

HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA fhrainmagazine

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A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE
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TALENT RETENTION

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Dear FHRAI Members,

We have entered into that phase of the year where there are festivities all around the country, which is very significant for the tourism and hospitality sector. The most beautiful and unique thing about India is its cultural diversity, which is also represented through the myriad of festivals celebrated all across the country. The festive season is really important for the hospitality sector as it gives people a reason to go out and celebrate. Most importantly, it is also the beginning of the tourist season in the country, and we all expect a great season this time around.

After an initial hiccup due to the Omicron scare, 2022 has been bringing positive news for the hospitality sector. In the last couple of months, there has been some improvement in inbound tourism due to the government's opening of the country to most tourists. This, along with enhanced domestic tourism activities, an increase in business travel, weddings, MICE and social events, has brought cheer and optimism to the industry. We hope and believe that this trend will continue for the rest of the year as well.

The abundant treasure of unique and diverse tourist products of India, coupled with an increasing number of citizens with higher disposable income, offers an excellent growth prospect for Indian domestic tourism. The weakening rupee has made India a much cheaper tourist destination for foreign tourists, who would be required to spend much less for their travel and stay. The business is expected to grow even further.

Pursuant to the recent announcement by the Government of India to allocate an additional amount of 50,000 crore under ECLGS for the tourism and hospitality sector, FHRAI has requested the Hon'ble Finance Minister to customise the ECLGS to meet the needs of the industry, since the announced measures are inadequate to mitigate the losses incurred by it and also considering the major hardships faced by the sector over the last couple of years. We are of the view that only long-term credit facilities can help the industry withstand challenges arising out of the prolonged impact of the pandemic while the business environment of the sector remains highly volatile and unpredictable.

We are pleased to inform you that on 1 September 2022, the FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM) welcomed its new batch of students, which also recorded the highest number of student enrolments in recent history. The last couple of years have almost put a pause on the number of students enrolling in hospitality education, but it is heartening to see that FHRAI-IHM is taking the lead to showcase the resilience of academic institutes offering hospitality education in the country.

As we enter into a new tourist season, let us equip ourselves to welcome the upcoming months filled with happiness, prosperity, and an abundance of business for the hospitality sector.

With kind regards,
Jaison Chacko
Secretary General, FHRAI



Jaison Chacko
Secretary General
FHRAI



IN LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS, THERE HAS BEEN IMPROVEMENT IN INBOUND TOURISM, BUSINESS TRAVEL, WEDDINGS, & MICE, WHICH HAS BROUGHT CHEER TO INDUSTRY. WE HOPE THIS TREND WILL CONTINUE

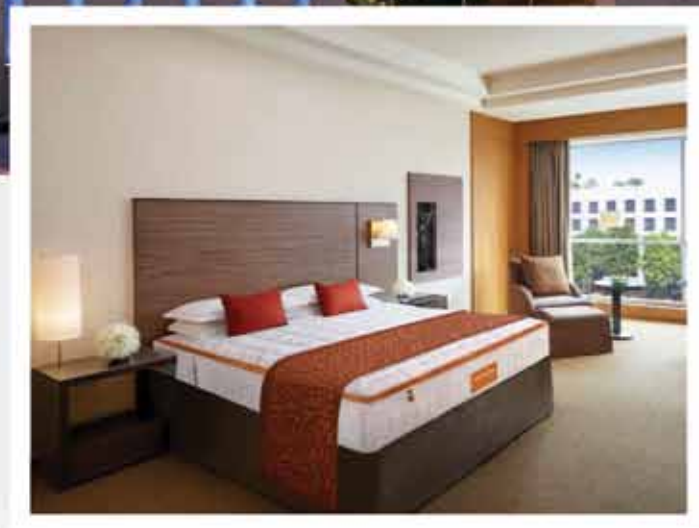


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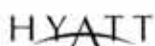


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Taj Hotels & Convention Centre Agra



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CASHING IN ON LONG WEEKENDS 22

Long weekend phenomenon is enabling the market to skyrocket. Hoteliers discuss how most hotels are sold out on long weekend days.



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SUSTAINABILITY FACTOR 30

Concept of being sustainable is new mantra gaining ground. Sustainability is not just a mere effort but goes a long way with hospitality projects. Let's explore how hotels are being sustainable in their practices and design.



IT IS EXPERIENCE OVER DESTINATION 36

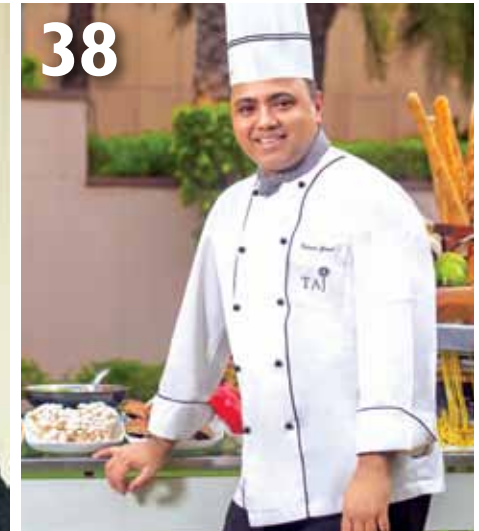
Whether it is metropolis or unexplored small town, curated experiences sit at heart of every destination, believes Samir MC, Managing Director, Fortune Park Hotels Ltd.



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Hospitality sector is now seeking to return to normal, and employees are given better benefits and care. Would this imply hardship had bright side?



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FHRAI

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‘Increase ECLGS loan term’

FHRAI has urged FM to increase ECLGS loan term. It is also seeking rationalisation of norms for all loans along with easing eligibility criteria.

FHRAI has submitted a representation to the Union Minister of Finance, Nirmala Sitharaman, requesting to increase the ECLGS loan term with rationalised norms for all loans to the hospitality sector. The request comes on the back of the recent announcement by the Ministry of Finance, vide which the ECLGS has been increased by ₹50,000 crore, from ₹4.5 lakh crore to ₹5 lakh crore. In its representations to the MSME Minister and Minister of Tourism, the association has extended special thanks for their efforts in enabling this support for the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The association has welcomed the measure, stating it would immensely benefit the MSMEs in the hospitality sector. However, considering the major hardships faced by the sector over the last couple of years, the industry feels that the announced measures are inadequate to



mitigate the losses incurred by it. For the hospitality industry to avail the maximum benefit of the ECLGS, FHRAI has requested for the scheme to be customised to meet the needs of the industry.

The tenor of loans granted under ECLGS 3.0 is six years, including a moratorium period of two years, whereas the same under ECLGS 1.0 is four years and under ECLGS 2.0 is five years with a one-year moratorium. The association has pointed out that many hospitality establishments have availed of the loans under ECLGS 1.0 and 2.0, and the repayment period for these loans has already started in most cases.

The business environment of the sector being highly volatile and unpredictable, FHRAI has opined that only long-term credit facilities can help the industry withstand challenges arising out of the prolonged impact of the pandemic.

Menu labelling for buffets

FHRAI has written to Arun Singhal, IAS, CEO of FSSAI, expressing its concerns about menu labelling and information display in FSEs.

Hotels and restaurants have expressed their concern to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) about the regulations' implementation and compliance, particularly regarding the labelling of menu and food information

at buffets. They have reasoned that there is no set menu for the buffet because the food, dishes, and cuisine vary with each buffet offering. In such cases, displaying the calorific and nutritional value of all the dishes and food items will be a monumental undertaking as

each dish varies in portion size. Another issue with these buffets is that there is no predetermined serving size for the dishes, as the guest chooses which dish and in what quantity, making it difficult to pre-set a dish portion to assess and display calorific and nutritional value per serving. When it comes to compliance with this requirement for buffet meals, FHRAI believes that a more rational and transparent approach is required. As a result, the association has asked the FSSAI to consider the request and exempt the buffet meals from the menu labelling compliance requirements.

Furthermore, the association urged FSSAI to issue directives to food safety officers across the country not to remove food samples from hotel and restaurant buffets until FSSAI establishes some rational menu labelling regulations for the hospitality industry.





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The copyright battle

FHRAI has presented its recommendations to DPIIT regarding issues with the Copyright Act that hotels and restaurants in India have been facing.

FHRAI has given its recommendations to Shrutti Singh, Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in response to issues with the Copyright Act that hotels and restaurants in India are facing. The association shed light on the harassment of hotels and restaurants in India by collection agents designated by copyright owners under Section 30 of the Act and the so-called holders of assignment deeds under Section 18 of the Act. This harassment includes multiple parties claiming royalty for the use of the same music/song, filing FIRs, filing civil suits, entering and disrupting functions held in hotel/restaurant premises, claiming payments for exempted events, and generally causing loss of reputation for the member hotels and restaurants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government should ensure that no harm is done to the rights of any entity that obtains the licence, such as by charging an unreasonable licence charge or charging a licence fee from numerous societies for the same work.
- According to Section 33(3) of the Act, there should be a single copyright society for a certain class of work,

which could be a government-controlled body with a transparent and clear revenue distribution mechanism. The government would have direct control over the centralised structure of the registered copyright society while protecting the rights of the relevant parties. Furthermore, acceptable licence fees should be set by either the society or the Copyright Board, as directed by the government.

“RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BENEFIT TRUE COPYRIGHT OWNERS & COPYRIGHT USERS. THESE ACTIONS CAN BE TAKEN UNDER EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK”

- A single point of contact should be established for obtaining the licence and any other clearances at a fixed and reasonable cost. The aforementioned single centralised society should be the sole body in charge of collecting licence fees, and no one else should be

allowed to collect licence fees for the same category of work, whether under Section 30 of the Act or otherwise. A transparent method for paying money, royalties, and licence fees to copyright owners and the owners of underlying works such as lyrics and music should also be implemented.

- Appropriate clarification may be made that performer's societies, such as ISRA, must collect their royalty share from the producer/owner of recorded music, or from music businesses rather than from hotels and restaurants.
- Furthermore, necessary classificatory amendments are required to make the Copyright (Amendment) Bill, 2012 workable and implementable by creating a clear system for royalty distribution between the societies that receive royalty and the other societies that are entitled to their part.

FHRAI has urged DPIIT to consider the aforementioned ideas favourably because they are consistent with the law's intent, as proven by the objects and reasons. This would benefit both the true copyright owners (as opposed to assignees or societies) and the copyright users. All of these actions can be taken under the existing legal framework, which includes provisions for them.

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HRAWI

Celebration of resilience

HRAWI's 19th convention will offer an opportunity for industry experts to network with fraternity members, vendors, and other industry professionals.

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) will hold its 19th Regional Convention in Nashik from 7 to 9 October 2022. The convention will be one of the largest gatherings of professionals from the hospitality industry in the Western region of India. The event will host key policymakers, government representatives, investors, and industry stalwarts who will share insights and experiences through the series of business sessions planned for both the hotel and restaurant fraternity. The event will offer an excellent opportunity for industry professionals to network with fraternity members, vendors, consultants, and other professionals from the hospitality industry.

"HRAWI will be hosting its 19th Regional Convention after a gap of three years. It will be a great opportunity for professionals related to hospitality to be part of it. HRAWI has chalked out an interactive programme under the theme 'Here to Win', to celebrate the resilience of the hospitality industry through trying times. The event will serve as a platform to catch up with the latest happenings in the industry and, to make it more



Kunal Gujral
Secretary General
HRAWI

“HRAWI HAS CHALKED OUT INTERACTIVE PROGRAMME UNDER ‘HERE TO WIN’, TO CELEBRATE RESILIENCE”

exciting, we have decided to organise it in the Wine Capital of India – Nashik. We urge everyone associated with hospitality to be part of the event and make it a grand success,” says **Kunal Gujral**, Secretary General, HRAWI.

NOC sought for groundwater

Since majority of members were unable to secure NOC for groundwater extraction due to COVID-19, FHRAI has requested an extension.

FHRAI has requested an extension for obtaining a no objection certificate/renewal of NOC for groundwater extraction in a letter to Sunil Kumar, Chairman, Central Ground Water Board, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation.

The submission was in response to the Public Notice No. 02/2022 dated 31 March 2022, which required all groundwater users, including drinking and domestic use for residential apartments,

group housing societies, government water supply agencies in urban areas, bulk water suppliers, industrial, infrastructure, mining projects, and swimming pools, to obtain permission from the CGWA before withdrawing and extracting groundwater. The deadline for obtaining clearance was 30 June 2022.

According to FHRAI, a vast number of hotels and restaurants rely on groundwater supplies for operations and hence engage in groundwater extraction around the country. Though the sector agreed to

meet the department's standards, most of the association members were unable to do so because of the unprecedented harm to the sector caused by COVID-19.

As a result, the FHRAI has requested that the department extend the deadline for obtaining the No Objection Certificate (NOC) for groundwater extraction by at least six months, allowing hospitality establishments to make the necessary arrangements to seek formal approval from the respective state and local authorities.

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The southern tour de force

The Association elects K Syama Raju to another term as prez and continues to support hospitality businesses in region.

For the first time, the Tamil Nadu Tourism Department has introduced Tourism Awards for the best performers in several categories of hotels and restaurants and has invited submissions for the awards. S Sundar, Director-Operations at SIHRA, has been named to the award committee.

RETURN OF EMPTY BOTTLES

On 26 April 2022, the High Court of Madras directed the Tamil Nadu Sales and Marketing Corporation Limited (TASMAC) to buy back empty liquor bottles from consumers in Nilgiris district to prevent the public from discarding empty or broken liquor bottles in public places, particularly in forest areas, or else all liquor shops would be closed to protect wild animals.

Buoyed by the success of the scheme, the Madras HC directed TASMAC to consider implementing the scheme throughout TN and ordered them to develop a plan for implementation and present it to HC by 15 July 2022. The court also directed the Excise Commissioner to issue circulars to license holders of private bars and hotels (which were outside the TASMAC's authority) to return the bottles to TASMAC.

The court rejected TASMAC's claim that it would be impossible to establish the scheme throughout TN. The main argument is that there would not be enough space at the 5,500 liquor stores to keep the collected bottles, which would make it difficult to operate the programme throughout the state. The court then ordered amicus curiae to offer comments and encouraged TASMAC to reconsider its decision, giving them until 26 September 2022, to do so.

SIHRA PREZ MEETS MOT SECRETARY

K Syama Raju met Arvind Singh, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, on 25 August 2022, in Bengaluru, and discussed issues affecting hospitality and tourism in Southern India.

71ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

More than 100 members from Chennai



K Syama Raju
President, SIHRA

“K SYAMA RAJU MET ARVIND SINGH TO DISCUSS ISSUES AFFECTING HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM IN SOUTHERN INDIA”

and other states attended the 71st Annual General Meeting (AGM) of SIHRA, which was conducted in person on August 27, 2022, at Feathers (A Radha Hotel), Chennai. Both in-person and remote electronic voting options were available to members. An overwhelming

majority of people voted in favour of all the resolutions..

K SYAMA RAJU RE-ELECTED AS SIHRA PRESIDENT

Following the AGM, the Executive Committee re-elected K Syama Raju, Managing Director, Hotel Maurya, Bengaluru, and Chairman, Hotel Maruthi Private Limited, Bengaluru. K Syama Raju, who was key in obtaining 'industry status' for classified hotels in Karnataka, is also pursuing tax concessions for unclassified hotels in the state with the government. Under his leadership, SIHRA could obtain orders from southern state governments to consider hotel staff as frontline workers and vaccinate them regardless of age, as well as organise vaccination camps in various cities with local authorities.

EC also elected K Nagaraju, Suresh M Pillai, D Srinivasan, and M Balakrishna Reddy as Vice Presidents; K Murali Rao as Honorary Treasurer; and T Nataraajan as Honorary Secretary for one year.

SIHRA continues its efforts to collect outstanding payments from hotels for providing accommodation and food to doctors, paramedical staff, and other health workers who worked in government institutions' COVID-19 isolation wards.

HRAWI

Committed to food safety

FSSAI's online FoSTaC programme in August witnessed 29 hospitality professionals in attendance.

On 23 August 2022, the HRAWI and the FSSAI conducted an online Food Safety Supervisory Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) session. The virtual session was attended by 29 hospitality professionals from various establishments across the Western region. Vivekanand and Divya Bhaskaran co-led the training, which focused on health and food handling practises for hospitality personnel.

"Prioritising education in food safety and handling SOPs amongst hospitality professionals is an ongoing endeavour. Impeccable kitchen etiquettes are paramount for any respectable establishment, and FSSAI's FoSTaC programme aims to make hospitality establishments achieve the highest standards. HRAWI is thankful to the hospitality establishments for proactively enrolling their personnel in the programme, and we plan to continue organising these



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI



“HRAWI IS THANKFUL TO ESTABLISHMENTS FOR PROACTIVELY ENROLLING THEIR PERSONNEL IN SESSION”

programmes every month,” said **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.

HRAWI has successfully trained and certified 2,321 hospitality professionals all across the western region of India in FoSTaC and FSSAI's Management Training Programme.



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Q2 RevPar garners triple-digit growth

BLR registers highest growth in RevPAR in Q2 at 660.1%, primarily due to low performance in Q2 2021 resulting from second wave of the pandemic.

The Indian hospitality sector witnessed strong growth in Q2 (April–June) 2022, primarily driven by demand for weddings and events as well as a stellar recovery in corporate travel. The country was amidst the second wave of the pandemic in Q2 2021, which had a significant impact on the performance of the hospitality sector. As a result, RevPAR witnessed an exponential growth of 339.3 per cent y-o-y in Q2 2022 over Q2 2021. Further, the sector witnessed a stellar 44.6 per cent growth at a pan-India level in RevPAR compared to Q1 2022, as per JLL's Hotel Momentum India Q2, 2022.

The demand across the sector soared during Q2 2022, primarily driven by weddings and MICE, and business travel. Corporate MICE demand also saw recovery in the form of corporate off-sites, team meetings, and training. Domestic leisure continued to be a key segment during this period, driven by the pent-up demand of travellers who had not experienced a summer vacation for the past two years.

The next two quarters are expected

to remain busy on the back of domestic leisure amidst long weekends and festivals. Business travel will continue to grow and will remain the main demand driver for the sector. While wedding and social function demand will remain a significant driver, MICE demand is expected to

“Q2 2022 MARKS REVIVAL OF INVESTOR INTEREST AND STAKEHOLDER PROFITABILITY”

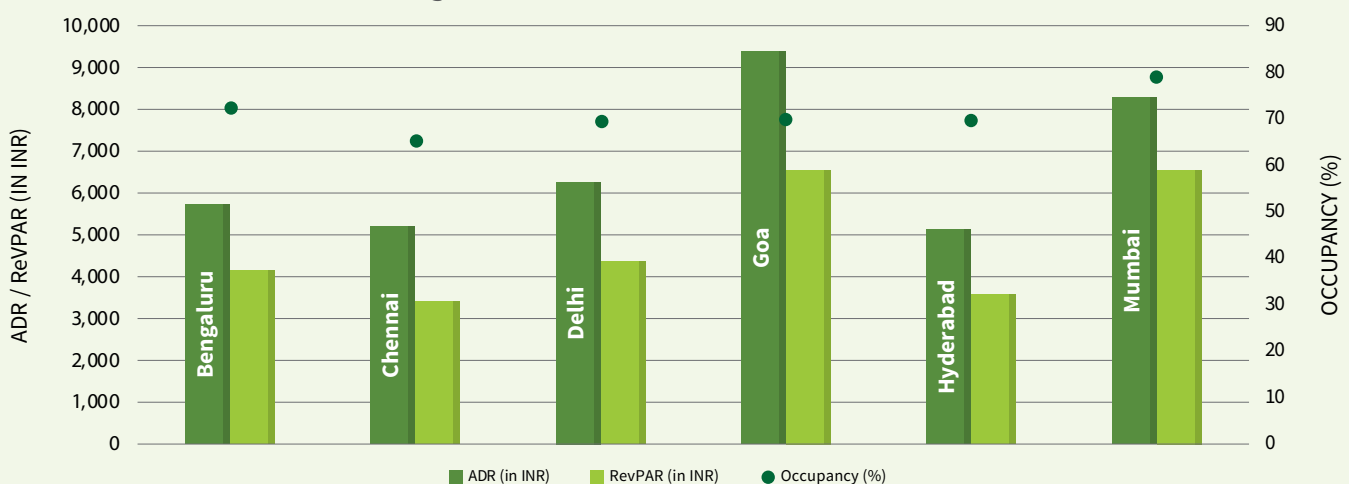
witness an uptick in the coming months, with many corporate meetings and large-format conferences being planned.

The total number of hotel signings in Q2 2022 stood at 47 hotels with 4,010 keys. Hotel signings surged to 90.9 per cent as compared to signings in Q2 2021. Domestic operators dominated signings over international operators with a ratio of 52:48 in terms of inventory volume.

All six key markets witnessed exponential growth in RevPAR levels in Q2 2022 as compared to Q2 2021, due to the low base witnessed last year during the second wave coupled with the stellar performance of the sector this year. Bengaluru emerged as the RevPAR growth leader in Q2 2022, registering a growth of 660.1 per cent over Q2 2021, followed by Goa and Hyderabad with y-o-y growth of 564.5 per cent and 326 per cent, respectively.

“With exponential growth across all performance indicators in business and leisure destinations, Q2 2022 marks the revival of investor interest and stakeholder profitability in the hotel industry. As business travel and corporate off-sites continued to grow, summer holidays offered a further impetus to the overall demand, resulting in a renewed confidence in the sector. We expect this momentum to continue over the next few quarters on the back of long weekends, festivals, weddings, events, and business travel evenly contributing to this growth story,” said **Jaideep Dang**, MD, Hotels and Hospitality Group, South Asia, JLL.

Q2 2022 Performance Trend Chart



Source: STR

WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY 2022

26 September is observed annually as World Environmental Health Day to promote awareness of different issues surrounding environmental health.

Our environment needs care and protection now more than ever. Let us all work together to change the views, attitudes, behaviours, and practices of people that are damaging the environment. Help us promote an eco-friendly lifestyle and remind each and every one of us that we are an integral part of nature. Aditya Rajesh Daga's Greenware has developed biodegradable gloves with the goal of raising awareness about environmental issues that need our attention, including conservation of mother earth. These gloves decompose in less than a year, unlike traditional plastic, which takes thousands of years.

It is necessary for the world to understand that there is an integral connection between the environment, health, and the economy. Hence, it



Aditya Rajesh Daga
Founder, Greenware



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becomes important to invest in healthy and green recovery close to all communities, with support from the environmental health workforce. Let us all pledge together to minimise the factors that contribute to the deterioration of environmental health!

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Regional Heads opine that while the MoT's guidelines on accessible tourism is a great step, the implementation comes at a cost.



A REVOLUTIONARY STEP

To develop a policy based on the best practises and universally recognised standards for accessible tourism in Incredible India, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has issued the draught Accessible Tourism Guidelines for India. The draft guidelines cover creating inclusive models of destination management services as well as developing accessible destination management services across all tourist locations in the nation. Most importantly, the latest draft proposes including more social groups, such as the underprivileged, the elderly, children, pregnant women, and transgender people. The public was asked to provide feedback on the draft.

Many spiritual sites, natural trails, and cultural sites (including art galleries and museums) would be accessible to the differently-abled. These would also provide accessible toilet maps for those with certain disorders. The draft states that 15 per cent of the global population, or nearly a billion people, have a disability and require specific support services, citing data from the World Health Organization (WHO). 2.1 per cent of the population



Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI

“THIS WILL ADDRESS THE KEY BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY, SUCH AS MOBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SERVICES RELATED TO DIFFERENTLY-ABLED PEOPLE”

requires special attention and care both while travelling and at their destination.

The draft also follows the spirit of various government legislation such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and the accessible India campaign. This will address the key barriers to accessibility, such as mobility infrastructure, services related to people with disabilities, and attitudinal barriers. These are revolutionary steps that will make our tourist spots more inclusive. However, these new guidelines also include the government's plan to make all star-category hotels a minimum of 5 per cent of their rooms universally accessible. The smaller establishments having fewer than 20 rooms would be required to have a minimum of two such rooms.

This will have additional cost implications and inconveniences for the hospitality sector. This proposal may not be viable for many small/existent establishments in the current scenario. But brand new establishments must keep these guidelines in mind while designing or architecturally planning them.



BEING MINDFULLY ACCESSIBLE

We appreciate the government's noble intent with the Accessible Tourism Guidelines for India.

It requires at least 5% of rooms to be universally accessible, and all other rooms to have adaptive features to assist guests with special needs. Smaller establishments with fewer than 20 rooms must include at least two accessible room units. To meet the proposed requirements, the hotels would need to undergo major structural changes. To conduct these changes, the hotels would need to obtain permission from many governmental bodies, which would be a time-consuming and costly process for the hotels.

In India, there is always a negligible demand for such rooms across all categories of hotels. Also, such rooms are not preferred by general guests due to the fact that they mostly remain vacant when not booked or occupied by differently-abled people.

The hospitality sector is customer-centric and any enhancement to the limit in the current situation will be an additional burden and challenge for the hotels to comply. As a result, it should



Surendra Jaiswal
President, HRANI

“IN INDIA, THERE IS ALWAYS A NEGLIGIBLE DEMAND FOR SUCH ROOMS ACROSS ALL CATEGORIES OF HOTELS”

continue to be appealing, and if any of the units needs to add one or two more universally accessible rooms to meet demand, they can do so immediately.

‘MUST BE OPTIONAL FOR EXISTING HOTELS’

The proposed provisions in the draught guidelines by MoT require a minimum of 5 per cent of hotel rooms to be universally accessible, while all other rooms must have adaptive features to serve guests with special needs. Smaller establishments with fewer than 20 rooms must have a minimum of two accessible room units.

We laud the MoT for formulating the 'Accessible Tourism Guidelines for India', which aims to improve the accessibility of public spaces for people with disabilities. It is an encouraging initiative to take an inclusive approach to tourism. This is a step in the right direction. The hospitality industry, for one, has never been discriminatory. However, we feel that certain efforts must be made to accommodate the specially abled in order to make places accessible to them as well.

While the MoT's draft proposal is a positive step, the industry has some concerns about the mandatory requirements for the maintenance of dedicated universally accessible rooms. When compared to current requirements,



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI

“IN NEW PROJECT APPROVALS, A DEDICATED NUMBER OF ROOMS COULD BE MADE MANDATORY”

the number of rooms proposed to be maintained for people with disabilities is high and unreasonable. At present,

all star hotels with at least 10 lettable rooms are required to provide at least one accessible room. Meeting the criteria should be optional for existing hotels, but a set number of rooms might be made mandatory in new project approvals.

There is barely any demand for such rooms across all hotel categories. Because these specialised rooms are not desired by general guests, they are typically unoccupied. Hotels must undertake considerable structural adjustments to comply with the criteria. Hotels will have to get clearance from many government departments to conduct structural improvements, which will be a time-consuming and expensive procedure for hospitality establishments.

Apart from this, there would also be ongoing costs associated with maintaining the rooms. This cost would be an added burden to the overall expenses of running a hotel establishment, and this, coming at a time when the hospitality sector has already faced the severe impact of the pandemic, will only add to the financial burden of hospitality establishments.



PAVING A sustainable path

Sustainability is way forward for tourism, and hotel industry can lead in this area. EC explores a few cost-effective ways for hotels to work sustainably.

STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

Sustainable and responsible tourism have long been discussed. Though the government has taken some steps, they are clearly not enough. As a nation, we are utterly unaware of the risks of irresponsible tourism. The price of development should not be at the costs of the environment. People now have a lot more money in their hands due to the country's economic progress, and they are travelling, both within India and abroad.

Anyone who has travelled abroad will attest that Singapore, Tokyo, and any other developed nation have high standards for cleanliness and hygiene. It is the result of the government's and the locals' collective efforts. Alarming levels of pollution have arisen in almost all of India's cities as a result of this total disregard for civic duties. Even while the situation is improving now and more people are becoming aware of environmental preservation, much more is still needed. Fern Hotels & Resorts



Param Kannampilly
Chairman & Managing Director,
Concept Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.,
The Fern Hotels & Resorts

“THE WILLINGNESS TO CLEAN THE ENVIRONMENT AND PRESERVE IT HAS TO COME FROM WITHIN”

has been working hard to protect the environment and promote responsible and sustainable tourism.

We try to use the best energy-saving devices during the hotel's construction. To ensure safe drinking water, we innovate and deploy the best technologies. The best sewage treatment plants are installed. We do it wherever rainwater harvesting is needed. Likewise, all of our hotels feature energy-saving, eco-friendly lights and bathroom amenities. The real difference can be made when the general population realises their duty to protect the environment. People have little respect for sustainability. Bottles, wrappers, and other toxic plastic waste can be found strewn across our beaches, mountains, and other historical sites. The government cannot do much; the desire to clean and protect the environment must come from within. We will not succeed unless and until we all work together.

RE-FOCUS AND REBUILD

The main aim of sustainable tourism is to maximise benefits while reducing negative consequences caused by tourists. Sustainable tourism is defined as commercially viable tourism that does not deplete the resources on which tourism and its future rely. As more countries began to revamp their tourism industries, the cost of natural resources, consumption patterns, pollution, and social and economic systems started to shift. For the industry to survive and recover from the current situation, there is an urgent need for sustainable and responsible management and planning. Although not everything is dependent on tourism, we must refocus and rebuild.

Both the number of tourists and tourist destinations have increased exponentially since COVID-19 cases have gone down. To make the business more sustainable, we need to reduce unnecessary expenses while adding a few low-cost experiential aspects. We can track the amount of electricity and energy used in kWh per square metre of serviced space, which can help a decision-maker in identifying gaps and cutting costs. Switching to cleaner energy sources such as solar, wind, mini hydro, or biogas will cut costs. Although wind and solar may require too much



Vineet Taing
President, Vatika Hotels Pvt. Ltd.

“THERE IS URGENT NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING”

space and cost to install, sophisticated and smaller versions are now available for hotels, making the process easier.

Modern technical advancements may soon lead to the replacement of standard solar panels with transparent ones that can act as regular window panes, aiding

in energy production. Using energy-efficient lighting saves money and reduces your carbon footprint. Fresh water consumption per guest every night may also help to save money and water. Recycling STP water for use in toilets and gardening can be impactful. By slightly reducing the water flow in the rooms, it might be able to reduce water waste.

Hotel waste can be turned into manure for horticulture and gardening. Another key factor to consider is the native vegetation. It is not only affordable; it is also authentic, requires less water, and is self-sustaining. Now that plastic is completely banned, hotels should switch to reusable glass bottles for serving in restaurant areas and rooms. Hotels and resorts can build a small distillation plant on their premises, lowering their long-term water procurement costs. Hotels and resorts should encourage guests to compost their kitchen waste on-site. Many restaurants these days advocate the use of recycled empty sachets. Every hotel and resort must perform a plantation drive once each month. Utilising locally made materials, products, foods, crafts, and art not only helps local communities, economies, and cultures flourish, but it also saves money.



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CASHING IN ON LONG WEEKEND

Long weekend phenomenon is enabling the market to skyrocket. Hoteliers discuss how most hotels are sold out on long weekend days.

IMMERSING IN REJUVENATION

The onset of the pandemic brought to light the hidden gems of domestic tourism, and the concept of staycations saw an exponential increase in popularity. Travellers are now more eager than ever to embark on a journey away from the hustle and bustle of daily city life. There is a strong inclination among travellers to book getaways at luxurious properties at drivable distances, where they can immerse themselves in the utmost rejuvenation through unparalleled hospitality and services.

After being couped up inside homes

for nearly two years, the demand for travel is soaring, and people are incredibly willing to spend on getaways. The feeling of making the most of the present has been reinforced by the various lockdowns, and the tourism and hospitality industries are seeing numbers higher than ever. This puts hotels in an impeccable spot to cater to an influx of travellers and go above and beyond with their innovations and offerings.

Staycations and weekend getaways are majorly planned over long weekends. Based on observations from recent

bookings, there is a rise in Thursday being tucked into the long weekend as well. As people plan their getaways, they are keen on starting the stay on Thursday, leaving ample time for relaxation and unwinding over the weekend.

Another trend being observed on a wide scale is that travellers are straying away from overly hectic itineraries. What they look for now are holistic properties with a sense of luxury and comfort that their homes do not provide. A sanctuary of hospitality, gastronomy, and other unique experiences that transport the guests to another world during the time of their getaway. This is a brilliant business opportunity for hotels to capitalise on by looking inward and developing their offerings and services. Hotels must use this chance to provide experiences across segments such as entertainment, dining, and wellness, among others, that can only be enjoyed at their property.

With guests now wanting to spend a majority of their getaway in the hotel itself, hotels have the opportunity to develop a deep and meaningful bond with the guests that they take home with them. We want people to come as guests and leave as family, creating a sense of longing until their next return. Travellers are now looking to open their hearts up to properties, and hotels need to step up to be receptive and giving of that love.



Rajiv Kapoor
General Manager, Fairmont Jaipur

“AS PEOPLE PLAN THEIR GETAWAYS, THEY ARE KEEN ON STARTING THE STAY ON THURSDAY, LEAVING AMPLE TIME FOR RELAXATION AND UNWINDING OVER THE WEEKEND”

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ALL-ENCOMPASSING EXPERIENCE

Even before the pandemic, bookings for long weekends rose, but not all leisure hotels were sold out. Due to the pandemic's two-year confinement, long weekends are when everyone ventures out. The Taj Hotel & Convention Centre Agra has sold out all long weekends in the new normal. We are seeing high ARR in addition to high occupancies. Even on weekdays, the higher room rates have seen a spillover effect.

Earlier, people would save money for international travel. However, with international travel remaining fraught with obstacles, such as visa delays, people are opting for domestic travel during long weekends. Instead of one long trip, they are taking 4-5 short trips. Hotels like ours are benefiting, and we are no longer feeling the pinch of reduced inbound traffic. While room occupancy on long weekends is around 80 per cent (if not sold out), ARRs have climbed by 40-50 per cent. This increase in room rates is helping hotels boost their revenues.

We offer various drivecation packages. The parent company, IHCL, designs the majority of the marketing strategies, and we, of course, benefit from being part of the Taj brand umbrella. True to the Taj Hotels ethos, we strive to provide an all-encompassing experience. Our hotel has three restaurants: Palato, an all-day diner;



Paritosh Ladhani

Executive Director, Sincere Developers Pvt. Ltd., owning company of Taj Hotel Convention Centre, Agra

“NOT ONLY ARE WE WITNESSING HIGH OCCUPANCIES, BUT HIGH ARRs TOO. THE HIGHER ROOM RATES HAVE SEEN A SPOVER EFFECT ON EVEN WEEKDAYS”

Daawat-e-Nawaab, an Indian specialty restaurant; and Infini, a roof-top bar and cafe. Guests can savour exotic cocktails and lavish European cuisine by the infinity

pool while overlooking the majestic Taj at Infini or rich Awadhi Biryani and Kormas at Daawat-e-Nawaab.

We have the very popular Noor-E-Taj show, and the evenings are beautiful with live music, puppet shows, and a showcasing of local culture. We have two swimming pools and a kids' club with very warm staff to ensure that children are never bored while at the property. Guests also have the option of choosing one of our wellness itineraries that would include morning yoga on the rooftop, spa treatments, and wellness cuisine. Our concierge, of course, is always there to assist with excursions such as a visit to the Taj Mahal.

When it comes to the long weekend market, there is no denying the fact that the trend is driven by bleisure, drivecation, etc. As mentioned above, we have various drivecation packages and, since we are well connected by road from Delhi, Lucknow, and other cities, we get a lot of last-minute bookings for weekends. The demand for off-sites has also witnessed a sharp rise over the long weekends. The long weekend market has been a big boost for hotels. It has helped us drive up ARRs. While occupancy was always good over the weekends, we never had such good RevPAR. We have been sold out for all the long weekends in the last six months.

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MAKING THE MOST OF LONG WEEKENDS

We are observing strong bleisure demand for the holiday weekends. Business travellers are increasingly mixing leisure and business together, which was sparked by the easing of travel restrictions. People want to make the most of these long weekends and are continuously looking for a quick and short respite from their monotonous lives. Driving to close destinations, which are cleaner and quieter, is convenient and does not require much planning in advance compared to other distant locations. Hotels are working on making the experience part of



Sharad K Upadhyay
General Manager, Crowne Plaza
Greater Noida

“DRIVING TO CLOSE DESTINATIONS IS CONVENIENT AND DOES NOT REQUIRE MUCH PLANNING IN ADVANCE COMPARED TO OTHER DISTANT LOCATIONS”

their guest stays memorable, combining culinary, activities, and the stay.

Crowne Plaza Greater Noida is the largest Crowne Plaza in South-West Asia, situated in the heart of the business hub of Greater Noida. Spread over 8.5 acres, the hotel features 398 well-designed, spacious rooms, including apartments and suites. We have one of the largest spreads of F&B offerings in Delhi NCR. Our on-site dining outlets offer a delicious culinary journey with innovative takes on Indian, Asian, and Mediterranean dishes. So, guests have everything under one big roof, be it comfort, culinary delights, or space.

Moreover, if we talk about monetary terms, the ‘long weekend’ is a trend that is fuelling massive growth in the market, which is very promising. This trend has been growing over the past few years, and most hotels are busy with reservations and are even sold out on these long weekend days. We also get many queries and bookings for stays, weddings, and events.

So, overall, the sentiment is upbeat after an immensely difficult period.



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LONG WEEKEND TRAVEL IS HERE TO STAY

Indefinite remote work has changed the travel landscape forever. We have noticed an influx in long weekend travel across the globe. Blurring the lines between business and leisure travel has given impetus to what hoteliers call ‘bleisure’. Further, remote workers are now opting to take longer trips during festive periods owing to location flexibility. Following this trend, we have witnessed a shift in the weekend occupancy at hotels across the country.

In the pre-pandemic period, at city hotels, we noticed a general trend of lower weekend occupancy and the occasional spurt on certain long weekends. Since the number of COVID-19 cases has lessened, however, we have witnessed a surge in weekend travel from numerous nearby feeder markets and, of course, from the



Shaariq Akhtar
General Manager, ITC Kohenuur

city as well. We are confident that this trend will continue with the upcoming festival season. Long weekends are here to stay, now more than ever, and it is, hence,

“WE HAVE WITNESSED A SURGE IN WEEKEND TRAVEL FROM NUMEROUS NEARBY FEEDER MARKETS AND FROM THE CITY AS WELL”

important to have offerings suited to this segment of travellers—typically a family or group of friends—so must include value offers at the hotel’s food and beverage and spa. At ITC Kohenuur, we have a monthly calendar called the ‘Good Times Guide’, which has unique experiences with something for everyone and has been widely appreciated by our guests.



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THE SUSTAINABILITY FACTOR

Concept of being sustainable is new mantra gaining ground. Sustainability is not just a mere effort but goes a long way with hospitality projects. Let's explore how hotels are being sustainable in their practices and design.



Charmaine Fernz



The word 'sustainability' is a much-talked-about subject that has witnessed growth in spurts across the hospitality industry. When we talk about sustainability, it is not just one or two initiatives but a whole process to save the overall environment. Today, many hotel properties are built with the environment and their surroundings in mind. These initiatives are not just restricted to one department but have an overall impact, be it housekeeping, F&B, or even services. Simultaneously, in many ways, being sustainable is also using local resources, which means giving back to the community.

As Trent Fraser, CEO of Choice Hotels Asia-Pacific says, a lot of changes to improve a hotel's sustainability level can be made that are relatively low cost. "Making sustainable choices when replacing in-room appliances, light bulbs, and choosing environmentally friendly cleaning products can make a huge difference without being excessively costly," he adds.

Citing an example, Fraser says that the Comfort Inn City Centre Armidale, Australia, instantly saved AU\$35,000 a year in gas bills when it upgraded its heating and hot water systems to heavy industry heat pumps, which are driven



Alexandra Woop

*Executive Director, Interior Design,
India, Middle East & Africa, Accor*

“Some of the largest contributors to environmental defects in the hospitality industry are energy usage and water consumption”

by solar power. The entire hotel is now heated using just 6 kW of electricity, which is the equivalent energy use of three air-conditioning units.

Furthermore, Australia's rolling lockdowns allowed hotels to review their practices and seek ways to reduce costs and wastage. "We have seen many positive steps toward improving

sustainable practises," adds Fraser. In a recent survey of Choice Hotel properties, 100 per cent of hotels were giving guests the option to reuse towels and opt out of daily cleaning of their rooms, and 97 per cent of hotels surveyed had transitioned 80 per cent or more of their lighting to energy-efficient LED bulbs. Ninety-seven per cent of properties had removed, or never offered, plastic cups and stirrers in rooms, and 87 per cent had removed, or never offered, plastic cutlery and tableware. Furthermore, 90 per cent of the properties had water-efficient toilets installed, while 80 per cent were using smart showers or low-flow showerheads, as well as providing recycling bins for guests (and recycling the waste).

Sustainability also played a big part in Quality Hotel City Centre Coffs Harbour's recent refurbishment. Sharing his views, General Manager Michael Dougherty says, "I believe sustainability is more of a responsibility rather than a focus on cost-saving. It is a duty of care, and while cost savings can be achieved, it is more about leaving a minimal footprint. We implement initiatives such as room waste recycling, elimination of all single-use plastics such as moving room amenities to bulk dispensers, energy-efficient lighting and solar energy generation."





THE IMPACT

Sustainability is the future of the hospitality industry. Awareness about sustainability in the industry has gained momentum in the last decade as it involves areas that impact social, economic, and environmental aspects of hotel operations and development.

Alexandra Woop, Executive Director, Interior Design, India, Middle East & Africa at Accor, believes that some of the largest contributors to environmental defects in the hospitality industry are energy usage and water consumption (i.e., heating, ventilation and air conditioning, water for guests, laundry services, irrigation, cleaning, maintenance, etc.). Also, the reduction of waste production is becoming an integral part of the strategy.

"The common misconception is that going green for hotels is remarkably expensive. There is a lot of research about the economic benefits of eco-friendly investments. Reducing expenses and costs is a desirable incentive in any business. The latest environmental advancements and technologies promote cost efficiency and reduction for those who choose to invest. 'Reduce, reuse, recycle' is the mainstream motto that hoteliers go by when it comes to waste management and energy usage," adds Woop.

Woop continues by outlining the benefits of investing in hotels so they may become more eco-friendly properties. Employees and customers will be more comfortable and eager to support an environmentally conscious company, and hoteliers can expect long-term cost benefits. Moreover, modern industrial leaders must have a strong commitment to the environment. Investments in hotels will serve as a public example of innovation and efficient social responsibility.

CARVING A NICHE

Radisson Hotel Group has committed to achieving Net Zero by 2050 and is validating its targets based on science-based targets and has taken active steps towards this goal. Two main routes are increasing the energy efficiency of buildings and transitioning to renewable energy.

"Together with Accenture, we defined our global renewable energy strategy. The immediate focus is to reduce our carbon footprint by 30 per cent in the next five years, as well as reduce consumption of natural resources, use renewable energy and phase out single-use plastics. India will be one of our focus countries where the strategy shows that we can cover 55 per cent of the reduction by on- and offsite solar (in on- and offsite Power Purchasing Agreements (PPAs), which do not require owner CapEx). The remainder of the target is covered by purchasing

green electricity certificates, or EACs. The strategy in India will deliver a net saving on utility costs to our owners," says **Jacobo San Nicolas Lopez-Bosch**, Senior Vice President, Head of Technical Services, Radisson Hotel Group.

Furthermore, he explains that there are certain sustainability measures that the modern traveller expects from a prominent hotel such as RHG, and we need to meet these basics. This is one of the reasons why we played a key role in the development of the Hotel Sustainability Basics to ensure the hospitality industry is acting together towards the goal of Net Zero by 2050 with concrete measures and as a united industry. The Hotel Sustainability Basics will raise the global starting level of hotel sustainability in a transparent and coherent way for all travellers and stakeholders, promoting responsible and sustainable travel globally. It will be rolled out across RHG by the end of 2023. The next step will be to ensure that our leased properties are compliant by 2030. We must improve the efficiency of our buildings by reducing utility costs, which we have already begun and for which we have earned sustainable certifications such as BREEAM, LEED, or EDGE. With requirements on insulation, building management systems, heat recuperation, and 100 per cent LED lighting, our regular technical standards bring them 75 per cent closer to the level of the major building ecolabels.

"In general, hotels do have to invest more money to take action steps towards Net Zero and better energy use. The payback is generally less than 10 years, but this is an investment that we, as an industry, need to make to protect our planet. The hospitality industry needs to come together to help mitigate and tackle sustainability. Sustainability in tourism is a reality," asserts Lopez-Bosch.



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

“India will be one of our focus countries where we can cover 55% of the reduction by on- and offsite solar”

MAKING A POINT

Sustainability is not a luxury nor an expense. It is the need of the hour. As **Kush Kapoor**, CEO of Roseate Hotels & Resorts, asserts, we are committed to moving towards sustainable living and are taking mindful steps, hand in hand with professional experts, to be guided on this journey. Sustainability is the need for the future. Simply put, non-sustainable items will eventually die out. It is to be remembered that while incorporating sustainable designs might cost a bit initially, over the long run the costs more than balance out.

Kush explains with examples such as the usage of LED light fixtures, water harvesting tanks in each property for saving and reusing rainwater, the use of solar energy panels to heat water, and using bio-degradable bags for waste disposal are some of the steps that we have taken. All single-use plastic has been discarded as well. "For us, sustainability is not a marketing tool. It has now begun to define us. We conserve around 1,000 uncut trees in our New Delhi urban resort. All Roseate Hotels are non-smoking. Food waste is turned into compost across all of our properties and then used for gardening," Kapoor continues. Roseate Hotels is becoming self-sustainable. This year, Roseate will launch a bouquet of signature products



Chander K Baljee

Chairman & MD, Royal Orchid Hotels

“Benefits to the health and wellness of travellers staying at an ‘eco-friendly’ hotel should be communicated clearly”

such as tea, coffee, cookies, and wines. These portfolio additions will help save money, make the brand self-sustaining, and gain better control over the quality of the products, which are largely cultivated on our organic farms.

MOVING AHEAD WITH POSITIVITY

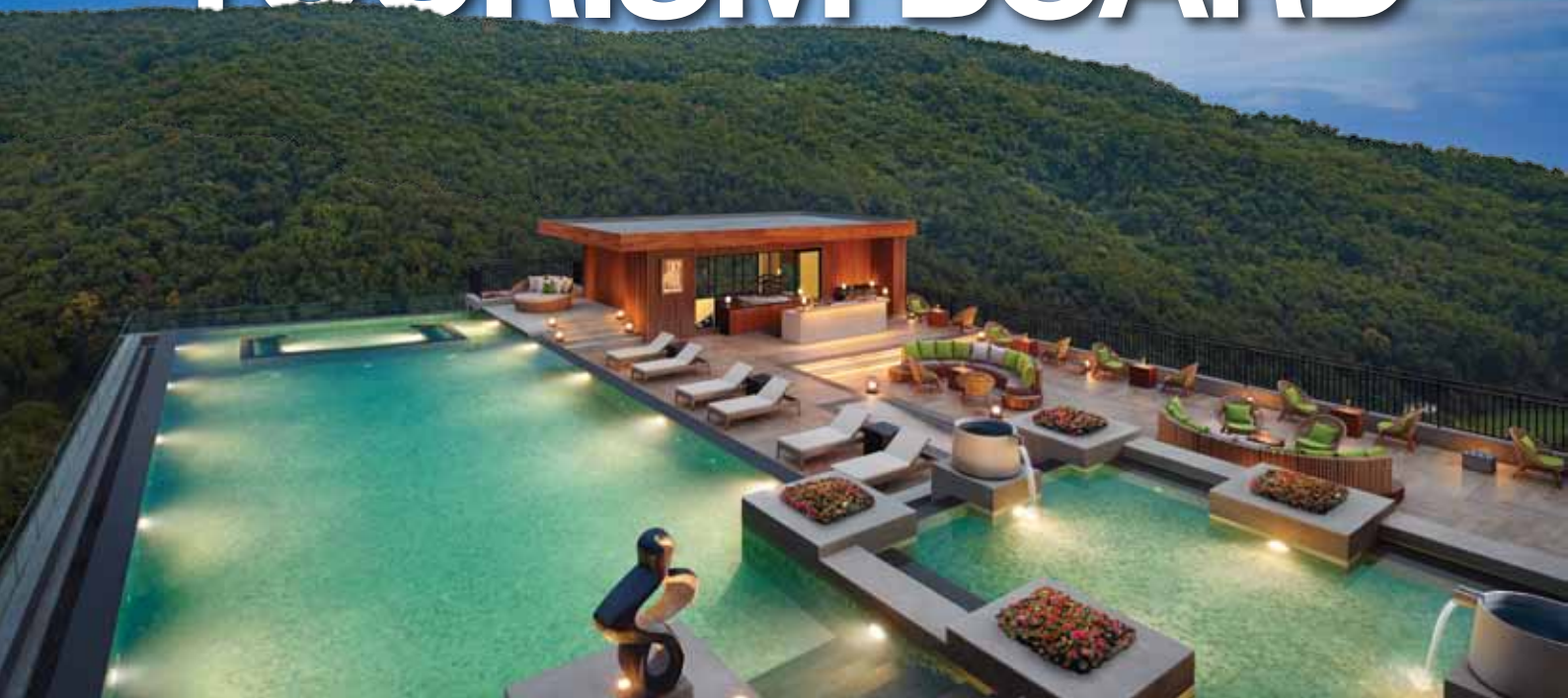
Sustainability comes at a cost, but the cost produces benefits in the long run. This is a common sentiment expressed by many across the industry. The right

investment can reap abundant savings and enhance your way of giving back to society. As **Nikhil Sharma**, Regional Director for Eurasia, Wyndham Resorts & Hotels EMEA, says, while introducing sustainable practices may incur varying upfront costs, they help to improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions, conserve water, and reduce waste. He adds that Wyndham Hotels & Resorts is committed to environmental stewardship. Wyndham Green, the global sustainability programme, has seen high levels of engagement across EMEA, reflecting the properties' commitment to addressing the ongoing climate crisis and recovering more sustainably from the pandemic.

In conclusion, sharing his view, **Chander K Baljee**, Chairman and MD, Royal Orchid Hotels, says, hotels must invest more in sustainable initiatives. This could include social, economic, and environmental aspects of hotel operations and development. Moreover, it is a major concern for modern-day travellers and consumers on a global scale. Many brands have already launched sustainable initiatives and are concerned with their social duties and environmental impact. However, when perusing hotel websites, there is often no clear message. The benefits of staying in an 'eco-friendly' hotel for travellers' well-being and health should be clearly emphasised.



Coming soon: A NATIONAL TOURISM BOARD



The Board will soon be set up to plan overseas promotions, announced Arvind Singh, Secy., MoT, and tourism policy is under consultation.

Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India, said that a National Tourism Board will be set up "soon" for the ministry's overseas promotion. "We have proposed the National Tourism Advisory Board, which will be chaired by the Union Minister of Tourism and comprised of all state tourism ministers, ministry representatives, and industry stakeholders. This board will review policy implementation, and the implementation unit will offer secretarial support to this board," said Singh, while addressing a hospitality and tourism conclave, organised recently by the Services Export Promotions Council.

Singh spoke on various subjects at the event, with a focus on the upcoming tourism policy. "A separate National Tourism Board will be set up to promote activities. It will be run by CEOs and funded by the public, but we will be advised by industry stakeholders. The

board will coordinate with the overseas missions. We will continue to operate as usual till the board is functional," he said.

GREEN SHOOTS

In his address, he noted the World Travel and Trade Council's estimate that the travel trade industry would return to pre-COVID-19 levels by March 2023 and that, between 2023 and 2030, the travel economy will grow at a rate of 5.2 per cent globally, compared to 2.3 per cent for the global economy. "They expect the travel economy to grow at double the rate of the global economy. They also

forecast that one in every three new jobs produced globally will be in the travel sector. Domestic tourism, hospitality, and weddings are all exhibiting signs of recovery," he stated.

NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY

The MoT has formulated the National Tourism Policy, which has been in limbo for almost two decades, Singh said. "We have a vision that in 2047, tourism will be a US\$1 trillion sector in the country. There is a need for a new policy as 20 years have elapsed and the country is at a different stage. We need to reassess our strategies on how we project India as a major tourist destination if we are growing as an economy." He shared that the policy has been drafted and is at the consultation stage. "We are consulting with other ministries and have taken the recommendations from Niti Aayog; global best practices from organisations such as UNWTO; and carried out a situational analysis; future projections

“THE BOARD WILL BE RUN BY CEOs & FUNDED BY PUBLIC. THERE WILL BE INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS TO ADVISE US”

for the tourism sector; multiple rounds of consultations from central ministries, state governments, and industry stakeholders. The draft policy was also published on the MoT website for comments from the public."

Singh shared that they have received inputs on the draft policy from all the stakeholders and a positive feedback. "We hope to incorporate all the suggestions and we will send this draft to the Union Cabinet for its approval soon. Thus, the new policy and the Commerce Ministry's trade policy, which is expected by the end of the month, will bring some happy tidings to all the sectors," he said.

POLICY AIMS

The policy aims at improving the tourism development framework, supporting tourism industries, strengthening support functions, and developing the sub-sectors. "The policy's key aims are to boost tourism's contribution to the Indian economy by increasing visitation, stays, and spending; making India a year-round destination; creating jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities in the sector, and ensuring a skilled workforce supply. We know that in areas where manufacturing or agriculture cannot be reached, tourism will be the main



Arvind Singh

Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India

“THERE IS A NEED FOR A NEW POLICY AS 20 YEARS HAVE ELAPSED AND THE COUNTRY IS AT A DIFFERENT STAGE”

employer. For instance, in remote areas and border areas, to enhance the competitiveness of the sector and attract private sector investment, we must make it attractive as well as remove the compliance burdens and taxation issues

to preserve and enhance the cultural and natural resources," he claimed.

MISSIONS OF POLICY

"We have identified five important tourism missions, which lay down the priorities of what India's tourism sector should be in the next decade. The first is a National Green Tourism Mission to mainstream sustainability, encouraging climate action, promoting responsible tourism, and aligning tourism development with SDGs of 2030. Second is the National Digital Tourism Mission to leverage cross-domain development of tourism domain data, developing a unified tourism interface, supporting MSMEs for digitalisation and enabling smart tourism destinations and IT applications in the centre. The third is the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skill Mission. The fourth mission is the National Mission on Destination Management Organisation. Fifth is the National Mission on Tourism MSMEs," Singh added.

G20 PRESIDENCY FOR INDIA

With India assuming the presidency of the G20, tourism to the country will benefit. "India becomes the president of the G20 in December and there will be a series of meetings at 55 locations, which the G20 Secretariat has identified."

Holy Grail of décor

Strawberry Collective is pivoting its focus toward hotel chains to obtain greater volume.

Strawberry Collective is a design house that prides itself on customised services for all its hospitality clients in F&B and housekeeping. We are well-versed in the industry, having completed and continuing to complete projects with reputable hospitality establishments. We have seen decent growth between 2021 and 2022 with our customers revamping their properties. We have been working on innovative products, and our fresh product collection has been loved by all, leading to an increase in sales numbers.

In order to expand via right channels, we participate in different forums, exhibition grounds, travel and meet with industry people. We communicate our brand presence through the right channels of marketing and advertising



Nidhi Goel

Founder, Strawberry Collective

“WE PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS WHILE WE WORK ON OUR PRODUCT RANGE”



in magazines. Amid uncertainties, we try to maintain stable pricing as much as possible. We can absorb the fluctuations within our margins. If it is beyond our ability, we convey it to our customer and find a mutually workable solution by either sharing the cost impact or re-engineering products to hold the price point. Our focus is to find new ways to penetrate deeper into the industry via bespoke designs and price points. In the past, we focused more on cafes and restaurants, but now our entire attention is directed towards hotel chains, which can give us a deeper volume.

ADVERTORIAL

When it comes to brand positioning, where is your focus in the new normal?

We are a proud Indian hospitality chain with complete faith in the Indian story; it is well established across the country with a deep understanding of the nuances of the various markets. Interestingly, about 30 per cent of our portfolio's hotels are in the leisure space. Our aim is to open more leisure hotels and expand in tourist locations to give our customers value-centric offerings in unique settings that will help them discover new places of interest. We began as a business hotel chain, but we have found a balance by expanding our footprint not only in business and city locations but also in leisure and tourist destinations. By 2025, we aim to establish a 50:50 balance of business and leisure in our portfolio.



prospects for unrestricted foreign travel have improved. Having said that, we still see a preference for domestic travel. Despite the COVID-19 downturn, domestic tourism exceeded all expectations. This surge in domestic travel is undeniably exciting.

What changes have you observed in travellers' behaviour nowadays?

Travelers loom for unexplored and less-crowded destinations that offer natural social distancing. Many are spending long weekends in their own cities, going to chosen destinations in their cars—Indian travellers are receptive to short getaways closer to home rather than extensive journeys abroad. Consumers' priorities have shifted; they want to spend more time with their families and loved ones. With everything returning to pre-COVID-19 days, office life is back, and

IT IS EXPERIENCE OVER DESTINATION

Whether it is metropolis or unexplored small town, curated experiences sit at heart of every destination, believes **Samir MC, MD, Fortune Park Hotels Ltd.**



Lipla Negi

Which key destinations are you considering for expansion?

We are on track to open nine to 11 hotels this year. In fact, after the pandemic, there is a greater allure to branded hotel chains. Indian brands are expected to gain favour. Fortune's query volume is always increasing. We are in active discussions to close operating contracts in important cities such as Goa, Himachal Pradesh, popular hill stations in Maharashtra, key temple towns in India, and intriguing leisure locations in the Northeast, to name a few. Our efforts to expand our range of business hotels continue. We hope to announce a few more signings this year in key tier II and III cities, including crucial

regions such as Delhi NCR. Currently, Fortune Hotels has 57 alliances with over 4,300 rooms across 48 cities.

Once outbound tourism bounces back, do you think domestic tourism would continue to thrive?

With the majority of people vaccinated,

people are eager for any opportunity to take a vacation, no matter how brief. Popular leisure destinations are seeing normal traffic, but unexplored places seem to be the top pick, and I do not see that changing anytime soon. Despite the eased international travel protocols, we have seen an unprecedented domestic response to international travellers. People appear to seek experiences rather than destinations. Fortune Hotels is conscious and proactive in integrating once-in-a-lifetime experiences for our guests within hotel properties. The current trend has given us an opportunity to expand our services and experiences, and we are all set to create exceptional

“DOMESTIC TRAVELLER IS EXPECTED TO BE A LUCRATIVE GROWTH DRIVER FOR THE INDUSTRY”



stays close to home. While we focus on providing outstanding experiences to our guests in our existing portfolio, our brand's growth trajectory continues this year, with new hotels opening in multiple locations.

What sort of trends do you foresee shaping the future of domestic tourism?

People have become more open to newer, smaller towns and cities that had previously been unexplored. As more people travel within the country's

“BY 2025, WE AIM TO ESTABLISH A 50:50 BALANCE OF BUSINESS AND LEISURE MIX IN OUR PORTFOLIO”

bounds, new destinations that are financially and geographically accessible are being explored, which is a great trend for our space. They prefer to spend more

time in one place, away from crowds, rather than travelling between multiple destinations, and domestic travel is their preferred option. To summarise, I believe that domestic travellers will be a profitable development driver for the sector, whereas international travel has yet to take off. It is now up to us to create and curate experiences for our guests wherever they are—be it a metropolis, a pilgrim destination, the hills, or even an unexplored, untouched small town.

When do you expect the complete return of business travel to the pre-pandemic levels?

The MICE segment is still growing, especially since the last several months, when large-scale events have just begun to be curated. We cater to a lot of these small-to-medium sized events in the MICE sector since the majority of our hotels have an average of 80 rooms available. Since the pandemic, small- to medium-sized weddings present a significant business opportunity. Today, majority of our hotels are equipped with outstanding banqueting facilities where these weddings and other social gatherings are catered. To improve business across the portfolio, we had to constantly innovate and evolve what we were doing, working closely with our hotels.





THE ERA OF talent retention

Hospitality sector is now seeking to return to normal, and employees are given better benefits and care. Would this imply hardship had bright side?



Charmaine Fernz

Often, we hear this quote among organisations, from the great J. Willard Marriott: "Take good care of your employees, and they will take good care of your customers, and the customers will come back." This quote is especially pertinent in today's new normal world, where it is all about regaining momentum toward success. The hospitality industry has had a roller-coaster ride during the past two years. Employees bore the brunt of the swirl of events. Fast forward to 2022, and the sector is returning to normalcy, with improved benefits and care for employees. Was there a silver lining to the adversity?

As **Sujata Guin**, VP-HR & CHRO, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited,



Sujata Guin

Vice President-HR & CHRO, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited

“It is imperative to create an environment that stems attrition and retains talent”

says, the pandemic was especially harsh on the hotel industry and its employees. The enormous loss of business and travel restrictions necessitated wage reductions, furloughs, and layoffs. The scenario makes retaining and hiring talent extremely difficult. "As we can see now, the hospitality industry is rebounding in the new normal. Moreover, filling these many job openings has become a major challenge. Hence, talent retention becomes even more critical. One of the priorities would be to reduce attrition in the first 90 days after an employee is hired. This stage has one of the highest exit rates. Employee sourcing, hiring, onboarding, and training all take a lot of time and money, so it is essential to create an environment that stems

attrition and retains talent," adds Guin. She further goes on to assert that it would be important to strengthen the focus on career development, training and upskilling, reward and recognition, competitive compensation, work-life balance, inspiring culture, and an exciting work environment embedded with the organisation's values.

MANY FACETS OF RETENTION

Without wasting time explaining and getting down to business, **Sarbendra Sarkar**, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, says while retaining talent in the industry is difficult, we are doing so through a slew of measures, such as better associate engagement; rapid expansion needs better internal resources, which leads to better retention; and finally, cluster general managers are paving the way for training our next line of GMs. We, like other hospitality groups, are striving to retain talent based on our standards and processes.

Vishal Lonkar, GM-Brand Development, Renest Hotels & Resorts, says that the market is opening for business and talent acquisition. Thus, retention is imperative for any hospitality business. Some firms are struggling, while some are successful in retaining talent. Citing examples, he says, many companies have introduced career development plans, succession plans, and options such as not hiring for leadership roles from outside but instead looking at internal promotions. MNCs offer transfers to preferred locations and growth within. Some of the groups have introduced sponsored executive education for managerial positions.



Sarbendra Sarkar

Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

“Industry is fast realising that even with the best training, some people are not equipped to handle the pressure of a fast-paced industry”

Bram Borrenbergs, VP-HR, Radisson Hotel Group Asia Pacific, says that hospitality brands are focusing more than ever on talent retention. "Human capital remains our industry's most important asset, and while many companies already had excellent retention programmes prior to the pandemic, this strategy has now taken on fresh impetus, and in the new normal, we are seeing more innovative and out-of-the-box programmes being introduced across the industry," he adds.

However, **Rajesh Kumar**, SVP-HR, Lemon Tree Hotels, says When it comes to managing new talent, it is critical to keep them "constructively engaged" and give them challenging tasks so that they not only learn but also grasp the

motives and requirements behind the processes and how they affect business in the long run. Most of today's workforce is young, and innovative "ideas and experiences" are essential to keep their morale high. Employees who are constructively engaged will deliver high performance. This can be done by fostering a work culture that supports participative management, allowing employees to engage in the operation and management of the business. Employees are encouraged to think freely, ideate, and be creative in an empowering work culture. A robust succession plan for high achievers and strong training processes help to provide employees with a focused growth path and groom them to take on higher responsibility, thereby also helping to retain them.

GAINING CONTROL

Talent retention is difficult in any industry. Many organisations are focusing on being more flexible and attaining a better work-life balance in the new normal. The question is whether there is a subset of the hotel business that requires better talent retention. Sarkar asserts that there is no business that needs more talent retention. We are losing talent in all areas of employment, including housekeeping, F&B, front office, and engineering. Being a part of a 24x7 industry that also does business on public holidays, weekends, or parties can make it challenging for associates to maintain a healthy work-life balance. So, the best and hardest-working staff quit because of the lengthy hours. The industry is trying to make a move in that direction, but due to the nature of the business, it is currently insufficient.

Lonkar states that the industry cannot function with one section getting preferential treatment while the others are ignored. It is a team effort that makes any brand successful. Because the industry is service-oriented, talent is key. Companies must keep talent in all departments. Training someone to provide the necessary quality of service takes time, effort, and money (as per the brand standards). The entire effort is futile if the organisation fails to retain the talent. It disrupts the operations, lowers service quality, and jeopardises brand standards. Nonetheless, there will be attrition. Hotels, on the other hand, must invest more in employee training and development, as well as upskilling and rewarding good performance.

However, Kumar feels that entry-level posts have always been difficult to fill and



retain. Hotel management institutes have also become a "happy hunting ground" for non-hotel companies hunting for talent. This has worsened the industry's rising demand-supply gap for talent. Hence, businesses must focus on talent engagement, growth plans, a positive corporate culture, and work-life balance in entry-level positions.

Guin says that attrition in the four key operational areas of service, production, housekeeping, and front office has been alarming. These four areas need specific focus for both retention and hiring. However, recent trends suggest that all areas and departments require retention efforts, as there have been large losses in the hospitality space and across work groups since the pandemic.

If there is one thing that all hospitality firms agree on, it is that entry-level staff require the most care. Borrenbergs, who has similar views, thinks that entry-level talent needs the most attention. These are the people who work on the ground, bringing our brand image to life and delivering guests with the 'Yes I Can' service philosophy. Many entry-level associates have the potential to be future leaders; all they need is the opportunity to grow and develop. We believe that retaining and developing our staff will help us drive client loyalty and respect our company's ideals and objectives.

METHODOLOGY

No one yardstick serves all purposes. As Jack Welsh says, "No company, small or large, can win over the long run without energised employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it." Lonkar considers talent retention to be an ongoing process. Every brand creates an effective succession plan, whether it's through internal promotions, performance-based incentives, or cross-departmental training and exposure. In addition to the foregoing, Renest Hotels and Resorts promotes higher executive education and training.

Kumar shares that training is key. He claims that upskilling employees equips them for bigger roles and gives them better opportunities to display their skills within the company. This helps to retain talent. We have different career development programmes to train staff at various levels. Our Hi-Pot Programme, an indigenously designed process to remain at the forefront of talented people to create a succession plan, underpins all of our programmes. Individual development plans are created in such a way that



Vishal Lonkar
GM-Brand Development,
Renest Hotels & Resorts

“Hotels need to invest more in staff training and development, upskilling and rewarding good work”

everyone has a fair chance to improve their skills. Hi-Pot employees can enroll in any of our internal career development programs—Skill-up or LEAP—to multi-skill themselves and contribute to not only their departments but also other verticals. Since new hotels are opening, our GSE Programme meets our rising need for executives. Finally, the Internal and External Management Programme and Executive Training Programmes were created to train and equip young hotel employees to take on supervisory and managerial responsibilities after successfully finishing the training.



Bram Borrenbergs
VP-HR, RHG APAC

“If we retain and develop our talent, it will help us to drive customer loyalty and uphold our company's principles and policies”

Work-life balance is an important factor that has been highlighted in the new normal. Sarkar believes that understanding an employee before hiring is important. He says that the industry is fast realising that even with the best training, some people are ill prepared to handle the pressures of a fast-paced industry. Thus, during job interviews, we emphasise the employee's mindset, which is not solely dependent on academic or work experience. Second, the industry is realising that pay scales must become competitive with other industries in order to recruit the best people. The well-being of an employee is of the essence. For example, we allow housekeeping staff to start early or later in the day or give the team an option to have alternate weekends off. Cross-training is also something that we promote.

Guin makes a point with the several initiatives that say that at ASPHL, we make all efforts to create an engaging culture and work environment that is based on THE Park Culture Code. Meaningful rewards and recognition remain key to creating commitment and engagement. Our 'I Make the Difference' Award Programme is a great enabler. In addition,



across locations, we focus on THE Park Fun@Work initiatives to ensure people are happy and experience fun moments at work. Wellness and health are also key focus areas for our teams. For freshers, we ensure there is focused learning and development through on-the-job and classroom training. Specific programmes are created for them, which ensures a well-charted career plan. We ensure that experienced talent has ample autonomy in their scope of work. Dual responsibilities are often allocated to some team leaders and managers, which creates expanded job roles and a sense of purpose.

Borrenbergs feels that the industry is seeing many new strategies and concepts that will help retain hospitality talent. Employee recognition is being looked at from a fresh perspective, and there is a move towards making our rewards and recognition programmes more meaningful. At RHG, we are working on a 'Service Recognition Programme' that recognises our long-serving associates and rewards them with a 'Diamond Pin', which is worn on the lapel with pride. Work-life integration is also a key aspect of the modern working era. Programmes such as 'Radisson Flex' deliver considerable



Rajesh Kumar
SVP-HR, Lemon Tree Hotels

“Entry-level positions require the highest retention, with employers bringing in talent engagement, growth plans, a positive corporate culture, and work-life balance”

benefits to team members and help them integrate their work and personal lives. Hotels have started giving 6-8 days off in a month and associates are being allowed to plan their leave more flexibly. Finally,

learning and development continue to be a key component of any company's HR strategy, and our Radisson Academy lets our team members progress with development programmes at their own pace. Under the 'Radisson Culture Beliefs', team members can take part in weekly activities based on our seven beliefs. Other benefits include retirement and healthcare benefits—in India, for example, we have improved our health and life insurance coverage for our employees. This has now become an industry first for the Indian hospitality market.

LOOKING AHEAD

No one rule or plan fits all. This is especially so in the hospitality industry, which has to deal with constant change. Every chain is doing its best in terms of talent retention, and the light at the end of the tunnel is the fact that travel is picking up and positivity is in the air. So, we can wrap up in the words of Richard Branson, who so aptly says, "The first thing to look for when searching for a great employee is somebody with a personality that fits with your company culture. Most skills can be learned, but it is difficult to train people on their personalities."



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BREAKING GROUND in the new normal

There has been strong drive for cutting-edge solutions that cater to evolving user behaviour, which has provided Hafele opportunity to meet that need.

Staycations became popular during the pandemic's last two years. Many people resorted to short breaks in nearby hotels for a change of scenery or to mark special occasions. The hospitality industry had to adjust to new guest patterns, with hygiene and safety as priority. Social distancing and touchless operations have become critical. To reduce physical contact with the operating devices, manually operated swing doors were switched to automatically operated solutions. Guests wanted more digital-savvy services and mobile keys to enter their rooms and other hotel areas. Hence, there was a huge demand for innovative solutions that catered to this consumer behaviour, which enabled us at Hafele to service them. Since the number of cases has dropped, the industry is aware that it needs to stock up on proper equipment and products.

Automated solutions: AUTOTEC AUTOTEC is a new automatic door series that comprises automatic sliding doors, swing doors, and revolving door solutions. Modern automation, easy customisation, buildable setups, and reliable operation are all hallmarks of the SLIDO sliding solution series. These systems can be used in the hotel's main entrance, lobby (revolving doors), and other public spaces. We also offer a new Prolock series access control system with two models:



Saurav Das
*Head-Projects & Hospitality South Asia,
Hafele India Pvt. Ltd.*

PL 50 and PL 200. This range meets hotel room access control needs and is equipped with the latest technology at an affordable price. Hafele launched its own in-house furniture fittings range earlier this year, which includes undermount drawer runners and furniture hinges.

Sustainability angle: Hafele offers sustainable solutions that are easy to integrate into a hotel's interior space. I want to focus on three major product ranges: Caesarstone surfaces for countertops, table-tops of bar, vanity, reception area, etc.; Dekton surfaces for floors, table-tops, counters, wall cladding, etc.; and ballroom acoustic movable wall partitions. Caesarstone surfaces, made of 93 per cent natural quartz, organic pigments, and enhanced polymer resins, are designed to create a safer and better-quality environ-

ment. All Caesarstone surfaces are American Greenguard Environmental Institute certified. Dekton is a unique surface range made of 28 naturally found minerals. The Greenguard programme certified that they do not emit any VOCs. The range resulted in a 7 per cent reduction in GHG emissions. Movable wall solutions are designed to have a product life cycle of more than 25 years and to offer flexibility in the use of square metres, saving both space and energy.

Maintaining competitive edge:

Hafele has an innovative range of hospitality solutions that add value to our clients' needs. Our space-saving, cost-effective, and design-enabling products are popular among hoteliers, designers, and others who benefit from a holistic set of benefits and a well-rounded service approach when they work with us. As part of its 360° Project Service, Hafele offers an expert project management team to our clients during the planning phase. Hafele coordinates all aspects of the project, including scheduling, product and solution recommendations, quotation service, and onsite support, from planning and tendering to order processing and handover. The Hafele India 360° Project Service Team is spread across India and neighbouring countries (Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Maldives) to help our customers with any project requirements.

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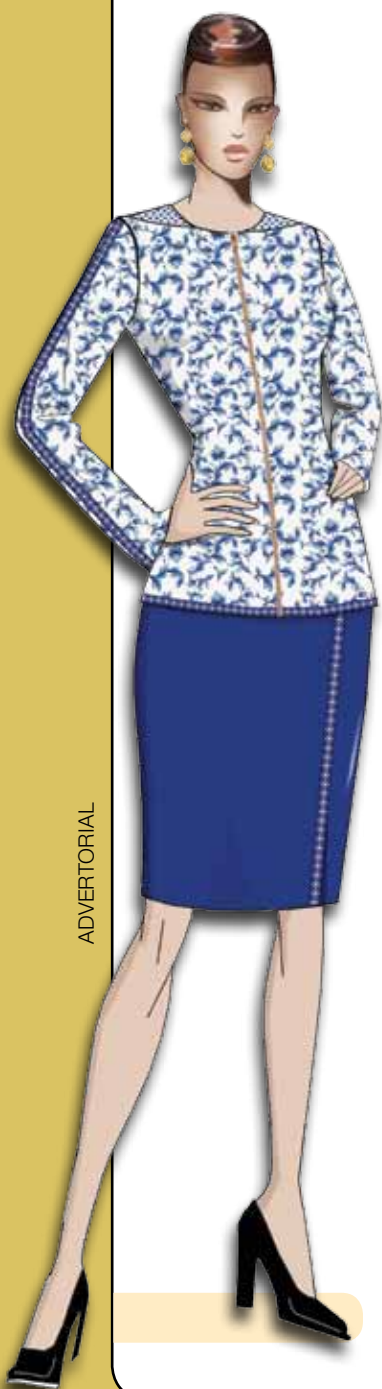
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A blessing to the hospitality industry's uniforms

Change is the only constant, and Team Uniforms Unlimited demonstrates this by constantly upgrading and innovating designs, fabrics, and techniques.



ADVERTORIAL

Over the years, uniforms have evolved from basic, dull, and bland attire to trendy, chic work wear. Designer uniforms are significant branding vehicles for the company as well as a source of pride for the employees.

Zubin Mehta, heads operations, design studio, sales, and marketing and aims for global expansion. His focus on research, market study, innovation, and consumer orientation ensures every delivery exceeds expectations. He is one such designer who believes 'a stylish yet practical uniform enhances value and unifies the complete experience of hospitality'. He has a holistic approach towards designing, which blends richness in cultures and offers finely styled uniforms that are practical as well as elaborate enough to bring instant connectivity with the destination where the hotels/resorts are located.

The Uniforms Unlimited Head Office is in Mumbai, India. Multiple factories are set up across India with state-of-the-art equipment to provide complete uniform solutions.

It is about time for people to understand the fundamental difference between purchasing ready-made designs from a catalogue and having designs created specifically for their brand. The brand Dezenzia is engaged in creating value-added attire that showcases contemporary and stylish uniforms to enhance the image of their clients to the highest international standards. They create

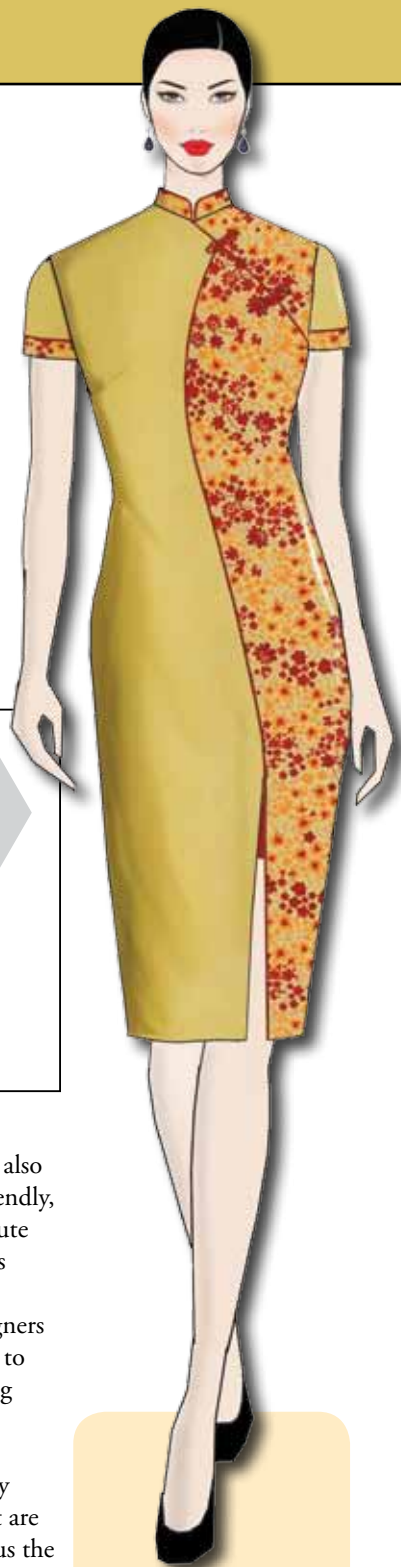


Zubin Mehta
*Managing Director,
Uniforms Unlimited*

styles that are not only chic but also practical, attractive, laundry-friendly, and durable. Dezenzia is the haute couture collection for businesses where impressions count. Their in-house team of qualified designers oversees the production process to make sure that clients are getting exactly what they desire. When a client opts for a valued design contract, both parties are heavily invested in creating designs that are going to last for a long time, plus the expected output is precisely as per the designs envisioned by the client.

Change is the only constant, and Team Uniforms Unlimited demonstrates this by constantly upgrading and innovating designs, fabrics, and techniques. They are without a doubt the trailblazers in establishing new uniform trends in the hospitality industry as well as in many other industries where uniforms are essential.

Visit www.uuindia.com & www.dezenzia.com; email at zubin@uuindia.com, soniya@uuindia.com



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MOVEMENTS



ANKUSH SHARMA

**General Manager-Development
Sarovar Hotels**

★ Sharma has been associated with pre-openings as well as running hotels and has achieved operational success in all spheres. His last assignment was as General Manager for The Gaur's Sarovar Portico, Greater Noida. He possesses a niche expertise in starting new operations, having created restaurant concepts, and opened hotels and spas both in India and internationally. His experience encompasses operations management, sales & marketing, e-commerce, liaison, pre-opening, and project management.



MUKTA KHANNA

**General Manager
Holiday Inn Agra**

★ Khanna is a hospitality professional with 19 years of experience across brands. In the current role, her business acumen and operational expertise will enhance all areas of the hotel's management, from delivering exceptional service standards to implementing operational efficacy and ensuring the team is empowered to achieve financial results. She has held several significant leadership roles with some of the top brands in the country. She has spent 10 fulfilling years with IHG, growing into the role of GM.



WAIBHAV RAWAT

**General Manager, Renest River
Country Resort Manali**

★ Rawat brings with him over a decade of experience. He will spearhead property operations and implement growth strategies to achieve and sustain leadership in the market. His responsibilities include but not limited to all phases of the hotel, including sales and marketing, human resources, F&B, budgeting and forecasting, empowering associates to provide superior customer care to the guests, communication, and problem-solving, amongst others. He has experience working with renowned brands.



KOVID UMMAT

**Cluster Director-Marketing
Hyatt Regency Dehradun & Hyatt
Regency Jaipur Mansarovar**

★ Ummat will be orchestrating all marketing and communication strategies for the hotels. While adept in ATL and BTL communication, he also has a comprehensive understanding of surrogate advertising. He will be responsible for generating market-specific content to drive business growth and profitability and for planning and executing strategies to strengthen the unrivalled and competitive positioning of the two hotels.



DEVIDYUTI GHOSH

**Director of Operations
The Westin Goa**

★ Ghosh will be responsible for leading the hotel's operations and ensuring that high standards of customer satisfaction are always met. She will also lead operations for F&B, culinary, engineering, front office, housekeeping, recreation, spa, and health club. She will liaise with revenue, sales, and marketing to identify areas of incremental revenue and implement strategies across operations. She will also work closely with the GM and facilitate key movements in the hotel, events, statutory/brand audits, etc.



AMANDEEP SHARMA

**Head of Project & Technical
Services, Leisure Hotels Group**

★ In his new role, Sharma will be responsible for planning and executing projects and providing technical support to the group's greenfield and brownfield projects. In addition to managing both design and project management responsibilities, he has demonstrated his expertise in areas such as tendering, contracting, awarding various MEP packages including their installation, testing and commissioning, and handing over to the hotel operations team, among others.

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