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Dear members,

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to share with you the latest developments within our esteemed association. As the President of FHRAI, it is both an honour and a privilege to serve you, our valued members, and to champion the interests of the vibrant and dynamic hospitality industry in our country.

I am pleased to inform you that FHRAI has taken proactive steps to ensure that our industry's voice is heard in matters that directly impact us. We have recently requested the inclusion of FHRAI in the Task Force established by the Department of Consumer Affairs to prepare guidelines for protecting consumers from dark patterns involving deceptive, manipulative and unfair trade practices on online platforms. We firmly believe that our inclusion in this Task Force is crucial, given our deep understanding of the challenges faced by both consumers and service providers in the hospitality sector.

Over the years, FHRAI has actively participated in and contributed to various consultative and policy formulation efforts of the Department. Our contributions to issues such as fake reviews on e-commerce portals and amendments to the consumer protection (e-commerce) rules in 2020 have been noteworthy.

FHRAI remains committed to advocating for fair and transparent business practices within the online ecosystem. We have identified several concern areas that have a significant impact on both consumers and service providers in their interactions on online platforms.

These concerns include the realm of customer feedback; we question the streamlining of ratings and rankings assignments by e-commerce platforms, aiming to curb manipulation and foster a level playing field. Equally crucial is the call

for pricing transparency, as we advocate against deceptive tactics that artificially inflate costs during the checkout process. Addressing the challenge of overbooking, we emphasise the need for accountability among OTAs, recognising the hardships posed to both consumers and service providers. Additionally, we confront the issue of platforms misrepresenting availability, which creates inconveniences for customers and service providers alike. Delving into the realm of reputational impact, we draw attention to the perplexities arising from platforms' ranking and rating systems, which can potentially misguide customers and tarnish the standing of service providers. Furthermore, our focus extends to the realm of taxation, as we spotlight the repercussions of incorrect GST collection by OTAs, affecting both customers and service providers due to the misapplication of GST rates.

We have approached the Directorate General of Foreign Trade to address an illogical clause in the Foreign Trade Policy related to charging notional customs duty for domestic sourcing. We have requested the necessary modifications to the EPCG Scheme in FTP 2015-2020 to rectify this issue and create a more favourable environment for domestic manufacturing.

We have also presented insightful suggestions to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism, and Culture regarding the development of niche tourism, spiritual tourism and theme-based tourist circuits in Maharashtra.

As we continue to navigate through evolving challenges and opportunities, FHRAI remains dedicated to serving as the driving force behind the growth and development of the hospitality industry in India. We are committed to ensuring that your voices are heard, your concerns are addressed and your interests are safeguarded.

With best regards,
Sudesh Poddar
President, FHRAI



Sudesh Poddar
President
FHRAI



FHRAI remains committed to advocating for fair and transparent business practices within the online ecosystem





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Housekeepers in hotels can use their skills to help marginalized communities such as domestic help, drivers and cooks, writes Niranjana Khatri.



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G20 summits create a conducive environment for networking, infrastructure development and knowledge sharing, emphasises Nishant Kumar.



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A brand is crucial component in company's success, & as times change, it is essential for hotel chains to update their brand to appeal to new millennials.



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FHRAI seeks relaxation in export obligation

Federation asks for a reduction of requirement to maintain average export requirements as well as an extension of the export obligation term.

The FHRAI has written to **Santosh Kumar Sarangi**, Director General, Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce, requesting a grant of relaxation from the maintenance of average export obligation and an extension in the export obligation period for the specified Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) authorization for the year 2022-23.

In a letter to Sarangi, FHRAI stated, “The tourism and hospitality sectors in the country have been devastated due to COVID, resulting in the sectors becoming the biggest casualties in terms of massive job losses, financial distress and the closure of businesses. Considering these highly unfavourable conditions for business, the DGFT, vide its public notice No. 53/2015-2020 dated 20 January 2023, granted one-time relaxation from maintenance of average export obligation for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22 and granted extension in export obliga-

tion period for specified EPCG authorization for these years.”

It further stated, “The decision of DGFT has proved to be a very big relief to the hospitality sector, which has been



Sudesh Poddar
President,
FHRAI

struggling to come out of the impact of COVID and sustain. On behalf of the tourism and hospitality sectors in the country, FHRAI would like to extend

its heart-felt gratitude to the DGFT for the same. FHRAI also takes this opportunity to inform you that, though the Indian tourism and hospitality sectors have witnessed a resurgence in the recent period buoyed by highly impressive domestic tourism, foreign tourist arrivals to India have remained dismal in this period. As per the report of the Ministry of Tourism for 2022, foreign tourist arrivals were 44 per cent lower than the pre-COVID level in 2019. It is imperative to note that the business environment in the hospitality sector is not conducive enough for the hotels to maintain their export obligation and annual average conditions due to a very small number of foreign tourists checking to the hotels. Therefore, FHRAI requests that kindly grant relaxation from the maintenance of average export obligation for the year 2022-23 as well as extension in export obligation period for specified EPCG authorization for the hotel sector in the country.” □

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EPCG clause alteration urged by FHRAI

In a letter to **Santosh Kumar Sarangi**, Director General, Foreign Trade, FHRAI asks for changes to an EPCG Scheme clause deeming it unfair and irrational.

The FHRAI has written to **Santosh Kumar Sarangi**, Director General, Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry requesting amendments in clause 5.08 in Chapter 5 of the EPCG Scheme in FTP 2015-2020.

In a letter written to Sarangi, FHRAI highlighted, “an illogical clause in the foreign trade policy which is devoid of any rationale or justification. Clause No. 8 in Chapter 5 of FTP 2015-20 states “In case of direct imports, EO shall be reckoned with reference to actual duty saved amount. In case of domestic sourcing, EO shall be reckoned with reference to notional customs duties saved on FOR value”. This clause about charging notional customs duty for domestic sourcing lacks any logic as there is no customs duty involved in procuring a domestic product and the problem becomes acute when heavy fines and penalties are imposed on the license holders for non-fulfilment of conditions of annual average and export obligations, which also involves customs duty com-

ponent as well whereby license holder has to pay customs duty in lieu of excise duty saved/utilized. As you are aware, in case of a normal import under the EPCG scheme, levies such as BCD, CVD, SAD and additional CVD are charged whereas in case of a domestic purchase under the EPCG scheme, Excise Duty is levied in place of customs duty. The anomaly in

This discriminatory clause stands against govt's continued focus to promote domestic manufacturing through Make in India initiative

the policy is forcing the license holders who have purchased domestic goods to pay hefty penalties in case of non-fulfilment of export conditions. The irony is that they are bound to pay the penalty for the set off for the customs duty and CVD which they have not received/availed at all. This discriminatory clause

stands against the Government of India's continued focus to promote domestic manufacturing through the Make in India initiative. Many of our members had sourced locally manufactured cars and electronic goods, among others in the past by availing the benefits under the EPCG scheme but were unable to fulfill the annual average conditions due to the non-conducive business environment for foreign tourism, post 2008. Now they are thrusted with notices with hefty fines by the Customs Department and in many cases the excise duty and fines that is charged is higher than the value of the original product.”

In addition to this, the Federation demanded to investigate this issue and consider some more suggestions it has made such as: make necessary modifications in the clause 5.08 of EPCG Scheme in FTP 2015-2020 and kindly issue a circular directing no action to be taken pursuant to the notices issued for non-compliance of clause 5.08 of EPCG Scheme.” □

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FHRAI suggests several measures to encourage tourism in Maharashtra, including, giving industry status to hotel sector & promoting niche tourism.

The FHRAI has recommended the creation of potential tourist destinations, theme-based tourist circuits and niche tourism (including spiritual tourism) in Maharashtra.

In a letter to **V Vijayasai Reddy**, Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture expressed gratitude for giving the hospitality sector an opportunity to participate in the meeting held on 6 July 2023 in Mumbai, during which it had some interesting discussion related to Development of Niche Tourism (including Spiritual Tourism), Theme-Based Tourist Circuits, and Potential Tourist Spots. The Federation added, “It is heartening to note that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture is focused on boosting tourism activities in Maharashtra.”

FHRAI further stated, “We would like to suggest the following to further tap the immense tourism potential of Maharashtra:

Aurangabad

Connectivity: Five years ago, the number of flights to Aurangabad connected 7-8 destinations, but now connectivity is only limited to 2 major metros. Connectivity has to increase to reach more destinations. The allocation of bogies and seats to Aurangabad is also very low. A lot of for-

“**Travelling from Maharashtra or Goa is still very tedious. The development of Sindhudurg as an extension of Goa Tourism should be considered**

eigners are travelling from Mumbai, but inbound is still suffering. Charter flights to the Far East are required.

Buddhist Circuit: It has been known to be a learning and cultural centre for Buddhists for ages. Thus, Aurangabad is required to have better connectivity on

the Buddhist circuit to Varanasi or Bodh Gaya. This is the potential for customers who want to come to Aurangabad but cannot due to a lack of connectivity. Charters from far eastern countries are the need of the hour to attract foreigners to this Buddhist circuit, which is a very high-potential sector. The hotel industry in Aurangabad has seen a decline in the last 5 years. Revenues have plummeted steadfastly, and revenues are getting hampered due to the above issues and lack of connectivity.

Sindhudurg

Sindhudurg, which is in the South of Maharashtra, holds great potential and the hotel industry is very excited about this destination, especially after the Mopa Airport, which has now come up in the North of Goa. However, connectivity continues to be a problem. Travelling from Maharashtra or Goa is still very tedious. The development of Sindhudurg as an extension of Goa Tourism should be considered, for enormous potential lies

Tapping into tourism potential of MAHARASHTRA

there and it is a perfect alternative to Goa for beach tourism.

Need for industry status

The hotel industry generates 9-10 per cent of the employment in the country. The GDP share it contributes to is about 11 per cent along with the tourism sector. The problem we are facing is a lack of long-term lending policies. Typically, for a large or small project, the Return on Investment is close to 15 years. And lending has not happened for more than 7-8 years. This is a major problem we have been continuously representing in the finance industry. Maharashtra Tourism has now accorded industry status to the hotel sector. There are certain incentives that aid in the development of more hotels. A national policy should be made by giving industry status to the hotel sector through the necessary inclusion of tourism in the concurrent list of the Constitution.

National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)

Huge allocations have been made under the NIP. It is primarily for infrastructure development. If hotel tourism projects could be included in the same for the last mile connectivity to hotels and exhibi-

tion centres, among others, the long-term lending issues could be addressed. We request that the projects required to augment the tourism infrastructure in terms of hotel guestrooms, convention and exhibition centres, airport infrastructure, roads, last-mile connectivity between popular tourist centres, among others, be included in the list for funding, apart from the 7,400 infrastructure projects already identified.

Maharashtra has a stunning coastline. Creating a coastal circuit, covering destinations such as Alibag, Harihareshwar can boost beach tourism

Niche tourism & spiritual tourism

Establishing well-planned spiritual centres and retreats in scenic locations such as Nashik, Pune and Aurangabad, which hold immense historical and spiritual significance. Promoting religious and cultural festivals such as the Kumbh Mela, Wari and Ganesh Chaturthi, among others, through effective marketing campaigns. Encouraging local communities to preserve and showcase traditional arts, crafts and music, thereby providing tourists with an authentic spiritual experience.

Theme-based tourism circuit

The development of well-defined theme-based tourist circuits can enhance the over-

all visitor experience and encourage tourists to explore the state further. We suggest the creation of the following circuits:

Heritage Circuit: This circuit could include historically significant places such as Ajanta and Ellora caves, Raigad Fort and the Gateway of India, among others.

Wildlife Circuit: Maharashtra boasts several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries such as Pench Tiger Reserve and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. Connecting these destinations will create an attractive wildlife tourism circuit.

Coastal Circuit: Maharashtra has a stunning coastline dotted with picturesque beaches. Creating a coastal circuit, covering destinations such as Alibag, Harihareshwar and Tarkarli can boost beach tourism.

Eco-tourism: The Western Ghats and the Konkan region are treasure troves of biodiversity. With proper conservation measures and the promotion of eco-tourism, these areas can attract nature enthusiasts.

Special subsidy to budget hotels

It would be prudent to introduce special subsidies to encourage the development of more budget hotels in Maharashtra, which shall not only boost tourism in the state but also result in employment generation and revenue generation for the State." □



EXPORTERS get more time for amnesty scheme

DGFT has extended the deadline for amnesty scheme allowing exporters to settle default in export obligations until December 31, 2023.

The last date to apply for availing benefits of the amnesty scheme for onetime settlement of default in export obligation (EO) by certain exporters has been extended for six months till 31 December 2023 by Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT). Earlier, June 30 was fixed as the last date for registration under the scheme. The government announced the new foreign trade policy on March 31, 2023. It included an amnesty scheme for exporters for one-time settlement of default in export obligation by the holders of advance and export promotion for capital goods (EPCG) authorizations. DGFT also said that the last date for payment of customs duty plus interest has been extended till March 31, 2024. Under the scheme, all pending cases of the default in EO of certain authorizations can be regularized by the authorization holder on payment of all customs duties that were exempted in proportion to unfulfilled EO and interest at the rate of 100 per cent of such duties exempted.

Earlier, FHRAI had written to **Santosh Kumar Sarangi**, Director General, Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, for an extension in the export obligation period. In a letter to Sarangi,

FHRAI stated, “The tourism and hospitality sectors in the country have been devastated due to COVID, resulting in the sectors becoming the biggest casualties in terms of massive job losses, financial distress and the closure of businesses. Considering these highly unfavourable conditions for business, the DGFT, vide



Sudesh Poddar
President,
FHRAI

its public notice No. 53/2015-2020 dated 20 January 2023, granted one-time relaxation from maintenance of average export obligation for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22 and granted extension in export obligation period for specified Export Promotion Capital Goods authorization for these years.”

It had further stated, “The decision of DGFT has proved to be a very big relief to the hospitality sector, which has been struggling to come out of the impact of COVID and sustain. On behalf of the tourism and hospitality sectors in the country, FHRAI would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to the DGFT for the same. FHRAI also takes this opportunity to inform you that, though the Indian tourism and hospitality sectors have witnessed a resurgence in the recent period buoyed by highly impressive domestic tourism, foreign tourist arrivals to India have remained dismal in this period. As per the report of the Ministry of Tourism for 2022, foreign tourist arrivals were 44 per cent lower than the pre-COVID level in 2019. It is imperative to note that the business environment in the hospitality sector is not conducive enough for the hotels to maintain their export obligations and annual average conditions due to a very small number of foreign tourists checking into the hotels.” Hence, the Federation requested for granting relaxation from the maintenance of average export obligation for the year 2022-23 as well as an extension in export obligation period for specified EPCG authorization for the hotel sector in the country. □

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FHRAI calls for action on dark patterns

Federation lists 11 concern areas & requests DoCA to consider these concerns while framing rules on fair business practices on online platforms.

The FHRAI has applauded the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) for initiating a discussion on dark patterns adopted by online platforms to deceive consumers and asked them to take action to resolve these problems.

In a letter to **Rohit Kumar Singh**, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, FHRAI appreciated the Department for taking a revolutionary step of setting up a Task Force for formulating the guidelines on fair business practices on online platforms and said, "Service providers such as hotels and restaurants are also grievously impacted in the online business due to the manipulative practices of the e-commerce entities such as Online Travel Aggregators (OTAs) and Food Service Aggregators (FSAs). On one hand, the hotels and restaurants are customers of the OTAs and FSAs who are offering their products on their platforms and on the other hand, they are service providers to their customers. Due to the dark patterns adopted by the online players, either the customer or the service provider and at times both of them collectively undergo immense hardships."

FHRAI further stated in the letter some major concern areas that severely impact the consumers and the service providers in their dealings on the online platforms, and requested the Department to review and take into consideration the following points while formulating the guidelines:

Fake reviews in e-commerce

Fake reviews are prejudicial or wrong reviews generated by a customer or by a competitor of a product owner, whereas motivated reviews are the reviews that a product owner may generate in collusion with an e-commerce entity or an aggregator. They have the capability to

mislead the customers, as the customers largely depend on reviews, rankings or ratings for making their product choices.

Inflating prices by OTAs

Prices displayed on the e-commerce platforms should be based on "What you see is what you get". But many online platforms, including the OTAs, indulge in displaying lower banner rates and then inflating them upon proceeding to the checkout page. Banner rates displayed should not be inflated.



Sudesh Poddar
President,
FHRAI

Problems due to overbooking

Many times, consumers undergo hardships due to overbooking mistakes of OTAs. This causes unnecessary scuffle between the consumer and the service providers. The OTAs should be made accountable for such acts by way of bringing them under the realm of unfair trade practices.

Inability of e-commerce platforms

At times, e-commerce entities such as OTAs and FSAs show on their platforms that the restaurants are not operating and rooms in hotels are sold out, but in fact, it is done due to e-commerce platforms' inability to service their customers, for a variety of reasons. This unfair activity causes immense trouble to both

the customer and the service provider.

Awarding ranking and rating

Some rationalization is required for the assignment of ratings and rankings by the e-commerce portals including OTAs and FSAs, as this is a hidden and indirect way for them to manipulate and dictate terms with business partners, especially the hotels and restaurants. There should be a central and standardized format for ranking and rating system along with an independent ranking system for e-commerce entities.

Unilateral marketing offers

Many online platforms provide several independent marketing offers, without any clear understanding and explanation to their ser-

It is often seen that OTAs host illegal & unauthorized accommodations on their platforms, which poses serious threat to consumer safety

vice providers, which leads to confusion and inconvenience among the service providers and customers at large. The service providers, especially, the hotels and restaurants are only responsible for sales made through their own websites and Apps only.

Unauthorized accommodations

It is often seen that OTAs host illegal and unauthorized accommodations on their platforms, which poses a serious threat to consumer safety. There should be guidelines to ensure that the OTAs do not host illegal or unauthorized accommodations on their portals. This poses serious security issues for guests or consumers staying at such unauthorized accommodation units.

Hidden charges

The online platforms often indulge in double dipping by inflating charges payable by consumers through charges raised under different names and pretext, due to which consumers are often confused and think that these charges are levied by the service providers.

Cancellation policy & rules

In many cases, once the consumer initiates cancellation, the online platforms also deduct a hefty percentage of the basic amount paid for the commodity and refund a very meagre amount to the consumers, which is very less from the original amount paid during booking, resulting in the consumers losing out on their hard-earned money.

Asking for more information

In today's digital era, when everything is available on a fingertip, any business having maximum information has an edge over its contemporaries. It is the same tactic that the online platforms operate upon, wherein they collect a plethora of information from the consumers in the garb of 'know your customer'. Usually, the information collected is much more than what is required. It has been found that

Inclusion in Task Force on dark patterns

FHRAI has written to the Department of Consumer Affairs, requesting to be included in the Task Force that is being set up to prepare guidelines for protecting consumers from dark patterns. The Federation stated in the letter addressed to **Rohit Kumar Singh**, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, "We observe that FHRAI, being the apex industry association representing the interests of more than 5 lakhs restaurants and around 60,000 hotels in the country, is not included in the Task Force, in spite of our active participation and contributions in different consultative and policy formulation efforts of the Department in the past. FHRAI made substantive contributions to the policy formulation efforts of the Department on pertinent issues such as matters related to fake reviews on e-commerce portals and amendments on consumer protection (e-commerce) rules 2020, among others." Taking cognizance of the FHRAI representation, the Department of Consumer Affairs confirmed inclusion of FHRAI in the Task Force on Dark Patterns. This would enable FHRAI to share inputs and suggestions which would be beneficial for the hospitality sector and ensuring fair business opportunities for hospitality establishments.

such data is manipulated to push online or social media advertising based on consumer preference to influence consumer buying patterns, using AI.

Wrong GST

OTAs levy and collect GST from consumers.

However, the hotel room tariffs are based on slabs and it is often seen that OTAs increase or decrease the agreed rate as per their convenience. In the process of increasing and decreasing the room tariff, the OTAs, often collect incorrect GST amounts from the customers, applying wrong GST rates. ❑

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Suggestions put forth for tourism development

FHRAI offers its ideas for growth of Indian tourism & asks that these be incorporated into recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee.

FHRAI has expressed gratitude to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture for inviting the Federation to participate in a consultation on 18 July 2023 at New Delhi. FHRAI shared its suggestions on tourism development in India and requested that these be included in the committee's recommendations.

In a letter to **V Vijayasai Reddy**, Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, FHRAI said, "It is highly encouraging to note that the Parliamentary Standing Committee is working with a focused agenda for the growth and development of the tourism sector in the country. FHRAI is happy to share the suggestions based on the questionnaire provided



V Vijayasai Reddy
Chairman, Parliamentary
Standing Committee on
Transport, Tourism & Culture

on some very pertinent topics related to tourism development in India. We humbly request you to include the suggestions in the recommendations of the Committee to Parliament. The recommendation was

in furtherance to a consultative meeting attended by a delegation of FHRAI with the Parliamentary Standing Committee in New Delhi. The delegation was comprising of **Pradeep Shetty**, Vice President,

It is encouraging to note that Parliamentary Standing Committee is working with focussed agenda for growth & development of tourism sector

Chetan Mehta, Executive Committee Member, **Pranay Aneja**, Executive Committee Member, **Nikhil Sharma**, Executive Committee Members and **Jaison Chacko**, Secretary General. □

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NO ROYALTIES for wedding music

HRAWI praises DPIIT's directive to prohibit copyright societies from collecting fees for playing sound recordings at weddings.

HRAWI has welcomed the latest public notice issued by the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) directing copyright societies not to collect royalties for playing sound recordings at wedding functions or other such social festivities associated with marriage. The DPIIT has clarified that such collections are in violation of Section 52 (1) (za) of the Copyright Act 1957, which specifies that the performance of literary, dramatic, or musical works or the communication of such works or sound recordings during bonafide religious ceremonies, including marriage processions and related social festivities, does not constitute an infringement of copyright.

“The directive of the DPIIT that license from copyright societies is not required for marriage and related functions has come as a big relief for the hospitality industry.

Despite there being clear provisions in the law, the copyright societies and agencies have been violating the law for the last two decades and harassing customers and



Pradeep Shetty
President,
HRAWI

hotels with all sorts of intimidating tactics. Hotels were unnecessarily caught between customers who are unwilling to pay and copyright societies that target hotels for the usage of music by the public. HRAWI has been rigorously pursuing this with various

government authorities, highlighting the misconduct of copyright societies, which end up causing constant harassment to hospitality establishments and an unnecessary financial burden to the guests. This directive is a result of HRAWI's commitment and perseverance to work towards creating a conducive business environment for its members. We are extremely grateful to the DPIIT for issuing directions to the

DPIIT directive that license from copyright societies is not required for marriage & related functions has come as big relief for hospitality industry

copyright societies/agencies to desist from making demands from consumers, which will aid the Ease of Doing Business and is in the public interest,” said **Pradeep Shetty**, President, HRAWI. □

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Experts share insights on fire safety, egress planning

HRAWI hosts a seminar on safety in hospitality industry, addressing various aspects of safety & educating participants on implementing measures for safety.



HRAWI recently hosted a seminar titled Life, Property and Environment Safety for Hospitality Industry at The Orchid - An Ecotel Hotel in Mumbai. The seminar addressed the various aspects of safety at hotels and restaurants and educated participants on the requisites for effectively implementing measures for the safety of

By prioritizing life, property & environmental safety, we not only fulfill our ethical obligations but also work for sustainable growth

everyone present at hospitality establishments. The event kicked off with a keynote address delivered by **Pradeep Shetty**, President, HRAWI, followed by an introductory technical session on Egress for Life Safety in Hotels by **Hemant Khadse**, CEO, East Corp Group.

“Safety is of paramount importance in the hospitality industry and our commitment extends beyond the physical security of our guests and properties; we are custodians of trust and stewards of the environment. By prioritizing life, property and environmental safety, we not only fulfill our ethical obligations but also lay the foundation for sustainable growth and success.” said **Pradeep Shetty**. □

Seminar simplifies GST for hospitality professionals

HRAWI hosts GST seminar in Panaji for hotel & restaurant owners, with **Jinit R Shah**, a seasoned Chartered Accountant sharing insights on GST related topics.

HRAWI recently organized an insightful seminar aimed at simplifying the Goods and Services Tax (GST) for the hospitality industry in

The seminar focused on a variety of GST-related topics that are relevant to the hospitality industry

Panaji. The seminar was held on the heels of the 50th GST Council meeting, which took place on 11 July 2023 in New Delhi. The event was hosted on 25 July 2023 at Fortune Miramar hotel, drawing atten-

dance from 42 hospitality professionals, including hotel and restaurant owners from across Goa. **Jinit R Shah**, a seasoned Chartered

Accountant with over 15 years of experience, conducted the seminar, providing in-depth knowledge and practical insights on GST related topics to the participants.

The inauguration of the seminar was graced by HRAWI members, including



Pradeep Shetty, President, HRAWI; **Nirav Gandhi**, Senior Vice President, HRAWI; **Jimmy Shaw**, Secretary, HRAWI; **Dilip Kothari**, Joint Secretary, HRAWI; **Paramjit Ghai**, Treasurer, HRAWI; and **Carl Costa**, Executive Member and State Co-ordinator, Goa, HRAWI. □



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HRAWI, FSSAI drive safe food practices

HRAWI successfully completed its latest FoSTaC programme in Goa, training 39 hospitality professionals to ensure safe food practices.

HRAWI, in collaboration with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), successfully concluded its latest Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) programme on 27 July 2023 at the Hotel Manoshanti in Goa. The intensive training witnessed the participation of 39 hospitality professionals, equipping them with the essential knowledge and skills to ensure safe and healthy food practices.

The FoSTaC programme was inaugurated by **Praveen Andrews**, Trainer; **Digambar Mangeshkar**, Operation Manager, Hotel Manoshanti; **Hemanshu Chauhan**, Assistant Secretary General,



Proactive participation of hospitality professionals showcases industry's commitment to meeting ever-evolving demands

HRAWI; and **Sandeep Bhaud**, Assistant IT Manager, HRAWI.

“The recent FoSTaC programme organised in Goa signifies a collective step towards ensuring safe and healthy food practices in the hospitality industry,” said **Pradeep Shetty**, President, HRAWI.

Reducing manpower costs while boosting sales

Romio Technologies is at the forefront of delivering advanced point-of-sale systems for hotels, focusing on sustainability and operational effectiveness.

The hospitality sector is faced with rising expectations for cost-effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency in today's fast-paced world. Innovative solutions are required as businesses work to deliver top-notch service while reducing their environmental effect. This is where Romio Technologies enters the picture, providing a broad range of goods and automated service options made to cater to the many demands of the contemporary hotel industry.

When it comes to delivering cutting-edge, multifunctional point-of-sale systems, Romio Technologies has taken the lead. The firm has created a variety of



Mohit Sharma
CEO,
Romio Technologies

products with a strong emphasis on sustainability that not only improve operational effectiveness but also help create a more sustainable future.

Mohit Sharma, CEO, Romio Technologies, talks about his focused and determined team that is dedicated to launching sustainable products for the market. “We are offering 3-5 years of warranty to our customers. A product will only be sustainable if there is longevity in the hardware, and scalability of the software,” emphasised Sharma.

When it comes to delivering cutting-edge, multifunctional point-of-sale systems, Romio Technologies has taken the lead



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Conclave prioritises overtourism issues

Panellists from hotel discussed eco-friendly practices and ways to mitigate the negative effects of overtourism at the HRANI's 8th annual conclave.

The recently concluded 8th annual conclave of HRANI in New Delhi discussed sustainable and responsible hospitality and tourism. The conclave held on 27 July 2023 witnessed a robust gathering of hotel and restaurant industry representatives, with **Satish Upadhyay**, Vice Chairperson, NDMC as Chief Guest, **Inoshi Sharma**, Executive Director, FSSAI and **R K Suman**, Regional Director, North, Indian Tourism as Guests of Honour. Delegates shared their experiences with sustainable and responsible tourism in sessions at the conclave, followed by an award ceremony and a networking lunch.

Garish Oberoi, President, HRANI, said, "This conclave was on responsible tourism. We have recently tied up with the Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSI), so based on that, we had this conclave where all sessions were based on how tourism or overtourism can reduce the impact on the environment. We had some very interesting panellists who are experienced hoteliers or past hoteliers and who are now working on responsible tourism."

He further added, "We have been having conclaves and conferences, but

this for the first time it was purely based on responsible tourism. We are trying to bring out a short booklet along with RTSI, which will be distributed to hotel and restaurant members and help them adapt to whatever is latest in eco-friendly practices so that in one way HRANI is helping out its members and teaching them more on how to reduce the impact of overtourism."

We have been having conclaves and conferences, but this for the first time it was purely based on responsible tourism

Elaborating on responsible tourism initiatives taken by hotels, Oberoi stated, "Most of the hotels and restaurants have already started to use glass bottles for

water, they are totally done away with plastic bottles. We do not see plastic straws as paper straws are being used and the containers in which food is being served are made of recyclable material. Through such conclaves, we are trying to educate hotel and restaurant members on all the eco-friendly practices and about the things available in the market. Though there is little-cost element attached to it because it is something new and enough vendors have not come into this space, we are hoping the price of these disposable articles will be reduced in the coming days. We are already talking to the government about some of these disposable and recyclable items that are being imported into India, so we are trying to tell the government that the duty should be reduced on these items rather than done away with, and the process of importing these articles should be simplified." □



Celebrating exceptional feats of hoteliers

Hoteliers were honoured during the 8th HRANI Conclave and given awards by prominent members of the industry for their contributions to the sector.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS 2023



Crepe Suzette



Ingredients

Ragi flour	100 gms
Sugar	150 gms
Salt	3 gms
Eggs	75 gms
Milk	200 ml
Butter	15 gm
Orange juice	50 ml
Orange zest	As required

Method

- Mix all the ingredients starting with dry ingredients and then add egg and milk making a smooth batter.
- Add butter at last (melted butter).
- Make sure that there should be no lumps in the mixture.
- Use a non-stick pan and pour the liquid batter on the pan.
- After the crepes are cooked pour orange juice over the crepes for flavour.

Mexican Avocado and little Millets salad



Ingredients

Little Millets	100 gms
Avocado	2 nos
Salt	3 gms
Extra virgin olive oil	50 ml
Balsamic vinegar	20 ml
Lemon juice	10 ml
Crushed pepper	2 gms
Tomatoes	50 gms

Method

- Soak Millets for at least 4-5 hours before cooking.
- Boil Millets for around 7-8 mins and drain the water.
- De seed and remove the skin of Avocado and dice them.
- Cut the tomatoes into small dices.
- Make a dressing of lemon juice balsamic vinegar and olive oil.
- Mix all the vegetables with Millets and pour the dressing from top.
- Sprinkle pepper and salt and mix well. Serve on a salad plate with slice of Avocado and garnish with parsley sprig

Recipes Credits:

Rishabh Misra

Lecturer, FHRAI IHM

Rohit Singla

Teaching Associate, FHRAI IHM



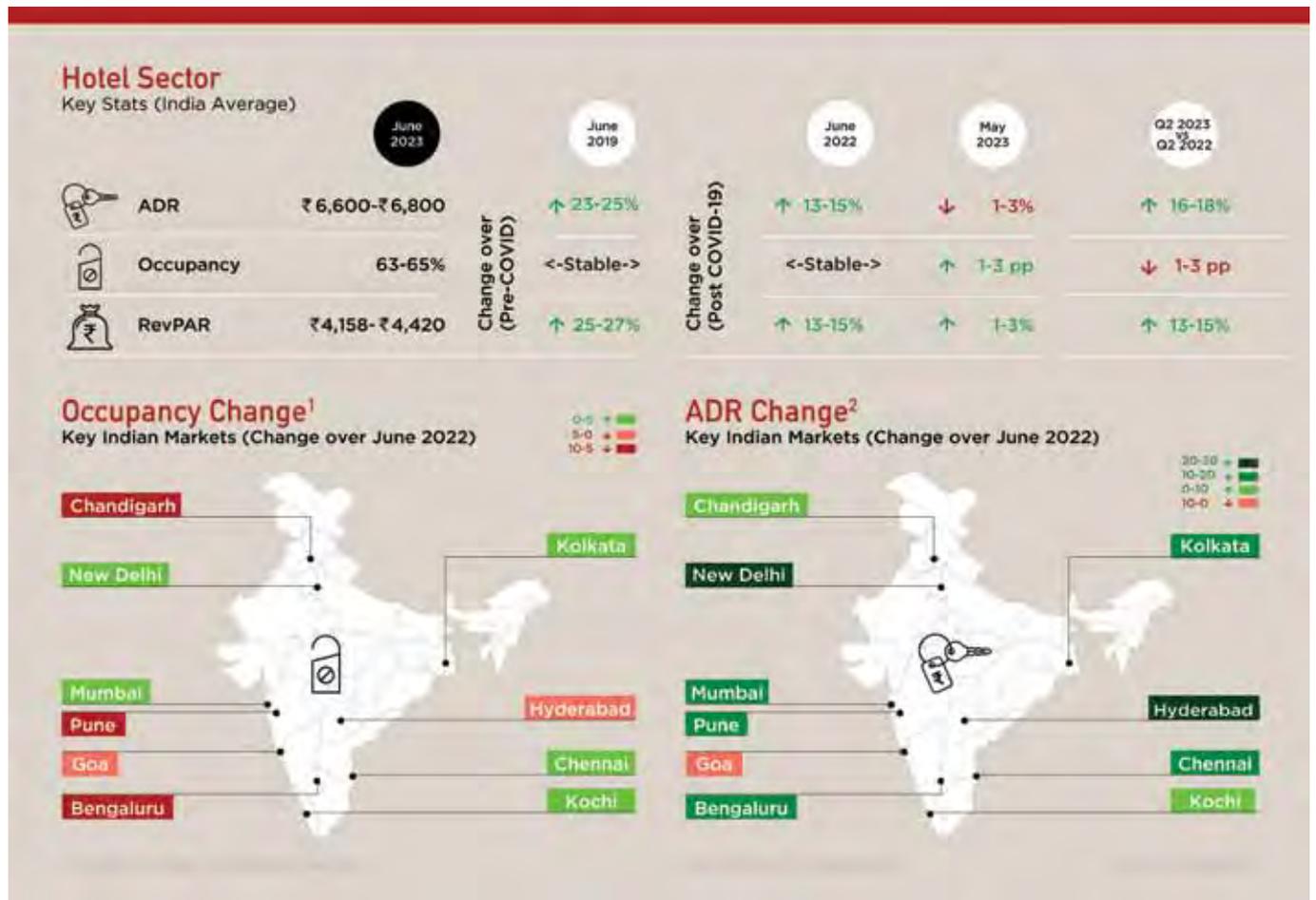
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Occupancy rates up in June 2023

India's hotel industry saw a slow recovery in Q2 2023, with occupancy rates increasing slightly & average rates falling in most major markets, points out HVS Anarock report.



Source: HVS Research. Data collated by HVS from 18 hotel operators and media reports as of 22nd Jul 2023





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Demand for hotel rooms to remain robust in 2023

Despite room additions continuing below pre-COVID levels, the hotel sector is predicted to add 5,210 rooms in 2023–2024, according to CMIE’s Industry Outlook study.

The room additions in the hotel industry are expected to remain below pre-COVID levels in 2023-24, according to CMIE’s Industry Outlook report. “Rising travel demand and higher occupancy rates are driving the need for additional capacities in the industry. Better global macroeconomic conditions and the resumption of e-visa services with key source countries will lead to an increase in foreign tourist arrivals. Demand for domestic travel is expected to remain robust in the current year. Most of the room addition projects expected to

Most of the room addition projects expected to be completed in 2023-24 will add capacity in smaller cities

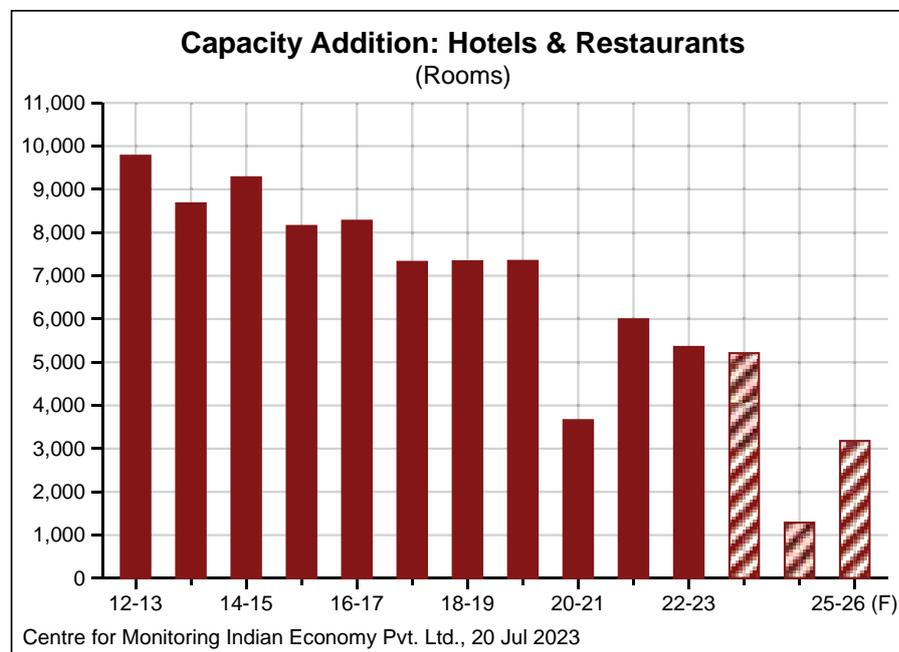
be completed in 2023-24 will add capacity in smaller cities. The hotel industry is anticipating an increase in demand over the next few years. It is therefore expected to continue to significantly add capacity over the next few years. We expect the industry to add a capacity of 5,210 rooms in 2023-24. The industry added 5,993 rooms in 2021-22 and 5,354 rooms in 2022-23. However, room additions will continue to be below pre-COVID levels. The industry added 7,686 rooms per year in the five years from 2015-16 to 2019-20,” outlined CMIE’s Industry Outlook.

Travel demand driving ARR

In 2022-23, the industry witnessed a sharp rise in foreign tourist arrivals and domestic tourist visits. Foreign tourist arrivals increased by 302.2 per cent to 7.9 million tourists in 2022-23 as com-

pared to 1.9 million tourists in 2021-22. Domestic tourist visits are estimated to have increased by 174.1 per cent to 1.8 billion visits in 2022 from 677 million visits in 2021. The increase in travel demand was reportedly on account of pent-up demand for leisure travel and a recovery in corporate travel driven by an

increase in meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibition events. The increase in foreign tourist arrivals and domestic tourist visits drove up occupancy rates and average room rates



pared to 1.9 million tourists in 2021-22. Domestic tourist visits are estimated to have increased by 174.1 per cent to 1.8 billion visits in 2022 from 677 million visits in 2021. The increase in travel demand was reportedly on account of pent-up demand for leisure travel and a recovery in corporate travel driven by an

(ARRs) in 2022-23. The industry’s average occupancy rates were around 59-61 per cent in the calendar year 2022, according to a report by HVS Anarock. Occupancy rates were 15-17 percentage points higher in 2022 as compared to the occupancy rates in 2021. However, when compared to occupancy rates in



the pre-COVID year 2019, they were 5-7 percentage points lower. The average occupancy rate is likely to rise to 66 per cent in 2023.

Average room rates in the industry increased to ₹6,000-6,200 in the calendar year 2022, according to the above-

Hotel companies are looking to expand their portfolios through asset-light model to keep up with faster increase in travel demand

mentioned report. ARRs were 37-39 per cent higher in 2022 as compared in 2021. Compared to rates in the pre-COVID year 2019, ARRs were 1-3 per cent higher in 2022. Average room rates are expected to grow by 16 per cent to reach ₹7,106 in 2023.

Asset-light models

The demand-supply mismatch is expected to continue for the next few years. The demand-supply mismatch, along with a healthy increase in foreign tourist arrivals and domestic tourist visits, will help drive up the industry's occupancy rates and average room rates over the next few years.

Hotel companies are looking to expand their portfolios through an asset-light business model to keep up with the faster increase in travel demand. The asset-light business model involves signing hotels under management contracts, franchise agreements, revenue-share agreements,

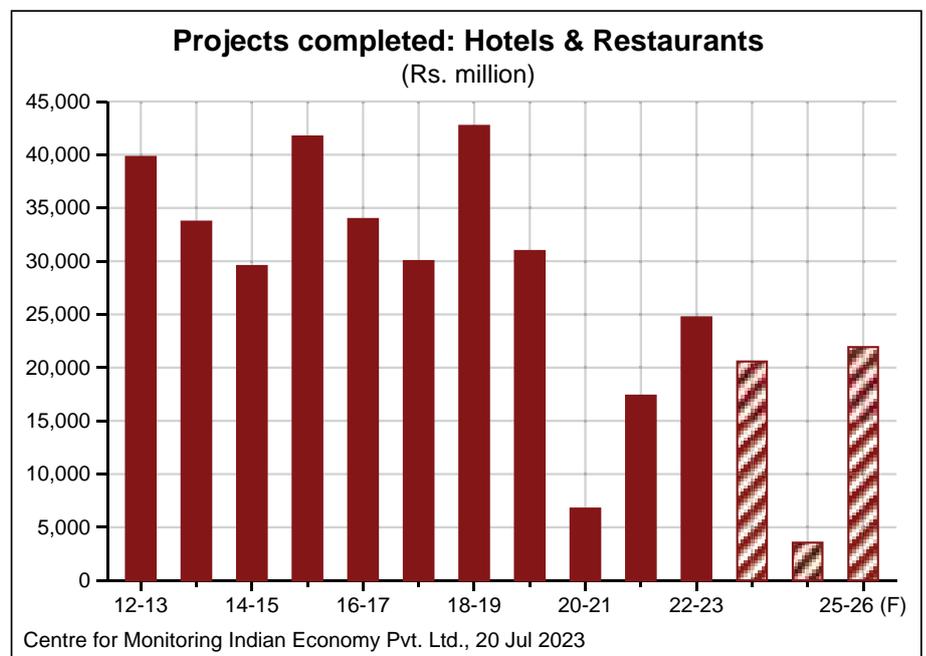
or lease agreements. These hotels will require less time for implementation. The asset-light model will also require less investment in capital expenditures from hotel companies.

Double digit growth

Foreign tourist arrivals are expected to increase by 23.3 per cent to 9.7 million visitors in 2023-24. The increase in foreign tourist arrivals will be on account of improvements in global macroeconomic

in 2022-23 as compared to 10.2 million foreign visitors in the pre-COVID year 2019-20.

Domestic tourist visits in India are expected to grow by 22.4 per cent to around 2.3 billion visits in 2023. The 22.4 per cent increase in visits is expected on an estimated 1.9 billion domestic visits in 2022. The number of domestic visits is estimated to have reached 80 per cent of pre-COVID levels.



conditions and the Central Government's decision to resume e-visa services for major source countries. In 2022-23, foreign tourist arrivals reached 77.6 per cent of pre-COVID levels. The industry witnessed 7.9 million foreign visitors

The industry is likely to complete 78 projects with an investment value of ₹20.6 billion in 2023-24 as compared to 59 projects with an investment value of ₹24.7 billion in the previous year. □



Indian hotel industry anticipates strong rebound

ICRA forecasts promising prospects for Indian hotel industry, with rising occupancy, healthy room rates and strong revenue growth expected in FY2024.

ICRA's projections indicate that premium hotel occupancy across India is set to reach 70-72 per cent in FY2024, following a rebound to 68-70 per cent in FY2023. The average room rates (ARRs) for premium hotels are expected to hover around ₹6,000-6,200 in FY2024. Despite the projected occupancy rates reaching the highest levels in a decade, the Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) is anticipated to remain at a 20-25 per cent discount compared to its peak in FY2008.

Consistent improvement in consumer sentiments despite the inflationary environment, stable corporate performance and domestic air passenger traffic inching above pre-COVID levels augur well for travel and hotel demand. The demand recovery has been strong in the last year, and ICRA anticipates it to continue in FY2024 as well. Sustenance of domestic leisure travel, higher bookings from meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) and business travel, along with an increase in foreign tourist arriv-

als (FTAs), would support demand. The industry is also likely to benefit from specific events such as the G20 summit and the ICC World Cup 2023.

ICRA estimates 13-15 per cent revenue growth for Indian hotel industry in FY2024, notwithstanding potential impact on demand from exogenous shocks, if any

Vinutaa S, Vice President and Sector Head, Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said, "Gateway cities such as Delhi and Mumbai are likely to top the occupancy chart at 75 per cent plus in FY2024. Demand is expected to remain healthy across markets, although Bengaluru and Pune are likely to be laggards compared to other key cities. While the G20 summit would support occupancy across cities in FY2024, improved economic activ-

ity and business associations stemming from these meetings are likely to translate into incremental demand for hotels over the medium term. ICRA expects an improving trend in ARR across markets in FY2024, driven by healthy occupancy."

ICRA estimates a 13-15 per cent revenue growth for the Indian hotel industry in FY2024, notwithstanding the potential impact on demand from exogenous shocks, if any. Sustenance of a large part of the cost-rationalisation measures undertaken during the COVID period, along with operating leverage benefits, resulted in a sharp expansion in margins. ICRA's sample set, comprising 12 large hotel companies, reported operating margins of 32 per cent for FY2023 as compared to 20-22 per cent pre-COVID. While there could be some moderation in margins from these levels with an increase in some cost-heads, including refurbishment and maintenance, the margins are still expected to be higher than the pre-COVID levels over the medium term. □



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Balancing growth and fair pricing

Sarovar Hotels maintains a strong focus on developing Golden Tulip brand, foreseeing significant growth in the next 5-10 years.

 **Janice Alyosius**

In the dynamic realm of hospitality, few players stand as prominently as Sarovar, a company that continues to redefine industry standards. With an impressive count of 103 operational hotels and an ambitious pipeline of 45 upcoming properties, Sarovar's dedication to growth and innovation is evident. Particularly exciting is the strategic advancement of the Golden Tulip brand in India, coupled with the introduction of cutting-edge technology that sets them apart on a global scale.

Ajay Bakaya, Chairman & MD, Sarovar Hotels, said, "We have 45 properties in the pipeline and we are operating 103 hotels as of today. We are excited about the development of Golden Tulip brand in India. We took a bit of exercise a year ago, and added an all-new technology brand that gives us state-of-the-art distribution systems across the world, something that other Indian companies do not offer at the moment. We have a CRS that is as modern as any airline system and we are building both the Sarovar and Golden Tulip brands at the moment. We are strongly focused on the Golden Tulip. It is a brand that has not seen its potential fulfilled in this part of the world and we see it as a growing brand in the next 5-10 years. Our activities carry on; we are building hotels, opening them, and expanding our presence in the smaller towns of the country. Sarovar was a pioneer

in the Tier II cities, and we have gone to Tier III and IV now."

Embracing sustainability

"We have always thought from a customer point of view rather than a brand point of view. Sustainability needs to go



Ajay Bakaya
Chairman & MD,
Sarovar Hotels

beyond what we put on our website and beyond what we talk about; it needs to be physically witnessed. We went on a campaign to eliminate single-use plastic pre-COVID, it became a challenge because people wanted the safety and security of sealed plastic bottles, so we had to reintroduce them. But we are again eliminating single-use plastic, that is our mission and we hope by the end of the year all 103 hotels will be free of single-use plastic. That goes for water bottles and toiletries in guest bathrooms as well. We are moving towards dispensers rather than little

plastic bottles that we throw into the bins. We are doing more and more with local communities and ourselves to make sure we leave the least possible carbon footprint," emphasised Bakaya.

Evolution of room rates

Bakaya said Sarovar takes a balanced approach, acknowledging the justifiable evolution of pricing over the past 15 years. "In reflecting on the past 15 years, it is apparent that the justification for hotel

Sustainability needs to go beyond what we put on our website and beyond what we talk about; it needs to be physically witnessed

investment rates is finally emerging. It took until 2023 to surpass the rates seen in 2008, indicating that we are currently operating at approximately half the rate of that year. In this context, our rates align more coherently with those in the rest of the world. While we remain below the rates of other major cities, there is still room for growth. It is crucial to strike a balance, avoiding excessive profiteering and ensuring that fair pricing principles guide our actions. Selling a room for an exorbitant price that is unjustifiable, such as a ₹5000 room for ₹50,000, is not aligned with our ethos," pointed out Bakaya. □

Unique corporate gifts for every occasion

From Diwali's brilliance to New Year's promise, commemorate every occasion with RR Solution's curated corporate gifts, spreading love, gratitude and positivity.



There are several events that call for celebration and thanksgiving as the year progresses. Whether it is the festival of lights, Diwali, the start of a new year, the honourable Doctor's Day, or a day meant to promote global safety, every occasion needs to be commemorated with thoughtful actions. The art of gift-giving is among the most heartfelt methods to convey your love, gratitude, and best wishes. For genuinely unforgettable celebrations, RR Solution offers a very nice selection of corporate gifts.



Diwali gifting

Gifting during Diwali is a cherished tradition that symbolises the exchange of positivity and prosperity. For a unique touch, consider personalised gifts that reflect the recipient's preferences. RR Solution provides customised clocks, personalised pen drives, coasters, apparel, health goods, or home appliances, among others.

New Year gifting

As the calendar turns to a new year, it is an opportune moment to inspire hope and new beginnings. A well-thought-out gift can set the tone for the coming year. RR Solution provides a range of custom-

ised gifts such as calendars with cherished memories or personalised journals, that make the recipient feel truly special.

RR Solution provides customised clocks, personalised pen drives, coasters, apparel, health goods, or home appliances, among others for Diwali

Doctor Day gifting

Doctor's Day is a time to honour the dedication and selflessness of healthcare professionals. RR Solution provides gifts that promote relaxation and self-care, such as spa gift sets or personalised thank-you



cards. These gifts extend beyond material value, acknowledging the commitment and sacrifices that doctors make in their quest to preserve life and health.



World Safety Day gifting

This occasion presents a unique opportunity to promote safety-conscious gifting. Consider gifting items that promote safety awareness such as first aid kits, emergency preparedness supplies, or high-quality safety gear. Gifting safety-related items conveys care and concern for the recipient's welfare, emphasising the shared responsibility of creating a secure environment for all.

In conclusion, gifting is a beautiful way to celebrate special occasions and show appreciation for the people and values that enrich our lives. Whether it is the festival of lights, the promise of a new year, the dedication of doctors, or the pursuit of a safer world, each occasion presents an opportunity to make a positive impact through thoughtful and meaningful gifts. By selecting gifts that align with the essence of each occasion, we not only celebrate but also enrich the spirit of these events, creating lasting memories and fostering bonds that transcend time. For trade enquiries, RR Solution can be contacted at 8527399075.



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Luxury redefined in New Town of Kolkata

With inauguration of Ozen Mansion Kolkata in Q2 2024, the Ozen Collection expands into India. This hotel offers stunning event spaces, large rooms.



DDP Bureau

The Ozen Collection is all set to enter the Indian market with its debut property, the Ozen Mansion Kolkata, scheduled to open in the second quarter of 2024. Ideally situated in the New Town neighbourhood



of Kolkata, the hotel is a short distance from both Eco Park and the International Airport, making it a prime location. The hotel's design will evoke the charm of a majestic and refined residence, featuring event spaces that exude a timeless and elegant atmosphere.

Souvagya Mohapatra, Managing Director, Atmosphere Hospitality, said, "We are continuously evolving ourselves into a more resonating brand every day, in true Joy of Giving spirit. With the upcoming The Ozen Collection hotels and resorts, we are pushing the boundaries of the guest experience. Expanding into India is very special to me, with Ozen Mansion Kolkata giving us a chance to enrich lives in India."



Boasting 235 units, including a 70-square metre minimum size of a club or heritage room and two presidential

Ozen Mansion Kolkata is set to be city's event venue of choice, with 6,500 square metres worth of impressive indoor & outdoor venues.

suites as big as 400 square metres each with a private pool, this city-focused property serves up a unique club lounge concept. The exclusive lounges will highlight and be named after iconic cultural elements of Kolkata such as Victoria, Chowringhee, Eden Garden, Howrah and Kalighat, among others.

The hotel is set to be the city's event venue of choice, with approximately 6,500 square metres worth of impressive indoor and outdoor venues. This will include a large pillar-less state-of-



the-art banquet hall with adequate pre function areas, an open-air courtyard and lawn, boardrooms, three expansive conference rooms, a pool party hall and open-air space.

Plans include three signature eateries, an international all-day dining restaurant, private dining areas, two bars, and a bakery and café. Epicureans will be delighted



with a glorious mix of favourite The Ozen Collection outlets and progressive new culinary concepts.

The lively city life experience will be punctuated with delightful leisure amenities such as a 1,000-square-metre swimming pool with a sprawling deck area, a



children's playroom, and a venue for wedding rituals and ceremonies by the gorgeous poolside area. An expansive ELE | NA ELEMENTS OF NATURE spa and wellness centre will round off the indulgent facilities.

Ozen Reserve Bolifushi, a part of the Ozen Collection, recently achieved the prestigious accolade of being crowned the world's top all-inclusive hotel. 



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After a decade of thriving operations in The Maldives, we proudly celebrate our 10th anniversary. Two of our properties; **OZEN Reserve Bolifushi** and **OBLU SELECT Lobigili** was recently awarded with the prestigious **TripAdvisor's Travellers Choice 2023 - Best of the Best - World Wide!**

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Chairman, India Expo
Centre and Mart

Sustainability is a major goal for everybody, all Himalayan states are considered major options for tourism. Out of the Himalayan states, Himachal Pradesh has done a lot in recent years. It has very good air connectivity, and moreover, they have a robust plan for promoting tourism in their state. I am sure India International Hospitality Expo event was able to generate a lot of interest in the state for tourism.



B Krishnamoorthy
Head, Commercial
Appliances Business, IFB

There are two major challenges in hospitality: the fact that it is a labour-intensive industry, and the conservation of natural resources such as water and electricity, among others. We have a unique product, called XORB technology. It helps in three types of saving: it saves up to 70 per cent of water, which leads to less consumption of electricity, and it uses less detergent for cleaning. This is technology for tomorrow.



Amit Sharda
Chief Operating Officer,
Prologix First

We have worked hard to make sure that our applications are paperless; we provide most of the things on the app and they are electronically saved into the system. That really helps save paper and a lot of the carbon footprint has been reduced by doing this.



Arjun Awasthy
VP, Kesri Transcontinental-
Homescapex

We try to source fabrics from various parts of the country and we see to it that they are treated in an environmentally friendly way. We have our own machinery, and we do not use defunct equipment that causes great pollution such as boilers, among others. Homescapex also does not use polythene and our goods are packed with recycled paper.



Balbir Singh Khara
CEO,
BuildTrack

What we are trying to bring to the industry is sustainable usage and experience, regarding not only technology but also sustainability. The technology that we are bringing here is how the Internet of Things can be introduced into the hotel space and how it can bring efficiency and productivity to hotels. This implies how energy and resource consumption can be reduced and how the workforce can be made more productive.



V Khinivasara
National Manager,
West Region, Assa Abloy

As far as sustainability is concerned, we have close to 250 EPD-certified products. We are constantly working to make our products sustainable because that is what all hotels are looking for at this moment, apart from a renewed focus on hygiene post-COVID.



Ritendra Sharma
AVP Sales,
WAE

We are venturing into the hospitality industry, where we are promoting our glass water bottling plants. This will enable the hospitality industry to majorly eliminate plastics from their operations. We, as a company hold the responsibility to completely stop using plastics, so our entire product line is based on stainless steel.



Inderpreet Sawhney
Managing Partner,
TSS

We are now getting onto renewable energy sources and giving back to the environment. We are collecting PET bottles from hotels, which cause massive junk, and working with a company that turns them into fibre and makes bags out of them, which can be used as beach bags and laundry bags, among others, in the hotels.

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Mid-segment growth catering to changing preferences

Tier III & IV markets are emerging as growth hubs, while offbeat destinations are becoming new flavour for tourists seeking unique experiences, reckons S P Jain.

 **Lipla Negi**

High occupancy and rates—do you feel it is sustainable?
I believe that the current high occupancy and rates in the hospitality industry are indeed sustainable. The recovery from the impact of COVID has been significant, with an increase in room occupancy and average room rates. However, predicting the exact stabilisation of rates is challenging due to various factors such as ongoing travel restrictions, changing traveller preferences, and the global economic situation. We expect the rates to stabilise as the tourism industry continues to adapt and respond to evolving market conditions.

CMIE study suggests hotel room additions remain below pre-COVID levels. What are your views?

Regarding the recent study by CMIE on room additions in hotels, I acknowledge that the recovery in the hospitality sector has been gradual. The study's findings may indicate a cautious approach by hoteliers to expanding their room capacities compared to pre-COVID levels, possibly due to the uncertainty caused by COVID. At Pride Hotels Group, our expansion plans are strategic and continue

to align with market demands and emerging opportunities.

What are your expansion plans?

I have ambitious expansion plans for the company. Currently operating in 56 locations across India, our group aims to open 100 hotels by the year 2030. These



S P Jain
Chairman & Managing
Director, Pride Hotels Group

expansion efforts will include both owned properties and managed properties. The focus will be on strategic locations and emerging markets, including pilgrimage centres and destination cities. Our aim is to offer personalised experiences, invest in sustainable practices and leverage new technology to enhance our guests' experiences across our expanding portfolio.

What is your strategy to strengthen Pride's footprints?

We recognise the vast potential in the market, with over 40,000 potential hotels yet to be branded. To strengthen Pride Hotels' footprints, our strategy involves a mix of both owned and managed properties. By combining these two models, we can expand our presence rapidly and offer a diverse range of hospitality services.

How mid-segment brands are witnessing strong growth trajectory?

I acknowledge the exceptional growth and returns exhibited by mid-segment

According to our analysis, Tier III and IV markets are indeed emerging as new growth hubs in the hospitality industry

homegrown brands in the hospitality industry. We attribute this growth to the changing preferences of customers, who are seeking personalised experiences and value for money. Mid-segment brands offer a perfect balance of quality services at reasonable prices, attracting a wide customer base. □

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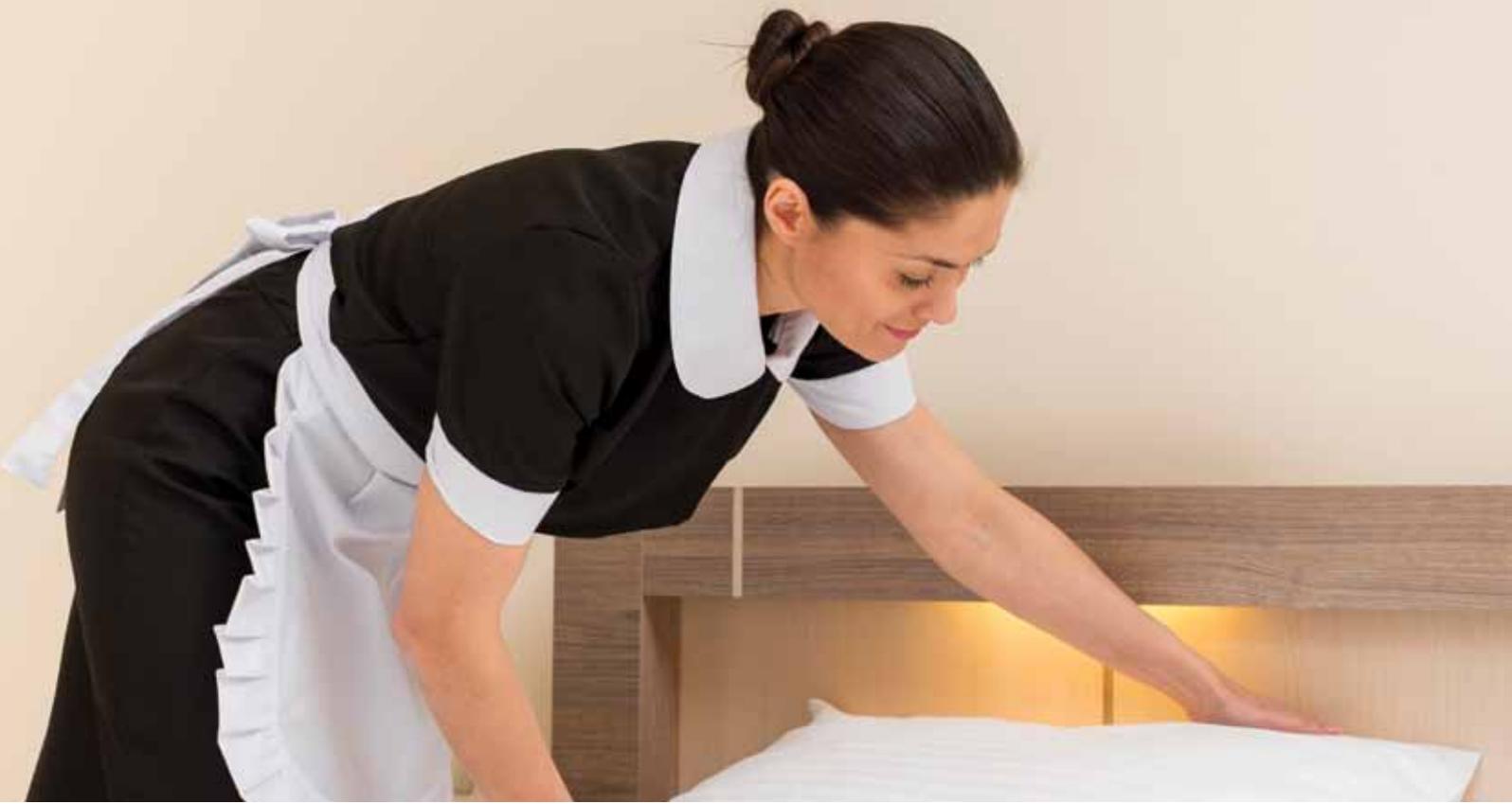
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Hoteliers as change agents in social sector

Housekeepers in hotels can use their skills to help marginalized communities such as domestic help, drivers and cooks, writes **Niranjan Khatri**.

Sustainable development means focussing on the planet, people and profit as part of our business process. The people aspect is also referred to as the social dimension of business. For the purpose of this brief article, I will have a laser focus on what housekeepers in hotels can do individually or collectively.

We imparted vocational training to orphans in food service, with offer that if we have vacancy, we will give them a job

In the 80s, the hotel industry used to invite orphans during Christmas for high tea. This was considered CSR—corporate social responsibility—a feel nice factor. My own understanding of this subject became deeper in the geographical isolation of the remote islands of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the late 80s, when I was operating a small hotel in Port



Niranjan Khatri
 Founder,
 iSambhav

The hotels can start common training hubs in different parts of the cities for domestic help to be trained professionally

Later, the same model was scaled up by taking boys and girls for vocational training in housekeeping, food & beverage service and food production. We shared this initiative with the government officials and after a few months, the Ministry of Tourism came out with a scheme called Hunar Se Rozgar—jobs through vocational training—for the hotel industry to adopt, in order to impart training to the underprivileged sections of the society on a large scale and to fulfill its own needs for skilled staff.

Creating talent pool

What can the hotel industry do to add value to marginalized stakeholders who work in our homes such as domestic help, drivers and cooks.

Hoteliers excel in food preparation, delivering service and the implementation of safety, security, hygiene and diplomacy. The same skills, though in diluted form, are expected from our domestic help. Thus, housekeepers are ideal to bring this excellence of the industry in a simplified manner to home levels in coordination with people in homes. A simple digital handbook can be made for distribution to urban dwellers which can be translated into regional languages.

The domestic help of the Philippines and Sri Lanka are given certificates after vocational training, which helps them get better jobs in other countries.

The hotels can start common training hubs in different parts of the cities for them to be trained professionally. We will become a great country when we add value to our invisible workers in the informal sector.

As we create a large pool of skilled informal sector labour, we should be in a position to send them to other countries with confidence to earn better wages, like people in the different sectors of industry who migrate aboard.

The inputs given above may be shared with hotel HR departments, with instructions to share the note with all managers or staff so that the invisible pillars of the country become more skilled and learn financial literacy to make them self-reliant—Atma Nirbhar in times of crisis.

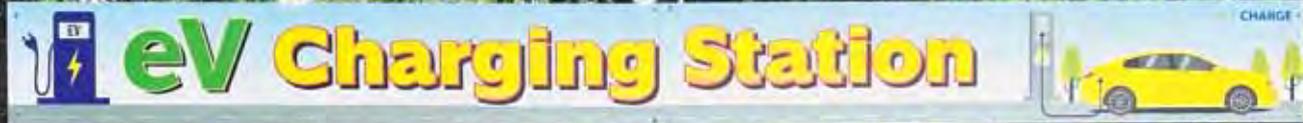
Just food for thought for leaders of the industry to impart their skills to the disadvantaged sections of society. □

Blair. Some local NGOs used to come to seek our financial help, but we were not in a position to assist them as our revenues were constrained due to two flights per week.

I learned that helping in the social domain needs three approaches: treasury, time and talent. Keeping this learning in perspective, we helped a local orphanage financially with a symbolic amount for purchasing stationery every month for the children. After we went to see the orphanage, we found its plumbing, electrical and woodwork in a shaky, leaky condition. In the islands, the availability of carpenters, electricians and plumbers was in short supply; hence, we sent our hotel's skilled staff to rectify the creaky infrastructure into a robust system.

We imparted vocational training to the orphans in food service with the offer that if we had a vacancy, we would give them a job; otherwise, they were free to join any other hotel. The other small hotels in the islands happily absorbed them because our hotel imparted good training.





Harmonising luxury and environment

Hotel chains are leveraging a variety of green measures to reduce their environmental impact and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Prioritizing green initiatives to reduce ecological footprint

Taj Holiday Village stands as a beacon of sustainable hospitality in an era where environmental responsibility has become paramount. As one of the leading properties under the Taj Hotels group, the resort has embraced sustainability as a core strategy, intertwining its commitment to providing unparalleled guest experiences with protecting the pristine beauty of its surroundings and conserving local ecosystems. This synergy between luxury and environmental consciousness has not only earned the resort accolades but also set a precedent for sustainable tourism in Goa.

Recognising that sustainability is not just an ethical choice but also a strategic imperative for long term success in the hospitality industry, Taj Holiday Village have integrated sustainability into its operations and revenue generation. The resort not only contributes to environmental conversation but also enhances guest experiences, reduces costs and attracts environmentally conscious travellers.

Here is how sustainability is ingrained into the core of the resort's operations and

revenue strategies and demonstrating that environmental responsibility and profitability can go hand in hand.



Dr Anmol Ahluwalia
Cluster GM, Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa

Green initiatives

The resort implements a range of green initiatives to minimize its ecological footprint. This includes energy-efficient practices such as using light-emitting diode (LED) lighting, smart climate control systems and investing in renewable energy sources such as solar power and wind power. By reducing energy consumption, the resort not only lowers its environmental impact but also cuts down operational costs, positively impacting the bottomline.

Water conservation

Recognising the significance of water conservation in today's water stressed world, Taj Holiday Village has adopted various water-saving measures. These include installing low-flow fixtures, implementing rainwater harvesting and treating and recycling wastewater for gardening and landscaping the grounds there by not only

“The resort not only contributes to environmental conversation but also enhances guest experiences, reduces costs

preserving the local freshwater resources but only resulting in reduced water expenses for the resort.

Waste management

The resort has a comprehensive waste management system that emphasizes waste segregation, recycling and composting. While the compost is used to keep landscaping green, it is also shared with our neighbouring locality houses, nursing homes and hospitals who engage in landscaping. □

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Implementing initiatives to minimise waste and conserve resources

Travel with Purpose (TWP) is Hilton's environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategy to drive responsible travel and tourism globally. It is integrated throughout our global business, including our operations, our supply chain and our engagement with our communities. At the heart of this strategy are our people, who bring our commitment to sustainable travel to life. We at Hilton do so by focussing on three pillars that our business success depends on: preserving the environment, creating opportunities and strengthening communities.

Hilton Garden Inn Saket is also part of the TWP. While we have already converted all lights to light-emitting diode (LED) lighting and incorporated water aerators in all public restrooms, we have also introduced cage-free eggs for our select guests during breakfast and other meals. The cooked food waste is also monitored very closely and would like to reduce the same by 50 per cent from last year.

On the social pillar, the hotel already has a minimum 20 per cent female workforce in the team and we are working closely with local NGOs to promote employment opportunities for the less privileged, including the specially-abled.

The team is also keen on adopting a local school for the street children.

Getting rid of single-use plastic as per the government directive has been adhered to, and are now working on hosting carbon neutral meetings with our regular clientele. Hilton Garden Inn Saket team



Joyjit Chakravorty
General Manager,
Hilton Garden Inn Saket

would offset the events carbon emissions and invest in partners for carbon reduction projects.

We have always believed that what gets measured gets done; hence, we are holding ourselves accountable for the commitment we have made to our people and planet. We use the industry-leading LightStay ESG Management System to track and report each hotel's progress, which gives us the visibility, data and awareness to improve over time.

As part of our commitment to responsible resource management, we have implemented several initiatives to minimize waste and conserve resources. Among the most appreciated ones is repurposing discarded linen to create shoe bags for our guests. These bags not only provide a convenient way for guests to store their shoes while travelling, but they also help reduce textile waste, making us contribute more to our goals for the TWP. For the remaining ones, we are committed to working with another local NGO initiative, Linen for Life, to contribute to the greater good.

We have installed sensor-controlled lights to conserve electricity, contributing to our efforts in sustainable hospitality

In addition, our hotel has been operational for more than a decade, our Chief Engineer has replaced traditional taps with sensor-controlled ones to ensure that water is being used efficiently. We have also installed sensor-controlled lights in the back areas to conserve electricity, contributing to our efforts in sustainable hospitality. The team at Hilton Garden Inn Saket has also been encouraged to work with more local start-ups to contribute to an eco-friendlier future. □



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walking the sustainability path



When it comes to sustainability, do hotel chains walk the talk? Hospitality leaders share how they are treading the green path.

 **Lipla Negi**

As one of the world's leading hotel companies, at IHG, we embrace our responsibility and the opportunity to help shape the future of respon-

sible travel. Hospitality for Good and to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We call it a journey as we may not have all the answers yet, but we see this as an important framework to bring together all who stay, work and partner with us to shape the future of responsible travel.



Sudeep Jain
MD, South West Asia,
IHG Hotels & Resorts

Over the next decade, we are focussed on working with our hotels to reduce carbon emissions in line with climate science

sible travel. That is why in 2021, we launched Journey to Tomorrow, a 10-year action plan of clear commitments to drive change for our people, communities, and planet, aligned to our purpose of True

Over the next decade, we are focussed on working with our hotels to reduce carbon emissions in line with climate science; eliminating single-use items or finding recyclable alternatives; reducing food waste; collaborating with local stakeholders to tackle water sustainability issues in areas of greatest risk. Additionally, we are implementing initiatives such as introducing bulk amenities and AI based technology to reduce food waste.



In the last financial year, our spend on sustainability related initiatives was approximately ₹35 crore. The technology updates in the sustainability field and regulatory requirements are dynamic. Hence while we have a budget in place, spends will not be limited to budgets but in line with our promise to lead positive change with IHCL's guiding force of Tajness.

Reducing our carbon footprint and increasing green initiatives are key focus areas. An aspect of our commitment to creating a better natural environment is helping India transition to net zero emissions. IHCL made an early transition to renewable power across several of its properties. Green power is sourced on the basis of long-term power purchase agreements to ensure stability of prices and supplies, with the generation sources being a mix of wind and solar. Currently, 35 per cent of the total power consumed by IHCL is from renewables. We have also tied up with Tata Power for the installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across our hotels in India. IHCL has installed over 310 EV charging points at more than 110 of its properties.



Gaurav Pokhriyal
Executive VP,
Human Resources, IHCL

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) is always a huge energy guzzler and a cost centre, for the hospitality business. Our partnership with the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group is helping us introduce efficient, climate-smart, cost-effective cooling solutions for the first time in India's hospitality sector. The impact will be game changing.

All biodegradable waste is composted, and 74 hotels have on-site composters. Two significant initiatives for doing away

with single-use plastic disposables are 100 per cent elimination of plastic straws and planned replacement of PET bottles with glass bottles for serving drinking water in guest rooms and banquets. 20 water bottling plants have been set up across our properties to scale up the transition to a plastic-free service process. Across our properties, plastic shower caps have made way for compostable shower caps and plastic ear buds have been replaced with paper ear buds. Our Taj branded hotels are also replacing other plastic disposables such as toothbrush, razor and comb with a bamboo comb, wooden toothbrush

IHCL has installed over 310 EV charging points at more than 110 of its properties and this number is going to increase

and wooden razor. This introduction will potentially reduce 25 tonnes of plastic on an annual basis. As an industry leader, IHCL has always been deeply engaged in skilling and talent development.

Our sustainability goals at Radisson Hotel Group align with Think People, Planet and Community principles. We have a strong commitment to becoming a Net Zero company and have set targets based on scientific validation through the science-based targets initiative. Our aim is to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

Our specific budgetary figures vary based on individual projects and regional considerations, and we consistently allocate resources to various sustainability solutions and programmes. We constantly assess and adjust our budgetary allocations on regular time periods to meet the evolving sustainability challenges and opportunities in India as well as worldwide.

To reach our sustainability goals, we are focussing on two main levers. Firstly, we are working on increasing the energy efficiency of our hotel buildings. This involves implementing measures to reduce energy consumption and adopting innovative technologies for sustainable operations. Secondly, we are transitioning to renewable energy sources to minimise our carbon footprint.



Inge Huijbrechts
Global SVP, Sustainability,
Security & Corporate Comm.,
Radisson Hotel Group

As part of our commitment to responsible travel and meetings, we offer sustainable value propositions to our guests. This includes providing 100 per cent carbon-neutral meetings and conferences. Additionally, we are expanding the availability of electric vehicle (EV) charging networks in India (in partnership with Sunfuel) and in Europe.

RHG's sustainability efforts extend beyond our company's boundaries. We actively engage in industry-leading initia-

tives such as the hotel sustainability basics and the pathway to net positive hospitality. These initiatives aim to drive sustainability practices and encourage positive environmental impacts throughout the hospitality sector.

We aim to reduce our carbon footprint by half by 2030 and by 30 per cent over the following five years by pursuing a renewable energy sourcing strategy that will increase the amount of renewable electricity we purchase. As part of our journey to carbon neutrality, we are

We aim to reduce our carbon footprint by half by 2030 & by 30% over following 5 years by pursuing renewable energy sourcing strategy

constantly increasing the number of green hotels, including the Radisson Resort & Spa Lonavala and Radisson Blu Hotel in Bengaluru which runs on 100 per cent renewable energy and is 100 per cent energy self-sufficient.

It is a matter of pride that ITC Hotels and WelcomHotels have achieved, much ahead of time, the 2030 carbon emission targets envisaged in the COP21 Paris agreement. Guided by the ethos of Responsible Luxury, we endeavour to create a harmonious balance between luxury and sustainability by prioritizing environmental stewardship.

We are constantly evaluating new technologies and initiatives. We are already way ahead on the sustainability curve and have achieved international milestones. We are working on our plan to extend the LEED Zero Water Certification and LEED Zero Carbon Certification to other hotels, which will be one-of-a-kind achievement in the entire world.

ITC Hotels is among the first hotel chains to mitigate single-use plastic at close to 150 touch points, eliminating the use of plastic by approximately 2.5 lakh kg/year. Our commitment to achieve 100 per cent waste recycling puts effective measures in practice such as recycling or reusing more than 99 per cent of waste generated through various means such as



H C Vinayaka
VP, Technical, EHS and
Sustainability, ITC Hotels

organic waste converters, bio-methanation plants and so on.

Over the past ten years, we have made significant progress in sustainability by ensuring our hotels fulfill their entire electrical energy needs through renewable resources such as off-site wind turbine generators and on-site paraboloid solar concentrators, among others accounting significantly for our total electricity consumption. We believe that the sustainability space is evolving day by day and we are continuously evaluating and implement-

ing latest technologies/processes for providing a better and sustainable workplace. Interventions such as advanced filtration for indoor air quality, atmospheric water generator and many others implemented at ITC Hotels are futuristic and ahead of time.

Employee participation and awareness is the key for driving these initiatives. In many instances, employees give us feedback on our initiatives and provide us ideas for improvising our work. Various environment and sustainability events such as World Environment

We have made significant progress in sustainability by ensuring our hotels fulfill their entire electrical energy needs through renewable resources

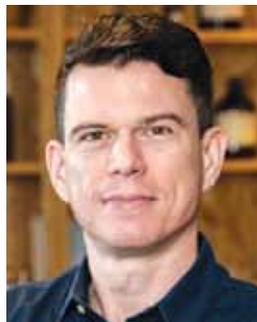
Day, World Water Day and National Energy Conservation Day, among others are celebrated with guests and employees, making them part of our sustainability journey.

Over the past 16 years, Six Senses has been bottling its own drinking water. By establishing on-site filtration and bottling facilities, each resort eliminates the transportation impacts and use of plastic water bottles. Six Senses drinking water has proved a taste-test winner with guests also.

Each Six Senses resort and hotel features an Earth Lab, which promotes sustainable living in inspirational and innovative ways. The space is used to host workshops that empower guests and community members to learn about and connect more closely with the natural world.

To be self-sustaining, we are moving towards zero waste to landfill, using existing resources and reducing our carbon. In 2022, we produced compost, organic vegetables, eggs, essential oils, renewable energy, honey and cleaning solutions due to the efforts of individual properties and avoided 1,760,787 plastic bottles by refilling our own drinking water.

In 2022, our hosts dedicated around 4,900 hours to volunteering in their local communities, over 9,500 community mem-



Jeffery Smith
Vice President,
Sustainability, Six Senses
Hotels Resorts Spas

bers joined our events to help the environment and support communities and almost 20,000 guests supported positive impact events. We made life better as 120,467 people gained access to clean drinking water and sanitation, provided access to education and skill training to 8,528 students and created 113 jobs in local communities.

We also protected endangered species as endangered sea turtles hatched on our beaches, including Hawksbill and green turtles. We protected and conserved

seven endangered and four more critically endangered species and conserved our habitats by planting trees, protected and restored habitat, and our hosts, community members and guests helped collect 33,887 kilogrammes of trash.

We recently announced our sustainability results for 2022, and we are proud of our achievements. The results include

To be self-sustaining, we are moving towards zero waste to landfill, using existing resources and reducing our carbon

figures based on energy and water consumption, habitat and endangered species protection and restoration, and vital community and cultural heritage projects. We are also leading the hospitality industry by using dedicated funds at each property to provide investment in projects that benefit local communities and environments while guest bookings contribute directly to each resort's sustainability fund. □



Hotels' win-win strategy

Sustainability initiatives are seen by hoteliers as long-term investments that benefit both environment & their sector.

Vaishali Momaya, General Manager, Operations, Gujarat, Ferns Hotels and Resorts, said that prioritizing green housekeeping is the need of the hour. She explained, “Efficient resource management, training of the staff, supplier collaborations and continuous improvement

new partners that fit into their sustainable goals,” she added.

Not to forget that choosing sustainable alternatives over conventional products would result in hoteliers spending more money. Momaya mentioned, “It will indeed accelerate the cost for consumers or visitors, but we are trying to adapt to it.”

Initially, installing solar power requires a large budget and is an expensive investment. Though there will be savings once installed.



Vaishali Momaya
General Manager,
Operations, Gujarat,
Ferns Hotels and Resorts

Hotels may make an attempt to go sustainable, but that does not mean the suppliers would want to follow the practice

While sustainability initiatives may appear challenging, hoteliers view them as long-term investments that benefit both the environment and the business. By adopting sustainable practices, hoteliers are streamlining operations, reducing waste and achieving significant cost savings over time.

are some strategies that are followed at our property. It enables us to optimize sustainable practices and manage costs and time commitments.”

“Hotels may make an attempt to go sustainable, but that does not mean the suppliers would want to follow the practice. Hotels would need to reach out to

 **Suhani Sood**

52 per cent of customers, according to Deloitte Research, still require sustainable lifestyles, since alternatives are so expensive. For hotels to maximise sustainable practises and control costs, green housekeeping, effective resource management, employee development, supplier partnerships and continual improvement should be given top priority.



Atul Upadhyay
Executive Vice President,
Pride Hotels

Microfiber cleaning

“While some hotels use sensory detection systems, other hoteliers employ microfiber cleaning technology and single-disc machines,” said Shilpa Dubey, Head, Operations, Espire Hospitality Group.

Prioritizing innovative green practices on the property, she stated, “We employ microfiber cleaning technology, utilizing microfiber cloths and mop pads that efficiently capture dirt and dust. This reduces the reliance on chemical cleaners and minimizes water consumption. The use

of single disc machines for floor cleaning, contributes significantly to the maintenance and longevity of the floors.”

Sustainable lighting

Talking about the lighting in the Pride Hotels, **Atul Upadhyay**, Executive Vice President, Pride Hotels, informed that the lighting in the Pride Hotels is powered by LED lights, which significantly reduces

Lighting in Pride Hotels is powered by LED lights, which drastically reduces energy consumption

energy consumption. To further reduce their carbon footprint, Pride Hotels use green power from windmills and solar farms.

Subhashish Gupta, Senior General Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel GRT Chennai, sharing about some green housekeeping practices, said, “Our hotel has a smart energy management

system, including the usage of energy-efficient appliances and lighting solutions.”

Plastic usage

Sanjay Sood, COO, Leisure Hotel Group, mentioned some initiatives that have been taken by the hotel. He categorically mentioned discouraging the use of plastic and using glass bottles filled with RO-treated water. Talking about the benefits of this initiative, he said, “It diminishes greenhouse gas emissions and mitigates climate change. Additionally, it curtails waste production, alleviating the burden of recycling plastic in landfills.” □





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G20 summits create a conducive environment for networking, infrastructure development and knowledge sharing, emphasises **Nisshant Kumar**.

 **Lipla Negi**

The hotel sector is practically buzzing with enthusiasm for the G20 summits and is enjoying high occupancy. However, for corporates and wedding planners, the rising cost of event planning has become a crucial concern. While hotels are focussing on recovery after two years of zero revenue, the MICE agents feel forced to look for alternatives as hotel rates skyrocket. Talking about sustaining business, **Nisshant Kumar**, Director, Sales & Marketing, Hyatt Regency Lucknow, said, “In the short-term, pent-up demand, increased domestic travel, and limited international options might contribute to high occupancy and rates. However, as and when the situation stabilises and travel normalises, rates are gradually normalising as well. The duration of high rates will be influenced by factors such as government policies, global economic conditions and any potential resurgence of travel restrictions.”

Corporates expect flexibility

While the corporate movement has returned to normal, the business now demands greater flexibility and attention towards the safety and wellbeing of the attendee. “The COVID also influenced corporate requirements, with an increased focus on health and safety measures for events, hybrid event options to accommodate remote work, and a stronger emphasis on technology for virtual collaboration

and engagement,” pointed out Kumar. He further added that some companies experienced budget cuts or reallocations due to economic uncertainties, while oth-



Nisshant Kumar
Director, Sales & Marketing,
Hyatt Regency Lucknow

ers increased budgets to invest in recovery and growth. “The average size of an event nowadays is between 200-500 depending upon the size of venue,” he informed. He further shared that large-scale events are

on a ramp-up phase in certain areas, which signifies a positive development in terms of recovery and normalcy.

Ancillary avenues

Talking about thinking diversely to chalk-out potential revenue generation strategies, Kumar shared, “Hyatt Regency Lucknow

“The hospitality industry is expected to experience fluctuations until a more stable travel environment is established”

is leveraging the benefits of its World of Hyatt Programme, successfully attracting a growing number of loyal guests to their hotel in the city. In addition, we are blessed to have the maximum number of spa treatment rooms, which is positively impacting our revenue generation potential.”

Top trends in hospitality

Sustainability & green initiatives: Environmental consciousness is gaining momentum in the MICE sector. Event organizers and venues are adopting sustainable practices to reduce their carbon footprint such as using eco-friendly materials, reducing waste and promoting responsible event management.

Technology integration: Event organizers are leveraging event management

software, mobile apps, virtual event platforms and augmented reality to enhance attendee experiences, streamline operations and deliver engaging content.

Flexible booking & cancellation policies: Given the uncertainties caused by COVID, event organizers and venues are adopting more flexible booking and cancellation policies to accommodate changing attendee needs and travel restrictions.

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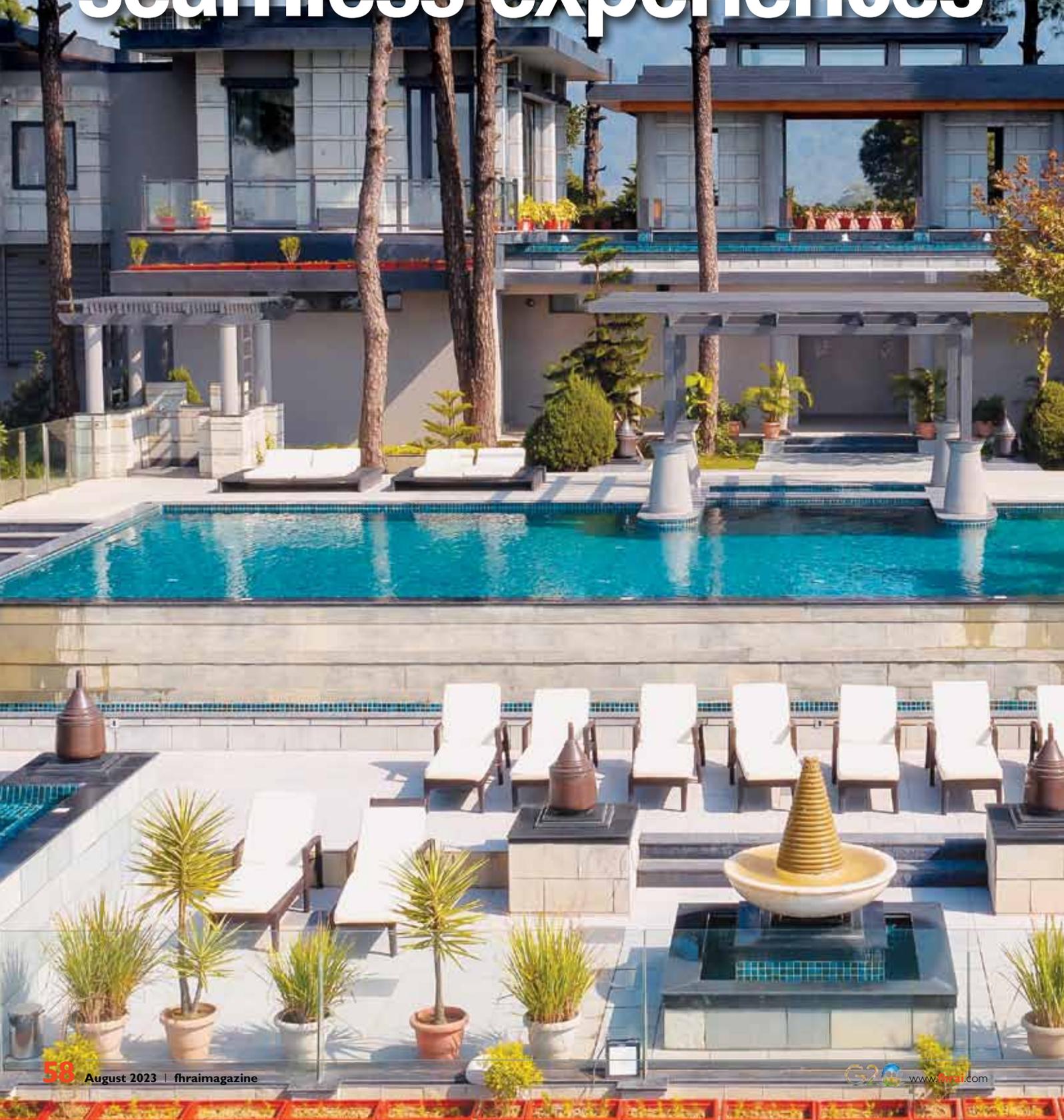


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Luxury hotels embrace tech for seamless experiences



In the digital era, the hotel industry is constantly leveraging technology to provide personalized experiences, improve efficiency and reduce environmental impact in order to be competitive.

 **Ananya Kukreja**

As in all facets of life: change is constant; and so, must the hotel industry adapt to the ever-evolving environment—be it from the point of view of guest comfort, guest expectations, or ensuring a seamless process of operations in this fast-paced world. There is no denying that technology has overtaken our lives in all spheres and the speed of change is so fast that if one does not adapt quickly enough, one would soon run the risk of extinction.



Alpana Singh
Cluster Director, S&M,
UP, Taj Mahal Lucknow

As a luxury brand, a hotel must deliver the best when it comes to experiences (products and services), and today, technology has so deeply embedded itself into the notion of luxury that the two are often indistinguishable; not that we are complaining! The connectivity, convenience and opportunity it provides to a property and brand are just some of the ways we can inculcate its benefits.

Luxury redefined?

Technology has seeped into all areas of a hotel—presence on social media, advertising on digital platforms, the online booking process through cell phones, seamless and instant reverts for reservations, guest feedback, and more. Within a property, its adaptation provides convenience to

guests and staff with little things such as digital check-ins and check-outs, digital order taking in restaurants, robot helpers, and so much more!

“Within the luxury segment, today one has to cater to different ages and demographics,” said **Alpana Singh**, Cluster Director, Sales and Marketing, Uttar Pradesh, Taj Mahal Lucknow. The usage and adaptation of technology should benefit all. However, it is important to keep in mind that with time, the clientele will move beyond Gen Z to Gen Alpha and Gen Beta—generations who are born in a tech-savvy world.

“Within the luxury segment, today one has to cater to different ages and demographics”

“In the digital age, luxury begins with crafting personalised experiences specifically customised to cater to guests’ unique preferences and requirements,” said **Abinash Manghani**, CEO, WelcomHeritage. To achieve this, we use our data-driven insights to better understand and anticipate our guests’ needs, enabling us to offer bespoke experiences tailored to their desires.

To remain relevant and competitive in the digital age, luxury hotels must strike a delicate balance between technology and personalised service. While advanced technology enhances convenience and efficiency, the human touch and personalised experiences remain crucial to delivering unforgettable, luxurious hospitality. A robot could certainly never cater to the requirements of a grand wedding and its grand guests.



Guest surveys, serve well

The biggest way to grow any business, let alone our customer-centric hospitality industry, is by listening to and understanding the expectations of the individuals they are catering to. Guest feedback has always gone a long way towards making a brand—that is, of course, if that feedback is acted upon or embraced.

“In my entire experience as a hotelier, I have learned that the best way to understand our processes is through surveys and guest feedback,” said **Manish Goyal**, Founder, Stotrak Hospitality

The shift in attitudes of the modern traveller towards respecting all things local, the rising awareness of the impact of their actions on the environment, and the rapid advancements in technology and a growing reliance on digital solutions have significantly transformed the expectations and preferences of luxury travellers. Hotels are recognising this how? —through guest

proactive now than ever in implementing sustainable practices towards the common goal of all living beings: longevity and prosperity. The modern customer, with their ambition to be educated, has allowed us to deeper connect with them over their mutually understood responsibility towards the environment. Actions towards reduction in carbon printing, use of renewable energy, sourcing local mate-



Abinash Manghani
CEO,
WelcomHeritage



Nishant Taneja
Head, Marketing,
Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort

Luxury begins with crafting personalised experiences specifically customised to cater to guests' unique preferences

feedback—research and development in understanding modern customers' needs and expectations.

With new information comes effective and efficient implementation. While travelling is at the top of the list of things to do today, there is a clear and strong shift towards travelling consciously. And rightly so! Many brands are now more

Luxury in hotels has indeed evolved, allowing guests to take more immersive approach in decision-making

rial and talent, and so much more that can be done to reduce the negative impact on the environment are the way every organisation must see the future.

In a recent news article, it was revealed that Apple has acquired a new patent related to the hotel business. Hinting at the company's potential venture into the hospitality industry with a dedicated hotel application for the iPhone and Apple Watch, it outlines a range of features that could revolutionise the hotel experience for travellers. This is just one of the examples of how technology is going to keep embedding itself into our industry. Personalised requirements such as room functionality, including lighting, temperature, audio and video settings, as well as bathtub controls, may be handled digitally. While all this sounds heavy on investment, most of it depends on the location, clientele, USP, and experience the establishment is catering to and promoting. Hotels constantly come up with exciting offers, packages and experiences and simply market them in their online presence. □





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Modern era of hospitality branding

A brand is crucial component in company's success, & as times change, it is essential for hotel chains to update their brand to appeal to new millennials.



Charmaine Fernz

A brand is a powerful instrument that forms the basis of every organization. It should be obvious that the most important component in determining a company's success is excellent branding. Warren Buffett said it so beautifully: "It takes 20 years to build a reputation, and only five minutes to destroy one." If you think about it, your behaviour will change. There are various industries affected by this, but the hotel sector is particularly affected.

Over the years, a variety of brands have succeeded in establishing themselves in India. But as times change, it is critical for hospitality businesses to update their



Manish Goyal
Founder,
Stotrak Hospitality

brand to appeal to the new millennials; otherwise, brand weariness will result. In the subsequent narrative, industry experts in hospitality express their opinions on the significance of minimizing brand wear-

iness. **Manish Goyal**, Founder, Stotrak Hospitality, simply states that evolution is the largest benefit the hotel business has. "Guest preferences and technological advancements are constantly changing;

“Guest preferences and technological advancements are constantly changing; therefore our business must keep up

therefore our business must keep up. In turn, this gives them an updated brand presence. The firms that react to such market changes keep providing something new to guests,” Goyal added. **Manoj**



Manoj Agarwal
Head, Asset Management,
InterGlobe Hotels

Agarwal, Head, Asset Management, InterGlobe Hotels has a unique viewpoint, contending that the best way to analyze brand fatigue is from the standpoint of the consumer. A significant amount of exposure to the target demographic through various media channels is necessary to mitigate brand fatigue. In the Indian hospitality sector, it is typically seen that brands don't use above-the-line (ATL) or digital campaigns to maintain a significant share of voice (SoV), whereas online travel agencies (OTAs) such as MakeMyTrip and Agoda have been able to do so across a range of media. "We, at InterGlobe Hotels, have continuously worked towards meeting the expectations of discerning customers by upgrading our

It is often seen that different hotel chains deal with brand fatigue by engaging with customers at various levels

service standards as well as our products through design interventions, he continued. "It is often seen that different hotel chains deal with brand fatigue by engaging with customers at various levels," added Agarwal.

According to **Antony Thomas**, Managing Director, Luxeclamp Eco Resort, who is speaking from the perspective of a fairly new brand, hotels must concentrate on brand distinctiveness and improving guest experiences in the competitive hotel market. To remain relevant and satisfy the changing needs of the target audience, this entails consistently updating and refreshing their offerings. He continues by saying that a number of tactics should be used, including continuous investment in cutting-edge amenities and

services, offering distinctive experiences, creating moments for customers that promote loyalty, and most significantly today, giving priority to personalisation.



Abhinav Sood
Director,
Communications Inc

"Actively seeking guest feedback through surveys or social media platforms allows hotels to understand areas where they may be experiencing brand fatigue. By addressing these concerns promptly and transparently, hotels can demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement and regain trust from disengaged customers," asserted Thomas.

Many hospitality companies are always looking for innovative methods to engage their customers

On a similar note, **Vishal Lonkar**, General Manager, Business Development, Renest Hotels & Resorts, states that in the hotel industry, where customer loyalty and satisfaction are critical, hotels employ various strategies such as periodic renovation and refurbishment to keep properties fresh and appealing. This includes improvements to rooms, public areas, amenities and technology infrastructure. In some circumstances, hotels decide to rebrand in order to refresh their image and attract new clients. Changes to the hotel's name, logo, visual identity, or target market positioning may be part of the rebranding process. This technique seeks to generate a sense of uniqueness and distinguish the hotel from its prior brand identity. Hotel innovation and technology integration are critical to staying current. Hotels frequently execute targeted marketing initiatives to re-engage existing customers and attract new ones. The campaigns' purpose is to rekindle interest

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in the hotel. Finally, working with influencers and brand ambassadors to reach a larger audience. By presenting the hotel from different angles, influencer marketing may introduce the hotel to new demographics, stimulate excitement and combat brand fatigue.

A brand apart

Many hospitality companies are always looking for innovative methods to engage their customers. While familiarity was once the gamechanger, local culture, food, historical significance and service in local costume are another trend that has grabbed the attention of many, according to Abhinav Sood, Director, Communications Inc. A brand is still identifiable by the experience it provides in terms of service, philosophy and identity, but it is the experience within these parameters that is important to people today. Sustainability, carbon footprints and promoting yourself as a Green Hotel are all key aspects of branding today. Many hotels modified their products to meet current demand during COVID such as becoming isolation wards or catering to long-term stycations or workations. It is critical to realize that management believes it is necessary to develop ways to better monetize and sell by presenting the same offers to diverse audiences.



Goyal believes that creating experiences is a pressing requirement. “Our hotels and homestays are always updating themselves with the most recent local experiences. The essential tactic is to jump on a new trend right away. For example, our most recent offering was a trip to a secret waterfall



Vishal Lonkar

GM, Biz Development,
Renest Hotels & Resorts

via an ancient temple and caverns where Pandavas lived during their exile; this trek was only known to the locals,” Goyal pointed out. Lonkar goes on to say that numerous unique tactics are being used to combat brand fatigue. Unique and memorable guest experiences, themed rooms, immersive activities, curated local experiences, or collaborations with local artists, chefs, or experts are examples of these. Customising amenities, in-room services, dining options and suggestions based on guest preferences and data is vital nowadays. Adopting sustainable practices and activities such as installing energy-efficient systems, eliminating waste, buying locally and organically and promoting responsible tourism. Finally, widespread usage of social media platforms and encouragement of user-generated content. Hotels may create a sense of authenticity and boost brand advocacy by sharing guest stories, reviews and images. Agarwal, who shares a similar viewpoint, believes that in order to enter the market with a fresh approach, the brand proposition must be modified and various communication tactics explored. Most brands are working on purposeful campaigns that will serve their purpose in the long run and will run for a minimum of 12-18 months, establishing maximum recall and as a result, the proper SoV. There is an urgent need to develop campaigns that rely on novel ways of creating bespoke collateral materials. The re-branding initiatives should have a long-term impact that lasts beyond the campaign period, ensuring long-term

recall among the target demographic. “In the new normal, we observed and assessed change in our customer segmentation at InterGlobe hotels, and accordingly, we designed and launched our full-fledged above-the-line brand campaign under the tagline vibe is at Ibis.” Moreover, when millennials and Gen Z bleisure travellers increased, we improved our rooms and public spaces to make them more trendy, young, photo-worthy, instagrammable and glocal,” he added.

Customising amenities, in-room services, dining options and suggestions based on guest preferences and data is vital nowadays

The new age branding

In the new normal, every industry had to look at their product from a different angle. Everything had changed. Today’s brands seek to communicate their experiences rather than just their products. According to Sood, it is all about storytelling, offering a peek of life into the hotel through influencers, YouTubers and Content Creators as a personalized experience. Lonkar, on the other hand, considers new-age branding to be a current approach to brand planning and management that takes into consideration changing customer behaviours, technological improvements and market dynamics. Purpose-driven, authentic and transparent, customer-centric, engaging through digital and social media, experience-focused, flexible and adaptive, collaborative, and using a multi-channel and omnichannel approach are key features of new-age branding.

Agarwal goes on to say that the changing landscape of communication and consumer involvement has resulted in a slew of new trends and opportunities. Hybrid events, the metaverse, gaming, digital audio, brand-owned experiential properties, tactical app communication, new age content—GenZ/AI/Vernacular, and many more are examples. Incorporating these features into brand communication and experiences can assist organizations in staying ahead of the developing digital world by establishing deeper connections and so effectively connecting with their target audiences. □



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Greta Grey and Colosseo

Greta Grey is a serene grey terrazzo that gracefully entwines with delicate black and white mosaics, adorning its surface like celestial stardust. The Colosseo is a pristine white terrazzo with a subtle fusion of grey and beige mosaic patterns. The designs complement each other, forging a symphony of elegance that transforms walls and floors into works of art. The newly launched products have a glossiness reflection of more than 75 per cent and water absorption rate of less than 0.2 per cent. The Terrazzo slabs can be re-polished to maintain its natural beauty.



Duke in Love

An ensemble of opulent cushions and bedding that will immerse any ambience with old-world glamour. The collection celebrates the time when swooning was an art and extravagant balls the norm, with a rich palette, quintessential embroidery, and gold accents that resonate a palatial aura. Endowed with a rich and majestic palette, handcrafted with gilded finishes and ornate detailing, this opulent cushion range becomes the focal point, the central character in the drama of an ambience. The sensual fabric provokes a sensorial experience of stately repose with its soft feel and textured finishes.

Raw Hand

Raw Hand debuts with an eclectic ensemble of mindfully curated tableware that is an ode to the skillful legacy of craftsmanship of India. A narrative that endorses sustainability with modern minimalistic creations that promote conscious living. An ethereal vignette of platters, dinner sets, dessert plates, tea sets and mugs crafted from clay stoneware and adorned with 24K gold that will add a touch of character to any tablescape. Minimal sensibilities with glazes and subtle designs as well as rich narratives that emanate vibrancy through bright colours, every creation is an expression of love for the environment.



Logam

Logam bring forth a medley of six nested tables that are eclectic with contemporary silhouettes and riveting finishes. The design vocabulary of this refreshingly innovative assortment of tables is unique and distinct and ready to blend with every style's aesthetics. Logam which also translates to metal in Malay, has led to these artistic creations which are primarily crafted from mild steel, aluminium and resin. With spectacular finishes and inventive designs, they can be nested together for a unique layered look with one sibling tucked under or set on either side for symmetry with an edge and extra surface.



Coffee tables by Altus Luxury Living

Altus Luxury Living's latest capsule collection of coffee tables is the embodiment of functionality smeared with luxury through elegant materials and fine craftsmanship. The five coffee tables craft a dialogue between quintessential vernacular language and contemporary design with the finesse of Italian marble, panache of brass and couth of teakwood to elevate the living experience. An artistic approach and inventive techniques combine to create these coffee tables that are truly luxurious and timeless. Extravagant yet distinct, this table with a black polyurethane coating top and sleek rectangular legs crafted in horn makes a dramatic statement wherever it resides.

Bed collection by Living Spaces

Living Spaces has recently unveiled a captivating Bed collection. Living Spaces designs focus on comfort, functionality and aesthetics for ultimate relaxation and sleep. More than five decades of expertise in the furniture industry and an impressive portfolio of furnishing over 75 prestigious five-star hotels and residences worldwide, Living Spaces reveals a thrilling and innovative addition to their range. The Collection offers an extensive selection of styles, materials and sizes to cater to diverse tastes and interior design preferences. The bed incorporates the inside frame in plywood with laminate and spruce wood.





Leveraging AI technology to reduce food waste

A new survey titled *The Business of Travel 2023* by Accor reveals that corporate clients are increasingly concerned about carbon emissions.

 **DDP Bureau**

An Accor survey titled *The Business of Travel 2023* has revealed that 54 per cent of corporate clients put carbon emissions as their number one CSR priority. Meanwhile, supplier sustainability performance for 2024 hotel sourcing and selection was ranked at 6.57/10, demonstrating its importance in booking decisions.

“The onus lies both on travellers and hosts, with both parties having to work together for more sustainable travel. More than 70 per cent of Accor hotels have carbon measurement tools in place and delegates were happy to spend more per night for higher environmental credentials. Accor joined the Global Sustainable Tourism Council in 2022 and, just this year, committed to supporting its 5,400 hotels in obtaining an external, sustainable certification. Partnering with Green Key and Green Globe, Accor hotels will be certified across four pillars of sustainability: management, environmental, cultural and socio-economic impacts. These partnerships will help Accor reach its target

of having 100 per cent of its hotels eco-certified by 2026—and reassure business travel bookers who want all hotel brands in a group to follow the same standards. Eco labels certify positive action, enabling clients to see the hotel’s actions and make greener choices,” the survey stated.

The survey further mentioned, “Delegates were in support of spending more per night if this guaranteed higher environmental standards and travellers can expect to experience other eco initiatives first-hand. Go Green Skip the Clean is a step-up from the ‘Are you sure you want your towels washed?’ labels so prevalent in hotel bathrooms. Instead, it offers guests the chance to forgo a daily clean and get rewarded with points on their ALL Accor loyalty account. Trials are in progress in Europe, a region delegates identified as better developed in its eco-thinking than the rest of the world. Accor’s company-wide commitment to finding solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss calls for guests, employees and even competitors to join a collaborative vision of hospitality’s eco-conscious future. The company works with the

Sustainable Hospitality Alliance to deliver impact locally and globally; it signed the Glasgow Declaration launched at the UN Climate Change Conference COP26 and joined the Ocean Framework in 2022. Created by Fondation de la Mer and supported by Amundi, the Ocean Framework assesses how its business activities impact ocean wildlife. Accor is also rethinking its food chain: sourcing more responsibly and reducing food waste using the

Accor hotels are reducing food waste using latest AI technology to capture data & transform menu design

latest AI technology to capture data and transform menu design, service and supply. Internally, Accor’s School for Change teaches management to pursue a set of clearly defined, non-financial sustainability goals. The day-long course forms part of the annual targets for all headquarter employees and closely links sustainable practices to the payment bonuses.” □

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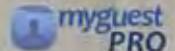
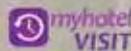
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MOVEMENTS



PRAVEEN SHARMA
Director, Sales & Marketing,
Le Méridien Amritsar

★ Praveen Sharma has joined Le Méridien Amritsar as Director, Sales & Marketing. In his new role, Sharma will not only oversee the business and expand the operations of the Sales and Marketing team but also bring in the right spirit and energy to drive revenue development for the property. He will play a crucial role in accelerating the hotel's branding and communications efforts. Sharma has previously been associated with Marriott chains of hotels such as Marriott Global Sales New Delhi, Courtyard Marriott Bhopal and Pune.



VARUN KANOJIA
Director, Sales,
Fern's Regional Sales Office, Delhi

★ Fern Hotels & Resorts has announced the promotion of Varun Kanojia. He will spearhead the Sales & Marketing department for Fern Hotels & Resorts from the Delhi region, leveraging his extensive experience and expertise to drive core sales, establish valuable relationships, promote brand strategies and contribute to brand marketing initiatives. Prior to joining The Fern Hotels & Resorts, he held more than 10 years of experience in the hospitality sector, having worked with renowned organizations such as ITC and WelcomHeritage.



SRIVATSA ALLAMPALLI
General Manager,
Hyatt Place Jaipur Malviya Nagar

★ Srivatsa Allampalli has been appointed as General Manager at Hyatt Place Jaipur Malviya Nagar. With over two decades of experience in hospitality, Allampalli has worked with renowned brands such as The Oberoi Group, One & Only Resorts, The Ritz Carlton, Taj Hotels and IHG. Allampalli comes from a Rooms Division background. Allampalli has also worked on various projects, providing support for various pre-opening hotels. Srivatsa joined the Hyatt family in 2010, where he worked as an Assistant Front Office Manager at the Grand Hyatt Muscat.



RAVI DHANKHAR
General Manager,
The Ramada By Wyndham,
Jaipur North

★ The Ramada By Wyndham, Jaipur North, has announced the appointment of Ravi Dhankhar as General Manager. In his new role, Dhankhar will be responsible for overseeing the hotel's staff and operations, sales, marketing, client relationship management, corporate liaisoning, P&L, financial targets, cost management and EBIDTA. Previously, Dhankhar served as General Manager for Pride Hotels, Chennai, overseeing the hotel's overall operations, among others. He received his Graduation degree in Hotel Management from Bangalore University.



SOUMYADEEP BANERJEE
Director, F&B,
Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Banjara
Hills Hyderabad

★ Soumyadeep Banerjee has joined Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Banjara Hills Hyderabad as Director, Food & Beverage. With over a decade of experience in the hotel industry, Banerjee brings a wealth of knowledge for delivering exceptional guest experiences. In his new role, Banerjee will lead the Food & Beverage team at Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Banjara Hills Hyderabad, focusing on creating memorable experiences for guests, maximising revenue from all segments, implementing innovative cost control measures, among others.



CHEF ANURAAG NARSINGANI
Director, Culinary,
JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity

★ JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity has appointed Chef Anuraag Narsingani as the Director, Culinary. With close to two decades of experience, having worked with establishments such as The Oberoi Group and Carnival Cruise Liner, Chef Narsingani brings a wealth of knowledge to his new role. Armed with a bachelor's degree from IHM, Mumbai, and a repertoire of professional training, Chef Narsingani continuously refines his culinary artistry, crafting impressive menus inspired by diverse cultural influences from around the world.



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