Industry, Textiles, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

Separate treatment for goods and services: Clubbing products and service criteria may conflict, so even though some of the guidelines are similar, they must be defined and read differently. Because the nature, measurements, standards, and principles of both transactions are fundamentally different, the regulatory framework should explicitly distinguish between products and services, with separate sets of laws for each. In service-related reviews, the questionnaire should be more dynamic based on replies, while also accounting for a reasonable amount of bias because service experience is always subjective in nature.

Penalty and punitive provisions: For the proposed regulatory framework to be successful, it should include strict provisions for fines, penalties, and punitive actions for defaulters. Furthermore, providing the regulatory system with greater teeth will put a check on dishonest and malicious acts on the part of both individuals and corporations promoting and supporting the same.

Establishment of a regulatory body/watchdog: A regulatory body must be established to regulate the conduct of online portals, including that of online travel agencies (OTAs) and food service agencies (FSAs), including but not limited to, allowing fake/paid/biased/unverified customer reviews. The proposed regulatory body may review the portals and make them transparently visible to every company. A report should be maintained on the business's scorecard of problems recorded, addressed, resolved, and closed and those left unattended, and the periodicity can be jointly determined with relevant trade and industry (quarterly or half yearly).



“THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK SHOULD INCLUDE STRICT PROVISIONS FOR FINES, PENALTIES, AND PUNITIVE ACTIONS FOR DEFAULTERS”

Allowing inter-business/inter-platform exchange of information: The hospitality establishments/business owners must be given the opportunity not just to defend their stance but also to directly address the consumers' complaints. Currently, FSA portals do not expose the customer's name and require businesses to only engage with them, which is a basic problem that must be addressed immediately. This could be ensured by making provisions for businesses and aggregators to file

complaints against each other for any type of unfair practice observed, which should also be considered and pursued by the regulatory body to find amicable solutions that benefit all stakeholders.

Establishing industry benchmarking on customer review mechanism: Ratings and rankings must also be regulated by a clear and well-known algorithm that all aggregators must universally adopt to prevent prejudice and backhand deals from hurting commerce.

Traceability/disclosing identity of the reviewer: One of the industry's main issues has been the lack of traceability of the reviewer, which makes it almost impossible to verify their review. Anonymous reviews provide a misleading impression that deludes potential guests. This entire process is being carried out to defend the interests of genuine customers. To do so, we must ensure that imposter customers are kept at bay, as their improper behaviour leads to fraudulent and compromised reviews.

'Clarify contradicting norms'

FHRAI requests clarification on a CCPA guideline on service charges that contradict the GST Act in a submission to the Ministry of Finance.

On behalf of the hospitality industry and its members, FHRAI has written to Vivek Aggarwal, Additional Secretary, GST Council Secretariat, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, to seek clarification from the ministry on the guidelines issued by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) on 4 July 2022, regarding the levying of service charges by hotels and restaurants.

The CCPA guidelines have been released to prevent malpractices and protect consumer interests with regard to the imposition of service charges in hotels and restaurants. However, the following clause in the guidelines goes against the ways in which the hospitality industry currently operates, which is legal under the GST Act: Clause 7. (v) Service charges shall not be collected by adding it them to the food bill and levying GST on the total amount.

"We would, therefore, request you to clarify whether GST is liable to be



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

“THE SAID GUIDELINE IS CONTRARY TO THE TAXATION LAW AND CANNOT BE FOLLOWED BY RESTAURANTS AND HOTELS”



levied on the service charge amount or not. In our opinion, the aforementioned guideline is contrary to the taxation law and cannot be followed by restaurants and hotels," said **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.



Set sail on a magical journey at Mayfair Lake Resort, Raipur

FSSAI licence in perpetuity

HRANI has welcomed the FSSAI's announcement that food handlers will receive permanent food safety supervisor training certificates.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) vide office memorandum dated 21 July 2022, has notified that the Food Safety Supervisor Training certificate will be perpetual in nature. However, if the food handler changes the kind of business (KoB), the certificate holder will have to undergo the food safety training and certification anew and obtain a new certificate for the respective kind of business. Prior to this notification, the training certificate was valid for two years.

Certificate holders must also receive refresher training whenever the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, are changed.

HRANI has sent a representation regarding the removal of the validity of the FSS certificate. The matter has been examined and, considering the current training curriculum, the validity clause of

“WE ARE THANKFUL TO ARUN SINGHAL, CEO, FSSAI; INOSHI SHARMA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FSSAI; AND SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE TRAINING DIVISION FOR EASING THE INDUSTRY”

the FSS certificate has been removed with immediate effect for the food handlers who continue to work in the same kind of business.

"We are thankful to Arun Singhal, CEO, FSSAI; Inoshi Sharma, Executive Director, FSSAI; and senior officials of the Training Division for easing the industry. HRANI is vigorously following up with the authorities to make the FSSAI licence



perpetual to reduce the compliance burden of food business operators. I am happy to share that the authorities have considered the request favourably and a proposal to the health ministry to amend rules under the Food Safety and Standards Act to allow perpetual licence has also been sent," said **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI; and Vice President, FHRAI.

In pursuit of best hygiene

The recent session of the FoSTaC programme, being run by HRAWI on a monthly basis, drew 70 hospitality professionals from the Western region.

HRAWI, in collaboration with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), conducted an Online Food Safety Supervisory Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) programme on 20 July 2022. The latest session saw the participation of 70 hospitality professionals from across the Western region. The programme was conducted by Vivekanand, with a focus on health and food handling practices for hospitality personnel.

"The aim of the programme is for the industry to be thorough and fully equipped to meet international standards in hospitality. It equips hospitality establishments to implement the processes as required by the FSSAI across all its



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI

functions and trains professionals on all the basic principle rules of hygiene. We

“WE URGE HOSPITALITY ESTABLISHMENTS TO ENROL THEIR STAFF FOR THE UPCOMING PROGRAMME”

are glad that we have been able to resume the programmes regularly," says **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.

HRAWI has trained and certified 2,252 hospitality professionals across India's Western region in FoSTaC and FSSAI's Management Training Programme.

SIHRA

Voyaging despite odds

In key developments, SIHRA appoints G Vasudevan, MD, Pandyan Hotels, Madurai, as EC member; gets stay on the government order on property tax.

G Vasudevan, Managing Director, Pandyan Hotels Ltd., Madurai, has been appointed as an Executive Committee Member of SIHRA with effect from 25 June 2022.

MADRAS HC STAYS TN GO

The Tamil Nadu government has issued a government order (GO) revising the property tax on all categories of properties effective 1 April 2022. The said order of the TN government was challenged in the High Court of Madras and the court issued orders staying the GO.

ROADSHOW BY INDIA TOURISM WESTERN ZONE

In collaboration with India Tourism Western Region, SIHRA held a Tamil Nadu Roadshow in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Vadodara, and Surat. Only 20 delegates from Tamil Nadu



K Syama Raju
President, SIHRA

“SIHRA HELD A TAMIL NADU ROAD SHOW IN MUMBAI, AHMEDABAD, VADODARA, AND SURAT”

were permitted to participate in the road show. Of the 20 delegates, 18 were members of SIHRA. S Sundar, Director-Operations, SIHRA, made a presentation on Tamil Nadu and also participated in the road show.

The roadshows were successful. More than 50 exclusive invitees of India Tourism at all locations participated in the road shows. Members had B2B interactions with top agents from Mumbai and Gujarat. The TN Roadshow was a grand success. Special thanks to Venkatesan, Regional Director, West & Central, India Tourism and Team India Tourism and Travel Club, Madurai for organising the event and to G Vasudevan, Executive Committee Member, SIHRA for co-ordinating the event. It was an excellent initiative and a well-organised event, and the participants had great experience and exposure.



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GST revision, a mixed bag for hospitality

While 12 per cent GST on hotel room tariffs of ₹1,000 or less will bring revenue for govt., there is a need to lower tariff for hotel rooms over ₹7,500.

BENEFICIAL BUT CONSTRAINED

The move to revise GST will help the government to bring down the 18 per cent GST rate slab on rooms that have tariffs of over ₹7,500 per day to the 12 per cent slab.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT

It will heavily impact budget customers who come to metro cities and stay for a long time, say for medical treatment from states in the Northeast or students who look for admissions to colleges. This hotel segment accounts for approximately 20 per cent of the total hospitality market and includes categories such as lodges, hostels, dorms, or jungle camps that are frequented by backpackers or young travellers. This segment witnessed a huge uptick after the lockdown was lifted after COVID-19. Following the imposition of a 12 per cent GST on room rents of less than ₹1,000, their market share will undoubtedly decrease. Markets in Southeast Asia have the lowest tax bracket for this segment, and therefore, they will keep attracting



Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI

“THE MOVE WILL ALSO HELP OPERATORS ELIMINATE THE LOSS OF GST INPUT AS THEY WILL BE ABLE TO CHARGE GST ON THE ENTIRE BED REVENUE”

young international travellers and even backpackers from India.

Bringing low-tariff hotel rooms into the tax ambit, on the other hand, will legitimise a large inventory of unlicensed hotels in the unorganised sector, which frequently operate clandestinely and compromise on customer service.

HEAVY TAXATION ON HOTELS

With rising inflation and high prices of basic commodities like edible oils, cooking gas, fuel, and transport, heavy taxation of the hospitality sector will be detrimental, especially when the sector is trying to recover from the pandemic.

All hotel food and beverage (F&B) revenue should be decoupled from room rates, and establishments should be allowed to charge GST at a rate of 5 per cent without an input tax credit under a composite scheme, and a rate of 12 per cent with an input tax credit. The two GST rate slabs for standalone restaurants should be retained.

LOW TAX RATES ARE IMPERATIVE

The tourism industry has a clearly noticeable contribution to the Indian economy, and that contribution will be higher in the near future. Hotels and restaurants are a major part of this industry, and without them, the industry cannot survive. It provides employment opportunities to a large population, and various micro, small, and medium-sized entrepreneurs are dependent on it.

The entire hospitality sector is under the GST regime and there is no exemption or threshold now. Due to the pandemic, the sector is already facing the challenge of meeting operating costs towards maintaining COVID-19 protocols while under the burden of high levies and sharp increases in fuel prices, among others. Therefore, the high quantum of 18 per cent GST should be reduced for the hospitality sector. Also, to ease the



Surendra Jaiswal
President, HRANI

industry, the levy of tax, which is based on room tariff, should be removed; it should be based on input tax credit.

As India becomes an even bigger player in the global hospitality and tourism

“TO EASE THE INDUSTRY, THE LEVY OF TAX, WHICH IS BASED ON ROOM TARIFF, SHOULD BE REMOVED; IT SHOULD BE BASED ON INPUT TAX CREDIT”

industry, we need our services to be on par with global rates. Our Asian neighbours such as Japan and Singapore have very low tax rates for their hospitality sectors (8 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively), which is an important reason for their ranking high on tourist wish lists. India is a global tourism hotspot, but it still loses out on the backpacker crowd due to high taxation rates.

ORGANISING THE UNORGANISED

A large number of unorganised and unlicensed hotels offer room rates of ₹1,000 or less. This was posing a problem for both the government and the hospitality industry. Now, all hotel rooms across categories will come within the sweep of taxation. So, this does not really hurt the industry, but it does increase the cost for the customer, marginally.

The 12 per cent GST on a hotel room tariff of ₹1,000 or less will not impact travel or tourism. Since this segment will now generate revenue, the government



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI

The GST rates for hospitality in India are one of the highest in the world, and this makes both domestic and inbound tourism expensive. We have requested that the 18 per cent GST category for hotels with room rates above ₹7,500 be annulled and merged with the category of 12 per cent GST rate. Similarly, restaurants should be allowed to avail the option to either charge a composite GST of 5 per cent with no input tax credit or a GST of 12 per cent with a full input tax credit and that the rate be delinked from any room tariffs if they are part of hotels.

“THE GST RATES FOR HOSPITALITY IN INDIA ARE ONE OF THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD, AND THIS MAKES BOTH DOMESTIC AND INBOUND TOURISM EXPENSIVE”

should consider bringing the 18 per cent GST rate slab under the 12 per cent slab. This slab comprises the largest segment of hotel rooms, and the 18 per cent GST makes it expensive for tourists.





SERVICE CHARGE TO LEVY OR NOT?

A debate is on whether adding a service charge to consumer bills is lawful. EC Member **Vineet Taing**, President, Vatika Hotels, discusses the issue.

The ongoing discussion on the legality of charging customers a 'service charge' have long been a source of contention. To charge or not to charge is a tricky question since, on one hand, it would be a saving for the customers, but on the other hand, it would cut off a big income for the needy ones. In most organisations, the entire amount goes to the staff to increase their net income. Hospitality has always been a law-abiding industry, but yet it has always been singled out.

FHRAI has been explaining this time and again that there is nothing illegal in collecting a service charge. Since this



Vineet Taing
President, Vatika Hotels

is collected for the benefit of the staff, including everyone from the waiters to the personnel working in the kitchen, it covers all who serve a consumer either directly or indirectly. It is a common and accepted practice in India and several other countries. Moreover, the industry has never forced a consumer to pay the amount if they do not wish to; it is optional at their end. It is for the customer to decide whether he wishes to patronise a restaurant or not. This leads to portraying the image of the industry wrongly in front of people.

It should be entirely a restaurant's discretion whether to charge a service charge or not. If a guest has any objection to paying the service charge, it can be



removed from the bill. It is a practice being adopted by other service providers too, who charge a certain 'convenience fee' for providing services to customers. Services like train and air ticket booking through websites or portals; food ordered via the website or mobile apps; or movie tickets booked through online portals, all levy a convenience fee on the customers. The hospitality industry is trying to come out of a long, struggling, and non-profitable phase, and at this juncture when they need a hand holding, such issues would demotivate them.

FHRAI has also advised its members that if they choose to collect service charges on behalf of their employees by including them in the bill, they must clearly state this on their menu. The convenience fee charged by other service providers does

“IT SHOULD BE ENTIRELY A RESTAURANT'S DISCRETION WHETHER TO CHARGE A SERVICE CHARGE OR NOT”

not come with any prior information, whereas the service charge is mentioned on the menu card. The industry is a manpower-sensitive industry that helps run the households of millions of needy employees across the country, and we are confident that the courts would have a wide-visioned and generous review of the matter in the best interests of all.

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Hotels are the new destination

With b-leisure and work-from-anywhere travel trends, a growing number of hotels are melding relaxation, entertainment, and dining under one roof.

NOT JUST A PLACE TO SLEEP

Travellers now view vacations as a crucial facet of their emotional well-being and believe that they improve these aspects of their health more than other forms of self-care. In light of this, there has been a notable rise in travellers seeking to split their business and leisure travel. With travellers trying to be more mindful of each trip they take, there is a growing desire to engage authentically with local communities. People have embraced domestic tourism quite well and are ready to travel to newer, drivable destinations. It can become a destination if it is in a desirable area and has reliable lodging.

DESTINATION WITHIN THE PREMISES

Every time hotels open their doors in a location, especially one that is untapped and does not already have an influx of hotels, it helps to create a destination and boost the economy. Hotels help in



Harkaran Singh
General Manager,
Hyatt Regency Dehradun

promoting underutilised places and create a destination by welcoming and drawing more visitors. The goal of the marketing is to highlight the location's advantages before tying the hotel product to them. Everyone is excited about helping guests explore the location and creating

memorable experiences since guests are more than willing to try something new.

GAMUT OF NEW EXPERIENCES

You can experience the might of the mountains and the warmth of the valley at the Hyatt Regency Dehradun, the 'heart of the hills'. The Petite Chef's Club engages our young guests; Cook with a Chef for the elderly; and Say it with Photos—unleash your inner photographer as you capture the scenic surroundings. Our in-house specialist conducts the group mobile photography session. The Bar Pathshala—after attending The Malt Bar's spirited cocktail making workshop, you will be the perfect house party host. We offer Zumba, yoga sessions, cycling trails, and much more. The Malsi Nature Walk, located next to the hotel, is a serene and energising trail, and our naturalist makes it fun and informative. We provide a variety of offsite and onsite events and

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are continually adding new ones to keep our guests engaged during their stay. For our younger guests, we offer Camp Hyatt. Craft projects, pottery, kite flying, scavenger hunts, and even story times, among others, are available for children aged 3–12 years.

BLENDING WORK, RELAXATION & FUN

The hotel is nestled amid the foothills of the Musoorie hills. All of our accommodations offer fabulous views, be it of the Himalayan foothills or the lush green Malsi forest. At the Hyatt Regency Dehradun, there are several spaces that allow you to be at ease and at peace while working, as well as high-energy spaces such as the rooftop outlets and our culinary hall, Range.

“CREATING MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES BY ASSISTING GUESTS TO EXPLORE THE LOCATION IS WHAT EXCITES EVERYONE”

B-LEISURE GAINS TRACTION

Today, individuals working across diverse industries and organisations are empowered with the opportunity to explore options for remote working and b-leisure travel. This has changed the way people look at both work and travel today. Moreover, many companies are encouraging b-leisure travel to help their employees de-stress and, in turn, perform better at work. Thus, more and more working professionals are seizing every opportunity to travel and spend time with their loved ones.

BLESSED WITH RAVING REVIEWS

Our guests have been really pleased and supportive from the start. The Hyatt Regency Dehradun has introduced another leisure destination as well as a key addition to the destination weddings and MICE segments with its expansive event spaces and inventory of 263 keys. Guests have given us raving reviews, and we are ensuring we listen to their feedback, which is the most critical tool we have to better ourselves and the experiences we offer to our guests. We are a pet-friendly hotel, and all of our guests appreciate it. The ask is always to create experiences, and that is what we are doing and adding to a host of new experiences in the coming quarter.



BLURRING LINES BETWEEN WORK AND LEISURE

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

RIGHT LOCATION IS KEY

The location has a significant impact on the demand for the hotel and hence on the price we can charge in the market. The success of a hotel location is determined by its proximity to demand generators and transit connectivity. We must recognise that what we have will not change in our local surroundings, which may have a negative impact on our business. Also, new social media platforms such as TripAdvisor and Google, as well as guest reviews on other OTAs, provide us with valuable data into how consumers evaluate the location of hotels surrounding potential sites.

DIFFERENTIATING FACTORS

Hotels must offer much more than a room to be competitive in the sector today; they must deliver an experience. We work hard to differentiate our guest experience from that of our competitors. We can begin by segmenting it into phases that touch different points in the journey of the traveller: pre-stay, in-stay, and post-stay.



Pankaj Gupta

*General Manager, Crowne Plaza
New Delhi Mayur Vihar Noida*

“TO BE COMPETITIVE IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR TODAY, HOTELS MUST PROVIDE MUCH MORE THAN A ROOM”

THRIVING B-LEISURE

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



Happy Independence

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WHOLESOME EXPERIENCES UNDER ONE ROOF

The very nature of travel has undergone significant change. Customers today seek out holistic experiences rather than just a hotel that can accommodate them. This may be done by curating F&B packages, including local experiences, leisure activities on-site and nearby, and local experiences.

BECOMING THE MAIN ATTRACTION

Guests' current travel trend shows that they seek hotels and resorts that offer personalised experiences. The F&B service shapes a guest's experience by showcasing the region's authentic dishes. The Chaupal, where guests are given a complete local experience with rural tea stalls, snacks, and games, is the perfect urban experience at Courtyard Aravali Resort. We are now cultivating our own vegetables to provide our customers with a farm-to-table experience. All of our rooms have chromecast-enabled televisions, making us the only resort with the facility.

MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE FOR GUESTS

Our centrally located pool is the resort's biggest draw. The property was designed with the new age of travellers in mind, who seek unique and exclusive experiences. The resort is spread across eight acres of land around the scenic Aravali hills, which are at a drivable distance from Delhi-NCR. Shibendu Choudhary, our Executive Chef, has worked extensively



Rajneesh Kumar

General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort

“GUESTS LOOK FOR HOTELS AND RESORTS THAT PROVIDE THEM WITH TAILOR-MADE EXPERIENCES WITH ADDED PERKS, AMENITIES, AND TOUCHPOINTS”

on F&B menus for all of our outlets. We offer recreational activities such as bicycling across the resort, pool Zumba, yoga sessions led by our in-house certified yoga instructor, and a complete solution

for children through Giggles, the kids room. We have kept our focus on local and global cuisines, which are showcased at Huang, our Pan-Asian restaurant, and The Aravali Kitchen.

THE URBAN RETREAT

The Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort not only acts as the ideal weekend getaway for guests, but it also serves as the ideal off-site location for corporations. It acts as the ideal urban retreat, capable of serving as both a resort and a workstation, thanks to its versatile and flexible board rooms. The property's Levo spa is an excellent addition for guests to de-stress, as is our modern gym centre, designed to satisfy fitness aficionados.

WORK-LIFE HARMONY

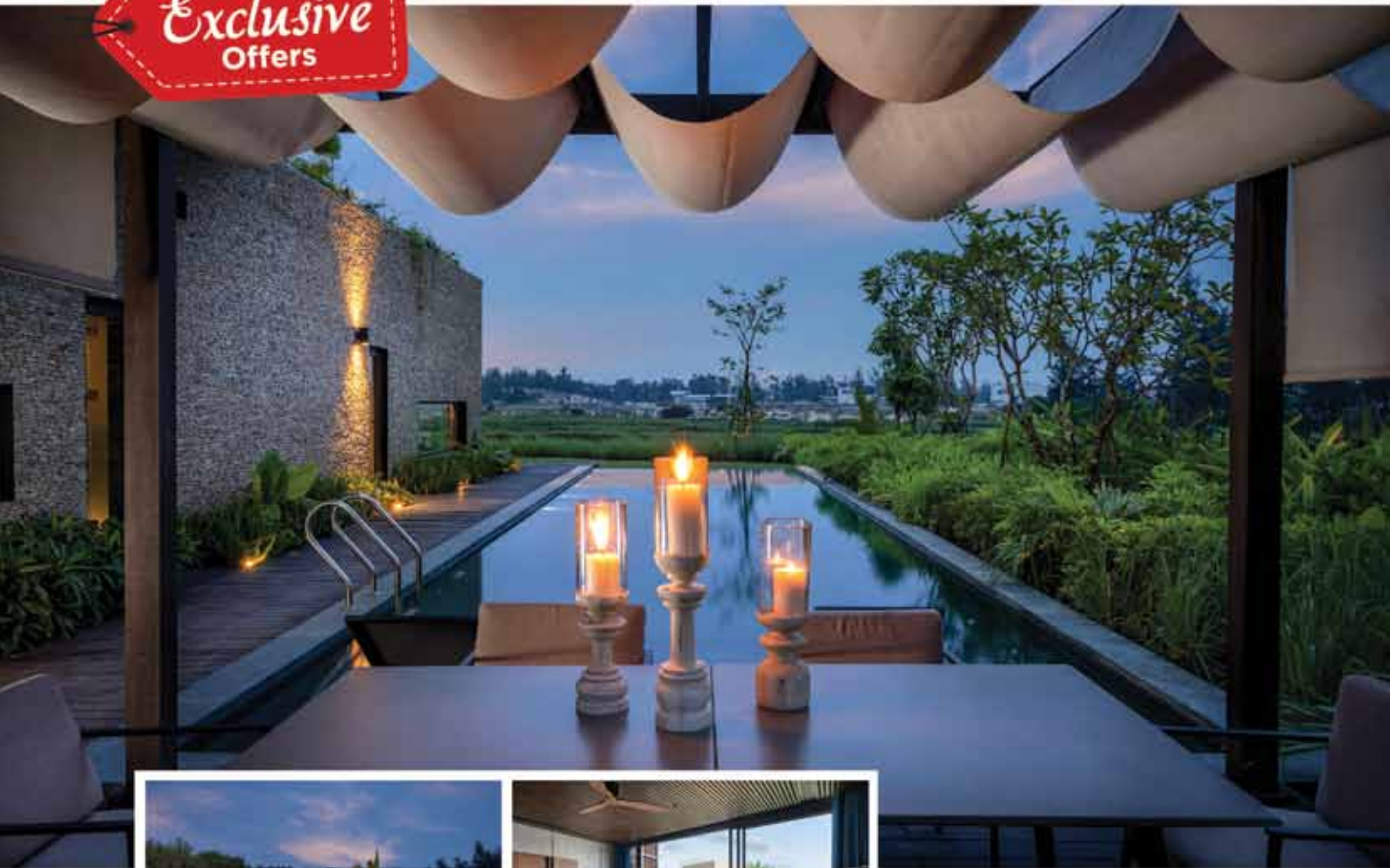
We have seen that b-leisure travel is gaining traction, and not just among millennials. It has evolved into a novel perk that many firms now provide to their employees as well as a means of achieving work-life balance. Business travel frequently includes a leisure element for corporate travellers. Hotels must start adapting to customer demands as business travel expands. The Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort was designed with functionality in mind. The resort offers seamless travel for both business and leisure travellers, with sophisticated meeting rooms equipped with the latest AV equipment.



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Leisure market STRIDES AHEAD

From the terrific rebound of business to increasing project and operational costs, **JB Singh**, President & CEO, Interglobe Hotels, talks about obstacles and opportunities.



Lipla Negi



Where do you see your clientele? Our USP right from the beginning has been offering amazing value for hotel rooms in key important markets across India. Our product is designed for everyone, including families, seniors, couples travelling for leisure, as well as an individual traveller who is upwardly mobile and discerning.

Our current network of 25 hotels across 13 cities in nine states, across brands such as Pullman, Novotel, ibis, and ibis Styles, covers both business and non-business locations. Going forward, for a country as large as India, we want to ensure that we are not too thinly spread out. Our primary growth strategy will be to continue focusing on tier-1 locations across the country while simultaneously looking at high-growth tier-2 cities as well.

While our primary clients are corporations and business travellers, our goal with the ibis product is to also cater to non-business travellers and create an experience for guests by making their stay not only comfortable but also fun and memorable.

In the new normal, what has been your strategy for recovery so far?

Ancillary revenues currently contribute around 13–15 per cent to the airline industry, while this figure remains in the low single digits for the hotel industry. It is high time now that the hotel industry should revisit its business model and operating structures in terms of focusing on ancillary revenues. In the last two years, when regular business was unpredictable, our team came up with a lot of new revenue-generating ideas, and we tested and implemented a number of those ideas, including the dark kitchen delivery model, dark stores, and converting meeting spaces into co-working spaces, among others.

How soon will you be able to meet or surpass the 2019 ARR levels?

The industry witnessed some of its best performing months this year, having

already surpassed the pre-COVID-19 levels of 2019. This was largely driven by the decline in COVID-19 cases, the resumption of domestic travel and international flights from March 2022, strong leisure, wedding demand, and the gradual return of corporate travel. Full year ARR and occupancy recovery, which were previously expected in FY23-24, are expected to be exceeded in FY 2022-23.

How are you enticing your trade partners as the business is recovering?

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

What are the major challenges that the industry needs to prepare for?

We perceive that uncertainty around COVID-19 and the resulting restrictions hampering business continuity and

“OUR AIM WITH THE IBIS PRODUCT IS TO ALSO CATER TO NON-BUSINESS TRAVELLERS”

momentum are one of the biggest threats at this moment. High inflationary trends in building raw materials and retail commodity products have resulted in substantial increases in both project cost and operational cost for the hospitality industry. As occupancies have come back, industry is facing a serious labour shortage, but at the same time, industry has become more efficient in terms of processes and operations. As a hospitality business, we should focus on digitalisation and technology in distribution and customer segmentation in the new normal because it allows us to meet the constantly changing consumer demand.

Your brand has expanded footprints in two leisure destinations – Goa and Vikhroli. What are the key drivers for this segment?

We have witnessed the real potential of the leisure market in India over the last two years. As seen over the past few months, leisure markets will grow with both domestic and international travellers. Domestic demand will be boosted by domestic MICE and destination weddings. Another key driver for this segment is that discretionary



“HOTEL INDUSTRY SHOULD REVISIT ITS BUSINESS MODEL IN TERMS OF FOCUSING ON ANCILLARY REVENUES”

spending will grow as the economy revives. With a strong GDP growth rate and rising per capita income in the country, the spending capacity of people will increase and people will utilise their time and energy to step out and continue the trend of staycations.

How are the numbers looking for your brand in 2022 so far?

Total revenue in the second quarter of this calendar year at portfolio level generated a surplus in comparison to Q2 of pre-COVID-19 levels. Furthermore, the monthly run rate of portfolio ADR also witnessed a healthy increase of ~10 per cent higher than pre-covid already, which is expected to get better in the coming months. Maximum rebound has been observed in business segments in tier-1 cities' key primary markets.

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

With great food offerings, trendy and energetic public spaces, comfortable rooms, well-landscaped outdoors, and photo-worthy and Instagrammable spaces inside the hotel, hotels today provide a refreshing and pleasant stay for various guest segments, such as corporates, families, social groups, and younger millennials. The new hotel design has been conceptualised for the modern traveller with spaces that are more fluid and look and feel warm and inviting. For example, we have now included specially curated libraries and art curated by young and upcoming





artists, which appeal to millennials and Gen Z alike, and for both business and leisure travellers.

Do you see rising inflation and fuel prices making an impact on business?

Inflationary trends in construction raw materials and retail commodity products have driven up project and operational costs significantly. Reduction in time and cost of construction through efficient development policies and norms and streamlining the approval and licencing process is something the government

needs to address on an urgent basis. There are ways and means by which the government can work towards removing the systemic inefficiencies that have been collected over the years to keep the industry attractive to investors.

“FULL-YEAR ARR AND OCCUPANCY RECOVERY ARE EXPECTED TO EXCEED IN FY 2022-23”

What makes this approach even more viable is that there are no direct financial implications to the exchequer.

- Providing an input credit on GST incurred in construction activities
- Making property taxes consistent across the country, to name a few
- Uniform building bye-laws and parking norms for the hotel development, as current norms prohibit the highest and best use of a land parcel
- Height restrictions, parking counts, and setback norms need to be relooked to ensure that global best practices are implemented across the country

Simultaneously, the government needs to work on long-term solutions to achieve sustainable capital availability for the industry by considering the following initiatives:

- Similar to the real estate sector, hospitality-specific alternate investment funds and government/RBI-backed credit guaranteed bonds will go a long way toward increasing fund availability for the industry.
- Bringing down the eligibility limit for getting infrastructure status for hotel projects from ₹200 crore to ₹50 crore investment. This will aid in the financing of long-term debt at a lower interest rate, bridging the gap between return expectations and debt costs.
- Priority sector lending status for hospitality, travel, and tourism



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Millennials & Gen Z herald THE FUTURE OF HOSPITALITY

Pandemic and demand volatility have impacted hospitality, with residual ramifications.

Kamal Kant Pant,
Principal, IHM Pusa,
offers insight on
hospitality trends.

Predicting the next trend has evolved as a new trend in its own right in the new normal, allowing the media to push many experts to try their hand at crystal ball gazing. Following this eminent trend, we are foreseeing new hospitality trends. So far, hospitality has had four recognised pillars: dining places, lodging, travel/tourism, and recreation. But, hospitality's reach is expanding, and industries such as retail, real estate, high-end consumer durables, and gems and jewellery, among others, now have a strong bundling of hospitality in their product mix. While it is natural to accept the integration of retail and hospitality given that, for most people, shopping entails both recreation and the acquisition of new products and services, with the balance tilting in favour of the former as you go upscale, luxury items are unmis-

takably using hospitality experiences as a differentiator. As global firms in the above industries compete for the best hospitality graduates, we have all seen this happen.

Regardless of the foregoing debate over the scope of the hospitality sector, I believe the following three trends will shape the business in the coming years: The evolving customer profile is the one overwhelming trend shaping the future of hospitality. Baby boomers, Generation Y, and Generation Next are gradually phasing out, giving way to millennials and Gen Z as the leading customers. This shift is transforming the behaviour of customers. The new emerging consumer cohort has the following characteristics:

- Real-time and smooth migration between the real and virtual worlds, as well as using virtual world cues to make real-world decisions. An amazing phenomenon to see is the current

generation's reliance on the digital presence of companies, images, videos, and reviews received, among other things, to make purchases for services such as a hotel to stay at, a table to dine at, or a show to attend. You do not exist for them unless you are on a digital platform. Hence, in order to lure consumers and eventually create an impact in the real world, every firm must be aggressively present in the virtual world.

- The new generation is selective about environmental issues and will not make compromises on matters that are valuable to them. Whether it is fair trade, animal welfare, carbon emissions, or pricing, they are less value-conscious than their predecessors were, but even if they were, they would be willing to spend a little extra if the products and services were responsibly sourced and processed. Businesses cannot pull a fast one on this



FROM MEGA TO MINI & MICRO HOTELS

During the pandemic, the only sector of lodging that saw strong demand was resorts with independent villas. Properties with many bedrooms, where families or close circles of friends could vacation together, were popular as well. Such properties are expected to remain popular now that the pandemic is subsiding. Many large hotel brands are anticipating this trend and exploring new business verticals as management contracts with property owners grow their part of the hospitality pie. To capitalise on this, real estate and housing designs are being inspired by AirBnB and other platforms that aggregate independent houses. Many former havelis, or palaces, have been turned into hotels across India. People will soon design their homes so that they may later be modularly utilised to accommodate paying guests and tourists.

DESKILLING OF THE WORKFORCE

The western hospitality industry relied largely on cost-saving technologies like labor-saving devices, self-help facilities, the usage of convenience/frozen meals, and so on since labour costs in those countries were so high. Even though India's labour costs are much lower than those in developed nations, management accountants are taking notice. Moreover, the sector now lacks skilled workers as a result of the layoffs that took place during the pandemic; this gap is unlikely to be bridged in the near future. Hence, the industry seeks to maintain lean, agile organisations that can adapt to any new circumstance. Hospitality in India is relying more on labour and



Kamal Kant Pant
Principal, IHM, Pusa

“DURING PANDEMIC, RESORTS WITH INDEPENDENT VILLAS SAW ROBUST DEMAND”

cost-saving technologies. To do this, either deskill the jobs in the industry or turn to automation. The kitchens are deskilling the catering jobs. Many mid-range hotels are either completely or partially outsourcing catering services by relying on readily available solutions in packaged convenience foods or by using the services of bulk producers, bakeries, or home chefs, especially for desserts and breakfast items, among others, which can be reconstituted, regenerated, and served by a workforce with limited skills. The future will see a few highly skilled and empowered people running and managing the hospitality businesses with a lot of machines and a few unskilled or transient labour pools.

generation since they are not used to waiting for information or continually verifying the veracity of the information. If they are found to be hiding key details, you will be shocked and may lose out on business opportunities.

- To appeal to this generation, airlines and fleet operators running transportation must upgrade to better equipment and operate more effectively to minimise environmental damage.

- In order to cater to this growing population, the hotel and leisure sectors will need to adopt more ecologically friendly construction processes and technologies, such as biodegradable cleaning products, natural furnishing materials, and close-loop technology.

- Buyers will also be influenced by dining trends, including slow food, plant-based menu options, locally sourced produce, farm-to-fork offers, and the like.



Putting 'design' in the spotlight

Hotels today are relooking at accommodation facilities. Design element of hotel is being looked at with microscope in a bid to be more profitable.

 Charmaine Fernz



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

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

Trent Fraser, CEO, Choice Hotels Asia-Pacific, believes that from a global perspective, the industry is seeing some subtle changes in the makeup of rooms, with some properties introducing

business suites within their room options. High-quality in-room amenities are being offered, including high-speed internet with a one-time login, smart TVs with access to subscribers' platforms and content, larger work desks, permanent screens, and office furniture. He adds, "Our metro properties are strong across Australia, with YTD RevPAR rising sharply in 2021 and occupancy levels 17



Alexandra Woop

*Executive Director, Interior Design,
IMEA, Accor*

**“We often take risk
of experimentation
when working with
design teams”**

per cent above comparable upper midscale market competitors. Visitors staying for an extended period prefer apartments and suites with more amenities, located further away from the central business district (CBD) to accommodate the transition from workweek to weekend leisure. There is also a shift in CBD properties toward apartment-style accommodation. Choice Hotels is planning a new development in Melbourne's CBD in the coming months that will appeal to longer-stay guests."

Jacobo San Nicolas Lopez-Bosch, SVP, Head of Technical Services, Radisson Hotel Group, says, "In the new normal, many industries have realised that remote working can work. So, hotels have revisited their room designs to adapt to this traveller's needs. In 2020, we launched our hybrid rooms and meetings. Hybrid rooms offer a modern office with the comforts of a contemporary hotel room. Hybrid meetings combine the best of meeting in-person and virtually with an image and AV conferencing system, dual screens, wireless presentation clickers, and high-speed internet. A common design technique is to ensure that rooms are convertible and adaptable to become multifunctional."

Chander K Baljee, Chairman and MD, Royal Orchid Hotels, says the concept of co-working spaces has gained



immensely. A shift from traditional ways of working is seen as a noteworthy opportunity for the industry to generate more revenue.

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

THE DESIGN CHANGE

Today, business and leisure are intertwined, and families are included. In such cases, hotels are now trying to modify space to best fit in. As Baljee points out, developing a unique space and design for a hotel or undergoing renovation is a long and daunting task. With rising competition, the city offers hundreds, if not thousands, of guest rooms. It is thus critical to put your best foot forward when it comes to hotel room space and interior design. The space and interiors should be functional and sophisticated.

Woop explains that a lack of circulation space in the room is a barrier for projects with a business model centred on public

area revenue or high room quantity, especially in historical buildings with smaller rooms. Even in the luxury and upscale segments, we require a certain number of functions and areas that are essential for a product. It is vital to keep the number of furniture items in the room to a minimum while also making them versatile. We always ask architects to enlarge façade windows if it is possible.



Nikhil Sharma

Regional Director-Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts EMEA

“Lobbies have elevated their design aesthetic to offer a relaxed environment”

Small rooms can be designed to emphasise their boutique essence while maintaining comfort and décor. Cutting-edge technology such as circadian lighting, sound speakers, a walk-in shower, and inspiring amenities are also on the agenda.

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

From a more b-leisure view, Sharma says that one of the main reasons b-leisure travellers extend their business trips is to unwind, which ultimately improves the quality of their work. This novel idea often entails family trips. Thus, it is crucial for hotels to design their rooms today with convenience in mind, including kitchens, private outdoor areas, neighbouring rooms, and designated workstations. Seamless technology is also key. However, Fraser believes that hotels are starting to look at how to reconfigure rooms to allow for a shift from a working week to weekend family leisure. High-speed internet, ethernet access, and Wi-Fi are essential, followed by built-in furniture strategically placed in the room to take



Kush Kapoor
CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts

“Hotels with wellness and fitness spaces will grow”

advantage of natural light. Access to better in-room kitchen facilities beyond tea and coffee is also vital.

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

THE PROFITABILITY TWIST

Hospitality was hit the hardest by the pandemic, but the new concern is whether design changes are affecting the bottom line. Fraser feels that renovations and upgrades to rooms are an ongoing cost for hotel owners. "Working space and kitchen facilities are being considered as rooms are being renovated. Many of these features are already present in the majority of our



Trent Fraser
CEO, Choice Hotels Asia-Pacific

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



mid- and upper-scale properties; it is just a matter of restructuring the space to cater to work during the week and leisure on weekends." Kapoor feels that the design of a hotel defines a project's overall business plan. If a hotel is a small business property, it will focus on simple, clean spaces with enhanced business efficiencies, not luxury. While luxury properties will focus on design and bespoke comfort, they will come at a cost, impacting commercials. It depends on the kind of guest and the position in mind.

Lopez-Bosch is of the view that hotel design has a major impact on the total build cost of a property as well as the ADR, which can be chargeable, but guests have an increasing expectation for certain design details and services at the base level, so one must be clever. Smart design has a huge impact on F&B operations since it dictates how many covers may be served, capacity levels, and revenue generation per square footage. RHG has professional agreements in place with suppliers to ensure we get the best prices based on the volume of orders. Hotel design allows us to combine new and recycled materials.

Woo opines, "When it comes to long-term design investment, a good quality design will influence overall operational success and have a high RoI in the short run. Design is more than just an interior project; it requires the involvement of experts such as F&B and wellness, kitchen, IT, acoustics, lighting, FLS, and others. Working with such specialised teams will always pay off. The paradox of interior and F&B design is that within the same budget, you may build a destination place

with high revenue or an empty, wasteful area with no vibe. It all comes down to strong concepts, market studies, and the right people in the design process, with the consultants who develop the project never being compromised. Engineering is a critical part of hotel design as it can influence operational costs and, in some cases, result in equipment cost savings by reducing water and energy consumption and GRMS."

THE DESIGN STUDY

First impressions are the best, is the adage, and the same goes for any hotel. As Baljee explains, whether it is a lobby, room, or restaurant, the interior design holds significant value because it is the entry point of a hotel experience. Serving as a visual backdrop for potential customers and clients, interior design can enhance the dining experience. Woo adds that unique designs refer to unique, bespoke concepts, where authenticity is the key to guests' hearts. The crafted design inspires guests to experience captivating stories through the spaces, making their journey unforgettable and exciting. We are innovating and experimenting with public space functionality. The latest projects we are currently working on in the region reflect the philosophy of unique concepts with a strong expression of brand DNA.

As per Kapoor, Roseate Hotels & Resorts' design philosophy focuses on minimalism, harmony with natural surroundings, quality, efficiency, and attention to detail. The colour palette is neutral with pops of colour. The Roseate New Delhi features timeless and iconic

architecture and design, as well as a natural setting with over a thousand trees and tranquil water bodies. The Roseate Ganges has villas that are designed with classic elegance in natural colour palettes and locations. Each of our properties has a distinct design concept that respects its surroundings and the ecology at large.

TRENDS TO FOLLOW

While design is key for every hotel, there are notable trends emerging in the next few years. Fraser says, "A major new trend is catering to long-stay travellers, who may spend a part of their official work week in their room to allow fewer but longer visits. In H1 2022, our corporate stays were on average five days instead of the four days in 2019." On the other hand, Kapoor feels that hotels with well-equipped wellness and fitness spaces are part of a growing trend. Modern life's demands mean that guests expect immersive experiences during their stay. Hotels with mindfully curated dining concepts are gaining popularity.

"The refreshed retro-vintage style focuses on excellent quality and timelessness while still being relevant and comforting. Classic styles are also invigorating with contemporary touches.



Jacobo San Nicolas Lopez-Bosch
SVP, Head of Technical Services, RHG

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

vintage glitz and flair to design ideas, and creating a colour palette with rich, bold hues, high contrast features, and sleek, streamlined forms will give the room an elegant and modern look," says Baljee.

As per Woo, it is all about a multi-faceted, experiential, sensory design approach. "We often take the risk of experimentation

when working with design teams across the region. We are also inventing new functionalities and experiences within each property, reflecting unique stories, from art galleries and libraries to theatre and fashion shows, followed by vibrant F&B spaces and tasting rooms," she adds. The vast outdoors, where people socialise al fresco, has been the favoured option for drinking, dining, and entertaining in recent years. While many hotels are putting interior elements outside, many are also bringing the outside in. Interiors with raw, organic roots and 'biophilic' design elements are serving as an antidote to too much time spent inside and tapping into mental well-being.

Lopez-Bosch shares that many venues have designed weatherproof outdoor spaces that are as desirable in the winter as in summer. Within the rooms, guest-focused technology, especially contactless technology, is a growing trend. Sharma concludes that a massive shift in consumer preferences determines today's top industry trends. These shifting tastes are impacting hotels and their design and functionality. Lobbies have typically served as a place to check in to your room. Now, lobbies are transformed to engage guests as well as offer a relaxed environment to socialise.





LUXURIOUS FERVOUR marks first milestone

Pratima Badhwar, Head-Commercial, Accor India & South Asia, shares that based on the positive response to Raffles Udaipur, Raffles Jaipur will open next.

Raffles Udaipur is celebrating its one-year anniversary, which fills us with delight and gratitude. Raffles Udaipur has received overwhelmingly positive feedback over the past year. We are excited to welcome guests from all over the world as we celebrate our first anniversary with zeal.

TRIUMPHS AND CHALLENGES

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

LESSONS OF RESILIENCE & GROWTH

2021 was a year of learning that paved the way for a vital evolution in the sector. We adhered to Accor's core values and kept our strategy focused on our guests. With



Pratima Badhwar
Head-Commercial,
Accor India & South Asia

“WE FOCUSED ON OUR PRODUCT AND THE LEGENDARY RAFFLES SERVICE, WHICH LED TO ORGANIC GROWTH”

better resources and advancements, we entered 2022. Organic growth resulted from our focus on our product and the

renowned Raffles service. This, along with tactical events and other strategic activities, helped us attract the right audience and solidify our place as the luxury getaway for the well-traveled.

STRENGTHENING THE POSITION

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

STRATEGISING MARKETING

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

Guest-centric ops made easy with WhatsApp INTEGRATION

eZee is all set to launch a brand-new WhatsApp integration with hotel PMS, allowing lodging providers to offer a whole new level of guest experience.

EZee Technosys (eZee), a leading player in hospitality technology solutions, is soon introducing WhatsApp integration with hotel PMS to help accommodation providers offer a whole new level of guest experience.

With over 2 billion users and 100 billion messages exchanged per day, WhatsApp is one of the most significant platforms in the world right now. This presents hotel businesses with a huge opportunity to constantly stay connected with their guests and build strong relationships.

"Travellers nowadays want to connect with accommodation providers in a seamless manner, and vice versa. They want to stay in touch with their guests before arrival, during their stay, and post-departure. This is how important communication is. And we, at eZee, are simplifying just that by introducing WhatsApp integration," said Hitesh Patel, Director and Co-Founder, eZee Technosys.

The WhatsApp integration will give a huge opportunity for hotels to make a positive impact on their guests' experience. The integration will not just provide accommodation providers with a platform to send messages to their guests, but also allow them to perform various guest-centric operations.

With WhatsApp integrated into the PMS, hotels can send instant booking notifications upon reservation, update guests about their stay details, ask for feedback right after they check out, inform them about unsettled transactions, send invoices, receive payment, create a catalogue for service, and more.

"Nowadays, hotel businesses are quite different from what they were a few decades ago. Running a hotel today is a tall order. Travellers want everything quick and at the convenience of their smartphones. Which is why mobile technology is becoming so relevant for



Hitesh Patel

Director and Co-Founder, eZee Technosys

“Travellers nowadays want to connect with accommodation providers in a seamless manner, and vice versa”



hotels worldwide. And this new initiative of integrating WhatsApp with a hotel PMS is going to change the way they communicate with guests,” Patel added.

Over the years, eZee has gained profound experience in working with hospitality establishments of all shapes and sizes and helping them fill voids through technology. It can rightly be

said that eZee has mastered the craft of building efficient and scalable hotel tech solutions.

And at present, powered by its potent R&D skills, technological prowess, industry expertise, and dynamic team, the company is working tirelessly to democratise the use of WhatsApp for hotels worldwide.

DOMESTIC TOURISM: **BOOM OR BUBBLE?**

It emerged as an unexpected saviour for the industry reeling under the global crisis of COVID-19. Will it continue its juggernaut or fade out soon? Top hoteliers delve into the future of domestic tourism.



Lipla Negi





Sudeep Jain
Managing Director-South West Asia,
IHG Hotels & Resorts

LOCAL EXPERIENCES IN THING

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

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

'OUR SUPPLY LEVELS ARE VERY SMALL'

Domestic tourism will be stronger than it has ever been prior to COVID-19. However, the real test of whether we are going to see sustainability of the kind of demand we have seen in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Kashmir in the last couple of years will only come in sometime through the middle of next year. Flights remain expensive; visas are taking longer than usual to clear, and they are also costly. As a result, international travel has not really taken off. Domestic demand is robust, but whether it can keep up its insane buoyancy in the coming year remains to be seen.

It is currently booming. However, I would call it a steady increase. Obviously, when international travel opens, there will be an impact on domestic tourism, but how much is unknown. People have awakened to what is available in the country during the last two years. They have become accustomed to travelling throughout India. Sarovar has always had a prominent presence in the domestic market. We bring in a fair amount of local gastronomy. We are now aware that there is a high demand for resorts in the domestic market. We are growing into tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

Most areas experiencing a boom have relatively little inventory. Srinagar, for example, does not even have 300 quality accommodations. Gulmarg does not have a hotel with 100 rooms. So, boom, since they don't have any more rooms to

sell. The supply is quite limited. Demand is growing because people are selling the same rooms for ₹50,000 that they used to sell for ₹10,000. Similarly, supply is limited in most parts of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

I believe the current trend has come to light as a result of the scarcity of available rooms in most places. There are a few decent-quality accommodations to choose from in Mashobara, Pahalgam, and Palampur. It is changing, but only gradually. So, I think there will be more supply added to resort locations, and they will perform better than before, but we do not know how much better. Domestic tourism is heavily reliant on connectivity. Wherever there is improved road infrastructure, airports, and air connectivity, which is emerging in most parts of the country, there is increased business.

The hotel industry must place an increasing emphasis on experiential stays. Before the traveller checks into the room, you should offer him additional information; information about what he can explore around the destination—wildlife, adventure, temples, nature, and so on. Curated holidays will shape domestic tourism's future. Rising inflation will have little effect because our supply is limited, and individuals have enough money in their pockets.

It is difficult to predict if the trajectory of domestic tourism will remain as vertical as it has been in the previous two years. However, we anticipate strong, sustained demand.



Ajay K Bakaya
Managing Director,
Sarovar Hotels

FUTURE OCCUPANCY LEVELS LOOK STRONG

The pandemic opened new doors for domestic tourism as Indian travellers started exploring multiple pockets around the country, aided by initiatives that promoted local travel and experiences. Even though international borders are open, we continue to witness strong demand across domestic destinations. The robust domestic tourism network, with globally benchmarked standards and immersive local experiences, will continue to attract the Indian traveller, especially given the diversity and vastness of tourism offerings that India houses.

At Radisson Hotel Group, we have recorded strong summer bookings in India, with occupancies across the

chain topping even 2019 levels. Both leisure and corporate travel led this domestic demand, with MICE, MSME, and social bookings picking up pace, especially in tier-1 and 2 cities such as Bengaluru, Pune, Mumbai, Goa, and Chennai. We also witnessed an increase in footfalls across leisure destinations such as Mussoorie, Dharamshala, Lonavala, Pondicherry, and Vishakhapatnam. Future occupancy levels are looking strong as well.

Leveraging the domestic opportunities present, our India expansion plan is set to more than double the current portfolio of 143 hotels (in operation and pipeline) to add another 148 hotels and resorts by 2025.



Zubin Saxena
Managing Director & Vice President
of Operations, South Asia,
Radisson Hotel Group

GROWTH DRIVER FOR TOURISM SECTOR

The outlook for domestic travel has changed in the last two years. Restrictions and the changing landscape of travel regulations have pushed local destinations to the forefront. People are willing to pay well for premium and luxury properties in coveted domestic destinations. While the more lucrative international travel is yet to pick up, domestic travel is expected to be a growth driver for the Indian hospitality and tourism industry. With increased disposable incomes, we observe a heightened curiosity about the country's own

travel spectrum. As for trends, travellers are now looking for meaningful experiences under one roof to create deeper connections with their loved ones and the environment. Hence, our hotels are in demand, and staycations at holiday destinations are sought after. This is also reflected in an increase in FIT and demand across Sofitel BKC, Raffles Udaipur, and Fairmont Jaipur, which are designed to keep the customer at the core of our products and services. We will continue to focus on domestic leisure travel, staycations, and workcations.



Puneet Dhawan
Senior Vice President-Operations, Accor

A MIX OF BOTH

I would say it is both, a bubble and a boom, to witness this surge in tourism contributed by domestic travellers, not only for the hospitality industry as an industry, but also for the guests and supplementing industries as well. At the time of the numerous restrictions posed by the pandemic, domestic tourism offered a plethora of choices with the comfort of short-distance travel and safety assurance provided by the hotel brands. Staycations turned out to be the first vantage point to break the lockdown

monotony, followed by drive-cations with family and friends, and even work-cations combining business with leisure to make the most of working from home, and the options only progressed from there on. Hotels have indeed gone out of their way to create meaningful packages catering to the needs of such evolving guest segments.

Domestic travel will continue to thrive as more people invest in travel experiences and discover previously unknown destinations.



Anuraag Bhatnagar
Chief Operating Officer,
The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

IT WILL REMAIN THE BACKBONE OF TOURISM

Despite setbacks in the pandemic years, the Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key drivers of growth in the services sector in India. The Indian economy has shown resilience and has seen demand from both leisure and corporate segments, which indicates the hospitality sector is on the right track. India's Ministry of Tourism as well as private stakeholders are promoting domestic travel, which we can assure you will remain the backbone of the tourism and hospitality verticals in the coming years.

The industry has realised the need to prioritise products and destinations that would be of interest in the target market and ensure that they deliver value for money. New segments such as rural, wellness, tribal, adventure, MICE, and religious can be developed.

Currently, the outlook is that inbound tourism will begin with a moderate flow by January 2023 onwards. Inbound inflow is also subject to airline capacity and visas, which is currently an issue. We believe it is the beginning of a multi-year run in the development of resorts in the country.



Abinash Manghani
Chief Executive Officer,
WelcomHeritage Hotels

UPTICK IN CONSUMER SPENDING

The tourism sector in India has staged a significant revival post-pandemic, giving a much-needed fillip to the domestic travel segment. This trend is expected to stay as the industry has witnessed an increase in demand for premium rooms due to rising consumer spending. The sector is witnessing a boom due to better connectivity of highways and the UDAN scheme, which has improved flight connectivity to various tourist

destinations. The Indian tourism sector is in a much better situation than other countries, which are more dependent on foreign tourist arrivals. For every beautiful tourist destination in India, there's an equally attractive alternative that remains unexplored. Hence, the situation is not likely to change even if international travel fully gains momentum. The country will continue to lead as a sustainable destination amid demand for safe and environmentally sustainable travel.



Satyen Jain
Chief Executive Officer, Pride Hotels

IT IS INDIA'S STRONG POINT

Yes, domestic tourism is on the rise. It is difficult to predict whether it is a bubble or a boom, as everything is interrelated to the way the economy performs. While the West is facing recessionary trends, India seems to be doing fine and doesn't show any sign of such fears. Therefore, I see this as a reality and hope to see this continue. If there is no boom, there is no bubble. India's strong point is its domestic tourism. People want to travel and have understood the fact that travel is one luxury they would like to have and should not keep it as a future plan.

It is important to note that those willing to travel internationally are already travelling now. Inbound travel

certainly won't impact the mindset of domestic travellers. Hence, there is no correlation as to how growth in international travel would adversely impact the domestic tourism market.

Infrastructure improvement in every aspect of India's economy is the factor that I feel will drive the story of domestic tourism in the coming times. Quality rooms and facilities being offered to travellers will also have a strong impact. One more critical aspect will be the growing mindset of travellers seeking niche travel products. The younger generation in India wants to travel and explore, and with discretionary income growth, travel will only increase in the coming years.



Sarbendra Sarkar
Managing Director & Founder,
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

A blend of INNOVATION, TRUST & CONVENIENCE

We have transitioned towards digital ecosystem to provide a holistic experience, shares **Rakesh Awasthi**, Head-Business Development, Ozone Group.

Trends come and make a statement each year. However, a hotel renovation trend would be a bit impractical. Hospitality services would not want to close down and keep up with the digital trends given the stability of such events. Our projects for the segment are based on contactless operation and the longevity of the products—for a minimum of 3-5 years. Though the products have a longer life, the hotels tend to update them to the latest demands and interiors at least twice in a decade.

SUSTAINABILITY FACTOR

We source locally produced materials. Ozone is mindful of its carbon footprint and puts effort into minimising it. In compliance with green building norms, we ensure that the raw material is procured within a range of 800 km only. We have strategically located warehouses in PAN India to keep up with it. In addition, our products are developed from ~90 per cent recycled materials—far above the mandate of 30 per cent.

BALANCING INNOVATION WITH CONVENIENCE

We have transitioned towards a digital ecosystem to provide a holistic and smooth onboarding experience. We have designed our solutions keeping user convenience



Rakesh Awasthi

Head-Business Development, Ozone Group

“We are also working towards integrating hardware that responds to hand gestures”

in mind, with over 50 per cent of Ozone products not needing any technicians for installation. We have developed touch-free technologies and have introduced products such as RFID locks that work through OTPs, thereby completely negating infection transmission that may happen through access cards. We are also working towards integrating hardware that responds to hand gestures for opening and closing doors.

OPPORTUNITY TO EVOLVE

In terms of architectural hardware and security solutions, I would not say there is competition in the market. Instead, the market has the opportunity to evolve continuously. To manoeuvre through challenging times, firms need to relentlessly re-innovate and be proactive in addressing the changing requirements of the market and the industry.

CATERING TO HOSPITALITY DEMANDS

This is where we get the scope to polish ourselves further. Hotels are looking to offer their customers an unforgettable and larger-than-life experience. They do not just want to install a product but redefine it. Some products, such as movable acoustic wall partition, were curated explicitly for hospitality. The innovation in shower enclosures was born from hotel input and now stands tall to serve further. Some of the trends that we have already started witnessing in hotels include solutions that ensure ease of access, such as automatic swing doors, digital furniture, virtually accessible locks, safes, and lockers, among others, completely replacing the traditional keys, access cards, and password mechanisms. A combination of ‘Innovation + Ozone’s Trust + Convenience’ is what we have been catering to.



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Hotels on COURSE OF RECOVERY

Domestic leisure, transient passengers, MICE/ weddings, business travel, and FTAs aid recovery.

Notwithstanding the impact on demand from further COVID-19 waves, if any, ICRA expects the industry's revenues and margins to return to pre-pandemic levels in FY2023. The demand is likely to stem largely from domestic leisure and transient travel, although there will be a gradual recovery in business travel and foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs).

ICRA expects pan-India premium hotel occupancy to be at 68-70 per cent in FY2023, while the average room rate (ARR) is expected to hover around ₹5,600 to ₹5,800. The improved operating leverage, along with the sustenance of cost-optimisation measures,

Important Highlights

- Cities reliant on business visitors, such as Bengaluru and Pune, will take several months to recover.
- Average room rate (ARR) is expected to hover around ₹5,600 to ₹5,800.
- Revenue per available room (RevPAR) remains 20-22 per cent lower than pre-COVID-19 levels.
- Hoteliers may report stable performance in Q1 FY2023, aided by a strong leisure segment.

will support margins. **Vinutaa S**, VP and Sector Head, ICRA, said, "The industry witnessed a healthy start to FY2023, with 56-58 per cent occupancy in premium hotels in Q1 FY2023. It was up from 40-42 per cent in FY2022 and closer to pre-COVID-19 occupancy of 60-62 per cent in Q1 FY2020. In Q1 FY2023, ARR stood between ₹4,600 and ₹4,800, as against ₹4,200-₹4,400 in FY2022. Although a few high-end hotels and leisure destinations have seen ARR spike to higher-than-pre-COVID-19 levels in recent months, it remains at a 16-18% discount to pre-COVID-19 levels. The demand recovery was aided by leisure, transient passengers, MICE/weddings, and pickup in business travel and FTAs."



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MOVEMENTS



BARUN GUPTA

**Director of Sales and Marketing
Hyatt Regency Delhi**

★ Specialising in room and MICE sales, Gupta has a rich experience spanning over a decade with leading international hotel chains. He will be responsible for leading strategic sales, marketing, and business operations and building up MICE strategies. Prior to joining Hyatt Regency Delhi, he was working as the Director of Sales & Marketing for IHG's biggest hotel in Southwest Asia – Crowne Plaza Greater Noida. He is currently also serving as the President of the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE).



VANDITA SINGH

**General Manager-
Marketing & Communication
The Fern Hotels & Resorts**

★ Singh is keen on collaborating with the team towards building on the brand's performance while striving to further enhance brand value by focusing on the strong brand positioning of the hotels. She brings with her over 10 years of rich and diverse global experience of working with some of the biggest brands in the world. Her strengths are her strategic and analytical skills, with deep marketing knowledge of topline, sponsorships, market analysis, brand positioning, and digital marketing.



NIKHIL GANDHI

**General Manager
Hyatt Regency Jaipur Mansarovar**

★ Gandhi has spent more than 20 years in the hospitality industry. He will assume an integral role in elevating the Hyatt Regency brand experience, bringing a unique hotel to Jaipur, and will ensure that the team delivers timeless guest experiences. He brings with him a wealth of experience in operations management. A consummate hotelier, he has acquired a deep knowledge of diverse aspects of hotel management and has gained experience in dealing with different cultural backgrounds in India.



SHYAMKRISHNAN A

**CRM, Hyatt Centric MG Road
Bangalore and Hyatt Place Hampi**

★ In his new role as Cluster Revenue Manager (CRM), Shyamkrishnan will be responsible for driving both strategic and tactical initiatives to maximise revenue growth for the properties. He will work closely with various teams in determining pricing strategy, creating striking promotions and identifying new business opportunities, focusing on the overall revenue generation. Over the course of his 14-year career, he has led successful revenue strategies for eminent hospitality brands.



PRABHNEET KAUR SODHI

**Guest Services Manager
The Imperial New Delhi**

★ Reckoned in the industry for managing bespoke guest experiences, Sodhi has earned several accolades for her organisational dexterity. She has been part of some of the finest hospitality brands and operations in India. She also enjoys the reputation for structuring and training performance-oriented guest service teams across many luxury hotels. Her experience spans over a decade, resting on the pillars of powerful guest relations and efficacious communication in the areas of experience management and front office operations.



KL RAMAKRISHNAN

**Chief Engineer, Courtyard and
Fairfield by Marriott Bengaluru**

★ Ramakrishnan would be implementing policies, standards, and procedures falling under the arena of engineering and technical work across all the departments. Starting his career as an Assistant Project Engineer in 2005, he forayed into the hospitality industry in 2010 with The Leela Kempinski Goa. He is a proficient hospitality engineering professional with 14 years of experience. He is skilled at upholding high standards of building, machinery, plants, fixtures, and equipment in all departments.

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