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## **FEATURE**

**Redefining Indian  
hospitality,  
the TECH way** PG 14 ▶

**‘We’re solidifying  
our position as  
a leading player  
in India’s  
hospitality  
landscape’**


**Dimitris Manikis**

President EMEA, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

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# Uttar Pradesh to transform historic forts and palaces into luxury heritage hotels

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Uttar Pradesh is set to boost its tourism sector by converting historic forts and palaces into opulent heritage hotels, aiming to offer unique accommodation options while preserving the state's rich heritage. Leading hospitality brands such as Leela Hotels, Indian Hotels Company (Taj Group), Neemrana Group, Mahindra Hotels and Resorts, Oberoi Hotels, Hyatt Regency, and Lalit Hotels have shown interest in this initiative.

Mukesh Kumar Mesharam, Principal Secretary of the Department of Tourism and Culture, noted the state's significant growth in domestic and inbound tourism. To cater to tourists seeking experiential tourism, the state is developing infrastructure and facilities for visitors across all economic segments. Discussions with prominent hotel groups are underway to revitalize palaces and havelis under a new tourism policy on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis.

The policy requires a minimum investment of INR 30 to 100 crores for transforming heritage properties into hotels, with various incentives and concessions offered based on investment levels. The first phase



targets iconic sites such as Chunar Fort in Mirzapur, Barua Sagar Fort in Jhansi, Jal Mahal in Barsana, Chattar Manzil and Kothi Roshan-ud-Daula in Lucknow, and Shukla Talab Haveli in Kanpur. Following government approval, the project will expand to include Mastani Mahal and Lake Palace in Mahoba, Tehroli in Jhansi, and TalBehat Fort in Lalitpur. ■

# Dessertvala reimagines Delhi's dessert scene

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Dessertvala, a boutique dessert cloud kitchen founded by Dev Dhanda. A graduate of the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in New York City, Dhanda saw a gap in the market for high-quality, innovative desserts and set out to fill it. His passion led him to pursue his dream of opening a dessert parlour after training at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in New York City.

Dessertvala started out as a physical store, but the pandemic forced the business to switch to a cloud kitchen model. "Dessertvala wasn't always a boutique cloud kitchen, we had a physical store front before the pandemic. However the uncertainty of the pandemic forced me to shift to a more sustainable model, hence the cloud kitchen emerged," stated Dhanda.

Despite the hurdles, Dessertvala quickly became the go-to destination for desserts among Delhiites. Dhanda views desserts as an art form and treats them as such. He emphasised the brand's commitment to consistent quality in both products and service, "The fact that sets Dessertvala apart from others is that there is a great amount

of emphasis on providing consistent quality in product and in service, there is no compromise on the quality of ingredients and equal importance is given to innovation, we constantly keep changing the menu and our offering, introducing different flavours and textures."

While currently operating as a cloud kitchen, Dessertvala has plans to establish a physical storefront in the future. "We plan to open a physical storefront soon, where we plan to bring forth an ambience which our patrons can physically interact in a manner of sight and sense and experience it in the manner it is meant to be," he added.

Looking ahead, Dhanda harbors ambitious plans to expand Dessertvala into other states. However, he acknowledges the challenges that come with expanding a niche product into new cities. "We are a quality driven small scale boutique dessert brand, expanding to other cities at this stage comes with its own challenges both logistical and supply chain wise amongst others."

Dessertvala's journey has not been without its challenges. From finding the right space to source high-quality ingredients, the business has had to overcome many obstacles. "One challenge that we constantly face is resistance



from customers, many have to be guided and convinced for the initial purchase there are only a handful who truly understand and appreciate the craft. It is a niche market which we hope to cultivate. On the flip side the brand has been able to cater to the needs of some renowned personalities ranging from authors, to public figures to film directors," concluded Dhanda. ■

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## ‘We aim to solidify our position as the premier wedding destination in the region’

Renowned for its extravagant Indian weddings, the Fairmont Jaipur is now setting its sights on a wider audience. Under the leadership of its new **General Manager, Rajat Sethi**, the hotel is crafting curated experiences to entice both Free Independent Travelers (FITs) and the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) segment. **Asmita Mukherjee** recently spoke with Sethi to delve deeper into his exciting plans for the future of the Fairmont Jaipur.

### **Q** Can you share your vision for the hotel? How do you plan to enhance its standing as a premier luxury destination in Jaipur?

As the General Manager of Fairmont Jaipur, I envision our hotel transcending traditional luxury to offer an unparalleled experience in Jaipur. We will curate personalized journeys that immerse guests in the city's vibrant culture, such as private tours led by local experts, cooking classes that revive forgotten Rajasthani recipes, and yoga sessions overlooking iconic landmarks. Sustainability will be a priority, with eco-conscious practices allowing guests to minimize their environmental impact. Fairmont Jaipur aspires to be more than a hotel—it will be a gateway to experiencing the soul of Rajasthan.

### **Q** Guest experience is paramount in the luxury hospitality industry. How will you ensure that Fairmont Jaipur continues to exceed guest expectations?

To ensure Fairmont Jaipur continues to exceed guest expectations, we will implement several key initiatives. We will utilize the Accor Customer Digital Card to personalize guest experiences before arrival, ensuring that we cater to their individual preferences. Our Five Senses Arrival Experience will engage guests' senses right from their arrival, to interactive and tailored dining experiences, setting the tone for their stay.

### **Q** What trends do you believe will shape the future of the industry, and how is Fairmont Jaipur adapting to remain at the forefront?

Fairmont Jaipur believes the future of luxury hospitality hinges on sustainability and exclusiveness. To lead in this evolving landscape, we are committed to implementing eco-friendly practices, such as energy-efficient designs and

local sourcing. We also focus on delivering personalized experiences and high-end amenities tailored to each guest's preferences, ensuring a unique and luxurious stay. By combining these elements, we continue to meet and exceed our guests' expectations, maintaining our position at the forefront of the industry.

### **Q** What strategic initiatives do you plan to implement to drive revenue growth for Fairmont Jaipur?

At Fairmont Jaipur, we plan to implement several strategic initiatives to drive revenue growth. Weddings will be a key focus, leveraging auspicious dates and offering comprehensive wedding packages to maximize this revenue stream. During the summer months, we will target the transient and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) segments. Additionally, we will create a diverse event mix and offer bundled experiences to attract a wide range of guests, optimizing our revenue across different segments.

### **Q** How do you aim to maximise operational efficiency while maintaining high service standards?

To maximise operational efficiency while maintaining high service standards, we have segregated teams for group bookings and individual travellers (FITs). We allocate separate floors for FIT guests to ensure their comfort, tailored amenities and experiences, enhancing their overall experience while maintaining efficiency in our operations.

### **Q** What strategies will you implement to optimize RevPAR and occupancy rates at Fairmont Jaipur?

To enhance RevPAR and occupancy rates at Fairmont Jaipur, we will adopt a multifaceted

approach. To leverage seasonal demand fluctuations, targeting transient and corporate segments to maximize occupancy during peak periods. Additionally, we will craft enticing packages that appeal to various guest preferences and needs, ensuring a balanced and profitable operation throughout the year.

### **Q** Fairmont Jaipur is a popular venue for weddings and special events. How do you plan to enhance this aspect of the business?

Fairmont Jaipur is the leading wedding destination hotel in Rajasthan, and to maximize wedding bookings, we offer competitive rates and tailored wedding packages with comprehensive benefits. These packages are designed to enhance the overall wedding experience, ensuring unforgettable celebrations against the palatial backdrop of our hotel. By focusing on providing exceptional value and unique experiences, we aim to solidify our position as the premier wedding destination in the region.

### **Q** Are there any new packages or experiences being introduced to cater to this market?

Yes, we are introducing several new packages to cater to our diverse market. During the summer months, we offer curated packages aimed at boosting transient demand, such as summer staycation and daycation packages to attract guests from Delhi and Jaipur markets. Additionally, we have also introduced the MICE Package for executive teams from organizations like YPO and EPO, catering to their specific event needs. Each package is thoughtfully designed to offer unique experiences and value-added services, ensuring an unforgettable stay for our guests. ■

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# ‘We are focused on organic growth and reinvesting profits to fuel expansion’



Indian speciality coffee chain Roastery Coffee House has recently announced its first international expansion. The brand, founded in 2017 by **Nishant Sinha**, with a passion for exceptional Indian coffee, recently announced its first international flagship store in Helsinki, Finland. This marks a significant step for Roastery Coffee House, becoming the first Indian coffee chain to enter the Nordic market. **Asmita Mukherjee** recently spoke with Sinha to delve deeper into his vision for the brand's global expansion.

Finland emerged as the strategic location for Roastery Coffee House's international debut due to its deep-rooted coffee culture and Finns' appreciation for quality products. A successful pop-up in Helsinki solidified their decision, with brisk sales of freshly roasted beans and Indian speciality coffees. "In Finland, we saw a strategic location to take Indian-origin speciality coffee to the world. The country is popular for its love of quality products and coffee! Finland is the biggest coffee consumer in the world, consuming as much as 12 kgs of coffee per person per day as of data from 2016. According to the International Coffee Organization, this high consumption rate underscores the country's deep-rooted coffee culture. We were overwhelmed by the love that we got for Roastery's Monsoon Malabar coffee at the first pop-up we hosted in the Finnish capital," said Sinha.

After the overwhelming response that the brand received from Finnish people, they are now planning to launch an outlet in Finland. "We are very excited about the upcoming launch of our flagship outlet in Finland. At the Roastery's first international pop-up, we witnessed a brisk sale of 250 packets of freshly roasted coffee beans and over 200 cups of Indian speciality coffee in just three days, which was very encouraging. While the consumption trends in Finland are phenomenal, we observed an evident gap for speciality coffee and curiosity about Indian-origin coffee, which we seek to fill. We are positive that our expansion into Finland will provide a solid foundation for future growth and expansion in global markets," added Sinha.

Sinha acknowledges the challenges of entering a market dominated by established chains. "Understanding Scandinavian and the European palate at large will be a challenge but one that we're looking forward to navigating. Of course, along with cultural differences environment and climate will also have a role to play," Sinha admitted. "We are committed to focusing on quality, innovation, and customer experience through workshops and educational initiatives about Indian speciality coffee."

Financially strong with a turnover

exceeding INR 70 crores (USD 8.7 million) as of January 2024, Roastery Coffee House is taking a cautious approach to international expansion. "We are focused on organic growth and reinvesting profits to fuel our brand's growth," said Sinha.

The company is not reliant on external funding and prioritises finding suitable locations across India, without targeting specific regions or cities. "We are focussed on growing organically at our own pace. We've chosen not to rely on external funding so far, so we're not obligated to launch a number of outlets within a time frame. However, we love to take Roastery Coffee House to newer audiences and are always on the lookout for good locations that can give us good visibility and business and reflect our brand ethos and aesthetic. It could be anywhere in India, we are not bound by any specific regions or cities," he said.

Roastery Coffee House differentiates itself through several strategies. "Direct sourcing allows us to offer a diverse range of high-quality Indian coffees. Our commitment to sustainability and a zero-waste model resonates with environmentally conscious consumers. The brand also prioritises the brewing experience, offering various brewing techniques and grinding options to cater to individual preferences. Finally, Roastery Coffee House cultivates a welcoming ambience, attracting a wide demographic with its warmth, greenery, and city-specific touches, like the functional step-well in their Jaipur outlet," Sinha concluded. ■

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# The TECH Advantage

Technology has been rapidly transforming the way hotels operate, and almost all the aspects of guest experience. While these advancements have continuously been making operations convenient, offering efficiency and personalization, the concern of losing the human touch has been in question. The essence of Indian hospitality has been the human touch, and while implementing technological advancements, it must be ensured that this all-encompassing element is not lost in transit. This issue features a story on the aspects of technology that enable hoteliers' operational and business efficiencies and what its future beholds. Technology and hospitality are not at odds, but work hand-in-hand to create a guest experience that is both seamless and deeply meaningful.

Indian hospitality has been a hot spot for international brands with continued expansion plans on the anvil. This issue features an interaction with Dimitris Manikis, President EMEA, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts who talks about their presence in the Indian market and their journey on the growth path. He outlines their plans to deepen the brand's presence in tier-II & III cities, cater to the spiritual tourism boom, and diversify their offerings with new brands. He highlights that technology and personalisation are a key priority - for example, they have implemented contactless solutions for seamless guest experiences, ensuring safety and convenience.

Other features in this issue include interview of Karuna Nasta, Vice President – Asset Management and Assurances, Chalet Hotels Ltd. She reflects on her journey of 25 years with the company from the time she joined as the first woman employee and her changing role.

We also highlight the Indian specialty coffee chain Roastery Coffee House, which has recently announced its first international expansion. The brand will soon open its flagship store in Helsinki, Finland.

With 40 operational outlets across the country and constantly growing popularity, Romeo Lane has created a special place for itself amongst their customers. Our feature on Saurabh Luthra, Chairman and Founder of Romeo Lane, highlights the company's growth trajectory and the future plan. Besides, we feature the regular expert columns from industry stalwart Mr Nathan Andrews, Educationist Prof. Satish Jayaram, and the Butler Coach - Prem Anand. Do write to us with your valuable feedback.



Sumit Jha

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# Espire Hospitality Group announces major expansion plans with ZANA & Country Inn brands



Espire Hospitality Group, with ambitious plans to open 20 hotels and resorts in the next few years, is set for a major expansion. Their strategy caters to a diverse range of travellers by offering both luxury and mid-market experiences through their ZANA Resorts and Country Inn Hotels & Resorts brands. As a part of their expansion strategy the brand is now targeting not just the popular leisure destinations but also key business hubs, through a mix of owned and partnered properties, as the aim is to reach a broad market. In a conversation with [Asmita Mukherjee, Akhil Arora, CEO & MD of Espire Hospitality Group](#), shared insights into their future endeavours.

Shedding light on their expansion strategy Arora explained, “Our expansion strategy is multifaceted, aiming to offer new options for different travellers and market segments. Our forthcoming properties will span across both ends of the spectrum, with ‘ZANA Resorts’ offering luxury boutique experience for the premium travellers, and ‘Country Inn Hotels & Resorts’ offering mid-segment resorts for the savvy traveller.”

Expanding beyond leisure destinations, the group is targeting key business hubs such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. He also informed that their expansion strategy will leverage a mix of owned, leased, and franchised properties, “In terms of market focus, while we have a strong presence in India’s leisure market, we are now setting our sights on key business hubs such as Delhi NCR, Mumbai, and Bangalore.”

The brand’s strategy includes transitioning to an asset-light model, stating their plans for

business model Arora said, “While ZANA Vrindavan will be our flagship property, most of our expansion will involve management, lease, and franchise models.”

Highlighting their expansion destination, he said, “Our expansion strategy encompasses a majority of hotels under management, lease and franchise models. While ZANA Vrindavan, set to debut in early 2026, will be a flagship property owned by Espire Hospitality Group. This diversified approach allows us to leverage our expertise and resources efficiently while simultaneously expanding our footprint across a broader spectrum of markets.”

The growing popularity of Jim Corbett as a tourist destination, and its capacity of drawing visitors from India and across the globe has inspired Espire Group to introduce their very own Zana brand to the destination as there was limited presence of upper upscale, luxury hotels, said Arora.

“With the location witnessing consistent business growth year on year, we identified a significant opportunity to introduce a premium luxury experience that caters to the discerning traveller segment.”

Elaborating on his plans for the brand ZANA Arora said, “We are targeting destinations such as Goa, Vrindavan, and Rishikesh, renowned for their cultural significance, natural beauty, and growing tourism appeal. These locations offer a conducive environment for upscale hospitality offerings, aligning perfectly with ZANA’s commitment to delivering immersive and luxurious guest

experiences. Additionally, we are focusing on metropolitan hubs like Delhi NCR, Bangalore and Mumbai, where there is a high demand for premium accommodations and a thriving corporate and leisure traveller base.”

Currently, Espire Group’s occupancy rates are on par with industry benchmarks. Their revenue comes primarily from rooms, followed by food and beverage informed Arora, “The average occupancy rate for our ‘ZANA Luxury Resorts’ has been 60% at an ARR of INR 14,000 while for ‘Country Inn Hotels & Resorts’, the occupancy has been 50% with an ARR of INR 6,000. Both, the occupancy and ARR are similar to the other hotels in comparable space, in the locations where we operate.”

“Our segment-wise revenue breakdown shows rooms contributing 70%, F&B 25%, and others 5%,” he added.

While describing their guest profiles, Arora explained, “Our luxury boutique resort brand ZANA Luxury Resorts is an ideal fit for modern, avid travellers seeking fresh and meaningful experiences. The brand is synonymous with opulence, exclusivity, and personalized experiences. On the other hand ‘Country Inn Hotel and Resorts’ is our mid-segment resort brand that caters to slightly budget-conscious travellers seeking friendly experiences.

Our hotels in Jim Corbett, Bhimtal, Udaipur, Ranthambore and Goa are located at a convenient driving distance from our key feeder markets including Delhi NCR, Gujarat, Jaipur, Bareilly and Mumbai. Our travellers are mostly leisure travellers and weddings remain an important segment for us.” ■

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# ‘We’re solidifying our position as a leading player in India’s hospitality landscape’

Capitalising on India’s booming travel market, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts is setting its sights on a multi-pronged expansion strategy. **Dimitris Manikis, President EMEA for Wyndham Hotels & Resorts**, spoke with **Asmita Mukherjee** about their plans to deepen the brand’s presence in tier-II & III cities, cater to the spiritual tourism boom, and diversify their offerings with new brands.



**Q Can you elaborate on your expansion strategy, particularly in tier-II & III cities?**

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts recognizes the immense potential in India's tier-II and III cities, driven by burgeoning infrastructure, increasing disposable incomes, and a rising domestic travel trend. We view these cities as a key part of our expansion strategy, tapping into previously untapped markets. With more than 30 hotels slated to open across Eurasia by 2025, we are committed to bringing our renowned hospitality services to these regions.

In 2024, we are focused on expanding our midscale offerings and footprint in tier-II and III cities. We aim to hire skilled professionals and train our workforce to ensure seamless operations and exceptional guest experiences. This expansion meets the growing demand for quality accommodation and contributes to regional economic development. With diverse brands, we cater to both business and leisure travelers, reaffirming Wyndham Hotels & Resorts' commitment to accessible travel.

**Q What potential do you see in spiritual tourism? How is Wyndham planning to capture that market and how is the brand catering to the needs of spiritual travellers?**

Spiritual tourism holds immense potential as it not only provides individuals with an opportunity for introspection and spiritual growth but also contributes significantly to the economic and cultural vitality of a region. At Wyndham, we recognize the importance of catering to this growing market segment and our hotel will help both domestic and international travellers experience the spiritual

connections they seek.

By offering comfortable retreats in key spiritual destinations such as Amritsar, Katra, Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Bodhgaya, we aim to provide travellers with a seamless and enriching experience. Our recent venture into Ayodhya with our rapidly expanding Ramada Encore by Wyndham brand marks a significant milestone in our commitment to spiritual tourism. With five operational hotels and eight under development under this brand, we are poised to meet the evolving needs of spiritual travellers.

Ramada Encore by Wyndham stands out with its modern design and efficient operations, catering to young travelers. Our new hotel in Ayodhya reinforces our presence in Uttar Pradesh and our commitment to offering memorable experiences. By focusing on spiritual travellers, Wyndham aims to boost spiritual tourism and contribute to regional socioeconomic development.

**Q Your current portfolio in India represents six of Wyndham's global brands. Are there any plans to introduce additional brands from your portfolio into the Indian market?**

Wyndham's robust portfolio in India already showcases many esteemed global brands, including Wyndham, Ramada, Ramada Encore, Trademark, Howard Johnson, Hawthorn Suites, and Days Inn. We're strategically planning to introduce additional brands into the Indian market to diversify our offerings further and cater to every traveller.

As transportation infrastructure grows, the demand for accommodations along these

routes will soar. Wyndham, brandslike Days Inn and Super 8 will provide convenient and affordable lodging options for travelers across many routes. Over the next 2-3 years, we anticipate substantial growth and development in India's hospitality sector, and we're poised to capitalize on these opportunities by expanding our brand presence across the country.

**Q Can you share any details about new signings, mergers, and hotel openings planned for India in 2024-2025? How does this contribute to your strategy of deepening your footprint in the midscale segment?**

In 2024-2025, we're poised for significant growth in India's hospitality sector, with several strategic moves underway. Our pipeline includes new signings, expanding our presence across 41 cities. This expansion focuses on the midscale segment, deepening our footprint in key urban hubs. With 60+ operational hotels and over 5,333 rooms (along with more than 30 hotels under development), we're solidifying our position as a leading player in India's hospitality landscape.

**Q With the ever-changing business landscape, what strategies does Wyndham have in place to ensure business continuity in India, especially in light of recent challenges?**

Wyndham has strategically positioned itself to thrive amidst India's dynamic business landscape. Recognizing the burgeoning potential in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, Wyndham pioneered its presence there early on, foreseeing the saturation in key metropolitan areas. Leveraging this foresight, the company has cultivated substantial growth in these



Ramada by Wyndham Khajuraho





Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Lucknow

regions. Furthermore, Wyndham is tapping into emerging trends like spiritual and religious tourism, a sector ripe with opportunities. By diversifying its portfolio and embracing evolving consumer preferences, Wyndham ensures resilience against challenges. This proactive approach underscores its commitment to sustained business continuity, poised to navigate any hurdles that may arise.

**Q Talent acquisition and retention are major challenges in the hospitality industry. What strategies are in place to address these challenges, and how does Wyndham plan to expand its workforce in India for 2024?**

Investing in finding and nurturing the right talent is vital for success and will close the talent gap. Wyndham employs a multifaceted strategy, that not only invests in our people, but also invests at the grassroots to foster the next generation of young talent. Our primary focus is on nurturing talent within the industry through comprehensive training programmes, mentorship, and tailored development paths.

Partnering with platforms like JobPlus enables us to equip aspiring hospitality professionals with the necessary skills, ensuring they seamlessly transition into our workforce. We are strategically hiring across upper, mid, and junior tiers, aligning recruitment and retention efforts with our pipeline objectives for 2024. With a current workforce of 6500, our target is to onboard 1500-1700 new colleagues this year to support our expanding operations effectively. Wyndham's commitment lies not only in sourcing talent but also in fostering

an environment where employees thrive in a great culture, ensuring long-term retention and organizational success.

**Q What are the current trends and new policies in the hospitality sector that Wyndham Hotels & Resorts is closely monitoring or implementing?**

Sustainability is at the heart of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts and we are committed to pioneering sustainable practices and providing places to stay, that are socially, ethically, and environmentally responsible. There is a growing demand for ethical tourism and guests now expect brands to move beyond meeting minimal expectations to purposeful

impact. Our Wyndham Green programme is mandated for all our hotels and is designed to optimise energy efficiency, reduce emissions, and minimise waste, ensuring environmentally responsible operations.

Technology and personalisation are also a key priority, for example we are implementing contactless solutions for seamless guest experiences, ensuring safety and convenience. Furthermore, Wyndham is adapting to evolving travel regulations, prioritizing guest well-being with enhanced hygiene protocols. These initiatives underscore Wyndham's commitment to innovation and guest satisfaction in an ever-changing hospitality landscape. ■

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Ramada by Wyndham Kasauli



## Kimaya Himalayan Beverages prioritises domestic market growth amidst plans for future international expansion

Kimaya Himalayan Beverages, the company behind the popular BeeYoung beer brand, is on a growth spree. With a remarkable growth rate of 129%, the company is setting its sights on ambitious goals for the future. In a conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee, Abhinav Jindal, Founder and CEO of Kimaya Himalayan Beverages**, shared that while they have ambitious plans for international expansion, their current focus remains on strengthening their presence in the domestic market.



**D**ue to the skyrocketing demand for BeeYoung, Kimaya has increased production capacity by 25%, Jindal informed, “To address the growing demand, we have ramped up our production capacity by about 25% for this season. We are exploring partnerships and new tie-ups with breweries that could enhance our production capabilities further.”

Looking ahead, BeeYoung has set its sights on conquering the South and West of India. Jindal informed, “Our approach will be to remain true to BeeYoung’s core ideology while delivering the product in its craft & authentic form. Understanding local consumer preferences and aligning them with our offerings will be key. Our focus on the South and West regions is strategic, aimed at leveraging the consumer behaviour and favourable policies in these areas.”

Kimaya’s ambitious plans include doubling their consumer touchpoints this year. “Our ambitious target will be met by increasing penetration in our existing markets and expanding our distribution network. New product variants are expected to open new avenues in modern trade and institutional spaces, helping us reach more consumers effectively,” Jindal said.

Capturing a coveted 10% market share is Kimaya’s ultimate goal. The brand has a well-defined plan to achieve this, “We are working towards this goal with a strategic plan that includes product innovation,

market expansion, and enhanced distribution. The introduction of new variants and the expansion into promising new markets will be key milestones. We aim to achieve this within the next few years,” said Jindal.

While BeeYoung’s core style will remain a focus, Kimaya is also excited to explore bolder flavor profiles in the future. “We are also excited about introducing bold new variants. These will be close to various international styles, offering something new to our domestic market but delivered in our signature craft style.”

The impressive growth of BeeYoung has naturally sparked conversations about international expansion. While the domestic market remains the primary focus for the brand now, Kimaya acknowledges the potential of international markets in the future. “Currently, our focus is predominantly on strengthening our position in the domestic market. International expansion is on the horizon but will be considered more seriously when the timing is right. Several markets in Asia could potentially resonate with our brand style and philosophy when we choose to expand internationally.

These strategies and focus areas are designed to ensure that Kimaya Himalayan Beverages not only maintains its current growth trajectory but also sets new benchmarks in the industry,” said Jindal. ■

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## 'We've expanded our footprint across India, with presence in 40 cities'

With a constantly growing popularity, Romeo Lane has created a special place for itself amongst their customers. **Saurabh Luthra, Chairman and Founder of Romeo Lane**, spoke to **Hospitality Biz** about the company's growth trajectory and the future plans.



**Q** Tell us about your journey into the world of F&B? How and when did it start?

My venture into the world of Food and Beverage began in 2016 with the inception of Romeo Lane in Delhi. Despite my background in business development and engineering, I always harbored a deep passion for hospitality. I saw an opportunity to blend my expertise with my passion and create a place that catered to various needs throughout the day, from lunches with loved ones to lively nightlife experiences.

**Q** What inspired you to give up the corporate role and indulge in the culinary world?

The decision to transition from a corporate role to the culinary world stemmed from a desire to pursue something I was truly passionate about. I wanted to create memorable experiences for people through food, ambiance, and hospitality. This desire fueled my decision to embark on this journey.

**Q** From your first outlet in Delhi in 2016, how has the organization grown over the years? What are the brands that you have created and what distinguishes them from one another?

Since our humble beginnings in Delhi, Romeo Lane has experienced remarkable growth. We've expanded our footprint across India, with presence in 40 cities. Our brand portfolio includes Romeo Lane, Mama's Buoi, Birch By Romeo Lane, and two resorts in Goa and Mussoorie. Each brand has its unique identity and offerings, catering to different preferences and occasions.

**Q** What are the future plans?

We have ambitious plans for the future, including further expansion within India and venturing into international markets. Our first international outlet is set to open and we will be revealing city name soon, with plans to explore other international markets as well.

**Q** Geographically, your brands have primarily been present in north India, and have now started to dot the national map. Tell us about your brand's presence?

While our brands initially had a strong presence in North India, we have been steadily expanding across the national map. This strategic expansion allows us to reach a wider audience and cater to diverse preferences.

**Q** Your first international outlet is expected to be operational in Dubai soon. Which other international markets do we expect to see your brands?

Apart from our upcoming international branch of Romeo, we are actively exploring other international markets for expansion. Our goal is to introduce our brands to global audiences while maintaining the essence of our unique offerings.

**Q** In this extremely competitive environment, what makes your brands different? What would you call your USP?

What sets our brands apart in the competitive landscape is our focus on providing versatile experiences throughout the day. Whether it's a casual lunch, a romantic dinner, or a vibrant nightlife, our establishments cater to diverse preferences under one roof. Not to forget, we really focus on our food taste.

**Q** A substantial portion of your brands growth has been through franchisee route. How many outlets are self-operated vis-à-vis franchised?

While some outlets are self-operated, a substantial portion of our growth has been through franchising. This approach allows us to scale efficiently while maintaining quality standards.

**Q** How do you keep quality control, especially when it comes to the franchised outlets?

Quality control is paramount, especially in franchised outlets. We have a corporate team

to look into it and implement rigorous training programs, regular audits, and stringent quality checks to ensure consistency across all outlets.

**Q** How has nature been influential in determining your products?

Nature plays a significant role in determining our products, especially in our resort properties. We strive to incorporate locally sourced ingredients and sustainable practices wherever possible, enhancing the guest experience.

**Q** What is the 4Ps strategy that you follow? How has that impacted your business and growth?

Our strategy revolves around Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. By focusing on delivering exceptional products, strategic pricing, prime locations, and effective promotion, we have been able to drive business growth and customer engagement.

**Q** What do you feel about the India growth story, especially with reference to the hospitality and culinary world?

The India growth story in the hospitality and culinary world is incredibly promising. With a burgeoning middle class, changing consumer preferences, and increasing disposable incomes, there's ample opportunity for growth and innovation in this sector.

**Q** What would be your advice to the new entrants in the business of F&B?

My advice to new entrants in the F&B business would be to stay true to your passion, maintain unwavering commitment to quality, embrace innovation, and prioritize customer satisfaction. Building a strong brand identity and fostering a culture of excellence will be key to long-term success. ■

Technology has remodeled the way in which a hotel functions and continues to redefine guest experience. Hospitality Biz takes a look at the aspects of technology that enable hoteliers' operational and business efficiencies and what its future beholds.



# Redefining Indian hospitality, the TECH way

In today's digital age, embracing technology is no longer a luxury, but a necessity for the Indian hospitality businesses to flourish. By harnessing the power of innovation, hotels can not only cater to the evolving needs of today's tech-savvy traveler but also create a future where personalized experiences, seamless convenience, and genuine human interaction jointly create a truly unforgettable journey. As hotel technology continues to transform the hospitality industry, it improves guest experiences, streamlines hotel operations and boosts revenue for hoteliers.

Cutting-edge technology with constant innovations, empowered by AI, has enabled India's vibrant hospitality sector to prosper. The transformation has been reshaping guest

experience, from the digital interactions for reservations, to check ins, to the in-room experience, to check-out, and finally to the post stay guest experience survey, that helps in course correction, when needed.

Hotel technology is transforming the hospitality industry, improving guest experiences, streamlining operations for hoteliers, and driving revenue.

Technological advancement stands as a cornerstone for success. Embracing the latest innovations such as data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning has empowered hospitality businesses to harness vast amounts of data to gain deep insights into guest preferences, market trends, and operational efficiencies. Leveraging these insights allows for personalized guest experiences, dynamic pricing strategies, and predictive maintenance, thereby enhancing overall operational effectiveness and guest satisfaction.

Upendra Dattatraya Kulkarni, Co-Founder & Director, HCS Global Corp – a first generation, premier Hospitality Consulting & Advisory Company based in India & the UK believes that technology has transformed the hospitality industry, enhancing guest experiences and operational efficiencies. "Automation and AI have streamlined check-ins, bookings, and customer service, reducing wait times and personalizing interactions. Mobile apps and IoT devices provide seamless,

contactless experiences, which were crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data analytics offer insights into customer preferences, enabling tailored services and better decision-making."

"Technological advancements have been a game-changer, revolutionizing operations through digital solutions in booking systems, customer relationship management, and personalized guest experiences via AI and IoT, significantly enhancing efficiency and guest satisfaction," said Karuna Nasta, Vice President – Asset Management and Assurances, Chalet Hotels Ltd.

"Technology is the catalyst propelling the hospitality industry into a new era of growth, where innovation enhances every aspect of the guest experience, driving unprecedented efficiency, connectivity, and satisfaction," said Huzefa S Nulwalla, Founder & CEO, The Monarch Solutions.

With the technological advancement over the years, travelers are able to research, compare prices, and book stays in a matter of minutes, empowering them with unprecedented control over their itineraries. But the digital concierge doesn't stop there. Integration with social media platforms like Instagram allows potential guests to virtually tour hotels through immersive, user-generated content, providing a more realistic and relatable glimpse into the experience.

Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing the hospitality sector by ushering in an era of hyper-

## Technology in hotel operations

### Guest-facing technologies:

- Mobile apps
- Self-service kiosks
- Digital concierge services
- Smart room technology
- Mobile key access

### Back-end technologies:

- Property management systems (PMS)
- Revenue management systems (RMS)
- Channel management systems (CMS)
- Cloud-based solutions





**Upendra Dattatraya Kulkarni**  
Co-Founder & Director,  
HCS Global Corp

personalization. Imagine chatbots powered by AI that seamlessly transition from virtual receptionist to multilingual concierge, offering 24/7 assistance and tailoring recommendations based on past preferences and real-time data. AI can also analyze guest reviews and social media sentiment to anticipate needs and proactively address potential issues. This, in turn, leads to a more satisfying stay and fosters guest loyalty.

While human interaction will undoubtedly remain a cornerstone of hospitality, robots are increasingly taking center stage for repetitive tasks. Imagine a friendly robot delivering room service with a smile (or at least a pre-recorded greeting!), diligently cleaning hallways, or even providing basic greetings and directions at the reception. This technology frees up valuable staff time for more complex guest interactions, allowing them to build rapport and deliver exceptional service.

“Technology is reshaping hospitality, turning every stay into a personalized, seamless journey where innovation meets comfort, and guests are empowered to create unforgettable memories,” reiterated Huzefa.

## Future

Some of the technological trends that are being currently used by the hospitality segment include:

- AI Robots
- Voice control technology
- Contactless technology
- AI recognition
- IoT smart lock
- Privacy protection programs/ hotel cybersecurity
- Customization/Personalization

As we peek into the future, we can expect an even more profound integration of technology. Imagine exploring potential destinations through augmented reality (AR) apps that



**Karuna Nasta**  
Vice President – Asset Management  
and Assurances, Chalet Hotels Ltd.

overlay virtual tours onto real-world settings, allowing you to experience a hotel's ambience or a city's attractions before you even book your trip. Virtual reality (VR) experiences could transport guests to iconic landmarks or historical sites within the comfort of their hotel room, offering a deeper cultural immersion. We can expect even more exciting advancements in the years to come, blurring the lines between reality and imagination, and forever transforming the way we travel and experience the world.

“Looking ahead, technology will further revolutionize hospitality. AI and machine learning will enhance predictive analytics for preemptive customer service and personalized marketing. Blockchain could improve transparency and security in transactions and loyalty programs. Augmented reality and virtual reality will offer immersive experiences, from virtual tours to in-room entertainment,” informed Upendra Kulkarni while taking about the future of technology in hospitality.

“A key trend likely to shape its future includes enhanced technological integration, where AI-driven personalized services, virtual reality tours, and smart room controls will revolutionize guest experiences and operational efficiency,” added Karuna Nasta while talking about the future of technology in hospitality.

“In the future of the hospitality industry, technology will seamlessly blend with guest experiences, transforming traditional stays into immersive journeys where personalization, efficiency, and connectivity converge to create unforgettable moments,” added Huzefa.

## Technology and Sustainability

Travelers nowadays are far more conscious of the environmental damage that tourism-related activities have caused in the last several years and want to travel more sustainably.



**Huzefa S Nulwalla**  
Founder & CEO, The Monarch  
Solutions

In order to minimize their environmental impact and maximize operational efficiency, hotels are implementing BMS, centralized software, and renewable energy sources. By using smart lighting, climate control, or electric vehicle charging stations, and other intelligent solutions, organizations can help reduce energy use.

“Technology also promotes sustainability. Smart energy management systems optimize energy use, reducing wastage and lowering carbon footprints. Automated lighting, heating, and cooling systems adjust based on occupancy. AI-driven waste management systems and digital platforms minimize paper use. Blockchain can ensure ethical supply chains. These advancements will redefine guest experiences, operational efficiencies, and environmental impact in the hospitality industry,” informed Upendra Kulkarni.

As technology continues to evolve and new innovations appear in the hospitality industry, we can expect to see changes that will rewrite the way we operate.

## Challenges

This tech-driven journey is not without its challenges. Ensuring robust data security to protect guest information is of utmost importance. Keeping pace with the rapid evolution of technology requires continuous investment and employee training. Additionally, bridging the digital divide in rural areas is crucial to ensure all travelers benefit from these advancements. It is also essential to strike a balance – while technology enhances the guest experience, the human touch should never be entirely replaced. While technology is an enabler, the warmth of a genuine smile, the attentiveness of a dedicated staff member – these irreplaceable elements will continue to be a defining feature of Indian hospitality. ■

# Adminutiae #2 | Combating External Variables

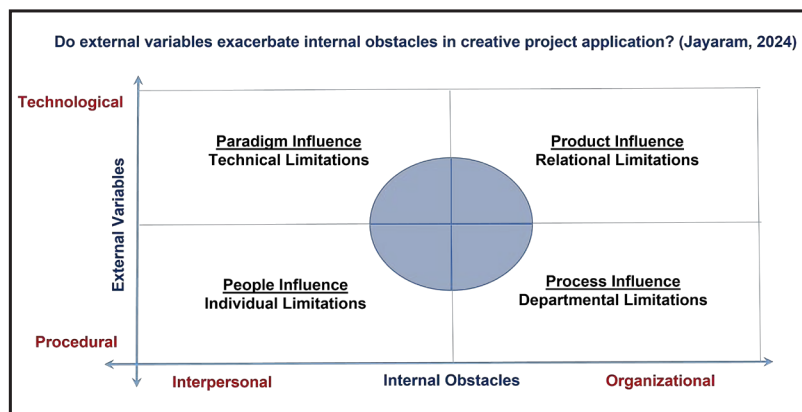
By Prof. Satish Jayaram, PhD – Ideator | Innovator | Incubator



**A**dminutiae #1 framed the internal context within which change is anticipated. Despite earnest provisions, external variables affect internal ecosystems unequivocally and must be classified as controllable and uncontrollable to prioritize! Democratically, frameworks like the National Education Policy 2020 are strengthened with political will and expert academic integrity. Yet, implementors need to reflect on changing student needs and expectations by welcoming digital disruption to learning content consumption. Vibrant audiences on Instagram (330 million users) can adopt, disseminate and proliferate digital learning via andragogy for increased interactivity. After developing mobile friendly learning solutions, student enthusiasm contrasts faculty disbelief. As relatively less tech-endowed learning facilitators wince, a self-paced consumption option with marginal facilitation emerges now!

Evaluate sharing learning content across borders - where language, culture and context are moderating variables. Geo-political influences such as parity in data privacy approaches, interfere with access to pertinent intellectual property. While mobile content remains ubiquitous and universal, will aggregation-curation outdo the competition for seats as institutions jostle for share? Analyse the reduced applications over five years into hospitality institutions countrywide! Renewing a beleaguered workforce will require tech-enabled neo-skilling with cyclical turn-around. A facilitating super structure of industry moocs - Swayam Plus, is now offered for integration by policy makers. Add shifting socio-economic variables - changing aspirations and lifestyle choices across generations. Have creative institutional projects adjusted their sails to optimize progress through these winds of change?

Driving institutional change in context, is therefore bounded by prominent external variables like technological and procedural ones.



Internal obstacles from Adminutiae#1 only exacerbate the situation, due to two main factors – interpersonal and organizational ones. These variables are key in grappling with the sheer force of external juggernauts. External variables vs internal obstacles are modelled together, to outline a potential set of positions. Recognizing these, allows for introspection to engage with forces optimally. It aids counteracting externalities by removing blocking impediments.

**1. People Influence | Individual Limitations:** Externally influencing, people-related challenges are a given uncontrollable. Reacting instead of responding, by exercising positional or administrative braggadocio, can only make matters worse. Individual ineptness,

inexperience and ignorance is debilitating. Add to this a lack of agility, sluggishness as well as indecision from multi-layered labyrinths and one can expect unfounded delay. Ambiguity is real, but lack of clear purpose and direction with managing resources, can drive the initiative into a spiral.

**2. Process Influence | Departmental Limitations:** Multi-loop organizational processes result in 'run-arounds' while external processes, deadlines and limitations - remain insensitive to internal factors. Accepting/navigating departmental loops with divisive forces is a valuable skill. Complex internal processes not facilitating resolution can further increase cycle time. Maintain a balanced view by demystifying the rationale of external procedure. Unless the big rich picture is clear, partial viewpoints of the jigsaw puzzle, only obscure the ultimate reality.

**3. Paradigm Influence | Technical Limitations:** Appreciation of a fast-changing technologically ruthless external ecosystem is critical. Paradigm changes can only occur with empowered resource upgrades, to keep abreast with external realities. Internal technical limitations need acknowledgement as barriers, to enable synergy with external force-fields. Bureaucracy is certainly not the answer, when responding to dynamic, environmental technology force-fields. Upgrading internal technical competences and capabilities can align external forces.

**4. Product Influence | Relational Limitations:** Acceptance of a plethora of plug and play product level solutions to speed-up organizational agility are valid. Institutions tend to wallow in internal comfort zones and remain committed to hoary processes without rationalizing their relatability to existing truths. Such relational limitations are the outcome of a mechanical and myopic culture. Enterprise-wide learning solutions must be deployed to enhance institutional knowledge upgrades. Accessing open interfaces to battle agility lags is an alternate solution.

*Adminutiae #2 highlights limitations arising from a lack of recognition of embedded institutional restrictions. Interpersonal deficits and inadequacies also balloon into cognizable institutional roadblocks. Reach internal consensus - external influences will most likely remain uncontrollable.*

Technological development waves will only multiply rapidly - bringing redundancy in its wake. External environment changes will occur, irrespective of internal considerations or prioritization in institutions. Agile responsiveness towards targeting external opportunities is therefore vital for change. Remove debilitating internal restrictions, to enable the larger rich change picture to evolve rapidly. In the next concluding piece on adminutiae, my focus will be on patterning some observed institutional responses. The purpose is to facilitate institutions to acknowledge the need for change proactively. ■

*The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.*





## ‘We are ready to ride the next wave of growth’

In an exclusive interaction **Manoj Jain, Chief Operating Officer, Delta Corp**, informed that Delta Corp to unveil massive plans for Goa. A first-of-its-kind 100-acre integrated resort featuring a 5-star hotel, casino, theme park, and more is on the way. The company also has plans a new and larger casino vessel for Goa’s Mandovi River. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Jain about the brand which is poised for growth in the Indian hospitality and gaming market.

**Q The hospitality and entertainment landscape is constantly evolving. What are some of the key trends you are seeing in the industry, and how is Deltin adapting its strategies to stay competitive?**

The travel industry boomed after the pandemic, with a focus on digital experiences, local travel, and prioritizing health and sustainability. Recognizing Indians’ desire for excitement, Deltin leveraged its gaming licenses and top-notch facilities to create world-class gaming and entertainment destinations in India. Pioneering luxury gaming on par with Las Vegas and Macau, Deltin has been the leader for over a decade, offering a unique experience that caters to all preferences. With a customer-centric approach and constant adaptation, Deltin remains at the forefront of the hospitality and entertainment industry.

**Q Deltin has a strong presence in the Indian market. Does Delta Corp have plans to expand its brand presence to new domestic or international markets?**

As far as casinos are concerned, at present, the only states in India where live gaming (casinos) is allowed currently are Goa and Sikkim. In each of these gaming destinations, Deltin has already established a dominating presence.

In the long-term, Delta Corp is coming up with a dream project, i.e., an integrated Resort project in Goa spread across 100-acre land, this will be one-of-its kind integrated resort having facilities like 5-Star Hotel, electronic casino, theme park, shopping mall, gaming zones, and an array of other family recreational activities. The Integrated Resort will enable Goa to attract an even wider traveler base.

Also, an existing offshore casino vessel of Deltin will be replaced with a much bigger vessel which will be unique and better than any casino people have experienced in India so far, the vessel is scheduled to be in river Mandovi in Goa in the current financial year.

As far as the brand is concerned, we are ready to ride the next wave of growth. Being an early mover along with a robust business and efficient management set-up, ‘Deltin’ is well poised for sustaining its leadership position in the market. While we currently have no plans for international expansion, our focus remains on strengthening our domestic market presence and delivering unparalleled guest experiences.

**Q What is your vision for the future of Deltin, and how do you see the brand continuing to innovate and lead the hospitality industry?**

Our vision for Deltin is to be a global benchmark in luxury gaming, hospitality, and entertainment, continuously innovating to set new

standards. We will leverage advanced technologies to enhance personalization and guest satisfaction while expanding our footprint with new projects. Our commitment to sustainability and responsible gaming practices will play a crucial role in shaping the future, ensuring we meet the evolving needs of our guests while maintaining a positive societal impact.

**Q How is Deltin leveraging data and analytics to understand and cater to the evolving needs of its guests?**

No company today can afford to marginalise data and analytics operations, given the rich insights they yield in several sectors. At Deltin, many, if not most, of our decisions are data-driven and based on the large quantum of metadata captured from our operations.

Data-driven insights are indispensable in Delta Corp for comprehending consumer preferences, optimising operations, and increasing revenue. Deltin utilizes sophisticated data analytics to gain deep insights into guest preferences and behaviors. By analyzing booking patterns, feedback, and engagement data, we can tailor our offerings to meet the specific needs of our guests. This data-driven approach allows us to provide highly personalized experiences, ensuring guest satisfaction and loyalty. Our CRM systems and AI-driven tools play a critical role in this continuous optimization process.

**Q With the rise of online travel agents (OTAs), how is Deltin ensuring it maintains a strong direct booking channel?**

To maintain a robust direct booking channel, we focus on enhancing the user experience on our website, Walkin and call center assisted bookings, making the booking process convenient, seamless, and easy. Our marketing strategies are designed to drive traffic to our direct channels, ensuring we maintain a strong engagement with our guests.

**Q What role do you see responsible gaming practices playing in the future of the hospitality and entertainment industry, and how is Deltin promoting responsible gaming at its properties?**

Responsible gaming is integral to the future of the hospitality and entertainment industry. At Deltin, we are committed to promoting responsible gaming through awareness programs, self-exclusion options, and support services. We ensure our staff is trained to identify and address problem gaming behaviors, creating a safe and enjoyable environment for all our guests. Our responsible gaming initiatives are designed to foster a sustainable and positive impact on our communities and the industry at large. ■

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# WTF

By **Nathan Andrews**, Author & Hospitality Consultant

A few years ago, I had the privilege of attending the Way to the Future summit hosted by and held at the famous Ecole Hotelier Lausanne (EHL). As the theme would suggest the sessions were all about how the future was going to evolve particularly in the area of new and innovative technology. Given the gravitas of EHL and the centrality of Lausanne, the event featured many notable speakers from the area including the CEO of the International Olympic Association, and faculty from INSEAD.

Towards the end of the day, a speaker from the hospitality industry shared his perspective on the application of cutting-edge technology in our industry focusing on the progress made in keeping room-service trolleys warm. I like many around me groaned, was this what our industry deemed a noteworthy application of technology? Shouldn't he have perhaps referred to one of the international brands using a robot for serving the guests instead?

Now after further reflection on what technology is really supposed to mean, I think I misjudged my industry colleague, maybe he had a better understanding of what technology really means than I had.

The dictionary defines technology as the application of scientific knowledge for practical

purposes, especially industry. The etymology of the word is the 17th century Greek word *tekhнологia* meaning in its immediate usage 'systemic treatment' arising from the conjoining of *tekhne* i.e. art or craft and *logia* meaning the study of. In short, the correct application of the word technology is the study of the art or craft of any systemic process. If that is true then isn't that what hospitality has always been about?

Over the years technology has gradually come to be associated with the engineering and mechanical sciences and synonymous particularly with computers and digital applications. Thereby suggesting that other non-scientific endeavours are somehow technologically backward, relics of another pre-scientific age. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

Horst Schulze the founder of Ritz Carlton famously defined our business as 'Ladies and Gentlemen, serving Ladies and Gentlemen'. Providing the legendary service for which he is known consistently required the 'application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes' aka technology. Every time a croissant comes out just right that is technology, when the room service order reaches the room at the right temperature as presented in Lausanne that is also technology.



Maybe it is time to change our mindset towards technology in our own industry. We employ sophisticated reservation systems and use metadata to map customer experience and behaviour and AI to help optimize rates, yet we always I believe see these as imports from other applications, inducted to make our own service-oriented, digitally lacking industry a bit more profitable and ostensibly contemporary.

Maybe we need to be unapologetic about the nature of our business to our non-hospitality colleagues who generally perceive hospitality as a necessary relic of a bygone age. Present ourselves to Gen Z as an opportunity to be part of a craft that is actually technologically savvy? Might such an approach even serve to improve the interest levels of Gen Alpha to follow in our steps? If so then the Way to the Future may not be so challenging after all. ■

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## ‘My journey has been an extraordinary blend of professional growth, innovation, and shared success’

In conversation with **Hospitality Biz**, **Karuna Nasta**, Vice President – Asset Management and Assurances, Chalet Hotels Ltd., reflects on her journey of 25 years with the company from the time she joined as the first woman employee and her changing role.

Sustainability and green initiatives will become core aspects of hotel operations, with eco-friendly designs, renewable energy usage, water conservation measures, and sustainable sourcing practices becoming prevalent to meet the growing demand for responsible tourism.

The rise of health and wellness tourism is another significant trend, with hotels increasingly offering wellness packages that incorporate fitness, spa treatments, mental well-being programs, and healthy dining options. Wellness resorts and retreats are expected to see substantial growth. Additionally, the focus on experiential travel will cater to the demand for unique and immersive experiences, offering curated experiences that highlight local culture, adventure, cuisine, and nature, such as culinary tours, cultural festivals, adventure sports, and eco-tourism.

The hospitality industry will also expand into Tier II and Tier III cities, driven by improved infrastructure, increasing economic activities in these regions, and the desire of travellers to explore lesser-known destinations.

**Q In your role as the Vice President - Asset Management & Assurances, what are the elements that hold the key to success?**

In my role as the Vice President - Asset Management & Assurances in the hospitality industry, several critical elements ensure efficient management of assets, profitability, sustainability, and guest satisfaction. Strategic asset management is paramount, which includes the optimal utilization of assets by ensuring all real estate, facilities, and equipment are used to their maximum potential. This involves regular audits, maintenance, and upgrades to keep properties in prime condition. Developing and implementing strategic capital expenditure plans that align with the organization's long-term goals is also essential. This includes budgeting for renovations, expansions, and technological upgrades to enhance property value and guest experience. Continuously monitoring the financial performance of properties through key metrics such as RevPAR (Revenue per Available Room), GOP (Gross Operating Profit), and NOI (Net Operating Income) allows for informed decision-making to improve profitability. ■

**Q How would you describe your journey of 25 years with Chalet Hotels Limited?**

Reflecting on my 25-year journey with Chalet Hotels Limited, it has been an extraordinary blend of professional growth, innovation, and shared success. I joined the company as the first woman employee, designated as Assistant Manager in the Accounts & Finance department, overseeing audits and accounts before transitioning to the business side of hotel operations in asset management. This journey has been incredibly exciting and filled with wonderful memories and countless learnings. From the early days focused on establishing a strong foundation to our expansive growth phases launching world-class properties, every step has been marked by a commitment to excellence.

I've witnessed our portfolio evolve from initial projects to becoming a leading player known for luxurious, high-end hotels and mixed-use developments. The journey has also been filled with challenges that demanded resilience and innovation, including navigating economic fluctuations, adapting to changing market demands, and embracing technological advancements. Each challenge has been an opportunity to learn and emerge stronger, emphasising the importance of strategic planning and agile execution. Throughout it all, I have been passionate about working at Chalet and have had fun at work, making this 25-year journey truly rewarding.

**Q You sure have seen the hospitality industry change considerably over the years in India. Your thoughts on the growth and future?**

Indeed, the hospitality industry in India has undergone significant transformation over the past few decades. From my vantage point, having spent 25 years with Chalet Hotels, this evolution has been marked by diversification and expansion. Initially dominated by luxury and upscale segments, the industry now features a vibrant mix of budget hotels, boutique properties, and alternative accommodations like serviced apartments and homestays, catering to a broader spectrum of travellers. Technological advancements have also been a game-changer, revolutionizing operations through digital solutions in booking systems, customer relationship management, and personalized guest experiences via AI and IoT, significantly enhancing efficiency and guest satisfaction.

Looking to the future, the hospitality industry in India is poised for continued growth, driven by these trends. The ongoing adoption of technology, emphasis on sustainability, and focus on creating unique travel experiences will likely define the next phase of its evolution, positioning India as a dynamic and diverse destination for travellers worldwide.

**Q In light of the growth in domestic and international travellers, what according to you is going to be the future of the Indian hospitality industry?**

The future of the Indian hospitality industry looks promising, driven by the growth in both domestic and international travellers. Key trends likely to shape its future include enhanced technological integration, where AI-driven personalized services, virtual reality tours, and smart room controls will revolutionize guest experiences and operational efficiency.

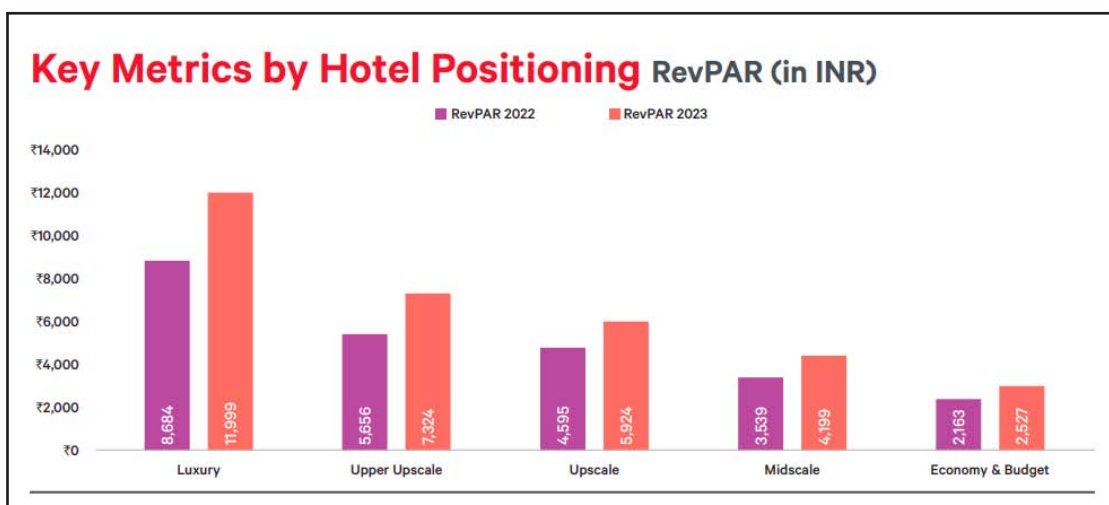
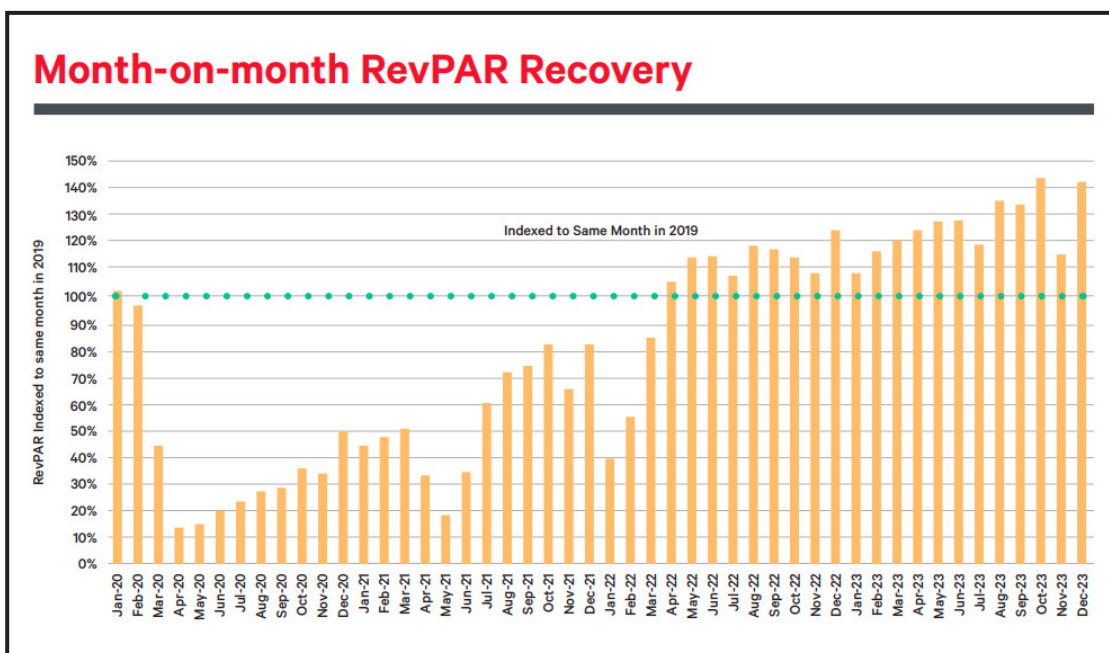
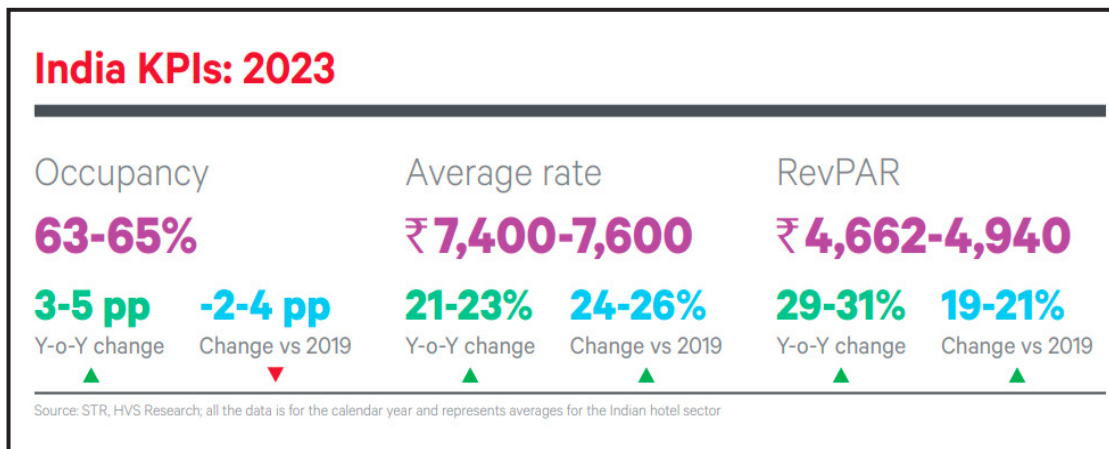
# India-wide occupancy to improve to 66-67% in 2024, says HVS ANAROCK report

Hbi Staff Hyderabad

According to the India Hospitality Industry Overview 2023 by HVS ANAROCK, in 2023, the Indian hotel sector displayed significant optimism, with key performance indicators such as occupancy rate, average rate (ARR), and Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) showing notable growth. The sector ended the year with a nationwide occupancy rate of 63-65%, up 3-5 percentage points from 2022 and nearing the pre-pandemic level of 65-67% in 2019.

The ARR for 2023 reached INR 7,400-7,600, surpassing 2022 figures by 21-23% and 2019 figures by 24-26%, driven by strong demand. This boost in average rates led to a RevPAR of INR 4,662-4,940, up 29-31% from 2022 and 19-21% from 2019.

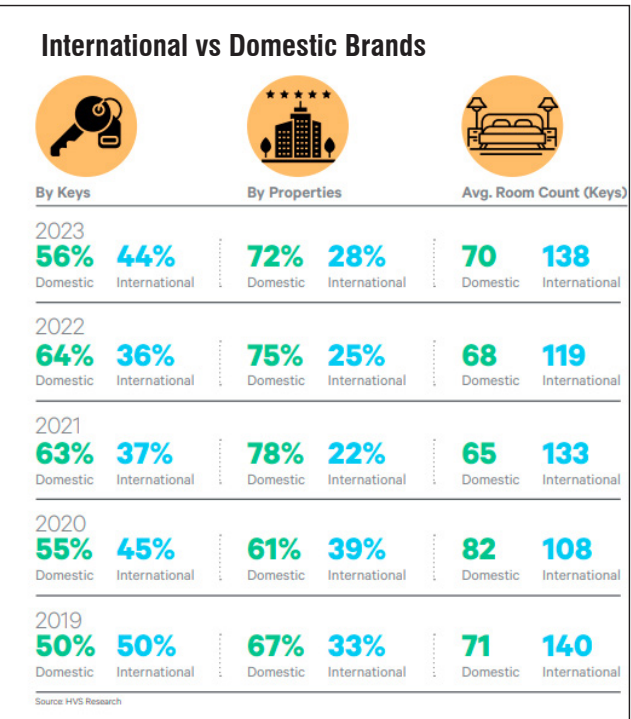
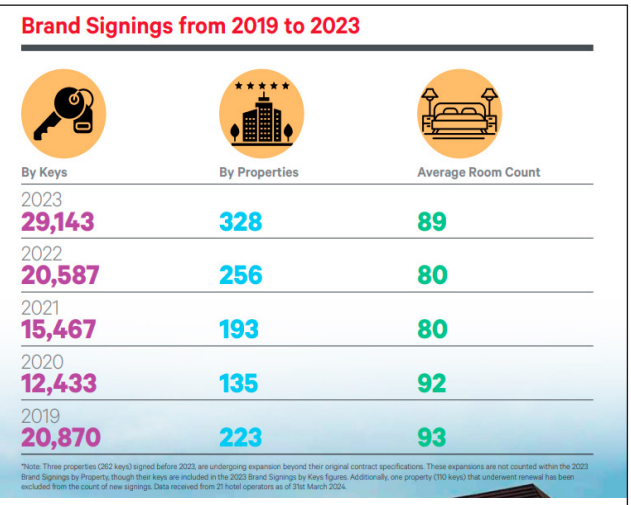
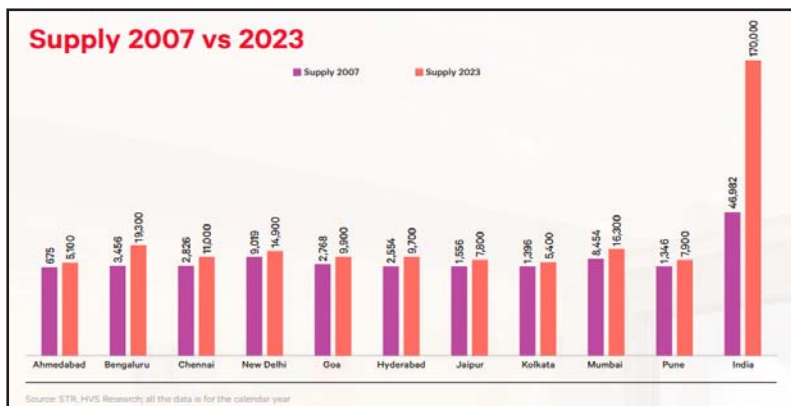
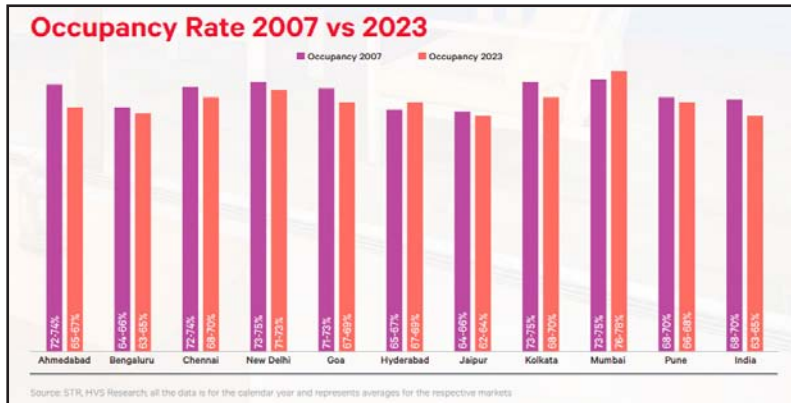
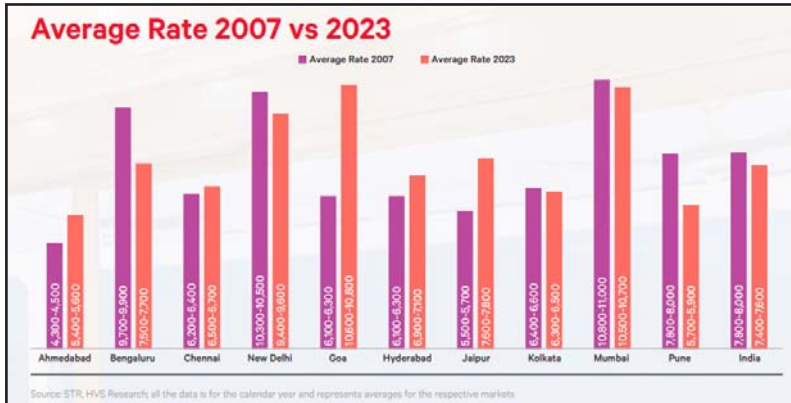
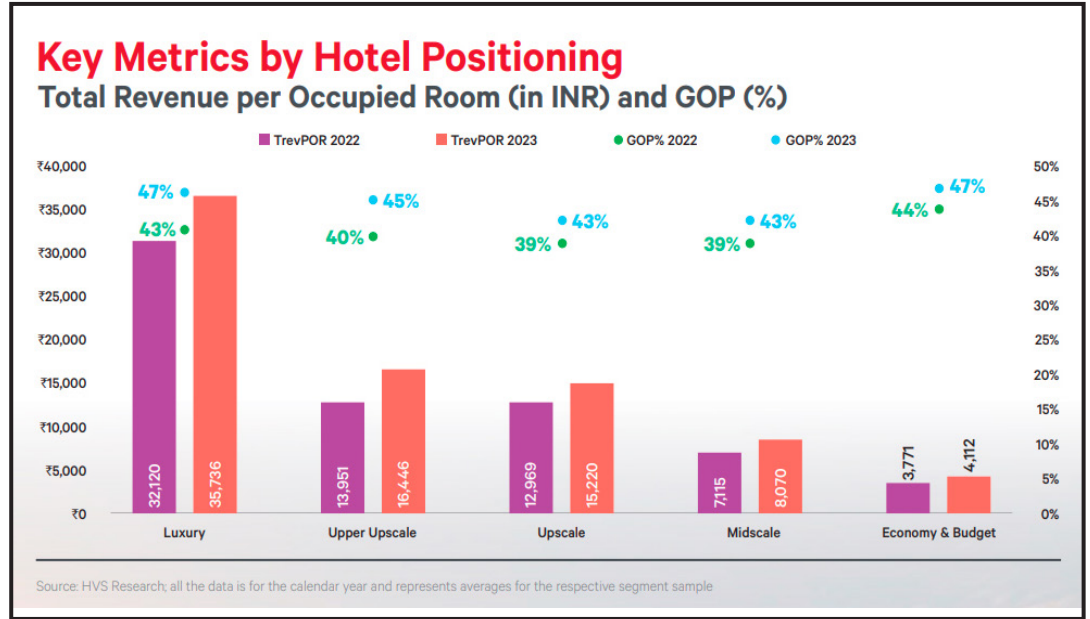
Destinations ranging from major metros like Mumbai and Delhi to leisure spots like Goa and Jaipur, and tranquil locations like Rishikesh and Kashmir, all contributed to this growth. The year also saw a record number of brand signings, emphasizing confidence in the Indian market's potential. The sector strategically focused on expanding into smaller cities





and underserved markets.

Looking ahead to 2024, HVS ANAROCK predicts continued growth, driven by sustained domestic demand, the return of international travel, niche tourism growth, and enhanced travel infrastructure. India-wide occupancy to improve to 66-67% in 2024, coupled with a 6-8% increase in ARR will push RevPAR to INR 5,281 during the year, almost 31-33% higher than the pre-pandemic RevPAR recorded in 2019. ■



# How do you scale your Business and make it a leader in the market?

By Prem Anand

Steve Jobs said you cannot connect dots by looking forward; you can only connect them by looking backwards. When I decided to get into sharing my learnings with others, with the aim of them using it to flourish in their lives,

I asked myself how I had come this far, from being an apprentice steward to founding a Butler Academy from Chennai to Switzerland;

I am writing this from ST Tropez, the French playground for celebrities and affluent people; a week's holiday in this extraordinary resort was provided as a gift towards my partner's service rendered towards her client.

Upon deeper reflection, I discovered the key to my journey: the crucial aspect of the ability of the service to transform ordinary experiences into extraordinary ones.

In a nutshell, this means creating memorable experiences for our clients.

This holds immense potential for our business, allowing us to create unforgettable customer moments.

This article is about this journey, and by getting a handle on it, our business can become not just a service provider but a brand cherished to become part of your customers' lives.

This is part of the vision that The London Butler Academy has embraced, and it can elevate your business to new heights of customer



*Prem Anand, a renowned figure in hospitality, is acclaimed for his exceptional butler skills. His reputation comes from impeccable service, acute attention to detail, and deep understanding of hospitality. Spanning prestigious establishments with high-profile clients, Anand is celebrated for discretion, professionalism, and anticipating guest needs. He founded The London Butler Academy(R), empowering individuals and hospitality professionals to excel in their careers.*

- Enhanced Brand Image and Reputation
- Enhanced Customer Loyalty
- Emotional and Psychological well-being of the client and the staff.

For an experience to become memorable, the following conditions are to be met.

**Emotional Connection:** The heart of a memorable experience is its ability to connect emotionally. This emotional connection is achieved when the experience touches on the individual's aspirations, unmet desires, or profound interests. It's about creating moments that feel personal and significant to the customer.

It could be in the following ways

Entertainment (passive engagement)- Jazz or theatre

Educational (active engagement where the customer learns) cooking classes  
Escapist (active engagement where the customer participates) scuba diving, paragliding

Esthetic (passive engagement where the customer is immersed in the environment)- botanical gardens

To transform an experience into a memorable one, The provider must be fully present, with sincere feelings toward the client's welfare and well-being and an interest in seeking

solutions. We should seek relationships as the outcome of every interaction, not a transaction.

The server should be able to provoke a feeling of immense gratitude, joy or a surprise for the receiver.

Many of the situations that we are encountering with our client have the potential to be converted into a memorable situation.

Identify staff who can reflect on the above and are intelligent enough to convert every encounter into an experience. They should be empowered to act towards this cause.

If you are well versed and your business is already creating such an experience, What is the next stage?

Next issue I will write about this ■



loyalty and satisfaction.

Should your business create such an experience, this will make them write about how they enjoyed your services, become unpaid ambassadors to your company, and rave about you to their friends and families. They will look forward to their next visit to spend time and money with your business. Your business will be ahead of your competitors when this is scaled up.

The benefits of creating memorable experiences are extensive.

- Positive Word-of-Mouth and Referrals
- Competitive Differentiation
- Higher Perceived Value
- Stronger Emotional Bonds



## Nirvana Works International launches Wise Monkey Indian Spiced Rum

Nirvana Works International has officially announced the launch of Wise Monkey Indian Spiced Rum – a new addition to their line-up of unique blends. After the success of their limited batch release, the purely-molasses based rum garnered quite the attention from rum fanatics. The latest offering from the award-winning brand brings in a truly Indian experience to add on to your bar collections. With an all-organic spices' infusion, the rum pays homage to the lesser credited land that celebrates both rum and spices – India. The Indian-inspired spirit is available for purchase at stores across Bahrain, UAE, and Zambia.



## Nemiroff Vodka makes inroads into India

The Ukrainian brand Nemiroff entered the Indian market through a partnership with Amistad Spirits, advancing its goal of becoming one of the top-five vodka brands. Amistad Spirits has an established network across India and distributes more than 100 premium liquor brands in the country. Its reach includes Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Leh and Haryana. Nemiroff credited Amistad's strong ethics and responsibility, along with its expertise in the alcohol beverage sector, making it the ideal distributor for the brand in India.

## Kohler launches multi-functional Cairn Kitchen sinks

Kohler launched Cairn® Kitchen Sinks in India crafted from Neoroc™ and built to endure the demands of daily use, combining a beautiful design and a rich matt colour palette with most durable material. Each sink comes with an included sink rack, providing an added layer of protection and helps the sink look newer for an extended period, enhancing both functionality and aesthetics. With straight bowl walls with soft French curves and an impressive 9½" depth, the sinks are designed to complement any counter top. The Cairn® range is crafted from Neoroc™. Kohler's proprietary matt composite sink material which is an exceptionally durable composite material available in India. This exclusive blend of natural stone and resin results in a rock-hard composite meticulously crafted to endure the rigors of daily kitchen use. Neoroc™ boasts of heat and stain resistance.



## Cargill introduces Nature Fresh block chocolates, chocolate chips and cocoa powder

Cargill unveiled a range of block chocolates, chocolate chips and cocoa powder products under its Nature Fresh Professional brand and showcased innovative products and solutions curated for the Indian Food and Bakery industry, at AAHAR 2024. NatureFresh Professional Chocolate Indulgence Range that includes block chocolates, cocoa powder and chocolate chips that were meticulously crafted based on extensive research conducted among India's top bakers. Available in four variants – Intense Dark, Dark, Milk and White variants, these products provide bakers with unique flavour of high-quality cocoa with creamy texture and superior mouthfeel, colour and sheen. Leveraging Cargill's advanced

DoMiReCo processing technology, these products ensure consistent top-notch quality, to deliver quality and meet expectations of Indian bakers. Available in slabs and chips form, these products come with a shelf life of 12-15 months and can be used in a wide range of bakery and ice cream applications like ganache, mousse, filing, garnishing, moulding and enrobing. NatureFresh professional portfolio also includes a unique imported cocoa powder (from Cargill's global leading cocoa powder brand Gerkens), tailored to needs of the Indian bakers and preferences of Indian consumers for richer and darker colored powders.



### voco Jim Corbett by IHG Hotels & Resorts

Nestled on the foothills of the Mailani range, the hotel immerses guests in the captivating natural beauty and wildlife of the Kumaon region.

Spread across 13.5 acres of lush greenery along the majestic Kosi Riverside, the resort in Dhilkuli region of Jim Corbett emerges as a sanctuary of tranquility and serenity, amidst dense forests and a symphony of foliage.

Offering an all-day dining experience, banquet halls, an alfresco lounge bar, a refreshing pool, rejuvenating spa, meticulously manicured lawns, an amphitheater, and a fully equipped fitness center, the hotel stands as an ideal destination for all occasions, particularly a dreamy destination wedding in the enchanting realm of Jim Corbett.

### MAATI, Nainital by Eight Continents Hotels & Resorts

MAATI – Signature Collection by Eight Continents epitomizes the essence of Nainital. The resort has 12 uniquely designed rooms representing elements of the earth. Each of the resort's rooms and suites is meticulously appointed with modern amenities and elegant furnishings, ensuring a stay of unparalleled comfort and luxury.

Guests can indulge their senses at the resort's exquisite dining venues, where culinary delights await at every turn. From traditional Indian cuisine to international favorites, each dish is prepared with the finest ingredients and served with impeccable attention to detail.

For those seeking relaxation and rejuvenation, the resort offers a range of wellness experiences, including yoga classes, and meditation sessions. Guests can also explore the surrounding area, with guided hikes, boat rides on the lake, and visits to nearby attractions such as Naina Devi Temple and Snow View Point.



### Minimalist Goa, Panjim

The hotel features 30 thoughtfully designed rooms and suites, embodying the simplicity and elegance synonymous with Minimalist Hotels. The blend of minimalist architecture and Japandi design creates an oasis of calm, providing a peaceful retreat for guests. Minimalist Panjim's design draws inspiration from minimalism and Japanese design, characterised by clean lines, natural materials, and a muted colour palette.

The backyard swimming pool transforms the hotel into a stunning tropical oasis.

Guests can indulge in two food and beverage experiences: Cafe Fika, an all day dining cafe offering a curated selection of speciality coffee partnered with locally acclaimed coffee brand in GOA- G Shot Coffee Roasters.

### Brij Eternity, Vrindavan

This 42 Keys hotel boasts of contemporary furnishings, plush bedding, and a range of modern amenities ensuring a comfortable and rejuvenating stay. Guests can indulge in a culinary journey at the hotel's multi-cuisine restaurant Tulsi Ark, which offers a diverse selection of international, regional and Satvik delicacies. The menu includes traditional dishes prepared without onion and garlic, catering to various dietary preferences and ensuring a delightful dining experience for all. Spread over 1 lakh sq. feet, the hotel boasts indoor & outdoor banquet spaces and lawns that are apt for hosting events big or small, from social gatherings to intimate celebrations and Vedic weddings.





## MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL


**Ashwin Vaidya, General Manager, Marriott Executive Apartments Hyderabad**

With over 17 years of extensive experience in the hospitality sector, Vaidya brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership prowess to his new role. In his current role, he will spearhead the hotel teams with exceptional leadership and hands-on guidance. His experience will be instrumental in ensuring

impeccable operations at the apartments, all while relentlessly pursuing excellence and pioneering innovative strategies.


**Hitesh Pant, Executive Chef, Sheraton Grand Whitefield Bengaluru Hotel & Convention Centre**

With over 14 years of experience in the food and beverage industry, Chef Hitesh brings a wealth of knowledge and a proven track record of excellence to his new role.

Chef Pant, in his new position, will oversee the culinary operations at Sheraton Grand

Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel, focusing on innovation and excellence across all F&B outlets, from in-room dining to orchestrating culinary experiences for MICE, events, and weddings. Beyond the kitchen, his leadership is marked by a deep commitment to nurturing talent and fostering a collaborative culture that thrives on achievement.


**Pravin Sarang, Director of Sales, Goa Marriott Resort and Spa**

Sarang has been part of Hotels since 2009. With experience at renowned hotel companies like IHCL, Hyatt and Radisson, he brings a wealth of expertise. In his most recent role as Director of Sales at Country Inn and Suites by Radisson Candolim Goa, he orchestrated remarkable successes, showcasing his

exceptional leadership and strategic abilities.

## ACCOR HOTELS


**Rachita Sood, General Manager, Novotel Mumbai International Airport**

Sood is an accomplished hospitality veteran with over 20 years' experience with specialised expertise in Rooms, Guest Experience, Spa Operations, Revenues and Controls, Implementation and maintenance of Operational Systems and Procedures amongst others. In her new role, she will

spearhead overall development of Hotel Operations vertical and oversee planning and implementation of strategies along with guest relations, leading the team towards maximum impact and outcome.


**Neelabh Sahay, Director of Operations, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach**

In his new role, Sahay will be overseeing the overall operations of the hotel and developing and implementing operational strategies to secure market positioning of the hotel.

A diligent professional with over 18 years of experience in his field, Sahay has been credited with organizing many successful

initiatives and was honoured with 'Food & Beverage Person of the Year' in Accor South Asia Hotel Awards for 2024.

## HYATT HOTELS

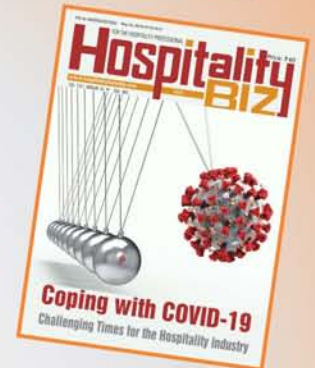

**Glen Dsouza, General Manager, Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata**

With over 18 years of experience and strong leadership skills in the dynamic hospitality and service industry, Dsouza has joined Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata as the General Manager. He brings a wealth of expertise in business administration, budgeting, revenue forecasting, and adept relationship management.

Dsouza's professional footprint extends beyond borders, having worked in vibrant international destinations such as Hong Kong, Doha, and Abu Dhabi. His global exposure has enriched his understanding of diverse cultures and refined his approach to delivering exceptional hospitality experiences.

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