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An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry

Business

Reduction in GST & its Effect on Hospitality Industry

Feature

The Challenge of Staff Retention in the Hospitality Industry

F&B

Cross-cultural Food Festivals in Hotels

Housekeeping

Housekeeping as a Revenue Engine

Cybersecurity
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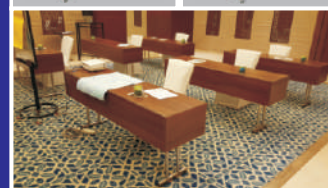


WS27

Foldable Banquet Tables



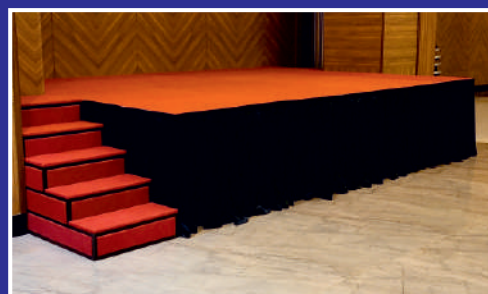
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As in every year, the festive and wedding seasons bring higher spending on travel and hospitality, and this celebration receives another boost with the recent announcement of revised GST rates for the hotel industry. In a key decision, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council approved significant changes to tax rates on hotels and air travel across the country, effective September 22, 2025. The move is expected to further energize the hospitality and tourism sectors just as the high-demand season begins.

Our business story presents an overview of the recent GST revisions and the simultaneous withdrawal of Input Tax Credit (ITC), impacting the hospitality industry. Will these changes ultimately benefit end customers, or will mid-sized hotels witness a surge in revenue? In this feature, we bring together insights and perspectives from hospitality professionals to decode the real impact of the new tax structure.

Cybersecurity has become a critical priority for hotels, essential to safeguard sensitive guest data and maintain operational integrity. A robust security framework not only prevents financial losses but also protects brand reputation. Our cover story explores why cybersecurity has emerged as a core area of concern for the hospitality sector and how hotels are staying ahead of evolving cyber threats.

Another long-standing challenge for the hospitality industry is staff retention. The current feature story brings together insights from HR leaders and General Managers on the strategies needed to foster a positive work culture that not only enhances employee satisfaction but also drives higher workforce retention.

Our F&B story explores how festivals and traditions are emerging as powerful platforms for creating experiential dining moments for guests. Our findings reveal that Gen Z guests, in particular, are drawn to visually engaging experiences that celebrate heritage, authenticity and local traditions.

As the festive season continues in full swing, we wish all our readers a very happy and prosperous Diwali.

Rajat Taneja

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An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry

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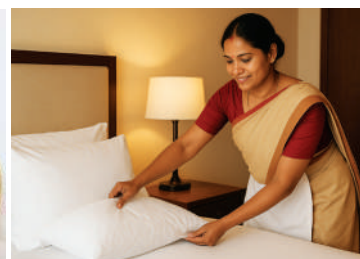
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The 2025 Kaohsiung Food Show:

Asia-Pacific's Premier Gateway to Food & Beverage Innovation

The 2025 Kaohsiung Food Show will return to the Kaohsiung Exhibition Center from October 23–26, 2025. Running concurrently with the Kaohsiung International Hotel, Restaurant, Baking and Catering Show (Kaohsiung HORECA), the event will transform Southern Taiwan into a dynamic hub for the food and hospitality industries in the Asia-Pacific region.

This year's exhibition brings together 330 exhibitors across 580 booths, attracting an expected 20,000 visitors. Covering the entire food supply chain, the show features everything from agricultural, fishery and livestock products to frozen ready-to-eat meals, functional foods, packaging solutions and state-of-the-art kitchen equipment. Key exhibitors include Cheng Ji Agricultural Products, Hao Di Yi (Taiwan's leading satay sauce brand), Yi E Shi by Fu Yi Foods and Jiu Zhen Nan Food Co., Ltd., a time-honoured Taiwanese brand making its Kaohsiung debut.

Kaohsiung HORECA will highlight cutting-edge machinery from exhibitors such as Hundred Machinery (automated encrusting machines), Sun-Mate Machinery (baking equipment) and Jaw Feng Machinery (vacuum packaging). These technologies underline Taiwan's strengths in smart automation, packaging and food processing solutions, helping businesses achieve higher efficiency, consistency and quality control.

To reflect global consumer trends, the Fresh Living Area will debut, showcasing organic, plant-based, low-sugar and other functional innovations. This makes it a must-visit for retailers, importers and buyers who are seeking to meet the surging



demand for clean-label and health-driven products. Another exciting highlight is the Omiyage Corner, presenting curated snacks, teas and sweets which celebrate Asia's rich gift-giving culture. International exhibitors from South Korea, Vietnam, the United States, Belgium and Germany will also bring their own authentic flavours to the show floor, making Kaohsiung a global crossroads of culinary excellence.

Beyond exhibitions, the 2025 Kaohsiung Food Show offers side events like Taiwan Foods Procurement Day, SDG seminars, celebrity chef shows, live launches, tastings, auctions and lucky draws. It's Asia-Pacific's premier sourcing platform, connecting buyers with innovative suppliers across healthy foods, premium snacks, and advanced production solutions, driving networking and growth.

Lemon Tree Hotels Signs New Property in Dehradun

Lemon Tree Hotels has signed a license agreement for a new property in Mohkampur, Dehradun. The upcoming Lemon Tree Hotel, Mohkampur, Dehradun, will be managed by the company's wholly owned subsidiary, Carnation Hotels Pvt. Ltd., the management arm of Lemon Tree Hotels.

The Lemon Tree Resort, Mohkampur, will feature 98 well-appointed rooms, a restaurant, a lounge, a conference room, a swimming pool, a fitness center, and other recreational facilities. The property is located approximately 18 km from Jolly Grant Airport and 9 km from Dehradun Railway Station, and is well connected by road. Strategically located within the Mall of Dehradun, the city's premier lifestyle and retail hub, the upcoming hotel promises guests seamless

access to an exciting mix of shopping, dining, and entertainment experiences.

Vilas Pawar, CEO- Managed & Franchise business, Lemon Tree Hotels, shared, "We are delighted to further enhance our footprint in Uttarakhand, where we currently operate eight hotels and have eight more upcoming ones."

Lemon Tree Hotels (LTHL) is one of the largest hotel chains in India and owns/leases/operates/franchises hotels across the upscale, upper-midscale, midscale, and economy segments.

Set amidst the serene surroundings of Dehradun, the resort aims to offer guests a refreshing blend of comfort, modern amenities and warm hospitality, making it an ideal destination for both leisure and business travellers.



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Hilton To Expand Its Presence In Rajasthan With Hilton Jaipur Kukas Hotel



Hilton has announced the signing of Hilton Jaipur Kukas, a forthcoming addition to its portfolio in Rajasthan. Developed in partnership with Masbu Resorts, the hotel is scheduled to open in 2029, underscoring Hilton's continued growth in one of India's most prominent cultural and tourism destinations. Situated in Kukas, Jaipur's renowned hospitality district along Delhi Road, the property will serve as an upscale retreat for both leisure and business travellers.

Guests will benefit from convenient connectivity to Jaipur International Airport and Jaipur Railway Station, whilst remaining close to the city's key attractions. Hilton Jaipur Kukas will comprise 122 guestrooms, including deluxe rooms, plunge pool rooms and villa suites offering panoramic views of the Aravalli Hills. Facilities will include an all-day dining restaurant, bar, executive lounge, spa, fitness centre and both indoor and outdoor swimming pools. In addition, the hotel will offer nearly 10,000 square feet of indoor event space, complemented by a 25,000 square-foot outdoor banquet lawn, positioning it as a premier venue for weddings, corporate gatherings and social occasions.

Clarence Tan, Senior Vice President, Development, Asia Pacific, Hilton, said, "The signing of Hilton Jaipur Kukas strengthens our development momentum in India and underscores our focus on bringing the flagship Hilton Hotels & Resorts brand to high-demand leisure and wedding destinations. This signing demonstrates our commitment to expanding our full-service portfolio in markets where domestic travel and premium experiences are driving sustained growth."

Royal Orchid Hotels Unveils ICONIQA Mumbai

Royal Orchid Hotels Ltd, one of India's hospitality majors with over two decades of excellence, proudly introduced ICONIQA Hotels & Resorts, its visionary upscale lifestyle brand. The brand's flagship property, strategically positioned adjacent to Mumbai International Airport's Terminal 2, marked a transformative entry into the premium hospitality segment with cutting-edge design, technology-driven service and immersive guest experiences tailored for the modern traveller.

The debut property in Mumbai features 291 meticulously designed rooms with many firsts across the hotel - In-room smart laundry closets, 24/7 whatsapp concierge, a strategic focus on various Food & Beverage offerings including Mumbai's first poolside day club are among of slew of thoughtfully designed facilities and elements throughout the hotel.

Expressing his thoughts, Arjun Baljee, Founder of ICONIQA Hotels & Resorts and President, Royal Orchid Hotels Ltd. says, "Mumbai is a city on the move, a nexus for business, culture and global connectivity. ICONIQA answers its energy and ambition with future-ready design, smart technology and thoughtful experiences that go beyond traditional hotel stays. We're proud to unveil a hospitality concept that is as dynamic as the destinations it serves, redefining upscale lifestyle travel for India and beyond."

Royal Orchid Hotels plans to accelerate its growth across its collection of brands to over 345 properties by 2030.



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ITW Expands Presence with New Head Office in Gurgaon



Illinois Tool Works (ITW), a Fortune 200 global enterprise founded in 1912, has announced the opening of its new corporate head office in Gurgaon, marking a significant milestone in its growth journey in India.

Headquartered in Glenview, Illinois, ITW operates in 56 countries with over 50,000 employees and reported a global revenue of USD 15.9 billion in 2024. Among its seven business segments, the Food Equipment Group (FEG) is a key division, known for its advanced warewash, cooking, refrigeration and food processing equipment that serve hotels, restaurants, retail and institutional clients worldwide.

The new Gurgaon office houses a dedicated team across sales, service and culinary support, ensuring focused regional coverage across North, South, and West India. "This strategic expansion strengthens ITW's ability to deliver world-class solutions and service support to customers across the country" said Razi Haider-Country Manager, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal.



A highlight of the new setup is the Experience Centre, a dynamic space where customers can explore and interact with ITW's premium food equipment in a live environment. The centre embodies the company's commitment to innovation, performance, and customer experience.

With this addition, ITW reinforces its long-term commitment to the Indian market, aiming to serve its growing clientele with enhanced efficiency, excellence and care.

With Landmark Kanpur Signing, Hyatt Grows JdV Brand in India

Hyatt Hotels Corporation announced the signing of The Landmark Kanpur, which will become part of the JdV by Hyatt brand, marking Hyatt's continued strategic expansion of its brands in India. Located in one of Kanpur's most prestigious neighbourhoods, the hotel is owned by Som Datt Landmark Hotels and Recreations Private Limited and is expected to open in 2026.

The signing of Landmark Kanpur, reinforces Hyatt's commitment to growing its portfolio of independent, experience-driven lifestyle hotels in key cities across India. The hotel will feature 170 rooms, a spa, four food and beverage outlets and varied event facilities, including a lush 7,200 square foot lawn on the 21st floor, catering to both corporate travellers and social groups.

The property is undergoing thoughtful transformation to reflect the elevated design and experience standards of the JdV by Hyatt brand, a collection of vibrant, independent hotels that are true reflections of the urban neighbourhoods they call home.

Embracing its namesake (joie de vivre), JdV by Hyatt hotels invite guests and locals alike to connect, live in the moment and celebrate the joy of life, making each stay yours truly. From vibrant environments that are reflective of the surrounding neighbourhood, to experiences with a uniquely local vibe and heartfelt and joy-driven service, The Landmark Kanpur will offer a contemporary lodging option unlike any other in the area.

"We're thrilled to welcome The Landmark Kanpur to the JdV by Hyatt family," said Dhruva Rathore, Vice President, Real Estate &



Development for India & South West Asia, Hyatt. "This association reflects our commitment to collaborating with exceptional local operators to deliver unique guest experiences in promising markets. Building on The Landmark's esteemed legacy in Kanpur, we're excited to take this property to new heights."

With this signing, Hyatt further its plans to strengthen its brand presence in India's key commercial and industrial hubs, offering globally minded travellers access to immersive, independent hospitality experiences through its growing lifestyle portfolio.



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Lords Hotels & Resorts Unveils a New Era of Luxury in Somnath

Lords Hotels & Resorts has announced the transformation of its Somnath property, setting a new standard of luxury in the region. With the theme “Crafted for Comfort, Designed for Memories,” the hotel introduces 82 world-class rooms, including premium club rooms, luxurious suites and a grand presidential suite.

The property welcomes guests with a sophisticated lobby, while offering a pure vegetarian restaurant that blends local flavours with global flair. Leisure and wellness facilities include a state-of-the-art gymnasium, salon, library, family recreation areas and Somnath’s first infinity pool. A dedicated game zone enhances the family-friendly appeal. For events, the hotel features a banquet and conference hall accommodating over 500 guests, catering to weddings, corporate summits and milestone celebrations.

Sudhir Jena, Corporate Vice President, Lords Hotels &



Resorts, commented, “As the gateway to one of India’s most sacred destinations, our upgraded hotel is poised to become a landmark not only for luxury but for thoughtful, culturally rooted hospitality. Every detail has been crafted to the minutest detail. Every space has a story. Every experience has a soul.”

Taj Cidade De Goa First to Earn Green Key Certification 2025

The Taj Cidade de Goa has set a remarkable benchmark by becoming the first property within the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) portfolio to receive the prestigious Green Key Certification 2025. This globally recognised honour reinforces the hotel’s steadfast commitment to sustainability, environmental stewardship and the pursuit of responsible luxury. The achievement reflects the property’s alignment with the preferences of today’s



conscious travellers, who value experiences that seamlessly blend indulgence with ecological mindfulness.

Rooted in IHCL’s visionary Paathya framework – the company’s guiding model for long-term Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) objectives – the hotel’s initiatives span water and energy conservation, cultural preservation and community engagement. Together, these efforts exemplify a philosophy of hospitality where responsibility elevates, rather than limits, the essence of luxury.

The Fern Hotels Signed its Second Property in Daman

The Fern Hotels & Resorts announced the signing of its latest property—Costeira Zinc Journey by The Fern Daman. This will be the brand’s second property in Daman. The company has a total of 37 hotels across Gujarat,



Suhail Kannampilly

Daman & Diu operational and opening shortly. The hotel will feature 49 well-appointed rooms & suites, an infinity sea-view pool, an indulgent spa, three distinctive dining options—a cozy coffee shop, a 24-hour multi-cuisine restaurant and a terrace restaurant with panoramic sea views. The hotel also offers a variety of modern event and meeting spaces including three banquets, a board room, an open terrace venue and a contemporary meeting room, catering to both social and corporate gatherings.

Commenting on the development, Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, said, “Daman, with its scenic beauty, evolving infrastructure and growing appeal as a short-haul leisure destination, fits perfectly into our strategic growth map. With this property, we aim to offer a rejuvenating and immersive guest experience that reflects the distinct character of the region, inviting guests to explore, discover and create unforgettable moments.”

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The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa Crowned “Best Iconic Hotel in Asia”

The award-winning streak of The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa (MET), a Five Star Deluxe full service hotel located in the heart of the business and commercial hub of New Delhi, and provides easy access to most of the corporate and financial centres, ministries, embassies and the International Trade Fair grounds shows no sign of abating. The hotel was crowned as the “Best Iconic Hotel in Asia” by the prestigious Haute Grandeur Global Hotel Awards. This accolade is a testament to the hotel’s unwavering commitment to hospitality excellence over the past 25 successful years. The award is particularly notable given during its ‘Silver Anniversary’ and the intense competition among top luxury hotels.

Expressing his thoughts at this winning moment, Vipul Gupta, Director of The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa, says, “This

milestone brings double the joy and celebration for us! We are excited to achieve this feat, and we are grateful to our customers, guests, associates, employees and stakeholders who have been part of our journey.”

Gupta further emphasises, “To win this prestigious award takes continuous passion,



drive and determination. We are proud to have been recognised for our commitment



to the highest standards, which has earned us a reputation for refined luxury. Our team’s dedication to providing the best amenities and services has been instrumental in achieving this esteemed award. We are confident that this recognition will inspire our team to continue striving for excellence. We express our gratification and thank Haute Grandeur Global Hotel Awards for appreciating our efforts on such a celebrated platform.”

MBD Group Celebrates 69 Glorious Years of Excellence and Innovation



MBD Group, a diversified conglomerate with a global presence, proudly celebrated its 69th Establishment Day, marking nearly seven decades of excellence in education, hospitality, real estate, retail and more.

The event began with a grand introduction followed by a heartfelt audio-visual tribute to the Founder, Ashok Kumar Malhotra. A moving speech by Satish Bala Malhotra, Chairperson of MBD Group, set the tone for the evening. The traditional lamp lighting ceremony was held, followed by the MBD Pledge

and cake-cutting ceremony. A powerful Opening Act – “O Shera”, featuring both internal and external performers, including a martial arts showcase, wowed the audience and set the stage for the celebrations to come.

Monica Malhotra Kandhari, Managing Director of MBD Group, delivered a compelling speech on the power of innovation in education/ Edtech, highlighting the impact of initiatives like AASOKA and the Love to Learn campaign. One of the event’s most heartwarming

highlights was the recognition of MBD employees and their families. Scholarships were awarded to the children of MBDians.

Sonica Malhotra Kandhari, Joint Managing Director, concluded by sharing her vision for growth in hospitality, retail and sustainability. She emphasised the importance of innovation and delivering meaningful experiences across all sectors. The day concluded with the MBD Anthem, a collective thank-you note and the opening of the Hi-Tea, bringing everyone together in celebration.

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ELIVAAS Expands Its South India Presence with Six Premier Luxury Villas

ELIVAAS, India's fastest-growing luxury villa rental brand, has announced its expansion into South India with six premium properties across Kerala. The Kerala portfolio includes Palm Dale, Pamba Heritage and Vembanad House in Alappuzha, Panchvadi in Thekkady, Still Waters in Varkala and Paloma Backwater Resort. Each property in Kerala has been designed to offer privacy and premium experiences. From intimate 4BHK villas to larger resorts with over 30 rooms, the portfolio caters to both close-knit family getaways and large-scale corporate offsites. Guests can expect curated services such as private chefs, personalised concierge support and luxury hospitality, along with signature experiences including houseboat cruises, shikara rides, kayaking, cycling and ayurvedic wellness immersions.



Speaking on the expansion, Ritwik Khare, Founder & CEO, ELIVAAS, said, "Our expansion into Kerala reflects not only the demand we see from travelers but also the immense potential of

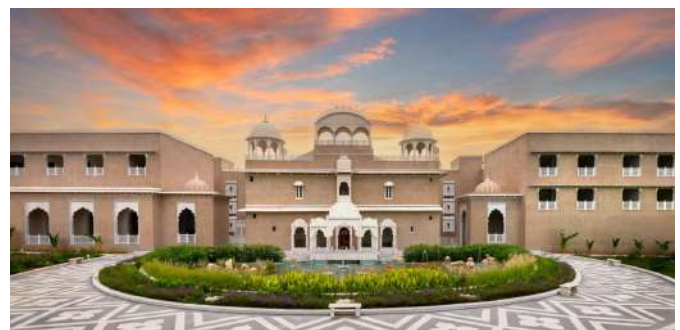
South India as a luxury and experiential travel hub. Having built a successful presence in different parts of India, Kerala is a natural next step for us – its backwaters, cultural richness and a strong tourism ecosystem makes it an ideal market. With this expansion, ELIVAAS is positioning itself to cater to the growing demand for premium stays that serve families, corporates and global travelers alike. We foresee South India becoming one of our strongest growth markets in the years to come."

ELIVAAS is a leading name in the Indian hospitality industry, specialising in curating luxury villa vacations across the country's most desirable destinations.

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) Declared the Opening of Taj Lalit Bagh, Udaipur

India's largest hospitality company, announced the opening of Taj Lalit Bagh, Udaipur, a grand estate that blends heritage with state-of-the-art sophistication. Built around a century-old estate with deep rooted architectural charm, Taj Lalit Bagh, Udaipur is a luxury retreat inspired by tales of royal hunts, offering a captivating blend of history and modern indulgence. At its heart stands an ancient stepwell that remains a perennial source of water and anchors the property in history.

The hotel brings Taj's signature culinary experiences like *Machan*, the all-day dining destination, *Nonya*, a Pan-Asian specialty restaurant and the vibrant *Nonya* Bar. Guests can unwind at the signature J Wellness Circle spa, offering holistic therapies or explore the recreational amenities including the pool and state-of-the-art fitness centre. With expansive indoor and outdoor venues, open-air courtyards and lush landscapes, it is an ideal setting for grand weddings, corporate events and immersive leisure escapes.



Ajay Sharma, General Manager, Taj Lalit Bagh, Udaipur, said, "Taj Lalit Bagh, Udaipur brings alive the rich countryside charm of Udaipur while offering the signature warm hospitality of Taj. We look forward to welcoming guests to this one-of-a-kind estate."

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HRAWI Celebrates 75 Years at 20th Regional Convention in Mumbai

The Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) – HRAWI inaugurated its landmark 20th Regional Convention at Taj Lands End, Mumbai, commemorating 75 years of hospitality excellence in the presence of industry leaders, Government dignitaries and hospitality stalwarts.

Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Chief Guest at the convention, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, in his keynote address said that Tourism and hospitality were ‘mirrors of a nation’s soul.’ Underscoring India’s Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, Dr. Tharoor called for decisive movement on three foundational pillars: Image, Infrastructure and Immigration.

With Maharashtra Tourism as the State Partner for the Convention, HRAWI welcomed an illustrious gathering of dignitaries, including Mohamed Farouk, Regional Director (Western & Central Region), India Tourism Mumbai, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Neelesh Gatne (IAS), Managing Director, MTDC; Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President, FHRAI; along with a distinguished group of Past Presidents and industry stalwarts.

D. S. Advani, Convention Chairman of HRAWI, delivered the opening address and introduced key Government dignitaries. This was followed by a welcome address from Jimmy Shaw, President of HRAWI, who underscored the convention’s significance for the hospitality sector.

Neelesh Gatne, Managing Director, MTDC, stated, “Maharashtra is unveiling ground-breaking initiatives to transform its tourism landscape. With the recent UNESCO heritage tag for the Maratha Military Landscapes, we invite you to partner with us in developing this immense potential”



A highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Awards to two industry icons- Dr Ajit B Kerkar, President of Honour, HRAWI and Vivek Nair, Member of Honour, HRAWI, in recognition of their unparalleled contributions to the field.

Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President, FHRAI said, “Our focus this year is on building a stronger, more resilient hospitality ecosystem through three key verticals including FHRAI, IHM-led programs and a new independent research centre dedicated to driving industry insights and advocacy. We have already begun executing a clear action plan, including measures to support members facing operational challenges and to engage with policymakers on critical issues like GST.”

ITC Hotels to Manage Luxury Hotel in Patna

ITC Hotels has announced the signing of definitive agreements with Kumar Infra Hotel Private Limited (KIHPL) to manage a new 140-room luxury hotel in Patna, Bihar. As part of the Bihar Tourism development initiatives, this landmark project emerged through a competitive government bidding process, in which KIHPL secured the rights and subsequently selected ITC Hotels as the operating partner. Strategically located on a 1.5-acre site in the heart of Patna, the upcoming property is envisioned to set new benchmarks in the city’s hospitality landscape. It will combine world-class service standards, contemporary and sophisticated architectural design, and ITC’s legendary culinary excellence—bringing an excellent experience of luxury and responsible hospitality to the state’s capital.

Speaking on the occasion, Anil Chadha, Managing Director, ITC Hotels Limited said, “It shall be a privilege to showcase our iconic



culinary and service excellence in Bihar through this ITC Luxury Hotel. Our luxury properties epitomise the culture and ethos of each destination, offering indigenous experiences while celebrating the region’s rich heritage through distinctive architecture, arts, crafts and rituals.”

Manish Kumar, Director, Kumar Infra Hotel Private Limited, added, “We are excited and honoured to partner with ITC Hotels for this landmark project in Patna. This collaboration aligns with the Bihar Government’s vision to strengthen the city’s commercial and cultural identity. We look forward to creating an iconic luxury destination that elevates the tourism potential and hospitality landscape of the state.”

The new ITC Hotel Patna will feature luxury accommodation, signature dining venues, and expansive meeting and banqueting facilities, especially designed to serve both business and leisure travellers.

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Kapil Vig



IHG Hotels & Resorts has appointment of Kapil Vig as the new General Manager of Crowne Plaza Lucknow, which proudly stands as IHG's 50th property in India.

Kapil brings nearly three decades of hospitality experience, having held leadership positions across several prestigious hotels within the IHG portfolio and

other international global brands.

On his appointment, Kapil Vig said he looks forward to working with the team at Crowne Plaza Lucknow to deliver exceptional guest experiences and further strengthen the hotel's position as a leading 5-star destination in the city.

A graduate of IHM Ahmedabad with a Diploma in Hotel Management, he is known for his guest-centric approach, operational expertise, and ability to build high-performing teams.

With his leadership, Crowne Plaza Lucknow is poised to set new benchmarks in 5-star hospitality, creating memorable experiences for guests and reinforcing IHG's commitment to excellence in India.

Preeti Mittoo



The Westin Goa has appointment Preeti Mittoo as the new Director of Sales and Marketing. With over 18 years of expertise in hotel sales and marketing across luxury, business and lifestyle brands, Preeti brings with her a proven track record of leading high-performing teams, driving growth across markets, and bringing people

together to deliver results.

She began her career with ITC Hotels and The Oberoi Group, and most recently served as General Manager, Sales, North India, at Lemon Tree and Aurika Hotels, where she successfully led the sales strategy for 32 hotels and spearheaded the launch of their luxury brand.

Marking her first chapter with Marriott International, Preeti's role at The Westin Goa will focus on positioning the resort as the destination of choice in Goa. Her vision is to build on Westin's wellness-infused philosophy and Goa's vibrant spirit to establish the resort as the benchmark for wellness-driven luxury in India.

Manish Dayya



Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity proudly announces the appointment of Manish Dayya as General Manager, marking a transformative new chapter for the iconic dual-branded destination. With a distinguished career spanning over 27 years, Manish brings deep expertise in leading India's luxury and premium hotels while driving exceptional

performance across operations, sustainability and guest experience.

Known for transforming properties into award-winning destinations, Manish brings a unique combination of commercial acumen, people-first leadership and innovation-led strategy. In his previous role as General Manager at Sofitel Mumbai BKC, he not only drove the hotel to record-breaking revenues but also established it as India's first Green Key certified property, setting new benchmarks in sustainability and technological integration.

His journey with Accor includes successful pre-openings, high-impact refurbishments, and consistent revenue and reputation growth. From converting Novotel Hyderabad into a top-ranked MICE hotel, reinventing guest experiences at Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, to launching some of Goa's most loved resorts, his purposeful, passionate team leadership stands out.

Dilsher Singh



The Westin Goa is proud to welcome Dilsher Singh as the new Rooms Division Manager. With almost a decade of hospitality experience, including over 6 years with the Marriott Family, his impressive career across several of the country's leading brands will enable him to bring in a wealth of expertise in service excellence, guest experiences

and team leadership.

Graduated from the Army Institute of Hotel Management, Bangalore, Dilsher began his career with Hyatt International, followed by Marriott International Voyager programme, rising to Front Office Manager. He then joined InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) as Front Office Manager at Crowne Plaza Gurugram and was also appointed Guest Experience & Continuous Improvement Champion for a cluster of seven hotels.

In his new capacity as Rooms Division Manager at The Westin Goa, he will be managing the Operations of Front Office, Housekeeping, Spa, Recreation and The Westin Fitness Studio.

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Vineet Kumar



Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal has announced the appointment of Vineet Kumar as Front Office Director. With over 14 years of extensive hospitality experience across leading international brands, Vineet brings a wealth of expertise in front office operations, guest relations and leadership. In his new role he will oversee the hotel's front office operations,

ensuring excellence in guest service and driving the highest standards of hospitality.

Vineet joins Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal from Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, where he led guest services and front office operations. With experience across leading brands like Marriott, Sheraton, Novotel, Oakwood and Radisson, he is known for operational excellence, team leadership and delivering exceptional guest satisfaction.

A graduate in Hotel and Catering Management from Punjab University, Vineet is known for his leadership, commitment to service excellence, and team motivation. Recognised with awards including Unsung Hero of the Year 2024 and Exceptional Performance of the Year 2023, his consistent results reflect his dedication to quality and guest satisfaction.

Abhishek Sabherwal



Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt announced the appointment of Abhishek Sabherwal as the new Director of Sales. Abhishek joined Andaz Delhi from The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences, where he most recently held the role of Director of Sales. His career

journey spans prestigious hospitality brands such as The Grand New Delhi, Country Inn and Suites by Carlson, Sahibabad and ITC Maurya Sheraton & Towers, New Delhi. With his strong expertise in sales, strategic planning and customer relationship management, Abhishek is set to further elevate Andaz Delhi's position as a preferred destination for business and leisure travellers alike.

Commenting on the appointment, Hardip Marwah, General Manager, Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt, said, "We are delighted to welcome Abhishek to the Andaz family. His extensive experience, leadership skills and deep understanding of the hospitality industry will play a vital role in strengthening our market presence and further enhancing the guest experience at Andaz Delhi."

Moët Hennessy India Appoints Siddharth Suri as Managing Director

Moët Hennessy India, a subsidiary of French luxury leader LVMH- Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, announced the appointment of Siddharth Suri as Managing Director, India including Dom Pérignon, Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Hennessy, Glenmorangie, Belvedere, Chandon and Volcan. In his new role, Siddharth will be at the helm of Moët Hennessy's iconic portfolio of wines and spirits in India. He will be responsible for shaping the company's long-term growth strategy, driving consumer-centric innovation and deepening the cultural resonance of Moët Hennessy's brands with India's new generation of luxury consumers, whilst building on the company's



legacy of excellence and innovation.

Speaking on his appointment, Siddharth Suri said, "It is an honour to return to Moët Hennessy India at such an exciting inflection point. India is one of the most dynamic luxury markets in the world today, and I look

forward to leading the transformation of the company into its next chapter of growth. By building stronger consumer engagement, customer connections, fostering innovation and driving sustainable business practices, we will continue to set new benchmarks for Moët Hennessy in India."

The appointment of Siddharth Suri signals Moët Hennessy India's strong commitment to shaping the future of luxury experiences in India. With his leadership, the company is poised to not only grow market share but also redefine how Indian consumers engage with wines and spirits-through immersive experiences, local relevance and uncompromising excellence.



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Cybersecurity - Securing Hotels in the Digital Age



The hospitality industry, after the pandemic hit it hard, has made significant progress in its recovery. But, to maintain its progress, it has to remain vigilant amid an evolving cyber threat landscape. With cybersecurity threats increasing, in frequency and sophistication, the industry has to take steps to protect data with information security policies and procedures. Data breach can affect the reputation of a hotel as well as the working of the industry. Cost of remediation after a cyber-attack would prove to be not only expensive, involving lawsuits, but could prove to be the breaking point for a hotel. Ashok Malkani views the cybersecurity scene in the hospitality industry.

Cybersecurity has become an important element for hotels to protect sensitive guest data (like payment and personal information) and maintain operational integrity, preventing financial losses as well as reputational damage. A successful data breach can expose information, leading to identity theft and fraud for guests and severe financial penalties for the hotel. Trust is crucial in the hospitality industry, and any data breach can severely damage a hotel's reputation.

Hotels are targeted for sensitive guest data like credit card information, personal details, etc., which can be sold on the dark web.

Hotel guests, if informed about the cybersecurity observed in the hotel, are often unaware of the meaning of cybersecurity and its importance and wonder why cybersecurity is necessary in hotels?

Cybersecurity, it may be stated, is necessary for protecting the guests' personal data.

Rakesh Sethi, General Manager, Radisson Blu Delhi, Dwarka, explains "Hotels collect and store vast amounts of sensitive guest information, including credit card numbers, passport details and personal contact information. A data breach could compromise this sensitive data. Hotel networks often include multiple devices, such as guest Wi-

Fi, POS systems and property management systems, which can create network vulnerabilities if not properly secured.

"Hotels use POS systems to process transactions, which can be targeted by hackers to steal payment information. Hotels increasingly use Internet of Things (IoT) devices, such as smart TVs, thermostats and door locks, which can introduce new security risks if not properly secured. A cybersecurity breach can damage a hotel's reputation and erode guest trust."

Vishwanath Patil, Assistant Multi-Property IT Manager, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, avers, "Cybersecurity refers to the practice of protecting systems, networks and data

from digital attacks, unauthorised access and damage. For hotels like Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, cybersecurity is not optional, it's essential. The hospitality industry handles vast amounts of guest data, including personal information, payment details and travel itineraries. Ensuring this data remains safe and confidential is fundamental to maintaining guest trust and operational integrity".

Subhransu Jena, Assistant IT Manager, Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel, disclosed, "Cybersecurity protects sensitive guest and operational data from theft or damage caused by cyber threats. It involves safeguarding personal information such as names, addresses, dates of birth and credit card details. This includes securing internal systems, booking platforms, property management systems (PMS) and Internet of Things (IoT) devices like surveillance cameras and smart room controls from unauthorised access and malicious attacks. Hotels must also secure their networks, including guest Wi-Fi, against threats such as phishing and malware that can lead to data breaches or operational disruptions. The loss of customer trust, following a breach, can result in long-term declines in bookings and revenue."

Saumitra Chaturvedi, General Manager, Novotel New Delhi City Centre, states, "When I talk about cybersecurity, I see it as protecting our digital infrastructure, networks and sensitive data from unauthorised access or attacks. For a hotel like ours, it's absolutely essential as we manage a vast amount of guest and operational information every single day – from personal details and payment information to internal records."

Our cybersecurity framework covers multiple layers like network, information, endpoint and application security, along with cloud security and identity and access management (IAM) to ensure only authorised access to resources."

Sukhbir Singh, General Manager of Novotel Hyderabad Airport, informs, "Cybersecurity is essentially the digital version of safeguarding your property. Just like we have physical security systems and protocols to protect our guests, cybersecurity ensures the safety of our data, our systems and the trust our guests place in us. It involves protecting sensitive information like guest

profiles, payment details, business data from unauthorised access or cyber threats. For hotels, cybersecurity is not optional anymore, it's vital. A single breach can compromise guest trust, impact operations and damage the brand's reputation.

At Novotel Hyderabad Airport, we treat cybersecurity with the same seriousness as guest safety. We follow Accor's global data protection standards, have strong internal controls and continuously train our teams to stay alert.

For me, cybersecurity is not just an IT function; it is integral to safeguarding guest privacy, ensuring business continuity and protecting our brand reputation. As cyber threats grow increasingly sophisticated, having a strong and proactive cybersecurity posture is indispensable for hotels today."

Shashi Kumar, IT Manager, ibis Styles Mysuru & Grand Mercure Mysore, explicates, "Cybersecurity refers to protecting computer systems, networks and data from unauthorised access, cyberattacks, damage or theft. Hotels need it to protect their guests, operations and reputation."

Nikhil Padinjaroot, Area IT Manager-South India, Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, states that, "Cybersecurity refers to the practice of protecting systems, networks and data from digital attacks. Key areas of cybersecurity include:

Network – Protecting internal networks from intrusions.

Application – Ensuring software is free



Rakesh Sethi



Saumitra Chaturvedi

from vulnerabilities.

Information – Safeguarding data integrity and privacy.

Operational – Managing permissions and access controls.

Disaster recovery & business continuity – Planning for data breaches or outages.

End-user education – Training staff to recognise threats like phishing."

Saurabh Choksi, General Manager, Sayaji Hotel, Pune, enlightens, "Cybersecurity protects digital systems and guest data from breaches or misuse. For hotels like ours, it's vital to safeguard sensitive guest information and maintain trust in our brand."

Francis Thomas, General Manager, The Orchid Passaros, Goa, expounds, "Cybersecurity protects digital systems and guest information from unauthorised access. At hotels like The Orchid Hotel Passaros, it's essential because we handle sensitive guest data, including personal details and payment information. Just as we secure rooms, we must secure digital assets. Strong cybersecurity ensures guests feel safe and confident while booking, paying, or sharing information online. Without it, breaches can damage trust and reputation. In today's digital age, cybersecurity isn't optional—it's an integral part of providing a safe and seamless guest experience."

Ravi Rai, General Manager, The Orchid Hotel Mumbai, avers, "Cybersecurity is as important to us as guest safety on the property. With so much of our work moving online, reservations, digital check-ins, guest data, payment gateways, it's become a core part of hotel management. In simple terms, it's about protecting our systems and guest

information from being misused. Every hotel, big or small, needs to take it seriously because one breach can undo years of brand trust.”

Kaushik Mondal General Manager IRA by The Orchid Hotel, Sambhajinagar, adds, “Cybersecurity refers to the practice of protecting systems, networks and programs from digital attacks aimed at accessing, changing or destroying sensitive information; extorting money from users, or interrupting normal business processes. Hotels absolutely need cybersecurity to protect sensitive guest data (credit card information, personal details), financial transactions and operational systems from various cyber threats.”

Types of Cybersecurity Threats

There are various types of security risks. Cyber-crimes are normally performed by individuals whose goal is to steal data, cause damage to or disrupt computing systems. Common categories of cyber threats include malware, social engineering, Man in the Middle (MitM) attacks, Denial of Service (DoS) and injection attacks. Cyber-crimes can affect the hotel guests as well as the property.

So, one may ask, what kind of cyber-attacks occur in the hospitality industry and how do they ensure that guests are protected from fake booking emails or other online scams?

Rakesh Sethi reveals, “Hospitality industry is vulnerable to various cyber-attacks like phishing attacks. These are scams that trick victims into divulging sensitive information, such as login credentials or financial details. These attacks can be highly sophisticated, making it difficult for even security experts to identify them.

Cybercriminals lock down hotel systems, demanding payment in exchange for restoring access. Termed as Ransomware Attacks, these attacks can be devastating, with estimated losses of \$100 million in lost revenue and recovery expenses, as seen in the MGM Resorts attack.

Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks result in overwhelming a hotel’s network with traffic, making it inaccessible to guests and employees.

“Man-in-the-Middle (MitM) attacks wherein cybercriminals intercept communication between guests and hotel networks, potentially stealing sensitive



Saurabh Choksi

information.

Malware refers to a Software designed to harm hotel systems, such as viruses, Trojans and spyware.

In IoT attacks cybercriminals exploit vulnerabilities in Internet of Things devices, such as smart locks and room sensors, to gain unauthorised access.

Social Engineering happens by manipulating hotel staff into divulging sensitive information or performing certain actions that compromise security.

When a scam targets hotel employees, tricking them into sharing sensitive data or making financial transactions, it is termed as Business Email Compromise (BEC)”

He adds, “To ensure guests are protected from fake booking emails or other online scams via Verify Booking Requests. We at Radisson Blu, Dwarka verify booking requests through phone calls or official booking platforms to confirm authenticity. We only



Nikhil Padinjaroot

use secure communication channels, such as encrypted email or messaging platforms, to communicate with guests. We also strive to educate our guests on how to identify and avoid fake booking emails or other online scams. We have also implemented two-factor authentication for online bookings to add an extra layer of security. Lastly, we only partner with reputable online travel agencies (OTAs) to reduce the risk of fake bookings.”

Saumitra Chaturvedi states, “Hospitality industry is highly vulnerable to cyber-attacks due to its reliance on digital systems and extensive handling of guest data. Common threats include phishing and social engineering, where attackers trick staff or guests into revealing confidential information or downloading malicious files. Ransomware is another growing concern, as it can encrypt critical systems such as booking engines or property management software, disrupting operations and guest services.

“Payment card breaches and credential theft are particularly damaging, exposing sensitive financial information and eroding guest trust. Technical weaknesses like unpatched software, misconfigured firewalls and insecure Wi-Fi networks further increase risk, allowing hackers to infiltrate systems or intercept data. The rise of IoT devices—such as smart locks and in-room controls—has also introduced new entry points for attacks if not properly secured.

“To safeguard operations, hotels must adopt a proactive cybersecurity strategy that includes regular software updates, strong encryption, network monitoring and continuous staff training. Strengthening both technical defenses and human vigilance is essential to protect guest data, ensure operational continuity and maintain trust in today’s digital hospitality landscape.”

He adds, “We, at Novotel New Delhi City Centre, take a multi-layered approach to protect guests from fake emails or scams. First, we make sure all official communication comes from verified, secure domains that guests can recognise easily. I always encourage guests to book through our official website or trusted travel partners.

Our IT systems are equipped with advanced spam filters, firewalls and phishing detection tools to prevent malicious content from reaching inboxes. Internally, we conduct

regular staff awareness sessions to help teams identify and report suspicious activities quickly.

We also educate guests about identifying genuine communication and safe payment practices. Together, these steps form a strong preventive framework against online scams.”

Sukhbir Singh says, “The hospitality industry has become increasingly digital, which makes cybersecurity one of the most important areas of focus for us. Hotels manage vast amounts of guest data, from personal details and payment information to travel itineraries and that naturally makes us a target for cybercriminals.

Some of the key risks we face include phishing attacks, where staff can be tricked into sharing confidential information; ransomware, which can disrupt operations by locking access to vital systems; and data breaches through compromised booking platforms or Wi-Fi networks. Even something as simple as an unsecured device at the front desk can be an entry point for a cyber threat.

At Novotel Hyderabad Airport, we take



Vishwanath Patil

a multi-layered approach to mitigate these risks. This includes strict access controls, regular system audits, encrypted payment systems and continuous staff awareness training.”

Saurabh Choksi disclosed, “The security risks in hotels include phishing, ransomware, data theft and Wi-Fi intrusions. Since hotels use multiple digital systems, one weak link

can expose the entire network.”

Francis Thomas declares, “Hotels face risks like phishing attacks, ransomware and data breaches. Unsecured Wi-Fi and outdated systems can be exploited. Guest records, payment information and booking systems are prime targets. These risks can affect operations, finances and reputation. We focus on staff training, updated systems and secure networks to minimise vulnerabilities, ensuring our guests’ information remains safe and their stay worry-free.”

Ravi Rai states, “There are quite a few cyber security risks in hotels. Phishing emails, fake booking websites, malware attacks and data leaks are some of the biggest threats. Even unsecured Wi-Fi or outdated software can be an entry point for hackers. Since hotels deal with multiple vendors and systems, POS, front office, PMS, each one is a possible vulnerability if not monitored carefully.”

He adds, “For us, at the Orchid Hotel Mumbai, cybersecurity means things like firewalls, antivirus protection, secure payment gateways, encrypted Wi-Fi and strict access

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control for internal systems. We also conduct regular security drills, update our systems and train our teams to identify suspicious emails or behaviour. It's about creating awareness as much as having technology in place."

Kaushik Mondal claims, "Cybersecurity risks in the hotel industry include data breaches, ransomware attacks, phishing attacks, malware infections and vulnerabilities in IoT devices used for guest services or hotel operations."

He adds, "Common cyber-attacks in the hospitality industry include Point-of-Sale (POS) system breaches, ransomware targeting booking systems or guest services, phishing scams directed at employees, website defacement and denial-of-service (DoS) attacks. "Examples of cybersecurity include firewalls, antivirus software, data encryption, multi-factor authentication, regular security audits, employee training on cybersecurity best practices, intrusion detection systems and secure network configurations."

Nikhil Padinjaroot asserts, "Hotels need cybersecurity as they are increasingly reliant on digital systems and handle large volumes of sensitive data, making them prime targets for cyberattacks. Cybersecurity entails: guest data protection, payment systems, wi-fi networks, smart room technology: modern hotels use IoT devices (smart locks, thermostats, etc.) which can be entry points for hackers if not secured and reputation & compliance: a data breach can damage brand reputation."

He adds, "Cybersecurity examples can be categorised into technologies, practices and real-world applications. Here's a breakdown to help you understand the landscape clearly:

Examples of Cybersecurity Technologies & Tools

1. Firewalls: Act as a barrier between trusted and untrusted networks.

Example: Cisco ASA, Fortinet, Palo Alto Networks.

2. Antivirus & Anti-malware Software: Detects and removes malicious software.

Example: Norton, Bitdefender, Kaspersky.

3. Encryption: Protects data by converting it into unreadable code.

Example: SSL/TLS for websites, AES for data storage.

4. Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA): Adds



Kaushik Mondal

extra layers of identity verification.

Example: OTPs, biometric scans, authenticator apps.

5. Intrusion Detection & Prevention Systems (IDPS): Monitors network traffic for suspicious activity.

Example: Snort, Suricata.

6. Security Information and Event Management (SIEM): Aggregates and analyses logs for threat detection.

Example: Splunk, IBM QRadar, Microsoft Sentinel.

"Examples of Cybersecurity Practices are:

1. Regular Software Updates

2. Access Control: Limiting user access.

3. Data Backup & Recovery: Ensuring data can be restored after a breach or ransomware attack.

4. Employee Training

5. Network Segmentation: Isolating guest Wi-Fi from internal hotel systems.

Real-World Cybersecurity Applications in Hospitality



Shashi Kumar

1. Securing Booking Platforms:

2. Protecting POS Systems: Using encrypted payment gateways and PCI-DSS compliance.

3. Monitoring Guest Wi-Fi: Using captive portals and firewalls to prevent unauthorised access.

4. Safeguarding Loyalty Programs: Preventing account takeovers and fraudulent redemptions.

Shashi Kumar states, "Cybersecurity risks in the hotel industry are on the digital systems for reservations, payments, guest services and operations. This dependence exposes it to a wide range of cybersecurity risks. Few examples are data breaches (guest and employee data), payment gateway and insecure network gateway"

Subhansu Jena disclosed, "Attackers often use fraudulent emails, text messages or phone calls to deceive employees or guests into revealing sensitive information such as passwords or credit card details. Ransomware is another major threat, malware that encrypts a hotel's critical systems and data, demanding payment for their release. Such attacks can paralyze operations, including reservations and electronic room access. Another cyber-crime involves public and guest Wi-Fi networks. The most damaging outcome of many attacks is the theft of sensitive guest data that is names, addresses, passport information, credit card numbers and travel details. High-profile breaches, such as the massive Marriott-Starwood incident, have demonstrated the scale of personal information at risk."

He added, "A cybersecurity breach can have severe consequences for both guests and hotel operations, ranging from personal financial fraud to significant financial and reputational damage for the business. Cybercriminals may also use stolen guest information to craft highly convincing, personalised phishing attacks, such as fake booking confirmations, to extract additional data or conduct fraudulent transactions. Sensitive guest information, including personal preferences and travel itineraries, may be exposed especially concerning high-profile guests whose data holds value on the black market. Additionally, hotels relying on third-party reservation or payment platforms face indirect risks if a vendor is breached,

which can strain business relationships and erode guest confidence.”

Vishwanath Patil affirms, “Hotels face multiple cybersecurity threats due to their interconnected systems reservation platforms, Wi-Fi networks, loyalty programs and point-of-sale systems. Common risks include data breaches, phishing scams, ransomware attacks and unauthorised access to guest databases. Even a single compromised system can lead to loss of sensitive information or operational disruption.”

He disclosed, “Some examples of cybersecurity are firewalls, data encryption, multi-factor authentication, secure payment gateways, antivirus software and employee cybersecurity training. At Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, proactive security protocols and regular system audits are part of daily operations to ensure data protection at every level.”

Technologies to Maintain Cybersecurity

To compete in the booming hospitality



Sukhbir Singh

industry a hotel has to deliver excellent customer service. One way of achieving this is by collecting and analysing sensitive customer data. However, collecting, processing and storing large amounts of customer data makes the hospitality business attractive to cybercriminals.

To maintain cybersecurity and prevent cyber crimes in hotels technologies like Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) and AI-

driven threat detection to secure systems and data are used. So, what are the measures or technologies that the hotels are adopting to tackle cyber-crimes?

Vishwanath Patil declared, “While digital transformation—such as contactless check-ins, online bookings and IoT-enabled rooms enhances guest convenience, it also expands the potential surface for cyber threats. Each new digital interface introduces possible vulnerabilities. However, with robust encryption, constant monitoring and staff training, hotels can balance innovation with protection.”

He adds, “The hospitality sector has made significant progress. Many global hotel brands, including Sheraton, have adopted stringent data protection policies and advanced digital security systems. However, cybersecurity is an evolving challenge. As technology advances, so do cyber threats. The goal isn’t to eliminate risk completely but to stay ahead through continuous innovation, awareness and collaboration.

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committed to providing not only exceptional guest experiences but also a digitally secure environment where privacy and trust are paramount."

Ravi Rai, opines, "Adoption of digital solutions by hotels have, to an extent, created new vulnerabilities. With everything becoming smarter, digital room keys, online check-ins, automated systems, we've opened more digital doors, so to speak. But that doesn't mean we stop innovating. It just means every new digital adoption must be backed by a solid security layer and constant monitoring. The industry has definitely matured. Most established brands now have dedicated cybersecurity teams, regular audits and strict data-handling protocols. But the truth is, cyber threats evolve every day."

He adds, "Realistically, I don't think cybersecurity is a problem that can ever be 'completely' solved. Technology is evolving every single day and so are the methods used by cybercriminals. What we can do and what the industry is actively doing is staying proactive rather than reactive. Collaboration within the industry is also growing; we're sharing best practices and learning from each other's experiences. So while complete elimination might not be possible, achieving a strong, resilient defense is absolutely within reach."

Saumitra Chaturvedi concedes that "Adopting digital solutions does create new vulnerabilities, but it's an inevitable part of innovation. In my experience, every digital advancement, whether it's mobile check-in, keyless room access or automated payment systems, enhances guest convenience but simultaneously expands the hotel's digital footprint. Each connected platform or device becomes a potential entry point for cyber threats if not properly secured."

He adds, "Cybersecurity is a continuous journey. We are exploring AI-driven threat detection to identify unusual activity in real time, along with enhanced firewalls, advanced encryption protocols and biometric or multi-factor authentication to reinforce access controls."

Our payment systems use secure, PCI DSS-compliant gateways to protect transactions end-to-end. On the cloud front, we implement strong encryption and access management policies to safeguard data



Ravi Rai

hosted on global platforms.

Beyond technology, our focus is on building a culture of cyber awareness, through training, simulated phishing exercises and a well-defined incident response framework. The goal is simple: to stay one step ahead of emerging threats and ensure the continued safety of our guests, employees and digital assets."

Rakesh Sethi is also of a similar opinion regarding digital solutions creating new vulnerabilities. He avers, "Cyber-attacks like malware, ransomware and phishing attacks targeting digital systems are likely. Weaknesses in software or hardware termed as System vulnerabilities can be exploited. More digital touchpoints can provide opportunities for attackers by offering an Increased attack surface."

He adds, "To stay ahead of emerging cyber threats, we are exploring various new measures and technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML). These technologies help detect and neutralise cyber threats before they cause damage by analysing patterns and identifying suspicious behaviour. Blockchain Technology offers a secure and transparent method of handling transactions, making it harder for hackers to interfere with bookings or payments. Cloud-Based Security Solutions provide robust security features, such as remote monitoring, real-time updates and encrypted data storage, making it harder for hackers to access sensitive information. Zero Trust Models focus on strict identity verification and constant monitoring for every device and user accessing the network, ensuring that only authorised personnel can

interact with essential systems."

He continues, "We are contemplating implementing measures to secure IoT devices, such as:

(I). Device Authentication: Using unique credentials and not factory defaults to block unauthorised access.

(II). Network Isolation: Keeping IoT devices on separate networks to minimise attack opportunities.

(III). Firmware Management: Regularly updating and patching devices to fix known security flaws.

"Educating staff on cybersecurity best practices, such as recognising phishing attempts and handling guest data securely, is crucial in preventing cyber threats. After all this is our first and one of the most important lines of defense. Implementing Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) adds an extra layer of security by requiring multiple forms of verification, making it harder for hackers to gain unauthorised access."

Subhansu Jena is of the opinion that hospitality industry's approach to cybersecurity remains inconsistent, with many organisations underinvesting despite their vulnerability to attacks.

He states, "While gradual progress is being made, the industry's ability to overcome evolving threats depends on shifting from a reactive stance to a proactive, security-first strategy. Data from 2023 revealed that 31% of hospitality businesses experienced a data breach, with nearly 90% suffering repeat incidents within the same year. The ongoing digital transformation through online bookings, contactless check-ins and third-party integrations has expanded the attack surface significantly. Human error remains a major contributor to breaches, amplified by high employee turnover and inconsistent training. In 2025, it was estimated that 70% of hotel staff with access to sensitive systems lacked consistent cybersecurity training."

Currently, the industry's cybersecurity efforts lag behind the sophistication of emerging threats, leaving it susceptible to costly and reputation-damaging incidents. However, the outlook is positive if the sector embraces modernisation. By investing in advanced technologies such as AI, implementing Zero Trust frameworks and fostering a proactive security culture, hotels

can build the resilience needed to safeguard guest trust and ensure long-term operational stability.”

Sukhbir Singh states, “Digital transformation has completely reshaped the hospitality industry, everything from contactless check-ins and mobile keys to online bookings and AI-driven guest personalisation. These innovations have made the guest experience more seamless, but they’ve also expanded the digital footprint of hotels, creating new areas of vulnerability. Every connected system introduces potential entry points for cyber threats if not properly secured.

For hotels, a strong cybersecurity strategy starts with data encryption, ensuring that sensitive information like payment details or IDs cannot be accessed even if intercepted. Multi-factor authentication and role-based access controls limit who can view or handle critical data. Regular system updates and patches prevent vulnerabilities in operating systems or software from being exploited.

At Novotel Hyderabad Airport, we follow a layered approach guided by Accor’s global data security framework. We pair technology with vigilance, ensuring that our systems remain resilient and that our guests’ digital safety is as assured as their physical comfort. In hospitality, trust is everything and cybersecurity protects that trust.

The hospitality industry has made significant progress in strengthening cybersecurity over the past few years. Most reputed hotel brands, including ours, now follow global data protection frameworks, invest in advanced security infrastructure and conduct regular audits to stay ahead of emerging threats.”

He concludes, “Cybersecurity is a moving target. As technology evolves, so do the methods of cyberattacks. The industry is now focusing on building smarter systems, faster detection, and stronger recovery mechanisms. Collaboration with cybersecurity experts, continuous staff training and adoption of AI-based threat monitoring are taking us closer to a more secure environment.”

Shashi Kumar declares, “The hospitality industry has made some progress in improving cybersecurity, but overall, it remains a highly targeted and vulnerable sector. While there are efforts and advancements, the nature



Francis Thomas

of the industry and the threats it faces make complete resolution of cybersecurity challenges unlikely in the near future.”

Nikhil Padinjaroot avers, “The adoption of digital solutions in the hospitality industry is creating new cybersecurity vulnerabilities, even as it improves efficiency, guest experience and operational control.”

He believes that “digital solutions are creating problems like:

1. Increased Attack Surface
2. Legacy Systems Integration
3. IoT & Smart Devices: These can be hijacked or used as gateways into the hotel’s network.
4. Cloud & Remote Access Risks: Cloud-based solutions and remote access tools can be compromised.
5. Human Factors: Without proper training, employees may fall for phishing scams, misconfigure systems, use weak passwords.
6. Third-Party dependencies on vendors for payment processing, booking engines, Loyalty programs. If these vendors are compromised, it can affect the hotel’s security posture.
7. Lack of Cybersecurity Strategy: Without a clear strategy, hotels may skip risk assessments, delay patching vulnerabilities. Ignore compliance requirements”

Saurabh Choksi believes, “digital check-ins and IoT devices expand the risk surface.”

He claims, “We, at Sayaji Hotel Pune, counter this through audits, encrypted systems and strong vendor security checks.”

He adds, “The industry’s progress in tackling cyber-crimes is steady, but cyber risks evolve constantly. The focus now is on resilience and adopting AI-driven and zero-

trust systems for stronger protection.”

Francis Thomas disclosed, “Digital tools like online bookings, mobile apps, digital payments and smart room devices enhance convenience but can be exploited if not secured. Connected devices like smart locks or TVs may become entry points for hackers.”

He added, “The industry has improved with encrypted payments, monitoring systems and updated technology. However, cyber threats keep evolving, so no system is completely risk-free. Large hotels are better equipped, but smaller properties may face gaps. At The Orchid Hotel Passaros, we stay proactive with staff training, regular updates and advanced systems. While complete elimination of risk isn’t possible, continuous vigilance ensures guest data remains safe and trust stays strong.”

Kaushik Mondal declares, “Adoption of digital solutions, such as online booking platforms, smart room technologies and interconnected operational systems, can introduce new vulnerabilities if not implemented and secured properly. Each new digital touchpoint or interconnected device presents a potential entry point for attackers.”

He adds, “The hospitality industry has made strides in improving cybersecurity, but challenges remain due to evolving threats and the increasing reliance on technology. While complete eradication of cyber threats is unlikely, continuous investment in advanced security measures, employee education and proactive threat intelligence can significantly improve the industry’s resilience and prospects of mitigating the problem effectively.

Conclusion

Today, maintaining a strong Cybersecurity system in the property has become extremely important for hotels. Though various technologies are being developed to tackle this issue, those committing cyber-crimes are keeping in step with the developing technologies. It is, however, not an impossible task for the hotels to avoid being exploited by cyber-criminals. Constantly training their employees to be aware of the latest technologies to prevent cyber crimes is a sure-shot way of preventing cyber crimes from taking place in your property. ■



Reduction in GST & its Effect on Hospitality Industry

The reduction in GST on hotel rooms costing less than Rs 7,500 per day – from 12% to 5% - has created mixed feelings of joy and wait-and-watch within the industry, which is happy at the news of reduction of GST but is cautious, with the government simultaneously announcing the withdrawal of Input Tax Credit (ITC). Industry sources believe that withdrawal of (ITC) will negatively affect the Indian hotel industry by increasing operational costs, particularly for budget and mid-scale hotels, which may lead to higher consumer prices and reduced competitiveness. **Ashok Malkani** presents an overview of the reduction of GST and the simultaneous withdrawal of ITC on the hospitality industry.

The announcement of the reduced rate of GST on hotel rooms, costing less than Rs. 7,500 per day, from September 22, 2025, is believed to be beneficial for travellers. According to the Hotel Association of India, the reduction in tax on hotel accommodation priced at Rs 7,500 and below will provide relief to travellers to the extent of 7 per cent on the room rate with the maximum of Rs 525 per room per night. Similarly, travellers will also gain, on the GST on food menus.

Rahool Macarius, Market Managing

Director, Eurasia, at Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, which owns brands like Ramada, believes, "The impact will be most significant in the mid-market space where India's expanding middle class is driving demand for high quality yet affordable stays. By improving affordability, the revised slabs also unlock tremendous potential in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities where value conscious travellers are increasingly fuelling new demand."

Piyush Rathore, Director of Sales, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore states, "We

welcome the government's decision to reduce the GST on hotel room tariffs. It's a progressive move that demonstrates strong support for the hospitality and tourism industry. This step will make hotel stays more affordable for guests and enhance India's competitiveness as a travel destination, both domestically and internationally. It's a positive development for Tier-II cities like Indore, where tourism and business travel are steadily growing."

He adds, "We anticipate a positive impact on occupancy. The reduced GST will make

travel more cost-effective, especially for domestic leisure travellers and corporate guests who are increasingly conscious of value and budget alignment. Additionally, this may also encourage MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events) bookings, which form a key segment for us at Sheraton Grand Palace Indore.”

He continues, “The immediate benefit will likely be experienced by guests through more attractive room rates and better value for money. However, over time, the increased demand and higher occupancy levels will translate into improved revenues and stronger profitability for hotels. It’s a win-win situation that stimulates growth across the ecosystem.”

He believes, “The GST reduction will intensify healthy competition, particularly in the upscale and luxury segments. Hotels that can offer high-quality experiences at optimised pricing will have a distinct advantage. It will also encourage more guests to upgrade their stays to premium categories, thus benefiting brands like



Piyush Rathore

Sheraton that offer elevated service and amenities.”

The GST reduction on hotel rooms costing Rs 7,500 could encourage hotels charging above Rs 7,500 to reduce their room rate to below Rs 7,500 to leverage the GST benefit?

Piyush Rathore disclosed, “We are

closely evaluating our pricing strategy in light of this change. While our primary focus remains on delivering premium experiences that justify our value proposition, we will certainly explore ways to optimise pricing to ensure our guests receive the best possible value while maintaining brand positioning and profitability.”

Hotel Competition

The lower GST would, it is believed, increase competition in the budget and mid-market segments.

Varun Marwah declares, “A GST reduction will increase competition in the budget and mid-market sectors by making rooms more affordable, potentially boosting occupancy and attracting more price-sensitive travellers. In contrast, competition in the luxury segment will remain relatively stable, as these hotels continue to be taxed at the higher 18% rate and will not see the same cost advantage as lower-tier competitors.

Piyush Rathore states, “The GST



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reduction will intensify healthy competition, particularly in the upscale and luxury segments. Hotels that can offer high-quality experiences at optimised pricing will have a distinct advantage. It will also encourage more guests to upgrade their stays to premium categories, thus benefiting brands like Sheraton that offer elevated service and amenities.

It must be realised that room rates becoming lower may benefit mid-market and budget hotels significantly against premium hotels but one must remember that there is also competition among the mid-market and budget hotels. Competition, today, among hotels is fierce and driven by factors like location, amenities and customer reviews.

According to hospitality industry analysts, Competitor analysis is a multi-faceted process, encompassing various levels of investigation to fully understand the competitive landscape. The four levels of this analysis include:

Analysing Competitor Strategies: This involves understanding the plans and actions competitors are taking to attract and retain customers. It requires an in-depth look into their marketing strategies, product development and overall business approach.

Objectives of Competitors: Identifying the goals and objectives of your rivals helps in understanding their long-term plans and immediate priorities. This could involve market expansion, customer retention or product innovation.



Varun Marwah

Strengths and Weaknesses: Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of rivals is crucial. This knowledge helps in identifying opportunities for differentiation and areas where your business can have a competitive advantage.

Reaction Patterns: Understanding how rivals have reacted to market changes, customer feedback and other external factors in the past can give insights into how they might behave in the future. This level of analysis helps in anticipating competitor moves and preparing strategic responses.

There are two types of hotel competition. They are:

Direct Competition: Hotels with the same price point, target audience and location, offering a similar experience.

Indirect Competitors: Establishments that meet the same customer needs in a

different format, such as a vacation rental competing with a hotel for a similar guest.

ITC Offsets GST Benefits?

Competition apart, the new GST rules, according to the official or political sources will help the hospitality industry. But will it really do so? According to industry sources the benefits of GST are neutralised by removal of ITC.

The hospitality industry is not entirely happy with the new GST registration, particularly concerning the removal of Input Tax Credit (ITC) for mid-segment hotels, which has offset the benefits of reduced tax rates.

Despite the positive changes for consumers, the hospitality industry, led by bodies like the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), has voiced strong opposition to the new framework.

The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) HRAWI welcomes the 5% GST reduction on hotel rooms under Rs 7,500 but opposes the withdrawal of Input Tax Credit (ITC), stating it will increase costs by up to 10%. They argue the removal of ITC, a key part of the GST system, will hurt the hospitality sector, especially budget hotels.

Jimmy Shaw, President of HRAWI says, "While we appreciate the Government's intent to simplify GST and offer lower rates to end-consumers, the absence of ITC reverses years of progress towards a seamless tax-credit system. This will inflate costs for hotels, particularly those operating in the budget and mid-scale segment and could make accommodation less competitive compared to neighbouring countries."

The GST changes, according to the industry, have been like a double-edged sword. While the reduced tax rates are popular with consumers and have made travel more affordable, the accompanying withdrawal of the ITC benefit has burdened mid-segment hotels with higher operational costs. Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, the newly elected FHRAI President, noted, "While the revised structure lowers tax rates and is expected to benefit consumers and improve compliance, it imposes structural



cost burdens on hotels, especially in Tier II and Tier III cities.”

Jaiswal highlighted that 90% of India's hotels operate below a room tariff of Rs 7,500 and are now subject to a 5% GST without Input Tax Credit (ITC). He noted that the withdrawal of ITC has increased costs on rentals, utilities, manpower and capital expenditure, particularly in Tier II and III cities, deterring investments and threatening domestic tourism. FHRAI has urged the government to reinstate ITC and issue a clarificatory circular to remove compliance ambiguities

Varun Marwah, Commercial Director – DoubleTree by Hilton Pune Chinchwad, observes, “The government's decision to reduce the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on hotel rooms with tariffs up to Rs 7,500 to 5% is a positive step for the budget and mid-market hotel sector and domestic tourism, as it increases affordability for travellers and boosts occupancy. However, the simultaneous removal of Input Tax Credit (ITC) for this slab creates a significant financial strain on hotels, potentially offsetting benefits and increasing cascading costs. The industry anticipates more broad-based reforms to achieve sustainable growth.”

As far as reduction of room rates to below Rs 7,500 by hotels charging above this amount, for leveraging the GST benefit, is concerned, Varun Marwah revealed that “Many hotels were considering or have adjusted their pricing to stay below the Rs 7,500 tariff bracket in order to benefit from the lower 5% GST rate, as opposed to the 18% rate for rooms priced higher. This would create a strategic advantage by making their rooms more affordable for travellers and potentially increasing occupancy.”

“But,” he added, “while reducing prices is likely to increase occupancy, the impact will vary depending on the specific guest segments, market conditions and the extent of the price reduction. Generally, leisure and domestic travellers are the most price-sensitive segments and will show the greatest increase in bookings from a price cut. Corporate and international travellers are typically less sensitive to price changes.”



He appends, “The benefits of the reduced GST for hotel rooms priced at Rs 7,500 or less will be partially passed to guests, but the effect on a hotel's revenue and profitability is more complex and depends on several factors. The GST cut from 12% to 5% comes with a key caveat: the hotel can no longer claim an Input Tax Credit (ITC) for these bookings.”

The removal of ITC benefits for businesses in the 5% GST slab is seen by industry leaders as negating the intent of the reform, as it prevents businesses from claiming credit for taxes paid on inputs, potentially leading to cascading taxes and higher operational costs. Without ITC, hoteliers face increased costs, which can, according to several hoteliers, make it difficult to pass the full benefit of the GST reduction to customers, leading to unchanged or only slightly reduced bills for guests.

The removal of ITC benefits for businesses in the 5% GST slab is seen by hospitality industry leaders as negating the intent of the reform, as it prevents businesses from claiming credit for taxes paid on inputs, potentially leading to cascading taxes and higher operational costs.

Without ITC, hoteliers face increased costs, which can make it difficult to pass the full benefit of the GST reduction to

customers, leading to unchanged or only slightly reduced bills for guests.

Ajay K. Bakaya, Chairman of Sarovar Hotels & Director of Louvre Hotels India has gone on record, stating that while reduction in GST was a welcome move, the removal of Input Tax Credit may act as a disincentive for much-needed investment and expansion in this category. He also felt that the threshold of Rs 7,500, set several years ago also needs to be revisited. A more realistic figure today, according to him, would be closer to Rs 10,000-12,000, in line with inflation and rising consumer demand

Many travellers are reporting that there has been no change in hotel rates. The primary reason, according to these hoteliers, is the removal of Input Tax Credit (ITC) for the lower GST slab.

There are several opinions, about the new GST, within the industry. Zubin Saxena, Senior Vice President and Regional Head, South Asia, Hilton, believes that this initiative will provide a great boost to domestic tourism, especially the flourishing mid-market segment. He is of the opinion that, with the Indian middle-class diaspora rapidly on the rise, hospitality brands were deepening their footprint in the mid-market sector, and with the rationalisation of the tax structure, the hotel stays would become far more affordable for a wider

range of travellers. He disclosed that Hilton had recently announced two strategic SLA's (Service Level Agreements) for its premium economy brands – Sparks By Hilton and Hampton by Hilton – which would strengthen its plans to offer quality and affordable accommodation to travellers across India.

Sanjay Sethi, MD & CEO, Chalet Hotels Limited felt that along with the GST reduction a simultaneous withdrawal of Input Tax Credit (ITC) creates an unintended anomaly.

His suggestions are:

Retain the benefit of ITC for this segment.

Revise the tariff threshold upward to Rs12,000, with ITC, in line with current market dynamics.

Link future tariff thresholds to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), so that periodic resets are not required.

Industry bodies like Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) and Hotel Association of India (HAI) while welcoming the tax reduction have raised significant concerns about the simultaneous removal of ITC.

The negative impacts cited by them are:

Cascading Taxes: Hoteliers must now absorb the GST paid on their input goods and services, such as laundry, maintenance and supplies. This breaks the seamless credit chain that the GST system was designed to provide.

Higher Costs: Instead of passing on savings, many hoteliers warn that their own operating costs will increase, which could prevent them from lowering end prices for consumers. The FHRAI noted that smaller hotels could face an additional Rs18 lakh in costs on a Rs 1 crore renovation.

Reduced Investment: The inability to claim input credits on capital expenditures, like renovations and expansion, acts as a disincentive for future investments in the hotel sector.

No Real Benefit For Some Guests: Some luxury hotel chains and smaller hotels have reported that the loss of ITC nullifies the consumer benefit, meaning the final prices for travellers remain largely unchanged.

Demand for Further Reforms: The industry is urging the government to restore



ITC for the 5% slab, link the tariff threshold to inflation and delink food and beverage services from room tariffs.

Additional Incentives

The industry feels that beyond GST reduction (which, according to them is offset by removal of ITC) the government should support the industry by offering investment incentives for new hotels and infrastructure, simplifying the regulatory environment and implementing promotional campaigns to highlight new affordable travel options.

Piyush Rathore says, "We would welcome initiatives focused on infrastructure development, visa facilitation for international travellers and enhanced digital marketing support for destination promotion. Additionally, policies encouraging sustainable hospitality practices and skilled workforce development would go a long way in strengthening the sector and ensuring long-term growth for the tourism and hotel industry."

Varun Marwah states, "Beyond GST reductions, governments should focus on improving infrastructure, promoting sustainable tourism, simplifying visa processes, providing skill development and offering financial incentives to boost the hotel and tourism sectors. These policies encourage investment, improve visitor experience, support local communities and enhance India's competitiveness as a global tourism destination."

The industry believes that it needs

incentives like capital subsidies, interest subvention on loans, and tax breaks like exemptions on electricity duty and land tax to spur growth. Additionally, easing compliance burdens by reducing the number of licenses and approvals needed, and implementing a duty credit scheme equivalent to a percentage of foreign exchange earnings would also provide a significant boost.

Some of the policy changes suggested by the industry are:

Investment and Infrastructure: The government should provide financial incentives or lower taxes for developing mid-segment hotels, homestays and other tourism infrastructure, such as creating a dedicated fund for tourism development. It should also invest in improving public transport like buses, which now have lower GST rates, to connect tourist destinations and reduce reliance on private vehicles.

Infrastructure and Connectivity: The government should invest in multi-modal connectivity and develop theme-based tourism circuits (e.g., spiritual, heritage, eco) by improving road, rail and air links to major and lesser-known destinations. It should also upgrade public amenities to enhance tourist experience. Besides developing niche infrastructure, the industry also believes that the government should create an enabling environment for private companies to invest in tourism infrastructure through fast-track clearances and land acquisition policies. ■



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The Challenge of Staff Retention in the Hospitality Industry

By Sharmila Chand

Talent retention is one of the crucial challenges faced by the dynamic hospitality industry.

Addressing this challenge requires implementing strategies that foster positive workplace culture. Investing in retention, implies building sustainable operations so as to whether any storm. Here comes the role of senior managers and HR team to establish strategies and solutions that can help hospitality operations to track engagement process, streamline communication, and implement recognition programs that keep top talent engaged and build a thriving workforce.

We talk to experts about the challenge and the kind of strategies they are practicing to tackle the problem.

Manmeet Singh, Assistant Director of Human Resources, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore

Strengthening Recruitment & Onboarding

Hiring the right people from the start reduces the chances of early exits. A structured onboarding process helps new employees feel connected, confident and aligned with organisational culture, reducing the likelihood of turnover within the first few months.

Offering Competitive Compensation & Benefits

Turnover often happens when employees feel underpaid compared to the market. Ensuring salaries, incentives and benefits (healthcare, allowances, recognition programs) are competitive keeps employees motivated and reduces the pull of external offers.

Investing in Learning & Career Growth

Employees stay longer when they see a clear career path. Providing training programs, mentorship and promotion opportunities shows commitment to their professional development, reducing the need to leave for growth elsewhere.

Enhancing Engagement & Work Culture

Creating an inclusive, supportive and engaging work environment improves loyalty. Regular recognition, open communication, team-building activities and work-life balance initiatives boost morale and emotional attachment to the organisation.

Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar, General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal

"We approach retention as a chain of strategies rather than stand-alone initiatives.

At Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal, our people are our biggest assets and we work hard not just to retain existing talent but also to attract new associates who are a strong fit for their roles.

To ensure that, we remain relevant and responsive, we have moved away from an annual survey model and instead conduct quarterly pulse checks. This allows us to stay agile, act on feedback quickly and address concerns in real-time. Another significant shift has been the consolidation of our leadership and foundational training programs. By streamlining these, we now reach a larger audience with more targeted and impactful messaging.

We also place strong emphasis on

development plans for associates. These plans are designed with regular checks and balances, ensuring that growth opportunities are not only aspirational but also practical and meaningful.

Finally, the introduction of 'Life on Time' has been a transformative step. This initiative helps associates strike a healthy balance between work and personal life, encouraging them to invest their time in pursuits that matter to them."

Ganeshram Iyer, Hotel Manager, ibis Styles Mysuru

"Providing a clear career roadmap along with cross-training and skill development workshops ensures employees see a tangible future with the organisation. This approach not only reduces the urge to seek opportunities elsewhere but also equips Heartists with versatile skills, making them more confident and engaged. Creating a positive work environment is equally important. Ensuring that employees feel respected, heard and encouraged to share suggestions cultivates trust. An inclusive culture where Heartists' contributions are welcomed and implemented can transform the workplace into a space that inspires loyalty and engagement."

Saurabh Gahoi, Senior Vice President, Ramee Group of Hotels

"At Ramee Group, we strongly believe that our people are our biggest asset. Retention is not just about reducing attrition—it is about creating a culture where employees feel valued and see a future with us. Some of the key strategies we practice are:



"Talent is at the core of our business. As leaders, what we sow into our people is what we will ultimately reap".

- Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar, General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal

Career Growth & Internal Promotions:

We focus on grooming talent from within, giving employees a clear career path and opportunities to rise through the ranks.

Training & Development:

Continuous skill development, cross-training across departments and leadership workshops help employees grow personally and professionally.

Employee Engagement & Recognition:

Regular recognition programs, town halls and celebrating achievements—big or small—keep morale high.

Wellness & Work-Life Balance:

Initiatives around employee well-being, flexible scheduling (where possible) and mental health awareness play an important role in retention.

Tips to Tackle the Challenge

Manmeet Singh, Assistant Director of Human Resources, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore

Recognise and Reward Performance



“High turnover is not just a human resources challenge — it directly impacts guest satisfaction and business success. Investing in our people is investing in the future of our hotel”

- Purnima Kumari, Human Resources Manager, Courtyard By Marriott Pune Chakan

Regular appreciation—through monetary rewards, recognition programs or even simple acknowledgment—makes employees feel

valued and motivated to stay.

Provide Growth Opportunities

Offer training, career progression plans, and skill development programs so employees can see a future within the organisation.

Foster a Positive Work Culture

Build an environment of trust, respect and open communication. A healthy workplace culture creates emotional attachment and reduces the urge to leave.

Ensure Work-Life Balance

Implement flexible schedules, fair workload distribution and wellness initiatives. When employees can balance personal and professional life, they are more likely to remain committed.

Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar, General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal

We believe there is no single formula for retaining talent—it has to be individualistic and customised within the available resources and tools. That said, there are four guiding principles that work well:



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"Value your people, and they will value your organization. When employees feel genuinely appreciated—through fair pay, recognition, growth opportunities, and respect—they develop loyalty and a sense of belonging, which naturally reduces turnover"

- Manmeet Singh, Assistant Director of Human Resources, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore

Focus on "What's in it for me?": Each associate's journey is unique. For those who prioritise career growth, we work on well-defined development plans to help them build and shape their careers.

Invest in Skill Enrichment: For associates who want to sharpen their knowledge and strengthen existing skills, we focus on targeted training programs that enhance competence, confidence, and readiness for larger roles.

Encourage Work-life Balance: Through Life on Time, Marriott has created an environment where associates can align their personal and professional goals, helping them lead more meaningful lives.

Mentorship Matters: Our mentoring program has been widely appreciated. It recognises and motivates associates, giving them a platform to be guided by leaders and to share their own aspirations

Ganeshram Iyer, Hotel Manager, ibis Styles Mysuru

Conduct stay interviews in addition to exit interviews to understand what motivates

employees and identify factors that might lead to attrition. These conversations allow management to proactively address concerns before they escalate.

Empower Employees with Decision-making Responsibilities

Allowing team members to take ownership of tasks, and guiding them when mistakes occur, helps them feel trusted and valued, boosting confidence and long-term commitment.

Build emotional connections, particularly with employees away from family. Celebrating personal milestones, acknowledging birthdays or anniversaries and showing genuine interest in their well-being strengthens engagement and loyalty.

Maintain open communication channels where employees can voice concerns without fear. Real-time feedback monitoring, quick resolution of issues and approachable leadership help Heartists feel heard and supported.

Purnima Kumari, Human Resources Manager, Courtyard, By Marriott Pune Chakan

Regularly solicit and act on employee feedback to improve workplace conditions.

Recognise and reward performance consistently to boost morale.

Promote work-life balance to prevent burnout.

Foster strong leadership that inspires and



"In my experience, the single most effective mantra is "Invest in People, Not Just Positions." When employees feel you are invested in their growth as individuals, their loyalty and performance naturally follow"

- Saurabh Gahoi, Senior Vice President, Ramee Group of Hotels



"Treat employees as internal guests, and they, in turn, will deliver exceptional service to external guests. Engaged employees not only provide better service but also become brand ambassadors, attracting talent and contributing to the overall success of the hotel"

- Ganeshram Iyer, Hotel Manager, ibis Styles Mysuru

supports teams.

To Conclude

The key lies in empowering teams and building high engagement. Customising development plans is essentially an investment in an associate's career and when done well, it consistently delivers strong results.

As says Kadambari, "While retaining and developing talent requires effort and consistency, it is one of the most important parts of our daily engagement strategy and one that we remain deeply committed to."

From her extensive experience, Purnima believes the key to addressing employee retention lies in 'Being there for someone'. Understanding employees' needs and challenges and responding with genuine care, creates a loyal and motivated workforce.

In the words of Manmeet Singh, "Staff retention isn't about one-time initiatives, it's about consistency. Organisations that make employee engagement, development and recognition part of their culture (not just reactive steps when attrition rises) see long-term loyalty and stronger teams.

Retention, in the end, is less about 'fixing' people leaving and more about building a place where people don't want to leave." ■

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Cross-cultural Food Festivals in Hotels – an Immersive Experience

Ethnic food festivals are potent promotions for brand awareness and nostalgic menu offerings

By Gita hari



Pic Courtesy: Temple Cuisine - McCafe Bengaluru Marriott

With festivals around, hotels are creating experiential dining - dinners with traditional music, *thali* experiences, folklore with matching decor and more. Festive *thalis* and regional cuisines are always very well received by avid gastronomes and the novelty-chasing new generation. Increasingly, diners seeking authenticity and a sense of longing through what they eat make up most of the footfalls. Be it a *Durga Pujo* thali replete with *bhaja*, *Luchi-cholar dal* to *Sandesh* and *bhappa doi*, a divine *Navratri thali* delicacy alongside storytelling and folk

elements like floral decorations, vibrantly decorated *matkis*, live music, and *dandiya* nights; or putting forward a grand *Onam Sadhya* with display of fresh *pookalam*, *kuthuvillaku* (brass lamps), *kettu melam* (percussion instruments) and banana leaf food service. All of these attract guests to indulge in tradition-bound feasts as they get transported to another cultural zone or a forgotten era from their own lineage.

Concept of Food Festivals

Beyond the festivities, there is also a potential story angle here: how brands are bringing

the flavours and traditions of one region to another, offering locals a chance to experience a new culture, while also celebrating nostalgia for those away from home. Think regional chefs travelling across cities, authentic story sourcing and hospitality brands acting as cultural bridges during festivals.

Dinesh Rana, Executive Chef, Novotel Goa Panjim enthuses, "Expect the sights, smells, and warmth of *Pujo*, recreated in true Novotel style. It is not just a menu, it is about nostalgia, community and celebrating traditions that feel like home even when you are miles away, for all the *probashi Bangalis*!"

Whether you are fasting or simply seeking to immerse yourself in the flavours of the season, IRA by Orchid Hotels, Mumbai, offered a *Navratri* spread that genuinely captured the joy of togetherness and tradition while South of Vindhyas at Orchid Hotel put up a grand *Onam Sadhya* with 56 items.

MCafé at Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield brought the *Navratri* essence to life with a thoughtfully crafted festive menu – a divine feast of Temple Cuisine. "A light yet hearty beginning of *Sabudana Khichdi* with crisp *Singhare ke Aloo* coated in chestnut flour and gently seasoned; Gluten-free *kuttu ki roti* paired with *Aloo Tamatar ki Sabzi*, *Paneer Sabzi* or *Lauki Sabzi* where each dollop was a soothing journey back home. Here, the spirit of the festival comes alive on your plate, offering not just a meal but a soulful celebration of culture, devotion and togetherness," avers Executive Chef Gaurav Paul.



Surajit Chatterjee

“We initiated the guests to begin the feast the way every *Pujo* day begins, with plates of crisp Vegetable Cutlet, golden *Beguni* and the redolent Dimer Devil, the perfect bites to spark conversation and appetite. For those who love their vegetarian classics, there was *Dhokar Dalna*, *Jhinge Aloo Posto*, *Sukto* and *Mochar Ghonto*, each dish echoing the comfort and depth of a classic Bengali kitchen,” says Chef Dinesh Rana.

Cultural Pairings and Interactive Chefs

Ethnic food pairings play a crucial role in connecting people from diverse backgrounds. With explanations of the ingredients and customs, guests understand and appreciate cultural contexts. It is an ideal platform for chefs to showcase their culinary skills.

Rajesh Mehta, General Manager, Ira by

Orchid, Mumbai, observes, “Cultural food combinations like our *Navratri thali* put up by the skilled kitchen team witnessed people come together, fostering a sense of community and shared celebration. It is wonderful to see guests from diverse backgrounds connect across myriad regions and enjoy time-honoured cuisines across the country.”

Novotel Goa Panjim’s exclusive package was the perfect base to soak in one of the state’s most colourful and culturally rich festivals, *Bonderam*, where the hotel highlighted Goa’s forgotten flavours with a special *Saraswat Brahmin Thali*, paying tribute to the culinary heritage of the *Gowd Saraswat Brahmin* community. “Featuring dishes like *Uddamethi*, *Khatkhate*, and *Patoli*, this curated experience offered guests a rare taste of Goa’s coastal traditions, crafted using age-old recipes and local ingredients. Combined with a diverse culinary selection, contemporary comforts and the warmth of Goan hospitality, we ensured a stay that was both festive and refreshing,” mentions General Manager Surajit Chatterjee.

The Gen Z Reaction

The palates, aromas and marvels of timeless dishes connect us with our ancestral legacy. Gen Z shows a genuine curiosity for culinary heritage, but they view it through a contemporary lens. For this generation, food is more than just



Chef Gaurav Paul

nourishment; it is a way of expressing identity, culture and storytelling. Tenzin Phunstok, Executive Chef - La Utsav, Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall, elaborates, “They are just as likely to appreciate a humble, lesser-known dish like Sikkimese *Gyathuk* for its authenticity and tradition as they are to share it online for its story and visual appeal. The strong response to our regional pop-up menus reflects this appetite: younger diners aren’t only open to gastronomic heritage, they actively seek the history, ethnicities and authenticity behind it.”

The present generation’s relationship with native dishes is fascinating. While they are globally influenced, there is a strong pull toward roots and validity. Chef Bhushan Hargane, Sous Chef, Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel rightly feels, “We have seen young diners enthusiastically embracing regional thalis and genuinely appreciating the flavours. They are curious about the stories behind dishes, cooking methods and cultural significance. Many connect these meals to their grandparents’ cooking, creating emotional bridges across generations. They value experiences over mere consumption, and traditional thalis offer both cultural immersion and Instagram-worthy presentations.”

According to Chef Dinesh Rana, “Yes, we have observed that Gen Z guests are particularly intrigued by experiential dining. While they may be accustomed to globalised cuisines, they enjoy interactive and visually engaging experiences that highlight heritage and local traditions. The combination of storytelling, folk music



Pic Courtesy: Navratri Thali - Ira By Orchid, Mumbai



Rajesh Mehta



Chef Bhushan Hargane



Chef Dinesh Rana

and curated plating helps them engage fully, making them more likely to share these experiences on social media, thereby amplifying the cultural reach.”

Festive and regional *thalis* have become a defining feature of experiential dining. “For our Bengali food festival, we had invited a chef from Bengal to ensure the authenticity of flavours, techniques and presentation. Similarly, our *Gowd Saraswat Brahmin thali* celebrates the coastal culinary traditions of Goa. Guests appreciate the opportunity to engage with these curated offerings, often asking about the history, ingredients and rituals behind each dish,” says Surajit Chatterjee, General Manager of Novotel Panjim Goa.

Limited-time Dining Experiences

Do curated festive food pop-ups and week-

long food promotions generate expected revenue for hotels?

GM Surajit Chatterjee, answers, “Yes, curated food pop-ups and week-long festivals have proven to be both commercially successful and culturally enriching. Beyond direct revenue, they allow the hotel to showcase regional and festive culinary heritage to tourists and residents alike. Visitors often plan their trips around these experiences, using them as an opportunity to explore local flavours authentically.”

The value, however, goes beyond revenue. Such initiatives position the hotel as both a cultural custodian and an innovator in gastronomy. Chef Tenzin Phunstok, points out, “Our 10-day Rajasthani food festival attracted a wide audience, including members of the Rajasthani community in Bengaluru who may not have visited us otherwise and

created lasting connections that extend well beyond the event itself. In essence, the blend of cultural storytelling with strong revenue potential makes these festivals an essential part of our culinary calendar.”

The initiative also strengthens the hotel’s reputation as a destination for experiential dining, encourages repeat visits, and generates media interest that adds to the overall impact. GM Rajesh Mehta avers, “Our experience with the *Navratri* midnight buffet has shown that curated festive food events can indeed drive revenue and attract new guests. By offering unique and authentic culinary experiences, we can differentiate ourselves and capitalise on the festive spirit.”

These themes attract not just hotel guests but local food enthusiasts, creating additional footfall. The key is authenticity and storytelling - guests are willing to pay premium prices for genuine experiences. “Beyond immediate revenue, these festivals build brand loyalty and position the hotel as a cultural destination. The investment in specialised ingredients and guest chefs pays off through increased covers, higher average spending, and enhanced brand reputation in the local market,” notes Chef Bhushan Hargane.

Whether to augment brand awareness, provide novelty to in-house guests, entice new clientele, create revenue or collaborate with food influencers and gain social media traction - it would not be an exaggeration to state that organising traditional food promotions with ethnic settings, is a win-win situation for both the guests and the hotels.



Pic, Courtesy: Onam Sadhya at Feast, Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel



Housekeeping as a Revenue Engine

In the hospitality sector, where every detail shapes perception and profitability, housekeeping often works behind the scenes, yet its impact resonates across the guest journey and the hotel's bottom line. Beyond pristine rooms and fresh linens, strategic housekeeping directly influences guest satisfaction, online reputation, operational efficiency, sustainability goals and ultimately revenue. When managed strategically, the housekeeping department can significantly enhance the hotel's profitability.

By Nikita Madan

In the digital era, where guest experiences translate instantly into online reviews, housekeeping holds vast power over revenue. Cleanliness is consistently rated as the top factor in positive reviews on platforms like TripAdvisor and Google. A spotless room and well-sanitised bathroom often determine whether a guest returns or recommends a property.

For luxury hotels, the stakes are even higher. Guests paying premium rates expect flawless presentation and hygiene. A single negative review about the cleanliness can deter potential

high-value bookings, while a consistent record of 'perfectly clean rooms' boosts online visibility and conversion rates. So, every bed turned down perfectly and every sparkling surface isn't just about aesthetics but it's a business decision that fuels future revenue streams.

According to Madhu Chandok, founder of Inspiring Innovative Hospitality, honourable advisor of PHA / HPMF and President of WICCI Hospitality & Tourism Council Delhi NCR, "In today's ever changing world and changing guest expectations, specially post covid, cleanliness has been one

of an important factor for the guests. Housekeeping fraternity has always been emphasising on this aspect and it is also an important factor for guests during their stay. This adds to the guest's loyalty and indirectly to hotel revenue too."

Meanwhile, according to Shambhu Singh Rao, Director of Housekeeping, Raffles Hotel, Udaipur, "Cleanliness lies at the heart of guest trust and satisfaction. Attention to detail reflects care and respect. A pristine room, thoughtfully prepared, communicates sincerity and quiet excellence. Housekeeping ensures that every element, from linen to lighting,



“Sustainability has always been another important aspect in the Housekeeping department. As we say ‘Penny Saved Is Penny Earned’.”

Madhu Chandok
Founder of Inspiring Innovative Hospitality

feels harmonious. Such precision often inspires heartfelt guest reviews, which play a vital role in encouraging new bookings and nurturing return visits.”

Operational Efficiency and Sustainability

An efficient housekeeping department doesn’t just save time, it saves money too and creates a capacity for more revenue. Smart scheduling, digital task allocation and predictive maintenance tools allow Executive Housekeepers to align room readiness with guest flow patterns. Jayshree Nagraj, Founder President &

Chairman of Professional Housekeepers Association says, “Operational efficiency transforms housekeeping from a support function into a strategic driver of revenue, guest satisfaction and brand reputation. When rooms are cleaned and released faster, guests enjoy smoother check-ins, reduced waiting time and a better first impression. When done right, it becomes a competitive advantage that boosts both brand reputation and bottom-line performance.”

Similarly, streamlined coordination during high occupancy or event turnover days minimises downtime, allowing for more sold room nights. Well-trained teams who understand resource optimisation such as using eco-dosing systems for detergents or reusing linens judiciously reduce costs without lowering standards. These savings, when aggregated over time, directly enhance departmental profitability and allow hotels to reinvest in guest experiences.

Modern travellers, especially in the luxury segment are increasingly eco-conscious. They are willing to pay more for hotels that align with their values. Madhu Chandok states that, “Today’s travellers specially Gen Z and Gen Alfa are very conscious about the sustainable practices followed by a hotel while booking their stays. They prefer practices that respect the circular economy. Guests happily pay more for staying in a hotel



“Housekeeping is not just about maintaining rooms, it’s about maintaining relationships that can lead to revenue.”

Jayshree Nagraj
Founder President & Chairman of Professional Housekeepers Association

that has ‘green practices’ as they too want to do their bit to contribute to saving the Earth.

A lot of initiatives are being practiced successfully by hospitality brands like bottling their own water and recently generating water from air are also initiatives that are being considered. Waste management has also become an important area where a lot is being done at brand and individual hotels level too.”

Shambhu Singh Rao commented, “Sustainability has become a hallmark of thoughtful luxury. Today’s discerning travellers seek experiences that align with their values and eco-sensitive practices resonate with this modern sensibility. Initiatives such as water conservation, biodegradable amenities and energy-efficient systems are seamlessly woven into daily operations.” For instance, the adoption of Green Key or LEED certifications, often driven by housekeeping protocols, signals commitment to responsible luxury. Guests today perceive “eco-luxury” as a status choice, making sustainability not a cost centre, but a brand differentiator that commands premium pricing.

Cross-Departmental Collaboration

Revenue in luxury hospitality increasingly depends on personalisation. Here, collaboration between housekeeping,



Pic Courtesy: Raffles Hotel, Udaipur



“Housekeeping professionals are often the quiet storytellers of the guest experience.”
Shambhu Singh Rao
Director of Housekeeping, Raffles Hotel, Udaipur

front office, marketing and loyalty programmes becomes a strategic asset. Imagine a frequent guest arriving to find their preferred pillow type, room fragrance or minibar selection already arranged. These gestures often originate from housekeeping’s detailed guest profiling and coordination with loyalty databases. By anticipating needs, housekeeping transforms service into a silent sales tool, encouraging loyalty program upgrades, repeat stays and longer average lengths of stay.

According to Shyam Yadav, Executive Housekeeper at Central Park Hotel, Pune, “Collaboration between housekeeping, front office and marketing ensures personalised room preparation for loyal or VIP guests. This alignment enhances satisfaction, strengthens brand loyalty, encourages repeat stays and supports revenue growth through better guest retention.”

Jayshree Nagraj adds, “Teamwork between housekeeping, front office, marketing and loyalty teams plays a huge role in making every guest feel special. When information is shared like guest preferences, loyalty tier or special occasions, housekeeping can personalise the room setup perfectly. A simple gesture, such as a favourite pillow, welcome note or preferred snack, creates a big emotional impact. Guests

feel valued, which not only improves their satisfaction but also encourages them to return and recommend the hotel. This collaboration not only enhances guest loyalty but also supports revenue growth by driving repeat business and premium spend. When departments connect, guests feel the difference and that difference pays back.”

Ancillary Revenue

In-room interaction offers unique opportunities for ancillary sales. While housekeeping may not be the traditional sales team, their direct engagement with guests make them soft sellers. Madhu Chandok says, “There can be many opportunities that can be highlighted during the process of guest check-in, while explaining the in-room amenities. Keep them updated on any F&B promotions in the hotel during their stay. Upselling the spas is another way to add to revenue of the Hotel.

Housekeeping staff needs to be proactive while engaging in a conversation with the guest and also talking about any local community engagements and culture will make the guest explore with hotel collaborators that may bring revenue to the hotel and also give a local experience to the guest.”

Meanwhile, Shyam Yadav adds, “Housekeeping teams can boost ancillary revenue by suggesting laundry, minibar restocks, spa treatments or in-room dining. Proactive guest engagement and



“Guests equate spotless rooms with safety and comfort.”
Shyam Yadav
Executive Housekeeper at Central Park Hotel, Pune

personalised recommendations create additional sales opportunities while improving the overall guest experience.”

Hotels that invest in communication and upselling training for their housekeeping staff often report measurable revenue gains. Encouraging room attendants with simple scripts or digital prompts creates a new, often untapped, revenue stream from within the room itself.

Conclusion

The transformation of housekeeping from a purely operational unit to a strategic business partner requires investment in technology, training and recognition. Their teams should be empowered with tools that streamline processes and training that links service excellence with financial outcomes. When General Managers view housekeeping as a core contributor to revenue rather than a cost centre, the ripple effect is immediate. Employee morale improves, guest satisfaction scores rise and both direct and indirect revenue streams expand.

In the hospitality sector, every polished mirror and perfectly folded towel is part of a larger business equation. Strategic housekeeping connects the dots between guest delight, brand perception, operational efficiency and profit. It is not merely about maintaining rooms, it is about maintaining the revenue engine that powers the entire hotel. ■



Pic Courtesy:
Grand Mercure Bengaluru Gopalan Mall

Setting High Standards

Vimal Handloom Emporium Pvt. Ltd. are manufacturers and whole sellers of high end bedding and lifestyle products. "Sweet Dreams" the flagship brand of the company is known for high quality and trend



setting products. With experience over two decades in area of home textiles, they work hard to satisfy need of their clientele for quality products and designs, keeping in mind the price competitiveness. The company has expanded over the years serving

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Stackwell has established itself as a leader in the banquet furniture industry, renowned for its exquisite contemporary designs, premium quality, and durable products. Offering a diverse range of banquet furniture, the company provides aluminum-framed and steel-framed powder-coated stacking chairs, flat-fold banquet tables, flexi-back/action-back chairs, frill-less laminated top conference tables, and glass-top tables for buffet arrangements.

A pioneer in ergonomic seating solutions, Stackwell is the only company in India to introduce flexi-back/action-back chairs, designed for enhanced comfort during long hours of banquet and conference seating. These chairs, stackable up to 10 units, minimize storage space while ensuring superior support with specially designed ergonomic backs. With over 10,000 chairs supplied, they have gained widespread acceptance across the hospitality sector.



Another standout innovation is the frill-less laminated top conference table, designed with removable modesty front panels and stainless steel legs for exceptional durability. Unlike conventional Chinese metal panels, these tables feature modesty panels that match the tabletop, offering an elegant and refined aesthetic. With over 5,000 tables supplied to prestigious convention centers and five-star hotels, this product has set new benchmarks in design and longevity.

Stackwell's dedicated design team continuously enhances its product line, focusing on innovation, durability, and sophistication. Committed to delivering "Value for Money for Years," the company remains a trusted partner in the hospitality industry, providing furniture that seamlessly blends functionality, style, and lasting quality.

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Uniforms Unlimited (UU) stands as a pioneering force in the uniform manufacturing industry, recognized for its commitment to impeccable craftsmanship, innovative designs, and superior quality. Established formally in 2005, the company carries forward the legacy of Jazeel Mehta, who began crafting uniforms in 1987. Today, joined by his children, Zubin and Zia, UU has set unparalleled standards in designing and producing finely tailored uniforms that blend style, comfort, and durability. With a relentless focus on research, innovation, and technology, the company integrates CAD systems for precision in design and pattern-making, ensuring perfection in every piece. Operating from a state-of-the-art, 50,000 sq. ft. facility in Mumbai, UU caters to a distinguished clientele, including five-star hotels, luxury resorts, cruise liners, airlines, hospitals, schools, and corporate entities, delivering complete uniform solutions with efficiency and precision. Expanding its expertise, the brand's signature line, "Chefs Unlimited," is synonymous with premium chef wear, earning the trust of top culinary professionals. Additionally, its in-house design studio,



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“Simplicity and Focus are My Guiding Principles”

Ameya Mandke, Operations Manager, Niraamaya Retreats Surya Samudra, Kovalam

By Sharmila Chand

With over 21 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Ameya Mandke brings a wealth of knowledge and passion to his role as Operations Manager at Niraamaya Retreats Surya Samudra. His journey began as a Front Office Associate at The Oberoi Rajvilas, Jaipur and since then, he has worked across diverse verticals including Front Office operations, Hospitality Education, Training and Human Resources.

A believer in collaborative leadership, he fosters a culture of empowerment, professionalism and continuous learning within his team. His guiding philosophy is simple yet powerful — stay calm, keep things simple and remain guest-focused.

Under his leadership, Niraamaya Retreats Surya Samudra continues to evolve as a sanctuary of holistic wellness, blending luxury with authenticity. He emphasises operational excellence, guest satisfaction and revenue growth through innovative strategies in F&B, wellness and experiential tourism.

Grounded and guest-oriented, Ameya Mandke defines himself as someone who values simplicity, honesty and authenticity. His most rewarding moments come from heartfelt guest appreciation — a true reflection of his team’s dedication and the transformative experiences that define Niraamaya.

In an exclusive interview he talks about his work philosophy and more....

What is the USP of your property?

Holistic Wellness Experience: Niraamaya Retreats Surya Samudra stands out with its seamless blend of luxury and holistic wellness. We craft transformative journeys that nurture the body, mind and soul while deeply connecting our guests to the natural and cultural essence of each destination.

Iconic Natural Settings: Our breathtaking locations—from seaside cliffs to lush forests—provide the perfect backdrop for rejuvenation and self-discovery, turning every stay into a soulful escape into nature.

What strategies do you practice to maximize hotel revenue?

We are currently focusing on strengthening our F&B operations, corporate retreats, and day-out packages. Many locals visit our property for intimate celebrations, corporate reunions and gatherings. These experiences not only

enhance guest engagement but also serve as a key source of revenue generation for the hotel.

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

In today’s ever-evolving environment, adaptability is key. The hospitality industry changes rapidly—be it consumer behavior, technology, marketing or business models. Staying updated with these trends and integrating innovation is crucial for long-term growth and success.

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

What I enjoy most is the people aspect—interacting with guests and mentoring employees. Building strong relationships and fostering a positive work culture gives me immense satisfaction.

What is your working mantra, your guiding philosophy at work?

Stay calm and keep things simple. I believe in maintaining a guest-focused approach and helping people with sincerity and purpose. Simplicity and focus are my guiding principles.

One piece of advice you would like to give to youngsters aspiring to excel in hospitality?

First, identify what you truly want in life, and then pursue it with determination and clarity. Passion and purpose are key to succeeding in hospitality.

Lastly, how do you define yourself?

I see myself as a guest-friendly and grounded individual who believes in simplicity, honesty, and authenticity. I prefer to keep things uncomplicated and remain true to myself in every aspect of life.

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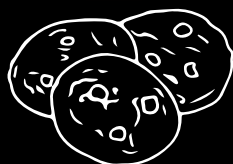


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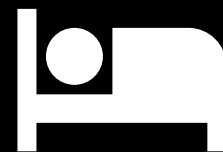
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