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Business Review

An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry

Business

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Feature

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Spotlight

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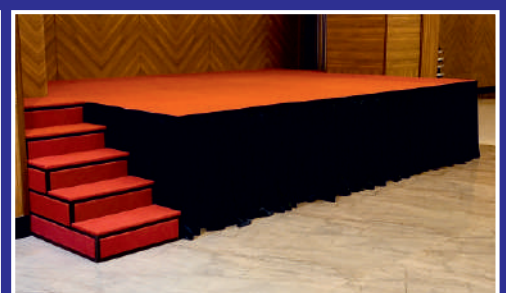
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As December draws to a close and the spirit of New Year celebrations sets in, we bring you the final issue of Hotel Business for 2025. It's been a remarkable year for Indian hospitality, one that truly showcased the sector's strength and resilience. Even as global markets faced economic slowdowns, trade tensions, India's travel and hospitality sector continued to move forward with confidence. Domestic travel demand once again emerged as the driving force, keeping the industry vibrant and helping it deliver a record-breaking year.

To keep this momentum going, hoteliers are continuously upgrading and investing in the overall aesthetics and beautification of their hotels. Our Cover story explores how aesthetics play a crucial role in setting an initial impact on the guests' minds and enhance the overall guest stay experience. This guest experience is of key importance for every property, and our business story examines what truly matters. Is it personalisation or quality of service, staff behaviour, cleanliness, comfort, amenities, or the hotel's overall ambience?

Our feature story explores how tableware enhances the presentation of food by adding aesthetic appeal while also serving several functional purposes. Our culinary experts share insight into the involving role of tableware, spotlighting current design trends, and how to choose the right pieces.

Every hotel is gearing up to create a memorable final meal of year, featuring global flavours, creative cocktails, wellness-forward menus, and picture-perfect presentations. Our spotlight story catch up with the full swing preparations and the energy being pumped to this most awaited New Year Eve.

Managing and organizing New Year's Eve requires careful pre-event planning and preparation to handle the large crowds that gather to venues hosting the festivities. This story explores how the industry plans and executes successful celebrations with precision and flair.

With this note we extend our sincere thanks to our readers, advertisers, and our industry partners for their continued support. Wishing you a Merry Christmas, and an exciting start to the New Year ahead.

Happy New Year.

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Ambiente 2026: Spotlight on Hospitality



With an enhanced focus on hospitality and interior design, fresh formats and a clear commitment to the industry, Ambiente 2026 is the meeting place for all those who aim to create a guest experience that lasts. From 6 to 10 February 2026, the hospitality sector will gather in Frankfurt.

Visitors to the world's leading trade fair for dining culture and hospitality can look forward to plenty of new features, offering insight into the pleasure worlds of tomorrow – with even more exchange, live formats and targeted matchmaking for industry professionals.

Ambiente Projects – Your host for planning, furnishing & equipping

Under this name, Ambiente brings together its B2B portfolio in one coherent format – precisely tailored to various target groups, from specialised wholesale to interior designers and hospitality professionals. Visitors will find the special interest areas HoReCa, Hospitality Interiors and Contract Business all under one roof.

Interior Design & Architecture Hub: Knowledge and Inspiration

Another highlight is the new Interior Design & Architecture Hub with an integrated Academy in Hall 3.1, designed by Ambiente Designer 2026 Katty Schiebeck,

the Barcelona-based interior designer of Uruguayan origin is known for combining sensory clarity, natural materials and emotional lighting into a harmonious whole. Her walk-in installation demonstrates how hospitality takes spatial form – from material selection to lighting design. Also located in Hall 3.1, Interior Looks offers a focused platform for buyers from the hospitality and contract sectors, where selected interior brands showcase their design solutions for professional environments. From furniture and lighting to home textiles – the selection is hand-picked, design-focused and perfectly tailored to the hospitality sector.

Additionally, the material showcase at the table with nature, realised in collaboration with Healthy Materials Lab Europe and the interior design studio Raumgesichte, offers inspiration for healthy and sustainable building materials.



Hospitality Academy: Knowledge for Hosts

New in 2026 is a partnership with Westwing, the renowned European home & living platform, which will curate the Hospitality Academy in the foyer of Hall 11.0. This new feature forms the conceptual bridge to Hall 3.1 – the hotspot for interior design, hospitality interiors and contract business. In addition to best practices, trade visitors can expect inspiring impulses on design trends in the hospitality sector, curated brand presentations and expert insights within an integrated academy. More information about guided tours, the speakers and their presentations will be available in the online event calendar from mid-November and will be updated continuously.

Hotelier's Day – Saturday as the industry meetup

For the first time, the trade fair Saturday will be dedicated to the Hotelier's Day, specifically addressing decision-makers from the hotel, restaurant, kitchen and F&B management sectors. "Personal exchange and trust – no digital tool can replace that," says Thomas Kastl, Director of Ambiente Dining. Through panels, guided tours and networking events, the focus will be on presenting concrete solutions to the industry's current challenges: staff shortages, rising costs and changing guest expectations.

Experience it live: Kitchen Show & immersive brand presentations

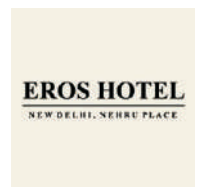
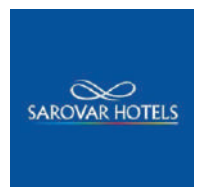
Another highlight is the Kitchen Show – Spot on Kitchen Essentials, featuring live cooking sessions and renowned personalities from the culinary scene in Galleria 1 South. At the same time, exhibitors such as Bonna, BHS tabletop, Nachtmann, Spiegelau, Villeroy & Boch and RAK Porcelain Europe will demonstrate how creative storytelling works in the B2B world.

Those who shape hospitality will find at Ambiente 2026 the stage where visions take form. Frankfurt showcases what hospitality means tomorrow: spaces that inspire – and experiences that stay with you.

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Anil Malhotra Takes Charge as HOTREMAI President for the Term 2025-27



The Hotel and Restaurant Equipment Manufacturers Association of India (HOTREMAI) announced the unanimous election of Anil Malhotra as President for the 2025-27 term, his third tenure in this role after a highly successful earlier terms leading the association (2018-2020 & 2020-2022). During his previous presidency, Anil Malhotra actively promoted HOTREMAI's interests across multiple Indian and international bodies in the hospitality ecosystem, strengthening the association's visibility and voice within the industry.

A respected figure in Indian hospitality with over four decades of experience, Anil combines deep industry insight with a consistent commitment to excellence. A graduate in Economics (Hons.) from Hindu College and a qualified Hotel Kaufmann from Austria, he gained formative international exposure in Austria, Switzerland and Germany before returning to India to serve with distinction at the Taj Group of Hotels.

Known for his integrity, professional acumen and longstanding relationships across the sector, Malhotra's second term as President positions HOTREMAI to further deepen its engagement with policymakers, hotel and restaurant operators and global partners in the hospitality equipment domain.

The newly formed 15-member Executive Committee for the 2025-2027 term brings together a distinguished lineup of industry leaders and comprises the following members:

- Ajay Khanna (Eagle Forgings)
- Sarina Marwah (Linen Talk)
- Anil Malhotra (Hospitality Sales & Marketing Company)
- J.K. Khurana (Venus Industries)
- Nirmal Khandelwal (FCML Distributors Pvt. Ltd.)
- Arvind Khanna (Interiors Inc.)
- Bimal Khurana (Veer Hotelware)
- Jatin Kumar (Hotels Equipment Merchants)
- G.S. Kalra (Chair Craft India Pvt. Ltd.)
- Ramandeep Singh (Neena Crockerries)
- Rahul Gutt (Radha Krishna & Sons Pvt. Ltd.)
- Deeksha Batra (Radiant Designer Steels Pvt. Ltd.)
- Vikram Khurana (Kaapi Solutions India OPC Pvt. Ltd.)
- Vineet Juneja (Metal Craft)
- Angad Chachra (The Bar Consultants).

HOTREMAI is one of the country's oldest and most respected bodies representing manufacturers, suppliers, service providers and consultants in the hotel and restaurant equipment sector. Established in 1982 and registered under the Societies Registration Act in 1994, it functions as a non-profit, non-political association dedicated to advancing the interests of its members and supporting the growth of India's hospitality infrastructure.

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Skål International India Installs 'Skål International Kashmir'

Skål International India celebrated a historic milestone with the grand installation of Skål International Kashmir, its 20th club in the country, at Taj Dal View, Srinagar. Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, presided as the chief guest and inaugurated the Club. The event brought together distinguished Skål leagues, tourism leaders, hospitality stakeholders and dignitaries, reaffirming the pivotal role of tourism in the Kashmir Valley, cherished worldwide as the paradise on earth.

The ceremony followed official Skål protocols including the oath and pinning of office bearers and founder members, certificate presentations, recognition of tourism contributors and messages of solidarity from Skål leaders. The upcoming new club builds upon Skål International India's fast-expanding footprint, following the installation of Skål International Jammu & Kashmir earlier this year as India's 19th club.

Omar Abdullah expressed confidence in the strengthened tourism movement, saying, "Kashmir welcomes Skål International with open arms. Together, we will invite the world to rediscover our peace, beauty and hospitality. Any B2B networking is good for the Kashmir economy. Tourism is our key business and Skål International India is doing excellent work. We are happy to see Kashmir in the spotlight for Skål International India."

Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål International India, emphasised the organisation's national growth: "Our 20th club in India reflects our belief in Kashmir's power to inspire global travel and drive sustainable tourism growth. Our goal is to establish



at least one club in every State & Union Territory and even multiple clubs where the industry size demands it."

Skål International India reaffirmed its commitment to:

- Advancing sustainable and responsible tourism development
- Strengthening alliances with valley-wide tourism stakeholders
- Enhancing global visibility and professional exchange
- Driving socio-economic progress through tourism excellence

With this landmark inauguration, Skål India continues to champion "Doing Business Among Friends" while expanding tourism leadership across the nation.

The Lodhi New Delhi Honoured with One Michelin Key

The Lodhi, New Delhi- a distinguished member of The Leading Hotels of The World has been awarded One Michelin Key, an honour that celebrates hotels offering exceptional character, comfort, and service. The Michelin Keys distinction recognises the world's most outstanding hospitality experiences, evaluated through anonymous inspections across five key parameters: architecture and design, quality of service, personality and character, value, and contribution to the locality.

Set in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi, adjacent to the historic Lodi Gardens, The Lodhi blends luxury with personalised service. It offers some of the city's largest rooms and suites, most featuring

private plunge pools and balconies, along with one- to four-bedroom luxury apartments complete with kitchenettes, private pools, and courtyards for an exclusive long-stay experience.

The Lodhi is also a celebrated culinary destination. Elan offers all-day international dining with a lively bar and alfresco seating, while Perbacco presents refined Italian cuisine in an intimate setting. Safari Lounge draws inspiration from wildlife, offering cigars and craft cocktails, and the hotel is home to Indian Accent, the internationally acclaimed restaurant known for its modern take on Indian cuisine.

Abhimanyu Singh Lodha, General Manager, The Lodhi, New Delhi said, "Receiving the One Michelin Key is both an honour and an inspiration. We remain committed to elevating every aspect of the guest experience- from world-class amenities to bespoke services- ensuring that each stay reflects the highest standards of contemporary Indian hospitality. This recognition reinforces our vision of The Lodhi as a distinguished address for those seeking excellence and refined luxury."

Receiving the One Michelin Key distinction further reaffirms The Lodhi's position as a benchmark of contemporary Indian luxury, one that seamlessly blends authenticity, sophistication and a distinct sense of modern Indian identity.





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Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity Celebrate 10 Years of Excellence

Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity marked a significant moment this November as the two hotels completed 10 years of shaping Delhi’s premium hospitality landscape. Part of the capital’s largest hospitality complex, the dual-hotel destination features 670 rooms and suites, over 14,200 sq. m. of versatile event space and six award-winning culinary venues.

Over the past decade, the iconic destination has evolved into one of Delhi’s most recognised hospitality addresses. From hosting international delegations, diplomats and global travellers to delivering large-scale conventions, the dual-hotel complex has contributed significantly to shaping Aerocity’s reputation as a preferred hub for business and leisure. Its strategic location, seamless connectivity and integrated offerings continue to position it as a standout choice in the region.

To commemorate the ten-year milestone, the hotels curated a month-long celebration through November, culminating in a Grand Gala Evening on 26 November 2025. The celebration series honoured the hotels’ long-standing relationships with guests and partners, while also acknowledging the Heartists whose dedication shaped the journey. Throughout the month, both hotels showcased the anniversary spirit with personalised touches, themed elements in guest areas and interactive moments that allowed visitors to create and share memories.

Speaking on the occasion, Manish Dayya, General Manager



of Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, said, “Completing ten years is a meaningful achievement for all of us at Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. This milestone celebrates the trust of our guests, the support of our partners and the passion of our teams. It also reinforces our commitment to move forward with sharper ambition, thoughtful innovation and a renewed focus on creating purposeful guest experiences.”

Over the years, the dual-hotel complex has earned recognition for shaping a new standard of hospitality in Delhi. As the complex steps into the next decade, the focus remains on strengthening the position as one of the city’s most dynamic destinations with renewed vision, sharper ideas and experiences designed with clarity and deeper guest connection.

Mharo Khet Venerated with MICHELIN Key 2025



Mharo Khet, the regenerative farm and culinary retreat set on 40 organic acres outside Jodhpur, has been awarded with 2025 MICHELIN Key in the hotels guide, the hospitality counterpart to the MICHELIN Stars. This global benchmark honours stays defined by exceptional design, service and character, affirming Mharo Khet’s commitment to sustainability, warm farm-grown hospitality and its distinctive land-led culinary philosophy, where food, soil and quiet luxury are intrinsically connected.

Chosen by Michelin’s anonymous inspectors, the properties featured in the guide represent the highest standards of comfort, authenticity and sense of place. Mharo Khet’s inclusion places it among a distinguished group of boutique destinations worldwide celebrated for creativity, meaningful guest experiences and a deep connection to their surroundings.

“We are honoured to be featured in the MICHELIN Key Hotels Guide,” said Rajnush Agarwal, one of Mharo Khet owners. “This acknowledgment reinforces our mission to offer guests an intimate and immersive connection with the land, its produce, and its people – revealing an unexpected yet deeply authentic side of Rajasthan, one that celebrates quiet rural life, genuine human warmth and the profound beauty of its agricultural traditions.”

At the heart of Mharo Khet is its cuisine. Here, 95% of ingredients are grown directly on the farm, harvested chemical-free and cooked within hours. The signature nine-course dining experience, Paeru, unfolds in an open-air guava orchard. Each course draws on memories, seasons and moments of life, an imaginative yet grounded expression of flavour and place.

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Hospitality Consultants Forum Launched to Foster Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

Consultants play a vital role in development and running hospitality projects at every stage, yet they are scattered across the country, each managing their own diverse portfolio of work. Most of them operate independently, crossing paths only during trade shows, expos or conferences. While these moments offer quick exchanges, regular and meaningful interaction within the consultants has largely been missing. To bridge this communication gap and also to chart a new direction, some of the leading hospitality consultants have come together and formed a formal association- Hospitality Consultants Forum.

Hospitality Consultants Forum is registered in Bengaluru under the Karnataka Societies Act, and has received a formal certificate of registration recently.

With this, it is now possible for all hospitality and food service consultants across India to board on to a common platform, to freely exchange their ideas, engage in professional debates, find common interests and strengthen the community.

The Forum has outlined the following objectives:

- To work towards enhancement of standards in the food service and hospitality industry.
- To create a professional platform wherein consultants can freely exchange ideas and seek clarifications and support from each other.
- To create an eco-system by becoming more accessible to clients and potential clients to find professional advice and solutions.
- To advise the equipment manufacturers, aggregators, OEMs and other key stake holders about the evolving trends and requirements of the end users, thereby encouraging improvement



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in the product standards.

- To collectively represent to the government and quasi government bodies about concerns and needs

of the consultants in particular and the food service industry in general.

Overall, the formation of the Hospitality Consultants Forum has been well received by the industry. Several leading consultants have already joined, with more expected to come on board soon. In the recent past, the association has been actively involved in several initiatives. It organised Culinary Futures, a two-day education and activity programme in Pune in September, where Pune Gas and Alister Equipments partnered to deliver intensive training on LPG systems along with a curated factory visit. During HoReCa 2025 expo in Mumbai, the Association

hosted a Consultants Lounge, offering visitors on-the-spot advice and guidance. It also collaborated with Prego, Chennai, to conduct a one-day seminar on Food Safety, with the Association of Food Scientists of India participating as one of the key contributors.

Speaking on behalf of the association, P.Sravan Kumar, of Excellence Hospitality, Hyderabad, said, "This is a welcome move, and we are confident it is in the right direction. Going by the positivity generated within a short span, we are looking forward to the

association becoming a bouncing board for all senior stake holders in the HoReCa industry". Arvind Gopal, one of the founder members said, "The formation of the association makes it easier for entrepreneurs and operators, especially in tier 2 cities, to access professional advice". Agreeing with this idea, Pramod Paleri added mentioning the association will benefit all stake holders in the hospitality sector including consultants.



P. Sravan Kumar

Hospitality, Textiles Poised to Lead Job Creation: NCAER Report

India's textiles, apparel and hospitality sectors are expected to emerge as the biggest drivers of job growth by 2030, supported by increased investment, according to a new study by economic policy think tank National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). The report also stressed the need to remove structural bottlenecks to enable faster and more inclusive expansion.

It noted that moderate growth in manufacturing and services could significantly boost employment, with jobs in textiles, garments and allied industries projected to rise by 53%, while employment in trade, hotels and related services could grow by as much as 79% by 2030.

Despite the economy's strong recent performance, the study pointed out that job quality has lagged behind growth. Most new employment has been generated through self-employment—largely

in agriculture—rather than through stable, salaried positions. The report highlighted India's labour force participation rate, at around 50%, as low compared to other countries at a similar income level, with the dominance of the informal sector remaining a key challenge.

"India's employment strategy must move beyond headline growth targets and focus on a calibrated mix of demand- and supply-side measures that directly encourage labour absorption," the report said.

On the supply side, NCAER recommended strengthening vocational education, improving skill development through deeper industry partnerships, enabling credit portability to allow students to move between institutions, and increasing investment to enhance the quality of training programmes.

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CM Rekha Gupta Proposes Ease-of-Doing-Business Reforms for Delhi Hospitality Sector

The Chief Minister of the Government of NCT of Delhi, Rekha Gupta, announced a series of policy measures aimed at easing regulatory processes for the hospitality sector. These include permitting third-party audits for fire licences and introducing a single-window licensing system for hotels and restaurants operating within the NCT of Delhi. Elaborating on the proposed third-party fire audits, the Chief Minister said the move would significantly improve ease of doing business for hoteliers and restaurant owners. She added that steps would soon be initiated to facilitate the issuance of various approvals and licences required from agencies such as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the Delhi Government through a unified single-window mechanism. The decision to allow third-party audits for fire licences was taken during a fire review meeting of the NCT of Delhi.

The announcements were made while inaugurating the Summit 2025– Viksit Delhi, Viksit Tourism & Hospitality: Together Towards a Viksit Bharat, jointly organised by the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI) and the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI). Addressing the issue of rising pollution levels



in the capital, the Chief Minister advised hotels and restaurants to install mist-fogging systems on their rooftops, stating that the initiative could help curb pollution while also reducing water consumption in surrounding areas. During the summit, FHRAI President Surendra Kumar Jaiswal presented the association's initiative to replace anti-smog guns with more sustainable and cost-effective pollution-mitigation alternatives.

Jaiswal also commended the NCT Delhi Government for its proactive approach towards the hospitality industry, noting that in a decisive move the administration had scrapped the mandatory Eating House Licence and police clearance requirements. He further welcomed the assurance that fire licences would be recognised through third-party

audits and that multiple approvals would be consolidated under a single-window system.

To strengthen linkages between hospitality and agriculture, the summit featured an exhibition of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) from seven states, showcasing a wide range of regional and GI-tagged products.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Neeraj Kharwal, IAS, Managing Director of ITPO, underscored the need for sustained policy support, infrastructure development and greater ease of operations to reinforce the sector's growth trajectory.

The summit concluded with a vote of thanks by Garish Oberoi, Honorary Secretary, FHRAI, and Past President of FHRAI and HRANI, who expressed his appreciation to the Chief Guest and the Guest of Honour.

HPMF Marks 15 Years in Hospitality Procurement

The Hospitality Purchasing Managers' Forum (HPMF) celebrated its 15th Foundation Day, marking a remarkable journey of growth, unity and transformation within the hospitality procurement fraternity. Established in 2010, HPMF has emerged as one of the most influential and respected procurement communities, with a robust presence across India and several international chapters.

Aligned with India's national priorities, HPMF has actively contributed to major government initiatives, including Make in India, Atma Nirbhar Bharat, Skill India Mission, Digital India and Swachh Bharat & Sustainability.

HPMF's 15-Year Legacy Includes, a strong and expanding community across India, Middle East, and Asia-Pacific 12 National



Conventions hosted across iconic Indian cities Industry partnerships, panel discussions, training programs and white papers, consistent support for local manufacturers, startups and MSMEs and benchmarking and elevating procurement standards in the

hospitality domain.

As part of its long-term strategy, HPMF has initiated the ambitious "100 Activities in 1000 Days" Project, a transformative roadmap designed to create deep, long-lasting impact across the hospitality procurement ecosystem. This project will include capability-building programs, standardisation initiatives, supplier development efforts, sustainability-driven actions, digital transformation guidelines, and youth skill development.

This initiative is expected to leave a massive impact on the industry and build a strong legacy for the next generations of procurement professionals.

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Loom Crafts Launches Flagship Outdoor Furniture Store in Kirti Nagar

Loom Crafts Furniture India Pvt. Ltd., India's leading manufacturer of handcrafted luxury outdoor furniture, has launched its first company-owned flagship display centre in Kirti Nagar, New Delhi—India's largest and most prestigious furniture market. Spread across 10,000 sq. ft., the new store marks a significant milestone in the brand's retail expansion, reinforcing its leadership in high-end outdoor living solutions.

The Kirti Nagar flagship exclusively showcases the complete collection of outdoor furniture designed and manufactured by Loom Crafts, including loungers, daybeds, sofas, dining sets, bar units, balcony and terrace furniture, poolside and garden sets and a wide range of accessories. Customers can explore the brand's three signature categories—Elite, Signature and Simpli—designed to cater to luxury, mid-range and value-driven requirements. A dedicated material area also displays the latest Sunbrella® and Agora all-weather fabrics, helping customers choose durable



and aesthetic upholstery options.

Commenting on the launch, Rahul Jindal, Managing Director, Loom Crafts Furniture

India Pvt. Ltd., said, "With our flagship store in Kirti Nagar, we aim to bring India's best outdoor furniture under one roof. This environment has been created to inspire and showcase how premium outdoor furniture can elevate homes, villas, restaurants, hotels and commercial spaces to a new level of comfort and beauty."

As part of its broader global vision, Loom Crafts is now planning to open exclusive showrooms in Dubai and Saudi Arabia, followed by expansion into other key markets across the UAE, Middle East and Africa. With the Kirti Nagar launch, Loom Crafts is also strengthening its India retail footprint. New exclusive stores are planned for Gurugram, Noida, Goa and Kolkata in 2026. The company currently operates through its flagship Delhi store and more than 14 Exclusive Brand Partner outlets across major cities including Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Mumbai, Pune, Coimbatore, Lucknow, Guwahati, Raipur and Nashik, supported by a growing dealer and channel partner network.

UNOX India Retains Great Place to Work Certification

UNOX India, the wholly owned subsidiary of UNOX S.p.A., Italy, global leaders in technology-driven commercial ovens, including combi ovens, convection ovens and speed ovens, for the hospitality, restaurant and institutional sectors, has been certified as a Great Place to Work® for the third consecutive year. This recognition reaffirms the company's sustained commitment to cultivating a culture that empowers people to perform, grow and lead with purpose.

The Great Place to Work® Certification™ is awarded based on employee feedback collected through the Trust Index™ Survey. The survey evaluates how employees experience their workplace across five core dimensions: Credibility, Respect, Fairness, Pride and Teamwork. UNOX India's performance was benchmarked against national workplace standards, reaffirming its position among India's leading workplaces.

Operating in over 44 countries, UNOX combines research-led design, applied intelligence and sustainability-focused cooking technologies to deliver professional solutions that make kitchen processes more efficient, repeatable and reliable. This certification reflects the company's alignment of people-first culture with its commitment to innovation and sustainability in professional cooking.

Vikram Goel, Regional Director, UNOX India & South-East Asia, commented: "The culture we strive to build at UNOX India is one



where every individual feels secure, respected and empowered to achieve their fullest potential. This third certification stands as a deeply meaningful validation of our 'trust-first' philosophy. It is an acknowledgment of our extraordinary team, whose passion, collaborative spirit and commitment remain the driving force behind UNOX India's progress and standing in the industry."

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The Leela Palace New Delhi Welcomes the G.O.A.T

The Leela Palace New Delhi was honoured to host football legend Lionel Messi, along with renowned footballers Luis Suárez and Rodrigo De Paul, during their visit to the capital as part of the G.O.A.T India Tour.

Rooted in the philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava, The Leela Palace New Delhi curated a warm and meaningful welcome that reflected India's rich cultural heritage while ensuring complete comfort and privacy for the guests. Traditional elements, thoughtful gestures and a seamless arrival experience came together to create a sense of familiarity, allowing the legends to feel truly at home.

Every detail across the Palace was carefully personalised, staying true to The Leela Palace New Delhi's belief that luxury lies in intuition and care. From bespoke in-room touches to discreet, attentive service, the experience was designed to offer calm, comfort and ease - hallmarks of The Leela Palace New Delhi's hospitality.

The visit was complemented by cultural performances and



symbolic moments that celebrated India's traditions, creating a beautiful intersection of global sporting excellence and timeless Indian hospitality. The Palace spaces were thoughtfully prepared to reflect elegance, warmth and understated grandeur, ensuring an environment that felt both welcoming and secure.

Hosting Lionel Messi, Luis Suárez and Rodrigo De Paul underscores The Leela Palace New Delhi's legacy as a preferred address for global icons. More than a visit, it was a moment of cultural connection - where excellence met empathy and where guests were welcomed not just with luxury, but with heart.

At The Leela Palace New Delhi, every stay is personal, every detail intentional and every guest made to feel at home.

The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa Celebrates 25 Years of Excellence

The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa celebrated an intimate occasion to remember 25 glorious years of excellence. The celebration was not just an anniversary but a shared journey of passion, excellence and evolution of The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa, India's leading standalone independent hotel, renowned for its luxury, quality, innovation and commitment.

The glitzy night saw gathering from distinguished delegates to corporate captains to fashionistas who were seen enjoying the evening and relishing flavours from across the world. Guests at the event were taken on an 'Exotic Culinary Journey'.

Garden of Joy, poolside venue for the event was a sight to behold. To evoke the spirit and cuisine of The Met's restaurants, guests were treated to myriad visual and sensory experiences. A curated feast awaited the guests, Sakura presented authentic Japanese spread, vibrant Indian dishes from Chutney, Bar + Tandoor added a burst of flavour, the Zing, multi-cuisine station offered eclectic delight. A special lounge was created by the poolside and served a selection of premium finest alcoholic beverages and a range of interesting cocktails and mocktails created especially for the evening. For those looking for a sweet ending, the Zing GourMET Shop provided a wide range of mouth-watering delicacies and freshly baked confectionaries. A live band kept Delhi's glitterati soaked in the ambient mood.

On the occasion Vipul Gupta, Director, The Metropolitan Hotel said, "We didn't just toast the years that have passed but also honoured



the vision that was set a quarter-century ago by our Founder, Late Shri Satya Pal Gupta. His mission, values and principles became the foundation of this hotel's culture and growth. We proudly carry his legacy forward with deep respect and unwavering dedication. From crafting memorable moments to delivering exceptional service, over the past 25 years, we have continuously evolved as a hospitality brand, and thrive to create our niche in this industry for years to come. The whole journey has been challenging but a satisfying one. On our 25th Year, we get conferred upon with prestigious International award of 'Best Iconic Hotel' in Asia, it says all that we're on the right path. We would like to thank our guests, customers, associates, employees, stakeholders, etc. who have been associated with our brand for the past 25 years".

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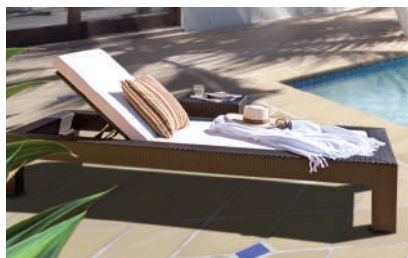


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Kris Reynolds



Hyatt Place Vadodara has announced the appointment of Kris Reynolds as its new General Manager. He has risen through the ranks over the last 17 years and has been associated with Hyatt Place Vadodara for over 4 years, having joined as part of the pre-opening team in 2021 as Director of Sales. His performance and strategic acumen has led to his promotions to Director of Sales & Marketing (2022) and subsequently Assistant General

Manager in 2023.

During this time, he played a pivotal role in shaping the reputation of Vadodara's first Hyatt hotel. As AGM, Kris was instrumental in driving stronger team engagement, optimising productivity and significantly enhancing guest satisfaction scores. Currently a participant in Hyatt's prestigious General Manager Development Program, Kris brings a distinct competitive advantage to the role: a combination of sharp market understanding, deep operational expertise and a sales-driven vision.

Hailing from a commercial background, Kris' journey with Hyatt began at the Hyatt Area Sales Office, where he was appointed Sales Executive in 2010. He then moved on to various positions within the Hyatt Hotels network in India. He has also worked with other notable brands such as Westin Hyderabad and Ramada Powai.

Manish Kumar Yadav



voco Amritsar by IHG has announced the appointment of Manish Kumar Yadav as its General Manager.

With over 17 years of hospitality leadership across luxury, upscale and mid-scale brands, Yadav will lead the hotel's pre-opening and steer its overall operations, commercial strategy and service excellence.

Before joining voco Amritsar by IHG, he served as Multi-Property General Manager for

DoubleTree by Hilton and Wyndham Chandigarh, driving operational performance and strengthening guest experience and brand delivery. He is also a two-time National Best General Manager Award winner, recognised by BW Hotelier and HVS.

Yadav is known for building strong operational frameworks, elevating guest experience systems and fostering high-performance cultures. His financial acumen and extensive pre-opening experience position him to establish voco Amritsar by IHG as a standout premium IHG hotel in the region.

Ranjana Pal



Hyatt Delhi Residences is delighted to announce the appointment of Ranjana Pal as General Manager. With over two decades of leadership experience across global hospitality brands, including Hyatt and Marriott, Ranjana brings a distinctive blend of strategic foresight, operational excellence and people-centric leadership to the role.

Ranjana has been an integral part of the Hyatt family since 2019, most recently serving as Cluster Director of Human Resources at Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt & Hyatt Delhi Residences. An alumna of Hyatt's prestigious General Manager Development Program, Ranjana brings to her new role a rare combination of operational depth and strategic vision. She has also served as a leader in many roles at the Hyatt.

Her career achievements are complemented by prestigious industry recognitions, including the HR Leadership Award at the IIT Delhi HR Conclave (2025), Most Preferred Workplace from Marksmen Daily (2025), Top 100 Women Super Achievers at National Economic Growth Summit (2024), Most Preferred Workplace for Women from Marksmen Daily (2024) and Asia Pacific Best HR Leader.

Shibani Malhotra



ICONIQA Hotel is pleased to announce the appointment of Shibani Malhotra as the General Manager of ICONIQA – Mumbai International Airport, the first of its kind flagship property with a unique Unhotel experience. 20+ years in hospitality have honed Shibani's commercial and operational mastery. She leads with energy, vision and a relentless commitment to elevated guest experiences.

Her Marriott legacy adds strength to ICONIQA Hotel's journey ahead.

In her current role, Shibani is at the helm of the operations of the 291-key ICONIQA Mumbai. Her endeavor alongside her team is to usher a guest to the property and make memories, excellence served daily, echoing ICONIQA's 'Un Hotel' philosophy to life." Shibani's appointment reaffirms ICONIQA's commitment to building a hospitality brand that is intelligent, emotive and unapologetically unconventional.



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Yogesh Arya



The Westin Resort & Spa Himalayas announced the appointment of Yogesh Arya as Director of Finance. With over 13 years of experience across leading hospitality brands, Arya brings a wealth of expertise in financial management and operational excellence. In his previous role as Assistant Director of Finance at Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, Arya led the finance team and played a key role in

driving the property's overall financial performance.

His earlier stints with Marriott and IHG in cluster roles further strengthened his proficiency in financial planning, budgeting, and control systems, contributing to greater efficiency and alignment across operations. At The Westin Resort & Spa Himalayas, Yogesh will oversee the property's financial strategy, compliance and performance management, ensuring alignment with Marriott International's standards and the hotel's long-term objectives. His focus will remain on streamlining processes, strengthening governance and fostering a culture of accountability and collaboration.

S.V. Sathyam



Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) and Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) announced the appointment of S.V. Sathyam as the new Director of People & Culture.

In his new role, S.V. Sathyam will oversee the talent management, human resources and organisational culture strategies for NHCC & HICC. His leadership is expected to further strengthen

the hotel's people-centric approach, support employee engagement and contribute to Novotel's mission of delivering exceptional hospitality.

S.V. Sathyam brings considerable experience in human resources and talent development within the hospitality sector. At NHCC & HICC, Sathyam will lead a comprehensive people agenda focused on fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment, strengthening talent acquisition and retention, developing leadership pipelines and learning frameworks and ensuring that all people operations are aligned with the organisation's broader business strategy for long-term scale and sustainability.

Vishal Singh



JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity announced the appointment of Vishal Singh as its new General Manager. With nearly three decades of rich experience in luxury hospitality, Vishal brings a dynamic blend of people-focused leadership, operational expertise and strategic vision shaped across leading hotel brands in India. Most recently, as General Manager of JW Marriott Chandigarh, he played a

pivotal role in driving sustained performance, strengthening brand presence and elevating the overall guest experience.

With over a decade of experience as a General Manager, he has been recognised with several prestigious accolades, including Best General Manager of the Year – Luxury & Upper Upscale Segment by Hotelivate and the Donald N. Pritzker Award during his tenure at Hyatt. His appointment marks an exciting new chapter for JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity as the hotel continues to strengthen its position as one of the country's most sought-after luxury destinations under inspired and forward-thinking leadership.

Satpreet Singh



Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall is delighted to announce the appointment of Satpreet Singh as the new Associate Director of Sales. With over 10 years of experience, Satpreet has held senior sales leadership experience with leading hospitality brands and a successful track record in sales leadership, revenue growth and client relationship development.

In his most recent role at Trinity Hotel Whitefield as Associate Director of Sales-Unit Head, he successfully focused on market penetration and boosted ADR to improve the overall market positioning in the competitive set.

Known for his active leadership style and a goal-orientated approach, Satpreet has consistently shown success in building high-performing teams and improving guest-focused sales strategies with sustainable business growth. In his new role, Satpreet will lead the sales and marketing function with an emphasis on shaping strategic partnerships, corporate and MICE, as well as revenue generation.



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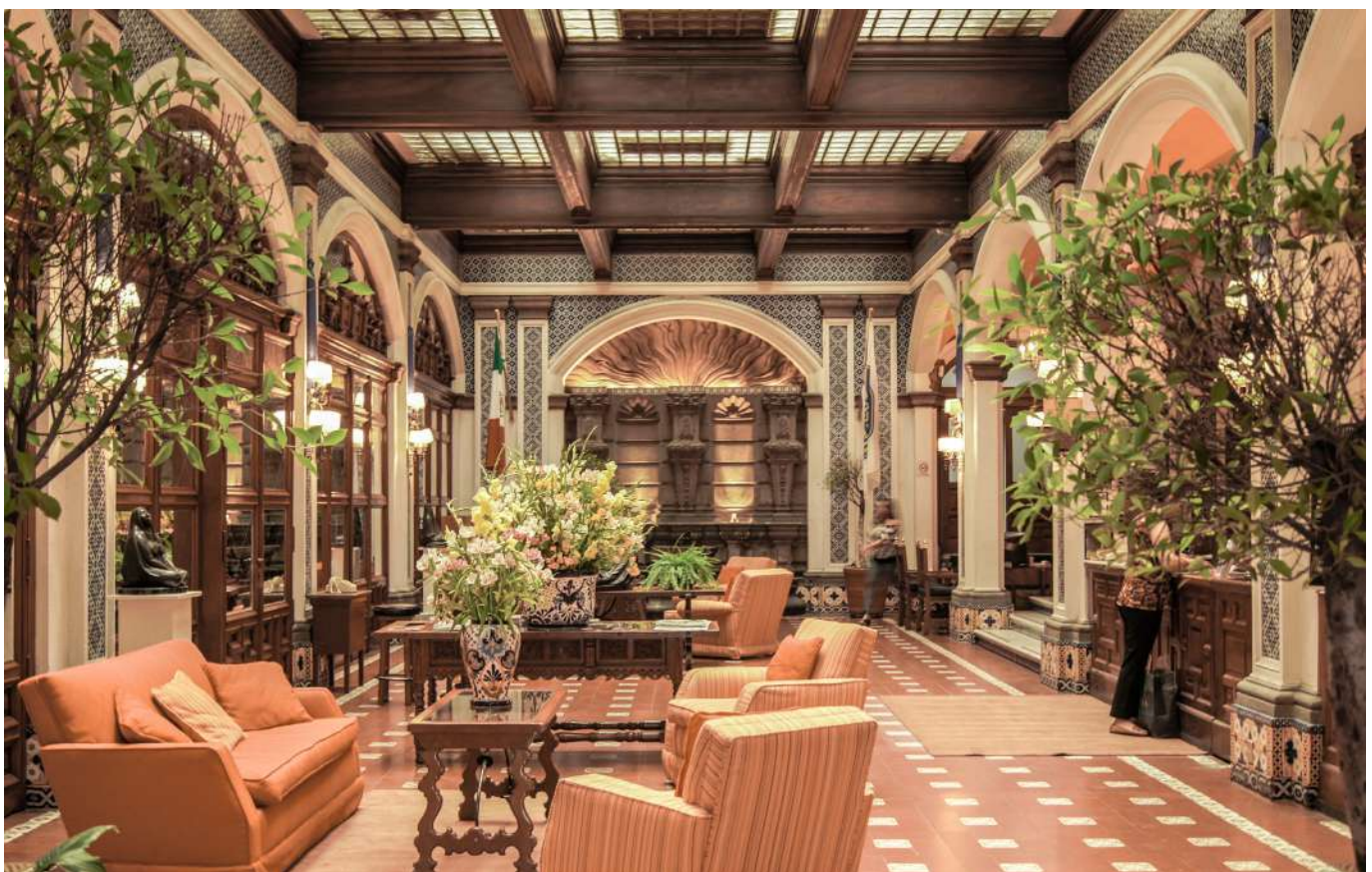


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Aesthetically Alluring Hotels

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Ambience has become important in the hospitality world, today. Beautifully designed interiors and lounges create an atmosphere that is capable of creating an everlasting impression on guests. In today's world, where experiences matter more than ever, aesthetics play a pivotal role in creating lasting impressions and forging meaningful connections with patrons. **Ashok Malkani** delves on the importance of aesthetically designed interiors, how they affect the guests and improve business.

Interior design in a hotel is not just about creating beautiful spaces but it's about crafting an experience. Aesthetics play a crucial role in setting an initial impact on the guests' minds. Aesthetics create ambience, enhance the guest experience, foster emotional connections and drive business by making spaces inviting, memorable and "Instagrammable". Aesthetics are vital in creating the right ambience in different areas of the hotel, such as the lobby, guest rooms, dining areas and spas. The right design can enhance the atmosphere of the space, making it feel welcoming, calming or exciting.

Ram Shetty, General Manager, Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall, asserts, "Aesthetics play a far deeper role than simply making a hotel look beautiful; they shape a guest's first emotion when they enter the space. At Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall, I see aesthetics as a strategic tool that defines how guests connect with the property. When design tells a story—especially one rooted in Karnataka's culture, it immediately creates familiarity, warmth and a sense of belonging. Guests remember how a place made them feel, and thoughtful design ensures those feelings translate into loyalty, positive reviews and repeat visits. For us, aesthetics are not cosmetic, they are the foundation for creating an immersive, place-specific experience that sets us apart in a competitive market."

Devinder Walia, General Manager at The Orchid Hotel, Chandigarh, states, "Aesthetics play a vital role in hotels as



they shape first impressions, influence guest comfort and enhance the overall stay experience. A well-designed, visually appealing environment reflects the hotel's brand identity, increases perceived value and often leads to better reviews and repeat business. In today's visually driven market, good aesthetics not only attract guests but also contribute to stronger marketing and higher satisfaction."

J Gopalakrishnan, General Manager, Gateway Bekal, discloses, "Aesthetics are incredibly important for hotels as they set the tone for the entire guest experience. At Gateway Bekal, distinctive aesthetics not only reflect our unique backwater location but also enhance guest satisfaction, drive

repeat visits and differentiate us from competitors. Investing in aesthetic appeal builds emotional connections and ensures stays are memorable, helping the hotel stand out in a crowded market and generate positive word-of-mouth and reviews."

Joyjit Chakravorty, General Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel, Bengaluru Outer Ring Road, affirms, "Aesthetics play a crucial role in hotel decision-making, especially at the discovery and booking stages. Most travellers form their first impressions through photos online and the hotel's visual identity across its website and social media creates an immediate emotional pull. A strong aesthetic also influences perceived value and allows hotels to command better pricing. In today's content-driven world, an Instagrammable hotel naturally enjoys higher organic visibility, particularly among the Millennials, Gen-Z and affluent Boomers. Unique design elements often become the property's signature, helping it stand out in a competitive market. Ultimately, aesthetics are not just about ambience and décor, they are core to brand identity and a significant revenue driver."

Key Elements

Aesthetically pleasing designs can evoke emotions, create a sense of escape or foster relaxation. The right ambience engages all the senses of the guests through strategic lighting, pleasing scents, soothing sounds, tactile comfort (textures, quality bedding)



and thoughtful design (local art, nature elements, functional layout). This makes the guests feel welcome, relaxed and connected to the brand. Incorporating a few key elements like layered lighting, curated scents, soft background music and comfortable furnishings, which trigger positive emotions in the guests.

Devinder Walia, states, "Hotel design revolves around creating a welcoming, functional and visually cohesive environment. Key elements include an inviting lobby, well-planned guest rooms, effective lighting, harmonious colours and materials, comfortable furniture, good acoustics and strong branding. Thoughtful space planning, sustainability and safety also play vital roles in ensuring a smooth guest experience and efficient hotel operations."

He adds, "Improving interiors and aesthetics begins with creating spaces that are visually appealing, functional and aligned with the hotel's brand identity. This is achieved through thoughtful use of lighting, colour palettes, materials, textures, décor, furniture and layout planning that enhances both comfort and visual harmony."

"At our hotel, The Orchid Hotel, Chandigarh, we incorporate several key interior design elements to elevate the guest experience. These include a warm and welcoming lobby design, cohesive colour schemes across rooms and public areas, layered lighting to create the right ambience, modern and durable furniture and curated artwork to reinforce the hotel's personality. Rooms are designed with contemporary fixtures and minimalistic décor for a clean and premium feel. Public spaces feature greenery, accent elements and comfortable seating that add vibrancy while maintaining functionality."

"Together, these elements create an environment that is not only aesthetically appealing but also operationally efficient and enjoyable for our guests."

J Gopalakrishnan informs, "Key elements of hotel design include harmonious architecture that blends with the location, thoughtful interiors using natural light and local materials and spaces that balance privacy and openness. At Gateway Bekal, lush landscaping, riverside views, traditional Kerala motifs, and modern comforts come



J Gopalakrishnan

together to foster a sense of calm and connection with nature. Functional spaces like versatile venues, spa and wellness areas, along with curated art and cultural details, ensure that every element enhances guest comfort and celebrates the spirit of the place."

He adds, "Improving hotel interiors and aesthetics requires a blend of thoughtful design and cultural sensitivity. At Gateway Bekal, we incorporate natural materials, local art and soothing colour palettes to create a harmonious environment that reflects Kerala's heritage. Layered lighting enhances ambience while ergonomic furniture balances comfort and style. Sustainable elements and smart layouts improve functionality, reducing maintenance costs. Our interiors aim to foster relaxation and connection with nature, making every space inviting and memorable for guests. Such intentional design elevates guest experience and operational efficiency."



Devinder Walia

"Enhancing a hotel's aesthetics involves blending thoughtful design, local culture, and sensory experiences. At Gateway Bekal, we focus on peaceful colour palettes, curated artwork and natural materials to evoke Kerala's heritage and serenity. Architectural elements, layered lighting and comfortable yet stylish furniture create inviting spaces. Adding indoor plants and water features connects guests with nature, while outdoor seating and views integrate the surroundings. Each touch, from textiles to textures, aims to reflect our locale and elevate the guest experience, making the hotel visually memorable and welcoming"

Joyjit Chakravorty revealed, "From my experience, the foundation of all design decisions starts with the location, as it dictates everything that follows. Next comes the arrival experience, which sets the tone for the stay. Room designs, including typologies like suites, accessible rooms and adjoining rooms, along with bathroom layouts and ergonomic planning, are essential. In today's world, technological integration has become a priority, even before food and beverage venues or wellness amenities. I also strongly emphasise the importance of designing efficient back-of-house operations with a focus on sustainable engineering. Safety, security and accessibility must be planned as thoroughly as revenue-generating spaces, as they collectively shape the complete guest experience."

She continues, "My personal approach to improving interiors and aesthetics begins with paint and lighting, as they create the strongest immediate impact. Next, I focus on decluttering and concealing wires and messy cables. From there, I look at floor coverings and window treatments, followed by upgrading door handles, cabinet pulls, faucets and functional showerheads. I have always believed that plants and artwork are essential to complement the character of any space. Of course, the final action plan depends entirely on the budget, room size, venue type and overall positioning of the hotel."

Ram Shetty affirmed, "Effective hotel design begins with a strong narrative, and for us, that narrative is Karnataka's heritage brought to life through our Culture Compass philosophy. Key elements include spatial

flow that supports intuitive movement for guests and staff, lighting that shapes mood and materials that balance durability with warmth. Artwork and cultural motifs serve as anchors, creating depth and identity across the property. Our Hoysala-inspired sculptures, mandala-patterned staff attire, Mysore sandalwood fragrance, and curated gallery-like lobby all demonstrate how design, when layered thoughtfully, builds an environment that is both functional and emotionally resonant. These components together ensure the hotel is coherent in its story and seamless in its guest experience”

He explained, “Improving interiors begins with clarity of purpose, each design choice must reinforce the property’s identity. At our hotel, we do this by ensuring that every element reflects Karnataka’s heritage in a sophisticated, modern manner. Enhancing aesthetics includes integrating meaningful artwork, refining lighting to create warmth, using natural textures and introducing greenery in ways that soften the environment. Multi-sensory experiences also play a critical role, from the visual language



of our Hoysala motifs to the familiar scent of Mysore sandalwood and the sound of Nadaswaram that welcomes guests. A combination of authenticity, consistency and sensory layering is what elevates interiors from functional to unforgettable.

“At Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall, our design ethos is anchored in Karnataka’s cultural identity, with strong inspiration from Hoysala architecture. This is reflected in our prominent hand-carved

wooden sculpture in the lobby, the mandala-inspired patterns on staff uniforms, the curated Art Gallery Walkthrough showcasing local artists and our signature Mysore sandalwood fragrance. We integrate abundant greenery through our plant wall and landscaped corners to bring nature into the urban setting. The alfresco poolside seating area further enhances the resort-like, open-air charm, seamlessly blending culture, relaxation and modern hospitality. Each of these elements ensures the property feels rooted, warm and distinctly local.

Incorporating Local Culture

An ideal way of creating a unique guest experience is by integrating artwork, sculptures and even historical artifacts from the local region in your hotel interiors. From traditional motifs and artwork to intricate craftsmanship of the region can offer guests a unique and immersive experience. Hotels in different regions can draw inspiration from local architecture, design traditions, and cultural practices.

J Gopalakrishnan opines, “Incorporating

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local culture into hotel interior design is essential to create an authentic and immersive guest experience. At Gateway Bekal, our design draws inspiration from serene backwaters, coastal landscapes and Kerala's architectural heritage, creating a strong emotional connection. This connection offers guests a unique sense of place and supports the local community. Designing with regional influences fosters emotional engagement, strengthens brand identity and ensures the hotel resonates deeply with both travellers and locals, enriching every stay with meaningful cultural richness.

Ram Shetty states, "Design must reflect the locale because guests increasingly seek authenticity and connection to the places they visit. For us, at Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall, embedding Karnataka's heritage into the hotel's visual and sensory language is not only a design choice but a responsibility. It strengthens the sense of place, supports local artisans and creates a unique identity that differentiates the property from global-standard hotels that often feel generic. By grounding our design in local culture, whether through Hoysala architectural references, regional art or sandalwood fragrances, we create a memorable experience that resonates deeply with guests and builds long-term loyalty."

Joyjit Chakravorty avers, "Interior design should focus on the locale of the hotel because today's guests increasingly seek authentic, non-cookie-cutter experiences. Design elements that reflect the locale, such as local materials, craftsmanship, colours inspired by the landscape, cultural motifs or



Joyjit Chakravorty

historical references, immediately make a hotel feel unique and emotionally engaging. Using local artisans, reclaimed materials and regional suppliers not only reduces the carbon footprint but also supports the surrounding community, which is something modern travellers, especially Gen-Z and Millennials, appreciate and reward. Ignoring the locale is a missed opportunity. Drawing inspiration from the destination doesn't mean turning the hotel into a museum; it means creating fresh, authentic, memorable spaces that guests want to return to and talk about."

Devinder Walia affirms, "Interior design should ideally reflect the locale of a hotel, and there are strong reasons for this. Incorporating local elements, such as regional art, materials, colours, cultural motifs or traditional craftsmanship, creates a sense of place that distinguishes the hotel from generic, copy-paste designs. This connection to the locale enhances the guest experience by offering authenticity

and helping travellers feel immersed in the destination. It also strengthens storytelling and brand identity, giving the property a unique character that guests remember and often share on social media or reviews."

He adds "From a business perspective, localised design increases emotional appeal, drives guest engagement and can boost repeat business because visitors appreciate spaces that feel rooted in the community. It also helps hotels connect with local artisans and suppliers, which can be cost-effective and environmentally friendly. In short, design that reflects the locale adds authenticity, enriches guest experience and strengthens the hotel's identity and marketability."

Adding Natural Beauty

An important aspect, often overlooked, is the introduction of greenery in creating an impressionable impact on the guests. Benefits of incorporating plants in hotel rooms, lobbies and restaurants, according to interior designers, elevate the overall guest experience, as well as the hotel's business outcomes. Adding greenery and providing outdoor seating are believed to add to the hotels' aesthetic value.

Ram Shetty avers, "Greenery is one of the most effective ways to soften the architecture and elevate both décor and guest experience. It creates a calming, biophilic environment that feels natural and inviting. At our hotel, Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall, greenery is not just restricted to outdoor spaces, we incorporate it indoors through our lush green plant wall, potted botanicals and subtle landscaping elements that bring



freshness into the interiors. Indoor greenery enhances air quality, adds visual comfort and complements the earthy tones of our Hoysala-inspired palette. For a hotel rooted in Karnataka's heritage, nature becomes an essential design element tied to the region's landscape and traditions."

Delving on outdoor seating, he states, "Outdoor seating significantly elevates a hotel's appeal because it provides guests with an escape that feels open, relaxed and experiential. Our alfresco seating by the pool has become one of the most photographed and appreciated spaces in the property. It enhances the perception of lifestyle luxury, encourages longer dwell time and offers guests a versatile space for dining, socialising, or simply unwinding. It also blurs the boundary between indoor comfort and outdoor tranquillity, adding vibrancy to the hotel's image and creating meaningful moments that guests associate with their stay."

J Gopalakrishnan affirms, "Greenery greatly enhances hotel décor and image by

creating a calming, inviting atmosphere that connects guests with nature. At Gateway Bekal, greenery is thoughtfully integrated both outdoors and indoors, including lush gardens, potted plants and living green walls. Indoor plants improve air quality, reduce stress and soften acoustics, making interiors feel fresh and welcoming. This biophilic design approach not only beautifies spaces but also boosts guest wellbeing and satisfaction, making greenery a vital element in our hospitality experience."

Greenery has become a central design element, not a decorative afterthought. Whether indoors or outdoors, well-maintained plants are one of the most cost-effective ways to elevate décor, enhance guest experience and strengthen the hotel's brand image. Greenery also reinforces eco-friendly and wellness-focused positioning, boosts social media appeal, and improves indoor air quality, an increasingly important factor in many Indian cities. Today, indoor plants, living walls and biophilic installations are widely used in lobbies, F&B venues,

corridors, wellness facilities, poolside areas and more."

Joyjit Chakravorty remarks, "Greenery has become a central design element, not a decorative afterthought. Whether indoors or outdoors, well-maintained plants are one of the most cost-effective ways to elevate décor, enhance guest experience and strengthen the hotel's brand image. Greenery also reinforces eco-friendly and wellness-focused positioning, boosts social media appeal and improves indoor air quality, an increasingly important factor in many Indian cities. Today, indoor plants, living walls and biophilic installations are widely used in lobbies, F&B venues, corridors, wellness facilities, poolside areas and more."

He adds, "Outdoor seating improves the image of the hotel, especially in a city like Bengaluru. It creates both psychological and practical appeal. Outdoor terraces, rooftop bars, garden cafés and poolside lounges signal that the hotel offers more than accommodation—it offers a lifestyle experience. Even a modest, well-designed



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terrace or sidewalk café can dramatically elevate how a property is perceived, helping it stand out visually and experientially.”

Devinder Walia states, “Greenery significantly improves a hotel’s décor and image by adding freshness, warmth and visual appeal. It isn’t limited to outdoor spaces—plants, planters and natural elements can be effectively used indoors as well to enhance lobbies, rooms and public areas, creating a more inviting and premium atmosphere.”

He adds, “Outdoor seating enhances a hotel’s image by creating a lively, welcoming and visually appealing environment. It offers guests a refreshing space to relax, enjoy natural surroundings and socialise, which improves overall experience. Attractive outdoor areas also boost walk-ins, strengthen the hotel’s lifestyle appeal and generate positive visibility both on-site and through social media.”

Furnished for Luxury and Cosiness

Comfort, ambience, brand perception, functionality and sleep quality, often depend on the quality of furniture in the hotel. High-quality, well-designed furniture creates a welcoming, luxurious or unique environment, while smart or integrated tech furniture adds convenience, making guests feel valued. It may be mentioned that choosing the right luxury furniture in hotels means thinking about more than just comfortable areas to sit, sleep or place one’s belongings. Beyond simple comfort and functionality, luxury



Ram Shetty

hotel furniture needs to make the guest instantly feel relaxed and well cared for. But, besides adding to the comfort, it has also to help promote interiors and improve aesthetics. One may ask how furniture helps in promoting interiors and aesthetics?

Joyjit Chakravorty asserts, “Furniture is not merely functional, it is the soul of interior design. It communicates the property’s design theme, whether modern, traditional or luxurious. Properly scaled furniture establishes visual balance, symmetry and harmony across the entire space. A statement sofa, sculptural coffee table or elegant console can become a focal point, giving the room character and purpose. Furniture enhances perceived value, adds warmth and liveability and influences how lighting interacts with the space. Ultimately, it completes the design story and anchors the guest experience.”

Devinder Walia states, “Furniture

enhances a hotel’s interiors by adding style, comfort and visual harmony. The right pieces strengthen the décor theme, improve functionality and create a polished, inviting atmosphere that elevates the overall guest experience.”

Ram Shetty avers, “Furniture shapes both the visual identity and the comfort experience of a hotel. Well-designed furniture guides movement, defines spaces and sets the tone for luxury and warmth. At our hotel, furniture selections align with our earthy, Karnataka-inspired design language, using textures, natural finishes and ergonomic forms that enhance both function and style. Quality furniture also reduces long-term replacement costs, supports operational efficiency and ensures guests enjoy comfort in every touchpoint, from lobby seating to poolside loungers. In many ways, furniture becomes the physical expression of the brand’s personality.”

J Gopalakrishnan informs. “Furniture plays a crucial role in promoting a hotel’s interiors and elevating its aesthetics. At Gateway Bekal, carefully selected furniture complements architectural design, enhancing visual harmony and brand identity. Comfortable, stylish pieces invite guests to relax and create a welcoming atmosphere. Quality materials and craftsmanship ensure longevity and luxury appeal. Versatile and ergonomic furniture supports operational efficiency while adding character and sophistication. Thoughtful furniture choices transform spaces into memorable experiences that resonate with guests and enhance their overall stay. Well-designed pieces enhance comfort, optimise flow and reinforce the design narrative. Quality materials and craftsmanship elevate the property’s overall appeal.”

Conclusion

A hotel’s popularity and pride, both depend on the aesthetics and décor. First impressions, it is believed, are formed within the first seven seconds of entering a hotel and the design of the lobby and communal spaces sets the tone for the entire stay. Thus aesthetics are important as they contribute to the overall ambience which shapes the memories guests take home which, in turn, encourages repeat bookings. ■





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Create a Memorable Guest Experience to Boost Hotel Revenue

Reputation and success of a hotel, be it a brand or otherwise, depends on the positive experience that it imparts to the guests. The property, thus, has to keep abreast of the ever changing likes and dislikes of the guests. **Ashok Malkani** scrutinises and examines how the hotels can create a favourable image and give a memorable experience that will remain etched in the hearts and memories of the guests.

Guest experience is an important element for hotels as it directly impacts its reputation as well as customer loyalty, thus affecting its revenue. Guests' positive experiences lead not only to repeat bookings but also to positive online reviews and word-of-mouth referrals. Guests' experience in a hotel is something that makes them feel welcome, satisfied, enriched and leaves a feeling of satisfaction that they have received value for money.

Personalisation is the buzzword, according to stalwarts, for optimising

guest satisfaction.

Arvind Kumar Sharma, General Manager, Signature Club Resort, Bengaluru, States, "Guest experience is the sum of every interaction a guest has with the hotel, right from the moment they book to the time they check out and even after they leave. It's not just about service delivery; it's about how the guests felt during their stay. Comfort, care, consistency and emotional connection all come together to define the experience."

He adds, "Today, the focus has shifted from merely showcasing facilities at the

hotel to truly creating experiences. A positive experience stays with the guest long after they have checked out. It builds trust, strengthens the brand, encourages repeat visits and turns guests into natural ambassadors who influence their friends and family through word of mouth and honest reviews. In a competitive market like ours, these memorable moments become the biggest differentiators. Guests often remember and cherish special occasions celebrated at a hotel or resort for years."

Mukesh Tripathi, General Manager, The

Orchid Hotel, Jamnagar, explains, "Guest experience in the hotel industry refers to the overall perception and impression a guest forms throughout their stay, from the moment they make a reservation to the time they check out. It includes every interaction they have with the property, such as the quality of service, staff behaviour, cleanliness, comfort, amenities, responsiveness and the hotel's overall ambience.

Creating an unforgettably favourable experience is essential because it directly influences guest satisfaction, loyalty and reputation. When guests feel valued and well-taken-care-of, they are more likely to return, recommend the hotel to others and leave positive reviews. This not only strengthens the hotel's brand image but also provides a sustainable competitive advantage in a highly competitive market. Exceptional experiences ultimately lead to increased occupancy, better profitability and long-term business growth."

Pankaj Sharma, Front Office Manager,

Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, declares, "Creating an unforgettably favourable experience is essential because it directly influences guest satisfaction, loyalty and the hotel's reputation. When guests feel valued and well-taken care of, they are more likely to return, recommend the property to others and share positive reviews. In a highly competitive industry, exceptional guest experiences help a hotel differentiate itself, increase revenue through repeat business and build long-term trust. Ultimately, memorable experiences transform one-time visitors into loyal guests and strengthen the hotel's overall brand image.

Amol Dhurve, General Manager, IRA by Orchid Hotel, Nashik, avers, "In a hotel, the guest experience is a combined effort by every part of the operation. It is important as it fosters strong customer loyalty, differentiates a brand from competitors and generates positive word-of-mouth referrals."

Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar, General

Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal claims, "Guest experience is simply how we make people feel throughout their stay. It is the warmth in our welcome, the comfort in our spaces, and the small moments that show we genuinely care. When we create a truly memorable experience, guests do not just remember the hotel, they remember how we made them feel. That personal and homely connection is what brings them back. Experiences create memories and memories translate into loyalty, enabling customers to visit us again. We at Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal work on creating personalised itineraries and curated experiences to keep enhancing our customer satisfaction."

Bharat Bhusan Biswal, General Manager, Lotus Eco Beach Resort, Konark, states, "Guest experience is the overall feeling a guest takes away from their stay, shaped by every interaction, from the moment they explore our website to the moment they check out. It's not just about service;



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it's about the emotional connection they form with us."

He further elucidates, "Creating an unforgettable experience matters because it builds genuine loyalty. When guests feel cared for and welcomed, they naturally become ambassadors for the hotel, sharing their stories with friends, family and online communities. That kind of word-of-mouth is invaluable."

"At Lotus Eco Beach Resort, this emotional connection is amplified by our unique location surrounded by dense forest, the sea and the river. Guests often tell us that the sunsets and sunrises here are some of the most beautiful they've ever seen. Even though we're close to the city, the moment you step into the resort, you're transported into a peaceful paradise, away from the usual hustle."

Empowering Guest Experience

There is a constant change in the likes and dislikes of the guests. The predilections for things differ from time to time. One has to remember that the steps for building a world class guest experience in a hotel may not be the same that your peers took. One has to be on one's toes to know the changing likes and dislikes of the guests.

Hotels can improve guest experience through strategic personalisation, flexible booking policies, enhanced digital services and value-added offerings. Some of the key strategies to gain a favourable guest experience could be by implementing flexible booking policies, maintaining consistently high cleanliness and hygiene standards throughout your property, creating well-designed common areas including lobbies, restaurants, bars and pools, providing wellness-focused amenities such as fitness centres, spa services. These are just a few suggestions of the stalwarts of the industry.

Mukesh Tripathi disclosed, "Hotels can improve guest experience by focusing on personalised service, operational excellence and consistent communication. In my view, guest experience starts with well-trained staff who are attentive, courteous and proactive in understanding guest needs. Personalisation is equally important—using guest preferences and



Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar

feedback to tailor services helps create a sense of value and recognition."

He adds, "Maintaining high standards of cleanliness, comfort and safety is essential, as these directly influence a guest's first impression. Technology also plays a major role today; features like mobile check-in, digital keys and quick service request platforms make the guest journey smoother and more convenient. Lastly, continuously collecting feedback and acting on it shows guests that the hotel is committed to improvement. When all departments work seamlessly together, it results in a memorable, hassle-free experience that encourages repeat business and positive reviews."

Bharat Bhusan Biswal states, "Improving guest experience starts with personalisation, empathy and consistency. When we truly listen to guests and anticipate their needs whether it's dietary preferences, room choices, or special



Arvind Kumar Sharma

occasions, it immediately elevates their stay."

"But," he continues, "hospitality is a balance between the property and the people employed. 50% of the favourable guest experience comes from the property, and the other 50% comes from the people who run it. No matter how advanced technology becomes, you can't replace human warmth. The real legacy of hospitality is carried forward by the team members who greet, guide and support every guest. When guests return and say they came back because of the staff, that's when you know you're doing something right."

Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar avers, "Guest experiences are created through extensive planning, customisation and taking into account guest preferences. When we listen closely and respond with sincerity, we naturally start to understand what matters to our guests. Personal touches, proactive service and a team that leads with empathy can completely transform a stay. Celebrating milestones and amplifying small gestures go a long way in making a guest feel special. The continued positive impact of such gestures makes it worth the while for the guest."

Arvind Kumar Sharma declares, "Hotels can improve guest experience by being genuinely guest-centric. It begins with listening - through conversations, feedback and simple observation. Personalisation, quick service, a culture of empathy and strong alignment between operational departments are key essentials. Often, it is the smaller touches that create the biggest impact. When everyone on the service front understands the purpose behind each process and every standard we observe, genuine care and consistency follow naturally."

Amol Dhurve states, "To improve the hotel guest experience, focus on personalising stays, ensuring seamless service from pre-arrival to post-departure and maintaining high standards of cleanliness and comfort."

Pankaj Sharma claims, "Hotels can improve guest experience by delivering consistent, personalised and high-quality service across every stage of the guest

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journey; e.g. personalised service, efficient and courteous staff, maintenance & upkeep and prompt guest concern resolution.”

Prior Planning

Prior planning by a hotel is necessary to ensure that guests, immaterial of whether it is a basic stay or a celebratory occasion, have a memorable experience. Planning is essential in hospitality also because it ensures smooth operations, consistent guest satisfaction and sustainable business growth. Preparation, one may add, to ensure guests have an unforgettable experience, starts from the initial check-in stage to the final check-out process.

Arvind Kumar Sharma declares, “preparing your hotel for the ultimate guest experience starts with the team. When people feel valued, trained well and genuinely empowered, they naturally deliver service with pride and warmth. Apart from that, clarity of processes, seamless communication between departments and regular reviews & audits of the guest journey help identify gaps before the guest experiences them.”

He adds, “I also believe one must stay curious and current - benchmarking with the best, adapting quickly and constantly asking oneself, “Can we do this better?” One of the most impactful philosophies I have learnt is Kaizen, which is all about continuous, incremental improvement. We practiced it to find smarter, more efficient ways of doing things and it has stayed with me. It applies beautifully to all aspects of hospitality too- small enhancements every day ultimately create memorable guest moments.”

Amol Dhurve explicates “To prepare your hotel for the ultimate guest experience one has to adopt:

- Flexible Booking Policies.
- Cleanliness And Hygiene. This must also be in shared spaces (lobby, restaurant, etc.)
- Contactless Check-In, Room Entry, Room Service Etc.
- Wellness Services and Amenities.
- Local Experience Packages.
- Concierge and Local Expertise.
- Value-For-Money Packages.

Pankaj Sharma states, “I prepare my



Amol Dhurve

hotel, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, for ultimate guest experience by ensuring seamless operations, personalised service and impeccable standards. We prepare for the guest before arrival through their details available on the system (Like their preferences or any special day they are celebrating).”

Mukesh Tripathi declares, “To prepare a hotel for the ultimate guest experience, I focus on three key areas: people processes and environment. First, I ensure that the team at my hotel, The Orchid Jamnager, is well-trained, motivated and aligned with service standards. Empowering staff to anticipate needs, handle requests confidently and resolve issues quickly is essential for delivering exceptional service.

“Second, I make sure that all operational



Bharat Bhusan Biswal

processes are smooth and guest-centric. This includes checking room readiness, verifying that amenities are in place, ensuring seamless communication between departments and using technology to streamline check-in, service requests and feedback.

“Third, I pay close attention to the physical environment. Cleanliness, safety, ambience and well-maintained facilities play a major role in shaping guest impressions. I also look for opportunities to add personalised touches, welcome amenities, customised preferences or small surprises that make the stay memorable.

“By combining well-prepared staff, efficient operations and a welcoming atmosphere, we create a consistent and outstanding guest experience that guests remember long after their stay.”

Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar affirms, “We have trained and inculcated a Total Hotel Loyalty mindset amongst our associates. This ensures the blending of processes, systems and attitude of the associates to think “guest first” and “go the extra mile”. We, at Courtyard by Marriott, empower our associates to care, to notice and to act. Then we ensure our spaces feel inviting, our amenities add value and our processes support ease and comfort. When these elements come together, the experience feels effortless for the guest.”

Bharat Bhusan Biswal says, “For us at Lotus Eco Beach Resort, preparation begins with our team. We invest heavily in training because the heart of a great stay is the people delivering it. As GM, nothing makes me prouder than seeing my team make a guest feel truly at home.

“We also focus on maintaining high standards across cleanliness, comfort and amenities. Our location already gives us a strong advantage: a beautiful natural setting that feels like a private sanctuary; so we aim to complement that with thoughtful service.

“We’ve also embraced technology where it adds value. Our check-in and billing processes are fully digital, so guests don’t have to wait even a minute. Small touches matter too: we leave personalised notes for guests, and if someone mentioned a preference or concern during a previous

stay, we make sure we address it before they even ask the next time. These details show guests that they matter to us as individuals, not just room numbers.”

Technology Transforms Guest Experience

In the digital age, technology has become an integral part of the hotel industry. From the moment the guests book their stay to the time they check out, technology plays a crucial role in making their experience a memorable one by offering seamless convenience (mobile check-in, digital keys), deep personalisation (AI-driven preferences, customised offers), enhanced in-room comfort (smart controls, streaming) and efficient service (virtual concierges, instant messaging), reducing friction and allowing staff to provide more human, attentive care.

Today, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and chatbots are being used to provide 24/7 customer service: thus rocketing the guest experience.



Mukesh Tripathi

Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar declares, “The tech-savvy guests, today, want things to be simple, fast and easy to control. Whether it is modifying a booking or accessing room services, they appreciate digital solutions that respect their time and help them navigate their stay effortlessly.”

He adds, “Technology helps us be more

attentive. It allows guests to move at their own pace. Whether checking in from their phone or planning their meal ahead. It also gives us insights into what guests prefer, so we can personalise their stay in meaningful ways. Our initiative of having digital mobile keys has helped us a lot in terms of the steps we take towards sustainability as well as giving our guests a more smooth and quick experience.”

Amol Dhurve avers, “Tech-savvy guests expect a seamless, personalised digital experience throughout their entire journey, from booking to check-out. Technology can significantly improve guest experiences by increasing convenience and personalisation through features like mobile check-in, contactless payments, contactless menu and in-room smart controls.”

Arvind Kumar Sharma affirms, “Tech-savvy guests expect simplicity, speed and a sense of control. They want the freedom of making choices, requesting services and accessing information without waiting. A clean, user-friendly interface, transparent



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pricing, the option to customise preferences and getting quick digital responses have become basic expectations. For today's tech savvy guests, convenience is just as important as comfort."

He adds, "Technology is no longer a luxury today- it has become part of the service fabric. Whether it is quicker check-ins, smart rooms, data-led personalisation, mobile service requests or real time service recovery, technology works as a strong enabler. It takes repetitive tasks off the team's plate and gives them more time to focus on the areas of operations that truly matter."

Bharat Bhusan Biswal remarks, "Tech-savvy guests expect everything to be quick, intuitive and on their terms. Mobile check-in, digital payments, room controls, instant communication; these features save time and create convenience. They also expect hotels to use data responsibly to personalise their stay without being intrusive."

"Technology can simplify and enhance many touchpoints. Our digital check-in and billing are great examples. Guests appreciate how quick and effortless the process is. Beyond that, technology helps us personalise stays. Through guest history and preferences, we can tailor amenities or services so that returning guests feel instantly recognised. Smart systems, digital menus, mobile payments all of these contribute to a smoother, more intuitive stay."

Pankaj Sharma states, "Tech-savvy guests expect digital solutions that are intuitive, responsive and enhance



Pankaj Sharma

comfort without replacing the warmth and personal touch of human service. Technology can significantly enhance the guest experience in hotels by increasing convenience, personalisation and efficiency. Technology complements human service by making operations smoother, personalised and more responsive, thereby elevating the overall guest experience. Through technology we can gather guest preferences and that can be used to elevate the guest experience. In short, in today's world technology is a boon and it plays a huge role in the hospitality world."

Mukesh Tripathi elucidates, "Tech-savvy guests expect a seamless and convenient digital experience throughout their stay. This includes easy online booking, instant confirmations, mobile check-in and check-out, digital room keys and the ability to make service requests through apps or chat platforms. They also appreciate smart room features, personalised recommendations based on their preferences and prompt

responses to inquiries. In short, they expect technology to make their stay more efficient, personalised and hassle-free."

He continues, "Technology can significantly enhance the guest experience. It streamlines processes, increases convenience, and allows for personalisation. For example, mobile check-in and digital keys reduce wait times, smart room controls enhance comfort and guest apps enable easy service requests. Technology also helps collect and analyse guest preferences and feedback, allowing hotels to tailor services and anticipate needs."

"Overall, when used effectively, technology makes the guest journey smoother, more personalised and more memorable."

Future Strategies

Guest experience is essential in the hotel industry. It helps in driving reputation, loyalty, revenue and competitive advantage. Positive experiences lead to glowing reviews, directly impacting bookings and success. With changing habits and tastes of guests, future guest experience plans have to evolve to suit the future trends. Hyper-personalisation via AI and data, seamless contactless tech and blending "invisible" tech with meaningful human connection, anticipating needs before they're voiced, offering community-focused local experiences, and prioritising sustainability to create intuitive, memorable and effortless stays are priorities for the hotels to continue impacting the guests with memorable experiences.

Mukesh Tripathi stated, "To keep hotel guests satisfied and maintain the property's position as a preferred choice, I would focus on three key strategies:

- **Exceptional Service Excellence:** Ensuring staff are well-trained, attentive and proactive in meeting guest needs. Personalised interactions and quick resolution of issues create a lasting impression.

- **Consistent Quality and Comfort:** Maintaining high standards of cleanliness, safety and facility upkeep across all areas of the hotel to ensure a consistently pleasant experience.



Business

• Personalisation: Leveraging technology to streamline processes like online booking, mobile check-in and service requests, while also offering tailored experiences based on guest preferences and feedback.

By combining excellent service, consistent quality, and personalised innovation, the hotel can build guest loyalty, encourage repeat visits, and secure long-term reputation as a favoured property."

Arvind Kumar Sharma revealed, "A few of the strategies are:

• Creating a culture where every decision keeps the guest at the centre - this helps the entire team stay aligned to the common goal.

• Continuously evolving - upgrading facilities, embracing the right technology and adapting service styles to meet today's traveller expectations.

• Focusing to build genuine relationships - knowing your guests, remembering them with their preferences and valuing their loyalty.

A hotel remains a preferred choice not because of one lone standout experience, but because it can deliver memorable experiences consistently time and again."

Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar says, "We will continue to evolve with our guests. Listening closely, investing in our people and embracing technology that enhances the human touch. Our goal is to create stays that feel warm, personal and thoughtfully designed. When guests feel genuinely cared for, they naturally choose to return."

Bharat Bhusan Biswal declares, "Our strategy is simple: combine the tranquillity of our natural setting with genuine, heartfelt hospitality and smart, thoughtful innovation.

"We'll continue investing in our team, because they are at the core of our success. We'll keep listening to guests, adapting our services and enhancing our amenities. And we'll make sure that every stay feels personal that each guest leaves happy, content and excited to return.

"When that happens, guests naturally recommend us to others. That kind of organic advocacy is priceless and it's the biggest compliment a hotel can receive."

Pankaj Sharma disclosed, "To ensure long-term guest satisfaction and maintain the hotel's status as a preferred property, I would implement a combination of service excellence, personalisation and continuous improvement strategies e.g. Deliver exceptional and consistent service, personalize guest experiences, etc."

Conclusion

Guests' experience and satisfaction are vital for hotels, irrespective of size. A hotelier has to keep in mind that the services they provide to the guests are encoded in their minds for times to come. A positive hotel experience assists a hotel in gaining positive reviews on different OTA platforms, customer retention, making it a standout among thousands of competitors and, of course, increasing its revenue and booking. ■



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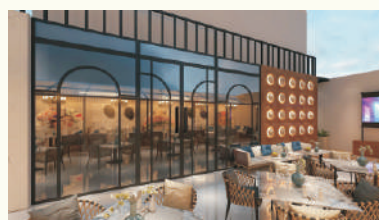
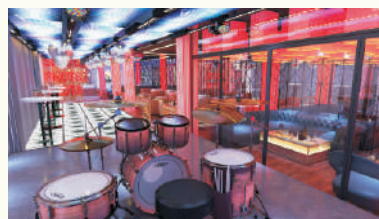
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The Role of Tableware in Enhancing the Dining Experience

By Sharmila Chand

From classic white porcelain to cheerful florals to rustic stone finish, the choice of tableware, is pivotal in shaping the dining occasions, transforming meals into immersive experiences.

The right tableware not only enhances the overall presentation of food, adding aesthetic appeal but also serves several functional purposes.

Here culinary experts highlight how the right choice of tableware acts as a chef's canvas, setting the tone for the entire meal, aligning with the decor, events and cultural themes. Above all, it serves specific culinary functions, the right selection of pasta bowls, salad platters, flat plates and so on keeping in mind the right choice of colour, shape, weight, size and texture.

Role of Tableware

The right tableware not only serves functional purposes but also adds aesthetic appeal, sets the mood and enhances the presentation of food, setting the stage for showcasing chefs' culinary offerings.

Zorawar Kalra, Founder & Managing Director, Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd.

"In fine dining, tableware is not a prop – it's part of the performance. The plate is the canvas, the cutlery is the choreography, and together they determine how a guest first "sees" the dish before they taste it. I've always believed that the visual impression accounts for almost half the dining experience, especially in modern Indian cuisine, where texture, colour and

form play such an important role.

At Masala Library, for instance, we use minimalist, matte-finished whites that allow the vibrancy of Indian ingredients to pop, almost like a gallery installation. At PaPaYa, I prefer deep, asymmetrical blacks and structured stoneware because they frame our progressive Asian plates with a dramatic contrast. And at Farzi Café, where the mood is youthful and theatrical, we consciously pick playful yet premium tableware that complements the quirk of the cuisine without compromising sophistication.

For me, the choice of tableware must seamlessly align with the restaurant's narrative – it must tell the story before the food arrives."

Chetan Sharma, F&B Manager, Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa

"Tableware is far more than a functional necessity—it is an integral part of the narrative and mood we create for our guests. It acts as a silent but powerful storyteller, immediately setting the tone for the entire dining experience and reflecting the restaurant's unique personality.

It is essential in elevating the perceived value of the food itself. For instance, minimalist white porcelain plates convey sophistication and ensure the dish remains the undisputed hero. Conversely, using handcrafted ceramic bowls instantly adds a layer of warmth and authenticity, which is perfect for supporting farm-to-table or rustic concepts.

Personally, I gravitate toward sleek white porcelain with subtle textures, as it provides the cleanest, most sophisticated canvas for plating and maximises the visual appeal of gourmet dishes."

Nilesh Kumar, F & B Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore

"Tableware plays a crucial role, it sets the tone even before the food arrives. The moment a guest sits down, the colours, textures, weight of the cutlery and the shape of the plates quietly tell them what kind of meal they can expect. For example, when you see brass cutlery or copper tumblers in a traditional Indian restaurant, your mind goes to warm spices and comfort-driven flavours. So the table prepares your mind even before the first dish is served.

In my personal preference, I like tableware that feels calm, elegant and comfortable in a luxury dining environment. I am drawn to matte stoneware in soft neutrals, because it allows the food to stand out without distraction. I also appreciate plates with gentle curves, light textures or natural shapes, as they add character in a subtle way. Even the right cutlery matters helps. A spoon or knife with a soft rounded handle or a light wave-like design gives a sophisticated feel. These small choices help set the right mood before the first bite."

Trending Tableware

These days trending tableware favours distinctive, handcrafted pieces for a unique



“As dining becomes more experience-focused, tableware will play an even bigger role. I believe the future of tableware lies in thoughtful craftsmanship, sustainable materials and designs that reflect the restaurant's identity.”

Nilesh Kumar, F & B Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore

style and storytelling.

Hand-painted ceramic dinner plates and textured glazes celebrate artistry. Think Japanese indigo glazing, ornate



“I gravitate towards tableware that has a soul — handcrafted pieces, unusual textures, shapes that aren't perfectly symmetrical, and muted palettes that allow food to shine. I look for pieces that elevate plating without screaming for attention.”

Zorawar Kalra, Founder & Managing Director, Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd.

designs, logo embossed, personalised hand-painted collection.

Chetan Sharma, F&B Manager, Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa

"We are currently seeing a strong movement toward tableware that feels both authentic and connected to nature.

The major trends I observe are:

Organic Shapes and Earthy Tones: This includes matte finishes, unpolished textures, and stoneware pieces that offer a grounded, natural feel.

Sustainability and Artisanal Craftsmanship: There is a desire for pieces that are sustainable and that come with a unique story, moving away from mass-produced items.

Yes, we actively incorporate these trends into our selection. We use stoneware plates with a matte glaze for our contemporary presentations, as they lend a modern, chic feel. We also utilise black slate platters for specific signature dishes, as the dark, natural contrast creates an immediate sense of drama that our guests truly appreciate."

Zorawar Kalra, Founder & Managing Director, Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd.

"Globally, we're seeing a shift toward organic, handcrafted, irregular forms — pieces that feel artisanal, textural and connected to nature. There is also a strong movement toward sustainable materials, recycled glassware, reactive glazes and earthy tones that evoke a sense of craft and authenticity.

We follow trends only when they amplify the brand's voice. For example, in Swan, an elegant lifestyle restaurant, we've adopted hand-thrown ceramics with gentle imperfections — they bring warmth without diluting luxury. For Louis Burger, we use brushed metal trays and bespoke wooden boards that add a tactile, premium yet casual feel. And for Nashville Fried Chicken, the trend of enamel-finish metalware fits perfectly with the Americana-inspired aesthetic."

Nilesh Kumar, F & B Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore

There is a distinct preference for natural, handmade and sustainable designs in

tableware these days. Diners appreciate pieces that feel earthy in slightly uneven edges and ceramics that look crafted rather than factory made. Organic shapes and ocean-inspired colours are also becoming very popular because they bring a sense of warmth and personality to the table.

I do follow trends, but only when they feel authentic to the restaurant's identity. If a trend helps tell our story better, I'm more than happy to embrace it. For instance, in our poolside restaurant we have selected shell-inspired platters, aqua-toned plates and bowls with gentle wave-like rims, because they naturally fit a water-themed space. These pieces support the ambience without feeling forced or overly thematic.

At the same time, beauty alone is never enough. Tableware must be strong, practical and reliable in everyday service. A plate might look stunning, but if it chips easily or doesn't work well for plating, it simply doesn't fit in. Trends are helpful, but purpose and functionality always come first."

How to Style And Choose !

The type of tableware selected depends on the occasion- whether it's formal or casual dining. Fine china and crystal glasses are ideal for formal occasions, while rustic stoneware and colourful glassware are perfect for casual themes. Matching the tableware to the occasion helps set the appropriate mood.

Chetan Sharma, F&B Manager, Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa

"My personal preference leans toward timeless elegance with a modern edge.

Versatility and Aesthetics: I prefer neutral tones, which allow the plating and ingredients to shine, rather than competing with the tableware.

Operational Efficiency: The items must be durable and easy to maintain to ensure seamless and efficient service.

Bespoke Collection

What truly excites me is the process of custom-designing tableware that perfectly aligns with the restaurant's specific theme—whether that is a bespoke series of tasting plates for an exclusive menu or unique, artistically blown glassware



“Tableware will not only remain relevant but will continue to play a pivotal, strategic role in fine dining, it should never be viewed merely as a backdrop as it is an integral part of the culinary story and a vital tool for creating truly memorable, exclusive dining experiences.”

Chetan Sharma, F&B Manager, Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa

to elevate our signature cocktails. This personalisation is what transforms a meal into a branded experience."

Zorawar Kalra, Founder & Managing Director, Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd.

"When selecting tableware, I evaluate three things:

Visual compatibility with the cuisine – Bold flavours need quiet plates; subtle dishes sometimes benefit from sculptural forms.

Tactility – A plate must feel good in the hand of the server and create a sense of luxury when placed on the table.

Durability plus Practicality – It must survive the rigour of a commercial kitchen while still feeling bespoke.

What excites me the most is when a piece of tableware can change the perception of a dish entirely – a bowl that makes a curry look elegant, a slate that turns a simple appetiser into theatre, a glass that transforms a cocktail into a memory. Those moments are priceless."

Nilesh Kumar, F & B Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore

"Personally, I enjoy tableware that has

a quiet elegance that is simple, warm and feel good to touch. I like matte finishes, soft organic shapes and natural-looking textures, because they add depth without overshadowing the food. What excites me most are pieces that have a small artistic touch, maybe a gentle ripple pattern or a naturally flowing edge, something that brings a sense of calm and personality to the table.

When I select tableware, I look for three things: it should match the restaurant's character, it should complement the style of plating and it must be practical for service. A plate must look beautiful when food is placed on it, but it should also be comfortable for guests to use and easy for the team to handle. When all of this comes together, tableware becomes an important part of the dining story."

To Conclude

Looking at the future trend in tableware, hand-painted designs, vintage collection, modern minimalist pieces, heirloom bespoke choices will set the stage for meaningful table setting.

Says Chetan Sharma, "As the industry places a greater emphasis on experiential dining and creating holistic memories, the future of tableware lies in two main areas: 'Personalisation' - Using custom pieces to strongly reinforce the brand's unique identity. Second, 'Sustainability': Prioritising eco-friendly and ethically sourced materials."

Zorawar Kalra adds, "The future of tableware is deeply intertwined with the future of dining itself. As restaurants become more experiential, more immersive and more narrative-driven, tableware will increasingly become a storyteller. Guests today are not just eating; they're observing, photographing, sharing – and tableware forms the backdrop of that entire interaction. I believe the next wave will see smart materials, sustainable craftsmanship and hyper-customisation, where every restaurant curates pieces that reflect its identity as much as its cuisine. Tableware has moved from being functional to being emotional – and its role in shaping the dining experience is only going to grow stronger." ■



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New Year Eve 2025-2026 Menu Trends

By Nikita Madan

As the clock ticks closer to midnight, luxury hotels all over India crank up the celebration. There's food from every corner of the world, cocktails that look as good as they taste, and desserts you don't have to feel bad about. Every spot is set up for that perfect photo. Some people dance all night, others sit down for a thoughtful meal, plenty just want to be with family. No matter how you celebrate, these hotels go all out to make sure your final meal of the year sticks with you long after the clock strikes twelve.

As the year-end countdown approaches, luxury hotels across India are pulling out all the stops to ensure every guest's midnight wish comes true. For the young and adventurous, global flair and creative libations are essential. Kitchens and bars get playful with local takes on Latin, Mediterranean, pan-Asian dishes etc., and cocktails and mocktails you won't find anywhere else. Not everyone wants to wake

up groggy after the party, though. Health-conscious diners still want to celebrate, just without the guilt. Instead of skipping the good stuff, they look for dishes that boost immunity, help digestion and keep

you feeling good and the chefs are listening. They're putting out platters of crisp veggie crudités, quinoa salads and whole-grain biryanis loaded with turmeric and moringa. Even desserts get a makeover, like for example sugar-free fruit parfaits or dark chocolate fudge rich in antioxidants.

And let's not forget the crowd that lives for the perfect photo. Hotels know that a stunning dish or a striking setup can go viral in seconds, so they make sure every corner and course has that "wow" factor. New Year's Eve isn't just for grown-ups, either. Families come out in full force, so hotels design buffets that everyone from kids to grandparents can enjoy. Chefs play with "newstalgia," taking comfort foods and giving them a modern twist.



Chocolate Berry Mousse

Pic Courtesy: Taj Corbett Resort & Spa

Menu Concepts

Luxury chains each tout unique menu highlights. For example, Taj Corbett Resort & Spa is offering a signature menu featuring



“At Taj Corbett, we curate menus that balance tradition with innovation, ensuring every dish tells a story of celebration.”

**Bidyut Saha, Executive Chef,
Taj Corbett Resort and Spa,
Uttarakhand**

a curated blend of global flavours and local Kumaoni delicacies. Highlights include slow-roasted lamb with Himalayan herbs, live seafood grills and traditional Kumaoni food for an authentic regional touch. Guests can also indulge in premium dessert selection featuring classic French pastries and artisanal Indian sweets. There will also be many live interactive stations like Asian wok station where guests can customise stir-fry with fresh vegetables, proteins and sauces; live grill bar with premium cuts and fresh seafood meet fiery grills for a flavour-packed experience; Italian pasta bar with hand-rolled pasta cooked to order with gourmet toppings; live sushi bar where chefs will hand-roll delicate sushi creations right before your eyes and dessert studio with live plating of signature desserts and flambéed treats.

Eros Hotel, New Delhi is offering a specially curated menu that blends global flavours with a lavish buffet at Tamra featuring fresh sushi, sizzling grills, classic Indian kebabs and premium set menus at Shangri-La Palace and Sorrento, including dishes like Pan-Seared Wild Scallop, Lobster Agnolotti and Grilled Lamb Chops. This New Year celebration will include several live interactive stations that turn dining into an experience. In the lounge and bar area, a



Pic Courtesy: Gateway Goa Palolem

live band will play throughout the evening, while guests enjoy handcrafted cocktails, premium wines, single malts, all set against a big-screen backdrop. On the culinary front, stations like the Blooms all-day buffet will feature live cooking counters—grill, stir-fry and dessert chefs preparing dishes right before your eyes—while Singh Sahib’s Punjabi show kitchen and Empress of China’s Chinese show kitchen will let guests watch signature dishes being made fresh.



“Our theme for the evening is “Vintage Classic”, celebrating timeless elegance and old-world glamour.”

**Sheetal Singh, Area Director South
Goa and General Manager Taj
Exotica Resort & Spa, Goa**

Gateway Goa Palolem is focusing on culinary experience where they will display global cuisines, like the fusion of East Asian cuisine with their signature Goan delicacies. They are also featuring live counters which gives them an option to customise guest needs, they will mainly focus on offerings like Mongolian station, Pasta station, Suckling pig, Mexican grills, Dim sums, Sushi and Hibachi. Their key signature dishes include varieties of Shumai, Har gaon, Sushi, Mongolian Grills and Tempuras. While they are focusing on East Asian cuisine, they are also showcasing their signature Goan Delicacy so that guests go back with a piece of Goa in their taste buds and hearts.

Taj Exotica Goa is offering an indulgent Global Cuisine Showcase, thoughtfully curated by the culinary team. Guests can look forward to an extensive spread that brings together the very best of grills, fresh seafood, Asian specialties and classic Western favourites. From aromatic Asian stir-fries to slow-roasted Western delicacies and flame-kissed grills, the menu promises a gourmet experience befitting the occasion. Among the many highlights of the evening, two stand out as perennial guest favourites: Signature Sea Food Grill, featuring the freshest catch sourced locally each morning and the Traditional Roast Turkey, prepared with age-old recipes and accompanied by all the classic trimmings. Live and interactive culinary experiences sit



Pic Courtesy: Eros Hotel, New Delhi

at the heart of this year's New Year's Eve celebration like the sea food grill station which is a chef-led station where guests can handpick from an array of premium seafood from tiger prawns, lobsters, calamari and fish steaks and have them grilled to perfection with marinades of their choice; live dessert bar which will feature an indulgent interactive dessert counter with made-to-order treats such as crepes, waffles, flambéed desserts, chocolate fountains and artisanal pastries assembled fresh in front of guests.

The LaLiT Laxmi Vilas Palace Udaipur's New Year's Eve menu is inspired by the royal culinary heritage of Rajasthan. Guests will enjoy a thoughtfully curated selection of Indian, Oriental and Continental starters, followed by iconic Rajasthani delicacies such as laal maas, ker sangri and pitod ki sabzi, where these dishes are deeply rooted in the region's traditions. To honour the princely lineage of Udaipur, they are

introducing two signature preparations for the evening: Khad ka Murgh and Dum ki Raan, both slow-cooked in true regal fashion. These dishes celebrate age-old cooking techniques once used in royal kitchens, bringing the essence of Mewar's culinary artistry to the festive table. The live interactive stations are designed to reflect the culinary richness and diversity of India while honouring the palace's tradition of personalised service. Live counters like a classic chaat counter, inspired by age-old Indian street food artistry, a pasta station, offering freshly made dishes with global flavours, a keema station, celebrating robust Indian spices and slow-cooked techniques and a Lebanese counter, bringing Middle Eastern flavours to the royal feast.

Beverage Trends

Upscale drinks programs are integral to NYE menus. Hotels offer curated cocktail and mocktail selections like for example,



"Our focus remains on maintaining the highest standards of quality and craftsmanship synonymous with The LaLiT's signature hospitality."

Arjun Belliappa, General Manager, The LaLiT Laxmi Vilas Palace Udaipur

Taj Exotica, Goa is presenting their largest-ever collection of luxury champagnes, to enhance NYE celebrations with a touch of exclusivity. They are also offering a refreshed beverage menu featuring legacy cocktails reinterpreted with modern techniques, premium spirits and a thoughtful selection of non-alcoholic creations, including botanical infusions and celebratory mocktails crafted to match the festive spirit. The expanded beverage program ensures every guest finds their perfect celebratory drink.

The beverage offerings at Gateway Goa Palolem will include malts, blended scotch, flavoured vodkas, Gin based cocktails and Feni based cocktails. They will also focus on Infused liquor that is a house favourite like Serenity 74 NE (Vodka infused drink flavoured with kahr lime), Floral Flip (Curry leaf infused gin-based cocktail), Bourbon nectar (Whisky based drink infused in cocoa nibs and barley) and Calm of the hills (Spiced rum infused with hibiscus and pineapple juice).

Taj Corbett Resort & Spa has introduced a variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages like premium craft cocktails infused with Himalayan botanicals and seasonal fruits, and non-alcoholic beverages like wellness mocktails featuring fresh



Pic Courtesy: Eros Hotel, New Delhi

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HOTREMAI publishes a periodical journal known as 'HOTREMAI REPORTS' in its effort to be more informative to its members and the industry. It carries information on activities, happenings and developments in the hospitality and allied sector and also covers the information on new projects, exhibitions and events. This creates opportunities for members to actively participate by sharing their views and also advertise their products and services at nominal costs. The 'HOTREMAI REPORTS' is circulated free of cost in the hospitality industry.

Ample basement parking for visitors will be provided during AAHAR 2026 at a nominal parking fee by ITPO.

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“Meals are no longer just about food but about storytelling, narrative and thoughtfully curated themes.”
Ronald Menezes, General Manager, Gateway Goa Palolem

herbs, cold-pressed juices and kombucha blends.

Service Innovations and Ambience

Beyond food and drink, hotels focus on experience and ambience. Themed décor and entertainment are ubiquitous, like for example, at Gateway Goa Palolem, the theme of the NYE will be Fire and Ice, which will focus more on music and ambience as per the theme to deliver a life time experience to their guests, Dress code will be smart casuals. They will have an interactive session with master of ceremony, quick games and engagement

activity followed by a live band performance and taken over by DJ.

Taj Corbett Resort & Spa is offering highlights like a scenic nature location, live music & entertainment with performances by renowned artists and DJ’s and eco-luxury ambience with sustainable décor and locally sourced ingredients. Their theme is “Under the Stars – A Celebration of Nature” and the dress code is smart casual with a hint of sparkle, encouraging guests to add a festive touch to their attire.

The LaLiT Laxmi Vilas Palace Udaipur is offering an immersive cultural experience that blends heritage with celebration. Highlights for the evening include a lively DJ night complemented with an enchanting performance of traditional Rajasthani folk dance, a tribute to the vibrant art and storytelling traditions of the region. The theme for this year is “Magical Moonlight” capturing the essence of a dreamy, elegant New Year’s Eve under the stars and the ethereal beauty of the City of Lakes by night. The celebration captures the romance of moonlit palaces, shimmering waters and the artistry that defines the region. There is no strict dress code; however, guests are encouraged to embrace the elegance of the theme with sophisticated, culturally inspired attire.

Blooms at Eros Hotel, New Delhi, is turning into a carnival-like wonderland for New Year’s Eve. Music will include a live band covering retro and international Western hits, complemented by live entertainers and instrumental performances. There is



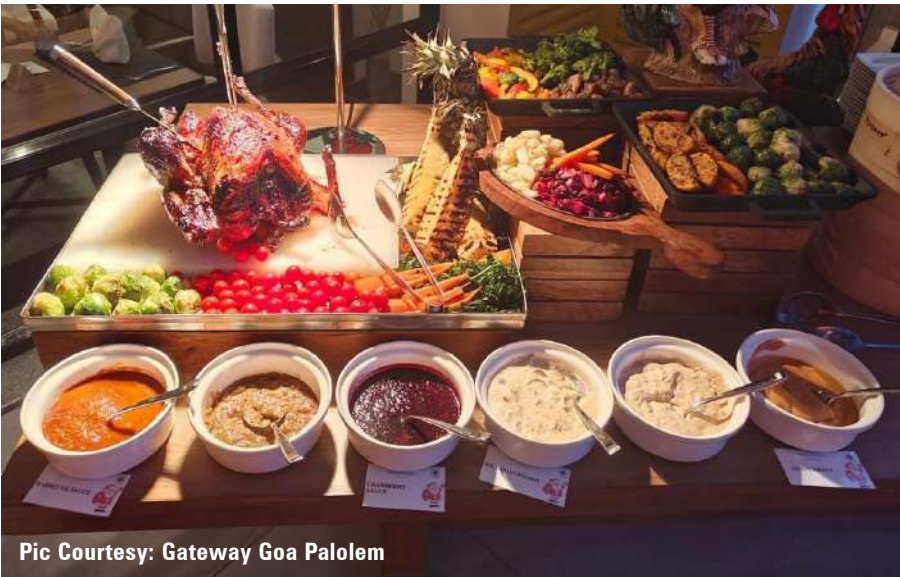
“At Eros Hotel New Delhi, the focus is on The Fire and The Ferment. We’re utilizing traditional clay-oven techniques.”
Diwas Wadhwa, Executive Chef, Eros Delhi

no official dress code.

The theme of the NYE party at Taj Exotica Goa is “Vintage Classic”, celebrating timeless elegance and old-world glamour. The décor, entertainment and ambience will transport guests to an era of sophistication and charm. While the evening is open to all styles, the guests are encouraged to follow the suggested dress code, “Dress to impress.” Whether opting for classic silhouettes or contemporary chic, guests are invited to embrace the spirit of the theme and make the night unforgettable.

Conclusion

As hotels across India gear up for New Year’s Eve, one thing is clear, celebrations are becoming more immersive, inclusive and experience-driven than ever. This year, it’s not just about fancy food or flashy décor, people want the whole experience. You’ll find everything from healthy menus to over-the-top international buffets, wild cocktails to jaw-dropping themed setups. The top hotels are pulling out all the stops with live music, interactive food stations and dishes you’ll talk about long into the next year. With interactive stations, live entertainment and unforgettable flavours, these celebrations promise not just a meal, but a memorable start to the year ahead.



Pic Courtesy: Gateway Goa Palolem

THE INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE OF LUXURY

A Conversation with Sixth-Generation Master Perfumer & Scent Branding Consultant Vishesh Vijayvergiya

For over 170 years, the Vijayvergiya family has crafted fragrances that function as emotional signatures rather than mere products. In this conversation, the sixth-generation custodian reflects on scent as an essential, invisible layer of luxury hospitality. Some Excerpts

How do you approach creating an olfactory logo for a luxury hotel?

We begin with the place, not the perfume. Architecture shows us how a space breathes, location defines its cultural rhythm and the guest profile sets the emotional tone.

For a coastal hotel in Goa, the ocean air, relaxed holiday spirit, Portuguese architecture, humidity and sunlight shaped every decision. We created a light, salty citrus-marine accord that remained buoyant, never heavy.

We don't scent rooms; we shape subconscious responses. Rather than matching décor, we distil a hotel's ethos into a proprietary accord, informed by a perfumery lineage that began in the 1850s. The aim is immediate and unspoken – a sense of belonging. That is not fragrance; it is invisible architecture.

Why is scent so effective in building guest loyalty?

Scent connects directly with memory. When a signature fragrance is experienced consistently – at arrival, during rest, and at departure – it becomes an emotional anchor.

Long after checkout, a trace of that scent can recreate the feeling of the stay. That is how a brief visit turns into a lasting association.

Hotels now retail their signature scents. What are the best practices, and which products work best?

Retail should feel like a continuation of the stay, not merchandising. The hotel retains the full architectural expression of the scent, while retail formats are softened for personal use.

The most effective formats are customised perfumes, candles and perfume oils – objects that slip naturally into daily rituals. Equally compelling are highly adaptable pieces such as incense sticks, room and linen sprays, customised perfumes and air fresheners. These are easy to personalise and allow the scent to reappear quietly in everyday life.

Should a hotel's olfactory logo change over time?

The core identity should never change.



Creating an olfactory logo requires immense effort, and once guests connect with it, consistency is essential.

What we introduce are micro-variations. Winter may call for warmth, summer for air and lightness and festive moments for a subtle accent. These are refinements, not reinventions.

Beyond lobbies and rooms, where does scent really matter in a hotel?

We've seen scent work beautifully in places like water fountains, gardens and linen – areas guests don't consciously associate with fragrance, but respond to emotionally.

A subtle fragrance in a water feature can shape the mood of an entire courtyard. Garden incense sticks add a slow, calming rhythm to outdoor spaces, especially in the evenings. And laundry fragrances are surprisingly powerful – when towels and bedsheets smell good, that comfort stays with the guest long after checkout.

When all these elements carry the same olfactory DNA, the hotel feels cohesive.

Can scent truly outweigh design in shaping experience?

Scent doesn't replace design – it

completes it. Our philosophy is simple: your hotel should smell as good as it looks.

Visual design engages the eye, but scent shapes emotion. When the two are aligned, the experience becomes cohesive and memorable. A well-crafted fragrance amplifies the brand language.

Guests may not consciously notice the scent, but they associate the feeling of the space with it. Over time, that association becomes powerful. In this way, scent doesn't compete with design – it reinforces it, ensuring the brand is felt, not just seen.

What do hotel owners often misunderstand about olfactory branding?

The most common misunderstanding is assuming scent is functional – something to mask odours or make a space "pleasant." In reality, scent operates at a much deeper level. It is not decoration; it is orientation. Guests use smell, often unconsciously, to decide whether a space feels welcoming, premium, calm or trustworthy.

Another misconception is believing that a good fragrance is enough. What actually matters is consistency and placement. A signature scent only works when it is thoughtfully integrated across key touchpoints and repeated over time. That repetition is what builds memory and recognition – the same way a logo or colour palette does.

From a perfumery perspective, scent is unique because it bypasses rational filtering. Guests may forget the furniture layout or the artwork, but they remember how the space made them feel. A well-crafted olfactory identity quietly amplifies everything the hotel already expresses through architecture and service, acting as a silent ambassador for the brand.

Once owners see guests responding – staying longer in public spaces, describing the hotel as "warm," "calming," or "distinctive" – the value becomes obvious. At that point, scent stops being an expense and starts being understood as invisible architecture. ■



Tackling the Issue of Overcrowding at NYE Events

With fast approaching Xmas and New Year Eve celebrations, the hospitality industry is gearing up to meet the overcrowding of excited guests seeking a ravishing and memorable experience at the NYE celebrations. **Rajat Taneja** gauges how the industry intends to tackle the overcrowding, normally experienced, during these celebrative events.

As Xmas and New Year's Eve (NYE) 2025 approaches, the hospitality industry – hotels and F&B outlets – ready themselves for the enthusiastic crowd. Excitement for India's hotel parties is high, focusing on glamorous galas, rooftop views, themed events and luxury experiences with live DJs, fireworks, gourmet dining and cultural performances. However, this night of celebration can lead to dangerous circumstances if events are not properly organised with event security in place.

For many restaurants, bars and other hospitality venues, NYE is a night of heightened emotions, increased alcohol consumption and a surge in customer traffic. Massive crowds have to be managed by the

hospitality industry which it does by strategic planning, technology, tailored packages and enhanced staffing.

For a successful celebration, the establishments have to concentrate on operational efficiency, managing guest expectations and safety precautions.

Hotels manage safe, successful Christmas & New Year celebrations through intense planning: robust crowd

control (security, entry points, clear exits), enhanced security (patrols, CCTV, ID checks), strict fire safety, thorough hygiene protocols, proactive staff training for surges, leveraging technology for booking/communication, and creating appealing, well-managed guest experiences

Niranjan Raja, Assistant Director, The Westin Chennai Velachery states,

"While Christmas and New Year Eve celebration events are highly popular, guest entry is managed strictly in accordance with the restaurant's approved seating capacity. This ensures a comfortable experience for all visitors while maintaining compliance with safety and regulatory standards."

He adds, "Safety is upheld through



meticulous planning, adequate staffing and strict adherence to all operational policies. We follow a zero-tolerance approach toward safety violations to ensure a secure environment for both guests and staff."

Rahul Singh, Founder & CEO, BTB Marketing Pvt. Ltd., disclosed, "At Bira 91 Taprooms, we plan New Years' Eve well in advance by setting clear capacity limits and using a cover-charge based entry system. This ensures we know exactly how many guests to expect at any given outlet. We also stagger online and offline ticket sales to avoid overcrowding and maintain a comfortable atmosphere. Additional floor staff, bartenders and runners are deployed to keep service smooth even during peak hours."

He asserts, "For occasions like Christmas and New Year Eve celebrations safety is a priority for us. Most of our outlets are located within malls that already have robust security systems in place. For NYE, we add a layer of private security personnel stationed at entry points. Clear crowd-flow pathways, monitored entry and trained teams ensure that guests can enjoy the celebrations without any concerns. ID checks and bag screenings are conducted wherever required."

Access Control

Access control is critical for any public event like Christmas or New Year's Eve



Niranjan Raja

bash or dinner. This is mainly because at these events the excitement is at an all-time high and alcohol is often involved. It must be realised that events with disorganised crowds often lead to chaos, injury and discontented attendees. Employment of event security guards can ensure that events run safely and smoothly, from entry to exit. These guards organise lineups, clear emergency exit routes and monitor crowds for signs of disruptive behaviour.

Rahul Singh, reveals, "For these occasions, access at our restaurant, is strictly through a cover charge, which is 100% redeemable against the final bill. Guests may purchase it online or at the outlet, but we cap online allocations to ensure we don't exceed comfortable

capacity. On-ground teams verify all bookings at the entry gate, after which guests receive entry bands or stamps to prevent unauthorised access. Re-entry rules are communicated clearly."

Niranjan Raja disclosed, "At The Westin Chennai Velachery, access control is strengthened through the use of event passes, electronic access systems and multiple security checkpoints. These measures help regulate guest movement and maintain a secure environment."

Pre-planning

Hotels and restaurants have to pre-plan for festivities like New Year's Eve which is celebrated by almost the entire country. Thus the crowd expected is bound to be more than on most other festivals. The biggest driver for this is sense of Belonging. Guests choose New Year's Eve for celebrating because they feel connected. Among the millennials, 75%, feel attending live events with family and friends deepens their relationships. As the number of guests increases it is essential for hotels and restaurants to control crowds. For this they need early strategic planning like optimising seating layouts.

One way of controlling crowds is to do sales forecasting based on the number of customers that you had last year. Pre-event planning, according to hospitality stalwarts, is essential.

Niranjan Raja avers, "Comprehensive pre-event planning includes assessing the expected number of vehicles, deploying additional manpower, setting up guest-filtering measures and arranging frequent patrolling across the premises. Extra staff are strategically positioned in high-traffic areas to ensure smooth and efficient operations throughout the event."

Rahul Singh stated that planning and preparations had already started at Bira 91 Taproom. He declared, "We are curating a special food menu that complements our flavourful beers and handcrafted cocktails, have aligned with DJs on the programming and set up a detailed staffing roster. We also planned décor – this year featuring Christmas-themed elements such as a beer-keg Christmas tree. Once closed, the



promotions will be rolled out across online and offline channels to build awareness and streamline cover-charge purchase.”

Crowd Control and Crowd Management

Often security guards are appointed to manage the huge crowd that normally visit avenues holding the festive celebrations. Hiring security guards is mostly done for crowd management as well as crowd control but not for rough handling the crowd. In this connection one may mention that though the two words – crowd control and crowd management – may sound synonymous there is a significant difference between the two. Crowd control is an extensive exercise during the event, which may include physical barriers to shift the crowd to the safe side to prevent injuries and bring the situation under control while crowd management is an overall strategy adopted by the property to assess the situation and maintain propriety before, during and after the event.

Hotels and F&B venues often hire numerous PSARA-licensed guards for crowd control. PSARA (Private Security Agencies Regulation Act 2005) licensed guards are personnel from agencies that have obtained this mandatory license to operate legally. These guards ensure crowd control by various methods like access management (checking invites), asset protection and managing drunk/disruptive guests, working alongside police for large-scale events.



Rahul Singh

Delving on employment of security guards, Rahul Singh states, “Security guards are one of the most critical parts of NYE planning. They manage the entry queues, conduct basic checks and ensure that only verified guests enter the venue. Inside the outlet, they help maintain crowd discipline, support staff in managing any unforeseen situations and coordinate with mall security if required. Their presence ensures a safe, seamless and enjoyable experience for all guests throughout the night.”

Niranjan Raja informs, “Security personnel are deployed according to a well-defined post allocation plan. Their responsibilities include conducting thorough checks, guiding guests to ensure smooth movement, and staying vigilant

for unusual or suspicious activities. Any such observations are promptly reported to the Loss Prevention (LP) team for swift action.”

Technology

Technology is transforming event management in the hospitality industry. At New year eve and other celebratory events technology plays an important role for hotel security and overcrowding by using AI, biometrics, smart IoT sensors and digital access (RFID, mobile keys) for proactive threat detection, seamless entry/flow, real-time monitoring, & predictive analytics, reducing bottlenecks at check-in/events.

Tech tools are indeed playing an important role in managing overcrowding at festive events in the hospitality industry!

Niranjan Raja affirms, “Technology plays a vital role, with CCTV surveillance enabling real-time monitoring of crowd movement. This allows the security team to take immediate action to prevent overcrowding and restrict unauthorised entry into the premises.”

Rahul Singh declared, “Technology is central to how we manage high-footfall nights like New Year’s Eve. Online ticketing platforms help us accurately estimate turnout and maintain capacity limits. On-ground, our Captain App – an online ordering system, allows servers to place orders directly with the bar and kitchen instead of writing to them manually. This speeds up service, reduces crowding at the counters, and ensures guests receive their orders quickly, which in turn keeps movement smooth across the Taproom. Additionally, real-time POS data, CCTV surveillance and coordination with mall and private security teams all contribute to maintaining safety and operational efficiency throughout the night.”

In conclusion, one may state that the time for the guests to enjoy themselves at Christmas, New Year Eve and other festivities is a period of caution and responsibility for the hospitality industry in ensuring that the guests have pleasant memories of the time spent at the outlet where they celebrated the event. ■



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S.K. International Est. itself in 1984 i.e. 41 Years ago with a group of well qualified and competent Professionals, Hotel executives & engineers with hardcore Professional streams. Today the company has the state of the art well equipped plant to produce undisputed quality products, varied spectrum of design for customised usage and timely delivery. The company specialises in hotel furniture, equipments and custom made products from last 35 years and now the company enters a vast market of office furniture as well as Interior design and execution, which includes complete interior solution from designing to planning, furniture, paint & polish, stone



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Sky Uniforms, established in 2004, has emerged as a leading name in the uniform manufacturing industry, catering to a diverse range of sectors with premium-quality attire. With an unwavering commitment to excellence, the company has positioned itself as a trusted provider of meticulously crafted uniforms and F&B linen, making it a preferred choice in the hospitality sector.



Specializing in uniforms for hospitality, corporate, industrial, security, education, and healthcare sectors, Sky Uniforms offers a comprehensive

product line that includes waiter uniforms, chef attire, housekeeping uniforms, manager suits, security and industrial uniforms, as well as school and hospital uniforms.

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attention to detail and reliability.

As a pioneer in the uniform industry, Sky Uniforms seamlessly blends innovation with functionality, offering tailor-made solutions that enhance brand identity while ensuring practicality and style. Whether it is a five-star hotel, a corporate office, or a healthcare institution, Sky Uniforms provides attire that exudes professionalism and comfort.

With a strong commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction, Sky Uniforms continues to set new benchmarks in the industry. Explore their extensive collection at www.skyuniforms.in and discover uniform solutions tailored to your business needs.

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Chef’s Choice

Knife is said to be ‘life’ of a chef. In fact, holding on to a good quality of knife is as important as for any user in the kitchen. In this very segment the most exclusive branded knife of India, which has been closely associated with star hotels and catering units is Remington Steel. Over the years the company has won an essential place in the commercial kitchens of India. The knives are made from tough, carbon stainless steel that ensures greater edge retention. These knives are heat treated and tempered in an inert atmosphere.

Remington knives are appreciated due to its



sharp, long lasting edges, user-friendly shapes and sizes and wide range that it offers. The wide range includes French Cook’s Knives, Paring Knives, Steak Knives, Vegetable Knives, Carving Knives, Slicing Knives, and many more. Remington Knives are fully forged to shape from high tough, Carbon Stainless Steel that

ensures greater edge retention. Remington Knives are heat treated and tempered in an inert atmosphere. Edges of Remington Knives are ten times sharper and longer than the conventional knives. They are known for their full-length tang for perfect balance and for easier and less tiring cutting.

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Hospitality Leader Who Values Integrity, Collaboration and Continuous Growth

J. Gopalakrishnan, General Manager, Gateway Bekal

By Sharmila Chand



A seasoned hospitality professional, J. Gopalakrishnan, General Manager of Gateway Bekal, holds a distinguished career spanning leading hotel brands.

With extensive experience in hotel operations, business strategy and guest engagement, he has played a pivotal role in positioning Gateway Bekal as a premier destination for MICE, weddings, and luxury getaways.

His journey began as an F&B Associate at The Leela, followed by key roles at ITC before joining IHCL in 2014. Since then, he has been instrumental in driving revenue growth and enhancing guest experiences. At Gateway Bekal, he leads strategic marketing efforts, blending digital outreach with personal engagement across key source markets like Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

Under his leadership, Gateway Bekal has embraced sustainable practices, including water recycling, solar-powered solutions and eco-friendly initiatives. Looking ahead, he spearheads an ambitious expansion plan, introducing private plunge pool villas and further strengthening Gateway Bekal as one of Kerala's largest hospitality destinations.

Gopalakrishnan's passion lies in creating memorable guest experiences and fostering a strong service culture within his team at Gateway Bekal. His leadership philosophy is rooted in authenticity and guest-centric hospitality.

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

What is the USP of your property?

The USP of Gateway Bekal, our riverside retreat, lies in its versatility and ability to cater to a diverse range of guests. We specialize in MICE, destination weddings and hosting large format groups, making us a preferred choice for corporate retreats and grand celebrations. As one of the leading hospitality destinations in North Kerala, we offer a perfect blend of modern amenities and traditional charm, set against a serene and picturesque backdrop. Our commitment to personalised service, spacious event venues, and seamless execution ensures that every event, be it corporate or social, becomes a memorable experience.

What is the differentiating factor of your F&B outlets?

The key differentiating factor of our F&B outlets is the way we create immersive experiences, staying true to the Gateway brand's philosophy of offering authentic and memorable hospitality. Our focus is on delivering rich local experiences that highlight the vibrant culinary traditions of North Kerala.

How has your journey been in the hospitality industry?

My journey in the hospitality industry has been an enriching and fulfilling one. A major milestone in my career was joining the Taj Group of Hotels—it was truly a dream come true, especially at a time when only a few prestigious brands dominated the industry. In 2014, I took the next step by joining IHCL, and since then, my journey has been one of continuous learning, growth and passion for delivering exceptional hospitality experiences.

What strategies do you practice to maximize hotel revenue?

I believe in a holistic approach to revenue management. We closely monitor demand patterns, dynamic pricing models, and competitor benchmarking. Cross-selling across departments, focusing on high-margin segments like weddings and wellness, leveraging digital marketing and optimising F&B offerings have helped drive incremental revenue. Strategic partnerships and experiential packages aligned with the destination also contribute significantly.

Where do you see yourself taking the hotel in the coming years?

My vision is to position Gateway Bekal as a preferred destination resort for intimate weddings, leisure travellers and wellness seekers. We are working on enhancing local experiences through curated itineraries and promoting regional cuisine.

What is your guiding philosophy at work?

My guiding philosophy at work is rooted in the true essence of hospitality, going beyond tasks and departments to create meaningful experiences from the heart. I believe to truly excel in this industry, one must embrace hospitality as a way of life rather than just a profession. Every interaction, every detail, and every effort should come from the heart, ensuring that guests leave with memories that last a lifetime.

How do you define yourself?

I take pride in being grounded yet ambitious, with a passion for mentoring teams and delivering guest centric excellence.



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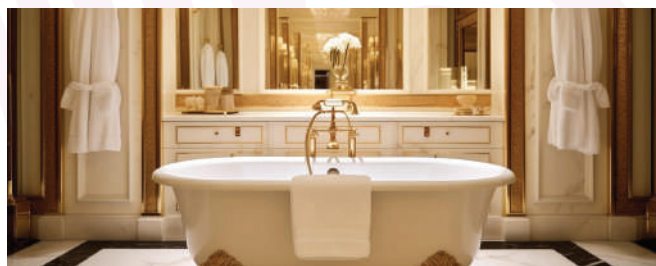
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