

HOTEL

Business Review

An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry

Business

Service with a Smile

Feature

Destinations for the Soul

F&B

Buff your Buffets

Design

Designing Wellness

Operations

Need for a Vegetable Washer

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Hotels in India are focussing on adopting measures which will help them to maintain environment friendliness. Sustainability has been largely incorporated into the hospitality industry's policies and management thinking. Hotels too are likely to benefit by adopting sustainable strategies which are more economical. Cover story finds guests now prefer to stay in hotels which are eco-friendly and environment friendly.

The success of a hotel depends on the service that is provided to the guests during their stay at the hotel. Guest relations or customer service is responsible to create the right image of the property with the guests. Business Story looks at all aspects of this department and how it ensures the property's future success.

Some interesting initiatives are planned or already executed to give a fillip to religious tourism in India. The Feature Story attempts to understand the potential of religious and cultural tourism in our country and how it can be more creatively and effectively harnessed.

Buffet is the back bone of the foodservice industry, ensuring higher revenue generation. But they have to be attractive and offer value for money. F&B Section dwells on the best ways to create Buffet USPs for its success.

Spa has become an essential feature of a five-star hotel in India. Now the question is how sophisticated and user-friendly the spa facilities are. In the Design Section, we have discussed the role of design in the success of a spa.

The sound system is one of the prominent components in the hospitality industry. Technology section focuses on the role of sound in creating the atmosphere in the form of cogent ambiance, which drives customers to visit a place again and again.

The opinions and perspectives of our features are supplemented by the information provided through the News section, which showcase the important happenings in the Indian hospitality industry.

HAMMER
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 An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry

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HAMMER

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**INDIA INTERNATIONAL
HOSPITALITY EXPO**
INDIA EXPO CENTRE & MART

AUGUST 3-6, 2022

The Curated Expo to Source for Your Hotels and Restaurants

IHE 2022, the most well-curated expo for Hospitality and F&B sector to open for visitors from August 3-6 at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida in its 5th year



IHE 2022 will host:

- 4-day Expo between August 3-6, 2022
- 4-day Hospitality and F&B conclave
- Competitions for mixology and housekeeping professionals
- IHE Hospitality Awards - Emerging as the most prestigious awards for hospitality professionals in the country
- Masterclasses by celebrity chefs and state pavilions

India International Hospitality Expo was set up in 2018 to address the much needed 'quality gap' in hospitality shows across the country. "There was a clear lack of platform that unified F&B, equipment and tech in hospitality to quality hotel and restaurant buyers. We aimed to address that with IHE", says Rakesh Kumar, Chairman of India Expo Centre and Mart, Greater Noida, who happens to be the chief curator of the show and the vision behind this award-winning venue, 45 mins from the heart of Delhi.

In its fifth edition, IHE 2022 is targeting at hosting close to 800 exhibitors and over 20,000 B2B buyers from hotels, restaurants, cloud kitchens and BnBs. In addition to the exhibition that sees a curated footfall, the expo also hosts knowledge sessions at the IHE Conclave which has seen hospitality stalwarts like Priya Paul (Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels), K.B Kachru (Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor,

South Asia at Radisson Hotel Group), Rattan Keswani (MD, Lemon Tree Hotels), Chander Baljee (CMD, Royal Orchid), Zorawar Kalra (MD, Massive Restaurants) and Celebrity Chefs like Ranveer Brar, Vicky Ratnani, Vineet Bhatia and many others. The IHE Awards across various categories identify the stars in the hospitality sector and have



emerged as the most awaited awards in the hospitality space.

The show, spread over 34,000 sq mt is planned to give the visitors a seamless experience where they'll get to meet some of the top kitchen, laundry, tech and F&B equipment suppliers from across the world. Additionally, there'll be scores of companies in the food ingredient space showcasing this year at IHE 2022.

With serious business generation at the core of its conception, IHE 2022, with the support of hotel purchasing bodies will host B2B sourcing sessions where purchasing professionals from the hospitality sector will educate the exhibitors about sourcing practices and what the industry really needs.

The expo has received raving reviews from hoteliers and restaurateurs since 2018 and is now looking to welcome hospitality entrepreneurs from across homestays, BnBs, and cloud kitchens in addition to star hotels and resorts which are regular buyers from here.



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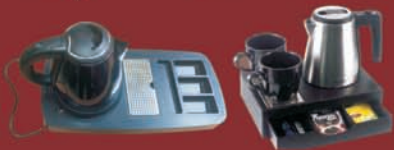
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Keys Lite Opens at Tapovan, Rishikesh

Lemon Tree Hotels Limited announced the opening of Keys Lite by Lemon Tree Hotels, Tapovan, Rishikesh. This is the second property of the group in the city, located near the Holy Ganges River, on the Badrinath road. Tapovan is well known for its serene beauty and river views, and the famous Lakshman Jhula connects Tapovan in Tehri district to Neelknaath in Pauri Garhwal district.



The hotel features 38 well-appointed rooms and suites with aesthetically designed interiors, and modern amenities and facilities for the utmost comfort of guests. Complementing the stay are a multi-cuisine coffee shop – Keys Café and a rejuvenating spa. This hotel also features an array of well-appointed spaces for functions, business meetings, conferences or private events.

Choice Hotels Launches Comfort Inn Rishikesh

Choice Hotels India has added yet another property Comfort Inn Rishikesh in the city of Rishikesh, located near Dhyaan Mandir. This is the second property of the brand in the divine city also known as the Yoga capital of India.



Rishikesh offers a unique blend of spirituality and adventure. The hotel is located at a close distance from major tourist attractions like Triveni Ghats, Janki Sethu, Laxman Jhula, Ram Jhula, and Neer Waterfalls.

Comfort Inn Rishikesh offers a breathtaking view of the Himalayan range from the rooms. The hotel showcases high-standard amenities like round the clock in-room dining facility, hi-speed internet, a business Center, laundry, and a host of other services.

For dining, the hotel offers multiple dining options. The all-day dining restaurant Lemon drop serves delicacies from around the globe. The well-stocked bar Jhanji is perfect for an evening to unwind with your friends and colleagues with refreshing cocktails and small bites. Enjoy the panoramic views of the valley from the Raindrop – the rooftop café. The hotel also offers well designed and fully equipped banquets hall and a perfectly manicured lawn to host events and conferences.

‘Enrise By Sayaji’ Aurangabad

Sayaji Group of Hotels has launched Enrise by Sayaji Aurangabad. Centrally located at Jalgaon Road, Mayur Park, the hotel is well connected. Some of the iconic tourist hubs like the Ajanta & Ellora Caves, Panchakki, and Bibi-ka-Maqbara are easily accessible.



Enrise by Sayaji Aurangabad offers 32 well-appointed rooms comprising of 24 Grande rooms and 8 club Grande rooms, tastefully designed with all contemporary amenities. Each of the rooms is air-conditioned and equipped with king/queen size beds, tea-coffee makers, a mini-bar, wardrobes, Wi-Fi connectivity, LED TVs, and a personal safety box. The facilities at the hotel include 24-hours room service, a travel desk, specialty restaurants, and banquet halls.

The hotel offers 3 banquets that are specifically designed to host 150 to 250 guests in an informal style that is ideal for private parties, corporate meetings, and other memorable events. Momenntt, the multi-cuisine restaurant that caters to the millennial segment serves a delectable assortment of Indian, Continental, and Thai in buffet and a-la-cart.

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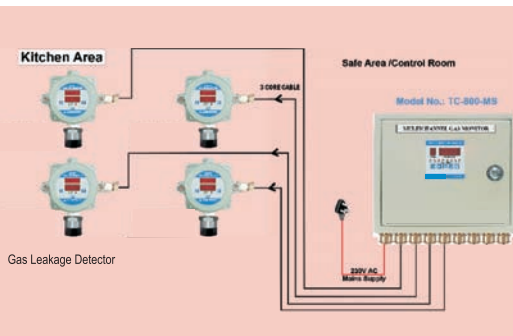
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Lemon Tree Hotels Signs 2 New Hotels

Lemon Tree Hotels Limited announced its new hotel signing – Lemon Tree Hotel, Malad, Mumbai & Lemon Tree Hotel, Kharar, near Chandigarh.



Lemon Tree Hotel, Malad is owned by Anmol Fluid Control Products Private Limited is expected to be operational under the Lemon Tree Hotel brand by August 2022, and shall be managed by Carnation Hotels Private Limited, a subsidiary and the management arm of Lemon Tree Hotels Limited. Located next to Inorbit Mall, this property will feature 93 well-appointed rooms, complemented by a multi-cuisine restaurant and a bar. It will also have a conference room and a fitness centre for recreation.

A new property in Kharar near Chandigarh

Lemon Tree Hotels Limited also announced a new hotel in Kharar near Chandigarh, owned by M/s Omni Pacific Colonisers Pvt. Ltd. is expected to open by November 2025, and shall be managed by Carnation Hotels Private Limited.



Positioned in the urban region of Punjab, it is among the 4 blocks of Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar district. Kharar is a fast-growing business and cultural hub in Punjab that has many tourist attractions to explore. Located in the Mohali region, this property will feature 60 well-appointed rooms, complemented by a multi-cuisine restaurant and a bar. It will also have a conference room, banquet facility, a spa and a fitness centre for recreation.

Speaking on the occasion, Vikramjit Singh, President, Lemon Tree Hotels, commented, "We are delighted to expand our reach in Punjab with our valued partner M/s Omni Pacific Colonisers Pvt. Ltd. This state holds immense business and tourism potential, and is a preferred destination for both business and leisure travellers. With our widespread reach, we feel that this hotel will add value to our customers."

Sayaji Hotels Signs 6 Properties in MP

Sayaji Hotels Limited will expand its presence in Madhya Pradesh with the opening of 6 new properties by the end of 2023. The group currently operates 4 properties with 500 keys under the brands Sayaji Hotels, Effotel by Sayaji, and Enrise by Sayaji.



The upcoming properties include Sayaji Gwalior, Effotel Bhopal, Enise Hoshangabad, Enrise Rewa, Enrise Harda, and Enrise Indore. Collectively these new properties will add 400 keys to Sayaji Group's portfolio in Madhya Pradesh.

Announcing the development, Jameel Sayed, Director, Business Development, Sayaji Hotels Ltd. said, "Madhya Pradesh has transformed itself into a major industrial hub, besides being in the forefront of culture and tourism. The region has witnessed a steady inflow of leisure and business travelers from across the globe. However, there has been an acute shortage of hotel rooms to meet the needs of discerning travelers. We are pleased to bridge this gap by adding six new properties in the State which will be operational next year. Sayaji Hotels, with its strategic location, luxurious rooms, a host of banqueting and F&B facilities will appeal to travelers in this region".

This rapid expansion in Madhya Pradesh exemplifies the consistency in the quality of its services and stays across all the Sayaji Hotels irrespective of the region it operates in. Moreover, the owner-centric strategy adopted by Sayaji Hotels is highly appreciated by its partners, enabling it to rapidly expand its presence under asset-light alliances and management contracts model.

Sayaji Hotels is India's premier upscale lifestyle hospitality brand, renowned for its bespoke experiences, signature hospitality, and ushering new standards of opulence in the 4-star and 5-star hotels category. The group's flagship 5-star property in Indore is one the most sought-after destinations. The group plans to have 50 operational hotels nationally in the next 3 years.

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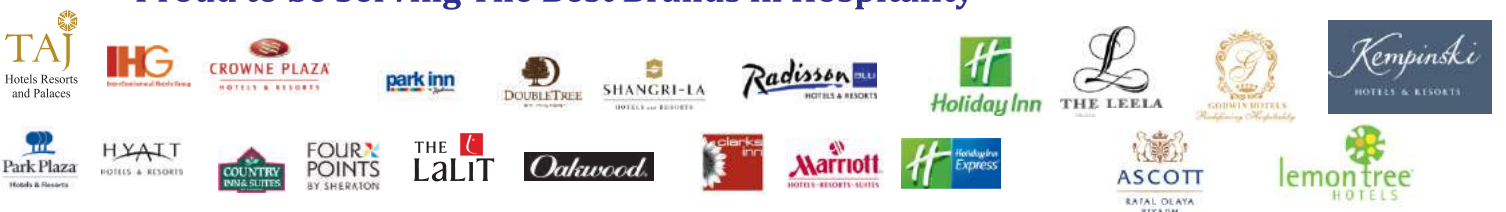
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IHCL Launches 'She Remains The Taj' - Reaffirms its Commitment to Women Empowerment

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), launched 'She Remains the Taj', a holistic framework of women-centric initiatives for all stakeholders including guests, employees, partners and community. This encompasses enhanced experiences for women travellers at its hotels across the globe. IHCL also announced its goal to raise women participation in its workforce to 25% by 2025, and support women led businesses and partners.

Speaking on the occasion, Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, IHCL, said, "IHCL is known for championing the cause of women and enhancing their participation both, within and outside the organization. Cognizant of the growing economic influence of women consumers, 'She Remains the Taj' reiterates our commitment to creating customer-centric experiences for travellers."

He further added, "We will introduce a series of initiatives and enabling policies to increase workforce participation. Keeping community at the core, IHCL will continue to extend economic opportunities to the larger ecosystem."

Based on extensive research, the customer value proposition for women travellers has been developed to include heightened levels of privacy, security, bespoke amenities and stay offerings. As part of its commitment to increase women in leadership positions, 25% of these roles at upcoming IHCL hotels will be women.

Over the years, IHCL has implemented pioneering initiatives including the opening of South Asia's first all-women managed luxury residences, Taj Wellington Mews in Chennai, and the all-women engineers' team to build Ginger's flagship hotel in Mumbai. Its industry leading policies include extended maternity leave, crèche facilities, healthcare benefits including IVF treatments, and skilling of women in under-served communities and regions.

Noesis Facilitates Three Hotel Transactions for Ginger Hotels

NOESIS Capital Advisors, India's leading hotel investment advisory firm in the last 2 quarters, has successfully facilitated three hotel transactions in Mumbai, Dehradun, and Agra for GINGER Hotels, an IHCL Brands. NOESIS functioned as an exclusive transaction manager for these transactions from asset identification to contract negotiations and signing.

Mumbai Hotel consists of 104 keys strategically located near Bombay Exhibition Centre, Goregaon. This hotel is a part of a mix-use development, scheduled to be operational by June 2022. This hotel inventory will be a big relief for exhibitors, and corporate houses within Goregaon & Malad micro markets due to limited branded hotel room supply.

Dehradun Hotel consists of 72 keys strategically located on Rajpur road. This hotel is going to be a GINGER lean luxe product, as they are part of this hotel from the planning stage. Delhi-Dehradun Economic corridor is going to improve the connectivity in the region. NOESIS negotiated a 30-year long-term lease right on the hotel for GINGER.

Agra Hotel consists of 75 keys strategically located on Fatehabad Road within 10 minutes' drive from the iconic Taj Mahal. NOESIS negotiated 29 years & 11 months of long-term lease rights on the hotel of GINGER.

IHCL is one of NOESIS's premier clients and is quite diverse in its offering from luxury to economy segments. We wish them success with their upcoming projects and for FY22-23.

"It has been a pleasure for the NOESIS transaction management team to represent GINGER Hotels for three consecutive transactions in Maharashtra, Uttarakhand & Uttar Pradesh. We are excited to share our vision in advising them on many more potential partnerships soon. It has been our endeavour to use our in-depth industry knowledge, hotel development & transaction completion skills in the interest of a long-term sustainable transaction. Said Nandivardhan Jain, Chief Executive Officer, NOESIS.

FY21-22 has been a brilliant fiscal year for NOESIS where we have successfully completed 100+ plus assignments ranging from Feasibility and Valuation Reports, Operator Search, Debt Syndication, Hotel buy/sell advisory, and Hotel operating company's portfolio sale transactions. Out of these successfully completed assignments, 23 were for hotels on a variable lease/revenue share model.



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Pride Hotels to Expand its Footprints to 100 Hotels

Pride Group of Hotels which presently has 44 properties nationally has embarked on an ambitious expansion plan to open 100 hotels by 2030. Once the new hotels are operational, Pride Group will have 100 properties with over 10,000 keys spread across various geographical regions, primarily in tier 1 and tier 2 markets. The focus is on an asset-light model for expansion with a major slice of the portfolio managed directly by the company. Most of the new properties will be located in popular leisure destinations with great tourism potential.

Announcing the developments, SP Jain, Chairman and Managing Director, Pride Hotels Limited, said "Subsequent to the challenges due to the pandemic in the past two years we are now witnessing exponential growth. While we will have 50 properties by the end of this year we plan to expand our footprints nationally by doubling our portfolio to 100 hotels by 2030. With the market gaining rapid momentum we will soon come back to expansion mode for our flagship properties. The Pride Group performed exceedingly well in 2021-2022 compared to 2020-2021. The ADR and occupancy have gone up from 43% to 65% for the current year 2022-2023. We are expecting to clock a turnover of Rs. 250 crores this fiscal year".

The new portfolio includes resorts and hotels in the cities of Nainital, Jim Corbett, Jabalpur, Daman, Rishikesh, Surendranagar, Dwaraka, Bhavnagar, Bharuch, Agra, Somnath, Dehradun, Chandigarh, Neemrana, Rajkot, Bhopal, Aurangabad, and Haldwani. Pride Group has also forayed into the premium service apartment space with the launch of its new brand 'Pride Suites', with the first property signed in Gurugram.

Currently, Pride Hotels operates and manages a chain of hotels under the brand name "Pride Plaza Hotel" an Indian Luxury Collection, "Pride Hotel" which are conveniently centrally located upscale business hotels, "Pride Resorts" at mesmerizing destinations and Mid-Market segment hotels for every business "Pride Biznotel". All four brands are well



S P Jain

appreciated and frequented by corporate clients, domestic and foreign tourists. Pride Hotel is a homegrown brand that resonates with true Indian hospitality.

Pride Hotels Signs new properties

Pride group of Hotels has signed two new properties - 'Pride Suites' Gurugram & Pride Biznotel Aurangabad'

Pride Group of Hotels has now forayed into the premium service apartment space with the launch of its new brand 'Pride Suites'. The company has now signed an agreement to launch its first property in Gurugram under the brand 'Pride Suites'. This will be the first extended-stay hotel from Pride Group with 2 Bay & 3 Bay rooms with a kitchenette, rooftop Bar, Grill & Restaurant, and Swimming Pool. The new property will be in close proximity to various corporate hubs, shopping malls, commercial establishments, and other places of interest.

Announcing the signing, Atul Upadhyay,



Vice President, Pride Group of Hotels, says "The market for luxury homestay has been growing exponentially over the years. We are delighted to venture into this lucrative market by signing our first property in Gurugram under the brand 'Pride Suites'. Gurugram which houses some of the leading corporate and multinationals has seen steady growth in the inflow of business travelers. However there has been an acute shortage of upscale rooms in the city. Pride Suites will offer all the contemporary amenities and unmatched comfort for the discerning corporate traveler ideally looking for an extended stay in the city".

Pride Biznotel Aurangabad'

The group has also announced the signing of 'Pride Biznotel Aurangabad'. Conveniently located adjacent to Aurangabad airport, the hotel is easily accessible to prominent



tourist destinations Ajanta & Ellora Caves, Panchakki, and Bibi-ka-Maqbara, Daulatabad fort among others. Pride Biznotel brand is a moderately priced, upscale, full-service hotel that meets the discerning needs of a business, adventure and leisure traveler.

Announcing the signing, Atul Upadhyay, Vice President, Pride Group of Hotels said, "We are extremely delighted to expand our footprints in Aurangabad, the tourism capital of Maharashtra. The city is recognized worldwide for its architectural marvels, world heritage sites, historical museums, handicrafts and cuisine. Apart from its historic and cultural significance, Aurangabad is one of the fastest developing cities for business and industry. It would be a pleasure to offer the signature Pride Hotel hospitality to our esteemed guests in Aurangabad".

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VITS-Kamats Group Launches 'Vits Select'

VITS-Kamats Group has announced a new addition to its portfolio with the launch of 'VITS Select'. Positioned in the mid-market segment, VITS Select will offer smart accommodation with F&B facilities primarily catering to business and leisure travelers. The properties will be conveniently located in close proximity to commercial hubs, city centers, small towns, and tourist attractions offering exceptional guest experiences.

Announcing the launch, Dr. Vikram Kamat, Founder, VITS-Kamats Group said, "While luxury hotels are at par with their global counterparts there is a near absence of internationally acceptable 3-star facilities primarily in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. To cater to the growing demand of corporate travelers we are delighted to launch VITS Select, which is moderately priced and equipped with all the contemporary amenities. VITS-Kamats

group not only focuses on rooms but our core expertise is Food & Beverage and banqueting services. We are the only premium hotel chain with the most frequented F&B outlets. Every VITS Select hotel will boast of multi-cuisine specialty restaurants serving authentic delicacies to cater to the taste of the discerning business traveler and locals alike".

'VITS Select' with its strategic location, striking décor, and impeccable F&B services will present a blissful corporate sojourn for guests traveling to the region. The hotels will offer 24 hours room service, multi-cuisine restaurants, travel desk, business center, conference rooms, and banqueting facilities. The rooms will be well-equipped with AC, Wi-Fi connectivity, LED TV, Wardrobes, Tea/



coffee maker, mini-fridge and safety lockers. The first property under the 'VITS Select' brand will be soon launched in Daman, followed by Bharuch.

VITS-Kamats Group currently manages 27 properties under the flagship brands 'VITS Premium Full Service Hotels & Resorts' and 'Purple Bed by VITS'. The Hotel chain presently

has an inventory of 1000+ rooms with a host of banqueting, conferencing, and restaurant facilities. The company is looking for a robust expansion plans to have 75 properties by 2025. As part of its expansion plans, VITS-Kamats Group will unveil the VITS hospitality experience in Bharuch, Daman, Jalandhar, Surat, Karad, Dwarka (NCR), and Colaba (Mumbai).

Hilton Signs Hilton Hyderabad Resort & Spa



Hilton announced the signing of an agreement with CKR Resorts Private Limited to launch Hilton's flagship brand in Hyderabad, with Hilton Hyderabad Resort & Spa. Hilton continues to expand its presence in India and currently operates 24 hotels, seven of which are Hilton Hotels & Resorts properties.

Navjit Ahluwalia, senior vice president and country head of Hilton in India, said, "I am thrilled to announce the signing of Hilton Hyderabad Resort & Spa. We actively explore strategic opportunities to deploy our brands across the country and this signing reinforces our presence in the southern region of India. We are pleased to partner with CKR Resorts Private Limited and bring Hilton's world-class hospitality to our guests in Hyderabad. I am confident that when the hotel opens, it will be a preferred

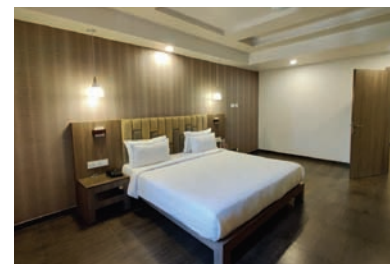
destination for all travellers."

Srinivas Chintala Reddy, Director, CKR Resorts Private Limited said, "We are excited to partner with Hilton - one of the leading hospitality companies in the world - to bring the international hotel experience to the state of Telangana. Hyderabad is a city which attracts international and domestic travellers because of its historical and cultural relevance, and we are confident that we will be able to offer guests world-class hospitality through this partnership."

The resort is spread across 15 acres and is situated in Shamirpet, Hyderabad, near Genome Valley - a high-tech business hub focused on pharmaceutical research and development.

With 115 rooms and 13 villas with private plunge pools, Hilton Hyderabad Resort & Spa will offer an exceptional guest experience. Additionally, with its expansive lush green lawns, modern architecture and design, along with its large banquet and meeting spaces, the resort will offer excellent options for guests to host corporate events, meetings, social events and weddings. The resort will be equipped with a fitness center and a spa, as well as multiple specialised dining outlets and a bar to cater to food connoisseurs.

'Pride Biznotel' Launched in Sasan Gir



Pride Group of Hotels has launched 'Pride Biznotel' at Gujarat's Sasan Gir National Park. Pride Biznotel Sasan Gir will be the group's 13th property in Gujarat. The hotel is easily accessible and is in close proximity to Gir National Park and other popular places of tourist interest.

Pride Biznotel Sasan Gir offers 23 air conditioned rooms, well equipped with internet connectivity, television and all contemporary amenities. Guests can avail of 24-hour room service, complimentary breakfast, tour desk, etc. The multi-cuisine restaurant serves a variety of Indian and continental delicacies in a-ala- cart. The hotel also houses a banquet for events and get-togethers that will be operational soon.

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Leela Leadership Development Programme

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts announced the launch of the Leela Leadership Development Programme (LLDP) with its first batch of 25 candidates at The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel and Residences. Built around a world class curriculum, in partnership with Indian School of Hospitality (ISH) in alliance with Les Roches, the class of 2023 will kick start learning through blended modules that include boot camps, classroom training, online classes and on the job experience across Leela hotels.

Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Operating Officer at The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts said, "We are excited to welcome our first batch of Leela Leadership Development Programme, class of 2023 in partnership with Indian School of Hospitality in alliance with Les Roches. We are truly humbled by the overwhelming response for our inaugural batch and thrilled to see the passion for hospitality in these young minds. The Leela's deep rooted Indian legacy and ethos of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' is the crux of Indian hospitality and we are delighted to partner with ISH to train and develop leaders who can take on challenges at a global level while retaining this ethos that defines true Indian hospitality. It is a privilege to interact with young talent and even a greater one to shape remarkable future luxury hospitality leaders."

Dilip Puri, Founder and Chief Operating Officer, Indian School of Hospitality, was quoted saying: "We are excited to work with The Leela group and leverage our executive education capabilities to help them train and nurture future hospitality leaders. By extending our academic expertise and pedagogy for the creation of this programme, we are



moving forward together in our mission to prepare young professionals who will shape a thriving industry in the new world environment. We are happy to be co-creating value for this programme through our alliance with Les Roches, one of the world's leading hospitality business schools".

The LLDP programme is a 15-month programme that identifies and mentors the talent in the industry with capstone projects, assessments, and extensive guidance at the iconic Leela properties. The programme will also include immersive knowledge sessions at ISH's world class campus in Gurugram and will offer an applied learning format through various expert sessions and workshops delivered by their faculty.

A tailored management training programme, Leela Leadership Development Programme offers young aspiring hoteliers the opportunity to train at some of the leading luxury hotels in the country under the leadership of accomplished hoteliers with blended learning modules focused on global hospitality competencies moulding them to be leaders of tomorrow.

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Signum Hotel Academy Partners with THSC

Signum Hotel Academy, an educational initiative by Signum Hotels & Resorts, has partnered with Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) to conduct THSC approved hospitality courses. The affiliation aims to create a pool of talent for entry level positions in hospitality that is facing a crunch of human resources in current times.

The THSC approved courses will impart theoretical knowledge as well as on-the-job training in key operational areas of a hotel including Front Office, Food & Beverages, Food Production and Housekeeping. Signum Cityscapes Mohali has also been approved as the on-the job training center for practical exposure.

Commenting on the affiliation, Mehul Sharma, Founder – Signum Hotels & Resorts said, 'The pandemic had stalled hospitality hiring and training, and drove away interested students from opting a career in this sector. With business reviving, hiring has also re-started but now there is a shortage of skilled talent. We are happy to partner THSC in our shared vision to create more skilled manpower for the industry.'

Shilpa Dikshiiit, Head - Signum Hotel Academy said, 'THSC partnership will add further credibility to the courses and will enhance program enrolments further. Our courses offer the ideal balance of theoretical knowledge and practical exposure.'

Rajan Bahadur, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) said, 'We welcome Signum Hotels to our Training Partner network. THSC is committed to creating a robust and sustainable eco-system for skill development in the industry to fulfil the manpower requirements and bridge the gap. With Signum Hotel Academy we will expand our reach with a common aim to develop skilled talent for hospitality and other sub sectors of the industry.'

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HAI Supports WTTC's 'Hotel Sustainability Basics'

Hotel Association of India (HAI), an integrated platform of the Indian hospitality has endorsed the industry driven, global initiative 'Hotel Sustainability Basics' of World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) to promote responsible tourism. The initiative was launched on the 21st of April at WTTC's Global Summit held in Manila, Philippines. The "Hotel Sustainability Basics" program recognises a set of criteria that all hotels should implement to drive responsible Travel & Tourism. At the launch, HAI was represented by Gaurav Pokhariyal, Senior Vice President & Global Head – Human Resources, IHCL.

Hotel Sustainability Basics provides the global hospitality sector with a baseline of positive actions to be taken to ensure they meet the minimum sustainability requirements. Developed by the industry for the industry, it highlights 12 actions which are fundamental to hotel sustainability and will help raise the base level of sustainability across the entire hospitality industry by providing every hotel a starting point on their sustainability journey.

The initiative has also gained support from major global groups such as Jin Jiang International (Holdings) Co., Ltd. including their affiliates Jin Jiang Hotels, Louvre Hotels Group and Radisson Hotel Group, Accor, Barceló Hotel Group, Meliá Hotels International, Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL). The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) is another Industry Body that has come forward in the program's support.

The message issued for the launch", MP Bezbaruah, Secretary General HAI, said, "A deep sense of concern for the planet and the community has been at the very core of business for the Association's founder members who believe in sustainable and responsible growth. It was only natural therefore for HAI to align with WTTC's initiative of Global Hotel Sustainability Basics and endorse it wholeheartedly at the first available opportunity. The initiative marks a responsible return to business post the pandemic."

'Aujasya' by The Leela'

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts have launched their signature wellness programme - Aujasya by The Leela aimed at redefining the road to holistic wellbeing. A unique blend inspired by traditional and modern practices, Aujasya by The Leela encompasses a collection of authentic experiences that build vivacity and promote the vigour of life, built around the 2Rs of Wellbeing – Restore (Food) and Renew (Mindfulness). Taking origin from the Sanskrit word, Aujasya - translated as beneficial to strengthening vitality or energy, this initiative will truly allow guests to embrace an enriching and healthy lifestyle.

The brand has launched the first pillar, Restore (Food), in collaboration with renowned nutritionist and food consultant, Dr. Ankita Jalori. The Leela has re-imagined culinary experiences across the country by improving the nutritional profile of food menus and offering healthy alternatives. Executive



Chef, Simran Singh Thapar at The Leela Palace Udaipur and Chef Rishabh Anand at The Leela Palace New Delhi along with their culinary teams across the country have thoughtfully curated menus to achieve the right balance between health needs and gastronomic expectations by

focusing on millets, lean proteins, low-fat dairy and whole grains.

Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Operating Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts said, "Challenges of the contemporary world and our fast-paced lifestyles often pose a disruption for our overall health. With Aujasya by The Leela, we are embarking on a lifelong commitment to holistic wellbeing. Our first step with Dr. Jalori has paved the way for a renewed take on food and nutrition. Her expertise in the field combined with her unmatched experience has enabled us to brew signature dishes with a renewed nutritional focus. We are delighted to begin this journey on such a meaningful note and will soon expand our wellbeing offering as we build on the concept of the 2Rs of Wellbeing with a signature touch of The Leela, while staying true to our brand ethos of placing the guest at the centre of everything we do."

Dr. Ankita Jalori, Food and Nutrition Consultant said, "Having worked in the nutrition and food industry for over 20 years, I am delighted to work with The Leela on conceptualizing Aujasya by The Leela. Today people have become more aware and conscious of their wellbeing. Balancing nutrition with taste can be quite a challenge. My science and knowledge and the skill and creativity of the Chefs at The Leela have come together to create this unique brand program for The Leela and I am thrilled to be a part of this wholesome project and look forward to its growth and expansion."

Aujasya by The Leela food menu includes wholesome and well-balanced dishes that take into account nutritional values and food synergies. The exciting menu includes dishes like Pearl Millet Pesaratu made with fiber and iron packed bajra; fermented Sorghum Rava Idli; calcium and protein rich Sattu Paratha; Spinach And Himalayan Millet Risotto combining the immunity-boosting power of spinach and Himalayan millets; Raw Jackfruit Masala Curry with nutrient dense Khapli wheat flatbreads satisfying a curry craving the healthy way; gluten free and antioxidant rich Quinoa Biryani; antioxidant rich Ginger Millet Bread and Butter Pudding; Ragi Payasam and Millet Pancakes and many more interesting dishes.

Aujasya by The Leela doesn't stop at food alone. The brand will continue to develop the wellness initiative to be a visible and essential offering in all aspects of service, wellness experiences, mindfulness and beyond. Through this unique program, The Leela is committing to curating experiences that resonate with the evolving needs of today's discerning luxury traveler.

Hilton Garden Inn Pune Hinjawadi

Hilton and Alexis Hospitality LLP announced the opening of Hilton Garden Inn Pune Hinjawadi. The 144-room hotel marks the entry of the award-winning Hilton Garden Inn brand in Pune.

Location

The property is located within the Rajiv Gandhi Infotech Park. It is located in close proximity to well-known sports venues, Balewadi and MCA stadiums and a number of dining outlets and retail establishments. It also offers added convenience being



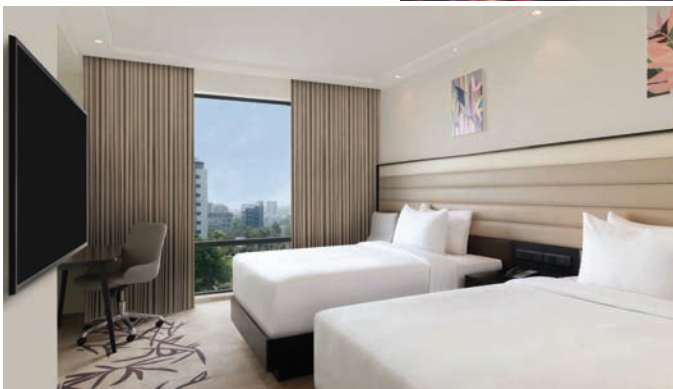
banquet menus catering to multi-cuisine preferences.

Dining Options

The hotel features multiple dining options offering a range of cuisines to excite the palate:

Ruhmani - Guests can look forward to traditional Indian Mughlai and Pan Asian cuisines and a selection of wine and signature cocktails. At Ruhmani, the all-day dining restaurant.

Santorini - The high energy rooftop lounge by the pool serves gourmet and



next to the Mumbai-Pune expressway and is connected to the industrial hub of PCMC.

"I am thrilled to announce the introduction of the Hilton Garden Inn brand to Pune. India continues to witness a speedy recovery in travel and our commitment to grow our estate in India remains on track with this opening". said Navjit Ahluwalia, senior vice president and country head, Hilton India.

"Alexis Hospitality is delighted to partner with Hilton to introduce the Hilton Garden Inn brand to the city of Pune. The team looks forward to delivering positive, upbeat service to all its guests" Samir Shah, general manager, Hilton Garden Inn Pune Hinjawadi.

Spaces

All 144 stylish and well-appointed rooms have scenic views. The rooms feature comfortable Suite Dreams® by Serta beds, a 55-inch, high-definition television, and a work desk with an ergonomic chair. Guests travelling in larger groups can take advantage of 'Confirmed Connecting Rooms' by Hilton for accessibility and convenience. With large floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the city and Mhatoba hills, the rooms are illuminated by natural daylight in addition to being equipped with built-in audio-visual technology.

The hotel also has a well-equipped 24-hour fitness center and a rooftop swimming pool.

With approximately 500 square meters of meeting space and venues with stunning views, the hotel offers an ideal location to host memorable weddings or business conferences.

Event organisers will also be able to select from extensive



continental cuisine with seasonal craft beers.

The Shop - A 24-hour grab and go shop offering a variety of items including healthy and fresh locally sourced foods, and other beverages.

"As one of the fastest growing Hilton brands in the region, Hilton Garden Inn is a popular choice amongst savvy travelers looking to maximise the value of their travels. Beyond its strategic location close to Pune's IT hub, Hilton Garden Inn Pune Hinjawadi offers upscale and affordable accommodations, modern amenities and thoughtful, heartfelt service that appeals to domestic and international business and leisure travelers alike." said Jenny Milos, vice president, Focused Service and All Suites Brands, Asia Pacific.

Hilton Garden Inn Pune Hinjawadi is part of Hilton Honors, the award-winning guest-loyalty programme for Hilton's 18 distinct hotel brands. Members who book directly on the hotel website will have access to instant benefits, including a flexible payment slider that allows members to choose nearly any combination of points and money to book a stay, an exclusive member discount and free standard WiFi. Members also have access to contactless technology exclusively through the industry-leading Hilton Honors mobile app, where Hilton Honors members can check in, choose their room, and access their room using Digital Key.

The hotel also participates in the Hilton CleanStay program, an industry-defining standard of cleanliness that delivers a clean and safe experience for guests without compromising the hospitality Hilton is known for.

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IHCL Announces New Properties

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has announced the signing of properties in Chennai, Agra, Thane, Udaipur & Jammu.

IHCL has signed another Taj hotel in Chennai. The new development under management contract will feature branded residences as part of the hotel complex.

Commenting on the signing, Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, IHCL said, "We are excited to announce the fourth Taj hotel in Chennai, together with branded luxury residences. This signing is in line with IHCL's vision of strengthening our presence in key markets across India. The multi-use development will cater to our discerning clientele and in addition to a world-class hotel will offer some of the most exclusives homes in the city managed by a trusted brand. We are pleased to partner with AMPA Group for this project."

The complex spread over 3.5 acres is strategically located at Nelson Manickam road with close proximity to key business districts. This greenfield development once completed will comprise of a luxury hotel with 235 keys and 123 Taj branded residences.

The hotel will have four restaurants and bar, and a selection of adaptable meeting spaces with outdoor areas ideal for hosting both business and social events. Guests will also be able to enjoy recreational facilities of a pool, fitness center and spa. The branded residences will enjoy Taj's legendary service and access to the hotel's facilities.

Ampa Palaniappan, Managing Director, AMPA Group, said, "We are happy to collaborate with IHCL for the Taj hotel and branded residences. Homeowners will have the privilege of enjoying the world-renowned Taj hospitality, in the privacy of their homes."

Chennai, capital of the state of Tamil Nadu is the most prominent cultural, economic and educational centre of South India. With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have 13 hotels in Chennai including three under development.

First Ginger in Agra

IHCL has announced the signing of

a new Ginger in Agra. This hotel is a fully fitted lease and will be designed around the brand's lean luxe design and service philosophy of offering a vibrant, contemporary, and a seamless hospitality experience to its guests.

Commenting on the signing, Ms. Deepika Rao, Executive Vice President, IHCL, said, "We are proud to bring the Ginger brand to Agra. A popular leisure destination, the city is an integral part of the famed Golden Triangle and home to the iconic Taj Mahal. IHCL will now have three hotels across Taj, SeleQtions and Ginger brands in the city. We are pleased to partner with The Dawar Group's Kaivalya Infratech Private Limited for this project."

The 75 keys Ginger is strategically situated off Fatehabad Road, a short drive from The Taj Mahal as well as other historic monuments such as the Agra Fort and Itmad-ud-Daula tomb. The hotel will feature an all-day diner and bar, fitness centre and a meeting room.

Puran Dawar, Founder and Owner, Dawar Group, said, "We are delighted to collaborate with IHCL for this new hotel in Agra. Ginger will offer a fresh and modern experience to the travellers."

A Vivanta Hotel In Thane

IHCL has signed a Vivanta hotel in Thane, Maharashtra. Located in the heart of the city on LBS Road, the existing hotel will be upgraded into the Vivanta brand post renovation. This is a management contract with NSM Hotels Private Limited.

Commenting on the signing, Suma Venkatesh, Executive Vice President – Real Estate & Development, IHCL, said, "Continuing IHCL's vision of strengthening our presence in key domestic markets, the signing of this hotel will debut the Vivanta brand in Thane, and will be our second hotel in this metropolitan city. Thane is an integral extension of Mumbai, known for its natural beauty and rapid industrial development. We are delighted to partner with NSM Hotels Private Limited for this project."

The 99-rooms Vivanta hotel is strategically located near the intersection of Eastern Express Way and Ghodbunder Road, a vital commercial and residential

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area slated to be connected by the upcoming phase of the Mumbai Metro project.

Dining options at the hotel will include Mynt, the all-day dining restaurant, and a bar. Recreational facilities will include a pool, fitness center and spa. The hotel will also feature banqueting halls with meeting rooms for social and business gatherings. It is a Brownfield project slated to open in 2023.

Mangesh Bhosale, Chairman, NSM Hotels Private Limited, said, "We are happy to collaborate with IHCL for this new hotel in Thane. We believe that this Vivanta hotel will leverage the untapped potential of the hospitality landscape in the city with a new and refreshed spirit."

With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have 13 hotels in Mumbai including four under development.

A New Seleqtions Hotel In Udaipur

IHCL has announced the signing of a new Seleqtions hotel in Udaipur, Rajasthan. The hotel is a management contract with Lalit Bagh Heritage Palace and Museum Private

Limited.

The 151-room Seleqtions hotel is strategically located in Nahar Mangra, with close proximity to the airport. Spread over eight acres, the hotel is being built in the tradition of the grand palaces of Rajasthan. It will have an all-day diner, a specialty restaurant and bar. The hotel will have over 10,000 square feet of banquet space, meeting rooms and expansive lawns, perfect for elegant weddings and conferences. It is a Brownfield project slated to open in 2025.

Tikam Singh Rao, Director, Lalit Bagh Heritage Palace and Museum Private Limited, said, "We are delighted to partner with IHCL for this Seleqtions hotel. The company is renowned for putting Udaipur on the global tourist map."

With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have six hotels across brands including three under development in Udaipur.

Vivanta hotel in Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir

The group has also announced the signing of a Vivanta hotel in Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir. The existing hotel will

be upgraded into the Vivanta brand post renovation. This is a management contract with the KC Group.

The 88-rooms Vivanta hotel is strategically located in the city centre, a short driving distance from the airport as well as all major tourist attractions and commercial districts. Dining options at the hotel will include Mynt, the all-day dining restaurant, and a bar. Recreational facilities will include a pool, fitness center and spa. The hotel will also feature banqueting halls with meeting rooms for social and business gatherings. The hotel is slated to open at the end of 2022 after completing renovation.

Raju Chowdhary, Chairman, K C Group and Siddhant Chowdhary, Managing Director Hotel KC City Centre said, "We are happy to collaborate with IHCL for this hotel in Jammu. We believe that this Vivanta hotel will leverage the untapped potential of the hospitality landscape in the city with a new and refreshed spirit."

With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have five hotels in Jammu & Kashmir including three under development.



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Atul Upadhyay

Atul Upadhyay has been elevated to the post of Sr. Vice President at Pride Group of Hotels. He will continue to oversee the entire operations of the group, spearhead strategic partnerships and drive the company's expansion plans. Prior to this, he was the Vice President of the group. Alumni of the prestigious Cornell University (US), he holds a bachelor's degree in Mathematics Science from

Jiwaji University, Diploma in Hotel Management from MSU, Vadodara and a Master's in Business Administration from Symbiosis International University, have over 28 years of experience in the hospitality industry.



Rajesh Rajpurohit

Rajesh Rajpurohit is the new General Manager at Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala. With a career spanning more than two decades in hospitality, he worked across prestigious national and international brands such as ITC Hotels, Taj Hotels, Aman Resorts, Wyndham and IHG Hotels. Before joining Radisson Blu Resort Dharamshala, Rajesh served a successful 6-year stint at Radisson

Jaipur City Center as the General Manager. He is a post-graduate in Business Management and an MBA in Hospitality. He is also Certified Hospitality Business Acumen from HSMIAI University, USA.



Vincent Ramos

Vincent Ramos, has been elevated to Sr. Vice President – Goa, after spearheading the Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) in Goa as the Area Director. He will continue to provide strategic direction to IHCL hotels within the Goa region. Some of the iconic properties in the IHCL, Goa portfolio include Taj Resort & Convention Centre, Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Taj Holiday Village Resort

& Spa and Cidade de Goa. He graduated from the Institute of Hotel Management, Goa and attained his Master's in Business Administration from S P Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai.



Mohammad Shoib

JW Marriott, has appointed Mohammad Shoib as the Director of Sales and Marketing at the newly opened JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort and Spa. With career spanning over 14 years in the hotel industry, he had been associated with the Marriott family for nine years as the Director of Sales and Marketing. Prior to this role, Shoib spearheaded the Sales and Marketing

department, at The Leela Palace, Bangalore. He was also associated with Le Meridien Paro, Riverfront, Ginger Hotel.



Saurabh Chowdhury

Saurabh Chowdhury has been appointed as the Director of Operations for The Westin Mumbai Garden City. Saurabh has been associated with The Westin Mumbai Garden City for the last six years. He was on boarded as the Director of Sales in 2016 and then promoted to Director of Sales and Marketing in 2018. He has worked with Grand Hyatt Mumbai, The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts, The

Renaissance Marriott Mumbai Convention Center Hotel and Marriott Executive Apartments. He is a graduate of DY Patil College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Mumbai.



Karthick Vincent

Sayaji Hotel Vadodara has appointed Karthick Vincent as General Manager. He has over 16 years of experience in Hotel Operations. Prior to this appointment, he was associated with Sayaji Group of Hotels units at Indore, Rajkot, Jamnagar, and Raipur. In his illustrious career with Sayaji Group he has been instrumental in enhancing business development, pre-opening of hotels, quality standards

across all departments, introducing innovative food concepts, establishing strategic tie-ups for MICE, and spearheaded various marketing and collaboration programs.



Sukhpreet Singh Bath

Fairmont Jaipur has elevated Sukhpreet Singh Bath as the Rooms Division Manager. Sukhpreet will be responsible for handling the Front Office, Housekeeping, Fairmont Butler service, Ruhab Spa, ensuring an exceeding guest experience. Sukhpreet joined Fairmont Jaipur in 2019 to spearhead operations as the Front Office manager. Sukhpreet has worked at JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove

Resort & Spa, JW Marriott Aerocity, Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts Gurgaon, Trident Gurgaon and the Hyatt Global Contact Center.



UmopathyAmirtham

UmopathyAmirtham has been appointed as the General Manager of The Leela Ashtamudi, a Raviz Hotel. With an experience of 25 years he has worked at properties across India and the UAE. He was associated with The Hyatt in Goa, Dubai, and Chennai, Umaid Bhavan Palace Jodhpur, Windsor Manor Sheraton Towers Bangalore, and ITC Kakatiya Hyderabad. He started with The Leela

Palace Chennai as Room Division Manager and was promoted to EAM and later to The Leela Palace Jaipur as Hotel Manager.



Vipul Tripathi

Sayaji Hotel Jamnagar has appointed Vipul Tripathi as General Manager. He holds more than 20 years of experience in Hotel operations. He has prior experience in Operations & Financial Management, Sales & Marketing planning, People Management, and Guest Focus. Prior to this appointment, he was associated with Sayaji Group of Hotels units at Vadodara and Indore. As an Accommodation

Manager, he achieved the highest revenue target on a yearly & monthly basis and the highest percentage in Guest Satisfaction Index.



Shahnaaz Anjum

The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru has elevated Shahnaaz Anjum to Food & Beverage Manager. She has been in the industry for close to 13 years. Beginning her career with The Westin Hyderabad, she gradually forayed into leadership roles while working with world class luxury and business properties both in India and internationally such as Sheraton Grand Bangalore, JW Marriott

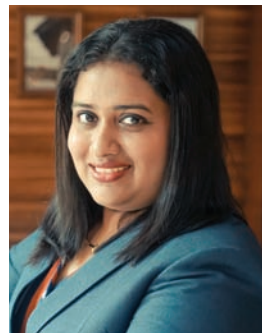
Bengaluru, Westin and Le Meridien Bahrain, Courtyard by Marriott Kochi, and The Leela Palace Chennai.



Dharmendra Rana

Enrise by Sayaji Aurangabad has appointed of Dharmendra Rana as Director of Operations. With an experience of 15 years he has worked with The Oberoi New Delhi, Trident Agra, Taj Lake Palace Udaipur, and Ananta Spa & Resort Udaipur. Prior to this, he was associated with Hotel Avadh Utopia, Surat as Food & Beverage Manager. He has an excellent track record in F&B

Operations, Business Planning, Profit Center Operations, Vendor Management, Quality Management, People management, Business Development and Budgetary Control.



Divyashree Borkar

Novotel Goa Candolim and Novotel Goa Resort and Spa has appointed Ms. Divyashree Borkar as its manager learning and development. Possessing a meritorious experience of around 8 years, Divyashree comes with extensive knowledge and expertise in the hospitality industry. She was previously associated with Courtyard by Marriott, Pune and Country Inn and Suites by Radisson Goa

Candolim. Divyashree has a strong operational understanding of her field which makes it perfect for her current role at Novotel Goa.



Ankush Ahuja

Ankush Ahuja has been appointed as F&B Manager at Hilton Goa Resort. He has experience of over 13 years in the industry. In his new role at, Ankush would be spearheading the functioning on overseeing all aspects of food and beverage operations. He has worked with the Marriott International, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Centara Hotels & Resorts, Taj Hotels & Resorts, Carlson

Rezidor and YUM Restaurants International. His last assignment was with 'The B Premier Boutique Collection, Doha' as Assistant Food & Beverage Manager.



Abhishek Banerjee

Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach has appointed Abhishek Banerjee as the Housekeeping Manager. With an experience of 10 years, Abhishek is adept at administering the entire operations of housekeeping. He is a thorough team player with sound knowledge about Guest Relationship Management, Revenue Management, Budgeting and Cost Control, Cross-

functional Coordination, Finance Management and more. Prior to joining Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, Abhishek has worked in the housekeeping space with renowned hotels across India.



Rohit Pandey

The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru has elevated Rohit Pandey to Hotel Manager. With over two decades of experience he has worked with some of the finest, luxury properties across Thailand, Seychelles, Maldives and India. Starting his career with The Oberoi group at Trident Agra, Rohit has held various managerial roles during his stint with the One & Only Reethi Rah Maldives,

Anantara Resort Maldives, Central Hotels & Resorts, Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, to name a few.



Kishore Tadikamalla

Kishore Tadikamalla has been appointed as Food and Beverage Manager at Courtyard and Fairfield by Marriott Bengaluru ORR. With around 11 years of experience he has worked at TGI Fridays in Hyderabad, Sheraton Hotels and Resorts, Accor, Swissôtel Hotels and Resorts, Le Meridien, JW Marriott. He is been a Guest Service Associate, Mixologist, Beverage and Venue Manager,

and through his work and dedication is now the Food and Beverage Manager.



Keen on Green

Environmentally friendly design has been a focus of architects and designers for decades, but people's growing desire to leave a destination better than they found it is driving loyalty to hotel brands that are positively impacting the environment. World Environment Day, observed in June every year, is making travelers and others more conscious about keeping the milieu clean. Today, green hotels are increasingly becoming in-demand. Making your hotel more sustainable and helping the planet, can actually boost your revenue and attract more bookings. **Ashok Malkani** finds that due to the pandemic, people have become more prone to stay in hotels which are eco-friendly and environment friendly. Hotels too are likely to benefit by adopting sustainable strategies which are more economical.

With the climate crisis on the rise, substantial efforts are being made globally to improve the environment which is getting polluted due to excessive emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂). According to U.N., humanity is using up the world's resources faster than they can naturally recover. The CO₂ emissions will need to halve by 2030 to avoid temperature rises of 2.5°C and higher by the end of the century. We are running out of time to save our planet - using up the equivalent of 1.6 Earths to maintain our current way of life - and nature simply cannot keep up with our demands, believes U.N. Thus The United Nations' Environment Programme (UNEP) has been holding The World Environment Day on June 5 every year, since 1973.

Environment has to be maintained by all - individuals as well as industries. In this connection it may be said that sustainability has been largely incorporated into the hospitality industry's policies and management thinking, since a long time. Eco-consciousness has been on the rise in the hospitality industry. Guests are looking for sustainable and authentic experiences and luxury hotels are going green as millennials demand sustainable travel options.

Hotels all over the globe are rolling out a plethora of green initiatives like solar power installations, smart showers, waste diversion, et al.

Hotels are also adopting measures which will help the guests, besides others, to



maintain environment friendliness. Marriott International has partnered with 'Charge Zone' to deploy 100 EV charging stations across all its properties in India which will help in reducing carbon emissions. Taking a step towards sustainability, Indore Marriott Hotel has installed an EV Charging station at its property and has initiated conversion towards an EV fleet as a part of the initiative by Marriott's commitment to sustainable operations and creating an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure around their hotels.

Eco friendly hotels are on the rise worldwide. But what makes an eco-hotel and why should hotels want to be ecofriendly?

Vishal Lonkar General Manager, Business Development, Renest Hotels & Resorts explains, "Essentially an eco-hotel is an environmentally friendly hotel that is not only built but also managed or operated in such a way so as to reduce the carbon footprint. This is done by employing sustainable practices wherever possible like using eco-friendly products, reducing energy and water consumption, using 100% organic linen, and reducing paperwork to name a few."

He disclosed, "Sustainable hospitality is a growing trend these days. Eco-friendly hotels tend to protect the environment by lowering their water and energy consumption, thereby reducing the overall cost and gaining a competitive advantage. Green travel is on the rise now so it's a win-win for the hotels that opt to go green."

Masdhoq Saeed, Resort Manager, LUX* South Ari Atoll, Maldives, states,

"Hotels, apart from providing exceptional service, have to think about the impact of our industry on the natural surroundings. With this idea in mind, we can then follow a green approach throughout every step of a hotel's operations. This involves waste management, energy and water conservation, and supporting sustainable initiatives on both local and global levels."

He continued, "Travel industry is large enough to impact the green balance, and we have to be mindful about this, sharing the same planet as our home. With millions of people traveling across the globe daily, every small action can contribute to the nature's wellbeing."

Satyajit Kotwal, General Manager, The Resort, Mumbai, explicates, "Any Hotel which works towards reducing the environmental impact by taking corrective actions of employing sustainable practices is called an ECO Hotel. This property is the need of the hour. Not just hotels but every organization and every being should take actions which have only positive impact on the environment. Ours is the last generation who can do something about this - any further delay would only be disastrous."

Sukhbir Singh, General Manager, Novotel Pune Nagar Road, clarifies, "A property that is taking steps towards sustainability and has made important changes and improvements to its infrastructure to minimize its impact on the environment is called an eco-hotel. There are a variety of changes that a property can make to become an eco hotel. A few of them are: use of renewable energy sources, organic



Satyajit Kotwal



Ronan Fearon



Masdhoq Saeed

toiletries, farm to table menus, introducing a compost system, etc.”

He added, “In the last couple of decades, the tourism and hospitality industry has experienced immense growth. Business and leisure travel has flourished at an exponential rate. With this kind of growth the pressure on the environment also increases and we, as an industry, must take steps to curb any negative impact. Due to climate change green technology has also developed and has become accessible to hotels. Hence it has become our responsibility to make our hotels as eco-friendly as possible.”

Ronan Fearon, General Manager, JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa, says, “Catering to the growing demand for sustainable tourism has become pivotal for any hotel. It’s important to start reducing the property’s carbon footprints and maintain an eco friendly image. This can be achieved with sustainable practices which involve streamlining operations and improving efficiency. An eco-friendly hotel works to reduce its environmental impact by employing sustainable best practices in maintenance, services, and supply chains. The way the hotel is designed and the way it runs to have a positive impact on the environment as well as the local community makes it an eco-friendly hotel. With the right energy saving systems, sustainable local products, water saving systems, carbon neutrality mobile check-in that is paper less, sustainable food packaging for deliveries (Marriott Bonvoy on wheels) makes JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa an ideal eco-hotel.”

He adds, “Customers are increasingly being mindful on green credentials, when they travel, for several reasons. As environmental awareness has grown, people have greater access to eco-solutions. Lifestyles around the world have changed. More people than ever are committed to recycling, reducing their use of plastics and having sustainably organic foods, saving energy and water and generally bringing eco-friendly elements into our daily lives. Eco hotels follow the practice of having and following various measures of sustainability in all areas and maintaining a card in order to deliver the high expectations of our customers.”

Kamini Patel, Brand Director, Aramness Safari Lodge, Gir National Park, states,

“It’s first and foremost the hotel’s consciousness towards their environment, carbon footprint, sustainable actions and commitment towards constant improvement to reach their goals. From water harvesting, no plastic use, reducing single-use items, these are a few ways to make a hotel an eco one. The monitoring of resources used, how the waste is recycled and the overall impact on the environment are the main factors.”

She adds “The hotel should be eco friendly because we are all individually responsible towards the earth. The hospitality industry is one of the largest service industries, and we are in a prime position to make a positive impact. We have been the largest consumer of goods, energy and single-use items in the past, and these actions need to be addressed.”

Benefits of Green hotels

Sustainability in the business world is essential to achieving growth and satisfying customers. Today, consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to environmental issues. Travelers are keen to occupy eco-friendly places. The hospitality businesses also save money in the long run when they go green.

One would ask why the travelers prefer eco friendly lodging places and what are the benefits of these properties?

Satyajit maintains, “Sustainable tourism is growing. More and more people are getting actively concerned about need for “working now” to save the environment. People want to reduce their carbon footprint. Consumers know that eco hotels are healthier. Also, at times, eco friendly hotels are more affordable.

“The benefits of eco-hotel can be briefly summed up thus:

- It benefits brand image.
- It reduced costs in the long run.
- Healthier work environment.
- Healthier community.”

Kamini says, “There is a rise in the awareness of preserving the environment and guests are looking at their own impact on earth. When they choose a hotel to stay at, being an eco-friendly one stands out. There is a feel-good factor as well connected with this conscious decision. The biggest benefit is being a responsible citizen of the world

Vishal avers, “The hospitality and travel sector was among the worst hit by the recent pandemic. However, since people

have now resumed travelling, the market is gradually picking up but there is a huge shift in consumer behaviour that is being witnessed. People are now conscious and aware more than ever about their health, fitness and the environment. As a result, the popularity of eco-travel is skyrocketing. Responsible tourism not only minimizes negative social, economic and environmental impacts but also supports the well-being of the communities as a whole.”

He adds, “Any green hotel is not only committed to reducing its carbon footprint but also to win the goodwill of the guests who are aware of the importance of sustainable hospitality. As we move towards a more conscious and environmentally aware consumer profile, it’s best for the hotels to adapt accordingly and offer the opportunity to travel more sustainably. Not only that, a green hotel rating can significantly boost brand awareness thereby increasing the overall revenue of the hotel.”

Ronan avers, “Eco friendly hotels are growing in popularity among travelers as they are beginning to prefer hotels that are close to the Mother Nature,

away from the hustle and bustle of the city and pollution. Marriott as a brand has implemented ‘commitment to clean’ policy during the recent pandemic. Guest-Facing Communications, installed sanitizing stations and room cleaning protocols are in place during guests’ stay, ensuring that they are well protected.

“I may add that one of the benefits of a Green Hotel is that it reduces the annual operating costs. There is a decline in energy usage and related expenses due to reduction in carbon footprint. Green hotels help in increasing the actual asset value of the property. They offer eco-friendly facilities such as regulated waste disposal and waste disposal management system which is extremely important for property maintenance. They also offer motion sensors for water and energy conservation, installation of solar panels and smoke control areas.”

Masdhooq disclosed, “Many travelers today are conscious about eco practices and observe them in their daily life. Knowing that even when they are on a holiday, they can still follow their sustainable habits, makes them feel better about the whole traveling experience.

Staying at LUX* South Ari Atoll is also a great chance to start following the global green trend, as we always educate guests about our sustainable approach and share tips on implementing those back home.”

He maintains, “Green tourism is not only beneficial for nature but also everyone’s wellbeing. It makes both hoteliers and guests feel good through their contributions to sustainability.”

Sukhbir Singh says, “Guests are getting more and more aware about green practices and sustainability. The changes that our planet has gone through, in the last couple of years, has made consumers conscious of the choices they make.”

He adds, “Going green is also beneficial to the hotels as when they make sustainability a key focus they not only help the environment but they improve the lives of the people in their communities. Local communities such as farmers and vendors also benefit from it. Sustainable practices in a hotel have a positive impact on customer experience and increase their likelihood of returning. Going green also helps in word-of-mouth marketing, and higher customer satisfaction.”



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Converting to eco-Hotel

During the past two years, due to the pandemic, people's priorities have changed. Today, with the slow return to normalcy, their focus has shifted away from the four walls of their homes to the four corners of the world. But fear still lurks in their minds and so the preference is for eco-friendly (or green) hotels. But how does one turn his property into an eco-friendly one and what sustainable strategies should be adopted?

Masdhooq reveals, "For turning your hotel into a green hotel, you should evaluate your current service practices and see what kind of improvements are possible to introduce in every area. Then it is a question of following the set path and regular assessments of updated operations. In this connection, I may mention that our hotel, LUX* South Ari Atoll, Maldives, actively promotes a sustainable approach to travel through workshops for our guests, marine biology presentations, coral planting sessions, and more. We also have coral adoption and whale shark adoption programmes implemented, and we collaborate with local eco entities and educational institutions to spread awareness within the islands."

Satyajit disclosed, for converting your hotel to an eco-friendly one you would have to adopt some of the following:

- Place bottles / pitchers of filtered tap water.
- Get rid of single use plastic bottles.
- Wherever possible use biodegradable and sustainable packaging.
- Automate energy control
- Invest in solar panels
- Invest in energy efficient lights – have motion sensors to control lighting.
- Switch to renewable energy provider.
- Reduce the need for AC

He adds, "The Resort, Mumbai, follows several sustainable strategies. We participate in the annual Earth Hour - a global climate change movement. To be a part of this movement and to show our support for this environmental awareness event, we undertake many energy saving measures. The Resort has taken the responsibility of energy conservation by participating in the fight for climate change. We have taken measures like setting public area temperatures to 24 degrees – guest rooms are equipped with special energy management tools. The hotel uses energy saving light bulbs, water, gas meters and consumption is

monitored daily.

"As a step forward, we have also educated our entire staff on the importance of water. Realising that conservation of water would be successful only if we get our guests involved we have water-saving signage's installed in guest rooms, washrooms and the restaurant areas – gently reminding people to use water responsibly. We have also decided to do laundry wash only with full load and to use the rinsed water from the laundry wash for cleaning and washing of garbage rooms. We have also started watering the hotel's beautifully manicured lawns and gardens in the mornings rather than afternoon to avoid evaporation. Another change we have made is of using a combination of pot boiler and brat pans for cooking.

"In banquets, water left in discarded bottles is collected and used for floor cleaning and gardening purposes. We have completely stopped using plastic bottles in banquets and conference rooms. Slowly we are in the process of getting rid of providing plastic bottles in the rooms.

"We ensure the utensils and dishes are pre-soaked to save usage of running water. Vegetables and fruits are washed in a sink of water rather than under a running water, without compromising on hygiene and cleanliness. Ice machines are adjusted to dispense ice on the basis of requirements and vehicles are given a dry wipe. Wet wipe is given only when absolutely necessary."

Vishal reveals, "Some of the ways you can turn a hotel into green property and eco friendly are:

- Go paperless
- Rainwater harvesting
- Reduce food waste
- Use organic products
- Reduce, reuse and recycle
- Automation for conservation of water and energy
- Utilise eco-friendly cleaning supplies
- Support local communities as much as possible
- Grow your own organic produce if possible

He states, "Eco hotels are the ones that apply stringent green practices/strategies which are sustainable. These practices have to be strategic in nature in order to save cost and at the same time ensure that it doesn't cause any inconvenience to the hotel guests.

"As far as Renest Hotels and Resorts is concerned, it was a brand that was



Kamini Patel



Sukhbir Singh

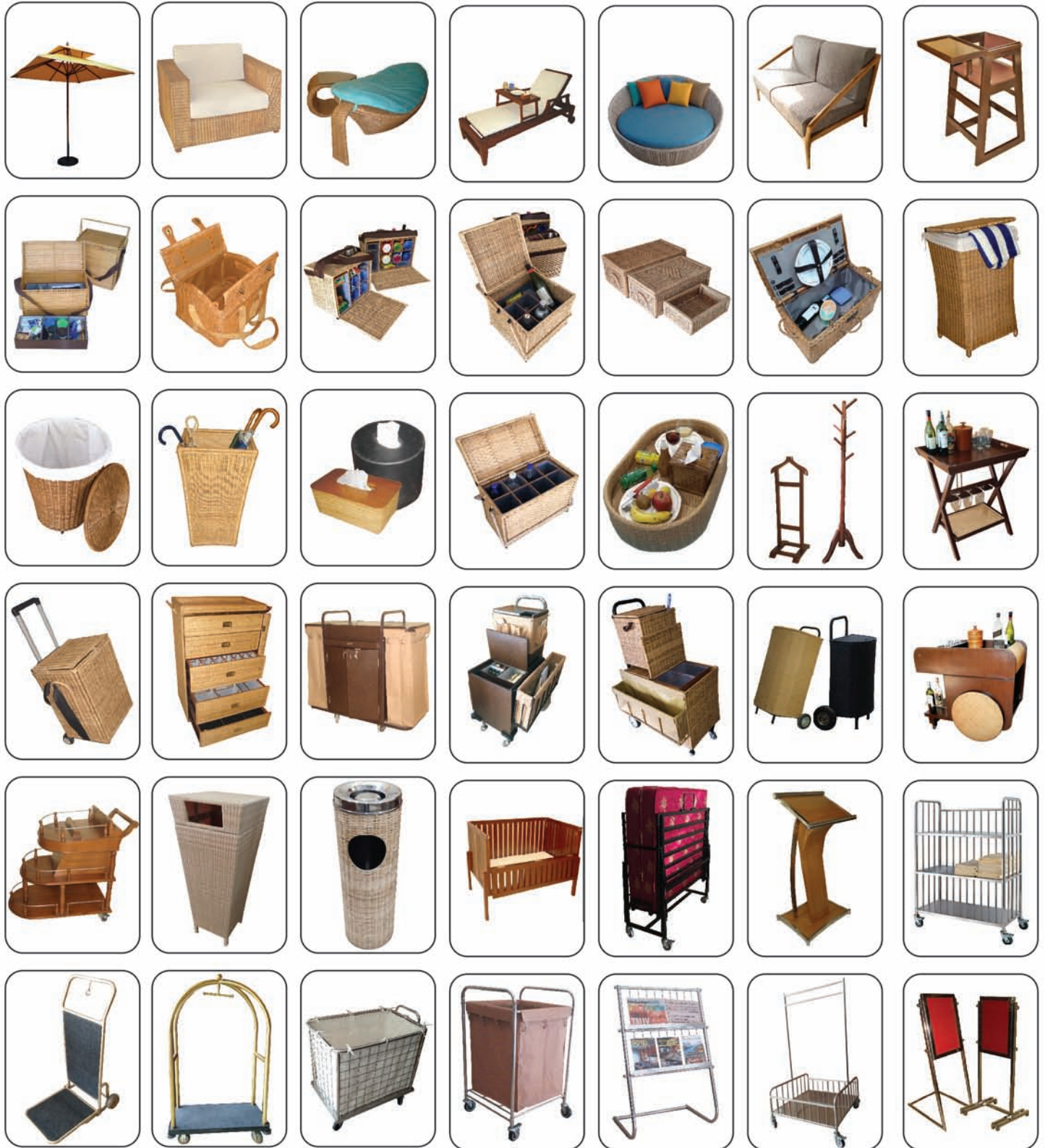


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formulated as being close to nature and a brand that brings value to its target segment. We are currently located in temple towns Shirdi and Tirupati, popular hill station Manali, business hubs, Jaipur and Gandhidham, wildlife space Bandhavgarh and have properties coming up in Haridwar, Dharamshala and Gurugram among others. We are genuinely concerned about our people and the ecosystem in which we live. We have integrated sustainable techniques to conserve and protect our environment such as growing our own organic vegetables, recycling rainwater, installing vertical gardens, and open skylights. We have incorporated the 4N concept (Natural Light, Natural Air, Nature, Natural Materials) in a few of our properties as well.”

Kamini reveals, “To make your hotel eco-friendly you must take the following measures:

- Opt for renewable energy sources such as solar or wind.
- Remove the use of plastic everywhere
- Use bulk guest amenities in refillable bottles instead of single use individual packing.
- Give option to the guest to reuse towels and sheets to reduce water consumption
- Reduce individual packing of food and beverage items – such as mini jams, sugar packets etc.
- Avoid disposable items wherever possible
- Use glass bottles instead of plastic ones
- Reduce use of paper wherever possible, removing excess notes and

collaterals in rooms

- Reduce free amenities, and offer them on request only

“At Aramness we are committed to eco-friendly practices.

- We are completely plastic-free lodge
- We are a farm-to-table concept and grow most of our menu requirements in-house and source locally as much as possible to keep our carbon footprint in check
- We have an in-house bottling unit for still and sparkling water in reusable glass bottles
- We have a biogas plant
- We do rainwater harvesting
- None of our pools are heated in order to conserve energy
- Pool water is recycled into the garden
- We use refillable glass bottles for guest bathroom amenities

We are constantly working to reduce wastage, critically assess our practices and

work towards being more sustainable. This is not a one-time process, it is a continuous one to improve and make the world a better place to live in.

Sukhbir Singh declares, “There are various steps a property can take to include eco friendly practices. Some Green practices adopted by Novotel Pune, to reach Platinum level in sustainable development program Planet 21 and acts for Positive Hospitality, are:

- Reducing CO2 emissions by 10%, between 2019 to 2022, by taking measures such as using renewable energy, recycling waste, replacing single use plastic etc.
- Recycling 85% of the waste generated and ensuring that all waste water is processed. 89% of Novotel Pune’s energy use is from renewable energy.
- Removing all single use plastic from guest bathroom amenities and replacing single use plastic in the F&B area with biodegradable materials.

One of the biggest steps taken towards a greener lifestyle is that Novotel Pune has introduced eco-friendly guest transport services, i.e electric vehicles.

Ronan proclaims, “Staying on top of hospitality industry trends and providing an excellent guest experience, while still keeping costs low, is key to the survival of any hotel. Using bio-degradable room amenities and catering to the growing demand for sustainable tourism gives an opportunity to the guests of having a luxurious experience in an environmentally friendly hotel.”

He disclosed, “Some of the eco friendly practices by JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa include recycling bins in guest rooms, promoting eco-friendly transport and carbon-offset programs, using eco-friendly cleaning



products, sourcing food locally, promoting sustainable yoga & resort wear, installing a sustainable, low flush & low-flow water structure to reduce water usage and costs and encouraging guests to play their part

“We follow various steps and maintain the sustainability score card that initiates all strategies. Environmental friendly ways like forming a green team is part of the program. We have started water bottling plant and are in the process of implementing in our property. We are paper less in terms of Marriott Bonvoy keyless check-ins. We have implemented Projectree system to have online approvals for all financial related documents as a part of sustainability program. Further, we have implemented our JW Garden to grow organic food like tomatoes, arugula, garden herbs, lettuce, chilli and more. We are also looking into having rain water harvesting and have also ensured that the hotel is fixed with sensors, LED lights and sensor water taps.”

Green Ranking

The demand for green hotels is increasing. Many hotels – large as well as small – are aggressively pursuing green ranking certificates for three reasons, namely:

- Increasing demand by travelers for eco friendly places to stay.
- Going green is economical in the long run
- Environmental regulations are on the rise globally.

Hotels, today, are keen to get green rankings, for several *raison d’être*.

Masdhoq states, “Being recognised by global entities for our sustainable efforts assures travelers that we are doing our best to serve both our guests and the planet. It is also very encouraging for our team members and inspires them for new ideas to keep up with our eco mission.”

Vishal iterates, “Consumers these days are aware and environmentally conscious. Hence, it becomes all the more important for the hotels to go for green rankings. This helps the hotels draw ecologically-minded guests to their location and thereby generate more revenue. Additionally, green rankings help establish a niche and generate brand awareness. Green hotels also tend to save money in the long run with reduced consumption and efficient use of resources.”

Sukhbir Singh emphasized the need for green ranking thus: “Travellers all

over the world are looking to make more sustainable travel choices. A survey says 98% of Indian travellers want to stay in a sustainable accommodation in the coming year. They would be more likely to choose a specific accommodation that implements sustainable practices; it rewards and encourages providers to take the next steps on their individual sustainability journeys.”

Ronan asserts, “Green hotels emphasize safety, health, and environmental friendliness. They advocate for green operations, green consumption, environmental protection, and reasonable consumption of resources in operations. Various options such as energy conservation, water, green product procurement for health and hygiene, waste reduction by having garbage classifications not only help to improve our business, but also helps to improve the area and community around our hotel.”

Kamini states, “Green rankings help with attracting guests who are conscious travellers, and also for the hotel’s reputation and branding as a responsible member of the community.”

All lodging places have now a dream of going green. ■

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Service with a Smile

While cleanliness and flexibility have been hallmarks of great customer service and satisfaction, communication is a notch above everything else in the hospitality industry. Guest satisfaction can be achieved only if there is proper and polite communication. Service with a smile seems to be the motto of the Guest Relations Dept. This is the department which can persuade guests to re-visit the property. The mission of the Guest Relations – or Customer Service – department is to be available and present for guests at all times – before, during and also after their stay to keep them informed about the developments taking place in the property. **Ashok Malkani** looks at all aspects of this department and how it has ensured the properties to recover from the adverse effects of the pandemic

Hospitality is just that - Hospitality. Thus the success of a hotel or a resort depends on the memorable service that is provided to the guests. And the Guest Relations – or Customer Service – is responsible to create the right image of the property with the guests. But how can guest services carry a hotel when there are no guests? The plight of the hotels over the last two years can be understood as Corona virus brought almost all industries to a standstill. The hospitality industry found many of their affiliates and associates close their doors. Travel and tourism as well as meetings and social gatherings had become taboo. But with time, and relaxations on restrictions, things are slowly returning back to normalcy.

A moot question at this point would be: What was the effect on the hotel industry and the guest relations department due to COVID-19 and how have the two recovered as the things are returning to normalcy?



Amit Rana, General Manager, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Rohini, disclosed, “The pandemic was an extremely uncertain time for the industry wherein we witnessed hotels completely shutting down operations




due to lockdowns, something that we would never have imagined even in our wildest dreams. While the recovery has been very slow in parts of the world due to prevailing Covid restrictions, we are seeing some normalcy in other parts where business travel has resumed. We have all witnessed ‘revenge travel’. With people having ramped up savings during the pandemic, they are more than willing to splurge on travel and new experiences.”


He adds, “With very little international travel happening over the past few years, majority of our guests were domestic travellers, and the guest relations faced a few challenges initially as domestic travellers are quite demanding and, with limited /contactless services available at hotels, the expectations of guests had to be met in creative new ways. With the return of international and business travel we are seeing higher occupancies and average

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Saurabh Chowdhury



Amit Rana



Arun Panneerselvam



Sunil Bhatia

daily rates (ADRs) and it seems things are back to pre-covid levels.”

Saurabh Chowdhury, Director of Operations – The Westin Mumbai Garden City states, “The Pandemic had a detrimental effect on the hospitality industry with operations coming to a standstill. Post the pandemic the industry has started showing fast signs of recovery and, at some locations, the recoveries have crossed the pre-pandemic levels. The leisure hotels have a stronger recovery index with revenge tourism currently quite evident in the country and business hotels also have a steady growth with business demand slowly but surely growing month on month. In this connection, I may add that guest Relations play a pivotal role to ensure a customized approach for the guest’s well-being at the property. They are the people who ensure repeat customers. This focus on repeat customers has become more important post-pandemic as this is a time for becoming more flexible to guest requirements, which means we have to be agile in our conversation and service timelines.”

Sunil Bhatia, Director, Sales & Marketing, The Mirador Hotel, Mumbai, declares, “COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the hospitality industry. It’s something we’ve never seen in this lifetime. However, things have more or less returned to normal. Over the last 2 months we have seen an over demand for Rooms and Conferencing Spaces.”

Arun Panneerselvam, Rooms Division Manager, Park Hyatt Chennai, avers, “While most industries have been impacted by the Covid-19 crisis, hospitality industry has been one of the most adversely impacted ones due to the travel restrictions around the globe. Since mid-2021, the industry has seen a good recovery as now restrictions have eased and travel resumed. In fact, most hotels have seen occupancy figures better than 2019 in the 1st Quarter of 2022. While the leisure segment recovered faster, more so in the domestic sector, business travel has now seen a major resurgence. There is a lot of confidence post double vaccination and the pent up demand has found its way to the hotels. With things getting back to normal and people traveling again, we are looking forward to the days when guests can see the smiles behind the facemasks of the guest relations and customer care staff.”

Role of Guest Relations

Accommodations, food & beverage, spas

and locations may draw the clicks on several online sites but the enduring relationship between hotels and guests is built by guest relations who are aware of what the guests prefer and look after individual needs. Guest relations’ people not only know the guests by their names but also their individual needs. They are proactive with personalized touches – from an unexpected amenity for children travelling with parents to the addition of an extra rack in their clothes cabinet for guests who travel heavy, are some of the steps up the ladder for building customer goodwill and loyalty. In short one may say that the mission of guest relations or customer service department is to be available for servicing the guests before, during and after their stay.

The guest relations duties and responsibilities and its role, in the present times, for promoting the property and improving the image of the hotel is varied.

Saurabh states, “Guest relations play a vital role in encouraging a positive sense of belongingness to guests’ revisiting the brands of their choice after almost 2 years. It is the most crucial department with a responsibility of a real-time engagement with guests to ensure their requirements and requests are fulfilled and to reassure a safe and hygienic environment to carry out their day-to-day activity smoothly. The Guest relations Department’s primary focus is to ensure repeat guests. Their major role at the property is to ensure that the guest’s wellbeing is well taken care of and also connect with the guests emotionally. The pandemic had a dampening impact on everyone and the guest relations department is there to ensure that a sense of positivity and confidence is instilled in the minds of our customers.”

Sunil elucidates, “Being part of the Hospitality Industry, Guest Relations play an important role in our day to day Operations. Right from the first Sales Call made, Email or call answered, to the moment the guests arrive at our Hotel and how they are greeted and interacted with throughout their entire length of stay are all part of Guest Relations.”

He adds, “In specific, the duties of the Guest Relations Executive, at the Lobby Level, is to maintain communication with the Guests In-house to ensure that their stay is pleasant and comfortable. They have to attend to any guest concerns and suggestions and co ordinate with the respective departments for the same. In

short Guest Relations maintain the Image of the 'Hospitality Promise' of the Hotel or Chain. Airlines and Hotel Ads show their Team Members greeting with a Namaste. That, in the simplest Terms, is the Epitome of Guest Relations in our Country."

Arun asserts, "One of the important responsibilities of Guest Relations, Dept. is to create an arrival experience that would be the foundation of the guest stay experience. The team is also responsible for creating connections through extending genuine care and empathy. For example children arriving in the hotel, get a special welcome experience at the front desk. There is a dedicated check-in counter for them complete with a registration card, giveaways, special menu and activities such as in-room movies, in-room tent set up, cooking sessions etc. While guest experience has always been the top priority of luxury hotel brands such as Park Hyatt Chennai, the role of guest relations has gained more importance in hotels as the guest expectations have evolved and they seek even more personalization. This drives us to be more innovative in

creating memorable experiences and the guest relations team plays a key role in this activity."

He avers, "Hospitality is an industry of service and human connections. The guest relations team always gives a personal touch to the guest experience which is unique to any hotel. They are the positive drivers to lasting impressions and memories of the hotel stay that guests take away with them and thus they definitely promote a positive image of the hotel."

Amit affirms, "The duties of the Guest Relations comprise of:

- Managing guests' experiences/ assuring our brand commitment IHG Clean Promise.
- Greeting and checking in guests as they arrive.
- Ensuring guests have a pleasant experience.
- Arranging reservations.
- Handling complaints as they arise.

"A Guest Relations Executive plays a very important and critical role in promoting the property. Guests are more likely to rate you positive on social media if their stays

were comfortable and the guest relations was able to forge that personal bond with the guests. People are once again looking for personalized experiences and if Guest Relations deliver it then there is a huge possibility that guests will share their experience amongst their groups of families and friends and positive word of mouth will spread.

"I may add that Guest Relations also play a pivotal role in handling guest complaints. If guest complaints are handled swiftly and to the satisfaction of our guests, the overall experience can be turned from negative to positive."

Problems faced by Guest Relations

Customer service is of utmost importance in the hospitality industry. And hospitality cannot be offered conversing with the guests digitally. Due to the customer-centric nature of the industry, it is natural that customer service is the area that is emphasized the most. Hospitality institutions must always be at the top of the rapidly progressing industry with changes

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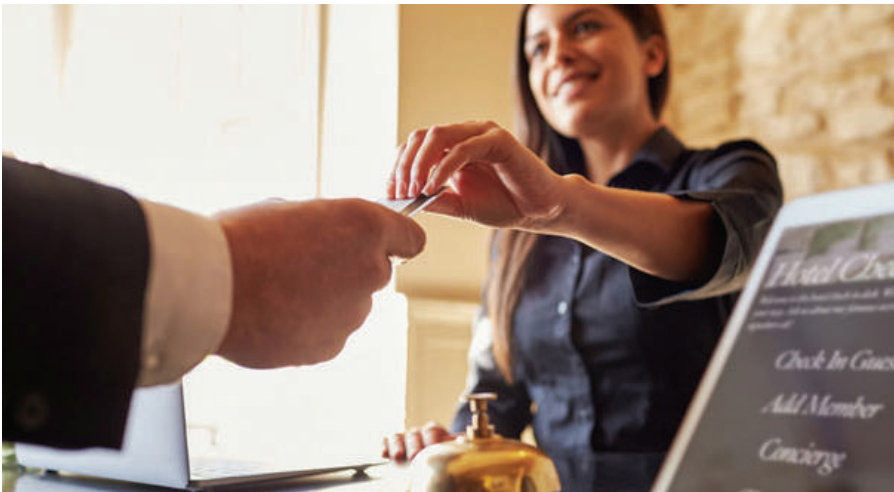
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in every possible sphere. But the pandemic had posed several problems for the Guest Relations Executives as the service lacked personal touch.

Amit revealed, "The guest relations had to do away with Aarti-Tikka of guests. Overall, the social distancing norms made it quite challenging to express the same warmth and personalised service. With faces covered with masks, one really had to put in a conscious effort in smiling through one's eyes and make the guest feel at home."

Saurabh disclosed, "Post pandemic guests have become extremely conscious and their needs and requirements, when it comes to services at the hotel, have increased. The Guest Relation Department has to ensure a constant engagement with multiple customers with different mindset and requests and have to strive hard to ensure that every guest's needs are met to the best of their ability and hotel capability, which is a tough and daunting task for the department."

Arun declares, "While the role of a Guest Relations Executive is a very satisfying one, as it creates an opportunity to do whatever it takes to enhance the guest experience, this job can sometimes cause an emotional burn out if the guests are unreasonable in their expectations and their response to the efforts of the guest relations team."

Suniil states, "There are two major problems faced by Guest Relations Dept. One is Guests being unreasonable in their demands and expectations, and the second is when the Hotel is genuinely sold out and there is a shortage of staff. We have seen this second situation arise in our Industry after the 2nd and 3rd Covid Waves when Business suddenly increased and we were –or still are – in some ways trying to get back good quality employees."

Promoting F&B Outlets in Hotels

Hotels, which were once at the forefront of innovation, have seen themselves being outpaced by individual F&B outlets. Guests are walking offsite to eat and drink. It is believed that hotels were almost complacent in the area of F&B.

Can customer relations help in promoting the hotels' F&B outlets?

Saurabh states, "Guest Relations can play a crucial role in upselling different FNB outlets to their customers especially when they are in charge to take care of the guest's needs at the hotel. They become the most important department to connect the guest requirement with hotel services and can promote FNB outlets, understanding the guests' choice of cuisines and other dietary preferences."

Arun too is of a similar view. He avers, "Word of mouth is everything. In guest relations, we build that trust with a guest. This gives us an opportunity to promote our food and beverage offerings. We can talk about popular and signature dishes, the specialty of our chefs and bartenders."

Amit asserts, "Preference capture made by the guest relations department helps us capture the food preferences of the guests and based on those preferences the guests can be suggested F&B outlets / food items they might enjoy. The food and beverage department also does suggestive selling based on the preferences of the guests."

Suniil declares, "If the frontline Employees are made aware of the in-house F&B Promotions, they can suggest the same to guests while having conversations with them."

New trends in Guest Relations

Today, technology has become an essential part of hotel strategy for enhancing guest

experience, besides improving operations and reducing costs.

Hotel F&B has become competitive. Before even visiting a property, guests can research the outlets.

Today, guest expectations have changed and the Guest Relations Department has to cater to the changing guests' needs.

According to Hotel Technology Trends 2021, there has been an explosion in travel apps for guests, mobile-optimized booking channels for their stay and a demand for instant messaging channels direct to hotel management for any questions and issues.

Suniil says, "Many Hotels and Chains have switched to Apps for Memberships, for ordering online etc., However, the very Ethos of our Industry will be in meeting guests face to face with a smile and speaking with them. Personally, I feel that Guests Relations may become a priority for Hotels going forward as Covid has shaken off Key accounts in ways that we never imagined, and retaining guests is the only way to predict and create a better future for us."

Amit asserts, "Artificial intelligence will play a major role in the industry in improving customer service. One example of this is AI-powered chatbots, which will be used for online customer interactions, removing lengthy waiting times, and providing swift, intelligent responses to questions. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and voice-controlled customer service or tourist information hubs within their hotels will also add to tech readiness of hotels."

Saurabh feels "Strong understanding of the repeat guest demands as well as using technology at the hotel to address guest needs efficiently and without any delay are the new trends."

Arun avers, "While the core of hospitality revolves around the human connection, we cannot deny that the technology is evolving very fast and the same will impact the guest expectations of the Gen-Z who are very tech savvy. So hotel team members should embrace the technology and use it to their advantage to create personalized guest experiences and connect better with the new age traveler. Social media's impact is quite noticeable in the hospitality industry and it will continue to be so in the future. The response time and opportunity to connect with travelers in any corner of the world makes it easier to match expectations and create experiences." ■

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Destinations for the Soul

India is a modern nation with an ancient civilisation. The civilisation of India is still very much living in the hearts and minds of its people, even after its meandering journey through the course of five millennia. With the exception of the Chinese civilisation, perhaps no other great civilisations of the world have experienced such a thread of continuity across several millennia.

And many would agree that religion, coloured with revered hues of mythology, is the cementing factor in the Indian civilisation. India is a diverse land where most major religions of the world, such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism are being practiced, and India has places of tourist interest associated with all these religions.

It is no wonder that even in today's IT-powered India, religion is a source of solace for millions of simple souls, and also a source of money minting for scores of cunning charlatans and so called godmans. Besides these two extremes, religion in India

also provides the requisite ambience for savvy business ventures, specially pertaining to the tourism and hospitality sectors.

This enduring influence of religion in our society is misused by cunning charlatans, fake godmen and opportunistic politicians, but the influence of religion in India's pluralistic socio-cultural environment have immense potential for the Indian tourism and hospitality industry. This potential needs to be tapped in a more proactive, creative and optimal manner.

The Potential

Yes, religion is an important and a steady source of revenue for the tourism industry of India. Religious tourism is not only the largest segment of domestic tourism in India, but it also attracts a sizeable proportion of the inbound crowd every year to its spiritual ambit. Moreover, it is growing at a whooping rate per annum. Religious tourism in India has shown continuous growth. It is because in India, travels for religious reasons are viewed as necessity

and not a luxury.

Indian hospitality industry has a huge potential in the area of religious tourism, which is evident from the fact that the demand in this direction keeps increasing year on year. However, most of the travellers love to get end-to-end solutions to their religious trips because of unfamiliarity of places, tourist attractions, conveyance, etc., which eventually becomes the challenging area for this kind of tourism.

The enormous revenue earning potential of religious and cultural tourism in India needs to be more effectively harnessed by the Indian tourism and hospitality industry, and in this regard, our states and the Union Government should play a more proactive role than they are doing at present.

It is common knowledge that India has a plethora of religious sites and shrines to make a devotee of religious tourism explore for a lifetime, at least. From Varanasi to Ajmer to Tirupati and from Gaya to Puri to Rameswaram, the thread of religious tourism in India spreads across the length

and breadth of the country.

From taking a dip at the holy Ganges of Varanasi at the break of the dawn, to feeling the mellifluous music of aarti in your soul as the twilight descends on Hardwar, from undertaking the arduous Amarnath Yatra to standing in the long queue for a darshan of Sri Venkateswara at the Sri Venkateswara Temple, located at Tirupati Hill, from taking a tour of the churches of Goa and feeling the soul of Christianity whose resonance could be heard much beyond the roar of the waves, to praying with a heart full of devotion at the Dargah of Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti in Ajmer to get relieved of one's miseries.... indeed, the religious tourism in India can take myriad montages, which are fascinating enough to form their niche in the memories for a lifetime.

Then there are great religious events in India, where everything stops for a few days at the destination for such events. These events are thronged by domestic and inbound tourists, and offer enormous potential for religious tourism. The Kumbh Mela at Allahabad, Hardwar, Nashik and Ujjain, which takes place once in the same destination after every twelve years, and the annual Rath Yatra at Puri afford a collage of experiences that could last a lifetime. Both these mega events or rather larger than life spectacles are high points of collective devotion, often coloured with frenzied hues.

Besides these destinations where one can find one's inner self, India has religious events of epic proportions, where everything stops for a few days at the destination/s which are focal points of such events. These events are thronged by huge numbers



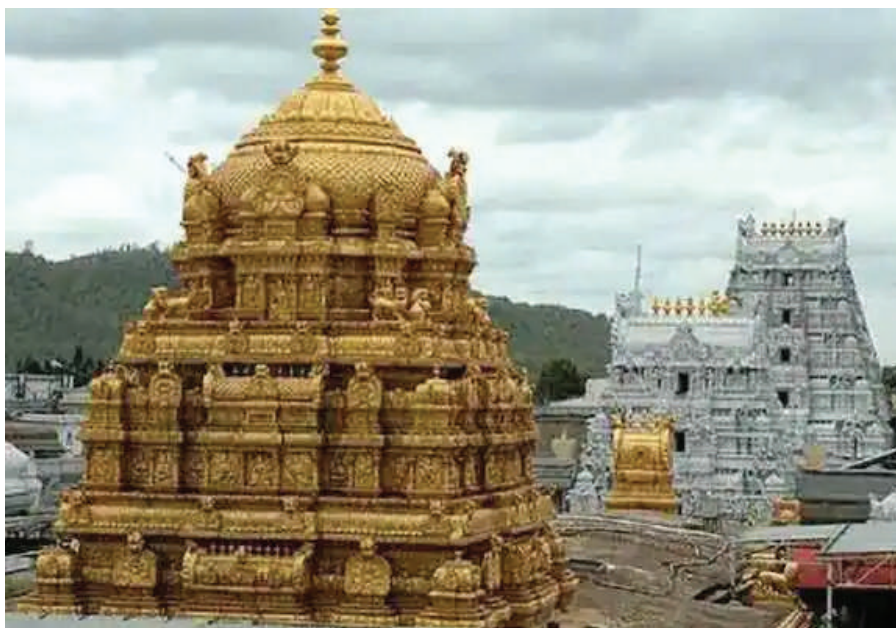
of domestic and even a sizeable number of inbound tourists, and offer enormous potential for religious tourism.

They give a kaleidoscopic view of the seminal yet vibrant, transient yet unchanging cultural landscape of India, where all changes are absorbed in a calm stream of continuity, without disturbing the essential sociocultural fabric.

Hospitality properties can provide affordable excursion packages to the famous destinations. These packages can reap lucrative dividends for the hospitality industry. It is about time more hotels and resorts in our country hosts festivals like Durga Puja, Diwali, Holi, etc. with creativity and uncommon grandeur which can bring in enhanced revenues for these properties. Hosting of festivals can also be a means for

the hospitality properties to showcase their environment-friendliness, which in turn can give them a distinctive market positioning.

However, promotional initiative for festivities is more relevant for big cities, where one can have a sizeable number of moneyed walk-in transient guests. Moreover, besides these fairs and festivities, India is home to myriad other lesser-known religious and cultural fairs and festivities, which need to be better promoted before the domestic and inbound tourists by the state governments and also by the Indian tourism and hospitality industry at large, and the destination/s where these lesser known but fascinating festivities are being held should be spruced with better hospitality infrastructure than they are having presently.



Hospitality Concerns

There is no denying the fact that the plethora of pilgrimage destinations of India, and as well as the huge spectacle of religious events, provide a great platform for the hospitality industry to thrive. Consequently, almost all of these famous religious tourism destinations have an array of top-notch hospitality properties. The hospitality industry of India cannot even think of having a long term and enduring growth, without giving due importance to the recession-proof religious tourism segment of India.

However, at the same time, it must be noted that the infrastructure at many of the religious centers of India are still far from adequate. Moreover, many of these famous centres for religious tourism,



such as Puri, Hardwar and Varanasi could generate greater number of foreign tourists, and much better revenues, with better cleanliness.

The overall situation of infrastructure in the holy destinations need to be improved with due urgency. The state and the private players are focusing on the affluent religious tourists, but more facilities for lodging and travel also need to be created for the majority of not so well off travellers, as they too need to address their spiritual needs amidst relative cleanliness and hygienic atmosphere.

It is about time, both the government and the private players sensed the tremendous business opportunities afforded by religious tourism in India, and pragmatically create the requisite infrastructure to facilitate the inflow of pilgrims and devotees, thereby enhancing the potential to generate more revenues to their exchequer. Simply building of more hotels wouldn't do, the supportive infrastructures of many of the pilgrimage destinations also need to be improved.

The Luxury

Like everything else in this country, devotion in India is also going through a transition. Nowadays, pilgrimage is not only about penance and privation. In fact, the tourism and hospitality sectors have ensured that it doesn't remain so. The high-end tourists can now seek their spiritual solace in the air-conditioned tents with running hot and cold water, can savour multi-cuisine dining, and undertake rejuvenation packages that include spa and yoga classes.

Now you can enjoy luxury tents at each of the char dhaams – Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri and Gangotri—which would prevent any sort of physical hardship or material discomfort coming in way of your spiritual salvation. Luxury tents were also available for the devotees with money power at the Mahakumbh Mela at Hardwar which is probably the largest religious gathering in the world.

Salvation is now here with a super deluxe version. A helicopter for pick-up and drop-in at the desired pilgrimage site, or somewhere at the vicinity of the site is also not that uncommon now. This service obviously caters to the business people and celebrities, who have loads of money but so little time...even for salvation.

Succinctly, with a plethora of foreigners and NRIs getting attracted to experience the country's spiritual side first hand, there is now no dearth of luxury and money power in the religious tourism of India.

Initiatives Needed

In this regard, the respective state governments where these religious tourism destinations are located, the Union Government, and the Indian tourism and hospitality industry should play a concerted and effective role.

Similarly, all these stakeholders can come together to develop an army of qualified tourist guides, who have a knowledgeable and nuanced perspective about the religious and cultural heritage of India, and are very much acquainted with the tourist interests of the place where they could be deployed in. They can guide

the domestic and inbound tourists in their religious and cultural journey through India, thereby making the money hungry and semi literate touts redundant.

Of course, the state governments and the Union Government need to come up with more creative measures to promote the almost unimaginable potential of religious and cultural tourism in the country. One of them can be induction of a few luxury trains connecting some important religious tourist destinations of the country, which are geographically far apart from each other (say one of these trains can connect Puri, Rameshwaram, Varanasi, and Jammu together in same route).

This can be a pragmatic measure to promote religious tourism, where people can visit religious tourism destinations which are far apart from each other geographically, at one go. The launching of Bharat Darshan Tourist Train in 2016 was an initiative on similar lines but we need more endeavours in this direction from the government.

In this regard, the launching of Aastha Circuit Train in February 2017 by Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRTC) and the North East Frontier Railway (NFR) is a praiseworthy initiative. This special pilgrim train takes travellers to various pilgrimage destinations in eastern and north-east India without incurring much expense from them.

A single trip of the train encompasses seven days and six nights. The train starts from Guwahati. Journey through this train can enable tourists to visit famous religious tourism destinations like Gangasagar, Shri Swamy Narayan Temple, Kalighat, the Konark Temple, and the Jagannath Temple at one go.

Thankfully, religious tourism is the focus area under Swadesh Darshan scheme of the present Union Government. The recent intention of the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh to promote religious tourism in the state by linking the places of tourist and pilgrim interest in the state with helicopter service is praiseworthy. Orissa government's aim to develop the Buddhist circuit of the state of Orissa is also commendable.

There seems to be a huge unexplored potential as far as attracting foreign tourists to India is concerned, and in this regard creative promotion of religious tourism with its myriad colours of festivity can play a crucial role for the growth of our hospitality industry. ■



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Hospitality Religiously

Ayodhya an ancient city of India, birth place of Lord Rama and setting of the epic Ramayana, is an important pilgrimage centre about 134 km from Lucknow. Recently Dr. Mamta Pandey, BJP leader, developed a new hotel, 'The Ramayana', offering all modern facilities for the future guests. Located at Gorakhpur-Lucknow NH27, the



boutique property offers 55 fully air-conditioned rooms having unique décor for discerning traveller. The hotel has 'Naivedyam'- A Pure Vegetarian Restaurant, serving world cuisine for all three meals.

The hotel also has 'Shakun', a 250 pax air conditioned hall, with Italian interior, a 'Banquet Lawn' which can accommodate 1000-1200 pax, also offering in-house catering. It has 'Conference Room, first in the city, for 15 pax conference hall with all Meeting facilities.

The property has been designed by Ankush & Sapna Aggarwal of ANSA Interior's Delhi. The property is managed by Alok Dubey, promoter, THS Consulting, Delhi. THS Consulting offer multidisciplinary foodservice design and planning services including F&B Operational Planning and Foodservice Performance Specifications for Hotels & Restaurants, Hospitals & Healthcare Institutions, Staff Facilities & Cafeterias, and Educational & Training Institutions.

In an interview with HBR, Alok Dubey talks about the scope for hotel industry at

the religious destinations.

What is the future of Religious Tourism in India?

In relation to the varying categories of tourism in India, pilgrimage tourism has gained significant importance over the past few years. Religious tourism has significant potential in generating required employment opportunities, national integration as well as foreign exchange earnings. Since people now have become more conscious about the hygiene standards, this gives an opportunity for a quality hotel/travel brands to gain maximum profitability.



What role government can play in making travellers aware of the religious destinations?

In fact, the government's focus on



Alok Dubey

tourism that has contributed to state-of-the-art infrastructure for easy accessibility and increased choice of accommodations has also led to an uptick in demand for special trains introduced by the tourism departments that cater to these pilgrimage tours. The Ministry of Tourism is the nodal agency for the formulation of national policies and programs and for the co-ordination of activities of various Central Government Agencies, State Governments/UTs and the Private Sector for the development and promotion of tourism in the country.

How Hospitality industry can gain from the growth of domestic Religious tourism?

Spirituality, in general, has recently emerged as an important subject of research in social and business areas. This has given birth to a new dimension to the tourism industry, called 'Spiritual tourism'. It has been observed that there has been an increase in the awareness and research interest in the thematic field of spiritual tourism. Tourism is an age old activity associated with civilized nations around the world. Thus, tourism literature too carries a long history along with it.

However, there are very few areas in tourism which has been taken through the domain of scientific investigation only recently. Spiritual tourism is one such area in which only a few researchers had carried out their work in a systematic and scientific way.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the global economy. Tourism has significant environmental, cultural, social, and economic effects, both in positive and negative terms. Tourism has been noted as the world's largest and fastest growing industry. Tourism, as a major service sector industry in state's economy, has multi-dimensional impacts on the society such as Economic, Social and Cultural, Environmental, Crowding and congestion, Community attitudes, Services and Taxes

What are the major issues faced by Hotel Operators at Religious destination?

Hotel operators are doing a daring task by investing and facilitating tourists in the

religious destination. Same time they are facing challenges on following aspects.

Skilled Manpower - The major problems plaguing the hotel industry in India is the lack of skilled professionals and retaining the same. This is because the wages are not at par with international industry standards

Sustainability- Hotels spend a large part of their running costs on energy and utility bills. Luckily there are many ways, thanks to intelligent technologies, that hotel operators can go green, review energy consumption and implement ways to deliver financial savings.

Technologies - it is an integral part of everyday life. Whilst we might use our holiday to take a break from certain aspects of our lives, it seems we never want a break from technology. Hotel guests demand a basic right to be connected in any hotel, in any location, around the world. Technology is a constant travel companion, wherever we go. Good news then, that the hotels sector is embracing the technology revolution.

Responding to competition - In this day and age, starting a business is more realistic and achievable than ever. But, with

so much easily-accessible information and guidance out there, it does mean that there can theoretically be more competition in the same market

What facilities & features hotel properties should provide to its guest at these destinations?

All sort of buyers visit to these places, as a responsible and smart hotelier we should look at providing at least a comfortable bed, easy shower, good breakfast and other meals. Apart the recreational facilities which includes their visit to religious places. These all makes the visit complete and satisfactory.

What kind of special packages hotel can offer tourists during festive seasons?

Hospitality is known as home away from home. Packages and offering during festivals can be done in such a way that the festivals can be celebrated in the similar manner as at home. They should offer guests the same comfort food and opportunity to fulfil their ritual beliefs.

How the menu planning is a challenge at these destinations?

Menu Planning is rather easy as there is always an opportunity to surprise the guest with different offerings with in the restricted environment of the destination. The focus is mostly on satvik food for Indian guests. Good food always make the stay comfortable, apart the fresh and organic raw material availability makes the chefs task quite easy, since food is mostly vegetarian.

Cleanliness is a major issue at religious destinations. What is your take?

There is an unavoidable generation of large scale solid and liquid waste, some of this linked to occasions, rituals and traditions. Absence of any standardized ways of cleaning and encroachments in and around further enhance the problem. On the top of all is the deviance of the transient visitors, many of whom choose to litter at will and leave behind a trail of filth. This required an immediate attention by authorities and stake holders.

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Buff your Buffets

The buffet is emerging as one of the essential elements in food service operations. What was earlier a service style meant for function (mass) catering is increasing being accepted in restaurants as well. So much so, that the buffet has become an indispensable part of most coffee shops or 24 hour eateries. Many a time a buffet defines the character of the coffee shop. The following are some essential elements in a buffet, which, if cared for, can make the buffet the USP of an outlet and be a cost effective yet stylish style of food service.

Composition: In India, buffets are generally multi-cuisine and have a mix of Indian, Continental, and Chinese cuisine with a salad bar and a dessert counter. The key to a successful buffet is to have something for everyone, i.e. acceptability to a maximum number of people. In a hotel, guests usually fall into two categories - in

house guests and local guest. The buffet must appeal to both clienteles.

In house guests: As a lot of in-house guests, especially who are on meal plans, depend on the coffee shop buffets, one has to provide a basic continental fare, like popular salads, breads, Classical dishes and accompaniments like steamed vegetables. For these guests, one has to have a complete salad counter with essentials like lettuce, relishes like olives, gherkins etc. A balance between composite salads and simple salads (just one ingredient) must be maintained.

Local guests: For local clientele the buffet should hold some good Indian food and Continental dishes, which are suitable to Indian tastes. These guests look for quantity in the buffet (as well as quality) as far as the number of dishes are concerned. The salad and cold buffets are becoming increasingly popular with locals, too, for

dietary reasons. Consequently the decision of whether to order Ala Carte or choose the buffet often rests with the kind of salad/cold display the buffet boasts of. Indian guests prefer to eat some simple home food like a pulao and dal with vegetables, which is why many buffets devote a counter for "ghar ka khana."

The following are guidelines for composition of each section of the buffet with respect to quantity and static dishes, which should always be there:

Salads

- Lettuce is the most basic and important part of a salad. Make sure more than one variety of lettuce is displayed of excellent quality. Lettuce should be washed very well and should always be fresh. Otherwise this can lead to a very poor beginning of a meal.
- Composite salads: Always have one or two (not more than that) popular composite



salads like Russian, Waldorf or Nicoise etc. For others, let the chef experiment with unique (but not disastrous) combinations which appeal to the eye and the palette.

- Other than composite salads, simple salads (single ingredient) should also be available.
- Fresh ingredients may also be part of the buffet for guests to create their own salads.
- Relishes and pickles are also important elements of the salad buffet. Pickled olives, gherkins onions or other root vegetables like carrots and radishes are deemed to be excellent appetizers.
- Dressings: Different variants of vinaigrette (herbs, garlic, etc.) and mayonnaise (thousand island, cocktail) based dressings along with innovative combinations like honey lemon, minted yoghurt etc. must be part of the salad counter.
- Cold Cuts: Depending on the pricing level, one should decide how many cold cuts are displayed. Salmon and imported ham (like Parma, Bayonne etc.) though very much liked can be expensive. In the absence of the above one or two homemade pates, terrines or galantines should be made with attractive garnishes. For Indians, who do not consume a lot of pork or beef, chicken salami/ mortadella is a likable option.
- Cheese: Imported cheeses are a common sight in many five star hotel buffets. To increase variety and keep costs bearable, one should combine imported cheeses with Indian made Foreign Cheese from leading local cheese producers. At least one of each, soft, semi hard and blue cheese, should always be displayed. For attractive presentation a whole block of cheese (especially Parmesan) is often showcased.
- Presentation: As this section is the face of the buffet it becomes imperative for it to look fresh, classy and attractive. One can use coloured glass bowls or plates of different shapes and sizes for salads. Elevations should be used to break monotony and make the whole presentation multi-dimensional. Other than the food one may display kitchen artifacts like oil and vinegar bottles, jars with pulses and pickled vegetables.
- Temperature: Most salads are served cold. Therefore they should be placed on an inbuilt bed of ice or in absence of this on glass bowls or acrylic ice baths filled with ice. Whatever method is used the temperature must be maintained throughout the service period. Cheese should be served at room temperature and not chilled.

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Main Course

- As discussed earlier restaurant buffets in coffee shops are multi-cuisine. As far as possible, different kinds of cuisines should be visibly separated into counters or windows.

- The continental section must have non-vegetarian and vegetarian choices. Too much classical cuisine can be boring and unappealing. Nouvelle cuisine should be encouraged with a touch of Italian cuisine and Lebanese cuisine both of which are increasingly popular nowadays.

- Continental food is generically not made with the distinction of being vegetarian or non-vegetarian, but keeping in mind the Indian culture provisions to distinguish the two should be made. Innovative combinations of vegetarian foodstuffs in international flavours should be included.

- Many buffets showcase a “roast of the day” section whereby a roast is carved in front of the guest and served. Care should be taken that the roast is not dry and is served tender and hot with an appropriate sauce.

- When selecting the dishes for the menu, one should choose dishes that have enough moisture and do not become dry after being on the buffet for some time. For example grilled pork chops with caramelised onions cannot go on a buffet, as the chops would become tough in no time. Dishes that have natural moisture in them like lasagna or baked vegetables, keep very well on the buffet.

- As far as Indian food goes, one should have gravy as well as dry dishes accompanied with a rice preparation. DO NOT KEEP BREADS ON THE BUFFET.

- If pasta is to be included in the buffet, the sauce and the pasta should be displayed separately.

- It is preferable if kebabs are made on site, if part of the buffet.]

Desserts

- A balance should be made between the number of Indian and Continental desserts that are part of the buffet. Generally buffets tend to have more western desserts as they allow the chef to be more creative in presentation.

- All the western desserts should be of different base i.e. no two should have the same, mousse or sponge base.

- Incorporate as many fresh fruits as possible in the dessert display.

- Chocolate mousse, caramel custard and fresh fruits are static buffet items. Efforts to make variations in their presentation must be made.

- All desserts should be displayed portion wise. All gateaux should be pre-sliced for ease of service and maintenance of presentation. Imagine a beautifully decorated chocolate gateaux and just one spoon put into it by someone for serving can ruin the whole cake. Instead it can be neatly cut, individually decorated and put in small plates!

Themed/Specialty Buffets

Buffets can also become monotonous if the same pattern is repeated often. Adding a theme to part of the buffet, or having something other than the usual fare available can maintain novelty in the buffet.

Food promotions can also be sold through the buffet. If there is an Ala Carte

promotion of a particular specialty food, a few of the dishes can be incorporated in the buffet as well. Or at times the whole promotion is on the buffet. For example various micro cuisines of India like Rajasthani, Karawali, Hyderabad etc. can be served in the Indian section. This should be highlighted through proper props on the buffet.

Having specialty items on a particular day of the week can be incorporated in the buffet matrix to break the monotony, for example a seafood special every Friday or pasta for lunch on Monday and so on. All this helps the guest to remember the buffet for something special.

Buffet Maintainance

- Temperature: The most frequent guest dissonance regarding buffets is that the food is not served hot. Modern restaurants have inbuilt induction heating but most still depend on solid fuel at some point in the display. Proper monitoring of the fuel during the operation is of utmost importance. Food should be placed in smaller portions and replenished frequently; this maintains the temperature as well as freshness of the food.

- Cleanliness: During operations the staff often neglects the cleanliness of the buffet. This destroys the aesthetic appeal of the buffet counter and leaves a poor impression of the establishment on the guest. Spillages around the buffet counters and edges of food pans with dried gravies etc. are common areas that should be monitored. An eye for detail on the part of the person responsible for maintainance/replenishment of the buffet can make a difference.

- Dish tags: The tags that label each dish in the buffet assist the dishes in up selling themselves. Care should be taken to ensure that the names of dishes are spelt correctly and any descriptions given are self-explanatory. Additionally, a colour code on the tag can help in identifying a dish as vegetarian or non-vegetarian.

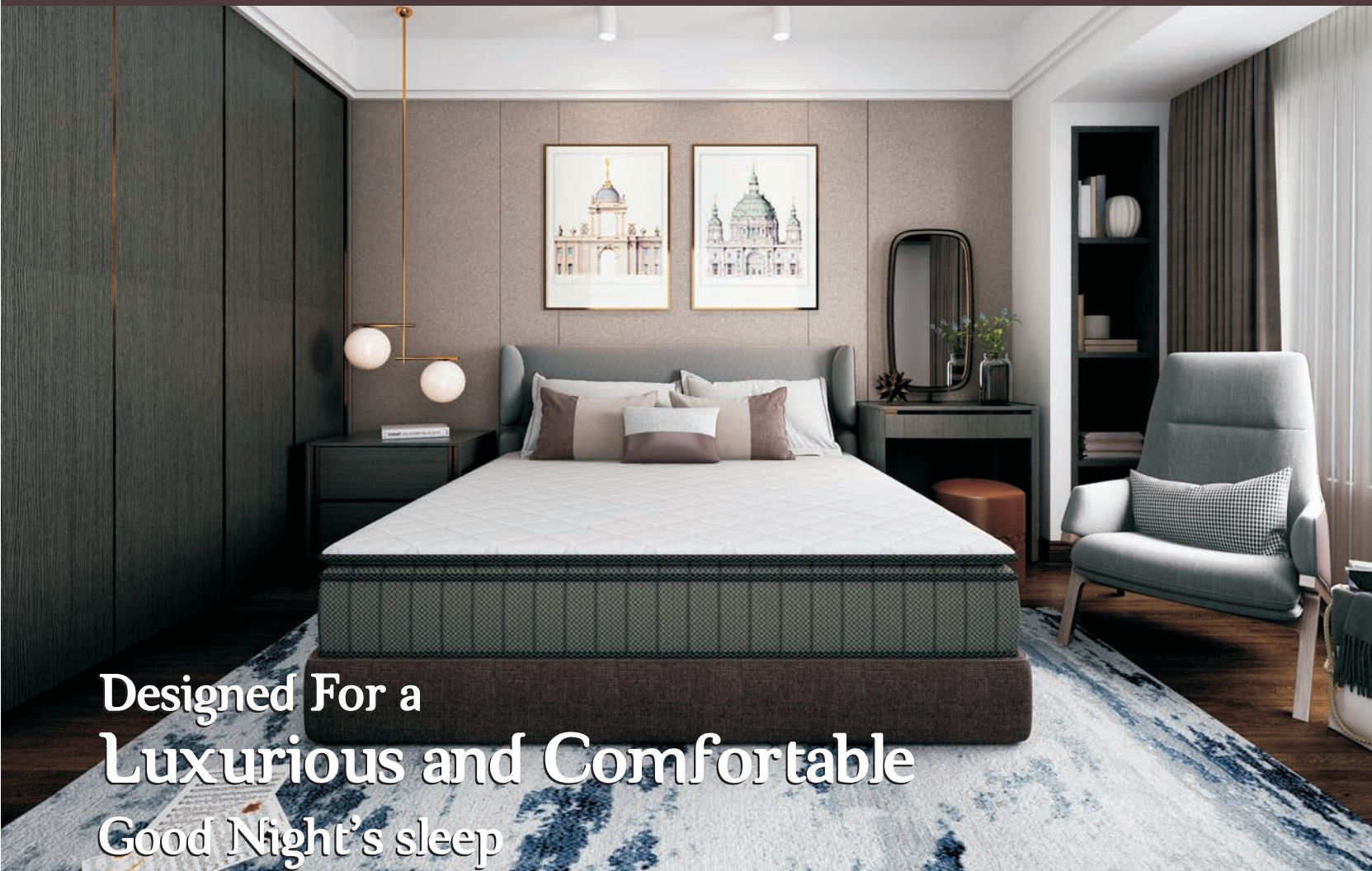
The whole idea behind the buffet is ease of service, getting more variety and showcasing a chef’s skill. As all the above work well for both the restaurant as well as the guest, one needs to pay a lot of attention to the buffets composition, presentation and maintenance. A good buffet should look as fresh as it has just been laid and each guest who approaches it should feel it is fresh and appealing. ■



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Designing Wellness

Wellness business in India is growing impressively. The growth of India's spa industry can be attributed to the significant increase in disposable incomes in select but sizeable pockets of urban India during the last decade, tension filled hectic lifestyles of many sections of people of post-modern urban India, and also due to the growing health and wellness consciousness in niches of Indian society.

Now, with the impressive growth and maturation of the wellness business in the country, the demand for innovative spa designs can also be expected to emerge as a trend, whose effects can of course, influence India's evolving hospitality industry, as nowadays a lot many hotels and resorts in the country house spas in them.

With changing times it is necessary to have a feel of the trends pervading through spa designing in India's spa industry; to know the elements which should be incorporated while designing a spa; to get an idea of the futuristic spa design trends in the context of India's spa industry; the relevance of eco-friendly spas among other issues and to know the appropriate lighting

requirements for spa.

Happening Trends

Various happening trends are pervading through India's wellness industry. In a rapidly growing wellness industry, India has witnessed many spa designs that are structurally beautiful, with fusing of some amazing design principles of east and the west.

Spa facilities close to nature is another trend pervading through India's wellness industry. Bringing the 'outdoors in' to keep guests close to nature is a spa design trend in the country. Similarly, wellness meets fitness is also a spa design trend. There is



a lot of focus on creative options to stay fit within spa resorts such as meditative walking pathways, Pilate studios, meditative zones etc.

A general trend in spa design is minimalism. Clean neat lines with eye pleasing colour scheme are generally preferred by both spa owners and clients. Spas in India are moving toward thematic interiors, where spa is designed around a particular theme, and elements related to the theme are used in the interiors. For instance, in a spa that specialises in marine treatments and follows a water theme, a water body should be installed within the spa and aqua colours like blue and green should be predominantly used.

Spa Design Elements

Preferably all hotels that plan to have a spa facility should in great detail integrate wellness with their other operations. This can enable guests to truly experience and feel the hospitality of the hotel as regards to their overall well-being. This wellness integration should extend outside a spa and should be a part of guestrooms, public

spaces and especially the reception areas. This could facilitate the spa to draw more guests into it, instead of it seeming to be just a random inclusion in the hotel's plan.

The ambience and the design of the spa should immediately put the client at ease and provide him/her comfort. A spa room should have attached balconies and sit-out gardens. Spas or wellness centers should act as wellness retreats. Care should be taken to have a common thread running through all aspects of the spa. This can be easily achieved by effective interior design.

The right furniture and appropriate colour schemes can also enhance the design aesthetics of the spa. First and foremost, furniture has to be comfortable. It is advisable for spa designers to not go overboard with heavy furniture. Massage beds with controlled temperature are expected to be welcomed by the guests.

As for the colour schemes in the spa décor, soft palette of colours is recommended. Flow of space and availability of amenities in the wet zone is very crucial part of spa design. All wet areas should be clubbed in one zone; away from therapy rooms, so that total silence is maintained near therapy

rooms. Spas should also ideally have an area to unwind after the session, where soft music can play.

Lighting the Spa

The role of lighting and colours in spa design cannot be overstated. In fact, lighting can be construed as one of the most fundamental and crucial aspect of spa designing. Lighting and colours are extremely important to create the right spa environment. In general, in a single spa there are different types of lighting needed to create a perfect balance of aesthetics and functionality.

Lighting is one of the most important elements of a spa's design. First and foremost, it is a functional element, so it has to be ensured that the lights are being used optimally. Secondly, lights also act as mood enhancers. Dimmers should be used inside a treatment room to create the desired atmosphere. Effective lighting should be provided around mirrors and in the dressing room. Thirdly, lights can also double as décor accessories in the form of lamp shades, pendant lighting fixtures and chandeliers.

In any spa, irrespective of its positioning, light play a very important part. Harsh light

is not required in spas. Warm yellow mellow light, preferably on dimmers or in a cove is always recommended. Soft light always helps to keep the mood calm which is the essence of going to a spa.

Chandeliers and other decorative lighting options in spas are also great to uplift the spirit of the guests and beautify the reception area. Finally, in areas such as the relaxation area, natural lighting should be allowed to fill the space to create a feel of the outdoors. Hence, a detailed lighting plan has to be in place to compliment the spa design.

Ambient light is appropriate for giving the overall soothing mood of the spa environment. In the therapy rooms task lighting is also needed to help staff clean the rooms and also see minute details while doing some jobs, such as while doing skin analysis.

The Specifications

Of course, the specifics of spa designs should vary from luxury hotels and resorts to budget hotels and resorts. In high-end spas, luxury has to emanate from the interiors and not just the treatments. That is why

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the design of a luxury spa should focus on spaciousness, privacy, soothing ambience, uncluttered space and intelligent use of light. In an average spa, the focus should be more on increasing the number of walk-ins, hence there the interiors should be attractive and sturdy, and the décor should be pleasing and functional.

In a luxury hospitality property, materials for walls, floors and ceilings in spas should be wisely chosen to exude luxury. Art work like paintings and sculptures should be used to reinforce the spa's theme, if any. If space is a constraint for spas in budget hospitality properties, collapsible walls and multi-functional spaces should be created.

Spas in luxury hospitality properties should be ideally designed in such a way that they face sights of great natural beauty wherever feasible, like sea, mountains, etc. They also can have an outdoor or indoor heated jacuzzi, facing natural beauty.

Spa sessions under the moonlight in the open, amidst jasmine, frangipani or other fragrant shrubs, of course in the conducive weather, can also be an option for a high-end spa facility within a high-end hospitality property. Spa designs in average budget hotels and resorts should focus on contemporary décor, and minimalism.

Moreover, spa's design should complement the service menu. The spa's design should fall in line with the services offered. For instance, you shouldn't conduct an Ayurvedic massage in a room designed with a Persian theme.

In a culturally diverse country like India, a spa facility should ideally reflect our societal, regional and cultural ethos. It should at

the same time aspire to carve a niche for itself in the global wellness scenario. For example weddings are huge business and so maybe wedding theme can be used as a central element in spa design. In India, male and female relaxation areas should be demarcated.

There should be amalgamation of royal Indian touch and professional international experience, not only in the services but also in the décor. India's hospitality industry caters to both Indian and international clientele. Thus the spas within the hospitality properties of the country should ideally convey both Indian and international flavours through their design elements.

Spas should help the clients to connect with nature. So, introduce an element of nature inside the spa, be it a water body, greenery or open air spaces. Moreover, the spa's design should tell a story and convey the culture of the spa to the client. A private consultation area should be part of the spa design in today's times. Physiotherapy and yoga rooms should be part of the spa. Prana healing centre and meditation pavilion could be add-on features to the spa.

As far as specifically spas in hospitality properties go, besides incorporation of these features another factor should be kept in mind. There the spa's theme should match with the hotel's decor but at the same time it should also be disconnected from the room/suite design.

Green Spas

In these times, when being eco-friendly is no longer just a choice but a dire necessity for

the survival of our future, eco-friendly spa designs can have good market potential. One should emphasise on bringing sustainability in every aspect of spa design, which include usage of eco-friendly building materials, using low consumption lighting among many other factors.

As far as environmental-friendly spa designs go, the use of energy efficient lighting, the usage of non-toxic paints, the use of reclaimed materials and upcycled materials, installation of in-built waste management system and water conservation system, as some of the effective measures to be included for getting environmentally-friendly spas.

Spa owners should consciously ask the architect or interior designer to install eco-friendly lights to get long-term benefits.

Future Spas

As the guests are getting more and more discerning, and as the definition of wellness is getting broadened, spas are expected to incorporate changes in its design elements.

Trend in India where spas will be based on the principles of holistic lifestyle coaching to help guests discover the best possible diet, rejuvenation, stress busting and sleep strategies for their special health concerns too. These developments would reflect in new spa design trends.

In the future, spas in India are expected to have spaces beyond those demarcated for facials and massages, which will help people feel more in sync with their environment. The focus will be on spa design trends which reflect the natural environment and translate into experiences that can immerse guests completely. As far futuristic spa designs in the context of India's hospitality industry go, there should be an endeavour to look beyond the four walls of a therapy room but yet have your total privacy.

Massage pods or recliner pods, underground pools and Jacuzzis, use of vibrant colours juxtaposed with whites and pastels, installation of one-way French windows offering scenic views, more use of technology-driven concepts, are some of the futuristic spa design trends expected to emerge in India's wellness industry.

India's wellness business is not only headed for impressive growth, but is also passing through exciting developments. This is the right environment for creative spa designers to come up with out-of-the-world and innovative designs to make their mark in the country's wellness business. ■

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Disseminate the Right Sound

While music and dining seem ideally matched, many of the audio systems in restaurants deliver uneven sound coverage. The result is music that may be inaudible at one table and uncomfortably loud at another. Thus it is important to understand the nuances of sound system and follow guidelines how to treat your guests with melodic delicacy.

The sound system is one of the prominent components in the hospitality industry. A restaurant serves a mood and not just food. It is the atmosphere in the form of cogent ambiance, which drives customers to visit a place again and again.

Time and again it has been recognized that ambience of a venue is a strong marketing tool.

Sound makes an Atmosphere

When it comes to sound, tempo and loudness have historically been the key dimensions.

These atmospheric dimensions need to be carefully designed to match with moods of the targeted customer. One would not have linoleum on the floor of an exotic restaurant. The discriminating customer would expect carpeting or perhaps marble.

By the same token an exclusive restaurant would not have the same lighting as a fast food joint. Similarly, choice of music at a pub would not be same as a restaurant offering oriental cuisine.

In short, atmospherics are designed to convey a specific image and set a definite mood. The key is to have all the senses – sound, vision, smell and touch in sync.

The Value of Music

Various researches reveal that one of the key senses the customer relates to, is hearing. It greatly affects the time customer will spend in the restaurant. Research concludes that customers equate the presence of music with better service. On the other hand behavioural scientists have studied the effects of music on worker productivity. They have found that high tempo music can serve as a strong stimulus to overcome low biorhythmic period that all humans experience all through the day. As a result, companies that offer music programming can provide a package that not only matches the ambience of a restaurant but also help employees remain alert. The owners can use music as a tool to increase both customer comfort and

customer stay time.

Quality Aspects

While the importance of music in restaurants and retail outlets is a recognized fact today, quality of sound is not what the guest encounters often when he is eating out. At most outlets one can hear music but it does not usually sound clear and natural. Traditionally, music is judged on content and tempo, often ignoring the critically important aspect of quality of sound.

In order to understand why quality of sound is often absent in a large number of outlets, it is helpful to examine the elements of a commercial music system.

- The first link of this chain is the programming content – the material that is played.
- The second link is the storage medium – source for where the sound is generated.
- The third link is the transmission medium – FM.
- The fourth link is the system electronics, primarily the amplifier other than that would include the source controller and system controller.
- The last and critical link is the loudspeaker.

The sound signal travels through these links sequentially, so if one is inferior the final signal will be inferior. The chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Over the last couple of decades the quality of consumer hi-fi equipment has steadily improved to a point where systems manufactured now reproduced high quality, natural sound. It is no longer necessary for you to be an audiophile to have a high quality sound system.

The result is that people everywhere – even your customers - are used to high quality sound. The hospitality industry unfortunately has not kept pace with the modern advances. Yet the various links in the audio chain have seen improvements.

Better Scheduling

The music programming business has evolved dramatically since the early days. Today there is an entire range of original artist recordings encompassing classical, folk, indiepop, rock, Jazz, Pop, blues, country and western. That's not all there's a whole range of occasion specific programming available.

Better Amplifiers and System Electronics

The amplifiers used to reinforce sound in large public places have seen a major shift in its designs. What began as a suitcase size, today, comes on a small printed circuit board. To the benefit of the user and the application these systems have become modular and can be extended as per the need and number of speakers and areas. All this now happens without a change in the backbone or a need for a shutdown. Increase in areas means more speakers but at the amplifier end all that is needed to do is add a card and the system is up and running. From the maintenance point of view these are a blessing in disguise as even if one amp fails all one needs to do is replace that card the overall system keeps performing without interruption.

Loudspeakers a Key Factor

Without better loudspeakers, dramatic improvements in the other critical elements in the audio chain would result in little or no overall improvement in the quality of sound the customer hears.

How does one tell the difference between a good and a bad speaker? One might look at a list of specifications, but unless he is an engineer, the ohms, Watts



and other data won't mean much.

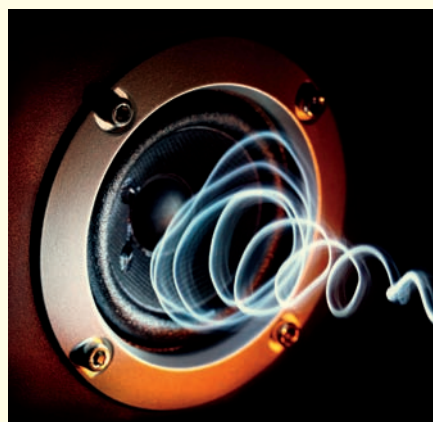
You might take a look at these speakers themselves. Maybe the bigger the better. Don't be fooled; it's not necessarily true. When you go to buy car you drive it. If one is buying speakers he should listen to them and compare the sound. Particularly useful is an A-B demonstration where you directly compare speakers playing the same music from the same system side by side.

You need not be an audio expert to recognize good sound quality. Research shows that three out of four listeners can tell the difference between poor sound and quality sound and will consistently choose the better sounding loudspeaker.

To help people understand sound quality sound engineers have established a standard set of simple definitions that allow all of us to characterize audio performance in common terms rather than engineering jargon.

Unfolding Quality sound

The descriptive terms are: "Clarity,"



"Fullness," "Brightness," "Fidelity" and "Pleasantness". Understanding these terms gives you the reference you need to make judgments about what you hear. These definitions will help evaluate sound quality:

- Clarity means that sound reproduction is distinct, pure and clear. You can clearly hear and distinguish between different instruments and voices. The opposite is an unclear, distinct, muddy sound.

- Fullness means the quality of the bass (low frequency) sounds is balanced with mid-range and treble (high frequency) sounds so that the entire range is included without imitations. The opposite is a thin sound. Good sound is neither too full or too thin.

- Brightness means the quantity of the treble sounds is balanced with the mid-range and bass sounds. The opposite is a dull sound. Good sound is neither too bright or too dull.

- Fidelity refers to how faithful or similar the reproduction is compared to the original sound. Perfect fidelity means the music sounds exactly as it would if you were present in the room where it was originally performed.

- Pleasantness is an overall rating that concentrates on the lack of aggravations and annoyances in the reproduction.

The End Result

The bottom line is that if using this simple vocabulary, you can describe your own experience with sound, you can easily identify good and poor sound. If you can tell the difference so can your customers.

With evolution of better programming, and electronics and now better loudspeakers, there's no reason to have inferior quality of sound in the outlet. For a reasonable cost, today one have a system that makes a Steinway grand Piano sound as rich and full as an original instrument.

A good sound system can be the audio equivalent of clear panes of glass, allowing true sound reproduction to convey the image you intend, or they can act as filters that distort and convey something unintended to the customers.

Business managers are faced with increasing competition from a variety of sources and it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish your outlet from the competition. One way to gain an edge is to create a unique and exciting environment. And what better way to do it than getting quality sound. ■

Need for a Vegetable Washer

Commercial practices of sanitizing are sometime severe and have undesirable effect on food materials. Pressure cleaning has become vital and with equipment like vegetable washer it is now convenient for us to achieve the results with least effort.

As the growing trend or consciousness of having rich nutrient based wholesome food is increasing, we sometime apply that technically and loose on the front that is so obvious. True, we tend to divert from the fact that the very vital procedure towards ensuring food safety is proper cleaning of vegetables before it goes to the chopping board.

The procedure of cleaning vegetables is mostly considered of minute importance and guidelines are restricted to manuals that give information on step-by-step system to be followed. It is also practically impossible to follow each and every step of manuals in the kitchen, which remain busy throughout.

The only concern on which nothing should be compromised is the food hygiene, the reason for good food of any F&B service establishment.

Washing up Eatables

Washing vegetables sounds so simple yet has to be minutely monitored. Raw vegetables in any commercial foodservice establishments, come in bulk and thus before storage enough precautionary measure has to be taken for storing vegetables in acceptable conditions.

For almost 100 years, vegetables contamination has been the prime reason behind human infection and illness. Many of the viruses, bacteria and protozoan on vegetables, which causes food poisoning, are derived from human faeces. Contamination from animal faeces is also well known and there are always other microorganisms, which occur naturally in soil or are air-



borne. However, microorganisms get added up after harvesting of vegetables, and the condition of storage, transport and display are responsible for how pathogens grow or not grow.

Eliminating the risks is difficult. Managing them should be based on identifying and controlling factors that are important in preventing contamination or limiting growth



Nitin Kumar

of pathogenic microorganisms between the time food travels from farm till plate.

A number of guidance documents has been developed. The International Fresh-cut Produce Association's guidelines for fresh fruit and vegetables, is based on principles of HACCP, Good Agricultural Practices, Good Handling Practices and Good Hygienic Practices.

Need for Vegetable Washer

Since a lot of fertilizers and chemicals are used during the farming fruits and vegetables, it is necessary to ensure that those chemicals do not find entry into our system, and thus the need for vegetable washer arises.

Research is on to understand better the mechanisms through which pathogens contaminate raw fruits and vegetables and procedures for removing pathogens.

There is always a cloud of doubt about the efficacy of disinfectants in killing parasites and viruses on fruits and vegetables. Washing fruits and vegetables in potable water is believed to remove a portion of microbial cells. In some instances, vigorous washing could give us result that a treatment with water containing 200mg/l chlorine would achieve.

Few considerations need to be taken into account when using a vegetable washer machine like controlling pH of the solution when using chlorine as a sanitizer; the temperature of wash water should be higher than that of the fruits and vegetables to minimize uptake of microorganisms by tissues. Although, disinfectants have variable effects on pathogen control

on fresh fruits and vegetables, they are certainly useful for sanitizing wash water to prevent contamination of produce that would result from using waters that are not safe.

Cooking is itself a process through which many pathogens die. But we eat many vegetables in raw form such as the salad preparations. Also, many cuisines try to retain the natural flavours of vegetables by not cooking dishes for long duration. Thus it is vital that consumption of raw fruits and vegetables is complemented by fresh and hygienic food.

Washing and Sanitizing

According to Nitin Kumar of Rans Technocrats Pvt. Ltd., manufacturer of Vegetable Washers, "Washing is aimed at sanitizing but we hardly achieve that condition. Pressure cleaning has become vital and with equipment like vegetable washer it is now convenient for us to achieve that result with least effort. The concept vegetable washer came about with the need to wash raw vegetables effectively without going through the tedious process that actually does not impart the result we would like to have."



Most fruit and vegetable washing systems are designed to remove gross contamination and their effectiveness remain a doubtful matter with microbial contaminants taking the driver's seat. The sanitizing of vegetables and fruits has gained a lot of importance of late, primarily because of rise in ready-to-eat

segment where food is sold with longer shelf life.

There have been reports that commercial practices of sanitizing are sometime severe and have undesirable effect on food materials.

Nitin further adds, "Some fruits and vegetables, nowadays, are coated with a food safe wax to preserve their shelf life. It becomes easy for dirt and residues to get settle on this wax coating. Since many consider water alone do not do the needful to get rid of all those organisms resulting in diseases, manufacturers have introduced products that help in good wash of vegetables or fruits."

It is believed that the standard of cleaning of vegetables should be high in food-based industries since large quantities of food is purchased and stored as per their convenience. But, it should not have negative impact on consumers.

Even though vegetable cleaning is important, sanitizing the other equipment used for preparing vegetables for cooking like cutting machine, mixers, grinders, etc., should also be taken care of to ensure that false steps do not mar the work done by the vegetable washer at the first place. ■

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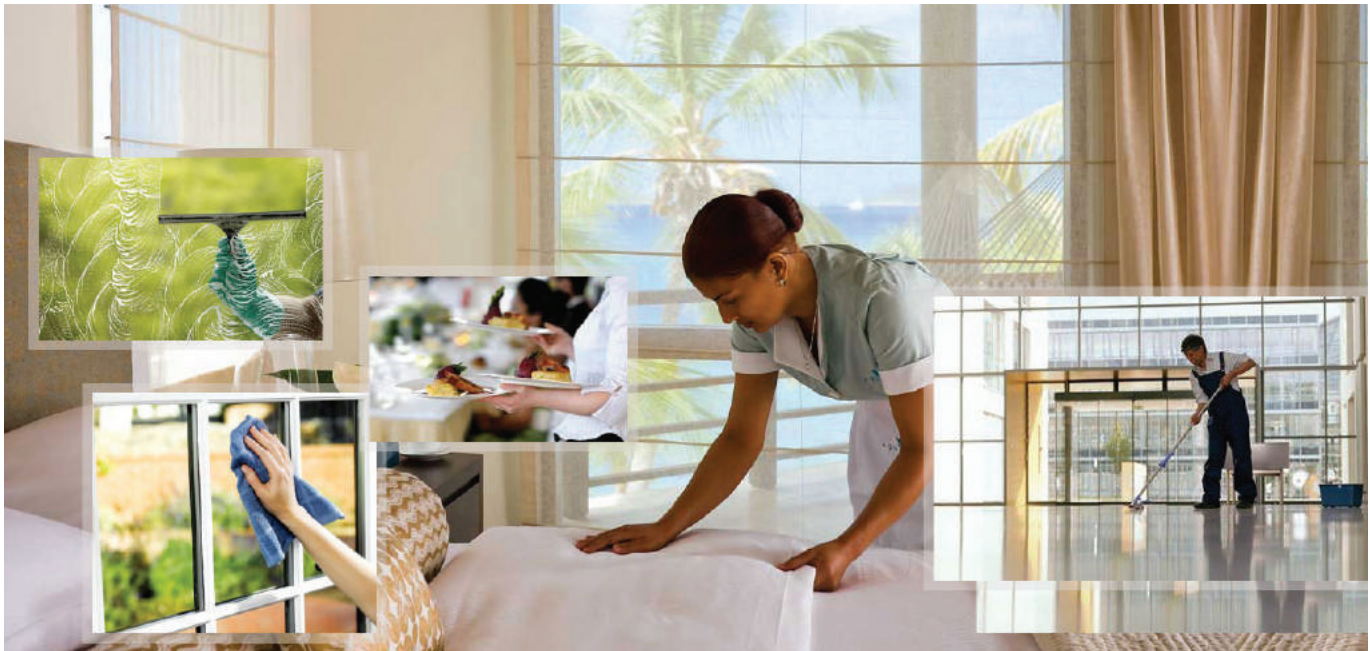
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Housekeeping Challenges for Hospitality

Housekeeping is the edifice of the hotel industry. Without a clean restroom, or a spic and span lobby, the best of facilities and amenities of a five-star hotel are likely to be unable to attract discerning guests. It is because without sanitation luxury loses its significance. Similarly, the aesthetic décor of the room wouldn't appeal to the guest if she/he comes to the room after the meeting and sees that her/his bed sheets are still as dishevelled as it was before she/he left in the morning, and the depleted toiletries in the bathroom are not yet replenished.

Yes, the major chunk of the revenue of hotels still comes from rooms (though F&B segment is fast catching up), but without good housekeeping standards, the best of hotel rooms will fail to attract repeat visitors.

However, it doesn't mean that housekeeping is important only for five-star hotels, which are normally characterised by high-end amenities and decor. It is essential for all hotels, but for five-star properties, the housekeeping standards should be nothing short of impeccable, as here you are catering to guests who are likely to have experienced

high standards of hospitality across the globe and naturally they have become habituated to not settle for anything ordinary.

Much More Than Cleaning

Housekeeping in hotels today is a complex and elaborate task and is not at all confined to cleaning and changing the bedding of the guest rooms, and cleaning of rest rooms and replenishing their toiletries as is being commonly perceived by people outside the hospitality industry. But that does not mean that the guests would not appreciate the wonderful laundry service, or for that matter the impeccable security of the hotel where she/he is staying, perhaps not realising that both of these facilities now fall within the purview of housekeeping in many hotels.

The laundry service does not only include cleaning the guests' linens and garments, but also the linens of rooms and also linens of the F&B outlets of the hotels, and maintenance of staff uniforms. At the same time, the now extended role of housekeeping also involves reporting of any untoward elements or about any suspicious person/luggage/activity in order

to facilitate the security concerns of the hotels. At the same time, the housekeeping department needs to ensure that the guests' privacy is not in any way compromised because of rigmarole of security.

Of course, the guest is also unlikely to wonder why the facility is pest free, when the city is full of pests. Yes, pest control of the property is also a housekeeping exercise. Similarly, if the guests get impressed by the wonderful horticulture of the housekeeping property, many of the hoteliers should thank her/his housekeeping staff for that. And if hotel is an environmentally friendly property, the challenges of waste disposal and waste recycling can assume very crucial role in the purview of housekeeping. Housekeeping plays an important role in forming the overall reputation of a hotel among its guests and potential guests.

Facilitating Guest Satisfaction

Succinctly, on a broader scale, the role of modern housekeeping in hotels is to facilitate guest satisfaction through quality professionalism along with special personalised touches, thereby contributing

to the guest's repeat visits to the property despite the attractions of competition.

Besides continual attention and stringent adherence to cleanliness and hygiene, aesthetics and security, great housekeeping should also focus on individual guests' preferences, likes and dislikes and endeavour with the objective to not only meet her/his expectations from housekeeping services, but also to exceed them. The housekeeping teams at hotels shouldn't miss opportunity to interact with their guests without getting intrusive and facilitate in every way to ensure that their guests are having not only a comfortable but also a wonderful stay.

For example, while chatting with the Executive Housekeeper the guest reveals that it is her birthday today. And then she would be pleasantly surprised if she gets a bouquet of flowers in the evening, along with a box of chocolates and warm wishes. Next time when she visits the city for business, she is likely to choose this hotel only, assuming all other factors remaining the same. Ideally, great housekeeping should in most cases (not in the above-mentioned case), be apparently invisible to the guest, but should add up to the overall guest experience. At the same time, it should help in making the first impression among the guests, which in these times of frenzied competition is extremely crucial for growth. The absence of good housekeeping, however, makes it apparent to the guests about the crucial role of housekeeping.

Cost-effectiveness and Coordination

And of course, the Executive Housekeeper would ensure that this challenging endeavour must be attained in a cost-effective manner too, whether through in-house manpower or through judiciously or for that matter optimally combining the efforts of in-house staff and outsourcing operations. It is because cost saved can also be profit earned.

The housekeeping department of a hotel should also have excellent co-ordination with all the departments of the hotel, in order to minimise disruption and optimising comfort, convenience and security for the guests. Among all the departments, its coordination with the security department of the hotel is most important.

Training is Crucial

Housekeeping is not only a 24/7 exercise for the hospitality industry, but is a continually



evolving field. Therefore the success of housekeeping services in hotels require training of the in-house and as well as the outsourcing staff (wherever applicable) not only at the time of induction but also from time to time, both in terms of soft skills and technical expertise, so that they are abreast with the latest trends and demands in housekeeping operations pertaining to the hospitality industry. This can help the hotels to compete with their competition, and no wonder many five-star hotels across the country are adhering to this principle.

Training should not only be at the level of rank and file housekeeping personnel, but also include the Managers and supervisors. However, the nature of training should ideally vary from senior and junior level personnel. For example, the junior level housekeeping personnel can be trained on handling some new-age equipment about which he is not familiar, or about tackling the day-to-day maintenance challenges, while the training for senior level personnel should focus on cost control, or people handling skills. These performance development training programmes from time to time can not only give an edge to the housekeeping of the hotel concerned, but can also help the housekeeping personnel in their career growth, thereby preventing employee



dissatisfaction and arresting the attrition rate to some extent.

Already many five-star properties are laying great emphasis on frequent training, but the emphasis towards frequent and updated training in the realm of housekeeping should percolate towards many three-star and two-star budget hotels also, spread across the country. Only then our hospitality industry can become more professional at par with international standards, in holistic terms.

The training process should ideally be based on feedback of guest satisfaction. As far as housekeeping in hospitality industry is concerned, guest feedback should be ascertained and acted upon on a continual basis(ideally one hour before the guests' check-out) , because only through guest feedback the Executive Housekeeper can decide for sure in which areas her/his idea and execution of housekeeping for the given hotel has been right or wrong.

A Challenging Profession

The challenges of housekeeping are many. For example, the maintenance of cleanliness in rest rooms and lobbies of the hotels, which attract heavy footfalls, is a perpetual challenge. If the lobby has marble flooring, the task of its maintenance becomes all the more daunting. Removal of food stains and grease stains from marble flooring is a time consuming task.

Granite flooring also needs great care. It is advisable to periodically clean granite surfaces with a natural stone or granite cleaner to maintain their shine. However, using harsh cleaners on granite flooring can damage the sealant and dull the finish. The Executive Housekeeper should also ensure that cleaning products and supplies are always adequate and appropriate floor cleaning measures are being employed for different types of floors of the hotels. Doing the cleaning up operations after a huge conference or banquet is over is no less challenging. And maintaining housekeeping standards amidst renovation is an arduous task indeed.

The Executive Housekeeper should ensure that the efficiency and the motivational levels of her/his team are kept high, so that both bottom lines and attrition rates are not unduly affected. The paucity of skilled and qualified manpower in hotel's housekeeping is always a challenge, which perhaps can be addressed through better pay packages, better social security and less erratic working hours. ■

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Sachin Maheshwary, General Manager, Grand Mercure Bengaluru Gopalan Mall



Sachin Maheshwary is the General Manager of Grand Mercure Bengaluru Gopalan Mall, 212-keys property, the sixth property by Accor in Bengaluru. Sachin started his journey with Accor Hotels in 2016 as an Executive Assistant Manager at the Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach. Prior to joining Accor Hotels, Sachin has worked with Taj hotels and Resorts for over 14 years across multiple disciplines. Sachin opened the first Novotel in Kerala, introducing the brand to the city of Kochi. A seasoned hotelier has extensive experience in operations and food & beverages. Sachin holds a diploma in hospitality from the Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology in Mumbai, Post Graduate Diploma from Symbiosis Pune and then went on to earn a Master's in Hospitality Management from Cornell University and Nanyang Technological University.

In an exclusive interview with **Sharmila Chand** he shares his work philosophy and more

What is the USP of your property?

Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall celebrates the essence of Karnataka in the heart of Bengaluru. The hotel stands apart with its curation of handcrafted experiences rooting from the local culture, cuisine and art. A short walk from the Baiyappanahalli Metro station, Grand Mercure at Gopalan Mall, is a 212 key property, with 10 meeting spaces and multiple F&B offerings. The hotel is in close proximity to many key commercial and residential bubbles of the city including Indiranagar, Outer Ring Road, Whitefield, Hebbal etc.

Tell us about the green initiatives the hotel has taken?

The hotel passionately follows Accor's sustainability charter and puts in great effort to promote a green lifestyle. Right from an EV charging station to adoption of alternate energy and rainwater harvesting. The hotel has a dedicated terrace garden for organic vegetables and herbs.

Tell us about the sustainable processes in your property?

At Grand Mercure Gopalan Mall, we believe in growing sustainably and with the community. Our amenities are fair trade certified and we promote the importance of sustainability in all our communications. We promote many local GI tagged elements right from the Channapatna toys, to organic coffee beans from Chikmagalur, Mysore Sandalwood fragrance and much more.

What is the marketing strategy to promote your property?

As a hotel we would like to be acknowledged as storytellers of the land. Our experiences and offerings are designed to narrate tales rooting from the local traditions.

What distinguishes your property

from others in the same bracket?

Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall is a true celebration of local way of life, culture, cuisine and people. Right from the notes of Nadeswaram welcoming you in at the entrance, to the signature fragrance of Mysore Sandalwood and vetiver, the elements narrate the story of Karnataka for the Global travellers to enjoy.

What would you say the 'Differentiating Factor' of your F&B outlets?

'La Utsav', the all day dining restaurant at Grand Mercure Bengaluru Gopalan Mall serves melange of regional and global fare. A key addition at the restaurant is lost recipes a segment of our menu that focuses on the forgotten and non-commercialized elements of Karnataka cuisine

'1026 AD' is Lobby Bar & Alfresco, our specialty coffee for the outlet is an exclusive blend from the oldest organic estate in Chikmagalur, the menu also boasts unique brewing techniques like syphon, chemex and Turkish for the patrons to enjoy. The bar features a dedicated gin garden with a wide selection of handcrafted gins, homemade tonics & bitters, a selection of curated cocktails

The hotel houses 10 meeting spaces including an expansive terrace and an elegant ballroom and can hold events for around 400 people.

Could you reflect on the future plans and new initiatives you wish to undertake in your property?

Our initial target is to have a great array of engagements for the city, that will help our guests spent a good time outside of the internet. We have many wholesome experiences in our calendar including booking reading sessions at the library lounge, movie

nights under the stars, picnic mornings with board games to begin your Sundays and much more. On an F&B front we hope to drive deeper ingredient-based conversations and create experiences that are both immersive and educating.

What is the most crucial issue to tackle in the Hospitality industry today?

I think we should really work together as an industry to rebuild the trust back in the hospitality for the young and upcoming hoteliers.

What do you enjoy most about being at the helm of affairs at the hotel?

I have a very passionate team at the hotel, I love seeing the collective effort that is put into going the extra mile.

What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

Being assigned to lead the pre-opening a team of a hotel is an experience that I have cherished tremendously, it gave me the opportunity to build up a hotel and its strategy from the bedrock level for the many years to come. It also help me define the culture of the hotel, placing the guest at the core of all decision making.

How do you de-stress?

My family is my greatest sense of joy and I love taking time out to teach or watch a movie with my kids. I also enjoy long drives and taking time out to explore the city.

What is your working Mantra, your guiding philosophy in work?

I strongly believe that the key is to be humble always. To make effort to learn something new every day.



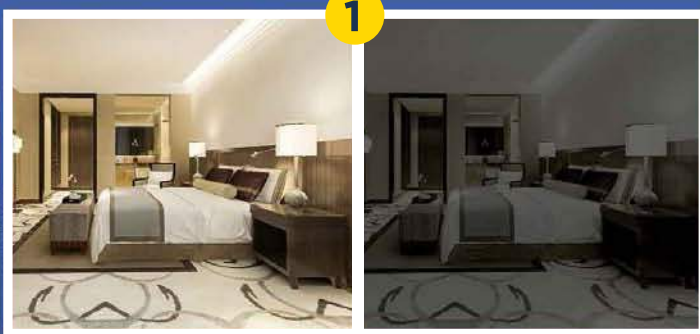
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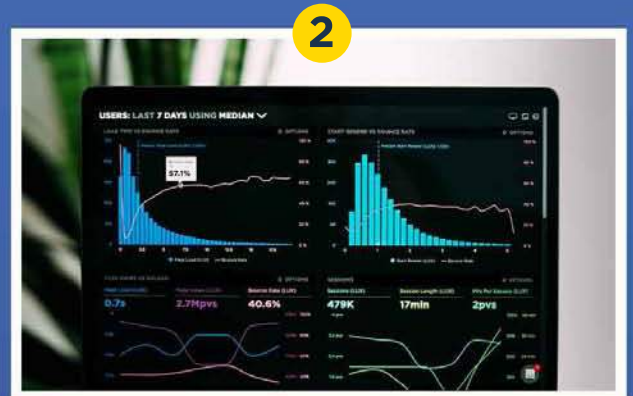
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