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Hospitality BIZ

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EVENT ROUND UP

HPMF Convention 2024

Vision and Strategy for
Increased Business

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SPECIAL FEATURE

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‘India’s non-metro cities are at the heart of the country’s hospitality growth, offering immense potential and untapped opportunities’

Sarbendra Sarkar

Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

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ProWine Mumbai

A platform for Industry Excellence

HBI Staff | Mumbai

ProWine Mumbai, now in its 4th edition, is all set to once again bring together India's wine and spirits industry to taste the future.

ProWine Mumbai, India's largest business event has been the hub for the wine, spirits and hospitality industry over the past few years. This global platform opens doors for International and Indian wine and spirit brands looking to showcase brands and products, not only through exhibit displays but also through the masterclasses, live tastings and aligned show features that take place alongside the show.

Organised by Messe Düsseldorf India and All Things Nice, the show is scheduled for the 8th & 9th of November at the world-class Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai (Pavilion 3, Show Time: 11am-7pm). Mumbai is home to some of the most prominent importers and producers of wines and spirits and also boasts of a progressive hospitality industry and advanced consumer base.

The audience at ProWine Mumbai includes importers, distributors, retailers, food & beverage managers from renowned hotels, mixologists, bar & restaurant owners, members of wine and spirits clubs across the country and consumers. The trade buyers are responsible for buying large investment inventory and also for determining which brands are carried in bars, restaurants and retail shops. The consumers are the actual end users of the brands and are integral for brands at the show.

Exhibition & Tastings

ProWine Mumbai brings together the country's community of AlcoBev brands, importers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers, along with international brands looking to enter the Indian market and connects them with noteworthy large-scale buyers including hotels, restaurants, bar owners and wine & spirit enthusiasts.

This year the show includes 'ProSpirits', a highlight that delves into the flourishing dynamics and innovative strength of the spirits industry. Attendees can explore the latest products and trends and be inspired by tastings presented by industry experts.

Visitors can expect to taste over a thousand brands across 190 exhibitors, 8+

country pavilions and 25 countries representing this time besides the 12 masterclasses.

Masterclasses

ProWine Mumbai will also host 12 sessions over 2 days of complimentary Masterclasses, bringing together the best of knowledge and a range of wine and spirit tastings. We can expect stellar tastings from Japan, Australia, Ireland, Spain and UK, to name drop a few. The complete schedule will be out on the event website shortly. Entry is free and on a first come first serve basis.

The ProWine & ProSpirits Challenge

The ProWine & ProSpirits Challenge opened doors to Indian and international wine and spirits brands available in India to ascertain the quality of their products vis-à-vis the preferences of the local palate. The Judging took place through a systematic blind tasting by not only industry professionals, but also by significant wines & spirits consumers, connoisseurs and enthusiasts, giving them a platform to express their opinion on their favorite wines & spirits. The aim of this challenge was to judge the wines & spirits based on their quality alone, revealing an independent list of the finest wines & spirits available in India, as chosen by the very people who drink them. See Jury on <https://www.prowine.in/prowine-spirits-challenge>

The winners will be unveiled at ProWine Mumbai and visitors can get a chance to taste at the exhibition booths the winning wines.

The ProWine Bartenders' Competition

ProWine Mumbai presents an exceptional platform for talented bartenders in the country to showcase their skills at the 'ProWine Bartenders' Competition'.

In partnership with Fay Barretto, Mr. Bartender & The Crew, Round 1 has taken place and select finalists will compete for the prestigious title 'ProWine Bartender of the Year', and win an all-expense paid Guest Shift at an international bar besides recognition in the trade and media, besides a prize and recognition in trade and media.

Judges for the ProWine Bartenders Competition include Meenakshi Singh – Sidecar, Pankil Shah – Woodside Inn, Pawan Shahri – Chrome Asia Hospitality.

The Panel Discussions

ProWine Mumbai 2024 will also showcase invigorating panel discussions on 8th Nov on astute topics that are pertinent to the industry. The panellists include producers of craft spirits, global brand ambassadors and heads of multinational brands.

1) For Sommeliers, By Sommeliers: Taking India's Wine Journey to New Heights | 1200-1300 Hrs.

2) Creating a World Class Bar Program - Showcasing India's Talent & Culture | 1430-1530 Hrs.

3) The Realities & Opportunities of Importing Wine & Spirits in India | 1630-1730 Hrs.

The ProWine Mumbai Night

The ProWine Mumbai Night is a major networking event bringing together luminaries of the wine and spirits industry, leaders of hospitality, eminent media persons, and key exhibitors from across the world under one roof, making this the most prominent wine and spirit event of the year. At the ProWine Mumbai Night, winners of the ProWine & ProSpirits Challenge will be showcased at an exclusive 'Winning Wines & Spirits Bar' – an opportunity for all present to taste and learn where the Indian market preferences lie. A succinct ceremony "ProWine Mumbai: Honouring Excellence" will also felicitate noteworthy contributors to the wine and spirits industry as selected by ProWine Mumbai's Advisory Board that will include wine and spirit professionals, global brand ambassadors and heads of retail and trade.

For the wine and spirits industry, ProWine Mumbai 2024 now transcends an extraordinary trade fair - a platform for not just wine but also spirit brands to grasp global market trends and explore new business avenues. With appreciation from the industry stakeholders and partners paired with the sector's growth forecast promises that ProWine Mumbai will once again be well-received and well-attended.

Visitor registrations are now open, please see terms for visiting ProWine and other information on www.prowine.in

Full Event Schedule on <https://www.prowine.in/Event-Schedule-2024> ■

A 3-day gathering, attended by over 500 delegates, including procurement professionals from across 8 nations and hospitality leaders, recently concluded in Lucknow. With more than a hundred deals and several MoUs signed during the B2B meetings, valued at about INR 1200 crores, the convention achieved significant business outcome. The convention, that started with a divine visit to the Ayodhya Dham, delved into various aspects that was relevant to the procurement fraternity and created a wonderful platform for networking and ideation.



HPMF Convention 2024 - Vision and Strategy for Increased Business

HBI Staff | Uttar Pradesh

The Hospitality Procurement Managers Forum (HPMF) Convention held from 26 to 29 September in Lucknow-Ayodhya Dham has added yet another shining chapter to the organization's history. The event was marked by impeccable planning, strategic vision, and flawless execution, earning well-deserved accolades for the HPMF team.

This landmark event, besides providing opportunities for professional growth and development of procurement professionals and senior managers, introduced several new initiatives that underline

HPMF's growth and its commitment to social responsibility. Key highlights included the unveiling of the "100 Milestones in 1000 Days" initiative, HPMF Gurukul program, plans to develop a cutting-edge tech platform, and an expansion strategy aimed at adding international chapters, government departments, and major industry partners. The emphasis on sustainability, green technology, women's equity, participation in DEI initiative and social causes further sets HPMF apart as a fast-growing, family-like organization with a deep sense of purpose.

Attended by over 525 delegates, partners, media and well known personalities from the industry, the convention provided delegates, sponsors, professionals, partners, and awardees with a profound sense of





belonging and achievement. Attendees praised the holistic nature of the event, which fostered connections and enriched professional discussions in a congenial, development-oriented yet comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere.

One of the highlights of the event was the brilliant speech delivered by Chief Guest Surendra Jaiswal, President of HRANI and the UP Hotel & Restaurant Association. His keynote address emphasized resilience, innovation, and sustainability as crucial elements for driving the future of the hospitality sector. The Guest of Honour, Gaurav Prakash, renowned entrepreneur and hotelier, shared visionary insights into the evolving landscape of hospitality in India, with a focus on strategic partnerships and technological advancements.

The support of the Tourism Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh was instrumental in making the event a grand success. Their commitment to promoting Uttar Pradesh as a tourism and hospitality hub was acknowledged as a key element that elevated the convention's significance, reinforcing the importance of public-private collaboration for growth.

The spiritual journey to the holy Shri Ram Lalla Temple and the cultural festivities at Ram Katha Park, which included a unique laser show, immersed attendees in the rich spiritual heritage of Uttar Pradesh. Traditional dress codes, local music, dance, qawwali performances, and a vast spread of authentic regional cuisines added to the vibrant cultural experience. The inclusion of GI-certified local arts and crafts with artisans in attendance further promoted the state's ancient art and crafts legacy.

In addition to the cultural and spiritual dimensions, the convention achieved significant business outcomes, with more than a hundred deals and several MoUs signed during the B2B meetings valued at about 1200 crores. The value and impact of the event far exceeded expectations, delivering outcomes comparable to government-run events at a fraction of the cost. Officials of the Government of Uttar Pradesh conveyed accolades to Team HPMF for a visionary, impactful event.

Motivational talks, industry discussions, and presentations by top industry leaders and government officials provided invaluable insights. The exhibitions were meticulously curated, showcasing the latest products, services, and new technologies for the hospitality sector, further elevating the HORECA industry's knowledge base.

One of the standout moments of the convention was the HPMF Procurement Excellence Awards, which recognized excellence through a rigorous and merit-based selection process. Notable honors included the Thakur Giriraj Singh Ji Lotwara Memorial Award (winner Padmashree Dr Rajnikant), and the HPMF Lifetime Achievement Award (winner N Srinivasan) with this year's focus on Women Achievers of India.

Dr. Nitin Nagrale, the driving force behind HPMF, received widespread praise for his leadership and vision. As one participant remarked, "I have been a lifelong achiever, yet there is so much more to



Dr. Nitin Shankar Nagrale
Founder and Secretary General

After a gap of four years, stepping back into organizing the HPMF Convention and Awards felt like an enormous task, especially in a post-COVID world where uncertainty and a general lack of confidence loomed over everyone. It wasn't just about restarting an event — it was about reigniting the spark of community

and collaboration that had dimmed during the long pause.

One of the biggest hurdles was generating sponsorship. The time it took to gain the trust and support of stakeholders was significant, and there were moments where it felt like the uphill battle would never end. The venue itself presented its own set of challenges, being far from easy to manage. Coupled with the multitude of approvals required in Uttar Pradesh, the logistical hurdles seemed never-ending.

As if that wasn't enough, rains on all 3 days of the event and the inevitable last-minute changes in plans added more layers of stress. At times, it felt like the universe was testing every aspect of our preparation and resilience.

Yet, against all odds, the event was a success. Every challenge we faced made that final victory even sweeter. In the end, it wasn't just about hosting an event — it was about proving that even in the face of adversity, with persistence and teamwork, we can achieve remarkable things.

The successful outcome is a testament to the power of determination, and I feel immensely proud of what we have accomplished together.

learn from Nitin and his remarkable team."

The HPMF Convention has once again demonstrated the power of collaboration, vision, and execution, setting a new benchmark for industry events and earning real accolades for its substantial achievements. ■



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Responsible growth!



As has been repeatedly reported, the hospitality industry in India has been experiencing a significant boom. According to news data available and recently published reports, there has been an unprecedented growth which has transformed the industry into a powerhouse of economic development – passing on more revenue to the exchequer, increased employment opportunities, and much more. A remarkable 10 to 12 percent annual growth rate has outpaced the global average. According to an estimate by CareEdge, following a 14 percent increase in RevPAR last year, the average growth this fiscal is expected to be in the range of 9 percent.

These are not mere numbers but have been the driving force for new hotel development across the country. An additional 55,000 keys are expected to be added over the next 5 years, to increase the existing tally of 166,000 rooms in the organized sector. According to Smartscrapers (an advanced AI tool that enables businesses and individuals to scrape data independently), there are 1,26,005 Hotels in India as of October 1, 2024; which is a 5.12 percent increase from 2023. Even if the provided date is to be partially believed, just shows the vast gap between the organized and the unorganized sector, that needs to be plugged in if we want to see the standards of our hospitality increase and enable guests to have an experience that is not full of surprises.

There has been a change of guard at many hospitality associations recently. The hospitality leaders perhaps can take up an initiative, in their respective domains, to map the hotel topography of the country and bring forward the true numbers and collectively ensure that guest convenience is thought of. Those operating hotels without catering to the basic standards must be brought to books and reported to the authorities, for necessary strict action. As the industry grows, there will be an express need to ensure that the guest confidence is sustained. Who is to be held accountable for guest experience at these unorganized hotel rooms?

Sumit Jha
Editor & Business Head

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Poisson or Poison?

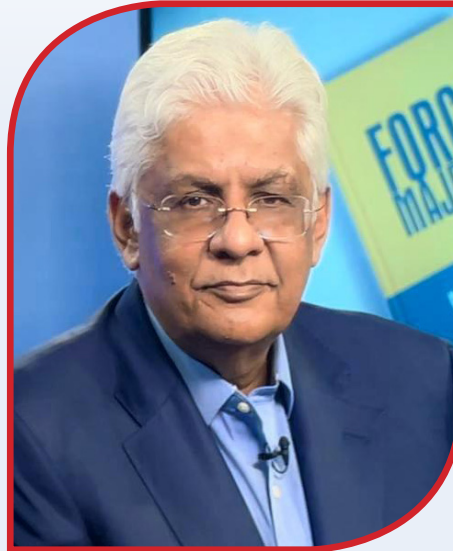
By **Nathan Andrews**, Author & Hospitality Consultant

Just this past week SAMHI announced the acquisition of Inmar Tourism for 205 crores. The asset that underlies this purchase is a 142-room hotel with an annual turnover of 24.76 crore. The news report also mentioned that a further 200-220 rooms may be constructed on the site, which I can safely assume was a key consideration in the final valuation.

Bottom line transactions are happening, and for transactions to happen there needs to be both a buyer and seller. In my current role, I receive on an average eight to ten opportunities a week, a mix of greenfield, brownfield and operating assets, so is it a good time to invest? And if so where and what? Perhaps to paraphrase Simon Sinek, the real question should be 'why'?

Obviously, there is no straightforward answer as there are a number of factors beyond the even the price. A wise king once said about the market "It's no good, it's no good!" says the buyer- then goes off and boasts about the purchase, that remains as true today.

So, why invest and what makes for a good investment? I would say any investment that aligns with the buyer's goals. Is the acquisition a



strategic investment as part of a portfolio? Then a good investment will align with the long-term strategy and the portfolio mix. Is the investment long-term? Then greenfield assets may make more sense, if medium-term then operating or brownfield assets would be perhaps more attractive.

For me one of the key factors after knowing the why, and assessing the what is the replacement value. While the current market supports values of 12 - 14 times EBITDA and may be favourable to the seller, those levels do not leave anything on the table for the buyer particularly if the investment horizon of the buyer is less than eight to ten years. However, if the EBITDA multiples are close to the replacement value and the underlying land value if applicable is reasonable, then I believe that makes for a good investment.

In short, there is no one-size-fits-all, as a hoarding in the Oberoi Delhi used to say one man's poisson is another man's poison! The wise man knows the difference.a. ■

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The economic benefits of going green in hospitality

By **Dr Niraalee Shah**, Responsible Tourism Society of India, State Convenor for Maharashtra

The hospitality industry encompasses a wide range of businesses, including hotels, restaurants, resorts, and event venues, all of which cater to travelers, tourists, and locals. This industry's economic and social significance is undeniable, as it contributes significantly to local economies and employment opportunities. However, this impact often comes at an environmental cost, as the industry grows, so do its ecological footprints, prompting the need for a shift toward sustainable practices. According to the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, tourism contributes about 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions a figure expected to rise by 130% by 2035.

Dr. Niraalee Shah, Managing Director of Travel Design, emphasizes the importance of sustainability in hospitality, stating, "Going green in hospitality not only reduces costs through energy savings but also attracts eco-conscious travelers, boosting revenue and enhancing brand loyalty." In this article, we will explore the economic benefits with few ways to going green in hospitality, revealing how sustainable practices can lead to cost savings, increased consumer loyalty, and a stronger brand reputation.

1. GREATER FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

One of the most immediate benefits of going green and adopting sustainable practices in the hospitality sector is the reduction in energy costs. In India, while some sustainable hotel practices may require upfront investments, many of them generate long-term financial benefits. Here are a few ways sustainability in the hospitality industry helps you save money:

- Implementing energy-efficient lighting, HVAC systems, and appliances can significantly lower electricity and gas bills over time.
- Monitoring energy usage and making adjustments based on data can lead to efficient operations and reduced energy waste.
- Water-efficient fixtures, low-flow toilets, and rainwater harvesting systems can result in substantial water savings and decreased water expenses. Reduced water consumption often leads to lower sewer fees charged by municipalities.
- Implementing recycling and composting programs can lead to decreased waste disposal costs by diverting materials from landfills.
- Opting for bulk amenities, refillable amenities dispensers, and reusable products can reduce the need to purchase single-use items.

2. ENHANCING BRAND REPUTATION AND LOYALTY

In an era where consumers are increasingly environmentally conscious, adopting sustainable practices has become essential for businesses in the hospitality sector. Going green not only aligns companies with public sentiments but also enhances brand reputation. Establishments that prioritize sustainability initiatives are often perceived as responsible, ethical, and caring, resonating with a growing segment of eco-minded travelers, here are a few ways sustainability can boost your brand reputation and give you a competitive advantage:

- Embracing sustainability portrays your hotel as an ethical and responsible organization that cares about the environment, communities, and future generations.
- Guests appreciate transparency in sustainable practices, increasing trust in your brand.

- Sustainability becomes a unique selling point that sets you apart from competitors in a crowded market.

3. TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

In today's competitive job market, employees increasingly seek opportunities with environmentally conscious organizations, prompting businesses to adopt sustainable practices to attract and retain top talent. A sustainable workplace fosters a positive company culture that enhances employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity. Here are a few ways sustainability can enhance talent attraction and retention:

- Provide hospitality training programs that equip employees with green skills and knowledge.
- Pursue relevant eco-certifications that validate your organization's sustainability efforts.
- Highlight your Sustainability Efforts in recruitment
- Implement Employee-Led Green Initiatives



4. LONG-TERM VIABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Adopting sustainable practices can help future-proof your hotel against regulatory changes and market shifts. No one knows what will happen in the future, but with climate change and global warming, sustainability can help you mitigate risks, and adapt to changing regulations and consumer demands. Here are a few ways sustainability plays a role in long-term viability and resilience:

- Sustainable measures improve your resilience to climate-related risks like flooding or extreme temperatures.
- Efficient resource use ensures your hotel can operate during resource shortages, minimizing disruptions.
- A positive public image as a responsible and sustainable hotel can help mitigate reputational damage during crises.
- Sustainability initiatives are part of a long-term investment strategy that yields long-term benefits.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, adopting green practices in the hospitality industry presents significant economic benefits that extend beyond environmental responsibility, by investing in energy-efficient technologies and sustainable resources, hotels can substantially lower operational costs through reduced energy and water consumption. Additionally, the growing demand for eco-friendly accommodations allows businesses to attract a new demographic of eco-conscious travelers, enhancing their market appeal. Ultimately, going green not only fosters a positive brand image but also contributes to long-term profitability and sustainability, positioning hotels to thrive in an increasingly competitive market. ■

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



‘We see significant potential in emerging markets in India, driven by a growing demand for mid-scale hotel options’

Vaibhav Jain, Regional General Manager at Holiday Inn Express (an IHG Hotel) for South West Asia, explains what sets the brand apart in the competitive hospitality industry. In a conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee**, he emphasizes Holiday Inn Express’s exceptional value, modern room designs, and business-oriented amenities specifically designed for solo travellers and professionals. Featuring premium bedding, free high-speed internet, and well-designed workspaces, the brand continues to stay competitive by offering guests a comfortable and hassle-free stay.

Q What are the key factors that set Holiday Inn Express apart from its competitors?

We believe that Holiday Inn Express stands out from its competitors due to its excellent value-for-money proposition, efficient room design, and smart amenities tailored to the needs of solo travelers and business professionals. Our brand is renowned for providing high-quality bedding, high-speed internet access, and comfortable workspaces, making it an ideal choice for those who prioritize functionality and convenience. Our service is all about delivering great service to Smart Travelers. By consistently offering a comfortable and efficient experience for guests, Holiday Inn Express hotels make guests’ missions easy no matter where they are in the world. For travelers on the go, Holiday Inn Express provides more where it matters most – a great night’s sleep with our Express Recharge program, focused service from genuine people, and the Express Start Breakfast included in the rate, all designed to help guests feel more than ready for their day. As the world’s largest hotel brand, Holiday Inn Express continues to evolve and has blazed a trail for the simple, smart travel experience for over 35 years. The loyalty program, IHG One Rewards, allows guests to earn and redeem points across a vast network of hotels worldwide. Our commitment to accessibility and inclusivity further distinguishes us, ensuring a welcoming and comfortable stay for all our guests. Additionally, our participation in IHG Business Edge provides small and medium-sized enterprises access to exclusive discounts and tools, enabling businesses to manage travel more effectively while benefiting from the IHG network.

Q Holiday Inn Express has established itself in several key business hubs. How did the brand choose these locations, and what factors do you consider to ensure they align with the needs of business travelers? Are there any specific regions or cities where you see significant growth potential for Holiday Inn Express?

Holiday Inn Express selects locations that are strategically positioned near business districts, airports, and major transport hubs, taking into account the proximity to corporate offices, conference centers, and popular tourist attractions to cater to the needs of business travelers. We also prioritize areas with high demand for accommodation and easy access to local amenities, ensuring convenience and comfort for our guests. In terms of growth, we see significant potential in emerging markets in India, where there is a growing demand for mid-scale hotel options. As the fastest-growing brand for IHG Hotels & Resorts, Holiday Inn Express aims to enable real, human connections for our guests by providing a simple, smart travel experience.

Q What are the biggest challenges you currently face in the hospitality industry, and how is Holiday Inn Express addressing them?

The hospitality industry faces several challenges, including fluctuating demand patterns, rising operating costs, and shifting consumer preferences. To address these challenges, we are focusing on implementing data-driven decision-making strategies, optimizing our operations to reduce costs, and investing in technology to enhance the guest experience. Another key focus for us is talent retention and attracting new talent. We understand that hospitality is not always seen as a preferred career path, and we are working to change this by offering a supportive work environment. By promoting a healthy work-life balance and ensuring our staff receive eight days off each month, we aim to make hospitality a more appealing and sustainable career choice.

Q What opportunities do you see for growth and expansion, especially in the context of post-pandemic recovery and the evolving needs of business travelers?

There are significant opportunities for Holiday Inn Express to expand by addressing the changing needs of business travelers who increasingly value flexibility and convenience. We plan to enhance our presence in key markets such as Kolkata & Greater Noida, while also exploring additional conversion opportunities in various locations across India. By aligning our expansion strategy with these evolving preferences, we can better meet the demands of today’s business travelers and strengthen our market position.

Q Are there any new employee engagement or training programs you have recently implemented or plan to introduce?

Holiday Inn Express, being a part of IHG Hotel & Resorts, has access to a diverse universe of employee engagement & training literature & programs. A few of them are IHG Skills Academy (a virtual learning platform, which is a global resource for hospitality for early career professionals), IHG Rise program (Designed to promote career progression, a 12-month program that also includes an opportunity to run a “Lean In Circle” in the hotel), Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives (DE&I) to drive gender balance and doubling under-represented groups across leadership roles. These programs aim to enhance employee engagement, foster a diverse and inclusive culture, and support career development. ■

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Leading Learners #3 | Championing Change

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



My last two columns Leading Learners #1 and #2, urged creation of accountability within learning structures by renewing roles to prioritize change. This concluding column focuses on championing change by analysing criticality and commitment in required quarters. Case note – declining career choice for culinary/hospitality/service domains. Are rewards visible in the context of changing economic implications, of a fast growing USD 500 bn food and beverage market size by 2027? Current mentors across all levels and functions need to attract future talent by repositioning growing opportunities! Areas affecting quality, consistency and sustainability of talent pipelines for future needs include content, credibility and cultural baggage. An interconnection of these factors is framed, by highlighting the urgency to act progressively, eliminating the sluggish status quo in several systems.

NEP (2020) provides a progressive structure to achieve quality through access, equity, affordability and accountability. The extent to which these benefits are prioritized and leveraged in learning or skilling systems, depends on acceleration - by assigning stringent timelines. Visionary results can be achieved through system synergy, by assigning relevant roles with responsibility and governing result-oriented accountability. The question to really answer is whether existing talent leaders, with limited resources and perspectives are fully empowered to bring in this change. Do existing constraints affect execution - by obscuring growing criticality and slowing commitment for change, across several stakeholder groups? Some inherent insights can be gauged through the modelling of both variables, criticality and commitment. While criticality remains masked, fluctuating between being concealed or revealed, commitment levels are either passive lip-service or occur in rarefied islands of excellence.

structures. All accredited institutions/faculty need to create their own degree of signature credibility, through advanced exposure/re-certification, meeting physical learning and skilling standards.

3. Skilling Systems: Module design, delivery, assessment and evaluation have gone through sea changes globally, yet methods deployed today remain hoary.

The priority to develop new bodies of contemporary underpinning knowledge, by content renewal and restructuring is a crying need. Affordability of progressive approaches can be highlighted from models like Swayam Plus, a powerful initiative by Ministry of Education, yet not fully leveraged nationally.

4. Supervisory Systems: Module supervision to achieve learning outcomes is a curriculum design and delivery mission. Supervisory systems have to change from a culture of mediocrity to one of incubating excellence. Industry, employment and/or entrepreneurial outcome-based performance management systems, must be instituted to bring in an ethos of transparency. Holistic implementation across academia and industry will yield better results if fully owned.

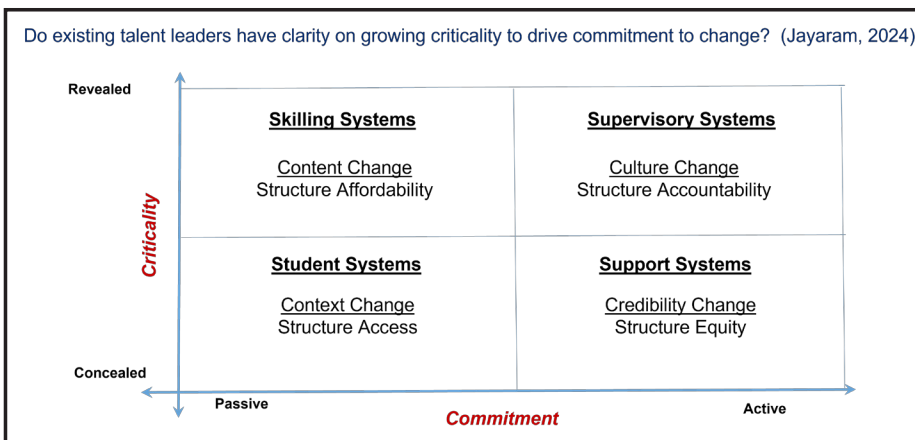
Synergies between student, support, skilling and supervisory systems need a think-tank, comprising academia, industry, entrepreneurs and the start-up ecosystem to work with urgency, address talent gaps and create certifications/micro-credentials, aligning open credit accrual/transfer. Accountability to ensure system performance at optimal levels requires answerable ownership. Cross functional teams across systems need to practice in concert to win this relay race. Frequent outcome reviews

and realignment through an overarching board, will ensure that there is coherence in efforts. The primary responsibility to lead learners, rests with policy makers and academic bodies via skilling delivery ecosystem partners alongside industry. Incorporation of advanced hybrid neo-skilling to offer open credit-based learning solutions, needs uniform incubation and acceptance first, then compliant conveyance as a universal minimum viable solution!

Leading effective learning experiences is a collective responsibility, yet structures for accountability, to deliver operative outcomes remain ambiguous. Stakeholder mapping, expectation alignment and engaged participation are some ways

in which real empowerment of talent pipelines can be accomplished. In conclusion, obscuring *criticality* is ostrich-like behaviour, stakeholders must definitively achieve consensus on deliverables without the proverbial buck-passing. Once achieved, despite limitations of democratic encumbrances, active *commitment* to ascertain stakeholder-level support credibly, must result in demonstration of a visibly renewed learning culture! An engaged macro-skilling ecosystem, driven by accountability, is the only real answer to protect future talents. But are all stakeholders truly championing this change vigorously? ■

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



1. Student Systems: Progressive open-credit accrual systems can be deployed to stack-up skills for interim outcomes. Multi-disciplinary learning can be adopted between periods of work, internship or summer school credits, to cement neo-skilling from practitioners. Changing contexts of student requirements remain largely concealed now. Access to learning opportunities can be re-structured, by mapping credits innovatively to suit emerging contexts.

2. Support Systems: Subject matter expertise exists rarely in progressive pockets within limited institutions, both globally and domestically. Students must gain equitable access countrywide, using digital learning, via synergistic institutional MoUs in collaborative



TreeHouse Hotels Prioritises Owner ROI with a Strategic Growth Plan, Limiting Multiple Properties in the Same City

TreeHouse Hotels & Resorts, a prominent hospitality chain under Karma Hospitality LLP, is making significant strides in its expansion journey, led by **Ajay Mehtani, Partner at TreeHouse Hotels & Resorts**. With extensive experience in leadership roles across sales, marketing, asset management, and business development in global hotel brands, Mehtani has been instrumental in driving the brand's successful transformation in the mid-scale segment. In an exclusive conversation with **Hospitality Biz**, Mehtani shares his vision for TreeHouse, its growth strategy, and the evolving trends shaping the hospitality industry.

Q From a successful role in research, what inspired you to take on the leadership role at TreeHouse Hotels & Resorts?

I have always been on the operational side of business. Sales & Marketing, Business Process Outsourcing, New Builds, Transitions & Franchise Support to Asset Management are some of the roles I have handled with leading global brands at regional level, hence running a business has always been a passion, that's where all the action is! In India, Mid-Scale hotels present a huge opportunity with over a billion domestic travelers growing at almost 8% CAGR in the next 5-10 years. We at TreeHouse Hotels & Resorts are well positioned to take advantage of this space. TreeHouse is a great brand for value conscious domestic travellers, the reason why we are expanding rapidly across India, and hence making it an exciting venture for me.

Q What was your vision for the brand when you first started?

TreeHouse has been in existence for over 10 years. We were very clear from the beginning that we want to be mid-scale and domestic focused. We stuck to our core strategy and direction resulting in successful growth and expansion.

Q Tell us about TreeHouse in numbers? What is the future plan, say by 2030?

TreeHouse Hotels & Resorts has now moved to a multi-brand strategy. "TreeHouse Exotic" is our upper mid-scale product, expansive and large format to cater to Weddings, Events and other market segments. "TreeHouse", our core mid-scale product offers great hotels to the value conscious travelers with one all day dining and small meeting areas in both business and leisure locations. Our third brand, "Nest by TreeHouse" Hotels Offers great Bed & Breakfast hotels which are at super locations for business or leisure providing clean-comfort at great prices.

Our growth strategy is very clear we don't want to have many flags in the same city or geo locations as we feel that it dilutes returns for the Owners if they are within +/- 15-20% ADR range and guests get an option to move unless the locations are significantly apart and travel time is high within the city.

We at TreeHouse Hotels & Resorts want cities to have fewer hotels of our brands but they should be well located, and with the right partners. Hence, we want to reach a goal of 50+ hotels by 2030 with a

right mix of all brands and at key locations.

Q What sets TreeHouse Hotels & Resorts apart from other boutique hotel brands in the hospitality industry?

I think the most important part in any mid-scale brand will always be consistency of product and service. Our Unique concept of Service "Dil-Se" which is a registered trademark with us, is our core value. We imbibe this service concept through our training programs at the associate level and our culture. Service from the heart, irrespective of the language we speak.

From a product standpoint our focus is very clear again across all our brands, young, vibrant, safe, clean-comfort for our guests.

Q How do you see the hospitality industry evolving over the next decade, and how is TreeHouse positioned to adapt to these changes?

It's a very broad topic as it has many aspects to it. Change is always constant. It can be product, technology, service, design, delivery, and processes. All of these will continue to adapt to changing customer needs. We will adapt too, bringing in operational efficiencies, with internal and external help and with the changing needs of the guests.

We continue to engage with our customers to understand their requirements and read through various other industry research on trends to be able to understand what should be done to keep our products and services aligned to the needs of our guests. We are younger and smaller, so change is always easier for us to adapt. You would have heard about the book "Who says Elephants can't dance?" but we think that it takes bigger players a little longer!

Q Can you share some key factors that have contributed to the success and growth of TreeHouse Hotels?

Our measure for success is simple, better ROI for our Owners, 8 of the hotels we operate are in the Customer Choice Awards for 2024, we expect to get to an 80% plus on this benchmark within our portfolio in the next year on our Customer Choice. Rest everything, we do revolves around this, continue to improve ROI and Guest Experience – as they say, Keep it Simple S..! If this is what we do well, everything else will follow. ■

'I believe in leading by working alongside my team to achieve our shared goals—'One Team, One Dream'



As the hospitality industry in India continues to evolve, Tier 2 and 3 cities have emerged as key growth areas. One of the finest examples of this is the recently opened Welcomhotel Belagavi by ITC Hotels. Under the leadership of **Rahul Kanungo, General Manager of Welcomhotel Belagavi**, the property has swiftly established itself as a premier destination for both leisure and corporate travellers. In an exclusive interaction, with **Asmita Mukherjee**, Kanungo shared insights on how the property is positioning itself to thrive in a rapidly changing market and his vision for the hotel's future.

Belagavi, nestled equidistant from Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Hyderabad, and just a stone's throw from Goa, Kolhapur, and Hubli, is witnessing a rapid transformation. Known as one of India's fastest-growing smart cities, it boasts a unique blend of industrial growth, abundant natural resources, and strategic connectivity. According to Kanungo, this makes Belagavi an attractive location for hospitality investments. "The city has long been a contributor to India's industrial development, particularly in sectors such as aerospace and automotive. With the growth of industries in areas like Kanbargi and advancements like the country's largest glass factory scaling up operations, the demand for hospitality is on the rise," he added.

As the demand for both corporate and leisure travel increases, Welcomhotel Belagavi has been designed to cater to diverse needs. "Our hotel is a tailored solution for travellers seeking luxury and comfort. With large rooms starting at 440 square feet, expansive banquet spaces, modern amenities like a spa, infinity pool, and a health club, we offer a resort-like experience amidst nature," Kanungo explains. The property's proximity to industrial areas and the Belagavi Airport makes it convenient for business travelers, while its serene location, surrounded by lush greenery and windmills, appeals to leisure guests.

What sets Welcomhotel Belagavi apart is its commitment to delivering exceptional guest experiences while adhering to ITC's

sustainability goals. Kanungo emphasises, "We are not just a city hotel; our resort-like architecture, vast open spaces, and luxurious amenities make us unique in the region. We are aligned with ITC's broader growth strategy, which focuses on sustainability and environment-friendly practices. Welcomhotel Belagavi is the 25th property in the country to embody this vision."

As the hotel is still in its nascent stage, Kanungo and his team are focused on building a strong foundation. "Our primary focus is on large social events and MICE business, given our extensive banquet facilities and room inventory. We aim to maintain premium rates and maximise RevPAR by offering high-category rooms with breathtaking views of the city's horizon and the surrounding hills," he shares.

In today's fast-paced world, technology plays a crucial role in enhancing guest experiences and optimising hotel operations. Welcomhotel Belagavi has embraced digital transformation wholeheartedly. "We use the latest software for a seamless check-in process, access-controlled elevators for guest security, and high-speed internet connectivity for business travelers. Our F&B outlets are equipped with tab-based operations to improve turnaround times," he reveals. The hotel also uses social media as a powerful tool to connect with potential guests, making it an economical and effective mode of communication.

Having been part of several pre-opening

teams, Kanungo has a wealth of experience in overcoming the challenges associated with launching a new hotel. "The key is to get the 'Triple P'—Product, People, and Process—in place. With ITC's brand strength, we were able to attract the right talent and set up efficient operations from day one. Understanding the business landscape and tapping into local resources has been crucial to our success," he explains.

Kanungo has also earned a reputation for turning around underperforming properties. His strategy is simple yet effective: "It's essential to understand the property's balance scorecard and market mix. Energising the team and making them believe in their ability to bring about change is critical. I always believe in working alongside my team to achieve our goals—'One Team, One Dream.'"

Kanungo is optimistic about Welcomhotel Belagavi's future. "Our ultimate goal is to make the hotel a destination where guests don't just stay but have an experience they cherish. We plan to expand our F&B offerings with specialty eateries, enhance our banqueting experiences with technological advancements, and collaborate with specialists from various fields to emerge as the brand leader in the region," he shares. The hotel will also focus on partnerships with travel agents, social media influencers, and technology providers to drive growth and innovation. ■

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Growing Market of HNWI's and India's Evolving Luxury Ecosystem

By Prem Anand, The LONDON BUTLER ACADEMY® Switzerland

In recent years, India has witnessed a sharp rise in the number of High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs), driven by the robust growth of various sectors, including IT, financial services, pharmaceuticals, and entrepreneurship. The term HNWI typically refers to individuals who hold investable assets exceeding \$1 million, excluding their primary residence. This rapid increase in wealth is shaping a new luxury ecosystem, where businesses are evolving to meet the specific lifestyle needs of the affluent. However, while the opportunities are vast, the market also faces challenges in delivering to the exacting standards expected by India's ultra-wealthy.

THE SURGE IN INDIA'S HNWI POPULATION

According to Knight Frank's "Wealth Report 2023," India's HNWI population grew by 11% in 2022, bringing the total number of individuals with net assets of \$1 million or more to over 797,000. This increase highlights the dynamic shift occurring in India's economy, where the rise of new business sectors and the global expansion of Indian enterprises have contributed to an unprecedented accumulation of wealth.

Furthermore, a report by Bain & Company estimates that the number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs)—those with assets exceeding \$30 million—is set to grow by 63% by 2026, further amplifying the need for a sophisticated luxury market to cater to this segment.

MARKET EVOLUTION: TAILORING TO THE NEEDS OF THE WEALTHY

With this expanding HNWI population, businesses in India are rushing to cater to the luxury lifestyle aspirations of the wealthy. Traditionally, luxury consumption in India was synonymous with foreign travel, where affluent Indians would shop for designer brands or invest in international properties. However, as the domestic luxury market matures, high-net-worth families and individuals are increasingly seeking premium experiences and products at home. Key areas where the market is evolving include:

- 1. Luxury Real Estate:** Developers are catering to HNWIs by offering exclusive residences with world-class amenities such as private pools, high-tech home automation, and concierge services. Areas like South Mumbai, Gurgaon, and Bengaluru have seen a surge in high-end real estate projects targeted specifically at this demographic.
- 2. Private Wealth Management:** As their wealth grows, Indian HNWIs are seeking sophisticated financial management solutions. A report by Ernst & Young notes that private banking and wealth management services are flourishing, offering everything from investment advice to estate planning and family office services. In addition, wealth management firms are increasingly integrating philanthropic planning, catering to the desire of wealthy individuals to contribute to society.
- 3. Luxury Retail:** The high-end retail space in India is booming, with international brands such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Hermes establishing flagship stores in

cities like Mumbai and Delhi. Luxury consumers in India are not only looking for products but for personalized experiences, from private fashion shows to bespoke tailoring services.

4. Experiential Luxury: The trend of experiential luxury is gaining momentum, where HNWIs are looking beyond tangible goods. Exclusive travel experiences, such as private jet vacations, bespoke wellness retreats, and curated culinary tours, are in high demand. Indian hospitality giants are also stepping up, offering unique, ultra-luxury accommodations to cater to this shift in consumer preferences.

CHALLENGES IN CATERING TO THE LUXURY MARKET

Despite the opportunities, businesses face significant challenges when addressing the needs of India's HNWI population.

- 1. Infrastructure Limitations:** India still struggles with infrastructure gaps in areas like transportation and urban planning. Traffic congestion, subpar public services, and the lack of ultra-modern luxury hubs hinder the ability to deliver seamless, world-class experiences that many HNWIs expect.
- 2. Cultural Nuances:** The Indian market is uniquely complex, with a mix of conservative and modern preferences depending on the region and the individual's background. Luxury brands often are navigating these cultural nuances carefully, ensuring they provide personalized experiences that resonate with diverse preferences.
- 3. High Import Duties:** Many luxury products, including cars, fashion, and electronics, face high import duties in India, making them significantly more expensive than in other countries. This creates a disincentive for HNWIs to purchase luxury goods domestically and drives them to shop abroad.
- 4. Talent Shortage in Luxury Services:** The luxury market in India suffers from a lack of trained professionals, particularly in the hospitality and personal service sectors. The demand for skilled butlers, estate managers, and personal assistants is growing, but there remains a gap in training and availability.
- 5. Institutions that train staff in high-end hospitality and personal services, such as The London Butler Academy®, play a crucial role in bridging this gap. We are looking for credible partners to develop talent. The London Butler Academy® is the first International Butler School established by an Indian British.**

THE FUTURE OF INDIA'S LUXURY MARKET

As India's HNWI population continues to grow, the market for luxury goods and services is expected to flourish. The wealth management sector, luxury real estate, and experiential services will be key drivers in this space. However, for the market to truly meet its potential, there must be an emphasis on improving infrastructure, reducing regulatory hurdles, and investing in talent development.

In conclusion, while India's luxury ecosystem is evolving at a rapid pace to accommodate the rising HNWI population, businesses will need to navigate a complex landscape of challenges to maintain sustainable growth. The future holds great promise, with the market likely to expand further, offering both domestic and international brands ample opportunities to engage with India's wealthiest families and individuals.

Concierge services catering to the Ultra high networth has boomed in the last five years.

SOURCES:

- Knight Frank, "Wealth Report 2023."
- Bain & Company, "India Luxury Market Report 2022."
- Ernst & Young, "India Private Banking and Wealth Management Report. ■"



"I am deeply passionate about human behaviour and its impact on service excellence. I bring many years of successful luxury service experience from the United Kingdom. I empower businesses, leaders, and teams to master client engagement, influence, and create experiences which make their clients become their loyal ambassadors. I am Prem Anand, the founder of The London Butler Academy in Switzerland, which helps businesses in India provide Swiss Standards."



‘India’s non-metro cities are at the heart of the country’s hospitality growth, offering immense potential and untapped opportunities’

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, a homegrown fast-growing hospitality brand, has been making significant strides in the Indian market with a diverse portfolio ranging from budget to luxury hotels. Founded by Sarbendra Sarkar, the company has rapidly expanded over the last decade, becoming a notable player in India’s mid-segment hotel industry. With ambitious plans to scale its operations, Cygnett aims to have 100 operational hotels in the coming years, solidifying its presence in both Tier 1 and non-metro cities.

In an exclusive interview with **Asmita Mukherjee, Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts** shares insights into Cygnett’s progress toward its growth goals, strategies to meet the rising demand in India’s expanding hospitality market, and plans to diversify into new verticals like wellness and luxury.

Q Cygnett was expecting to have 45 operational hotels by 2024. Could you share your progress toward this goal and any challenges you've faced?

Cygnett Hotels and Resorts is a dynamic, tech-savvy, and one of the fastest-growing hotel chains, offering a diverse range of hotels from budget to upscale luxury. In just 10 years of operation, the company has rapidly expanded its portfolio, with nearly 50 hotels either operational, in pre-opening stages, or under development. In terms of total aligned properties under the Cygnett brand, including our pipeline projects, we are exceeding our targets. This year has been particularly significant, with multiple signings for our luxury brands, Anamore and Ayurvyaas. Additionally, we've seen a strong response in the midscale and value segments, securing 12-15 new properties under the Cygnett Inn, Cygnett Style, and Cozzet brands. I foresee Cygnett continuing a rapid growth trajectory, expanding our presence across India.

As for challenges, there aren't many, though project timelines remain a key area for improvement, especially in India, where developments can move at a slower pace. That said, we are a tech-savvy company with a strong fundamental, as a company we prioritize transforming and keeping ourselves ahead of time and for future challenges.

Q As Cygnett moves closer to its goal of 100 properties, what are the key factors driving your growth strategy, and where do you see the biggest opportunities for further expansion? Are there any specific geographical locations you plan to expand in India and abroad?

We are well on track to reach the significant milestone of 100 operational hotels in the

coming years. Our growth strategy has been driven by entering markets with a high demand for branded, service-oriented hotels. I see the biggest opportunities in India's Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, where there remains a significant gap in branded hotel options. Additionally, the Northeastern region of India offers tremendous potential. With its untapped tourism resources and rapid infrastructure development, we've expanded our presence there, recently signing new properties in Dibrugarh, Tawang, Golaghat, and Borpeta. Another key area of growth is the Indian religious circuit, where we see increasing demand for branded hotels due to the rising number of visitors year over year. Furthermore, emerging destinations, particularly those gaining popularity among younger travelers, present significant opportunities for the hospitality sector.

Q Domestic tourism has become the backbone of the tourism and hospitality industry in India. How do you view the demand from domestic tourists in comparison to international tourists in the coming years?

Even with the pandemic behind us, domestic tourism remains the lifeline of hotels across India. Whether for weekend getaways or weddings, the demand from domestic travellers continues to bosting occupancy higher and fill rooms. Over the next few years, we expect domestic tourism to grow further driven by leisure, business, MICE and wedding segments.

In comparison, inbound tourism has been slower to recover as global economic downturn. However, beginning 2025, I anticipate a strong resurgence in demand from international markets. India apart from being a

rich cultural destination is gaining prominence as a MICE hub. The country's economic growth, and cultural heritage also bodes well for the future growth of inbound tourism.

Q Cygnett has been active in both greenfield and brownfield projects. Could you share some insights into how you approach these two types of projects and the unique challenges and opportunities they present?

When it comes to greenfield projects, they are full of potential, and we are involved from the very beginning. Our approach starts with comprehensive feasibility studies to assess the market needs, helping us determine the most viable product, the level of investment required, and anticipated ROI. Envisioning the final product is crucial, and we focus on aligning the concept with market demands before moving forward. We also rely on our meticulously developed brand manuals for each of our brands, which guide the design process. Our technical teams work closely to ensure that execution is monitored effectively, ensuring the final product delivers the Cygnett experience and right return on investment.

In contrast, brownfield projects present fewer opportunities for customization since we come in later during the development phase. However, we focus on optimizing what's already in place, ensuring the best use of existing structures. Our technical team works diligently to design and adapt within those parameters, while strictly adhering to our brand standards and manuals to deliver a high-quality, efficient hotel without compromise.

Q Cygnett has a strong presence in the mid-segment market. Are you exploring opportunities in other verticals such as luxury and wellness, or long-stay accommodations?

From day one, we had plans to add the luxury segment to our portfolio, and I am pleased to tell you that we are well on track to introduce our luxury hotel brand soon. Anamore is the upscale brand of Cygnett Hotels & Resorts. At Anamore, it's more than just a hotel stay; it's about offering luxuriously comfortable accommodations and a wide range of premium facilities. We have signed more than a couple of Anamore properties in the country, and they are currently in the development stage.

In terms of wellness, which is one of the top tourist trends in 2024 and a key priority for today's travelers, we are also ahead of the curve. We have Ayurvyaas, a lifestyle



and wellness brand under Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, and to meet this growing demand, we will soon be introducing our first Ayurvyaas property, set to open in February 2025. It will offer a holistic wellness experience that combines ancient Vedic wisdom with modern practices. Ayurvyaas is designed to provide physical, mental, and spiritual rejuvenation, ensuring a comprehensive and transformative stay for our guests.

Q What sets Cygnett Hotels & Resorts apart from other hospitality brands in India, particularly in the budget and mid-market segments?

Our vision is to provide comfortable accommodation and exceptional hospitality to our valuable guests. We deliver what we call the 'Cygnetture' experience which translates into quality hotels, prime locations, value for money, safety, consistent service, excellent food and sustainable practices. All our hotels reflect cygnetture experience for our guests not just in pretty words but also in action. We understand the value of a good night's sleep, a meal that hits the spot, it makes you feel cherished, and prices that suit the pocket. We don't promise, we deliver. Our strategic focus goes beyond geographical expansion and includes operational excellence, personalization and being sustainable. The second most valuable thing which sets us apart is the tech savvy nature of the company to enhance guest experience and more productive outcomes. Predominantly at cygnett, we start using AI driven technologies to let guests know what they are going to experience even before they arrive, and the big data to deliver tailor-made experiences for an exceptional Hospitality and our trademark Cygnetture experience to every guest.

We have a diverse portfolio of budget and mid-market brands such as Cygnett Inn, Cygnett Style, Cygnett Retreat and Cozzet Hotels. These brands are known for offering clean rooms, convenient locations, modern amenities and outstanding service. The budget and mid-market brands of Cygnett Hotels & Resorts ensure a reliable and satisfying experience for every guest.

Q Cygnett has been expanding into new locations like Vrindavan, Bhiwadi, Dibrugarh, and Ahmedabad, and launching new brands like Ayurvyaas and Cozzet. Could you share more about these new properties and the unique selling points (USPs) they bring to your portfolio? Ayurvyaas itself is a USP for the Cygnett, not

many major players of hospitality is having such a Wellness & Life Style brand. Ayurvyaas, offers its guests premium spaces with spectacular views combined with the supreme luxury & life style wellness and exceptional hospitality one has ever experienced. With specialist staff and upscale facilities, the brand resonates the global character. Ayurvyaas is our lifestyle and wellness brand. Ayurvyaas brings balance to its guests' lifestyle through traditionally trusted and proven therapies prescribed after a detailed consultation with our in-house wellness and contemporary techniques experts.

Whereas, Cozzet brand is widely known for offering clean rooms, convenient locations, modern amenities and exceptional service. Positioned as a smart, safe and sensible budget segment brand, Cozzet goes beyond the traditional approach to hospitality offering a fresh and radical experience at an affordable price point. Despite offering affordable prices, Cozzet hotels prioritize cleanliness and hygiene, ensuring clean rooms, sparkling floors, and crisp linen. Exceptional service is another hallmark of Cozzet hotels. The staff is committed to providing prompt and cygnetture service to meet the needs of every guest.

Q Do you see any emerging cities or regions in India where the demand for hotel accommodations is rising rapidly? What factors are driving this growth, and how does Cygnett plan to meet this demand? India's non-metro cities are at the heart of the country's hospitality growth, offering immense potential and untapped opportunities across various regions. Smaller cities and towns are increasingly becoming key markets for branded hospitality players with strong demand from the leisure, business and wedding segments. Economic activity is on the rise in tier-I, tier-II and tier-III cities which is further driving the need for quality accommodations.

Moreover, initiatives like the Indian government's Smart Cities Mission are accelerating infrastructure development in these areas. As the quality of life improves in smaller cities, the demand for branded hotels is also steadily increasing. The demand is also being fueled by the expanding middle class and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Q How do you view the current demand and supply equilibrium in the Indian hospitality sector, especially in Tier 2 and 3 cities? Do you see a growing need for more properties in these regions?



As I mentioned earlier, the demand is ever growing for quality hotels in non-metro cities. As per a recent CareEdge report, India has approximately 166,000 branded hotel rooms. Over the next five years, the industry is projected to add around 55,000 new rooms, with supply growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 4.5-5.5%. Despite this anticipated growth, the demand for hotel accommodations is expected to continue outstripping supply. We definitely see a growing need for more properties in these regions and will accordingly continue to enter these markets with different brands of ours.

Q RevPAR (Revenue per Available Room) and occupancy rates are key metrics in the hospitality industry. How has Cygnett performed in these areas across its portfolio, and what strategies are in place to further improve these metrics?

At Cygnett, we've seen consistent growth in both RevPAR and occupancy rates across our portfolio, driven by our strategic focus on markets with strong demand for branded, service-oriented hotels. In particular, our properties in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities have performed exceptionally well, as these locations present untapped potential with growing demand for quality accommodations. To further enhance these key metrics, we have implemented several strategies. First, we focus on optimizing our pricing models through dynamic pricing and real-time data analytics, ensuring that we remain competitive while maximizing revenue. Additionally, our regional sales team, and our CRS call center also contribute significantly in higher occupancy rates. Plus, our service design and personalized guest experiences contribute hugely on guest retention. We also place a strong emphasis on digital marketing and distribution, leveraging technology to increase

our online visibility and reach. In terms of operational efficiency, our tech-driven approach helps reduce costs while maintaining high service standards, ultimately improving profitability per room.

Q With occupancy levels fluctuating in different regions, which cities are currently showing the highest demand, and how is Cygnett positioning itself to capture this demand?

Occupancy levels can vary across regions, but we've observed particularly strong demand in PAN India overall. Especially Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, as well as key emerging regions like the Northeast. Cities such as Jaipur, Lucknow, and Tezpur, Itanagar, Bhuvneshwar along with tourism destinations like Nainital and Ayodhya, are showing high occupancy rates driven by increased domestic travel, rising business hubs, and untapped tourism potential.

Cygnett has strategically positioned itself to capture this demand by expanding our presence in these high-growth markets. We've focused on delivering branded, service-oriented hotels in cities that traditionally lack high-quality accommodation options. Our midscale and value hotel brands, including Cygnett Park, Cygnett Resort, Cygnett Inn, Cygnett Style, Cozzet are tailored to meet the needs of both business and leisure travelers in these regions. Additionally, we continue to leverage technology and data analytics to fine-tune our marketing efforts, ensuring that we reach the right customer segments and maximize occupancy. We're also focusing on forging local partnerships and enhancing our guest experience to solidify Cygnett's brand presence and build loyalty in these rapidly growing markets. As demand surges in these areas, we are well-prepared to cater to the needs of today's discerning travelers.

Q Post-COVID, the industry has struggled with a shortage of skilled manpower. How is Cygnett addressing this challenge, particularly in terms of hiring and retaining talent?

The industry is facing a whopping over 60 percent demand-supply gap in manpower with hotels expanding at the rate of 18 to 20 percent per year, the shortage of skilled manpower is being foregrounded at each level of the hospitality sector. Industry estimates suggest that around 25% to 30% of the skilled and experienced workforce in the hospitality sector permanently shifted to other professions during the pandemic. This has resulted in a significant shortage of trained

personnel in the sector.

I believe that for attracting the young talent in our business we need to rebrand the hospitality industry as a vibrant and lifestyle-driven sector. Invest in training and development, Embrace technology, and offer competitive wages, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement to improve retention rates, is what we believe in Cygnett. As a responsible hospitality company, we have introduced the Comprehensive Cygnett Leadership Development Program (CLDP) to prepare our future leaders. The Cygnett Learning Academy has also played a key role in fostering a culture of learning in our young team members and acquire new skills throughout their careers.

Q Cygnett has introduced the affordable brand 'Cozzet' in key locations. What are the expansion plans for Cozzet, and how does it complement your existing portfolio of budget and mid-market hotels?

Cozzet is one of our fastest-growing brands. Recently, we have launched Cozzet Bindal in Jamshedpur, Cozzet Deera in Sonapat and Cozzet Victoria in Bhubaneswar. The brand is expanding its footprint in several key locations including Jamshedpur - the steel city of India along with Mahad, a thriving business hub near Navi Mumbai and other destinations such as Puri, SIDCUL Haridwar, Chittorgarh and Phalodi in Rajasthan.

We plan to open 3-4 hotels under the Cozzet brand annually. Like our other budget and mid-market brands, Cozzet focuses on providing exceptional service at a competitive price. It caters to the needs of modern young travellers, offering essentials such as clean rooms, fast internet, quality service and delicious food.

Q You've highlighted the increasing spending power in non-metro cities. How is Cygnett leveraging this trend, and what role do government initiatives play in supporting your expansion into these markets?

Cygnett has strategically recognized the growing spending power in India's non-metro cities, and we are actively leveraging this trend to expand our presence in these high-potential markets. Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are seeing a surge in demand for branded, service-oriented hotels due to increased domestic travel, growing business activities, and rising aspirations of travelers in these regions. We are addressing this need with our midscale and value brands like Cygnett Inn,

Cygnett Style and Cozzet, which offer quality accommodations at competitive price points.

Government initiatives play a crucial role in supporting our expansion. Programs like the UDAN scheme, aimed at enhancing regional air connectivity, have made travel more accessible to these cities, boosting tourism and business travel. The focus on infrastructure development through projects such as Smart Cities and improved road and rail networks also facilitates easier access to non-metro regions, making them more attractive to both leisure and business travelers. Moreover, the government's push for religious and heritage tourism has opened new opportunities for us in destinations along India's religious circuits. Cygnett is aligning with these initiatives by developing properties in locations like Ayodhya, Vrindavana and Ujjain catering to the rising number of visitors in these areas. By combining government support with our market-focused approach, Cygnett is well-positioned to capture the increasing demand in non-metro cities and further drive our growth across India.

Q With the rise of online booking platforms and the growing demand for value-for-money accommodations, how is Cygnett using technology to enhance the guest experience and stay competitive in the budget hotel segment?

Today, nobody doubts that technology and travel are the perfect combination. This joint force also plays a crucial role in the way we travel, from the vacation destination we choose, all the way to what we do once we're there and even in the time after we've come back from our adventure. It is so prevalent, that according to a Google Travel study, 74% of travellers plan their trips on the Internet, while only 13% still use travel agencies to prepare them. Cygnett being a tech-savvy company always embraces the technology to deliver better. Predominantly at Cygnett, we are using mobile applications the cell phone has become the tour guide, travel agency, best restaurant locator, map, and more. It's by our side during the entire purchase journey., VR/AR technology is next as this lets you see the top of the world without having to climb to the top. We have incorporated virtual tours to let guests know what they are going to experience even before they arrive, and the big data to deliver tailor-made experiences for an exceptional Hospitality and our trademark Cygnett experience to every guest. ■

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‘The growing awareness of our communities’ heightened vulnerability to climate change has inspired us to adopt eco-conscious practices’

In today’s evolving hospitality landscape, where personalisation and purpose-driven collaborations are becoming paramount, **Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield** has embraced an innovative approach to corporate gifting. At the heart of this transformation is **Anjali Naik, Director of Sales and Marketing**, who has been instrumental in fostering meaningful partnerships with local organisations, such as Diya Innovations, to craft unique, socially conscious Diwali hampers. In an interaction with **Hospitality Biz** Naik shares the thought process behind this collaboration, how it reflects Marriott’s core values, and the broader impact of integrating hyper-local talent and sustainability into the hotel’s offerings.

Q Could you share the thought process behind Marriott Whitefield’s decision to collaborate with smaller hyper-local organisations like Diya Innovations for your Diwali hampers? How did this partnership come about?

Our intent is to give a platform to the truly deserving artists and give back to the society in our own way. This year, while brainstorming ways to make a meaningful impact, we decided to do more than just do the usual. We wanted to do something that will have a social impact and decided to partner with a NGO to include them in our efforts, spreading love and joy by supporting their cause through this collaboration.

Q How do you ensure that working with hyper-local vendors helps in bringing out the cultural nuances of the region in your offerings, especially in something as personal as festive hampers?

Each offering curated by the local NGOs carries a unique story, and we wanted these stories to reach homes across India making the receiver feel a part of a larger cause. We met with the artisans and had in-depth conversations to understand their history, background, and how creating these handmade toys brings them fulfillment and a sense of self-esteem and acceptance within the community.

Q In your experience, how important is it for hotels like Marriott to support local talent and organizations? What impact does this have on both the local community and the hotel’s brand image?

Diya Innovations is more than just a business; they are on a mission to empower individuals

with intellectual disabilities by offering them opportunities in an inclusive environment.

While these Diyas and toys could have been sourced from wholesale dealers at a lower cost to boost profitability, we wanted to be part of something that is for the greater good this festive season. By supporting small businesses that uplift talented individuals we felt we have inched a little closer to Marriott’s core values, heritage and what the brand stands for.

Additionally, this partnership aligns with our focus on sustainability and reviving childhood memories through simple, handcrafted toys—now often overshadowed by technology.

Q Could you elaborate on the sustainability practices incorporated into your collaborations, especially with vendors like Diya Innovations? How do you balance luxury with sustainability in corporate gifting?

The growing awareness of our communities’ heightened vulnerability to climate change has inspired us to adopt eco-conscious practices, including the use of biodegradable and recycled materials, while moving towards a zero-waste approach. Diya Innovations use toxin-free raw materials, which align seamlessly with Marriott’s commitment to sustainability

Q How has the concept of corporate gifting evolved over the years, and how is Marriott Whitefield embracing this shift?

Corporate gifting is evolving every year, with a growing emphasis on meaningful and sustainable options that create a lasting

connection and stand out. As experts in curating specialized and personalized hampers, we’ve successfully forged strong connections and have seen consistent year-on-year growth in our revenues in this segment

Q Do you see this initiative with Diya Innovations as part of a long-term relationship? How do such collaborations contribute to Marriott Whitefield’s overall ethos of creating meaningful partnerships?

Yes for sure as both the organisations believe in sustainability and supporting local artisans with special needs. Our people first culture, giving people from different communities with different abilities a chance to shine is what sets us apart and help create incredible stories year after year. At the hotel we have team members with special needs and are believers of being inclusive in our hiring programs. This synergy with Diya Innovations made us pick them as partners.

Q From your perspective, are you seeing a broader trend in the hospitality industry towards working with local artisans or organizations for events and gifting? How does this align with the changing expectations of today’s customers?

Yes, very much. The consumer today is experiencing an overload of technology and there is a disconnect with nature and emotions, which we all enjoyed during our younger days before technology took over our lives. Hence, with our personalised hampers, we are adding that special touch with the toys and Diyas which we feel will bring a smile and take people back to simpler times. ■

Oktoberfest: A Boon for India's F&B Industry

Oktoberfest, the world's largest beer festival, has transcended its Bavarian roots to become a global celebration. This annual celebration, traditionally held in Munich, Germany, this 16-18 day event traditionally held from late September to early October, is synonymous with beer, food, and merriment, is now celebrated by millions worldwide. For the F&B industry, the festival represents more than just beer. It's a unique opportunity to engage customers, boost revenue, and build brand loyalty. In India, Oktoberfest has found its footing, becoming a vital part of the hospitality sector's calendar, particularly in hotels, restaurants, and pubs that cater to beer lovers and foodies.

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

As the F&B landscape in India continues to diversify, Oktoberfest presents a golden opportunity for businesses to introduce patrons to a rich cultural tradition while simultaneously showcasing their culinary and brewing prowess. The popularity of craft beer in India has grown exponentially in recent years, and Oktoberfest serves as the perfect

platform to highlight this trend.

The Beer Café, India's one of the largest beer chain, is bringing Oktoberfest to cities across the country with its month-long OktoBEERfest. Running from September 21st to October 31st, this event offers patrons a taste of Germany with a variety of authentic brews and a specially curated menu featuring Brätwurst, Frankfurter Würstchen, and more. Rahul Singh, Founder & CEO of The Beer Café, sees Oktoberfest as



an ideal opportunity to introduce Indian beer lovers to new flavors while promoting the craft beer culture in India. “We’re thrilled to bring the spirit of Oktoberfest to beer lovers in India. At The Beer Café, we are all about creating joyful moments, and there’s no better way to do that than with the global symbol of great beer and festive cheer—Oktoberfest,” says Singh. With India’s burgeoning craft beer scene, events like OktoBEERfest serve as important platforms for both brewers and consumers to engage and explore. “Oktoberfest is the perfect opportunity to bring people together, whether they’re exploring new brews or indulging in authentic German cuisine. With India’s growing appreciation for craft beer, we’re excited to introduce our patrons to new flavors and traditions. This festival is about more than beer—it’s about celebrating community and culture,” says Singh.

At Hotel Sahara Star, Mumbai, Oktoberfest has evolved into a grand celebration of not just beer but camaraderie. This year’s Sahara Star Oktoberfest on October 13th promises to be an unforgettable experience with a stellar lineup of breweries such as 12th Man, Effingut, and Rolling Mills, among others. The day-long celebration will blend hops, laughter, and traditional Bavarian festivities. Beyond the beer, the culinary pairings crafted by Sahara Star’s chefs enhance the overall experience, making it a key date on Mumbai’s F&B calendar. “This festival is all about creating memories with friends, enjoying good brews, and embracing the Oktoberfest spirit,” says a spokesperson from Sahara Star. It is also a reminder that festivals like Oktoberfest help elevate the guest experience, especially when done right.

At The Orchid, Mumbai’s Mostly Grills rooftop restaurant brings the essence of Germany to life from September 20th to October 6th, 2024. Overlooking the Mumbai airport runway, Mostly Grills pairs a Bavarian beer selection with an authentic German menu that includes Jagger Schnitzel, German sausages, and Leberwurst. “For us, Oktoberfest is more than just beer. It’s about creating an immersive experience for our guests—food, ambiance, and festivity all rolled into one,” says a spokesperson from The Orchid. Their attention to detail, from traditional Bavarian uniforms to live music, highlights how hotels can integrate cultural elements into their offerings, adding value to the customer’s experience while boosting foot traffic.

Further down in Maharashtra, Sayaji Kolhapur is recreating the vibrant atmosphere of Munich’s Oktoberfest at its Moon Tree

Café from September 21st to October 6th. Chef Balwant if Sayaji Kolhapur has curated a special menu, offering delicacies such as Pretzels, Bratwurst, and Bavarian Chspieß skewers, paired with a selection of craft beers. “Our team has worked meticulously to ensure every dish on the menu captures the true essence of Bavarian flavors,” says Chef Balwant, highlighting the growing trend of theme-based food festivals in India’s smaller cities.

In New Delhi, Eros Hotel Nehru Place has embraced the Oktoberfest spirit with a luxurious twist at its Lounge & Bar. From September 21st, 2024, the hotel will offer guests a Bavarian-inspired culinary experience, including Pork Bratwurst, Kasseler Chops, and Potato Pancakes. The ambiance, crafted by the hotel’s culinary team, will transport guests to Bavaria, pairing traditional dishes with an extensive beer selection. “For a hotel like Eros, it’s about creating a memorable experience that connects food, culture, and atmosphere,” says the hotel’s culinary head. This approach underscores how Oktoberfest can serve as a key differentiator for luxury hotels looking to offer unique experiences to discerning customers.

Down south, Hydeout in Bangalore is hosting its own version of Oktoberfest with an array of craft beers paired with authentic dishes like Bratwurst Hotdogs and Beer Mac n Cheese. The event brings the festivity of Munich to Bangalore, offering patrons a blend of traditional flavors and local craft beer culture.

“This event is more than just a festival; it’s a celebration of craft beer and great food,” says a spokesperson from Hydeout. This sentiment is echoed by many in the industry who see Oktoberfest as a chance to connect with patrons on a deeper level, offering not just food and drink but a curated experience that leaves a lasting impression.

At Andaz Delhi, Hyatt’s luxury and lifestyle hotel, Oktoberfest celebrations by the poolside from September 22nd to October 1st offer a luxurious take on the traditional Bavarian fest. Partnering with BMW (Bird Automotive), Andaz is combining food, beer, and high-end lifestyle elements to create an elevated Oktoberfest experience. Guests can enjoy Oktoberfest Platters featuring roasted spring chicken, bratwurst, and sauerkraut while soaking in the festive ambiance. “We wanted to create something special that goes beyond just food and beer. Our goal was to offer an experience that resonates with our guests, capturing the essence of Bavaria in a sophisticated setting,” says a spokesperson from Andaz Delhi. This approach reflects the growing trend of experiential dining, where customers seek more than just a meal—they want to be part of a narrative.

With consumers increasingly seeking unique experiences, theme-based festivals like Oktoberfest offer hoteliers and restaurateurs a chance to differentiate themselves in a competitive market. ■



India's Hospitality Industry Reaches 2.48 Million Lodging Rooms and 2.3 Million Employees, Marking Robust Recovery: Report

Hbi Staff | Hyderabad

The hospitality industry has faced a dramatic fall and resurgence in recent years, driven by geopolitical crises and the pandemic. Hotelivate has analyzed the industry's current state, focusing on hotel market size and employment. Historically tracking the branded hotel segment, Hotelivate recognized the need to assess the broader accommodation landscape. Their latest report by Harinya Sreenivas and Manav Thadani, using data from OTAs and industry experts, reveals 2.48 million operational lodging rooms in India as of June 2024, with a workforce of 2.3 million employees. This translates to 0.94 employees per room, highlighting the industry's significant economic contribution and future potential.

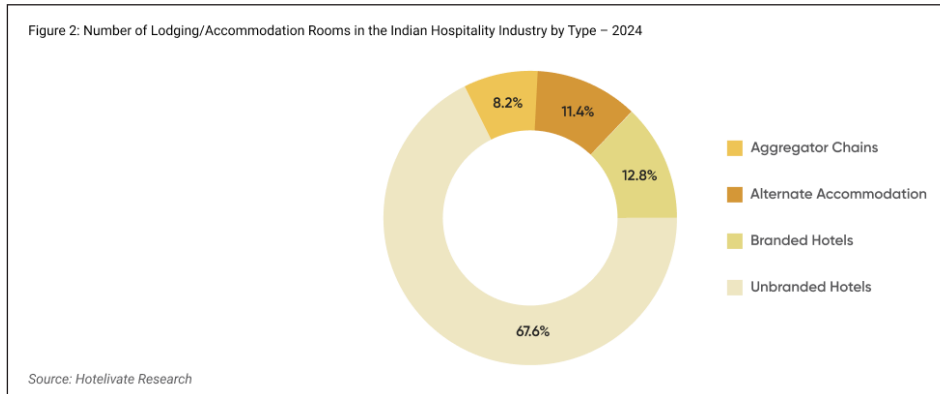
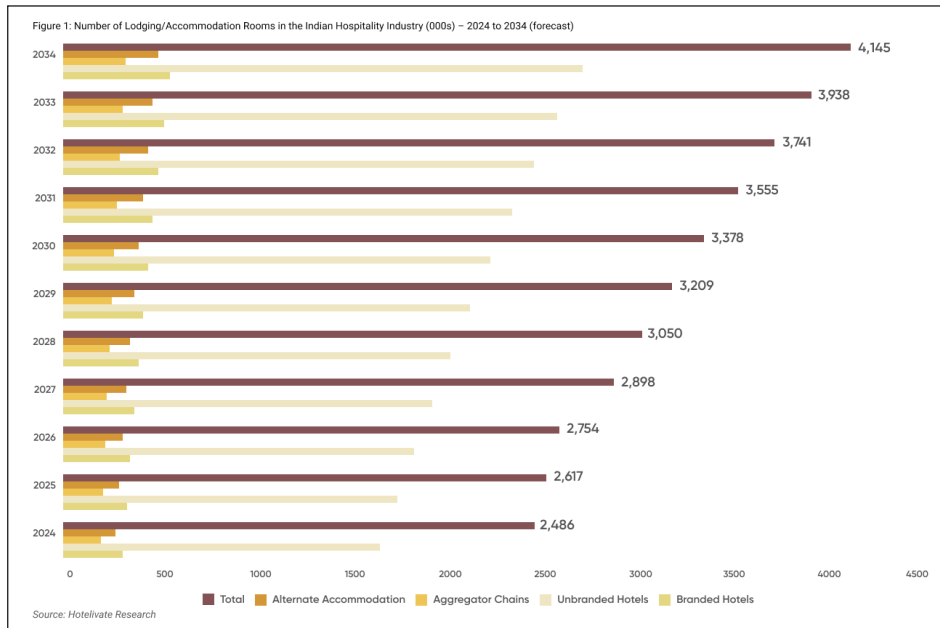
The Supply Story

Hotelivate's latest analysis reveals a robust count of 2.48 million lodging rooms currently operational in India as of June 2024. This figure spans across a diverse spectrum, encompassing branded hotels, aggregator giants like OYO, FabHotels, and Treebo, independent establishments, and various alternative accommodations such as guesthouses and homestays. Looking ahead, projections indicate a steady ascent, with the room count expected to climb to 3.1 million by 2029 and surge further to 4.1 million by 2034. Initially poised to reach 3.3 million by 2024 based on pre-pandemic forecasts, the hospitality sector encountered setbacks during the Covid-19 crisis, notably impacting unbranded and aggregator segments, where closures approximated 15% of room capacity. Despite these challenges, the branded sector demonstrated resilience in the last two years, marked by a resurgence in new signings and openings. With tourism

Number of Accommodation Rooms (in 000s)			
Accommodation Type	2024	2029	2034
Branded Hotels	318	425	568
Unbranded Hotels	1,681	2,145	2,738
Aggregators	205	261	333
Alternate Accommodation	282	378	506
Total	2,486	3,209	4,145

Number of People Employed (in 000s)			
Accommodation Type	2024	2029	2034
Branded Hotels	467	619	821
Unbranded Hotels	1,681	2,145	2,738
Aggregators	162	206	263
Alternate Accommodation	51	68	91
Total	2,361	3,039	3,913

Source: Hotelivate Research



on the rebound and market dynamics improving, the industry anticipates not only a swift recovery to pre-pandemic levels by 2025 but also sustained growth throughout the coming decade.

“Unbranded Hotels currently make up more than two-thirds of the country’s total lodging supply and are projected to maintain this dominant position for the next decade”

The independent/unbranded segment possesses a commanding 68% share of India’s lodging landscape, underscoring its dominant presence in the market. Meanwhile, the branded hotels sector has swiftly emerged as the second largest, buoyed by increasing investments and heightened interest from both domestic and international brands, particularly in tier II and tier III cities. Simultaneously, the alternate accommodation sector, bolstered by the rising popularity of homestays alongside a robust base of guesthouses, has solidified its position as a significant player in the market. Notably, aggregator chains have maintained a stable market share over the past half-decade, with new openings counterbalancing closures incurred during the tumultuous pandemic period.

The People Story

Hotelivate’s latest figures reveal that India’s hospitality industry supports a formidable workforce of 2.3 million as of June 2024, translating to 0.94 employees per lodging room nationwide. Despite pandemic disruptions in 2019, when the sector sustained 2.4 million jobs, the industry remains a vital contributor to India’s employment landscape. WTTC underscores this impact, noting that India’s broader Travel & Tourism sector directly employed 37.21 million people in 2023, with hotels accounting for a substantial 6.21%.

Looking ahead, we anticipate robust growth in hospitality employment, climbing to 3.0 million by 2029 and further

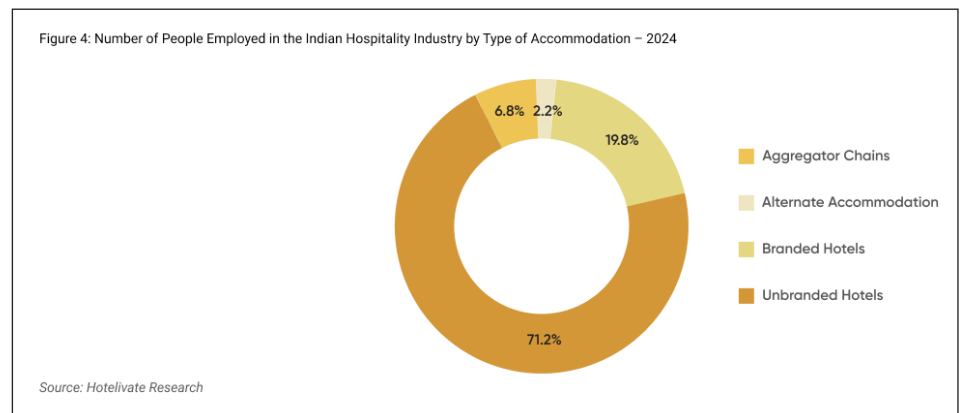
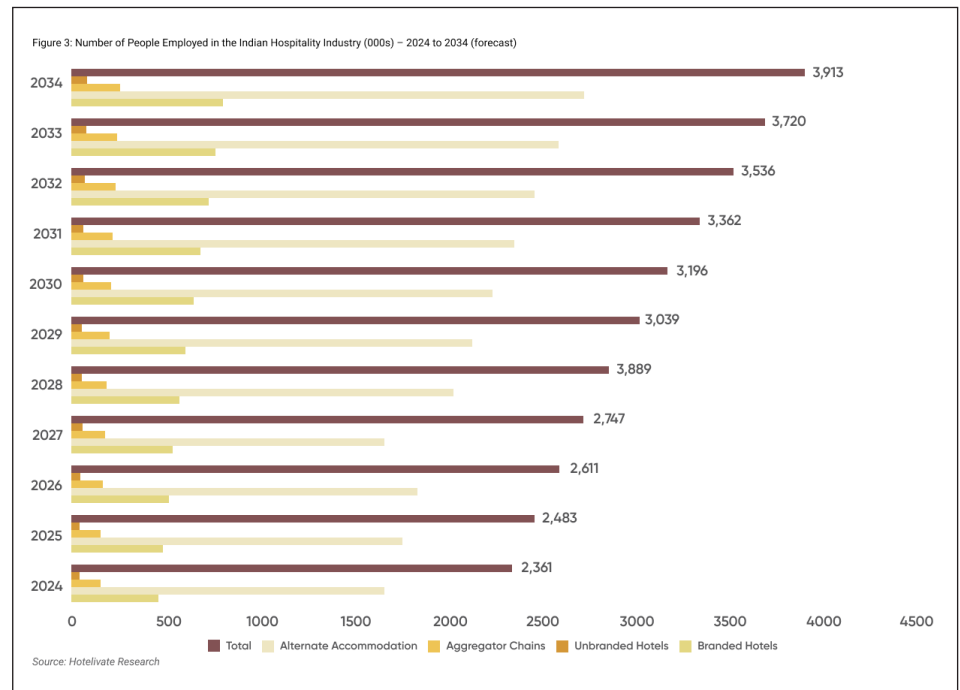
to 3.9 million by 2034. With unbranded hotels leading the charge due to their sheer number, despite the low employee-to-room ratio.

The hospitality industry is multifaceted with various parallels other than hotels. Even with the addition of 1.5 million jobs in the next decade, we believe this is a conservative estimate for the hospitality industry as the industry is likely to see growth in employment from ancillary facilities such as clubs, restaurants, dhabas, clubhouses, banquet halls, and various other infrastructure that is being established in large volumes across the country. These ancillary facilities may employ individuals not accounted for in these estimations. Therefore, although the current projected growth in employment is 1.5 million jobs, the actual number added

may be much higher than this estimation.

Conclusion

Hotelivate’s latest analysis reveals India’s hospitality industry bouncing back strongly as of mid-2024. Despite setbacks from global crises, the sector has currently seen growth in the branded hotel supply in the last few years. Employment continues to grow in the sector, led by branded hotel supply due to the sheer volume of these accommodations in the country. With investments surging, particularly in tier II and III cities, and a resurgence in new openings, the industry will experience sustained growth in the decade ahead. This sets the stage for a thriving hospitality sector poised to capitalise on growing tourism and solidifying its essential role in the Indian economic landscape.. ■





‘Our vision is to create a lasting presence in the world of craft spirits’

John Royerr is a visionary entrepreneur and the driving force behind Ochre Spirits, an innovative Indian artisanal alcoholic beverage brand. With over 15 years of experience in the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry, John decided to start his dream brand of artisanal spirits with a vision to make a mark globally. As the Founder of Orche Spirits, he talks to **Sumit Jha** about their brand and future plans.

Q What inspired you to start Ochre Spirits? Tell us about the journey.

Ochre Spirits was born from a deep understanding of shifting consumer preferences and the desire to create something that resonates with the modern conscious consumers. Having spent more than a decade in the spirits industry, I noticed a growing demand for smoother, more refined spirits—ones that offered not just a drink, but an experience. This insight led to the foundation of Ochre Spirits, with the vision of crafting artisanal, flavorful spirits that cater to a more mindful audience.

Our journey has been driven by a commitment to elevate drinking experiences through unique, thoughtfully crafted flavors that enhance each sip. Ochre Spirits is not just about making drinks; it's about transforming how people engage with spirits. We focus on flavor innovation, ensuring every bottle is a reflection of our dedication to quality and creativity.

Launched in April 2024, Ochre Spirits has quickly gained traction in Goa, and our products are now available in all premier retail destinations, sought after by those who appreciate the finer nuances of exceptional spirits.

Q What sets Ochre Spirits apart from other craft distilleries in the market?

We focus on creating a genuinely enjoyable experience by prioritizing quality and authenticity. What makes us different is our commitment to using real, natural ingredients—like fresh fruits, berries, nuts, and spices. Instead of relying on artificial flavors, we infuse our spirits with these elements to bring out authentic, bold flavors that stand out. We take pride in our craft, making sure that each bottle offers a unique experience that feels both elevated and accessible, without compromising on the richness of taste.

Q What is your current range? What is your vision for the future of Ochre Spirits? What are the new products in the pipeline?

Our vision is to create a lasting presence in the world of craft spirits by becoming a go-to for home bars and a prominent player in cocktail culture. We aim to foster a lifestyle centered on thoughtful, experiential drinking.

Our current range of premium, small-batch, flavored spirits showcases the diversity and creativity we bring to the table. This includes 3 Gins, 3 Vodkas, and 2 Rums, each crafted to deliver bold and refreshing flavors. Currently, our Nutty Berry Rum and Peach & Cherry Vodka are available in retail outlets across Goa, offering consumers the opportunity to enjoy these unique spirits at their leisure. At our tasting room, we offer a wider selection with Kiwi & Pear Gin, Saffron Gin, Rose & Raspberry Gin,

Berry Vodka, and Apricot & Plum Vodka, along with the citrus-forward Citrus Rum. These variants give visitors an exclusive opportunity to explore the full Ochre experience.

As we look toward the future, we are excited to continue expanding our portfolio. By the end of the year, we will be introducing two new variants—one each of vodka and rum—further solidifying our commitment to innovation and the artisanal spirit experience.

Q What goes into creating a unique, high-quality spirit? Could you walk us through your product development process?

Creation of a high-quality spirit goes far beyond just the distillation process; it's about crafting a sensory experience. Our product development is meticulously designed to enhance both smoothness and flavor, catering to a growing demand for spirits that offer more than just a drink—spirits that tell a story with every sip.

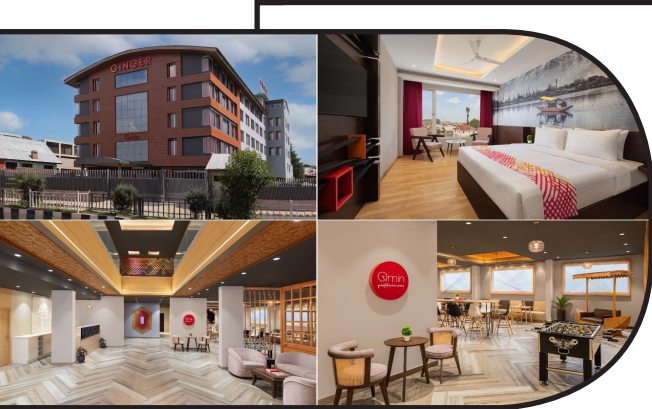
Our rums, gins, and vodkas each have their own distinct character, developed through a deep understanding of flavor profiles. Take our Nutty Berry Rum, for example. Traditionally, rum is known for its robust flavor, but can sometimes leave a harsh finish on the palate. We wanted to create a smoother, more approachable rum, so we infused it with the rich, nutty warmth of roasted nuts balanced by the tart sweetness of berries. Similarly, our Citrus Rum captures the bright, zesty notes of fresh citrus fruits, providing a lively contrast to the base spirit, making it a vibrant choice for both cocktails and sipping neat.

In our gin range, we've approached flavor infusion with equal care. Saffron Gin offers a luxurious depth, with the delicate, earthy aroma of saffron adding a subtle complexity to the classic gin botanicals. The Rose & Raspberry Gin blends floral and fruity notes seamlessly, delivering an aromatic burst that is both refreshing and layered. For a more tropical twist, our Kiwi & Pear Gin balances the tartness of kiwi with the subtle sweetness of pear, offering a refreshing and crisp finish.

Our vodkas follow the same philosophy of flavor craftsmanship. The Peach & Cherry Vodka is a rich, fruity blend that combines the sweetness of ripe peaches with the tartness of cherries, perfect for cocktails that require a fruity twist. Berry Vodka brings the bold, concentrated flavors of mixed berries for a vibrant and lively palate experience, while the Apricot & Plum Vodka adds a more refined sweetness, pairing the mellow softness of apricots with the bold juiciness of plums. ■



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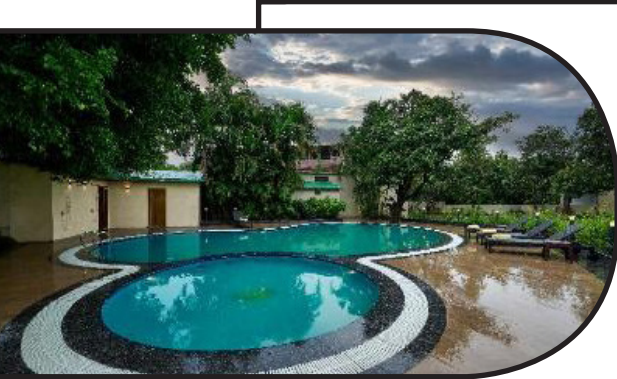
Ginger Srinagar, Barzulla

Strategically located in Barzulla, the 64-key Ginger Srinagar provides easy access to the airport and iconic attractions such as Dal Lake, Shalimar Bagh, Shankaracharya Temple, and Jama Masjid. The hotel's all-day diner, Qmin, serves up a delectable array of flavors to cater to diverse palates, making it an ideal choice for business lunches and casual gatherings.

Azalea by Stone Wood, Carmona

Azalea by Stone Wood, a luxurious retreat set amidst the scenic beauty of Carmona in South Goa. Azalea by Stone Wood offers 52 well-appointed rooms, including deluxe, premium, and suite options, with modern amenities such as high-speed Wi-Fi, HD LED televisions, and 24-hour room service. The resort also features a multi-cuisine restaurant, Café d'Azalea, a swimming pool, and guest services, including airport transfers and a business centre, making it an ideal choice for leisure and business travellers.

Guests of Azalea can explore nearby attractions, including Cabo de Rama Fort, a historic landmark with breathtaking views of the Arabian Sea, and Big Foot, a recreated Goan village that offers a glimpse into the region's rich cultural heritage. The property is also close to the iconic Arch of Coconut Trees, a natural landmark perfect for picturesque moments.



ABN Sarovar Portico, Jim Corbett

The hotel offers a serene retreat nestled within the lush landscapes of India's oldest national park. This property, located 4 Kms from the Dhangadi Gate (Dhikala Zone), features 65 elegantly designed rooms and cottages, blending relaxation with natural beauty.

MJ Sarovar Portico, Haridwar

The hotel is situated 5 Kms from Har Ki Pauri, enhances Sarovar Hotels pilgrimage portfolio. Strategically located to serve travelers visiting Haridwar, Rishikesh and Dehradun, this hotel boasts 75 elegant rooms and suites, designed with extensive facilities to meet the needs of spiritual seekers and professional visitors alike.



Hindware's Italian Collection launches Automate Imperial Smart Toilet

The Automate Imperial from Hindware Italian Collection is a sleek and modern toilet equipped with an array of high-tech functionalities. This advanced smart toilet boasts a minimalist design and technology that eliminates the need for a bulky flushing tank, saving valuable space in your bathroom.

Ensuring extra convenience, the smart toilet offers customizable and personalised settings, including adjustable heated seats, personalized water pressure & temperature, and LCD display, all controlled by advanced sensors for a seamless operation.



Antarctica Equipment introduces TONDA – Gelato Display Case from Ifi S.p.a.

TONDA, the world's first round and rotating display case, transforms the art of showcasing and preserving gelato and pastry, merging technological innovation with sustainability and health-conscious design.

TONDA's circular and rotating design introduces a new dimension in displaying and serving gelato, offering a unique 360-degree product view, maximizing visibility, and providing a smoother, more efficient service experience for operators.

Its advanced sensor-controlled technology allows simple hand gestures to activate the rotation, allowing the gelato server to select flavors with minimal effort while offering optimal ergonomic comfort.

Rich's Launches Versatie Gold Cooking Cream

Rich's launched the Versatie Gold Cooking Cream, an addition to their renowned product lineup. Versatie Gold Cooking Cream embodies the concept of 'One Cream, Endless Possibilities', offering unmatched versatility for both hot and cold applications, catering to the diverse needs of professional chefs and industrial kitchens.

Versatie Gold Cooking Cream is designed to be a multifunctional kitchen essential, capable of enhancing a variety of dishes with its rich, creamy texture and superior performance. Unlike other creams that split or ooze fat at high temperatures, Versatie Gold maintains its consistency, ensuring perfect results every time. It is ideal for use in Gravies, Pastas, Dips, Tandoor applications and sauces without the risk of curdling.



Sula Vineyards Debuts Sula Merlot

Sula Vineyards announces the launch of its newest offering—the Sula Merlot. This release highlights Sula's continued commitment to expanding its wine portfolio and delivering exceptional, world-class wines to enthusiasts across the nation.

Merlot, one of the world's most beloved red grape varieties, is celebrated for its soft, fruity, and approachable wines. The launch of Sula Merlot is a milestone, bringing the rich heritage of this classic grape to Indian wine lovers at an inviting price—perfect for both beginners and enthusiasts to enjoy and appreciate.

Sula Merlot is now available at the select retail outlets across Mumbai and Pune. The product is priced at INR 895.

HYATT HOTELS


Amit Jain, General Manager, Hyatt Place Aurangabad Airport

Amit brings more than 18 years of hospitality experience to his new role that will see him overseeing all hotel operations and driving revenue growth, while offering top-class service to guests of the Hyatt Place Aurangabad Airport.

Over the years, Amit has accumulated a wealth of knowledge and expertise in budgeting, customer retention, forecasting, finance and

management. Throughout his tenure, Mohammad Ali has played a crucial role in expanding Accor's presence in India's diverse markets. His strategic insight and leadership have been pivotal in delivering impressive results and fostering long-term relationships with key stakeholders.

Ramesh M R , Human Resources Manager, Hyatt Centric Bangalore


Ramesh holds a Master of Business Administration in Human Resource & Marketing and a Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering. His professional journey has been marked by a consistent focus on human resources, with notable roles at renowned hospitality establishments such as Hyatt Regency Trivandrum, Radisson, Marriott, Leela and Sarovar Hotel &

Resorts. Ramesh M R holds a Master of Science in Psychology (Industrial Psychology), demonstrating a deep understanding of algae and their applications in various industries, including biofuels, pharmaceuticals, and food production. As Human Resources Manager, Ramesh will play a pivotal role in driving the hotel's talent strategy and ensuring a positive and engaging work environment for all employees. His expertise in employee relations, recruitment, training and development, and HRIS technologies will be instrumental in fostering a high-performing team.

ITC HOTELS


Upender Singh Tomar, Hotel Manager, ITC Sonar, Kolkata

With over 14 years of comprehensive experience at ITC Hotels, Upender has demonstrated his proficiency and leadership across various pivotal roles. As the Hotel Manager at ITC Sonar, A Luxury Collection Hotel, his primary goal is to deliver exceptional guest experiences and uphold the hotel's distinguished reputation in ITC's home city.

Upender possesses a commendable background in the Food & Beverage industry, having served as the Food

& Beverage Manager at esteemed establishments such as ITC Maratha in Mumbai, ITC Gardenia in Bengaluru, ITC Kakatiya in Hyderabad and Manager – Conventions & Events Operations in ITC Grand Chola in Chennai. His diverse experiences showcase his remarkable versatility and expertise in managing food and beverage operations.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL


Mohammad Shoib, Director of Operations, The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat

Shoib arrives with a robust background from his most recent role as Director of Sales and Marketing at the JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort and Spa. With a career spanning over 15 years in the hospitality industry, Shoib is set to elevate service standards across the South Asia region.

During his nine-year tenure with the Marriott brand, Shoib drove significant revenue growth in rooms, food, and beverage at JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru. His prior experience includes leading sales and marketing initiatives at The Leela Palace, Bangalore, as well as roles at Le Meridien Paro, Riverfront, and Ginger Hotel (A TATA Enterprise).

Bharathi Perumal , Hotel Manager , Le Royal Meridien Chennai


With more than 20 years of international experience in luxury hospitality, Bharathi is known for his strategic leadership and consistent delivery of exceptional results in operations, revenue management, and guest experience.

In his new role at Le Royal Meridien Chennai, Bharathi will apply his extensive experience in hotel operations and strategic planning to drive profitability, optimize processes, and elevate the luxury guest experience. His leadership contributed to achieving significant results in guest scores, total revenue, GOP, and Colleague Heartbeat scores in 2022 and 2023.

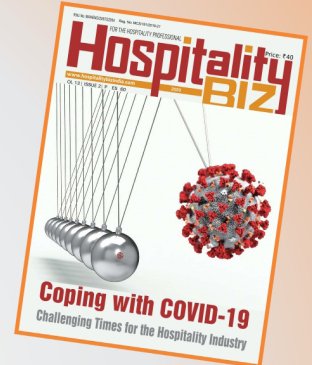
PRIDE HOTELS


Neha Rawat, General Manager, Pride Elite Haridwar

With over 15 years of extensive experience in the hospitality industry, Neha's brings a proven track record in managing front office operations, strategic planning, team leadership, and customer relations. Her previous roles include leading operations at Modi Yoga Retreat in Rishikesh and Pride Hotel & Resort in

Rishikesh, where she was part of the pre-opening team. In her new role, Neha's will oversee the overall operations of the hotel, ensuring compliance with the brand's standards while driving guest satisfaction, profitability, and market growth.

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