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An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry

Business

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Feature

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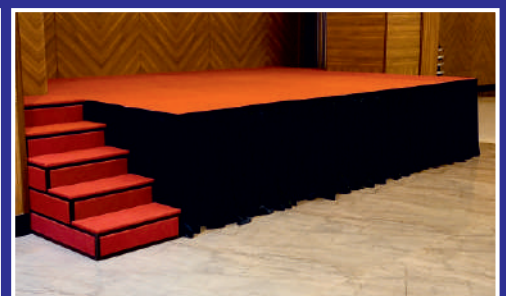
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The World Travel & Tourism Council has projected a strong growth trajectory for India's hospitality industry, and with the country now ranked eighth among the world's largest tourism economies, this momentum signals a decisive and sustained sectoral boom.

Our Cover story delves into the forces reshaping India's hotel industry, robust domestic travel, aggressive brand expansion, rising room rates and occupancies, and growing demand across leisure, business, weddings and spiritual tourism, signalling a strong, multi-year growth cycle.

Hotels are rethinking workforce strategies, and our business story explores the aspects of building in-house hotel teams versus tapping the vast national talent pool through outsourcing for key services and daily operations.

The feature story captures views of hospitality stalwarts on key issues hot and trending this year, highlighting people-first culture, sustainability, experiential travel and technology, and how these forces will shape the Indian hospitality industry.

How well-designed hotel loyalty programmes build repeat business. Our spotlight story explores how personalisation, tailored rewards and ongoing engagement help hotels deepen guest relationships and remain competitive in an increasingly crowded marketplace.

This Operations story examines how hotels are tackling evolving guest grievances through real-time communication, data-led insights and more human-centric service, shifting from reactive replies to proactive, structured complaint resolution.

We also look forward to Aahar 2026 (10-14 March'2026), India's leading hospitality exhibition organised by India Trade Promotion Organisation, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, to explore new products and services, and wish all exhibitors a very successful show.

Rajat Taneja

rajathammer@gmail.com

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Publisher cum Editor

Rajat Taneja

Resident Editor

Ashok Malkani (Mumbai)
 Sharmila Chand (Delhi)
 Gita Hari (Mumbai)

Sr. Content Writer

Nikita Madan

Layout & Design

Hari Kumar V

Production Assistant

Simran Gomber

Advertising Sales

Sumesh Sharma

Director Sales

Sanjay Anand
 Mobile: +91 9811136837

**Please share the press releases and media materials at
info@hammer.co.in**

Editorial & Advertising Office:

Hammer Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
 206, Samrat Bhawan,
 Ranjeet Nagar Commercial Complex, New Delhi-110008
 Phone: 91-11-45093486, 45084903

E-mail: info@hammer.co.in

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Frankfurt Sets the Stage for Global Momentum



The consumer goods trade fair trio kicked off in 2026 on the day before the fair with the Compass Talks and the presentation of the new IFH industry index. As the first international sentiment barometer, it reveals where the global consumer goods industry currently stands and the key issues at stake. The tenor of the subsequent afternoon panels was clear: waiting is not an option – what is needed are further developments in business models, more resilient value chains and better preparation for uncertainties, such as customs duties and import regulations.

Against this backdrop, international participation in consumer goods fairs is growing – especially in this dynamic trading environment, personal encounters,

market transparency and resilient networks are becoming increasingly important. Detlef Braun, Managing Director of Messe Frankfurt, remarked, “Geopolitics, cost pressures and the need for transformation are no longer exceptional circumstances, but rather a new reality. This is precisely why it is important to seize the right moment in the market with confidence and drive. And that moment is here and now in Frankfurt.”

Around 140,000 visitors from all over the world took advantage of this opportunity. The results of the visitor survey underscore the strong response to the trio of trade fairs as a whole: Once again, very high visitor satisfaction ratings of 96 per cent, a level of internationality of 71 per cent and the presence of all relevant trade

and buyer groups confirm Frankfurt’s role as the central platform for the global consumer goods industry. The strongest visitor nations included Italy, China, Netherlands, USA and France. The trio of trade fairs yet again attracted numerous top buyers from international retail groups to leading retail chains, in particular large-volume international retailers such as ALDI, Carrefour International, Coop, Crate & Barrel, dm Drogeriemarkt, Dirk Rossmann, EDEKA, El Corte Inglés, Fenwick, Fleurop, Globus, IKEA, Jaeyoung Trading, Lidl, OBI, OTTO, REWE, Sainsbury’s, Tesco, Zalando and Zara.

In addition, the hospitality and contract business continued to gain in importance. A similarly positive mood was evident at Christmasworld and Creativeworld.





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From 31 March to 3 April 2026 at SNIEC, Shanghai, Sinoexpo Informa Markets will be uniting global hospitality decision-makers to explore the latest trends and solutions anchored in sustainability and intelligent innovation.

Across 2,100+ exhibitors and 140,000+ professional buyers, the show will showcase cutting-edge advancements in building materials, engineering design, smart hotel

technologies, lighting and hospitality supplies, empowering stakeholders to transform operations and elevate guest experiences.

High-level forums, award ceremonies and competitions will bring together leading architects, designers and industry elites to share insights and shape the next chapter in urban development and design. Signature highlights include The China International Building & Interior Design Forum, The Hotel

Uniform Show and The Hotel Housekeeping Competition.

New interdisciplinary integration zones including The Hotel Brand Investment & Franchise Zone, the Public Space Landscape Engineering Design Zone and the International Intelligent Sun Shading & Energy-Efficient Building Zone will showcase practical, scalable solutions that advance sustainability, efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Bali-Inspired Pool Resort Opens in Karjat, Maharashtra

Set against the serene backdrop of a flowing river and expansive natural landscapes, Stone Water by Zuper introduces a transformative hospitality experience that blends immersive design, refined luxury, and dynamic recreation. With thoughtfully conceptualized rooms across five distinctive categories, exclusive river canopies positioned midstream and curated culinary and lifestyle experiences, the resort is poised to redefine destination living.

Designed to offer 126 elegantly appointed rooms across five distinctive conceptual categories, the resort blends advanced comfort with immersive natural experiences. The culinary journey is equally enchanting, a signature restaurant which offers soulful open-air dining, complemented by a chic café & bar and a stunning boho-inspired pool bar, for relaxed indulgence. Celebrations and gatherings are elevated with two well-equipped indoor banquet halls, a lush lawn beside the pool, and a massive river-facing lawn ideal for grand occasions. For those seeking recreation and energy, the resort offers an exciting lineup of activities including pickleball courts, paddle courts, bowling alleys, and more, ensuring guests enjoy the perfect balance of leisure, adventure and social engagement.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Ajay Badekar, Director of Stone Water by Zuper, said: "This is how dreams turn into reality. Stone Water Resort



& Spa is a sanctuary of peace and serenity where guests can create their own moments rather than wait for someone else to make them. This is where nature and design co-exist in absolute harmony & it is not just a destination, but an experience designed to be cherished for a lifetime."

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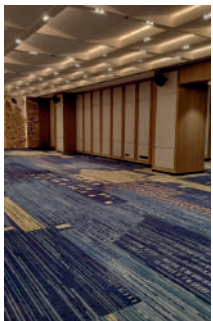
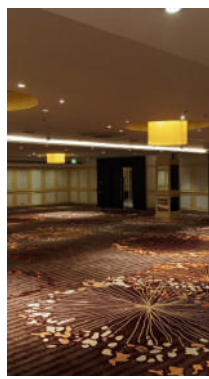
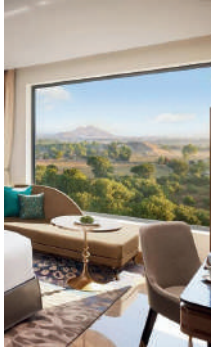
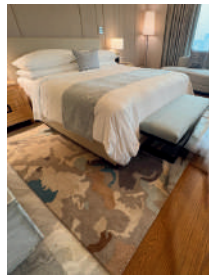
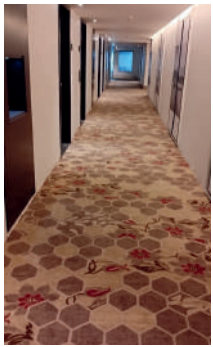
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Seclude Willows, Ramgarh Introduces Pet-Friendly Mountain Retreat

Nestled in the tranquil hamlet of Ramgarh on the edge of the Kumaon range, Seclude Willows, Ramgarh has officially transitioned into a fully pet-friendly boutique retreat, offering travellers a serene mountain escape alongside their beloved companions.

Spread across 2.5 acres of lush hillside, the property features 11 uniquely themed rooms, expansive outdoor spaces, and an atmosphere designed to encourage slow and mindful travel. While pets have always been welcome at the retreat, the experience has now been intentionally enhanced with curated offerings that prioritise comfort, convenience and care, ensuring pets feel just as relaxed and pampered as their owners.



To cater to different travel preferences, the retreat has introduced two specially designed packages Paw Premium Package and Royal Woof Package. Both packages include pet-friendly accommodation along with thoughtful essentials such as comfortable pet beds with disposable covers, nutritious meals, fresh drinking water, bowls, leashes, towels, napkins, toys and welcome kits filled with treats.

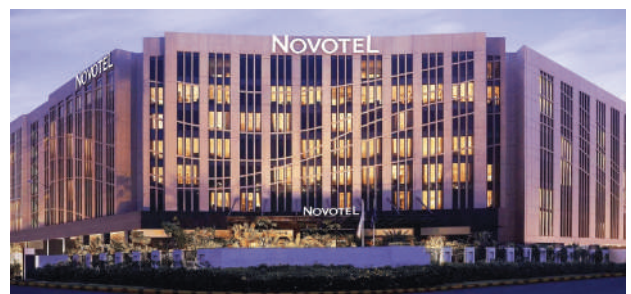
Enhancing the overall stay experience, the resort also offers guided pet walks, grooming and bathing accessories, pet-safe shampoos and additional care amenities, all while maintaining the serene ambiance of the mountain retreat.

Speaking about the initiative, Rohit Sethi, Founder of Seclude Hotels, said, "A vacation feels complete only when the family is together – the pet parents and their babies. With this initiative, we aim to ensure that pets are not just accommodated but truly welcomed and pampered."

Accor Expands in North India with Signing of Novotel Vrindavan

Accor has announced the signing of Novotel Vrindavan, strengthening its presence in North India and marking its entry into one of the country's prominent spiritual destinations.

The hotel is slated to open in 2029 and will be operated by Accor. Planned as a 150-key new-build development across 6,222 square metres, the hotel is designed to meet the growing demand from pilgrimage tourism,



destination weddings, and large-format events. The project will have an estimated gross floor area of approximately 14,000 square metres.

Novotel Vrindavan will offer a 1,000 square metre ballroom, several meeting rooms, an all-day dining restaurant, a lobby lounge and bar, a speciality restaurant, along with a fitness centre, spa and swimming pool.

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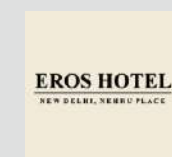
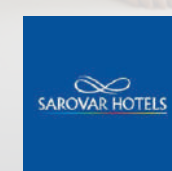
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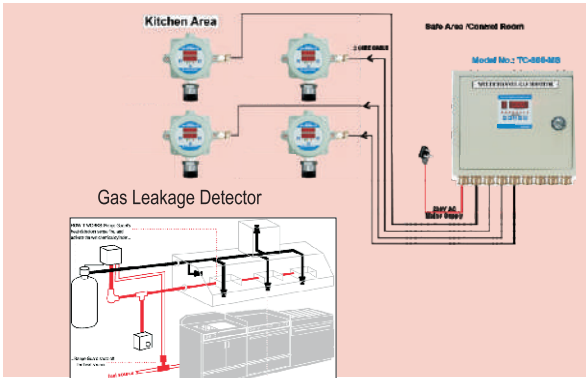
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Club Med Phuket Brings the Spirit of India to Thailand

Club Med, leader in premium all-inclusive holidays for 75 years, is thrilled to announce that Club Med Phuket will transform its iconic beachfront into a high-energy celebration of Indian heritage. On 4th March 2026, the resort will invite international guests to experience the spirit of Holi through a vibrant sundowner, followed by a curated Indian gala dinner and an immersive party experience. This cross-cultural showcase is designed to bridge borders, uniting guests through the universal language of color, music and festive joy.



The first highlight of the day will be a vibrant Grand Goûter & Color Battle at Coconut Garden. The Phuket team will introduce guests to the meaning of Holi, celebrating the arrival of spring and the spirit of togetherness. This will be followed by a coordinated countdown and collective colour-throw moment, creating a joyful and highly Instagrammable highlight against the stunning beachfront backdrop. Designed as a dry Holi experience, guests will play with organic, natural colour powders and fresh flowers, with safety measures thoughtfully in place to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable celebration for all.

As soon as the sun sets, the festivities will transition into an Indian Flavours Dinner Experience at the resort's main restaurant. Guests will indulge in a rich buffet complemented by live Indian cooking stations, showcasing authentic regional preparations. The celebration will culminate in a high-energy Grand Indian Night Party, transforming the theatre or main bar area into a vibrant, Bollywood-inspired experience.

Royal Jordanian Airlines Promotes Amman for Indian Travellers

Royal Jordanian Airlines invited Indian travellers to discover Amman, Jordan's vibrant capital, as an ideal late winter and pre-monsoon destination. With pleasant temperatures, rich cultural heritage and seamless connectivity, Amman offers the perfect blend of comfort, history and modern charm. Royal Jordanian Airlines, the national carrier of Jordan, will be providing convenient connections from India to Amman via key international hubs, ensuring a smooth and comfortable journey. Known for its warm hospitality, award-winning service, and modern fleet, the airline makes discovering Jordan both accessible and enjoyable for Indian passengers.



"Indian travellers are increasingly looking for destinations that offer culture, history, and comfort without long travel fatigue," said Karim Makhoul, the Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) for Royal Jordanian Airlines. "Amman is perfectly positioned as a late winter and pre-monsoon escape, and Royal Jordanian is proud to connect Indian travellers to the heart of Jordan with world-class service."

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The Oterra Earns IGBC Green Existing Building Platinum Certification

Indian Green Building Council has awarded The Oterra Hotel the IGBC Green Existing Building Platinum Certification, one of the highest recognitions for sustainable building operations in the country. The accolade reflects the hotel's sustained commitment to environmentally responsible practices while upholding the standards of luxury hospitality.

This top-tier certification recognises excellence across key parameters such as energy efficiency, water conservation, waste management, and indoor environmental quality. It underscores The Oterra's focused efforts to reduce its carbon footprint through operational innovation and conscious resource management.

Among the initiatives contributing to this achievement are the adoption of renewable energy solutions, the use of efficient HVAC



systems, and structured measures for water recycling and rainwater harvesting. The hotel has also implemented systematic waste

segregation and composting practices to minimise landfill impact, alongside guest-facing initiatives that promote sustainable stays without compromising comfort.

The recognition reinforces The Oterra's position as a frontrunner in sustainable hospitality and sets a benchmark for other hotels seeking to balance responsible operations with premium guest experiences. It also aligns with India's broader momentum toward green infrastructure and climate-conscious tourism. With this certification, The Oterra joins a select group of hotels that have successfully embedded sustainability into their everyday operations.

Sterling Expands Footprint in Rajasthan

Sterling Holiday Resorts has announced the opening of Sterling Amargarh Jodhpur, strengthening its footprint in Rajasthan and adding to its



portfolio of large-format destination resorts. Situated on Pal Road within Jodhpur city limits, the property offers convenient access to major heritage attractions while

serving leisure travellers, destination weddings and corporate events.

Set across landscaped grounds, the resort reflects the architectural and cultural essence of the Marwar region. It is positioned to host family vacations, large social celebrations, and business gatherings, supported by expansive event infrastructure.

Accommodation is available across Classic, Premier, and Suite categories. Event venues include two indoor banquet halls, Kesari and Marwar along with Rajwada, The Lawns, designed for weddings, social occasions and corporate programmes.

Dining is anchored by Sangri, The Flavours of Rajasthan, an all-day restaurant offering regional specialities alongside international selections, complemented by courtyard dining spaces. Leisure amenities include an outdoor swimming pool, cultural programmes and family-friendly areas.

The property also integrates into Sterling's broader Rajasthan circuit, enabling multi-city itineraries connecting Jodhpur with Udaipur, Pushkar and Jaisalmer, supporting extended leisure and wedding travel across the state.

Centre Unveils ₹1,200 Crore Redevelopment Plan for The Ashok and Hotel Samrat

The Centre has unveiled plans to redevelop two iconic hospitality landmarks in New Delhi, The Ashok Hotel and Hotel Samrat, under the second phase of the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP 2.0). The combined indicative value of the proposed projects stands at ₹1,200 crore.

Of this, ₹820 crore has been allocated for The Ashok Hotel, while ₹380 crore has been earmarked for Hotel Samrat. The redevelopment will be implemented in phases across the five-year NMP 2.0 timeline. The Ashok is expected to be awarded in FY27, whereas Hotel Samrat is targeted for FY30.

Owing to its scale and prominence, The Ashok will be prioritised in the initial phase of the tourism asset monetisation programme. Hotel Samrat, on the other hand, is scheduled for execution in the latter part of the cycle.

The redevelopment plans include significant infrastructure upgrades, along with the transfer of operations and management responsibilities. Monetisation will largely follow the public-private partnership (PPP) model through an Operations, Management and Development Agreement (OMDA). Under this framework, private entities will undertake investments for modernisation and assume operational control for a specified concession period.

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Cygnett Strengthens Footprint in Ayodhya with Second Hotel Signing

Expanding its early presence as the first branded hotel operator in Ayodhya, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts has announced the signing of its second property in the sacred pilgrim city. The upcoming Cozzet Ayodhya will be positioned as a smart, safe and thoughtfully designed value hotel that combines comfort with practicality. The property will feature 70 well-appointed rooms, an all-day dining restaurant and contemporary guest amenities tailored to the needs of both leisure and corporate travellers.

An expansive 8,000 sq. ft. banquet hall with an adjoining lawn will make the hotel a preferred venue for weddings, social functions and large gatherings. Additional facilities will include a fully equipped gymnasium, conference rooms and modern technology solutions designed for business guests.

Strategically located on the Gorakhpur–Lucknow Highway, the



hotel is approximately 5 km from Maharishi Valmiki International Airport and just 1.5 km from the Ram Mandir, with select rooms offering views of the revered temple precinct.

Whiteflower Expands Uttarakhand Portfolio with Bulaakh Resort

Whiteflower, an experiential hospitality brand based in Uttarakhand, has completed a year of operations in 2026 while expanding its footprint with the launch of Bulaakh Whiteflower in Mussoorie. The



addition reinforces the brand's growing presence across the state.

Over the past 12 months, Whiteflower has made three resorts operational in key Uttarakhand destinations, catering to leisure travellers,

destination weddings and private events. The brand positioned itself within the experiential and wellness hospitality segment, with a focus on nature-led locations and tranquil surroundings.

The newly opened Mussoorie property is designed as a wellness-oriented retreat. It features dedicated spaces for yoga and meditation, a temperature-controlled swimming pool, a gym and a spa equipped with therapy rooms, jacuzzis, steam and sauna facilities. A signature glass house offering panoramic hill views, along with adaptable indoor and outdoor venues, makes the resort suitable for weddings and social gatherings. All rooms are centrally air-conditioned and heated to ensure comfort across seasons.

Whiteflower has also outlined plans to expand into Dehradun, Rishikesh, Haridwar, and Nainital by the end of 2026, signalling continued growth across Uttarakhand.

Summit Hotels Debuts Pangthang Retreat in Sikkim

Summit Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of Summit Signature Retreat Pangthang in Gangtok, signalling the brand's debut in the retreat hotel category in Sikkim. Perched on a hilltop in Pangthang, the 38-room property offers uninterrupted views of the Eastern Himalayas, with Mount Kanchenjunga visible from the resort.

The retreat offers a range of accommodation options, including Superior Rooms, Deluxe Rooms, Premium Suites, Attic Suites and Luxury Suites. Each room features a private balcony designed to maximise panoramic Himalayan views, while select suites include separate living and dining areas suited for extended stays.



Reflecting regional climate conditions and sustainability considerations, the rooms are designed without air conditioning or minibars. The property houses a multi-cuisine restaurant that showcases Sikkimese specialities alongside Indian and international fare. A sun deck overlooking Kanchenjunga further enhances the immersive, nature-led guest experience.

For events and gatherings, the retreat includes a banquet hall spanning approximately 5,000 sq. ft., capable of hosting over 500 guests, making it well-suited for destination events, retreats, and intimate celebrations.

IHCL to Acquire Majority Stake in Brij Hospitality

Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) has signed definitive agreements to acquire a 51% stake in Brij Hospitality, the company behind the boutique experiential brand 'Brij'. Through this move, IHCL will assume ownership of the Brij brand and, in partnership with its founding promoters, aims to accelerate growth in India's boutique leisure hospitality segment.

Commenting on the development, Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, IHCL, noted that rising disposable incomes and discretionary spending are fuelling demand for experiential leisure travel in India. He added that this transaction builds on IHCL's existing marketing and distribution alliance with the Clarks Group, evolving it into a



majority partnership with one of the early pioneers in the boutique leisure space.

Brij Hotels is known for its collection of boutique luxury properties that offer immersive, location-driven experiences across destinations such as Varanasi, Jawai,

Dalhousie and Jaipur. Among its landmark properties is BrijRama Palace in Varanasi, celebrated for its heritage architecture and cultural significance.

Udit Kumar and Anant Apurv Kumar, Co-Founders of Brij Hospitality, expressed confidence that the partnership with IHCL will help shape the future of boutique hospitality in India. They highlighted the alignment between IHCL's legacy of showcasing Indian hospitality globally and Brij's design-led, culturally rooted approach to guest experiences.

Brij Hotels currently operates a portfolio of 22 properties, with 11 more in development, offering personalised luxury stays in distinctive settings across the country.

STORII Castle Kanota Opens as ITC Hotels' 10th STORII Property



ITC Hotels Limited has announced the opening of its tenth property under the STORII brand with the launch of STORII Castle Kanota, a 52-key heritage hotel in Rajasthan. The opening coincides with 150 years of the historic Kanota estate and reflects a collaboration with the Kanota family grounded in shared values of heritage conservation and responsible hospitality.

Anil Chadha, Managing Director, ITC Hotels Limited, noted that the STORII brand highlights destinations through properties distinguished by their architecture, legacy, and strong sense of place. He added that Castle Kanota embodies this philosophy through its living history, continued family stewardship, and deep cultural roots.

The property blends modern guest comforts with the preserved architectural character of the estate, along with its historic artefacts and traditions. Visitors are offered an immersive experience shaped by the stories, cuisine, and customs that have defined Kanota for generations, presenting

an authentic window into Rajasthan's living heritage.

Established in the mid-19th century by Thakur Zorawar Singh ji, a nobleman who served the Maharajas of Jaipur, Castle Kanota began as a jagir headquarters before evolving into a family residence enriched by generations of service, scholarship, and conservation. The estate first welcomed travellers in 1971 while continuing to function as a lived-in family home.

With this addition, ITC Hotels further strengthens the STORII portfolio as a collection of distinctive properties that celebrate destinations with depth, character, and enduring cultural identity.

Luxuria by Moustache Group Enters Ranthambore

Luxuria by Moustache Group has announced the launch of Jangalat, a new luxury jungle resort in Ranthambore, Rajasthan. The upcoming property is planned as a low-density, private retreat. The group marks its entry into one of India's most in-demand wildlife destinations with this launch.

Jangalat is designed as a low-density, private retreat focused on open spaces and



thoughtful planning. The layout preserves the natural character of the land. A key highlight of the property will be a 300-metre-long river feature running through the resort. The concept blends comfort with the raw beauty of the jungle.

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PHA Announces 8th 'National Housekeepers Convention' in New Delhi



The Professional Housekeepers Association (PHA) announced its 8th National Housekeepers Convention on 30th May 2026 at

Eros Hotel, New Delhi, bringing together Housekeeping Professionals and Hospitality Leaders from across the country for a focused day of industry insight, dialogue, and excellence.

Their theme "Stewards of Standards" reflects the evolving role of housekeeping leaders as custodians of quality, safety, and consistency in hospitality operations. Today's housekeepers go beyond maintaining cleanliness, they uphold brand promises, ensure guest trust, protect assets, and drive sustainable practices across properties. The convention title highlights the dual nature of housekeeping where art represents attention to detail, aesthetics and guest-centric care and science signifies systems, processes, technology, hygiene protocols and performance metrics. The focus on leadership reinforces the strategic influence of housekeeping professionals in shaping service excellence and operational efficiency.

The convention is inspired by the ideals of care, create and elevate. Care emphasises people, purpose and responsibility towards guests, teams, assets and the environment. Create encourages innovation, problem-solving and the adoption of smarter processes and tools and Elevate inspires continuous improvement, professional growth and the pursuit of higher standards across the housekeeping function.

The announcement comes on the back of a highly successful 7th National Housekeepers Convention, held on 17th May 2025 at Bangalore.

Key Highlights from the 2025 Convention Included:

- Strategic keynote addresses on workforce empowerment and operational leadership
- Case study presentations from major hotel chains showcasing best practices in linen management, cleanliness analytics, and guest-centric housekeeping
- Solution showcase segments where leading suppliers

demonstrated innovations in housekeeping automation, eco-friendly chemicals and productivity tools

- A strong emphasis on skill development and career pathways for housekeeping professionals

Building on that momentum, the 2026 National Housekeepers Convention will spotlight key trends shaping housekeeping operations, including AI-assisted workflows, sustainability standards, workforce training frameworks, digital quality assurance practices, and process excellence in housekeeping and facilities management.



Ms. Jayashree Nagaraj, Founder President and Chairperson, PHA, commented: "Housekeeping has transitioned from a back-of-house function to a strategic pillar in hospitality operations. The overwhelming participation and quality of discourse at the 2025 Convention in Bangalore reaffirmed the industry's commitment to excellence. In 2026, we aim to deepen this conversation with actionable insights and practical solutions tailored to modern operational realities."



Ms. Bharti Singh Kalappa, Founder Member, National Vice President & VP Operations, PHA-North Chapter, added: "The New Delhi edition will extend the learning trajectory established in Bangalore, emphasizing operational innovation, sustainable practices, skill enhancement, and technologies that amplify housekeeping

performance. We are curating an agenda that resonates with the challenges and aspirations of housekeeping leaders across hotel segments."

The 8th National Housekeepers Convention is expected to attract over 300 Housekeeping Professionals, Operations Leaders, Procurement Heads, Hospitality Educators, and Leading Suppliers of Housekeeping products and solutions.

IHCL Adds Tree of Life Sariska Manor to its Portfolio

The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) has announced the onboarding of Tree of Life Sariska Manor in Tehla, Rajasthan, as part of a conversion project under its Tree of Life brand. Commenting on the development, Deepika Rao, Executive Vice President, New Businesses and Hotel Openings, IHCL, noted that Sariska's serene natural setting offers guests an easily accessible escape with a relaxed pace of life. She added that the resort aligns well with the Tree of Life ethos through its design, which blends harmoniously with the surrounding landscape and the region's cultural character.

Situated in Tehla, a gateway to the ecologically rich zone around the Sariska Tiger Reserve, the resort features 26 rooms. Dining options include Antler's, an indoor multi-cuisine restaurant; The Sparrows, an open-air venue that embraces the natural surroundings; and Leopard's Lair, a lounge designed for leisurely evenings. Guests can also access



a range of recreational amenities, including a swimming pool and spa, along with cycling trails, nature walks and excursions to nearby cultural sites, allowing them to explore the area's natural beauty and heritage at their own pace.

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Marriott International Opens its 200th Property in India

Westin Hotels & Resorts, part of Marriott Bonvoy's portfolio of 30 extraordinary brands, has announced the opening of The Westin Jaipur Kant Kalwar Resort & Spa.

Set across nine acres at the tranquil foothills of the majestic Aravali range, the resort comprises 135 elegantly appointed keys, including premium guestrooms, suites and private villas. Each villa is conceived as a personal sanctuary, complete with private



garden spaces and exclusive plunge pools, offering a restorative retreat amid the peaceful Aravalli landscape. Guests can expect deep, rejuvenating rest on the iconic Heavenly® Bed, underscoring Westin's Sleep Well promise.

Commenting on this significant milestone for India, Kiran Andicot, Senior Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International



said, "Celebrating the opening of our 200th property in India is a defining moment for Marriott International and a reflection of the continued trust our guests and owners place in our brands. Over the years, our

growth in India has been shaped by hotels that offer enriching experiences through distinctive design, elevated culinary programs, and service excellence that create memorable journeys."

With 200 open properties in India across 18 distinct brands and a robust pipeline of nearly 150 hotels, Marriott continues to strengthen its presence in the country, spanning major metropolitan centres to emerging business and leisure destinations nationwide.

"We are excited to welcome guests to discover Jaipur through the Westin lens, where cultural richness pairs seamlessly with elevated comfort and balance," said Kamaljit Singh, General Manager, The Westin Jaipur Kant Kalwar Resort & Spa.

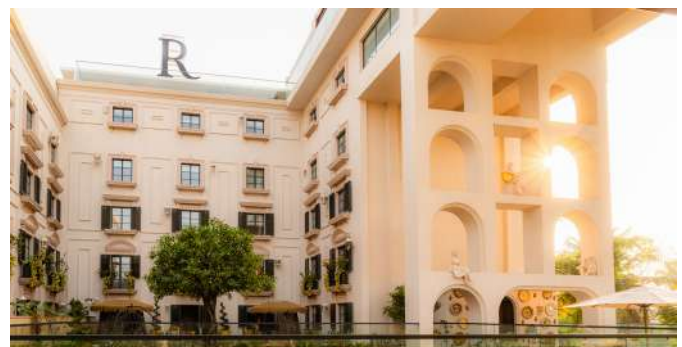
Renaissance Hotels Strengthens its Footprint with Renaissance Goa Hotel

Renaissance Hotels, part of Marriott Bonvoy's global portfolio of over 30 extraordinary hotel brands, announced the opening of Renaissance Goa Hotel. This new address is thoughtfully designed for travellers drawn to authentic exploration, genuine connection and captivating local stories. Nestled within the lush Arpora valley with effortless access to North Goa's iconic beaches - Baga, Anjuna and Vagator, the hotel sits at the dynamic intersection of Goa's lively coast and the quieter, more rhythmic pulse of a valley retreat.

"The Renaissance Hotels brand is built on curiosity and the idea that travel is most rewarding when it truly connects guests to the distinct character and DNA of a destination," said Kiran Andicot, Senior Vice President, South Asia, Marriott



International. "Goa has long captivated as one of India's most enduring leisure destinations, offering a lighthearted familiarity and an accessible choice for both planned getaways and spontaneous adventures. As we continue to expand our lifestyle portfolio across India, Goa remains



central to our leisure growth strategy, with a focus on neighbourhood-led experiences, innovative design and a style of exploration that today's travellers seek."

The hotel's 133 guest rooms and suites boldly pair contemporary design with thoughtful, unexpected details, including locally inspired 3D art pieces and bespoke brass floral cabinetry. Family Rooms overlook sweeping views of the tropical valley, offering a sense of calm after days spent exploring Goa's lively neighborhoods. Spacious bathrooms and lifestyle-forward amenities complete a comfortable and engaging stay.

Designed to accommodate a range of gatherings, the hotel features nearly 8,000 square feet of flexible event space suited to destination weddings, intimate celebrations, and creatively led corporate sessions. The ballroom, along with a selection of adaptable meeting venues, is supported by advanced technology and versatile layouts to enable seamless event executions.

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Sushil Kumar



Novotel Hyderabad Airport announced the appointment of Sushil Kumar as its new Director of Engineering. With over 13 years of experience across some of India's leading hotel brands, Kumar brings strong technical acumen, project management expertise and a commitment to operational excellence. In his new role, he will oversee overall property maintenance at Novotel Hyderabad Airport, ensuring the hotel's infrastructure, utilities and

essential systems operate seamlessly and efficiently. He will lead the engineering team in strengthening preventive maintenance practices, enhancing safety standards and supporting the hotel's sustainability goals through improved energy management and resource efficiency. He will also play a key role in coordinating renovation and upgrade projects, maintaining statutory compliance and creating a safe, well-functioning environment that enhances guest experience. Kumar has held key engineering roles with renowned hospitality brands such as Hilton and IHCL (Taj Hotels) properties, where he successfully led renovation programmes, major utility upgrades, and award-winning sustainability initiatives. He brings hands-on expertise across HVAC and electrical systems, energy management, fire and life safety, CAPEX planning, and large-scale project execution.

Bhaskar Gajapathy



Bhaskar Gajapathy, the new Director of Human Resources at the Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, brings with him over 12 years of experience in Human Resource Management. With a strong focus on luxury and premium hospitality, Bhaskar's expertise spans across workforce planning, recruitment, compensation & benefits, statutory compliance, employee relations, training & development and

improving DEI outcomes by implementing targeted hiring practices, designing corporate policies and implementing rewards and recognition schemes. In his current role, Bhaskar plays a pivotal part in shaping people strategy, strengthening organisational culture and aligning HR practices with business goals. Prior to this, Bhaskar served as the Assistant Director of HR at the Coorg Marriott Resort & Spa. Bhaskar started his career in the hospitality sector with a stint at the Trident Chennai post which he joined the Marriott group at the JW Marriott Sahar, Mumbai. Bhaskar has been deeply involved in several marquee pre-opening and task-force assignments in many high-end properties. He has also been nominated for the APEC Pre-Opening HR Leader Award in 2023 and 2024.

Dr. Annoo Rachel Vilayil Rajoo



The Westin Resort & Spa, Himalayas announced the appointment of Dr. Annoo Rachel Vilayil Rajoo as its new Assistant Director of Spa, within the Spa & Recreation department. With over a decade of experience in Ayurvedic consultation, Panchakarma, spa management and wellness operations, Dr. Annoo brings deep clinical expertise and a holistic approach to luxury wellness across global resort environments.

An experienced Ayurvedic Doctor, Dr. Annoo has worked across leading luxury resorts in India, the Maldives and Turkey. Dr. Annoo follows a supportive and hands-on leadership style, focused on clear communication, team development, and leading by example. Guided by the principle of 'lead with empathy, serve with excellence and always place the guest at the heart of every decision', she believes that thoughtful personalisation and anticipation of guest needs are what truly elevate a wellness experience. In her new role, Dr. Annoo's priorities include enhancing guest experiences through tailored wellness offerings, strengthening training and performance standards across the spa team, and driving sustainable revenue growth through quality-led innovation.

Srinivas Chippala



Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) announced the appointment of Srinivas Chippala as the Executive Housekeeper. Srinivas Chippala brings around 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry, with professional expertise spanning Housekeeping Operations, Front Office exposure, Resource Management, Team Management and General Administration. His

operational experience includes managing guest rooms and public areas, laundry operations, linen and uniform rooms, pest control, horticulture, façade cleaning services, flower room operations and housekeeping-related vendor management. He joined Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC from Hilton Embassy Golf Links, Bengaluru, where he has been working as Executive Housekeeper since March 2024. His earlier career experience includes roles at Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach (Accor Hotels), Novotel Chennai SIPCOT (pre-opening), Radisson Hyderabad Hi-Tech City and The Park Hyderabad, progressing from operational roles to leadership positions within the housekeeping function. In recognition of his contribution to housekeeping operations and leadership, Srinivas Chippala was the recipient of the "Housekeeper of the Year – National Award" by BW Hotelier for the 2025–2026 period.



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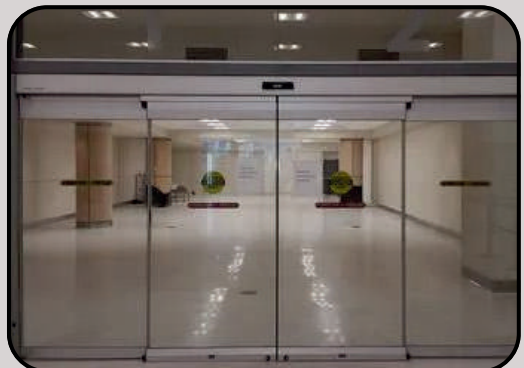
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Sanjeev Kumar Singh



Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel announced the appointment of Sanjeev Kumar Singh as its Executive Housekeeper. Sanjeev brings extensive experience in delivering high standards of guest satisfaction through effective housekeeping operations. His expertise spans departmental administration, budgeting, inventory and linen management, team leadership, training and development, vendor

coordination and strict adherence to standard operating procedures. He has successfully managed housekeeping functions across expansive hotel premises while working closely with engineering and other operational teams to ensure seamless day-to-day functioning. In his most recent role, Sanjeev served as Executive Housekeeper at Rosetta Sakleshpur, Karnataka, where he oversaw housekeeping operations for rooms and public areas across a 100-acre property. His responsibilities included departmental administration, inventory and laundry management, minibar coordination, guest feedback handling, preventive maintenance collaboration with engineering and initiatives related to property upkeep and landscaping. He has previously held senior housekeeping roles at Grand Mercure, Agra and Fortune Landmark, Ahmedabad. Earlier in his career, he served as Assistant Executive Housekeeper at Fern Residency, Rajkot, and Team Leader – Housekeeping at Vana Retreats, Dehradun.

Goutham N J



The Westin Goa announced the appointment of Goutham N J as the new Executive Housekeeper. With 17 years in hospitality and a decade-long association with Marriott International, Goutham brings a strong operational foundation shaped by renowned hotel openings, cross-functional experience and a commitment to excellence. A native of Thrissur, Kerala, Goutham began his hospitality journey as a

Housekeeping Associate at ISTA Bangalore. Over the years, he has played key roles in several prestigious pre opening projects, including ISTA Pune, JW Marriott Bengaluru (UB City), and Kochi Marriott Hotel. In his new role as Executive Housekeeper at The Westin Goa, Goutham will lead the resort's housekeeping operations with a strong focus on quality, efficiency, and guest-centric service. His leadership will play a critical role in elevating guest satisfaction- one of the most important drivers of loyalty, positive reviews, and repeat visits. With this appointment, The Westin Goa strengthens its leadership team, reinforcing its dedication to world-class hospitality and exceptional guest experiences.

Johny Joy



Renaissance Goa Hotel announced the appointment of Johny Joy as its Director of Operations. With over 14 years of leadership experience across international luxury hospitality brands, Johny brings a strong operational mindset, people-focused leadership and a proven ability to manage large-scale, full-service hotel environments. Johny's career spans key operational roles across

leading hotel brands, where he has consistently driven excellence across rooms, food and beverage, and support functions. Known for his hands-on and collaborative leadership approach, he has successfully overseen complex hotel operations featuring multiple dining venues, extensive recreational facilities, and large-scale banquet and event spaces. His strength lies in translating brand standards into seamless on-ground execution while building high-performing, guest-focused teams. His leadership journey has been marked by industry recognition, most notably being honoured as the Hotel F&B Manager of the Year, 2024 by the FHRAI, reflecting his sustained focus on operational excellence, innovation, and elevated guest satisfaction. Beyond operations, Johny has a keen interest in evolving hospitality trends, travel and creative concepts that shape contemporary guest experiences.

Kazi Abdul Wahab



The Orchid Hotel, Mumbai appointed Kazi Abdul Wahab as Executive Assistant Manager. With over 18 years of extensive experience across hospitality operations and sales, he is recognised for his strong operational expertise, food & beverage leadership, pre-opening experience and unwavering commitment to delivering international service standards. Over the years, he has led multi-

outlet F&B operations, large-format banqueting venues and cross-functional hotel teams across India and Oman. His professional journey includes experience with four pre-opening properties and two significant brand transitions, The Dukes Retreat to Athiva Resort & Spa, Khandala and Le Royal Meridien to Hilton Mumbai International Airport. Kazi Abdul Wahab holds a Twin Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering Technology from Atharva College of Hotel Management. He is a Certified Hotel Manager (CHM) by the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), reflecting his commitment to global hospitality benchmarks and professional excellence. In his current role, Kazi Abdul Wahab will oversee key operational functions at The Orchid Hotel, Mumbai.



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India's Hotel Boom Its demand drivers

There has been a significant boom in the hotel industry. The growth of the hospitality industry, which has a powerful positive effect on the country's economy, has several reasons for its progress and development. India draws millions of Indian and foreign travellers year in and year out, making hotels important assets for promotion of tourism and economy of the country. **Ashok Malkani** views the industry's progress, ways of enhancing the importance of the industry and its future.

India's hotel sector has been experiencing record growth. One of the enduring paradigms of Indian hospitality over the past few decades has been the strong sense of circularity. Besides the hotels holding onto their occupancies and rates, the hospitality industry has seen a spate of mergers, partnerships and strategic alliances and signings. Recently Accor, besides restructuring its corporate presence in India, entered into a strategic partnership with Treebo. Wyndham tied up with Cygnett for expansion. IHCL, plans to add 4,500 rooms across more than 30 new properties next fiscal year as part of its goal to exceed 700 properties by 2030. Recently, IHCL has entered into a significant strategic partnership, signing agreements to acquire controlling stake in ANK Hotels Pvt Ltd and Pride Hospitality Pvt Ltd. The group has also signed a distribution agreement with Brij Hospitality Pvt Ltd, taking IHCL's portfolio to over 550 hotels, the first for any group in India.

The top six markets witnessed year-over-year growth in Average Daily Rate (ADR) and Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR). The hotel sector is indeed on a roll!

According to a recent report by HVS Anarock (a global consulting firm focused exclusively on the hospitality industry), the hotel industry's Average Room Rates (ARR) rose ~12% year-on-year, occupancy surged 500 basis points (5%) and RevPAR jumped 20% in April 2025.

India's tourism industry is indeed rising at



a rapid pace! According to the most recent Economic Impact Trends Report published by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), India has advanced from its former tenth position to eighth position as the world's largest tourism economy.

With an increase in travel and tourism, the hotel industry is witnessing a boom.

Rubin Cherian, General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC declares, "Indian hotel industry is experiencing a sustained and structural boom, not a short-term rebound. The strongest growth is visible in the upper-midscale to luxury segments (4-star & 5-star hotels), driven by rising domestic affluence, experiential travel and the resurgence of corporate and MICE demand. Midscale hotels are expanding rapidly in emerging

cities, while upscale and luxury hotels are benefitting from improved pricing power and higher occupancies in the metros.

Hyderabad exemplifies this trend well. As a city that balances technology, pharma, culture and conventions, it has seen strong demand across business, leisure and events. At Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC, we've witnessed consistent growth from large conventions, destination weddings and global corporate events. Telangana Tourism's focus on infrastructure, heritage promotion and global outreach has further strengthened the city's positioning as a premium yet value-driven destination."

Vijay Chandran, General Manager, Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa states, "India's hotel and hospitality industry really has been experiencing a boom, driven by strong travel demand, rising tourist numbers and growing investor interest. This growth is evident in new room signings, increased RevPAR and expansion across star categories and secondary cities, with a particularly notable recovery since the border tensions or economic pressure. Overall, mid-market (3-star & 4-star) + premium (4-star & 5-star) categories are seeing the most significant . Economy and budget hotels continue to see upticks especially in domestic travel markets, though data suggests mid-market growth will dominate supply pipelines into 2026."

Reshma Godbole, Director of Sales and Marketing, Le Meridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa, avers, "Indian hotel industry is clearly in a multi-year boom phase. The current upcycle is not speculative but



structurally driven by strong domestic demand, disciplined supply growth, and sustained pricing power across key markets. The fastest growth is visible in midscale to upscale hotels (3–4 star equivalents), followed closely by premium and luxury (5 star) properties. Midscale and upscale brands are benefiting from expanding domestic travel, Tier 2 and Tier 3 city demand, and brand-led standardisation, while luxury hotels are seeing strong rate-led growth supported by weddings, experiential leisure and high-end domestic travel.”

Anant Leekha, General Manager, Novotel Pune, states, “Indian hospitality industry is witnessing a strong and sustained upswing, supported by a balanced recovery across leisure, business and social travel segments. The growth is particularly evident in the mid-scale to upscale categories, especially well-positioned 4-star and 5-star hotels. These hotels benefit from diversified demand sources, including corporate travel, MICE movements, weddings and experience-led leisure travel. Business travel has shown consistent recovery across metro cities and emerging commercial hubs, while leisure and destination-driven travel continue to support demand during peak seasons. This combination has resulted in healthier occupancies and more stable year-round performance.”

Nimish Pitale, Director of Sales & Marketing, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore says, “Indian hospitality industry is experiencing a strong and sustained growth phase. The most significant momentum is visible in the upper-midscale, premium and luxury segments, driven by experiential travel, destination weddings, MICE demand and branded hospitality expansion. While budget hotels continue to grow in volume, it is the 4-star and 5-star categories that are seeing higher RevPAR growth and increased investor interest.”

Varun Marwah, Commercial Director of Sales & Marketing, Double Tree By Hilton Pune-Chinchwad, declares, “The Indian hotel industry is experiencing a strong and sustained boom. The growth is most pronounced in the mid-scale and upscale segments (3-star and 4-star hotels), driven by rising domestic travel, corporate movement, MICE demand and improved



Nimish Pitale

infrastructure. At the same time, luxury and upper-upscale (5-star) hotels are also seeing renewed traction, particularly in metro cities, resort destinations and experiential leisure markets, supported by weddings, destination travel, and premium lifestyle spending. The 2-star segment continues to grow steadily, especially in budget-conscious business and transit locations.”

Pushkar Upadhyay, Director of Sales & Marketing, The Westin Jaipur Kant Kalwar Resort & Spa, affirms, “The Indian hospitality industry is experiencing a fundamental transformation, moving well past post-pandemic recovery into a phase of strong and enduring growth. Rising demand, fuelled by domestic leisure travel, pilgrimage and spiritual tourism, and a rejuvenated MICE segment has begun to outstrip supply, driving record occupancy levels and firmer room rates. While the most pronounced gains are evident in the premium 4-star and 5-star



Rubin Cherian

categories, the rapid rollout of 3-star mid-scale hotels across Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities underscores the breadth of this upcycle, highlighting its truly nationwide character and its potential to accelerate further through 2026.”

Sanjeev Kumar, GM of Naukuchia House – IHCL SeleQtions, reveals, “India is witnessing a significant boom in hospitality. The strongest growth has been in the 4-star and 5-star segments, driven by rising aspirations of domestic travellers and the demand for experiential luxury. At the same time, mid-scale hotels (3-star) are expanding rapidly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities to cater to business and spiritual tourism.”

Contributors for Boost in Tourism

The tourism sector in India has regained its pre-pandemic momentum. The tourism sector has, however, to delve into factors like the reasons for the boost and whether the increase is in international or domestic tourism. In this connection it may be mentioned that there has been a robust growth in domestic travel.

As far as spiritual tourism is concerned, events like Mahakumbh mela, in Prayagraj in February 2025, play a great role in boosting this segment of the tourism industry. The Mahakumbh is believed to have generated about Rs 28 billion for the hospitality and travel industry, indicating a strong demand for accommodations in pilgrimage sites.

So, one may ask: what is contributing to the growth of the Indian hospitality industry – domestic travel, international tourism or spiritual tourism?

Anant Leekha informs, “Growth has been driven by a healthy mix of Indian and international travellers. Domestic travellers continue to form the backbone of demand through leisure breaks, weddings, spiritual tourism, and business travel.

“At the same time, international travel has gained momentum, supported by India hosting global business events, international conferences, sporting events, concerts and destination weddings. This blend of domestic and international demand has helped hotels diversify their guest mix and reduce dependency on any single travel segment.”

He adds, Spiritual travel has certainly played an important role, particularly in

destinations such as Ayodhya, Tirupati, Dharamshala and other pilgrimage centres. This segment has driven strong domestic travel and encouraged new hotel development and infrastructure upgrades. However, the overall growth is not limited to spiritual tourism alone. Business travel, destination weddings, and regional events have also contributed significantly, helping many destinations evolve into multi-purpose travel hubs rather than single-segment markets."

Rubin Cherian disclosed, "The current boom is overwhelmingly domestic-led, with Indian travellers accounting for nearly 75-80% of occupied room nights across branded hotels. Rising disposable incomes, "revenge travel," and the blending of business with leisure have reshaped travel behaviour. Short breaks, weddings, conferences and experiential stays are now frequent and spontaneous.

"International tourism, while slower to recover post-pandemic, has made a meaningful return to major gateways such as Hyderabad, particularly in the upper-upscale



Sanjeev Kumar

and luxury segments. Global business travel, long-stay expatriates and international conferences are once again driving demand.

Hyderabad benefits from both forces. As a pharmaceutical, IT and convention hub, it attracts global delegates, while its culinary scene, heritage landmarks and proximity to Telangana's cultural circuits make it appealing for domestic leisure travellers. At HICC, "International conventions are rising

alongside robust Indian corporate and social demand, creating a well-balanced demand mix."

He adds, "Spiritual tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing engines of travel demand in India, and its impact on hospitality is both deep and structural. According to industry data, accommodation bookings across pilgrimage destinations grew 19% in FY24-25, with many locations registering double-digit and even 25%+ growth.

What's changed is the nature of the pilgrim. Today's spiritual traveller seeks clean, branded, reliable accommodation and often combines pilgrimage with leisure experiences. Group travel, short stays and last-minute bookings dominate this segment, creating strong demand for organised hotels, homestays and midscale brands.

Hyderabad benefits indirectly as a transit and hosting city for spiritual circuits across Telangana and neighbouring states. With Telangana Tourism promoting temple trails, heritage routes and cultural festivals, the convergence of faith, culture and comfort is

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accelerating hotel demand. This trend is no longer niche – it is mainstream.”

Varun Marwah states, “The growth has been predominantly driven by Indian domestic tourists. Post-pandemic, domestic travel has emerged as the backbone of the hospitality industry, with increased frequency of leisure trips, workcations, weddings and religious tourism. International arrivals are steadily recovering and contribute significantly to premium and luxury hotels, but domestic demand remains the primary growth engine.

I may add that the spiritual and religious travel segment has played a significant role, especially in destinations like Ayodhya, Varanasi, Tirupati, Shirdi and Ujjain. Infrastructure development around religious hubs and improved accessibility have boosted demand for quality accommodation. However, the hotel boom is not limited to spiritual tourism alone, it is a combination of leisure, business, weddings, events and experiential travel trends.”

Nimish Pitale says, “The primary driver for boost in tourism has been Indian domestic travellers. Post-pandemic, domestic travel has grown exponentially, with increased frequency, higher spending and a preference for branded hotels. International travel is steadily recovering and adds incremental value, but domestic demand remains the backbone of the current boom.”

He adds, “Spiritual tourism has played a role, particularly in destinations like Ayodhya, Varanasi, Ujjain and Tirupati. However, the overall boom is multi-dimensional, driven equally by leisure travel, destination weddings, corporate events and experiential stays rather than spiritual tourism alone.”

Vijay Chandran states, “Domestic tourists are the primary growth driver. Domestic travel continues to account for 75% - 80% of tourism volumes, forming the backbone of hotel demand. International tourism is recovering but at a slower relative pace compared with domestic visitors (though long-term projections are positive). Domestic leisure, weddings, corporate, MICE and events are the dominant sources of hotel clientele, whereas international travel contributes meaningfully but not as the main driver of volume growth.”

He continues, “Having personally spent



Varun Marwah

4+ years at the Spiritual capital – Amritsar and now in Pushkar – I would say that spiritual tourism is a meaningful contributor to the city’s tourism. Pilgrimage and faith-based travel have surged, with many Indians travelling to religious sites, boosting hotel stays. Major brands are launching properties in spiritual destinations to tap this trend. However, it is subjective to select cities.”

Reshma Godbole avers, “The growth has been overwhelmingly domestic-led. Indian travellers have emerged as the backbone of hotel demand, driven by higher disposable incomes, improved connectivity, flexible work patterns and a strong cultural shift toward frequent leisure travel. While inbound international tourism is recovering steadily, it has not yet matched the scale or consistency of domestic demand. In value and volume terms, domestic travel today contributes far more to hotel occupancies, room nights and overall revenues.”



Vijay Chandran

Speaking about spiritual tourism he says, “Spiritual tourism has been an important accelerator, but it is not the sole driver of growth. Destinations such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Tirupati, Ujjain and Puri have seen unprecedented visitor inflows, directly boosting hotel demand and catalysing new supply. However, industry-wide growth is equally supported by leisure travel, destination weddings, MICE, adventure tourism and cultural tourism.

In short, spiritual tourism is a powerful contributor in select corridors, while broader leisure and experiential travel trends are driving pan-India hotel growth.”

Sanjeev Kumar states, “The boom is largely domestically driven. Post-pandemic, Indian travellers have embraced domestic destinations, exploring boutique luxury and heritage properties. International arrivals are recovering, but the backbone of growth remains the Indian travellers.”

He adds, “The rise in hospitality demand is closely linked to India’s spiritual boom. Destinations such as Ayodhya, Tirupati and Varanasi have seen leading hotel brands enter aggressively, recognising that spiritual travel today is not just about pilgrimage but about holistic experiences. Guests are seeking wellness, mindfulness and cultural immersion alongside their spiritual journeys. This has created a new wave of demand for hotels that can balance faith, heritage and modern hospitality. Properties like Naukuchia House, though not a pilgrimage site, benefit from the same trend – travellers want places that reconnect them with meaning, nature, and culture.”

Pushkar Upadhyay declares, “Although international interest is on the rise, the current surge in the hospitality sector is being driven predominantly by domestic travellers. Indian tourists now constitute the core of the market, contributing close to 84% of overall visitor spending. Supported by increasing disposable incomes and a growing appetite for premium staycations, it is the steady, year-round demand from domestic travel – rather than seasonal overseas arrivals – that is sustaining record occupancies and powering the industry’s continued growth.”

He adds, “Spiritual tourism has become a central driver of growth in India’s hospitality

sector. Accounting for more than 60% of all domestic travel, pilgrimage-led journeys have expanded far beyond a seasonal phenomenon into a consistent, year-round economic force. This transformation is spurring significant infrastructure investment and a rapid increase in branded hotel development across key religious destinations, as today’s pilgrims increasingly seek high-quality, experience-led and comfort-focused accommodations alongside their spiritual journeys.”

Vicinity

Hotel occupancies across the country are growing. And this includes tier II and tier III cities! Projections indicate that there has been a revenue increase of 7-9% in FY 2025 due to several reasons like raise in events like weddings and business travel. Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) Property Consultants India has reported that about 42,071 key check-ins were made at top-branded hotels in 2024, with 77% concentrated in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Weddings, festivals and corporate events, due to cost advantage as compared



Anant Leekha

to metros, are increasingly being hosted in tier-II and tier-III cities.

Pushkar Upadhyay discloses, “Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities have emerged as the next growth engines for Indian hospitality. In 2024, nearly 77% of all new branded hotel signings were concentrated in these markets, reflecting a clear shift by developers away from overcrowded metropolitan areas. This

momentum is being propelled by stronger regional connectivity, more attractive cost structures and a sharp rise in demand from cities such as Jaipur, Indore, and Ayodhya. Far from being peripheral, these destinations are increasingly outperforming metros on both occupancy and average daily rates, supported by a blend of corporate “bleisure” travel and a powerful surge in spiritual tourism.”

Reshma Godbole reveals, “One of the most defining features of the current growth cycle is the geographic broadening of hotel growth beyond metros. Hotel development is accelerating across Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities such as Indore, Surat, Lucknow, Kanpur, Nagpur, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Vadodara, Dehradun, Kochi, Chandigarh Tri-City, and several emerging leisure and industrial clusters. Improved air, road and rail connectivity, combined with rising local consumption, has made these markets commercially viable for branded hotels.”

She adds, “Large hotel groups are deliberately prioritising these markets, as

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demand growth here is often stronger and more stable than in saturated metros.”

Vijay Chandran avers, “The hotel boom is no longer confined to major metros: There are significant hotel investment and room signings in Tier-2, Tier-3 and smaller cities, with tens of thousands of rooms planned or under construction.”

He continues, “Domestic travel growth, improved air and rail connectivity and proactive city tourism strategies are making secondary markets attractive for brands and investors. This expansion is diversifying geographic penetration of branded and independent hotels, fueling growth beyond metros.”

Anant Leekha states, “There has been a noticeable rise in hotel development across Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Improved infrastructure, better air and road connectivity and growing regional business hubs have made these markets increasingly attractive.

In addition to leisure and spiritual tourism, these cities are witnessing increased corporate travel, industrial activity and wedding-related demand. As a result, hotels in these markets are benefiting from a mix of weekday business travel and weekend leisure or social events, creating more consistent occupancy patterns.”

Nimish Pitale declares, “Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are witnessing accelerated hotel development due to improved infrastructure, air connectivity, corporate movement, weddings, and leisure travel. Cities like Indore, Jaipur, Udaipur, Kochi and Coimbatore are emerging as strong hospitality hubs, offering both business and leisure demand.”

Rubin Cherian says, “One of the most defining shifts in Indian hospitality is the rapid expansion into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, where demand is now outpacing supply. Over the next 5–7 years, India will require an estimated 150,000 additional hotel rooms, much of this growth coming from emerging markets rather than saturated metros.”

He adds, “Improved air connectivity, new airports, highways and rail infrastructure have made these cities viable for business, leisure and social events. Hotel groups, including Accor, are accelerating growth through asset-light management models, allowing faster scale with lower capital risk.

From an Accor perspective, this expansion



Reshma Godbole

aligns with evolving travel patterns, weddings, regional conferences, spiritual tourism and long-stay business travel. Hyderabad plays a gateway role here, feeding traffic into Telangana’s secondary destinations. This de-centralisation is creating a more resilient hospitality ecosystem and unlocking long-term value beyond traditional urban centres.”

Varun Marwah affirms, “There has been a notable rise in hotel development in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Improved air connectivity, highways and regional business hubs have made these markets commercially viable. Cities such as Indore, Udaipur, Madurai, Trichy, Coimbatore, Amritsar, Ayodhya and Varanasi have seen increased branded hotel presence.

These markets benefit from a mix of business travel, religious tourism, government movement and local events, making them attractive for mid-scale and upscale hotels.”

Sanjeev Kumar, disclosed, “There has been a marked rise of hotels in tier 2



Pushkar Upadhyay

and tier 3 cities. Places like Rishikesh, Varanasi, Coimbatore, and smaller Himalayan towns are seeing new boutique hotels and branded properties. This is because travellers are seeking authentic, less crowded destinations.”

Future

The hotel industry in India, after the pandemic, has grown at a phenomenal rate. The progress has been aided by India’s growth in the tourism sector, which is targeted for 100 million international arrivals by 2047. The nation’s global tourism ranking has improved dramatically, supported by government initiatives and rising foreign exchange earnings, which rebounded to Rs. 2.78 lakh crore in 2024 after a pandemic dip. According to a report by IDBI Capital, India’s tourism and hospitality sector is expected to grow rapidly and could reach \$ 60 billion by 2028.

The report mentions that as of March 31, 2024, India had a total of 3.4 million hotel rooms. However, the organised sector (which includes branded hotels and high-quality independent properties) form only 11 per cent amounting to 375,000 keys. The luxury hotel segment is even smaller with just 29,000 keys, across 230 hotels.

To boost the tourism industry, the government has introduced several schemes. Some of them are

- Swadeshi Darshan Scheme: creating new travel destinations and boosting demand for hotels.
- Incredible India campaign: This is mainly with the intention of strengthening inbound tourism demand, benefitting hotel chains, luxury resorts, etc.
- E-Visa & Digital Initiatives: by simplifying visa processing for travellers from 150+ countries
- Dekho Apna Desh Initiative: meant mainly for encouraging domestic tourism by promoting lesser-known destinations.

Conclusion

India, which is considered as one of the most popular travel destinations globally, has witnessed a sharp rise in tourism and hospitality industry. And the boom is not just limited to major cities but also tier-2 and tier-3 cities. ■



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From security and cyber-security to housekeeping, laundry, etc., hotels have to depend on several services to achieve success. Like every other industry, the hospitality industry too, in today's dynamic work environment, faces the same dilemma: to have a fully in-house team or to tap into the vast national talent pool through outsourcing. Ashok Malkani delves into several aspects of the two teams.

George Bernard Shaw has said, "The great advantage of a hotel is that it is a refuge from home life." But the success of the property depends entirely on the work team at the hotel. Teamwork is absolutely essential for the success of a hotel. Satisfaction of the guests is of primary importance for the success of the property. From an inn to a five-star property it is teamwork of those looking after the welfare of the guests which contributes to the success story of the hotel.

A major question that arises, particularly in recent times, is whether the hotels should have an in-house team or should

they outsource services like housekeeping, laundry, security etc.?

Opinions differ on this aspect.

Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts states, "The decision to outsource or retain services such as housekeeping, laundry and security in-house depends on the hotel's brand promise, operating scale and long-term strategic priorities. In-house services offer greater control over quality training, guest interaction and compliance with brand standards. For us, as we place strong emphasis on sustainability, consistency and guest experience, in-house teams allow

deeper alignment with our environmental protocols, service ethos and responsible hospitality values.

Outsourcing on the other hand can deliver cost efficiencies, flexibility and access to specialised skill sets, particularly in functions that are labour intensive or non-core to brand differentiation. Security and laundry services are often effectively outsourced when managed through reputable partners who meet compliance standards and service level agreements.

From an industry perspective, the most successful hotels adopt a pragmatic blended approach. Critical guest-facing

functions where brand perception is directly impacted are best managed in-house, while backend or highly technical services can be outsourced under robust governance frameworks. Ultimately, the objective is not cost reduction alone but operational resilience, quality assurance and the ability to scale responsibly without compromising guest trust or employee wellbeing."

Nitin Pathak, General Manager, Hilton Gurugram Baani Square, avers, "Hotels generally follow a selective approach. Housekeeping is usually maintained in-house because cleanliness and guest satisfaction directly affect the hotel's reputation. Laundry services are often outsourced to reduce capital investment and save space, while security is typically handled by licensed agencies under the supervision of hotel management. Functions such as the front office and engineering are generally kept in-house since they involve critical operations and direct guest interaction. This approach allows hotels to maintain high-quality service in core areas

while achieving cost efficiency for support services."

Srikanth Devarapalli, General Manager at JW Marriott Kaafu Atoll Island Resort, Maldives, declares, "In the luxury segment, particularly at JW Marriott, we strongly believe that guest-facing services should remain in-house.

Housekeeping, front office and service delivery teams are the custodians of the brand promise. Keeping these services in-house allows us to maintain strict brand standards, consistent training and a strong culture of service.

The requirement also varies by location. In the Maldives, where resorts are situated on remote islands, properties must operate independently due to the absence of nearby service providers capable of delivering specialised services. In contrast, urban environments offer readily accessible external vendors and support networks, resulting in a fundamentally different operational landscape."

Rajiv Kapoor, General Manager, Fairmont

Mumbai & Roswyn, A Morgans Originals Hotel opines, "There is no one-size-fits-all answer, especially in the luxury segment.

At Fairmont Mumbai, the guiding principle is: guest experience first. Core touchpoints that directly influence service consistency, personalisation and brand standards such as housekeeping and guest-facing services are typically better managed in-house. These teams embody the brand's service culture and are trained to deliver the Fairmont promise.

Support functions like laundry operations, security or engineering services may be outsourced selectively, provided the partner meets stringent service-level agreements and compliance standards. Outsourcing can offer scalability, cost efficiencies and access to specialised expertise, particularly during pre-opening or high-demand periods.

The decision ultimately depends on:

- Impact on guest experience
- Ability to maintain brand standards
- Operational control and flexibility
- Long-term cost sustainability"

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Comparison

In today's dynamic work environment in the hospitality industry one of the biggest questions that the top management faces is: Should we hire an in-house team or outsource the work?

One tries to fathom: Which will be better for the property? This question is extremely relevant today as both – in-house as well as outsourced services – hold distinct advantages and disadvantages. So, how does one compare the two as far as expertise and efficiency is concerned?

Rajiv Kapoor explains, "In-house teams bring brand alignment, emotional ownership and consistency, which are critical in luxury hospitality. They understand guest expectations deeply and can adapt in real time.

Outsourced partners often bring process efficiency, technology leverage and specialised skill sets, particularly in non-core functions. However, efficiency must never come at the cost of warmth, personalisation or responsiveness.

The most successful luxury hotels adopt a hybrid approach, combining in-house leadership with outsourced expertise where it adds value without compromising experience."

Srikanth Devarapalli states, "Outsourced providers often bring operational expertise and efficiency through scale. However, in-house teams bring brand-specific expertise and a deeper understanding of our guests, our market and our service philosophy.

In a luxury environment, efficiency is not only measured in speed or cost, but also in precision, consistency and emotional connection, where in-house teams consistently perform better. In-house teams are better positioned to respond intuitively to guest needs, whether it is privacy, personalisation or cultural sensitivity, which ultimately defines luxury in this destination."

Nitin Pathak avers, "In-house teams offer deep knowledge of the property, strong alignment with hotel culture and consistent service delivery. Outsourced providers bring specialised expertise, efficient processes and scalability, which can be especially valuable for tasks that require specific technical skills. The success of outsourcing depends on vendor capability, clear service



Suhail Kannampilly

standards and proper supervision, while in-house teams rely on internal training and alignment with brand expectations."

Suhail Kannampilly explains, "In-house teams bring contextual expertise rooted in brand philosophy, property specific nuances and guest expectations. Their strength lies in institutional knowledge, operational continuity and the ability to respond quickly to on-ground challenges. This is particularly relevant in India where regional demand patterns, labour dynamics and cultural expectations vary significantly across markets. In-house expertise also enables tighter coordination between departments which improves efficiency in daily operations and service recovery.

Outsourced service providers typically offer process driven efficiency supported by standard operating procedures, technology platforms and cross property benchmarking.



Srikanth Devarapalli

Their teams are trained across multiple client environments which allows them to bring best practices and measurable productivity improvements. In areas such as revenue analytics, IT enabled services or specialised maintenance, outsourcing can often deliver higher efficiency due to scale and focused domain expertise.

At The Fern Hotels and Resorts, we evaluate expertise not just in terms of technical capability but also alignment with sustainability compliance and guest centricity. Efficiency is most effective when expertise is contextualised. Therefore, while outsourcing can enhance efficiency in certain functions, long term expertise and service excellence are best achieved through a collaborative model where internal leadership sets direction and external partners augment capabilities in a structured accountable manner."

Differences

As the hospitality industry grows and evolves one of the most strategic decisions the hoteliers have to make is whether to manage key operations in-house or to outsource them. One of the main issues under consideration would be the KPIs (key performance indicators). Choosing between outsourcing and in-house operations is a complex decision that is impacted by a wide range of factors.

Suhail Kannampilly says, "The primary difference between in-house and outsourced models lies in control, accountability and cost structure. In-house operations typically involve higher fixed costs but offer greater control over quality, culture and long term talent development. Outsourcing converts fixed costs into variable costs which can improve short term financial flexibility but may reduce direct oversight.

Key performance indicators for in-house teams often include guest satisfaction scores, employee retention, service recovery metrics, sustainability, compliance and departmental profitability. For outsourced services KPIs are more transactional and outcome focused such as turn-around time, cost per unit, adherence to service level agreements, compliance scores and audit results. In-house models are advantageous for functions that directly influence guest



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perception and brand equity. They foster loyalty, consistency and deeper service personalisation. However, they require sustained investment in training systems and leadership. Outsourcing offers speed, scalability and access to specialised expertise but carries risks related to inconsistency and dilution of brand values if not governed effectively.

At The Fern Hotels & Resorts, we believe success lies in aligning KPIs across both models so that whether a service is delivered internally or externally, it contributes equally to guest experience, operational excellence and our commitment to responsible hospitality."

When you compare the two with regards to guest expectations and cost-effectiveness, he says, "Guest experience is influenced less by whether a service is in-house or outsourced and more by how seamlessly it is delivered. From a guest perspective, consistency, responsiveness and personalisation matter far more than operational structure. In-house teams often have an advantage in understanding returning guests preferences, brand tone and service nuances which enhances emotional connection and loyalty.

Outsourced services can support cost effective solutions by optimising processes, reducing wastage and leveraging economies of scale. When well integrated, these efficiencies can translate into better maintained facilities, faster service delivery and competitive pricing without compromising quality. However, this requires strong onboarding training and alignment with the hotel's service philosophy.

At The Fern Hotels and Resorts, we focus on outcome based integration. Cost effectiveness is pursued through smart sourcing, energy efficiency and process optimisation rather than labour substitution alone. Whether services are in-house or outsourced, our priority is that guests experience warmth, reliability and sustainability in every touchpoint. When cost efficiencies are achieved without visible trade offs in service quality, guests benefit from better value which strengthens trust and long term brand affinity."

Rajiv Kapoor explicates, "The primary difference between in-house and outsourced



Rajiv Kapoor

operations lies in control and alignment. In-house teams are deeply integrated into the hotel's culture and service philosophy, allowing for stronger brand consistency, quicker decision-making, and a more personalised guest experience. Outsourced operations function through structured contracts and service-level agreements, focusing largely on efficiency, scalability and process-driven delivery.

In-house performance is typically measured through guest satisfaction scores, service consistency, staff engagement and cost efficiency, reflecting both service quality and cultural strength. Outsourced services are evaluated using KPIs such as SLA adherence, response times, compliance standards and cost benchmarks, ensuring accountability and operational efficiency.

While in-house teams offer greater brand control and emotional ownership, they require higher investment in people and training. Outsourcing provides flexibility and access to specialised expertise but needs close oversight to ensure service standards and guest experience are not compromised. In the luxury segment, a balanced approach



Nitin Pathak

retaining in-house control over guest-facing services while outsourcing selectively delivers the most sustainable results."

He adds, "When you compare the two teams in terms of guest experience and cost effectiveness, I would say that from a guest's perspective, operational models are invisible, but outcomes are not. Cost-effective solutions are viable only when they enhance efficiency without affecting service quality, responsiveness or personalisation. In luxury hospitality, any model whether in-house or outsourced must deliver a seamless experience. Decisions are therefore evaluated through the lens of whether the guest perceives a positive or neutral impact on their stay."

Srikanth Devarapalli elucidates, "From a GM's perspective, in-house and outsourced models are evaluated through very different lenses. In-house success is measured through guest satisfaction, brand compliance, service consistency, associate engagement and repeat visitation, as these directly reflect how well the brand promise is being delivered. Outsourced models, on the other hand, are typically assessed through cost efficiency, productivity and adherence to service-level agreements. While in-house operations require a higher investment in people and training, they offer stronger brand alignment, greater accountability, faster service recovery and deeper guest relationships. Outsourcing provides flexibility and cost control, but in a luxury resort environment it can present limitations in personalisation, consistency and brand immersion."

He adds, "Comparing the two, with reference to guest experience and cost effectiveness, I would say that in the luxury space, cost effectiveness must be viewed through a long-term lens. While outsourcing may reduce short-term costs, in-house teams consistently deliver higher guest satisfaction and loyalty, which ultimately drives stronger revenue performance and brand equity. At JW Marriott, we believe that investing in service excellence is one of the most effective commercial strategies."

Nitin Pathak avers, "The main differences between in-house and outsourced services lie in the type of employment, cost structure and supervision. In-house teams are

employment-based with fixed costs and rely on direct supervision, while outsourced teams operate under contracts with variable costs and performance monitored through service agreements. Key performance indicators for in-house services include gross operating profit, guest satisfaction, staff productivity, attrition rates and departmental costs. For outsourced services, KPIs focus on service level agreement compliance, cost per occupied room, quality audits, guest complaints related to the service and statutory compliance. In-house services offer consistency and brand control but may have higher payroll costs and less flexibility, while outsourcing provides cost efficiency and scalability but requires careful monitoring to avoid inconsistent service.”

Comparing the two in terms of guest satisfaction and cost effectiveness, he adds, “Guest experience is influenced by service consistency, cleanliness, responsiveness and safety. In-house teams are generally more effective in roles that involve direct interaction with guests because they can

provide personalised service and immediate problem resolution. Outsourced services are more suitable for support functions that can be standardised, offering cost savings while maintaining quality. However, hotels must ensure that cost reductions do not compromise service standards or brand expectations.”

Revenue Strategy

Speaking about in-house and outsourced teams, one of the aspects taken into consideration is revenue. Most of the hoteliers make outsourcing decisions based on one metric: the monthly fee. They compare the salary of a full-time Revenue Manager to the agency retainer.

A layman may wonder about the intricacies of revenue management. It may be mentioned that revenue management connects marketing, sales and operations, processing vast amounts of data to make split-second decisions that define your bottom line.

Nitin Pathak explains, “In-house revenue

management is handled by the hotel’s own staff. It involves planning and optimising revenue through pricing strategies, forecasting demand, managing inventory and overseeing distribution. The team works closely with sales, operations and brand standards to ensure that the hotel maximises its revenue potential. In contrast, outsourced revenue management is carried out by specialised external firms that manage multiple properties using advanced systems and market insights. These providers follow standardised methods to improve revenue performance and offer expertise that may not be available in-house.”

Rajiv Kapoor elucidates the difference between the two modes of revenue management thus: “In-house revenue management refers to having a dedicated team within the hotel that manages pricing, inventory, demand forecasting and distribution strategies. This team works closely with operations, sales and marketing and has an intimate understanding of the hotel’s positioning, brand promise and





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guest mix.

Outsourced revenue management involves partnering with a third-party specialist firm that manages these functions remotely, often across multiple properties, using centralised systems and analytics."

Srikanth Devarapalli states, "At JW Marriott Maldives Kaafu Atoll Island Resort, in-house revenue management means having a dedicated team that is deeply connected to the rhythm of the resort, our guest profiles and the destination itself. Being only 15 minutes from the airport, demand patterns, length of stay and guest intent differ significantly from remote atolls, and this requires constant, real-time decision-making.

Outsourced revenue management is typically managed by third-party specialists who support multiple properties remotely. While technically capable, they may not always capture the nuances of a resort experience where seasonality, guest behavior and brand positioning are closely intertwined.

For us, a revenue strategy must support not only performance, but also experience integrity."

Suhail Kannampilly explicates, "In-house revenue management refers to the practice where a hotel manages pricing, distribution, forecasting and inventory control internally through a dedicated team that is embedded within the organisation. These teams work closely with operations, sales and marketing which allows for strong alignment with brand strategy, guest segmentation and on-ground realities. In contrast, outsourced revenue management involves engaging specialised third party firms that provide revenue optimisation services across multiple properties using centralised systems advanced analytics and market intelligence.

At The Fern Hotels and Resorts we view revenue management as a strategic function rather than a purely technical one. In-house teams offer a deeper understanding of brand positioning, sustainability commitments and regional demand nuances which are particularly important in the Indian hospitality context. Outsourced models however bring scale, technology driven insights and exposure to global best practices which can be valuable for smaller

hotels or during expansion phases.

The choice between the two is not binary. Increasingly progressive hotel groups are adopting hybrid models that retain strategic control in-house while leveraging external expertise for analytics, benchmarking and system optimisation. This balanced approach allows hotels to remain agile, competitive and data led while preserving brand integrity and long term revenue vision."

Current Trends

The hospitality industry, driven by technology, sustainability and demand for personalised guest experiences is evolving rapidly. Staying ahead of the guests' expectations it must continuously adapt to changes. Today, personalisation is being taken to new heights with hyper-personalisation. This goes for marketing emails, messages and promotions, as well as in-room experiences. Whether it's a pillow or a blanket, a welcome gift or message, or asking for your guests' temperature preferences beforehand, the more you can tailor the guest experience, the better."

Nitin Pathak states, "Current industry trends indicate that hotels are increasingly adopting hybrid models. Non-core and capital-intensive services are often outsourced, while guest-facing functions remain in-house. Revenue management and analytics are becoming more centralised to improve efficiency and decision-making. There is also a strong focus on cost optimisation, productivity and robust vendor governance. Overall, the preferred model combines the strengths of both approaches, retaining core guest-facing services in-house while outsourcing specialised support functions."

Rajiv Kapoor informs, "The industry is increasingly moving toward hybrid operational models that combine in-house leadership with selective outsourcing. There is a growing reliance on technology-driven partners for backend and technical services, while guest-facing roles remain largely in-house, especially in the luxury segment. Experience-led service delivery continues to be a key differentiator, making in-house teams central to the brand's success."

Srikanth Devarapalli avers, "The

industry is moving toward experience-led operations. Luxury resorts are increasingly retaining core services in-house while selectively outsourcing specialised or technical functions. This allows brands to protect the guest experience while maintaining operational efficiency. In the Maldives, and particularly within the luxury segment, in-house service models remain the preferred approach."

Suhail Kannampilly declares, "The hospitality industry is witnessing a shift towards hybrid operating models, technology driven decision making, sustainability integration and asset light expansion. Hotels are increasingly focusing on core brand defining functions while selectively outsourcing specialised or backend services. This allows them to remain agile in a volatile demand environment while maintaining quality standards.

Revenue management, data analytics, digital marketing and IT infrastructure are among the most commonly outsourced or centrally managed functions due to the pace of technological change. At the same time, guest engagement, housekeeping and sustainability initiatives are often retained in-house to ensure consistency and emotional connect. There is also a growing emphasis on workforce wellbeing, compliance and skill development which has led many brands to reassess excessive outsourcing.

The preferred model across the industry today is neither fully in-house nor fully outsourced but a calibrated blend of both. Leading hotel groups including The Fern Hotels and Resorts are prioritising strategic control, ethical operations and guest centricity while partnering with experts where it adds measurable value. This balanced approach supports scalability, resilience and long-term brand credibility in an increasingly discerning market."

Future

It may be mentioned that The India Facility Management Market, which is segmented by service type, is expected to increase from \$ 87.21 billion in 2026 to reach \$ 123.98 billion by 2031, growing at a CAGR of 7.29% over 2026-2031.

Srikanth Devarapalli states, "The future

Business

will be strategic and experience-led. Luxury brands like JW Marriott will continue to prioritise in-house teams for guest-facing and brand-critical functions. Outsourcing will remain relevant, but only where it supports the guest experience without compromising on quality. At the end of the day, we would prefer to invest more to deliver exceptional service and consistency of the standards that define our brand."

Suhail Kannampilly declares, "The future of hotel operations lies in intelligent integration rather than rigid models. As technology, automation and data analytics become more sophisticated, hotels will increasingly outsource specialised knowledge driven functions while retaining strategic and guest centric roles in-house. This evolution will allow brands to remain competitive while focusing internal resources on experience, design leadership and sustainability.

In-house teams will become more skilled, more technology enabled and more focused on value creation rather than transactional tasks. Outsourced partners will be expected to move beyond cost efficiency to deliver innovation, compliance and measurable improvements in performance. The relationship will shift from vendor management to strategic partnership.

For The Fern Hotels and Resorts, the future is anchored in responsible growth. We see a continued emphasis on in-house stewardship of brand values, guest relationships and sustainability commitments supported by carefully selected partners who enhance capability without diluting identity. This balanced future ready approach will define resilient hospitality brands in an increasingly complex and conscious global market."

Nitin Pathak informs, "In-house teams will continue to manage brand-critical and guest-facing functions, where personal attention and service consistency are vital. Outsourcing is expected to expand in specialist and support areas such as laundry, security, IT support and centralised revenue management. The future model will emphasize lean internal teams supported by external partners under strong governance and performance monitoring to achieve both efficiency and high service standards."

Rajiv Kapoor believes, "The future lies in intelligent integration rather than choosing one model over the other. Luxury hotels will continue to retain in-house control over experience-defining services while outsourcing selectively for efficiency and specialisation. The focus will be on ensuring that all partners, whether internal or external, are aligned with the brand's service ethos and long-term vision, supported by data, training and strong governance frameworks."

Conclusion

The Indian hospitality industry is undergoing a transformative growth which involves guest expectations, sustainability mandates and rapid integration of technology. The guest needs have to be met and the general consensus suggests that an amalgamation of both – in-house and outsourced teams – are best suited. This trend is expected to be followed extensively by hotels in India as well as globally. ■



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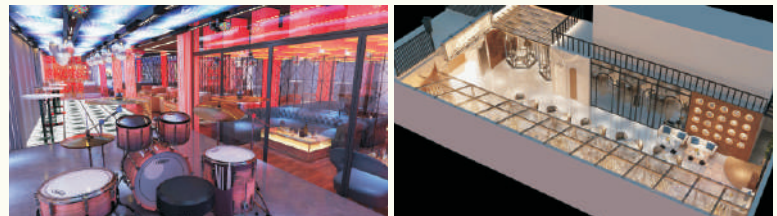
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Key Hospitality Issues Trending in 2026

By Sharmila Chand

The hospitality industry is evolving rapidly, driven by changing guest expectations and technological advancement.

Experts in the industry say, the future of hospitality will be shaped as much by people as by product. Hotels that invest in leadership development, emotional intelligence, purpose-driven culture, and career pathways will attract and retain the next generation of talent. Engaged teams deliver engaged guests, this remains the most enduring truth of the thriving industry.

Here we have five stalwarts of hospitality sharing their thoughts on 'Key issues in Hospitality, hot and trending this year.'

Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels and Resorts

At Roseate Hotels & Resorts, we see four key trends shaping the year ahead:

Experiential & Immersive Luxury

Today's luxury traveller is looking for meaningful experiences, not just a place to stay. Personalisation, storytelling, and authentic local connections are becoming essential. At Roseate Hotels & Resorts, we focus on curated dining, art-led spaces, wellness, and cultural experiences that allow guests to truly connect with the destination.

Sustainability as a Core Priority

Sustainability is now a strategic necessity. Guests are increasingly choosing brands that demonstrate genuine environmental responsibility. Energy efficiency, waste reduction, elimination of single-use plastics, and responsible

sourcing remain key focus areas across our operations.

At Roseate Hotels & Resorts, initiatives such as 'Aheli water' help reduce dependency on packaged drinking water, while innovative recycling practices, including converting discarded plastic into fabric for T-shirts and other materials, reflect our commitment to circular economy principles. Hotels that embed sustainability into their core philosophy and daily operations will build stronger trust, long-term loyalty, and meaningful impact.

Technology-Enabled Personalisation

Technology is transforming the guest journey in meaningful ways. From contactless services to AI-driven insights,



"At Roseate Hotels & Resorts, we focus on curated dining, art-led spaces, wellness, local and cultural experiences, that allow guests to truly connect with the destination"

Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels and Resorts

hotels can anticipate guest preferences and deliver seamless, personalised experiences while improving operational efficiency.

Innovations such as our Robot Server enhance service delivery with efficiency and novelty. Our softwares for guest streamline operations and elevate the overall guest experience through smarter, more integrated systems. Technology, when thoughtfully implemented, enables both convenience and consistency across every touchpoint.

Rise of Bleisure & Flexible Travel

The line between business and leisure travel continues to blur. Flexible work models are driving longer stays and hybrid travel. Hotels are adapting with co-working spaces, strong connectivity, and extended-stay offerings to meet these evolving needs.

Supreet Roy, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel

Purposeful and Experience-Driven Travel

Travellers are no longer impressed by scale or opulence alone. The modern guest is seeking meaning, relevance, and emotional connection. Purposeful travel is about immersion, authentic engagement with local culture, communities, and stories that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Hotels that act as cultural curators rather than just accommodation providers will stand out, offering experiences rooted in destination, heritage, and human connection.

Continued Growth of Bleisure and



“In 2026, hospitality success will be defined not by size or scale, but by relevance and resonance.

The hotels that thrive will be those that seamlessly combine meaningful experiences, authentic food journeys, technology-enabled personalization, and strong people-centric leadership, while remaining deeply rooted in the timeless essence of hospitality”

**Supreet Roy, General Manager
Sheraton Grand Pune Bund
Garden Hotel**

Flexible Travel

Bleisure has evolved from a trend into a structural shift in travel behaviour. Business travellers are increasingly extending stays to include leisure, wellness, and family time. This is driving demand for flexible check-in/check-out, hybrid workspaces, social lobbies, and curated city experiences. Urban and convention-driven hotels must reimagine design, programming, and service to seamlessly balance productivity with relaxation.

Experiential and Story-Driven Food & Beverage

Food & Beverage has become a primary driver for destination choice and brand differentiation. Guests are seeking story-led dining that reflects regional identity, seasonal sourcing, and culinary craftsmanship. Chef-driven concepts, immersive dining formats, open kitchens, and locally inspired menus are no longer optional, they are strategic assets. In 2026, successful hotels will treat F&B

as a cultural platform, not just a revenue centre.

Wellness as a Lifestyle, not a department

Wellness in 2026 is holistic and integrated into the entire guest journey. It goes beyond spas and gyms to include sleep quality, nutrition, mental wellbeing, movement, and digital detox. Hotels that thoughtfully embed wellness into rooms, menus, programming, and experiences will resonate deeply with both leisure and corporate travellers seeking balance in an increasingly demanding world.

Personalization at Scale

Guests expect hotels to recognize them, not just by name, but by preference. Intelligent use of guest data allows for hyper-personalized experiences, from room setup and dining recommendations to curated itineraries. The challenge and opportunity lies in delivering personalization that feels intuitive and human, not intrusive or automated.

Redefining Luxury: From Excess to Intent

Luxury is being redefined. Today’s discerning guest values thoughtfulness over extravagance, craftsmanship over excess, and authenticity over uniformity. Quiet luxury, meaningful design, personalized service, and emotional resonance will increasingly define premium hospitality in 2026.

Parag Shah, General Manager, Grand Mercure Bangalore

As we move into 2026, the hospitality industry is shifting away from “business as usual” toward a more personal, experience-driven approach.

At Grand Mercure Bangalore, we are seeing how closely guest satisfaction is connected to how we engage with our teams and how deeply we integrate with the local community.

The “Culture First” Talent Strategy

We’ve moved past the era where a paycheck was the primary retention tool. With a shrinking talent pool, 2026 is about building an ecosystem where people actually want to stay. The trend is moving away from rigid hierarchy toward structured upskilling and mental wellbeing. The Example: Instead of just



“As we move into 2026, the hospitality industry is shifting away from “business as usual” toward a more personal, experience-driven approach.

At Grand Mercure Bangalore, we are seeing how closely guest satisfaction is connected to how we engage with our teams and how deeply we integrate with the local community”

**Parag Shah, General Manager,
Grand Mercure Bangalore**

“filling shifts,” we are seeing hotels implement “Internal Gig Circles”- where a front-desk associate with a passion for mixology can spend a few hours a week training in the bar. This cross-training satisfies the employee’s desire for growth while making the hotel more operationally resilient.

Positioning F&B as a “Neighbourhood Destination”

The time when hotel restaurants depended mainly on in-house guests is now behind us. Today’s diners look for emotion, culture, and a sense of belonging, and city restaurants are winning because they feel alive and connected. To stay relevant, hotels F&B must move beyond function and become a place the local community genuinely relates to.

Example: Instead of a routine all day dining experience, thoughtfully curated and hyper local moments are creating deeper impact. A Bangalore Heritage Sunday Brunch built around regional artisanal ingredients, familiar flavours, and the warmth of live local jazz can

gently transform the space from a hotel facility into a lively city destination, one that locals choose with intent, not just travellers staying upstairs.

The Push for “Direct-to-Guest” Digital Sovereignty

In 2026, Hyper-Personalized Direct Bookings is the norm. We are using technology to make the direct booking path so seamless and rewarding that guests feel they are losing out if they book elsewhere.

Example: Hotels are now offering “Value-Added Micro-Perks” exclusive to direct bookers—such as a guaranteed early check-in or a complimentary curated local experience (like a guided walk through Koramangala) rather than just a 5% discount. It’s about offering value over price.

Varun Marwah, Commercial Director, Doubletree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad

Experience-Led Hospitality

Guests are no longer booking hotels only for accommodation; they are choosing experiences that tell a story - immersive food festivals, local trail explorations, chef-led dining experiences, or city discovery content (like hosted



“Tech-enabled convenience with a strong personal touch, immersive experiences, dynamic pricing strategies, curated F&B, ticketed events, are significant trends in hospitality to lead the game”

Varun Marwah, Commercial Director, Doubletree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad

walks, cultural pop-ups, or themed stays) rather than standard packages.

Personalization Powered by Technology (But Human at Heart)

Technology is enabling hotels to personalize guest journeys more effectively, from pre-arrival preferences to post-stay engagement. However, the winning formula is tech-enabled convenience with a strong human touch.

Revenue Optimization Amid Rising Costs

With increasing operational costs (energy, manpower, raw materials), hotels are focusing sharply on smarter pricing, demand forecasting, and ancillary revenue streams rather than only increasing room rates. Example: Dynamic pricing strategies, curated F&B experiences, ticketed events, collaborations with lifestyle brands, and monetizing underutilized spaces such as rooftops, pool decks, and banquet areas to drive profitability beyond rooms.

Sustainability with Accountability

Sustainability in 2026 is shifting from being a marketing message to a measurable, operational responsibility. Guests, corporates, and partners now expect transparency and real action. Example:

Energy-efficient infrastructure, reduced single-use plastics, locally sourced menus, food waste management, and responsible procurement—communicated subtly through guest touchpoints rather than loud claims.

Ranjit Phillipose, Sr Vice President Operations, IHCL Goa

Purpose-Driven and Sustainable Guest Experiences

Sustainability is no longer a checkbox with guests or with our resorts; it is a core expectation. In Goa, where natural beauty is the brand, sustainability shapes every guest’s journey. Travellers now actively choose destinations and brands that demonstrate environmental responsibility and community impact. Goa’s ecosystems, from its beaches to its forests, are under pressure from tourism. Hotels must be stewards, not spectators.

Wellness Integration beyond Spas

Wellness is expanding from treatment



“Convenience without losing warmth, Wellness beyond treatment rooms to holistic lifestyle immersion, guests now seek deeper cultural connection, unique stories, and roots in place”

Ranjit Phillipose, Sr Vice President Operations, IHCL Goa

rooms to holistic lifestyle immersion. Guests now define wellness as mental and emotional well-being and not just massages and yoga sessions. Goa is perfectly positioned, with its serene coastline, indigenous healing traditions, refreshing monsoons and a year-round wellness culture.

Hyper-Local Luxury where culture is the core amenity

Travellers are no longer satisfied with generic luxury. They want authenticity with comfort. The globe trotter now seeks deeper cultural connection, unique stories, and rootedness in place. Goa’s rich heritage, music, Portuguese-influenced architecture and diverse communities are fertile ground for curated cultural luxury.

Tech & Human Harmony working hand in hand

Convenience Without Losing Warmth. Technology is not about replacing people; instead, it is about empowering them. Travellers expect seamless digital interactions – from arrival to departure – but still value human connection. Goa’s luxury guest profile includes global jetsetters accustomed to intuitive tech and the personalised warmth of Goan hospitality. ■

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Loyalty Programme

The Art of Guest Retention

By Nikita Madan

Loyal guests are the foundation of every successful hotel. The stronger their loyalty, the less likely they are to consider competing brands and well-designed loyalty programmes are one of the most effective ways to secure that commitment. While approaches may vary, the core objective remains the same: encourage guests to choose your hotel first and inspire them to return again and again. Because every guest is different, a successful loyalty programme must address varied needs, preferences and motivations. Tailored marketing, personalised offers and ongoing feedback from members all play a crucial role in ensuring the programme remains relevant

and effective over time.

At its heart, a hotel rewards programme is a way of expressing appreciation to guests for their choice. Whether the rewards enhance their current stay or elevate their next visit, these thoughtful benefits reassure guests that they made the right decision and give them every reason to keep coming back.

What are Loyalty Programmes?

A hotel rewards programme is a loyalty initiative run by an independent hotel or a hotel chain to strengthen guest retention and build long-term preference over competitors. It is a structured marketing approach that motivates

guests to repeatedly choose the same brand by offering meaningful benefits, rewards and exclusive experiences. These programmes encourage loyalty by allowing members to earn points or rewards based on their spending and engagement with the hotel, which can later be redeemed for complimentary stays, room upgrades, discounts or special privileges. Ultimately, the goal of a hotel loyalty programme is to increase guest retention, drive direct bookings and support sustained revenue growth.

How Do Loyalty Programmes Work?

Hotel loyalty programmes function much

like airline or retail loyalty systems, inviting guests to enrol in exchange for members-only financial benefits and experiential rewards. They are simple yet effective frameworks designed to encourage repeat stays. Typically, they operate in the following ways:

Membership Enrolment: Guests can join the programme free of charge, either through the hotel's website or at the front desk during their stay.

Earning Points: Members earn points for each stay and for spending on additional services such as dining, spa treatments, or in-house experiences. These points accumulate over time.

Tier Levels: Most programmes include tier categories such as Silver, Gold and Platinum, with higher tiers offering enhanced benefits. Advancement is based on the number of stays or points earned.

Redeeming Points: Accumulated points can be redeemed for rewards like complimentary nights, room upgrades, partner benefits or vouchers.

Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, says, "Loyalty programmes in hospitality are designed to encourage repeat stays and strengthen guest relationships. Guests earn points when they book rooms or use hotel services such as dining or spa. These points can be redeemed for free nights, room upgrades, or special benefits.

Most programmes include tier levels, where frequent guests receive additional privileges. This approach increases guest retention, supports direct bookings, and helps hotels better understand guest preferences while driving long-term growth."

A guest who feels acknowledged and valued is more likely to develop a lasting connection with the hotel. A thoughtfully designed loyalty programme goes beyond offering perks; it fosters meaningful relationships that contribute to long-term growth. Here are three key advantages:

Enhanced Guest Experience and Repeat Bookings

When guests feel appreciated, they return. Personalized rewards such as



"Roseate Hotels and Resorts offers the B-Privé Rewards & Membership programme, designed to enhance guest experiences."

**Kush Kapoor, CEO,
Roseate Hotels & Resorts**

room upgrades, late check-outs, or welcome gestures create memorable experiences that encourage repeat visits.

Reduced Marketing Costs with Higher Impact

Loyalty programmes are among the most cost-effective marketing strategies. Rather than continuously investing in acquiring new guests, hotels can focus on nurturing existing relationships with guests who already trust the brand.

Increased Revenue through Data-



"The LaLiT Loyalty is a purpose-driven, tiered programme open to all eligible guests. Members earn points on stays, dining, spa treatments etc."

**Harmeet Kaur, General Manager,
Corporate Marketing & Customer
Experience, The LaLit New Delhi**

Driven Personalisation and Upselling

Repeat guests provide valuable data insights. When a loyalty programme is integrated with a robust PMS, hotels can tailor offers, recommend relevant services, and deliver highly personalised experiences that boost satisfaction and revenue.

Harmeet Kaur, General Manager, Corporate Marketing & Customer Experience, The LaLit New Delhi asserts, "Loyalty programmes work by incentivising repeat engagement with a brand through rewards and recognition. Customers earn points, credits or benefits each time they make a purchase or interact with the brand. These accumulate over time and can be redeemed for rewards such as discounts, complimentary products or services, exclusive access, upgrades or special experiences.

Many loyalty programmes are structured in tiers, with higher levels offering enhanced privileges and personalised benefits to recognise long-term or high-value customers. Beyond rewards, modern loyalty programmes focus on building emotional connections by offering personalised experiences, convenience and value aligned with customer preferences, shifting loyalty from purely transactional to relationship-driven."

Types of Loyalty Programmes

Hotels design loyalty programmes in different formats to suit varied guest preferences and travel behaviours. Each model is built to reward repeat stays, deepen brand affinity and encourage long-term engagement. Below are the most common types used across the industry:

Points-Based Programmes

This is the most widely adopted format. Guests earn points for every stay and for spending on in-house services. Over time, these points can be redeemed for complimentary stays, room upgrades, amenities or partner rewards. The more a guest stays or spends, the greater the benefits they unlock.

Tiered Loyalty Programmes

Tiered programmes categorise

members into levels, such as entry, elite and premium, based on their activity and loyalty. As guests progress through tiers by meeting defined criteria, they gain access to progressively richer benefits like priority upgrades, late check-outs, dedicated support and personalised privileges.

Co-Branded Credit Card Programmes

Many hotels partner with credit card providers to extend loyalty benefits beyond the property. With co-branded cards, members earn hotel points through everyday purchases, not just hotel stays. These cards often come with added advantages such as faster point accumulation, instant elite status and exclusive discounts.

Alliances and Partnership Programmes

Through strategic partnerships with airlines, car rental services, restaurants and retail brands, hotels allow members to earn and redeem points across a wider ecosystem. This flexibility increases the perceived value of the programme and offers more ways for guests to engage with the brand.

Experience-Led Loyalty Programmes

Some hotels move beyond transactional rewards and focus on curated experiences. Members may receive invitations to private events, culinary sessions, wellness treatments or local adventures that regular guests cannot access. These experiential rewards help create memorable



“At Eros Hotel New Delhi, we offer the Eros Premier Loyalty Programme! It’s designed to reward our valued guests for their loyalty and continued patronage.”

**Davinder Juj, General Manager,
Eros Hotel, New Delhi**

connections and stronger emotional loyalty.

Role of the Front Office

The front office plays a vital role in driving hotel loyalty programs by enrolling new members, recognizing elite guests and delivering personalised service. By managing member profiles, updating preferences in the CRM and offering benefits such as room upgrades, early check-in, late check-out and complimentary breakfast, they enhance the guest experience. As the primary point of contact, the front office also

handles feedback and service recovery, strengthening relationships and turning routine interactions into opportunities for retention and revenue growth.

Davinder Juj, General Manager of Eros Hotel, New Delhi says, “The front office plays a pivotal role in driving the success of our loyalty programme, Eros Premier. As the first point of contact, they’re responsible for setting the tone for a guest’s stay and influencing their perception of our brand. By delivering exceptional service, they’re able to build emotional connections with our guests, driving loyalty and retention. They proactively communicate programme benefits, personalize interactions, and anticipate special requests, making guests feel valued and appreciated. By doing so, they encourage guests to continue choosing Eros Hotel New Delhi for their stays, ultimately boosting the



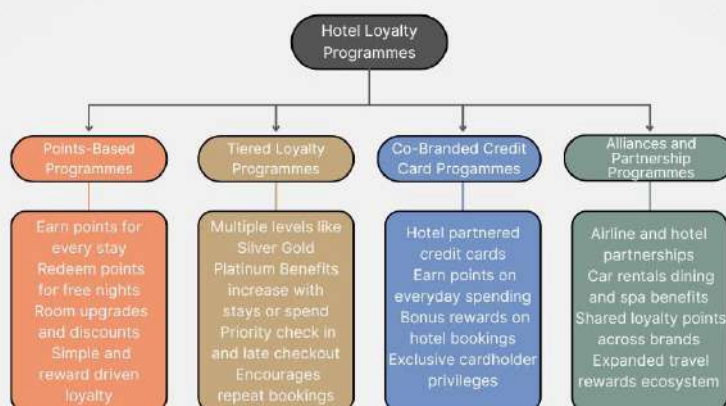
success of our loyalty programme.”

Ravi Rai, General Manager, The Orchid Hotel Vile Parle, Mumbai agrees, “The Front Office is instrumental in driving loyalty programme success, as it is the first point of guest engagement. At The Orchid Hotel, Mumbai, our team actively introduces and promotes Orchid Rewards while ensuring seamless enrolments. More importantly, they recognise returning members, greet them by name, and acknowledge their preferences and tier benefits. This personalised attention strengthens emotional connection with the brand. When guests feel valued from arrival to departure, loyalty naturally deepens.”

Changing Guest Mind-set

Davinder Juj says, “Today’s guests are looking for more than just a place to stay - they want experiences that are

Types of Loyalty Programmes in the Hotel Industry





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personalised, authentic and memorable. The changing guest mind-set is driven by a desire for unique experiences, flexibility and recognition of their individuality. Guests now prioritise feeling valued and understood, and they're more likely to stay loyal to hotels that cater to their preferences and interests.

What's driving this shift is the rise of digital natives and millennials, who expect seamless, mobile-first interactions and crave experiences over material rewards. To keep guests loyal, hotels are focusing on creating emotional connections, offering tailored experiences, and leveraging data to anticipate their needs. This includes things like personalised room amenities, exclusive access to events, and recognition of their special occasions.

Ultimately, loyalty is no longer just about points and perks - it's about building a relationship with the guest. Hotels that get this right will be the ones that thrive in today's competitive landscape."

Harmeet Kaur, agrees, "Rather than simply chasing discounts, modern travellers seek programmes that recognise their loyalty through experiences tailored to their lifestyle, whether that includes luxury stays, culinary journeys and wellness rituals or contributing to causes they care about.

With growing awareness around social impact and sustainability, loyalty programmes that enable guests to give back such as donating points to



"Members earn points called Petals on eligible spends, which can be redeemed for complimentary experiences and exclusive benefits."

Ravi Rai, General Manager, The Orchid Hotel Vile Parle, Mumbai

support education, the environment or community upliftment, resonate deeply with a new generation of conscious travellers. This shift reflects a broader evolution in which loyalty is no longer purely transactional, but emotional and values-driven."

Kush Kapoor, asserts, "The guest mind-set has shifted from simply looking for comfort and price to seeking meaningful, personalized experiences. Today's guests expect services tailored to their preferences, seamless digital interactions and stays that feel unique rather than standardised.

Loyalty is built through personalisation, memorable moments and technology-

enabled convenience. What makes a guest stay loyal today is the ability of a brand to deliver experiences they cannot easily find elsewhere. At Roseate, this is reflected in our philosophy of #ExperiencetheUnimagined wherein we offer refined, immersive stays supported by personalised attention - from tailored wellness journeys at Aheli Spa to our dedicated butler service. The guest should feel valued and truly understood."

Ravi Rai, stated, "At The Orchid Hotel, Mumbai, we believe true loyalty comes from personalised experiences across both stay and dining. Whether it is anticipating a repeat guest's room preferences or ensuring their favourite dish is prepared just the way they like it, attention to detail creates emotional recall. Guests return not only for our rooms or for restaurants, but because they feel valued, known and genuinely cared for. Consistent service, warm greetings and thoughtful gestures are what transform first-time visitors into loyal patrons."

Conclusion

Designing an effective loyalty programme is as much a strategic business decision as any other hotel initiative. Data plays a central role. To truly understand guest preferences and spending patterns, hotels need technology that captures insights across every touchpoint of the guest journey and compiles them into comprehensive guest profiles. This 360-degree view enables more precise personalisation and smarter decision-making. Loyalty programmes also contribute significantly to brand identity. They are not standalone offerings but an integral part of the guest journey, just like booking, check-in and in-stay experiences. As hotels shape loyalty initiatives around memorable experiences rather than just points, it becomes equally important to reflect this experience-first approach in marketing communication whether through emails, calls or direct interactions. Guests appreciate knowing that rewards go beyond numbers and are tailored to what truly interests them. ■



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Guest Grievances – How Hotels are Fixing it

By Gita Hari

Guest complaints in the hotel industry have changed noticeably in the last few years. Grievances can be mechanical, attitudinal, service-related, poor room amenities, or FnB nitpicking. Positive guest response is the bedrock of any hospitality organisation. Primarily, as a service-oriented and guest-centric sector, the perspective of the clientele summarises the stature and prominence of the properties. Prompt attention to guest complaints helps in establishing a constructive image.

Guest complaints presently reflect a larger shift in how people are travelling and what they expect from a hotel stay. The earlier approach where the staff answered in a mild, explanatory way and always ended with a “thank you” to the guests for their feedback and “that we will look into their remarks to further improve our level of service in the future”, no longer holds water. The hospitality sector now takes a proactive and structured approach to addressing evolving guest concerns by combining

technology, data insights, and human-centric service. Today’s guests expect not just comfort, but responsiveness and understanding. As hospitality evolves, so does the way the hotel addresses concerns.

The staff focus is on being more present and accessible for the guests. With real-time communication tools like SMS and mobile messaging, guests can reach them instantly – and more importantly, the concerned department

can respond just as quickly. Often, concerns are resolved even before they turn into complaints at Orchid Group of Hotels. “At the same time, we are closely listening to feedback. By studying guest insights and recurring patterns, we can fix root causes instead of temporary issues. This helps us deliver a smoother, more consistent experience for everyone,” says Sandeep Aware, Housekeeping Manager, IRA by Orchid Hotel, Nashik.

FnB

People travel for work or leisure and in either case, fnb plays a significant role. Vaibhav Gupta, General Manager, The Astor Goa, a boutique luxury hotel, observes, “Post-pandemic, guests are staying longer, travelling with families, or combining work and leisure, which means hotels are no longer just managing short stays but living spaces. As a result, operations teams are redesigning SOPs to focus more on consistency, responsiveness, and ease. Food has become more immersive with restaurants



Sandeep Aware

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HOTREMAI strives to safeguard and represent interest of its members in particular and of the industry in general by taking-up various issues adversely affecting the business of its members with the government bodies, hotels, restaurants and their associations.

Business Promotion

Through its programmes and events: HOTREMAI organizes in-house meets, like Purchase Managers Meet, Hotel Consultants & Architects Meet, F & B Manages Meet, Project & Engineers Meet and such other events, where the representatives of the hospitality industry interact with its members, know their products and services, discuss the problems faced by them and make collective efforts for their effective solutions besides establishing mutual understandings and workout fruitful business deals. This provides its members a platform to demonstrate their products and services and provides opportunity to know their customers' needs.

Hotremai Facilitation to its Members for Exhibitions

HOTREMAI's Secretariat streamlines all booth-allotment formalities for exhibitions through a smooth single-window system. It handles documentation, submissions, and follow-ups on behalf of members. This simplified process saves time and effort, allowing members to focus on their exhibition preparation and business goals.

Informative to its Members

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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laying emphasis on interactive and multi-sensory experiences." The Astor's restaurant Deck88 has extended breakfast hours to make the most of your laidback holiday. The Chef's Table is an experience in itself where different curated preparations conform to the preferred taste of everyone sharing a suite (a short but detailed chef interaction helps), without prior notice to each about what is going to be served on the individual's plate.

Executive Chef, Gaurav Marwari, Novotel Pune Viman Nagar Road, reveals, "Service delays are avoided with defined Turnaround Time, digital logging and escalation matrix. High food quality is maintained by recipe standardisation, strict quality control, reduced holding time besides live guest feedback."

Staff Attitude and Tech Advancement

For starters, it begins with the basics. A smile remains the simplest yet most powerful element of hospitality. "At The Astor Goa, this is a core principle we instill in all our team members. A warm, approachable team creates an environment where guests feel comfortable reaching out, and that human connection often defines their overall experience more than any physical amenity," observes Vaibhav Gupta.

Training also plays a crucial role. Hotels continuously invest in empowering their teams – not just with service standards, but with empathy and problem-solving skills. A well-trained team member who genuinely listens can completely turn around a guest's experience.

Technology is another strong enabler. "AI-powered tools help us monitor guest sentiment and identify concerns early, allowing us to take proactive action rather than reactive steps," says a spokesperson from The Orchid Group of Hotels.

Housekeeping & Engineering

Housekeeping and engineering go together most of the time. For concerns such as room readiness and delayed check-ins, hotels are strengthening



Chef Gaurav Marwari

pre-arrival planning and coordination between front office and housekeeping teams. "Rooms are now being released only after multi-point checks that include not just cleanliness but functionality, air conditioning, hot water, Wi-Fi connectivity, and overall comfort to prevent maintenance-related discomfort after check-in," informs Vaibhav Gupta.

Today's guests expect consistency, speed, and impeccable hygiene, and hotels take that responsibility seriously. "Housekeeping is about more than cleanliness – it is about comfort and trust. We have strengthened our quality checks, enhanced team training, and improved coordination with other departments like Engineering, to ensure every room feels fresh, safe, and welcoming. Even the smallest detail can shape a guest's overall experience, and we never overlook that," voices Sandeep Aware.



Vaibhav Gupta

Going Beyond Standard Services

The hospitality industry relies heavily on guest satisfaction not by just meeting expectations but by going beyond to create noteworthy and enjoyable experiences. Personalisation has also become central to how hotels operate today. "The Astor Goa is built around the idea that no two guests are the same. Our experiences are curated keeping each age group, family type, and travel purpose in mind, ensuring that there is something meaningful for every individual. When a guest checks in, the effort goes beyond standard service. Through attention to detail, familiarity, and genuine care, teams aim to create an environment where guests feel recognised, comfortable, and at home. The effort is on resolving every requirement with thoughtfulness and flexibility, so the stay feels less transactional and more personal," emphasises Vaibhav Gupta.

Echoing this sentiment is Ira by Orchid Hotel, Nashik, "Most importantly, we understand that every guest is different. Personalized communication and tailored solutions go a long way in building trust. Hospitality, at its core, is about making people feel heard, valued, and cared for – and that remains our biggest priority."

It is vital to exceed guest expectations by creating memorable experiences.

Chef Gaurav Marwari lists, "At Novotel Pune, we continuously aim at creating Wow experiences; Personalized services in rooms and fnb outlets; Knowing guest preferences beforehand; We make it a point to curate food and experiences according to any special occasion like birthdays, anniversaries, unique experiences for long stay guests and special amenities for ALL members including activities and arrangements for younger guests (kids)."

By exhibiting commitment to provide immediate relief to their woes, personal attention, and responsiveness by the hospitality sector makes the guests feel valued and appreciated. To foster guest loyalty and deliver favourable feedback translates as recurring revenue and helps untap fresh patronage. ■

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HAMMER Group Publications

The Power of Scent



By Nikita Madan

Have you ever wondered why certain hotels feel instantly comforting, luxurious, or energising the moment you step inside? While interior design and service excellence play crucial roles, there is another invisible force shaping guest perception, scent.

In today's highly competitive hospitality landscape, hotels are increasingly investing in sensory branding, with fragrance emerging as a powerful differentiator. Aroma diffusers, once considered a spa luxury, are now strategic tools used to elevate guest experience, strengthen brand identity and drive long-term loyalty.

Setting the Mood from the First Step

The lobby is more than a waiting space, it is the hotel's opening statement. Many premium properties carefully curate fragrances to align with their brand personality. Warm, rich aromas such as sandalwood or vanilla are often used in fine-dining spaces or luxury hotels to evoke sophistication and warmth. Beach resorts may opt for fresh, ocean-inspired notes like sea breeze and coconut, subtly transporting guests to a coastal escape.

By installing diffusers at strategic points, hotels create a gradual "scent journey." Guests are immersed in a carefully designed aromatic cloud that enhances ambience and deepens emotional engagement from check-in onward.

Driving Productivity and Comfort

Scent is closely linked to human psychology. Research indicates that certain aromas influence mood, focus and behaviour.

Peppermint and citrus, for instance, are known for their stimulating properties, making them ideal for business lounges and meeting rooms. Lavender and chamomile promote relaxation and better sleep, making them suitable for guest rooms and suites.

For business travellers, a vital segment for many urban hotels, a fragrance-enhanced environment can subtly improve alertness and comfort, contributing to a more productive and satisfying stay.

A Strategic Branding Tool

Consistency is fundamental to brand identity. Just as logos and colour palettes distinguish a hotel, a signature scent can become a powerful memory trigger. The sense of smell is deeply connected to emotion and memory; guests often recall fragrances long after visual details fade.

By developing custom scent profiles that reflect brand values, floral and woody notes for a five-star heritage property, or fresh citrus for a contemporary lifestyle hotel, brands create distinct sensory signatures. Over time, the fragrance becomes synonymous with the property, strengthening brand recall and encouraging repeat visits.

Enhancing Air Quality and Guest Perception

Hotels experience high footfall and operate in enclosed environments. Diffusers not only release pleasant aromas but also help neutralise unwanted odours, improving perceived air quality. High-quality essential oils can refresh spaces naturally, contributing to overall comfort.

However, implementation must be

thoughtful. Overpowering fragrances can cause discomfort, while insufficient diffusion goes unnoticed. Leading hotels now rely on programmable systems that adjust intensity based on time, occupancy and space size. Centralised control systems allow managers to maintain consistency across lobbies, corridors, guest rooms and restaurants.

Operational Considerations

Selecting the right diffuser involves evaluating fragrance type, noise levels, energy efficiency and aesthetic compatibility with décor. Large-capacity units suit expansive lobby spaces, while compact, low-noise models are better suited for guest rooms. Regular maintenance and high-quality essential oils ensure consistent performance and cost efficiency.

Seasonal scent rotations like warm vanilla in winter, fresh marine or citrus notes in summer further enhance guest engagement and keep the experience dynamic.

To Conclude

Dining and hospitality are inherently multi-sensory experiences. Smell influences taste, perception, and emotional response. By integrating scent into their experiential strategy, hotels are not merely enhancing ambience, they are building emotional connections.

In an era where guest experience defines brand success, fragrance has become a subtle yet powerful business asset. More than just a pleasant detail, scent is now a strategic investment, one that turns a stay into a memory and a guest into a loyal advocate.

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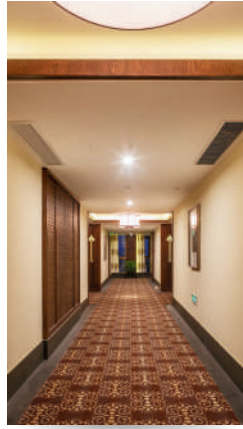
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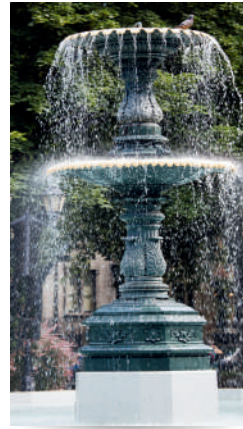
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Lords Wear Pvt. Ltd., established in 1988 and headquartered in Nagpur, is a leading Indian manufacturer of institutional uniforms and hospitality linen, trusted by hotels, restaurants, healthcare facilities, and large commercial establishments nationwide. With over three decades of expertise, the company delivers durable, functional, and professionally designed apparel tailored for high-intensity operational environments.

Lords Wear offers a comprehensive range of hospitality solutions, from chef coats, steward uniforms, service staff attire, and aprons to premium bed, bath, and table linen. The company's products are engineered for comfort, long service life, and repeated industrial laundering, making them ideal for hotels, caterers, QSR chains, bakeries, and institutional kitchens.

Beyond hospitality, Lords Wear also provides specialized uniforms for healthcare, industrial, security, and corporate sectors, enabling organizations to source complete workwear solutions from a single, reliable partner. With a strong manufacturing backbone and pan-India distribution, Lords Wear continues to support institutions seeking consistent quality, timely delivery,



and cost-effective procurement.

The brand focuses on sustainable sourcing, modern design innovation, and responsive after-sales support for long-term client partnerships.

Lords Wear Pvt. Ltd
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Effective Cleaning Solutions

Inter Clean Solutions Pvt. Ltd. is one of the most proficient manufacturers, traders and suppliers of chemical products. Since 2013, the company has been offering a wide range of quality chemical products, which include Hand Cleanser, Carpet Care, Glass Cleaners, Marble Cleaners, Kitchen Cleaners, and Specialised Care Chemicals.



The company has a well defined market policy to penetrate through its experienced sales team, having young, energetic & experienced professionals. InterClean Solutions' products cover a wide range, they

can cater to mass and as well as the premium segment.

The company's carpet cleaners have highly effective shampoo concentrate for thorough cleaning of textile floor coverings. They can preserve textiles and are endowed with anti soil effect and fresh scent. The company's carpet cleaners are specially formulated for intensive cleaning and stain removal of carpets, and are suitable for all colour and water-resistant carpets.

The washroom cleaner and sanitizer of the company are designed to effectively remove natural oils, soap deposits and general soiling from bath, sinks, shower, wc's tiles, glass screen and hard floor coverings. They help prevent hard water deposit form forming on surface sand and leave a refreshing mild fragrance to deodorize the room.

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“I see myself as a builder — of teams, guest loyalty, brand equity and future leaders”

Sanu Sadananda, General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Bengaluru Airport

By Sharmila Chand



Sanu Sadanandan, General Manager of DoubleTree by Hilton Bengaluru Airport, is a seasoned hospitality professional with a distinguished career spanning over two decades across leading hotel brands. With deep expertise in hotel operations, revenue optimization, business development, and team management, he has played a pivotal role in driving operational excellence and market growth at India’s largest DoubleTree by Hilton property.

Sadanandan’s passion lies in delivering exceptional guest experiences and blending operational innovation with authentic hospitality. His leadership philosophy centers on strategic vision and team empowerment. Outside of work, he enjoys quality time with family and exploring culinary trends.

In an exclusive interview, he tells us about his journey and more....

What is the USP of your property?

Prime Aerospace Park location is significant USP- nestled inside the Bengaluru Aerospace Park, just 15 minutes from the Kempegowda International Airport, with seamless access to North Bengaluru’s IT, aerospace, and industrial hubs, perfectly balancing business, transit, and leisure needs.

As the GM, I’m focused on leveraging our airport proximity to deliver seamless, tech-enabled experiences that rebuild traveler trust without disruptions.

Airport-Integrated Comfort: As Bengaluru Airport’s hub, Brew 33 Express Lounge blend Hilton’s warm hospitality with transit-friendly execution, offering familiar flavours with sophisticated twists for travelers seeking reliable yet memorable F&B amidst journeys.

How has your journey been in the hospitality industry?

My journey in the hospitality industry has been both deeply enriching and transformational. It began with a passion for service and evolved into a commitment to leadership, performance, and brand building. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to work across diverse markets and teams, each experience shaping my understanding of what true hospitality represents – not just service delivery, but emotional connection and lasting impact.

Looking back at your hospitality journey, tell us one learning curve, that you wish to highlight about your journey?

Looking back at my hospitality journey, one of the most significant learning curves has been understanding that leadership is less about control and more about influence. Early in my career, I believed that driving results meant personally ensuring every detail was executed perfectly. Over time, I realized that sustainable success comes not from doing everything yourself, but from building capable teams who think, decide and lead independently.

This shift required me to evolve – from being task-focused to people-focused, from seeking perfection in processes to cultivating accountability in people. I learned that clarity, trust, and empowerment often deliver stronger outcomes than supervision alone. The more I invested in developing others, the stronger the performance of the organization became.

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

Over the next two years, my vision is to position the hotel as a clear market leader – commercially strong, operationally consistent, and culturally aligned. The focus will be on driving sustainable RevPAR growth through disciplined segmentation, stronger direct channels, and premium positioning, while protecting rate integrity.

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

What I enjoy most is witnessing our team transform everyday stays into memorable

journeys, fostering a culture where every colleague’s idea fuels innovation and growth.

Leading India’s largest DoubleTree by Hilton, I take pride in steering seamless operations for transit travelers, balancing our prime airport connectivity with warm hospitality that turns layovers into highlights.

What is your working Mantra, your guiding Philosophy at work?

My guiding philosophy is rooted in clarity, ownership, and warmth. I believe that clarity precedes performance. When teams clearly understand the vision, priorities, and definition of success, they move with confidence and purpose.

My working mantra is simple: drive results without losing humanity. Sustainable success is built not only on strong metrics, but on belief – belief in the brand, belief in the team, and belief in what is possible together.

How do you define yourself?

At my core, I am both strategic and hands-on. I value data, structure, and financial rigor, but I equally value intuition, relationships, and emotional intelligence. I believe sustainable success is achieved when commercial performance is balanced with culture-building and long-term brand positioning.

Every role I take on is an opportunity not just to manage operations, but to elevate standards, inspire belief, and leave a lasting positive impact on people and the organization.

Ultimately, I define myself by the difference I make – in results achieved, in talent developed, and in the experiences created.



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