## HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA

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2022

FH&R

A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE By DDP Publications

### LEISURE TRAVEL brings back cheers

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## **2022: A YEAR OF CURATED EXPERIENCES**



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Gurbaxish Singh Kohli Vice President FHRAI

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The huge potential of domestic tourism finally got its overdue respect in the aftermath of the pandemic as hoteliers continued to focus on leisure destinations and tier 3 and tier 4 cities



My Dear Members

he entire country is celebrating the 75th birth anniversary of independence with programmes organised to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which was kick-started on 12 March 2021 from Sabarmati Ashram by our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, by flagging off a 75-week long festival to commemorate 75 years of India's Independence.

Let us all pledge our assistance to this programme. FHRAI will be circulating the logo, which we, as proud Indians and drivers of the economy, must display prominently in our establishments and also wherever we can. We will tell you all more about our humble participation very shortly.

The industry has witnessed some sort of recovery after the second wave in 2021. There has been strong demand with people preferring leisure trips after prolonged COVID-19 restrictions, and if the upswing trend continues, we may witness a good recovery in FY 2022-2023.

The sector ended the year with an India-wide occupancy of 42–45 per cent, up by 10–13 percentage points over the previous year and due to the recovering demand, especially driven by the leisure markets, which continue to dominate the recovery.

The huge potential of domestic tourism finally got its overdue respect in the aftermath of the pandemic as hoteliers continued to focus on leisure destinations and tier 3 and tier 4 cities. Pockets in smaller leisure markets in the country, such as Haridwar, Corbett, and hill stations in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir, recorded all-time high occupancy and ARRs. Goa's average rates surpass pre-pandemic levels by over 19 per cent.

There has been an increase of around 24 per cent in brand signings by 2021. Travellers today are more conscious and particular about hygiene and safety, which has led to a boost in demand for premium properties, including heritage hotels, resorts, cottages, villas, and luxury hotels. There has also been significant improvement in demand for hotels in the budget segment due to an increase in business travel, which resulted in a surge in room bookings.

In our commitment to interacting with the government, the FHRAI OB met our Dynamic Tourism Minister, G Kishan Reddy, on 10 May 2022 and represented to him issues of hotels and restaurants. We also urged him to confer the long pending industry status on hospitality across India, as has been done in certain states. We are interacting with his office and assisting the MoT to chalk out issues and solve them immediately. We are slated to meet him in Mumbai on 15 May to discuss first-hand the issues we face and how to resolve them together with the government.

Seeing an upward swing past, the past gloom over the industry needs to take a back seat and we need to move on further. Therefore, after a prolonged gap of nearly 3.5 years, I am glad to inform you that FHRAI has decided to hold its national convention this year, tentatively in August. We have shortlisted two very desirable destinations and are finalising the dates, which I will reveal to you as soon as things are finalised. Our regional arms have also decided to hold their conventions, viz., SIHRA in Bangalore in early September and HRAWI in Nashik, in the wine region, in late September. Members would be keen to attend our regional and national conventions, thus giving them the opportunity to gain from the theme seminars and sessions held there and, most importantly, meet and interact with the fraternity, whom they would be meeting after many years.

Travel has begun, starting with domestic and now also internationally. This gives us hope to get back to work, put our issues in the past, and look forward to the future, ensuring it is bright.

I wish you all a very happy and pleasant May!

With kind regards Gurbaxish Singh Kohli Vice President, FHRAI

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### MAY 2022

#### FOOD MEETS TECHNOLOGY

To witness prowess of food and hospitality industries, thousands visit much-anticipated International Food & Hospitality Fair – AAHAR 2022 held at Pragati Maidan in Delhi.

COVER IMAGE: JW MARRIOTT BENGALURU PRESTIGE GOLFSHIRE RESORT & SPA







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Stakeholders have had no choice but to maintain their fortitude since 2020. now that travel has resumed, risk of another wave looms. But that won't dampen the sector's spirit.

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#### LEISURE TRAVEL BRINGS 22 **BACK CHEERS**

Opportunities for leisure are increasing as countries relax travel restrictions. Executive Committee looks forward to summer holiday season and getting back to business as usual.

#### 2022 IS THE YEAR OF 28 CURATED EXPERIENCES

There has been surge in appetite for unique experiences. To meet demand, hotels are making their properties stand out, creating world of their own to offer value of experiential holiday.

#### **EXPERIENTIAL STAY IS 34** THE BUZZWORD

To win in this competitive atmosphere, strong marketing communication and brand awareness are essential, says Gagan Katyal, Head of Sales and Marketing, Ananta Hotels and Resorts.

#### **HOSPITALITY SCENARIO 36** IN THE NEW NORMAL

Pandemic has taught tourism and hospitality sectors be on the alert, while adapting to new resilience. Come-back strategy this time had to be tweaked to cater to new demands.

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## Lauding true leadership

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli has been bestowed with "Indian Hospitality Leadership Award 2021" for his leadership and contributions to hospitality sector over last four decades.

he awards ceremony took place on 2 April 2022, in Thane, Maharashtra. Kohli is the director of Mumbai's famed Pritam restaurant, as well as the iconic Pritam da Dhaba and the four-star Hotel Midtown Pritam. He previously held the position of president of HRAWI. The event was hosted by the Association of Hospitality Professionals Welfare India (AHPWI), with Dr. Dhananjay Sawalkar, Joint Director, Government of Maharashtra-Tourism; S.P. Jain, Chairman, Pride Group of Hotels; and Pradeep





**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli** Vice President, FHRAI

I thank AHPWI for recognising efforts of FHRAI Chandel, Founder-Chairman and National President, AHPWI, present as chief guests. Quaiser Khalid, IPS, Commissioner of Railway Police, Maharashtra, was named the Corona Super Hero.

"The FHRAI is the industry's voice and has always championed its progress. I feel fortunate to be part of this great institution and to represent the industry. I thank AHPWI for nominating me and for recognising the efforts made by the association," said **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

The Indian Hospitality Leadership Awards recognise the contributions of efforts and skills, as well as the achievements of industry members who persevered during a difficult year. Sharad Belsare, Sr. VP, Western India-AHPWI and Mihir Sarkar, Sr. VP, Western India-AHPWI, planned and hosted the award event.

## Pratima Panday vs Union of India

Pratima Panday filed PIL with Allahabad HC in which FHRAI was a respondent, urging that Union of India issue Writ of Mandamus to ensure registration of lodges under Sarai Act 1867.

he Public Interest Litigation (PIL) also asked for a Writ of Certiorari to prevent Sarai keepers from setting a check-out time of 12 p.m., as well as a Writ of Mandamus to direct the respondents to regulate the varying tariffs charged to visitors staying for different periods of the day.

The PIL stressed the need to register hotels and guest houses under the Sarai Act of 1867 and not allow them to operate unless they are registered. The PIL also emphasised the need for setting apart the hotel check-in and check-out systems and recommended that suitable directives be made so that the hotel tariffs may be properly regulated to ensure some uniformity.

Respondents stated that the tariffs are based on the level of the hotels, which is directly related to the facilities offered. It was also



PIL stressed need for setting apart check-in & check-out systems

said that the check-in and check-out times were set in accordance with the tourism management concept, which is widely used across the world, to ensure that rooms could be prepared for the incoming guests.

For the last six years, FHRAI has been representing the hospitality sector at the

High Court of Allahabad (Lucknow Bench). The court took note of the respondents' arguments that the Court cannot engage in such commercial aspects nor is it in the public interest, and so dismissed the petition completely.









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## **GST needs rationalisation**

With retail inflation at a 17-month high, FHRAI has requested the GST Council to delink F&B revenue from room tariffs and two GST rates for restaurants.

n light of the unprecedented surge in inflation, FHRAI has asked the GST Council to review and simplify the current GST structure for the hospitality sector. With the prices of food oils, cooking gas, fuel, transportation, and other essentials skyrocketing, the FHRAI has requested the government to consider simplifying GST rules to allow establishments to claim an Input Tax Credit (ITC). The FHRAI has proposed that all hotel F&B revenue be delinked from their hotel room tariff slabs and that hotels be able to charge GST at 5 per cent without ITC under the composite system and 12 per cent with ITC. Similarly, for standalone restaurants, FHRAI has asked that the two GST rate slabs mentioned above be maintained, as was done in the previous service tax regime.

The FHRAI has suggested lowering the GST on LPG used in hotels and restaurants from 18 per cent to 5 per cent in order to reduce operational costs, which will benefit customers. It has also sought either the abolition of GST on rent payments or the allowance of input credit on rent payments in order to mitigate the impact of growing inflation.

"All F&B revenue should be delinked from any room tariffs if they are part of hotels, by allowing a 5 per cent composite scheme for units that are not availing ITC and a 12 per cent GST for units that are availing ITC. Simplification of GST rules will lead to greater compliance, especially from small units. A mechanism should be in place to enable the establishments to avail themselves of the input of GST paid on rent and other GST costs. This will make the businesses more viable. For restaurants too, two separate GST slabs



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli** Vice President, FHRAI



Industry is trying to overcome the crisis of over two years and is only trying to make a recovery



should be allowed; one at the composite slab rate of 5 per cent GST without ITC and the other at 10 per cent. The steady rise in the prices of commercial LPG almost every month, fuel, oil and essential commodities is hampering the revenue. The industry is trying to overcome the crisis of over two years and is only trying to make a recovery. At such times, rationalising the GST rates for the industry could make a difference," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

The FHRAI also stated that, as a result of the global relaxation of restrictions, GST has been reduced in the majority of countries that rely on FTAs. However, India's GST rates remain among the highest in the world, making both domestic and inbound travel incredibly expensive.

"With GST at 18 per cent, the current threshold limit for hotel room tariffs with GST is ₹7,500 This should be raised to ₹9,500. At the time, when the threshold was fixed at ₹7,500, the exchange rate of one US\$ per rupee stood at ₹64, but the same has breached ₹76 per dollar today. Raising the threshold limit will bring parity in rates between the rupee and the dollar. Also, the threshold limit for zero GST on hotel rooms should be increased from ₹1,000 to ₹2,000 per room a day.

This will benefit budget hotels, encourage more domestic tourists to travel, and promote tourism in the country. IGST billing should also be allowed to hotels for corporate bookings and MICE. This will enable the companies to avail the GST input credit, which will incentivise them to spend their annual budgets in Indian cities other than the holiday destinations of South East Asia," concludes Kohli.



## The health tourism opportunity

UP Export Promotion Council recently hosted interactive session on theme of Promoting Medical Value Travel & Wellness Tourism in Uttar Pradesh, in which HRANI took part.

he Chief Guest on the occasion was Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi, Minister for Industrial Development, Export Promotion, NRI and Investment Promotion, Government of Uttar Pradesh. Navneet Sehgal, Additional Chief Secretary, MSME & Export Promotion Council, Government of Uttar Pradesh; Mukesh Kumar Meshram,



HRANI

#### Jaiswal focused on issues surrounding implementation of industry status

Principal Secretary, Tourism & Culture and DG, UP Tourism; and Pawan Agarwal, Joint Export Commissioner, were among the other dignitaries.

On the occasion, Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President of HRANI and the Uttar Pradesh Hotel and Restaurant Association (UPHRA), as well as Vice Presideny of FHRAI, delivered a comprehensive and extensive presentation. During his presentation, he focused on the issues surrounding the implementation of industry status granted under the Tourism Policy 2018. He also emphasised issuing a government order (GO) to all interested departments for the policy's execution so that industry can avail industrial rates. The Minister and the Additional Chief Secretary listened patiently and positively and assured them that the GO would be implemented and issued. At the ceremony, Ravi Khanna, Treasurer, UPHRA; Renu Thapliyal, Secretary General, HRANI; and Gyanu Jaiswal, Manager-Administration, UPHRA, attended the ceremony. Representatives from TAAI, tour and travel, and medical associations were also in attendance. Dr. Abhav Singh, Director General of the Service Export Council, and Dr. Rakesh Kapoor, Director of Medanta, as well as other stakeholders, were also present virtually at the event.

## **Fire Safety Week**

The session's goal was to raise awareness about fire prevention measures.

RANI, in collaboration with its state association, the UPHRA, observed Fire Safety Week at Hotel Lineage Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, promoting "Learn Fire Safety, Increase Productivity." The session's objective was to raise awareness about fire prevention measures. As Chief Guest, Avinash Chandra (IPS), DG Fire Service UP, was present, as were other dignitaries such as Akash Kulhari (IPS), DIG Fire Services, and Vijay Kumar Singh, CFO, Lucknow. In his welcome address, Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President of HRANI and VP of FHRAI, noted that the safety and security of guests is the prime duty of all hospitality units, and that norms should be followed in this regard.

Ravi Shankar Khanna, Treasurer; Shyam Kishnani, Joint Secretary; and Naveen Charan, Secretary, UPHRA, were also present, as were prominent members of the association. HRANI also presented letters of appreciation to Vijay Kumar Singh; Madan Singh, FO, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow; Sheshnath Yadav, FO, B.K.T. Lucknow; Vinod Kumar Yadav, Fire Man, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow; Sarvjeet Kumar Ram, Fire Man, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow; and Dharmendra Yadav, Fire Service Driver, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, for saving many lives in a fire incident held recently at a hotel in Lucknow.



## New excise policy in Chandigarh

Under new excise policy by Chandigarh administration, hotels and restaurants are allowed to open and serve till 3 am in exchange of increased licence fee.

he Chandigarh Administration (CHA) has approved a new excise policy for FY23 that provides restaurants, bars, and hotels with a two-hour extension in closing times (up to 3 am) in exchange for increased licencing. For an additional fee, liquor service is now available round the clock at three-star and four-star hotels. Excise charges have been raised by about



Chandigarh has taken a lead in pushing responsible night life



5.5 per cent. The minimum retail sale price of liquor has also been increased to a range of 5-10 per cent, considering input costs and taxes. The new excise policy aims to balance the aspirations of consumers, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, and the government. On behalf of HRANI and the Chandigarh hospitality fraternity, a delegation led by Ankit Gupta, Honorary Joint Secretary, HRANI and President CHA, along with VP Ashwani Kumar, GM of Hyatt; Amritanshu Aggarwal, Joint Secretary; and Aman Aggarwal, Joint Secretary, CHA, met with HE Banwarilal Purohit, Governor of Punjab and Administrator, CHA, and thanked him for his support. "Chandigarh has taken a lead in encouraging responsible night life. The said policy is empathetic towards the tourism and hospitality sectors," said Ankit Gupta, Honorary Joint Secretary, HRANI and President, CHA.

## **Pursuing revenue streams**

SIHRA is on its toes to keep its hoteliers on an upward trajectory by working with the Tamil Nadu government to issue a GO to release hotels' dues.

n 12 April 2022, SIHRA and TTF had an interactive session with Trichy hoteliers at Ramyas Hotel in Trichy, where they discussed the plan for growing revenue when the intensity of COVID-19 subsided and marketing Trichy as a destination in partnership with the Government of Tamil Nadu. Thirtyfive hotels participated, offering their viewpoints and pledging support.

#### PAYMENT DUE FROM TN GOVERNMENT TO HOTELIERS

SIHRA is constantly following up with the Directorate of Public Health to ensure that hotel bills are submitted to the government. SIHRA is also working SIHRA is ensuring that hotel bills are submitted to government

with the Tamil Nadu government to issue a GO to release the hotels' payments. Hoteliers are advised to check with the respective deans and heads of government hospitals to ensure that the bills submitted to them are forwarded to the Directorate of Medical Education in Chennai for payment.





SIHRA





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## The revolution of Re-serving

HRAEI has joined Re-serve campaign, which aims to raise awareness about food waste and urges guests to have leftovers of their meal packaged for home or delivered to needy.



estaurants in Kolkata have joined forces to reduce food waste by encouraging guests to have leftovers of their ordered food packed for home or distributed to the underprivileged at no extra cost. The "Re-serve" campaign was launched on the Stop World Food Wastage Day (27 April). Along with the digital campaign, tent cards with the hashtag





**Sudesh Poddar** President, HRAEI

All memberrestaurants have been asked to ensure that no leftover food is thrown away #ItsTooGoodToWaste will be placed on tables of prominent restaurants, encouraging guests to pack the excess food at no extra cost. HRAEI as well as more than 300 restaurants have joined the campaign.

**Sudesh Poddar**, President, HRAEI, said, "All member-restaurants have been asked to ensure that no leftover food is thrown away. We have started requesting guests to allow us to collect their leftovers to cook a few buckets of extra food to which we add our kitchen leftovers. We have assigned four or five people from my restaurants to serve them to the poor in central Kolkata. Pieces of kebab, chicken, fish, and paneer, along with gravy, were most commonly wasted at our restaurants. Our cooks are now getting them cooked into fresh dishes, which is hygienic and tasty."

## Think green, live green!

Sustainability is at core of Greenware, and on World Environment Day, **Aditya Daga**, Founder, underlines critical need to go green to promote holistic brand approach.

orld Environment Day (WED) has been used to raise awareness about environmental issues. But on the upcoming WED, Aditya Rajesh Daga has something more to offer to Mother Earth; compostable Greenware gloves decompose in less than a year, unlike traditional plastic.

Sustainability is the need of the hour, and only savvy business people will know where the wind is blowing. By adopting





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Green behaviour in business will create a holistic image green behaviour, one can preserve the environment and create a brand that will be more valuable than money. Apart from this, these gloves have a lot more importance.

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**Paint the economy green**: The greenware gloves decompose faster, emit lesser carbon footprints and help in building a green economy, an economy that sustains the environment.



## **April session of FoSTaC programme**

HRAWI organised another virtual FoSTaC training with FSSAI, this time focusing on food handling practises. It was a success, with many industry professionals in attendance.



n 21 April 2022, HRAWI held an online Food Safety Supervisory Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) session in partnership with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The event, which was conducted virtually, was attended by 54 hospitality professionals from various hotel and restaurant organisations. Vivek Anand





**Sherry Bhatia** President, HRAWI

We will keep hosting these programmes on regular basis led the seminar, which focused on health and food handling practices for hospitality personnel.

"HRAWI is thankful to the hospitality establishments for proactively enrolling their personnel in the programme. We thank the trainers deputed by FSSAI for imparting the knowledge. We have made tremendous progress over the last few years and plan to continue organising these programmes on an ongoing basis in the future," said **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.

HRAWI conducted the programme last month on 16 March for 22 hospitality professionals from the region. The association has trained and certified 2,058 professionals in FoSTaC and FSSAI's Management Training Programme in India's Western region.



## FOOD meets TECHNOLOGY

To witness prowess of food and hospitality industries, thousands visit much-anticipated International Food & Hospitality Fair – AAHAR 2022 held at Pragati Maidan in Delhi.

y Lipla Negi

fter a hiatus of almost two years, AAHAR 2022 returned to its home ground at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, with much fervour and cheer. The muchanticipated five-day event – 26–30 April – was inaugurated by **Piyush Goya**l, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, who is also in charge of the Ministries of Food and Consumer Affairs and Textiles. Organised by the India Trade Association Organisation (ITPO), the magnitude of the fair brought much optimism and cheer to the industry that was badly hit by the pandemic.

The fair's, ITPO's first AAHAR after intensity of COVID-19 subsided, theme this year focused on unlocking and showcasing the potential of the food and hospitality industries. And the excitement of exhibitors as well as visitors to the event was almost palpable. "After a period of lull, the market is booming now. There has been a lot of focus on the food sector in the past year. AAHAR, being the most premium exhibition for the industry, gives us the platform to showcase our new range and explain to people why it is relevant to move to higher quality products or new generation equipment," said **Sanjay Jain**, Director, Elanpro.

Echoing the enthusiasm, **YK Mehta**, Owner, Mehta Furnishers, said, "Our valued clients look forward to meeting us at AAHAR, discussing the new product line and getting their orders placed. We also get to interact with new clients." Technology and the digital revolution shaping the future of food and hospitality businesses were at the core of the event.

Talking about the digital transformation of the foodindustry, partly accelerated by the pandemic, **Kushang**, Co-Founder of SupplyNote, said,





Suppliers are revisiting their product range to offer good quality products at a low price

"During COVID-19, what happened was that as an industry we woke up. We realised that it is very difficult to talk to so many people in person. So we took a leap of faith in technology and started adopting it. Technology is going to play a crucial role in enabling the supply chain and restaurateurs to move forward in an organised manner."

The suppliers expressed that while there has been an uptick in demand from buyers once again since COVID-19, the cost-cutting is forcing suppliers to revisit their product range in order to offer good quality products at a low price. "The budgets have shrunk since COVID-19 and, naturally, it has impacted our business too. For our hotels, we have launched a special 15-inch low-height mattress that fits the bill for budget hotels," shared **Sunil Dutta**, Sales Head, King Koil. Adding to it, Ruchika Singhal, Sr. Architect, H.S. Ahuja & Associates, said, "We need to cut down on the project cost and yet meet the client's satisfaction standards."

Many suppliers, however, are hopeful that the situation will get better in the coming months and that business will return to its pre-COVID-19 level. **Nidhi Goel**, Founder, Strawberry Collective, said, "Since it is the meeting ground for participants and visitors, I really feel that AAHAR would give a kickstart to the industry after a gap of two years."

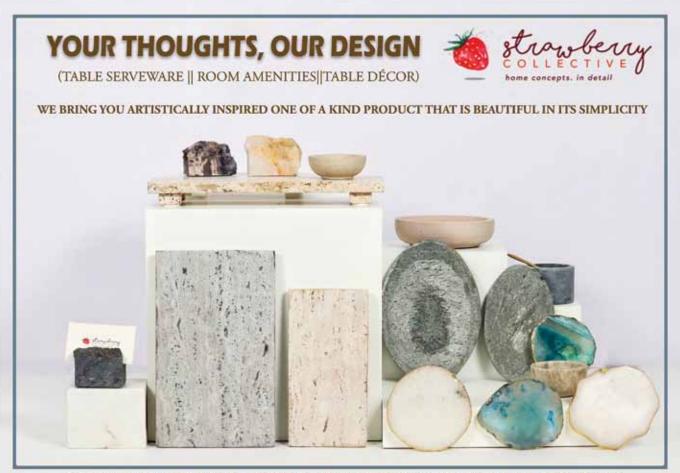


## FHRAI-IHM at AAHAR '22

FHRAI-IHM students and faculty visit AAHAR 2022 to catch up on the latest trends and innovations in the food and hospitality industries.







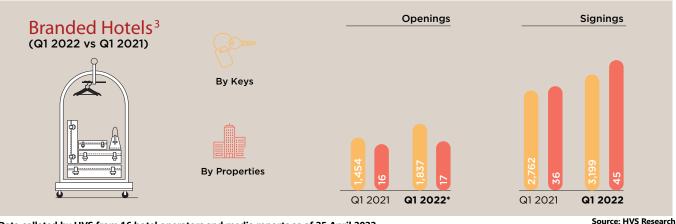
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## Hotel occupancy on an upward trajectory

Nationwide hotel occupancy surpassed 60% in March. HVS Anarock reports the resumption of big ticket events such as IPL boosted Mumbai's occupancy to pre-pandemic levels.







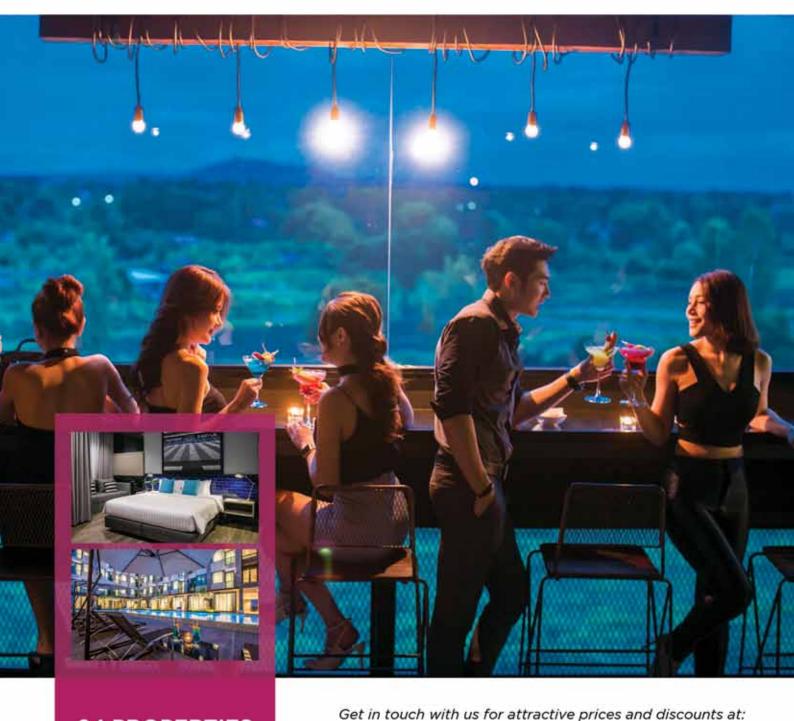
<sup>3</sup>Data collated by HVS from 16 hotel operators and media reports as of 25 April 2022



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## Being positive in the face of adversity

Stakeholders have had no choice but to maintain their fortitude since 2020. Now that travel has resumed, risk of another wave looms. But that won't dampen the sector's spirit.

y Fhrai Bureau





Sudesh Poddar President, HRAEI

#### A SILVER LINING

The economy is fast recovering from lockdowns, but the recent rise in COVID-19 cases is

worrying the hospitality sector. Fresh cases have crossed 5,000, the most in over a month, as infections continue to increase across countries, led by the new Omicron sub-variant.

Therefore, the risk of a possible fourth wave and subsequent lockdowns continues to linger. However, there are analysts who cite international cases to claim the overall outlook may not be that alarming.

Hotels are now running at full capacity and high occupancy as consumer sentiment continues to be strong. Hotel stocks such as High occupancy rates are coming, riding the wave of binge travel

Lemon Tree, Mahindra Holidays, and Taj GVK have gained 4–14 per cent so far this month as occupancy levels continue to rise.

Crisil is anticipating a sustained recovery of the sector hit hard by the pandemic. According to a recent report, revenue will soon approach pre-pandemic levels. Not just hotels, quick-service restaurants have witnessed a robust sales recovery in the last few months, according to brokerage firm Motilal Oswal. Both dine-in and delivery outlets are doing good business.

The most prominent silver lining is in the travel sector, which is expected to experience strong revenge travel, which will benefit hospitality, tourism, and the airline industry in the summer months.

High occupancy rates are coming, riding on the wave of binge travel by a section of customers.





**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal** President, HRANI

#### HYBRID MODELS OF BUSINESS

COVID-19 has been a real baptism by fire for the industry, and after facing two years of the pandemic, hospitality is now better prepared to face any adversity. Vaccination cover is spreading, and hopefully, even if new variants hit us, the impact will be less. The focus of the industry will be to follow the guidelines and take all measures of prevention through proper sanitation and cleanliness at all levels. Face masks and daily temperature checks of restaurant staff, regular hand and surface sanitation, social distancing, and QR-based ordering

Focus is on taking steps of prevention through proper sanitation continue as common practices. Businesses have also started leveraging their digital presence on social media to showcase their commitment to the health and safety of consumers.

The economic cycle, especially in relation to supply and demand and the value of money, is obviously a major factor in growth. We have seen how the demand for hospitality and tourism dramatically dropped during the pandemic. Now, with things opening up, it is rising again. As hospitality companies continue to reduce their debt and get on the path to recovery, a new dawn seems to be lighting up the horizon. With the easing of travel restrictions, the industry expects a good recovery this year. The players are confident of rebounding to pre-COVID-19 levels in the next couple of years owing to an increase in leisure and work travel.

We see a continued trend towards personalisation of experiences, staycations in untapped leisure destinations, hybrid models for business and corporate meetings, and a preference for intimate weddings and small-scale, cosy social events. We are cautiously optimistic about 2022, hoping that we will be able to combat the pandemic, while also seeing the return of businesses and growth.





Sherry Bhatia President, HRAWI

#### **RESILIENCE IS KEY**

The last two years were one of the worst times that the industry had experienced. Many weathered the storm, but a few withered. However, as things stand today, the outlook is positive, and this is largely because the hospitality industry is resilient.

Presently, the industry is in the first leg of recovery, with strong demand being witnessed in the corporate and leisure segments. A proper revival for the restaurants to attain pre-pandemic levels of momentum may take somewhere around six months. For hotels. it depends on travel allowances and how much travel is done before certain parts become fully functional. Dining out is seeing consistent footfalls, and business at restaurants is at 80 per cent of pre-COVID-19 levels. For that matter, restaurants with chains are doing well, with some opening new outlets over the last guarter. Luckily, the third wave of the pandemic between December 2021 and January 2022 did not last long, and hence, the damage was less severe compared to the first and second waves. Unless we face a grave threat from another variant of the virus in the near future, the industry is looking forward to decent business in the coming months.

So yes, there is optimism amongst industry players and the vacation



Presently, the industry is in the first leg of recovery

season looks promising. The next three to four months are critical for the hospitality industry because people will travel more for vacations during the summer. If the trend continues without any interruptions, the industry will witness a good recovery in FY2022-23.

The hospitality industry was one of the first to embrace all of the COVID-19 safety and hygiene protocols. During the first wave, which was the worst of the three, the industry lent hotels to governments across the country. This was possible because our staff were trained and equipped to manage the guarantine process and follow the protocols. The same is true for restaurants. So, if we do encounter a situation where the next wave hits, we are confident that we will be able to deal with it far more efficiently.

## Leisure travel brings back cheers



Opportunities for leisure are increasing as countries relax travel restrictions. Executive Committee looks forward to summer holiday season and getting back to business as usual.

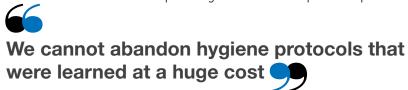


#### Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar Executive Director, HRH Group of Hotels, Udaipur

#### **READY, SET, TRAVEL!**

Though the entire North India is facing record breaking heat conditions, there are smiles all over! COVID-19 restrictions are being lifted, and people are getting out to travel. There were experts in Europe who had predicted such a scenario in July-August 2020. Needless to say, it brings cheer to the hospitality industry, though we cannot abandon the safety, security, and hygiene protocols that we started observing at a huge cost. Caution has to be exercised and sanitisationcleanliness has to be observed at public places. In Udaipur and

across Rajasthan, the wedding season has also brought thousands of families together, celebrating at our unique heritage venues. HRH Group of Hotels pioneered



regal weddings and Udaipur has remained the most preferred wedding destination. At the same time, pilgrimage travel is no less significant. The ancient temple-towns of Kailashpuri, Kesariyaji Tirth, Ranakpur, and Nathdwara are where the devout flock. For the pilgrims, too, safety and health security are a must. We are ensuring that pandemic regulations are followed, as Udaipur and Rajasthan have become all-yearround destinations.







#### **Param Kannampilly** Chairman & MD, Concept Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., The Fern Hotels & Resorts

#### **UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL**

The Indian domestic leisure market has been the mainstay for the hospitality industry over the past 12–18 months. So much so, that a large number of resorts all over India generated record occupancy levels and revenues in 2021, far in excess of their pre-COVID-19 performances in 2019. With the opening up of the country now and travel restrictions all being withdrawn, hoteliers are more buoyant and looking forward to a good recovery year.

International destinations, especially those in Europe, the US, and the like, still face uncertainties, and it is expected that the Indian domestic leisure traveller will continue to travel to and patronise local domestic hotspots. All flights within the country are running at full capacity, and with the summer holidays before us, leisure travel could be a great market segment for India's resorts. Hoteliers need to capitalise on this potential by offering attractive packages to get the large local market to come and stay at our leisure destinations. Packages offering special deals tailored to specific segments such as families, families with pets, school groups, family and friends, single travellers, and senior citizens will all induce the domestic customers to come and holiday at such resorts. If hoteliers can successfully capture the same, the hospitality industry will be back in business in 2022.

With summer holidays before us, leisure travel could be great for resorts

## **Reshaping travel OUTLOOK**

**Cheryl Williams**, Chief Revenue Officer for Preferred Hotels & Resorts, focusing beyond recent setbacks, is betting big on creativity, flexibility, and local markets for new revenue streams.

y Lipla Negi



**Cheryl Williams** Chief Revenue Officer Preferred Hotels & Resorts

or **Cheryl Williams**, her appointment as the Chief Revenue Officer at Preferred Hotels & Resorts has come at a significant time. Indeed, so much has changed since the onset of COVID-19, "how people travel, where they travel, and why they travel," she said. However, she perceives this change in the travel landscape as an "opportunity to reenergise, reimagine, and rethink processes and our suite of products and services."

In this newly created executive position, Williams will lead the brand's commercial efforts, working with department leaders to drive revenue for its expanding global portfolio of 650 hotels in 80 countries. Upbeat about the challenges, Williams is determined to expand the brand's footprints and strengthen alliances. "I am getting to know our teams around the world and analysing our current position so that I can focus my energies on our desired future state and strategic priorities."

#### **EXPANDING ASIA PACIFIC PORTFOLIO**

Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Asia Pacific portfolio consists of nearly 140 properties, and Williams is confident that the company is in great shape to further develop its footprint in new markets. In the past 12 months, the brand has welcomed five member hotels in the region,



Brand outreach strategy is heavily reliant on creativity, leading to customer connection

including THE Park Kolkata in India and The Soaltee Kathmandu in Nepal, its first property in the destination.

The India portfolio of the brand, in particular, looks stellar and ultra-luxurious right now. "With the addition of The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru and The Leela Jaipur in late 2021, we represent 10 of the multi-award-winning group's ultra-luxurious properties in India and there are plans to grow the alliance in the coming months and into 2023," she said. The summer of 2022 shines bright with promising partnerships. She apprised, "We have also expanded our master partnership with The Fullerton Hotels & Resorts, which will launch The Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel Hong Kong with us this summer."

#### **REVENUE OPTIMISATION**

From a brand perspective, Williams knows that 2022 represents a new travel landscape, and thus asserted, "Our approach is to stay nimble with strategies that can adapt to the ever-changing needs of our hotels and clients, while being mindful of opportunities to create efficiencies and new revenue streams."

#### **STAYING CONNECTED WITH GUESTS**

A closer look at her brand outreach strategy in 2022 reveals that it is heavily reliant on creativity, leading to customer connection. She said, "In the last two years, Preferred Hotel Group has ushered in exciting updates to its family of brands–most notably with the spring 2021 launch of sustainable brand Beyond Green–and valuable enhancements to 'I Prefer Hotel Rewards', which has a growing membership of over four million travellers globally."

#### LOCAL MARKETS REMAIN INVALUABLE

Optimism dominates the brand's outlook in 2022 as William shared, "Our business continues to lead with leisure business, with group travel coming back sooner and stronger than expected; we are also optimistic about corporate business travel and are starting to see this reflected in booking data." Betting big on local markets and experience that goes beyond the hotel stays, she said, "Local markets have been invaluable for many of our hotel members, particularly in coastal and rural areas. As we move forward, expect to see hotels ramping up revenue beyond the traditional room and hotel services, partnering on local experiences that extend beyond the hotel stay."



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#### **AAHAR Exhibition 2022**

HSAA recently participated in an exhibition in AAHAR where they discovered that there are only a few interior design firms registered, and none of them provide turnkey service except HSAA. Their display had a café concept, which was well appreciated by both visitors and other exhibitors.

For More Information www.hsaa.co.in hsaaco@gmail.com

studiohsaa@gmail.com





HSAA stall @ AAHAR 2022



Team HSAA @ AAHAR 2022

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## **2022** is the year of **CURATED EXPERIENCES**

There has been surge in appetite for unique experiences. To meet demand, hotels are making their properties stand out, creating world of their own to offer value of experiential holiday.



Joyjit Chakravorty

#### Jovjit Chakravorty General Manager, Hilton Garden Inn, New Delhi

#### PERSONALISATION RULES THE ROOST

The travel curbs have become more flexible, the demand curve has been rising, and this has given an opportunity to the growth of personalised experimental breaks-we, at Hilton, hence, curated a unique package, the 'Great Small Breaks', for urban families with kids. While our little quests are busy with our special kids' menus, choice of board games, or joining our culinary teams in making their own Avenger amenities, our guests take extra advantage of Hilton Garden Inn Delhi's being located inside the best shopping complex in NCR, thus indulging in our specially designed 'ShopStayCation'.

Enjoying a shopping spree from any of the major brands, rejuvenating with a relaxing spa, simply watching a movie, getting a new look in the salon, all with our direct access and collaboration with one of the most reclaimed shopping destinations, DLF Avenue, Saket. The evenings are planned for a few sips in our High Spirits bar and then savouring handpicked global flavours at India Grill restaurant, with an exclusive kid's corner and their favourite delights-there is something for all.

Over the weekends, the Hilton Garden Inn team have curated 'D.U.N.C.H', focusing on Saturday's being the new Sunday. There is dance, music and food-a combination for all age groups. We have also put together 'The Mid Week Gigs' to beat your 9-5 blues, as you laugh away the night with the best stand-up comedy artists while feasting on the 'Naughty Noodles".

> You need to book your table to experience more on our Happy Wednesdays. Our Executive Chef, Vineet Bahuguna, got inspiration from his recent visit to the hills and is working on curating "The Himalayan Trail" with dishes and ingredients highlighting the destination's unique offerings. Starting this month, beat the Delhi summers with Ice Kacang or Tempura Fried Ice Cream, and India Grills' most popular kebabs with ice cold bubblies. We aspire to bring a dash of adventure to dining experiences and give our guests a



memorable time. We have seen traction in the launch phase through social media and online booking channels, but gradually queries started coming directly to the team. Word of mouth and quest reviews in all channels have contributed to the success.

We aspire to bring a dash of adventure to dining experiences for our guests

We have constantly worked alongside our guests' feedback, including our little future guests, to make 'ShopStayCation' the best 'Great Small Break' for every guest who has come and stayed at HGI Saket.



#### Harkaran Singh General Manager, Hyatt Regency Dehradun

#### **REAL AURA OF THE HILLS**

The hospitality industry has been witnessing multiple waves of trends that have changed the face of business. The aspect of experiential hospitality not only reflects on the culture of the property but also plays a crucial factor in determining the quality of a visitor's stay. While the hotel industry envisions providing the absolute best to its patrons, it is important to evolve with the ever-changing definition of comfort, luxury, and experience.

We, at Hyatt Regency Dehradun, believe in providing immersive experiences that not only resonate with the vibrant culture of Dehradun but also cater to the spirit of exploration in our guests. The property offers its patrons tranquil views of the serene Malsi forest and the majestic Himalayan range from all the rooms. When it comes to food and beverages, the hotel has a host of options to bring happiness to all age groups. The food and beverage offerings at Hyatt Regency Dehradun are designed to deliver a multi-sensory experience through thoughtfully sourced ingredients, passionate cooks, classic recipes, seasonal flavours, chic interiors, global beverages, and authentic hospitality amidst scenic surroundings. Hyatt's food philosophy is "Thoughtfully sourced, Carefully served" - each of our distinctive food and beverage venues will bring to life Hyatt's commitments towards supporting local suppliers and artisans and caring for our communities and environment. With a sprinkle of quirk, our food and beverage offerings revolve around three pillars: nostalgic, global, and progressive.

Guests can indulge in various onsite and offsite activities to make their stay even more enjoyable and memorable. Our onsite activities include cycling trails, cook-along sessions with our chefs (for both kids and grownups), zumba and yoga sessions, The Bar Paathshala– offering our guests a masterclass in making cocktails, constellation walks, pinecone painting, movie nights under the stars, bird watching, and chat and chai sessions with Hyatt Doon Tribe–an evening by the bonfire for our guests to mingle with other guests and the Hyatt team. The unique location of the property enables the guests to explore what Dehradun has to offer. Be it scenic mountains or forest treks or hikes or exploring mind-rolling monasteries or visiting iconic properties like the Forest Research Institute or going on a local food trail savouring the flavour of Doon with the famous Bun Tikki, Sadarji ke Pakode, Chetan ki Kachori, Katlambe Chole and wrapping it with the nostalgic cream roll at Ellora's Bakery. The location also provides easy access to famous tourist destinations like Mussoorie, Rishikesh, and Haridwar, which can be enjoyed on a half-or fullday trip.



Harkaran Singh

It is important to evolve with the everchanging definition of experience



For our little visitors, Hyatt Regency Dehradun offers a programme called Camp Hyatt that involves a range of engaging experiences for kids, including the introduction of the local Camp Hyatt mascot – DODO the deer, offering a personalised check-in experience for kids, along with craft projects, pottery making, kite flying, treasure hunting, and more. To sum up, Hyatt Regency Dehradun makes the guests experience the real aura of the hills through rustic experiences and energising interactions with the locale.





Sanchit Gupta

66

#### Sanchit Gupta Managing Director, Nest Jaipur

#### **CURATING DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES**

Experiential holidays are all about exploring personal interests and preferences. These vacations are different from the usual family or friends' trips and can include soul searching, adventures, meditations, parties, and simply a few days to rediscover oneself in whichever way is deemed correct. With the pandemic meddling with travel plans in the past couple of years, this could be a way for experiential travellers to "reclaim their lives".

The hotel and hospitality industry, which is already in recovery mode, can tap into the increased demand of experiential travellers.

Hotels can come up with different and innovative ideas for travellers. For instance, coffee brewing, tea preparations, full moon dinner experiences, vineyard visits, or sports events as part of the package can bring more experiential travellers to the hotels.

**Pitching new activities:** Hotels should consider location-based experiential activities that bring people from different parts of the country. For instance, nature trails in the Himalayan region or combining wine with historical sightseeing could be a few activities that

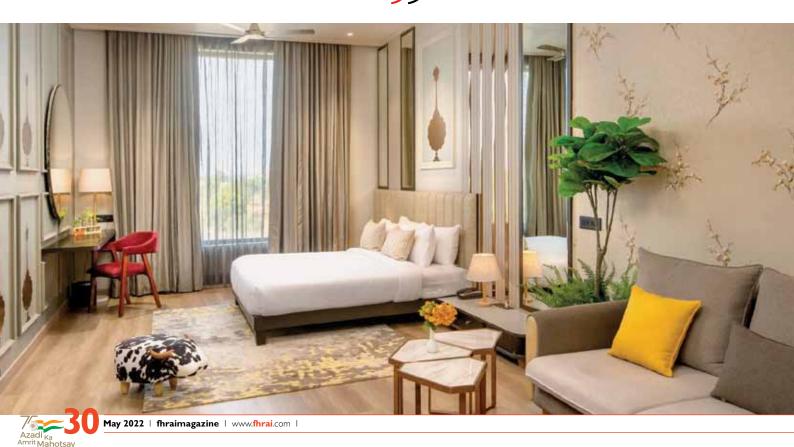
Trend of experiential travel in the country has just started to gain momentum

have yet to be tried on a large-scale basis. The key is to observe what travellers are doing in a region and how the hotel can assist in making the experience better.

**Making itineraries interesting:** The outlook of travellers has evolved significantly in the past few years. Inclusion of balloon safaris and year-round adventures such as trekking, skiing, paragliding, river rafting, camping, and fishing are now commonly offered by the hotels. The hotels can also collaborate with local adventure sports service providers to ensure that the travellers are offered the best price for the activities they seek to carry out.

**Matching global standards:** Experiential travel might be a new idea in India but is mainly common in other parts of the world. Hence, comparing the Indian hotels' quality of experiential travel services ought to be done with their global counterparts. It is highly recommended that the Indian hotels take a leaf out of the customer experiences and expectations along with the type of quality of services offered and pricing strategies around the world and develop strategies to match them.

**Summing up:** The trend of experiential travel in the country has just started to gain momentum. This gives an excellent opportunity for the hotels around the country to evaluate the types of activities and experiences they can provide to their customers to make their vacation memorable.



# **Classification**

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Dr. Shekhar C Jindal

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- 4. Within 12 hours, the volume is reduced by up to 80-85 per cent.
- 5. It is a computerised and user-friendly machine.
- 6. The compact designing of the machine has reduced the space occupied by the installed machine.
- 7. Compost formed is rich in different nutrients, in line with FPO standards.

Compost formed is rich in different nutrients as per FPO standards

8. If handled properly, following do's and don'ts, and kept maintained and clean, the machine can work efficiently for years together.

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## **Experiential stay** is the buzzword

To win in this competitive atmosphere, strong marketing communication and brand awareness are essential, says **Gagan Katyal**, Head of Sales and Marketing, Ananta Hotels and Resorts.





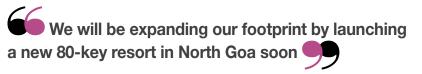
Gagan Katyal

### How is Ananta Hotels & Resorts faring after intensity of the pandemic subsided?

We specialise in resorts that are well-planned and have plenty of open space. These are the factors that have contributed to our success. Our pricing has been competitive, and our guest service has helped us earn referrals. We have been able to meet our budgets following the pandemic, and we are aiming for a full recovery in FY2022-23. Keeping our fingers crossed!

#### What are your expansion plans for 2022?

We have a resort named Jagira Ananta Elite in Gir, Gujarat. It is scheduled to open in June 2022. In terms of location, we are growing. The majority of our properties



are located in the midst of nature and offer unique experiences. In Udaipur, for example, the entire resort is sprawled across 100 acres. We have created exquisite jungle cottages amidst this vast space to provide our guests with a jungle glamping experience. Ananta gives you the opportunity to live in nature rather than in a box hotel. We naturally gravitate toward commercial and business-friendly places for business growth. However, we ensure that our guests have an abundance of nature and luxurious hospitality in these prospective locations. As part of our business strategy, we look for sellable locales such as Gir, Goa, and Bhimtal, among others. In addition, we work on management and/or leasing contracts.

### What new destinations are you considering?

Aside from Gir, we will be expanding our footprint by launching a new 80-key resort in North Goa early next year. Villa residences are a prominent trend in Goa. We are building a hotel with private villas in Goa. We are



also upgrading our spas and wellness facilities. We are going to be big on wellness. For us, 2023 will be a year of wellbeing.

### Has the room occupancy level bounced back to normal for you?

Occupancy has grown. We have been catering to family travel, which has been increasing from nearby locations that are within driving distance. The rooms are rather large. We were really aggressive in our sales calls.

### What marketing strategies are you considering for promoting your properties?

To win in this competitive atmosphere, strong marketing communication and brand awareness are essential. We are strong in digital and will be attending shows for more B2C engagement.

### Where do you see a strong connection for business growth?

OTAs are rapidly expanding. Nowadays, everything is digital. They provide fabulous flexibility in terms of rate aggression and property picture uploading. Working with an OTA offers more flexibility than working with a travel agent. OTA accounts for around 30 per cent of all business.

### What has changed for you and the brand as a whole between 2020 and 2022?

Bookings used to be long-term, but today they are short-term. Wellness is a differentiator for us, and we are working hard to capitalise on it at our resorts. To keep guests engaged in the resort, a variety of unique venues are available. A close encounter with nature and a high level of hygiene are two key areas of focus.

## Domestic travel ruled the roost after the outbreak. How did the shift to domestic travel work out for you?

Fortunately, we have always had a strong hold on domestic leisure, which has only grown. When it begins, international inbound will only fill the gap, providing a healthy mix.



## Keeping 'thinking out of the box' in mind, what new ideas has Ananta tried or launched recently to stay strong on the road to revival?

We will continue to develop new resorts since it is lucrative. Along with experiential holidays, wellness and wellbeing are a strategy.

### In terms of MICE, how is the brand trying to bring business back to hotels?

To entice buyers, competitive MICE packages are being floated. Participation in business trade shows, as well as a huge number of sales calls and distribution, are beneficial. Multiple venues help to break up the monotony of outdoor events.

#### Are weddings a big part of your business? How is the brand helping guests attending small, intimate weddings? And when do you think big-fat Indian weddings will return, and with what changes?

Big fat weddings are making a comeback. In order to accommodate the pandemic-induced changes in business, we have created separate check-in areas, easy room allocation, and multiple venues so that people can be conveniently dispersed.

#### What are your thoughts on heritage tourism?

India is a country with a rich heritage and culture. To gain a larger share of the market, experiential stays and local gastronomy could be promoted.



## Hospitality scenario in the new normal

Pandemic has taught tourism and hospitality sectors be on the alert, while adapting to new resilience. Come-back strategy this time had to be tweaked to cater to new demands.

**/** Charmaine Fernz





Sudeep Jain

Investments will be based on operational efficiencies

he last two years were sheer chaos for the tourism and hospitality industries. What was once considered a positive year turned out to be the darkest for many. Yet, despite all the gloom, there was a silver lining – adaptation. Sudeep Jain, MD, South-West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts, shares his views, saying, "The pandemic taught our industry to maintain a flexible business approach and respond to market dynamics in real-time. We have learnt to be more agile and decisive while being customer and owner-centric. On the consumer side, there is heightened demand for trusted brands to be able to offer safe, quality experiences, while for owners, future investments will be based on costs and operational efficiencies." He goes on to explain that there was an acceleration in the adoption of technology, which will continue to influence the way we travel and stay in hotels. "A fast-evolving trend is the effective utilisation of space in hotels. We are focusing on effectively repurposing spaces to

make them multi-dimensional without losing aesthetic sensibility. For example, multiuse lobbies are becoming quite popular, and guests today are comfortable meeting, working, entertaining, and dining, all within the extended lobbies," adds Jain.

Sharing a similar view, **Dhananjay Saliankar**, Head-Sales and Marketing, Fortune Hotels, says, "The industry has undergone a transformation. Every brand did its best to hold on to, revive, and sustain its business. Many changes had to be made to accommodate the nuances of the new normal and now, the pragmatic customer with a changed mindset." Saliankar feels that businesses have to be patient, forthright, and flexible, but most importantly, they have to think outside the box. The main focus is on mainstream revenue generators for alternate avenues of business such as laundry, food deliveries, and sanitisation services. "We had to acknowledge the changing mindset. Packages



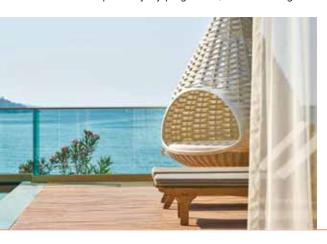
were devised to focus on trending concepts such as drivecation, workcation, and staycations, among others. Our initiatives included the Unlock Business and Leisure packages, which were launched during the pandemic and were a huge success. In the second wave, Fortune Escape packages were targeted at customers willing to travel for a much-needed break. Finally, there was the Safe Stays at Fortune Hotels programme that ensured round-the-clock safety and hygiene protocol, from prearrival to check-out," he adds.

However, **Puneet Dhawan**, Senior VP-Operations, Accor, India & South Asia, believes that the last two years have been intense learning experiences that have paved the way for a critical evolution in the industry. "We began 2022 equipped with better resources and befitting advancements to stabilise our business and reinforce our development plans this year. At Accor, we turned to strategic planning and implemented necessary changes on all fronts," he adds. Dhawan further explains that today, travellers are looking for unique experiences with a major affinity for exclusively curated experiences, a strong focus on well-being, as well as innovation and adoption of technology.

Interestingly, **Trent Fraser**, CEO, Choice Hotels Asia-Pacific, believes that there has been a growing familiarity with the mid-range brands. "Business travel in the regions has changed, with franchisees reporting that travelling sales reps are staying longer and are responsible for covering larger areas. They choose properties that can provide a base of operations while they are working in the regions," he adds.

#### **A RENEWED FOCUS**

Looking at the positive side of the pandemic, Fraser says that actually, lockdowns allowed properties to review their practices and seek ways to reduce costs and wastage. He goes on to explain that, as per independent research commissioned by Choice Hotels in 2021, the reasons for travel and how people wanted to travel had changed. A change of scenery and mental health were cited as leading reasons for people wishing to travel, and travel by car was the preferred method of travel. "In a bid to tap into this segment, we launched the Year of the Long Weekend campaign. We continue to develop our loyalty programme, Choice Privileges. A



recent example is a strategic partnership with United Petroleum. Our strategic approach has resulted in consistent growth in our loyalty programme, with almost 500,000 members at the end of Q1 2022. Direct online bookings have seen significant growth within the group – up 38 per cent compared to March 2021 – and we have put considerable effort into sustaining this growth with greater investment in diverse digital acquisition strategies. Direct bookings were a preferred option, as making direct contact with properties gives guests more confidence if they need to make any last-minute changes," adds Fraser.

Subsequently, sharing a rather strategic approach, Saliankar says that marketing strategies have become more customer-centric with a digital-first omnichannel approach. "Earned and owned channels have become more precious, and loyalty is another asset. Sales and distribution continue to play a big role, and customer relationships have become a game-changer in procuring existing and alternate avenues of business in a highly competitive market," he adds.

One cannot but deny that hospitality chains have had to bite the bullet to survive. As Jain explains, "We have observed a significant shift in the profile of guests, the way they travel, and the experience sought after. Quick weekend getaways, staycations, and intercity vacations with localised experiences have become popular as travellers increasingly look for a break from their routines. To cater to this segment, we created tailored marketing plans to capture local demand. We are also assisting our general managers in using power data to increase foot traffic at our restaurants and provide a more personalised experience for our guests. Our presence on social media has become predominant in the last two years, with direct email and WhatsApp marketing campaigns taking centre stage to attract various groups of travellers."

#### **CHARTING NEW COURSE**

The change witnessed by the industry also means understanding unique and evolving segments. Dhawan explains that the industry is beaming with possibilities to explore. "The Indian domestic market is majorly dominated by leisure and business guests. However, new sectors such as weddings and small-scale or large social events are also receiving a substantial amount of interest. There has also been a trend of people taking staycations and workcations in nearby hotels," he adds.

Jain asserts that with the rise of hybrid working models, people are experimenting with their work setup to break the monotony. Balancing work along with personal wellness is becoming increasingly popular. "In Q1 2022, we witnessed a demand-driven from a combination of leisure and business travel. To make the workcation experiences seamless, our hotels are offering customised packages that include a mix of accommodation, use of meeting space, access to high-speed internet, business



Dhananjay Saliankar



Focus is on mainstream revenue source for alternate business avenues



**Puneet Dhawan** 





**Trent Fraser** 

Lockdowns allowed properties to seek ways to reduce costs centre facilities, discounts on dining, gym access, free parking space, and access to recreational facilities in the hotel," he confirms.

Touching on a personal chord for the industry, Saliankar says that the human touch has now been altered into a thoughtful human touch served with uniquely tailored offerings for memorable stays. "It would be interesting to note that while a guest type will always be bucketed on the basis of business and leisure, with enhanced customisation and growing people connect they will also be micro-segmented based on how they travel—solo, families, single women, senior citizens, and millennials, among many others," he adds.

Fraser says, "We see several new segments arising now and becoming more common in the future. These include the working nomad and the intergenerational holiday guest. Our regional properties are increasingly hosting remote workers and providing in-room services to enhance their stays, such as the business suites. The other set of new travellers are the bigger family group bookings," he adds. Interestingly, Fraser makes us understand that the pandemic experience has demonstrated to many small businesses that it is not smart to have all your eggs in one basket, or travel segment. The industry has borne the consequences when those market segments are unable to travel.

#### **DEPARTMENTAL FOCUS**

The pandemic did not impact just one division but the industry as a whole. As Jain explains, while each department within the hospitality space has undergone considerable changes in terms of operations, the most notable changes have been in housekeeping, F&B, and HR functions. For F&B, they continue to evolve their offering through well-thought-out services such as takeaways, home deliveries, and dial-a-chef services. "The HR personnel have been focused on supporting colleagues' physical and mental well-being. For this, we maintained regular and open communication from senior leaders, organised work-life summits, initiated partnerships for mental well-being via online courseware and ongoing support for colleagues, launched leadership masterclasses and an employee assistance programme, amongst other initiatives," he adds.

Fraser says, "The biggest challenge has been maintaining and retaining the housekeeping and hospitality staff. In some instances, our properties have shared staffing resources between them, giving their staff extra shifts across several Choice Hotel-branded properties to provide enough work for employees and fill gaps." He goes on to talk about the new initiatives, such as housekeeping on demand, which have been beneficial for guest safety by limiting the number of people who are accessing their rooms during their stays. It has also meant a lighter demand on housekeeping staff, giving room for



accommodation absences due to illness, close contact isolation, and stress. "Our revenue management services to franchisee properties are achieving great outcomes for member properties. While our focus this year has been on flexibility in booking terms and conditions, the window for more active revenue management activity has narrowed. Previous performance is now less of a factor in pricing decisions compared to the most recent 90 days and competitor pricing," he says.

Saliankar says, "We too had to speedily resort to technology to bring in a seamless experience. Today, we have a new integrated customer reservation system that was envisioned and developed during the pandemic years, the ITC app for bookings and more, the Oditley app to monitor and audit hotel safety standards on a real-time basis, an online learning and development platform for employees called PAATH and a technology partner who is helping our hotels obtain the ISO 9001 certification for COVID-19-related protocols." Dhawan, speaking from a futuristic point of view, says, "The industry has been subjected to numerous stimuli over the past two years, thus bringing forth an evolved, versatile, and well-adapted sector. F&B witnessed a significant change. There was a lot of room for innovation in the F&B industry, and we have already seen a lot of it in the form of food delivery, outdoor catering, cloud kitchens, and DIY kits. These have been the revenue-driving forces during the pandemic. We are now seeing things such as digital menus, single-use recycled menus, more table service than buffet service, and the continuation of home delivery and prepare-at-home restaurant meals that are all being very much appreciated, and we expect these to continue as the norm long into the future," he adds.

The pandemic has certainly sharpened the edges of the industry the world over. The constant battle with new nuances has forced the industry to have a relook at not just a marketing strategy but the chain as a whole. Thus, it would be right to say there is always a silver lining.





## Taking the expansion route

Indian market looks lucrative for Radisson Hotel Group, owing to strong recovery rate. This resilience of sector in Indian market has led to RHG being bullish on expansion.

#### Hazel Jain

adisson Hotel Group (RHG) is preparing to double its portfolio in India as it unveils plans to more than double its Indian footprint, with 148 hotels and resorts to be added by 2025. These will be in addition to the over 140 properties RHG currently has in operation or under development.

Showing faith in the India market, **Katerina Giannouka**, President-APAC, RHG, said, "I am so impressed by the way the India market has rebounded, successfully, much faster than the last wave. This illustrates the resilience of the market, predominantly driven by leisure travellers in India. And now I am happy to see that the MICE segment is coming back along with corporate demand." She added that the team has a pipeline of about 40 more properties, which puts the group at 150 hotels. "Our target is to

double that to 300 hotels within the next five years. We have a focus on tiered cities in India. We have a good distribution of properties across India," she added.

#### SUNRISE INDUSTRY OF INDIA

Echoing similar sentiments, Zubin Saxena,



Katerina Giannouka

Zubin Saxena



Managing Director and Vice President of Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, who said, "We see Indian hospitality as the sunrise industry. We are seeing a good recovery where the larger economic factors are lining up. The larger traveller trends in India that we are seeing are all conducive to a big boom, so we are expecting both RHG in India as well as the hotel industry in India at large to narrate a huge growth story in the coming years. We have also observed that, over the course of the pandemic, the demand segments have opened up and the domestic traveller has really started experimenting with branded hospitality and experiencing hospitality products. We foresee that with international skies and the market opening up, the slab of base demand will expand, thereby increasing the total demand." Saxena added that the group saw occupancy levels of 70 per cent in 01 2022.

#### **INDIVIDUAL RETREATS PILOT**

RHG recently unveiled its Individuals Retreats brand extension, specifically designed and launched only in the Indian market. It is an extension of

Radisson Individuals, launched last year. It will be a collection of upper-upscale and luxury lifestyle retreats across India that will offer guests experiences in wellness, adventure, and culture, among others. They will be located in offbeat destinations such as Goa, J&K, Coorg, and Kabini.





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## Appointments



MAINAK RAY Director of Sales, The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat – Marriott International

Ray has been elevated to the position of Director of Sales at The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat. In his current role, he will be responsible for implementing new sales and marketing strategies in order to boost room and event sales at the hotel. His key responsibilities include transient and group pricing decisions, preparing budgets and forecasts, developing strategies, curating unique events to support the rooms as well as food and beverage (F&B) sales, and positioning the hotel as a preferred wedding destination.



PANKAJ MISHRA Director of Finance Novotel Pune

Mishra brings over 18 years of deep understanding and command of financial planning and analysis, financial control, taxation, and budgeting. He will continue to develop innovative financial structures while also mentoring the team to success. His impressive background will benefit the property in improving operational and financial performance. Formerly the Financial Controller at Grand Mercure Gandhinagar Gift City, Mishra oversaw the operational control and risk assessments of the company.



RAJESH RAJPUROHIT General Manager Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala

A seasoned hotelier with a career spanning more than two decades in hospitality, Rajpurohit will lead the team at Radisson Blu Resort to position the property as a leading resort in Dharamshala, streamline hotel operations, align sales and marketing strategies with the hotel's commercial objectives, and drive excellence in guest experiences. Before joining Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala, Rajesh served a successful 6-year stint at Radisson Jaipur City Centre as the General Manager.



RAHUL SHARMA General Manager Le Meridien Jaipur Resort & Spa

Sharma comes with two decades of experience in the hospitality industry. He was the Hotel Manager for Marriott Amritsar from 2019 to 2019. He has spearheaded various initiatives that have resulted in enhanced guest and associate experiences. A seasoned hotelier, he is a strategic thinker who has accomplished himself by excelling in guest satisfaction, revenue growth, brand compliance, and directing sales and distribution teams to success and profitability for hotels and resorts internationally.



VINITA NECI Head of Business Development Leisure Hotels Group

Negi will oversee Leisure Hotels Group's asset management and development activities, including management contract negotiations, potential partnerships, and owner relationship management. She will also be the senior contact for investment partners, commercial agents, and development advisors. She will be based in Delhi and report to Vibhas Prasad, the director. Vinita joins Leisure Hotels Group after having spent more than two decades in key business development roles in large Indian and multinational hotel chains.



CAJETAN DSOUZA Food and Beverage Manager The Ambassador Mumbai

Dsouza has more than 18 years of experience and has worked with some of the best hospitality brands. He had earlier worked with the Sarovar Group in the same capacity. Armed with a diploma in hospitality and an MBA in hospitality, he joined the Marriott group as an F&B assistant. Later, he moved to ITC Parel. He also worked in Italy for a while before heading back to his motherland. He brings with him expertise in planning, forecasting, and budgeting the revenues for the F&B Department.



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