R.N.I. No. MAHENG/2007/22934 Reg. No: MCS/181/2019-21

FOR THE HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONAL

Hospitality BIZ

www.hospitalitybizindia.com
MARCH 2026
VOL 18 | ISSUE 4 | PAGES 36
PRICE: ₹150

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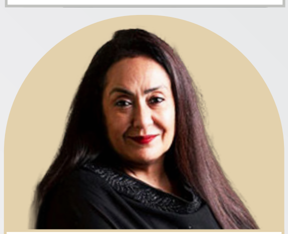

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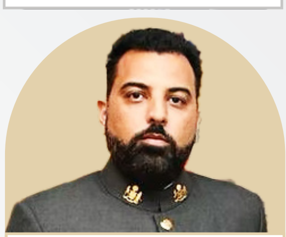

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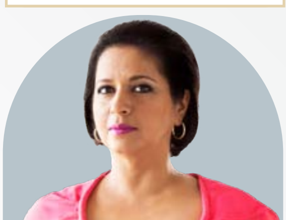

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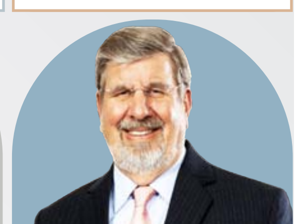

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Marriott South Asia signs 100+ deals in 2025

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Marriott International closed 2025 with a record-breaking performance in South Asia, signing 102 hotel deals representing over 12,000 rooms — a 143% increase in deal signings year over year. India led the momentum with 99 signings, reinforcing its central role in the company's regional growth strategy.

Marriott South Asia Growth Surges 143% in 2025

Marriott delivered 10% year-over-year RevPAR growth across its comparable South Asia portfolio, driven primarily by ADR gains and strong premium demand. The company ended 2025 with 219 open properties and over 36,000 rooms in the region, including 204 hotels in India alone.

The development pipeline remains robust, with 157 properties and more than 27,000 rooms under development, reflecting sustained investor confidence and long-term demand transformation across gateway cities and emerging markets.

India-Centric Expansion Across Gateway and Leisure Markets

Major metros such as Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune anchored base performance, while cities like Ahmedabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Coimbatore, Kochi, Indore, Dehradun and Surat accelerated expansion.

Leisure destinations including Goa, Jaipur, Udaipur, Rishikesh and Shimla recorded faster lifts, demonstrating diversified demand across segments.

Portfolio deals accounted for 25% of rooms signed, while conversion deals made up nearly 50% of hotels signed, signaling strong brand conversion momentum.

Luxury Brand Debuts and Portfolio Milestones

Key milestones included the opening of The Westin Jaipur Kant Kalwar Resort & Spa — Marriott's 200th property in India — and brand debuts such as Moxy Kathmandu and The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection.

Planned portfolio introductions include The Ritz-Carlton Reserve, JW Marriott, Marriott Hotels & Resorts, Courtyard by Marriott, Fairfield by Marriott, and Moxy Hotels across key Indian cities. ■

Centre plans PPP redevelopment of Ashok, Samrat Hotels

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Government of India has approved the redevelopment of two prominent hospitality assets in New Delhi—The Ashok Hotel and Hotel Samrat—under the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) 2.0 framework. The plan aims to attract private sector participation through Public–Private Partnership (PPP) models, with a combined investment potential of around INR 1,200 crore.

According to the details shared by NITI Aayog, the redevelopment of these brownfield hospitality properties will be carried out using a direct contractual approach with private investors. Under the proposed structure, the redevelopment of The Ashok Hotel has an estimated investment outlay of about INR820 crore, while on the other hand Hotel Samrat is expected to see investments of roughly INR380 crore. These investments will contribute to the government's broader asset monetisation programme and will be counted as monetisation proceeds under NMP 2.0.

The redevelopment of The Ashok Hotel—one of the capital's most iconic hospitality landmarks located in the Diplomatic Enclave of Chanakyapuri—is expected to be taken up earlier in the implementation cycle, with the project targeted for award around FY2027. The redevelopment of Hotel Samrat, also situated in central New Delhi, is expected to follow later, with the award timeline projected around FY2030.

Both properties are currently owned and operated by India Tourism Development Corporation, a central public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Tourism. Through the PPP structure, the private sector will invest in upgrading infrastructure, modernising facilities and enhancing operational efficiency, while the government retains ownership of the underlying assets.

Industry observers note that redeveloping legacy hotels through PPP could unlock significant value for India's hospitality sector. With rising demand for modern accommodation, large convention spaces and premium hospitality experiences in the national capital, such kind of projects are expected to strengthen the city's position as a key destination for business travel, events and international tourism. ■

Hospitality revenues up 12% in FY2026 : ICRA

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

ICRA Hospitality Outlook FY2026: Revenues to Grow 9–12% India's hospitality sector is set to sustain strong momentum in FY2026, with revenues projected to grow 9–12% year-on-year, according to ICRA. The growth outlook remains favourable despite a high base in FY2025, supported by steady domestic leisure travel, weddings, MICE activity and resilient corporate demand.

ICRA estimates pan-India premium hotel occupancy at 72–74% in FY2026, compared to 71–73% recorded in the first eleven months of the current fiscal. Average Room Rates (ARRs) are expected to rise to ₹8,200–8,500, up from ₹8,000–8,200 in FY2025, reflecting sustained pricing power.

Premium Hotel Occupancy & ARR Remain Firm

Premium room inventory across 12 key cities is projected to grow at a CAGR of 5–6% over FY2025–FY2026. However, demand growth of 8–9% continues to outpace supply additions, creating a demand-supply gap likely to persist for the next two to three years. This structural imbalance is expected to support occupancy stability and sustained rate growth.

Operating Margins Expand Above Pre-Covid Levels

Operating margins for the premium hotel segment are projected at 34–36% in FY2026, broadly aligned with FY2025 levels of 35.8% and significantly higher than the pre-Covid range of 20–22%. Margin expansion is driven by operating leverage, cost rationalisation and an improved revenue mix.

Healthy cash accruals over the past two years have strengthened balance sheets and improved debt coverage metrics, keeping the sector's credit outlook stable.

Demand Diversification & Asset-Light Growth Strategy

Demand drivers now span corporate travel, weddings, MICE, concerts, sports, religious tourism and Tier-2/3 leisure markets. Hotel companies are increasingly adopting asset-light models through management contracts and franchise agreements, enhancing returns while limiting capital intensity.

With strong fundamentals and disciplined expansion, India's hospitality sector appears well-positioned for sustained growth in FY2026 and beyond. ■

Samhi Hotels targets INR 3,000 crore revenue with expansion push

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Samhi Hotels Ltd is aiming to more than double its revenue to around ₹3,000 crore in the coming years, driven by a mix of new hotel openings, portfolio expansion and investments in boutique hospitality. The hotel ownership and asset management company, which currently generates about ₹1,200 crore in topline revenue, plans to fuel its next phase of growth through fresh inventory in key urban markets and steady performance from existing properties.

According to chairman and managing director Ashish Jakhanwala, the company's expansion will focus on high-demand business travel markets such as Hyderabad and Bengaluru, where corporate travel and domestic tourism continue to remain strong.

"We are gunning for at least ₹3,000 crore in topline from our current ₹1,200 crore," Jakhanwala said, adding that sustained demand for domestic travel and the addition of new properties will support the growth trajectory. Currently, Samhi manages a diversified portfolio of roughly 7,500 rooms across mid-scale, upper mid-scale and upscale segments, operating under global brands such as Marriott International and IHG Hotels & Resorts. Around 2,000 rooms fall in the mid-scale category, another 2,000 in the upper mid-scale segment, while nearly 2,400 rooms belong to upscale and upper-upscale hotels. The company expects same-store revenue growth of around 9–10 percent annually, supported by robust domestic travel demand.

SAMHI
SMART HOTEL INVESTMENTS

A key part of the strategy also involves gradually increasing the share of upscale hotels in the portfolio. Currently, about 45 percent of Samhi's revenue comes from upscale properties, with the remaining 55 percent from mid-scale brands such as Holiday Inn Express and Fairfield by Marriott.

This balance is expected to shift significantly once upcoming properties under brands such as W Hotels and Westin Hotels & Resorts become operational, potentially taking the upscale share of revenues to nearly 65 percent. Beyond traditional hotel assets, Samhi is also expanding into experiential hospitality. The company recently acquired a 70 percent stake in boutique hospitality platform Rare India for around ₹45 crore. The platform currently represents about 70 independent hotels across 15 Indian states as well as properties in Nepal and Bhutan, marking Samhi's entry into the growing boutique leisure segment. ■

Assam Cabinet approves INR 103 crore five-star hotel project in Silchar

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

In a major boost to hospitality infrastructure in Southern Assam, the Assam Cabinet has approved the development of Silchar's first five-star hotel, to be built with an investment of approximately Rs 103 crore on Saturday.

The project will be spearheaded by Polo Hotels Group. The announcement marks a significant step towards strengthening the tourism, business, and events ecosystem of the Barak Valley. Announcing the decision, Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister of Assam, earlier said, "Our cabinet has given a go ahead to construct a Five Star hotel in Silchar, to Polo Hotels Group. The Polo Hotels Group will be spending around Rs 103 crore on this project. This is going to be the first five-star hotel in Silchar."

The project will introduce international-standard luxury hospitality infrastructure to the Barak Valley for the first time, positioning Silchar, the commercial and administrative hub of Southern Assam, to host high-value travel, corporate engagements, and large-scale events.

The proposed luxury hotel will feature 100 premium rooms and suites, designed to meet global hospitality benchmarks while reflecting the cultural character of the Barak Valley.

Key facilities will include multiple specialty restaurants and bars, a resort-style swimming pool, a full-service spa and wellness centre, a modern fitness facility, and state-of-the-art banquet and conference infrastructure capable of hosting corporate summits,exhibitions, weddings, and government events. Industry analysts note that India's hospitality sector has witnessed a strong rebound in recent years.

According to tourism estimates, India recorded more than 2.3 billion domestic tourist visits in 2023, while demand for MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) has expanded rapidly across emerging regional cities. The Silchar project forms part of an ambitious expansion plan by Polo Hotels Group, one of Northeast India's most established hospitality brands. Alongside the Silchar development, the Group is currently building 10 additional hotels across Meghalaya, Tripura, West Bengal, and Nagaland, significantly expanding its footprint across Eastern and Northeastern India.

This pipeline of projects is expected to position the company among the largest hospitality operators headquartered in Northeast India, reinforcing its long-term commitment to developing world-class tourism and hospitality infrastructure across the region.

"Silchar is one of the most important gateway cities in Northeast India and requires hospitality infrastructure required to support its growing economic and institutional importance. This project is not just about building a hotel; it is about enabling the next phase of growth for the Barak Valley. As a company rooted in the Northeast, we see it as our responsibility to bring world-class experiences to emerging cities and unlock their full potential. The Silchar hotel, along with our expanding pipeline across the region, reflects our long-term commitment to building the largest and most trusted hospitality platform in Northeast India," said Deval Tibrewalla, Chief Executive Officer of Polo Hotels Group. Hospitality infrastructure projects of this scale generate significant multiplier effects across local economies.

Industry estimates suggest that each hotel room can generate around 2 direct jobs, along with additional employment across sectors such as food supply chains, transportation, event management, and local services. The Silchar project is therefore expected to create substantial direct and indirect employment opportunities, while supporting local businesses, producers, and service providers across the Barak Valley.

Once operational, the hotel is expected to establish a new benchmark for luxury hospitality in Southern Assam, enabling Silchar to host national-level conferences, policy meetings, corporate gatherings, and destination events that were previously constrained by the lack of premium accommodation facilities.

The development also reflects a broader shift in India's hospitality landscape, where emerging regional cities are increasingly becoming the next frontier for tourism and business travel infrastructure. ■

Equal Tables

Every year on International Women's Day, the hospitality industry proudly celebrates the warmth, grace and empathy that women bring to the workplace. Walk into any hotel lobby, restaurant floor or guest relations desk and chances are you will see women ensuring everything runs smoothly. Yet, curiously, when one looks up the organisational ladder, the view becomes far less balanced.

The numbers quietly reveal the contradiction. According to the India Skills Report, women make up just about 26% of the hospitality workforce in India, even though nearly 39% of students enrolling in hospitality courses are women. In other words, many women enter the industry with enthusiasm, but far fewer are still around when leadership opportunities come knocking.

The drop becomes even steeper at the top. According to a report globally, women account for over half of the hospitality workforce but only around 30% of leadership roles, and a mere 5% reach CEO positions. The industry that prides itself on inclusion still has some catching up to do when it comes to who gets a seat at the decision-making table.

This is not simply about optics or ticking diversity boxes. Hospitality, at its heart, is about understanding people. Women leaders often bring a collaborative, empathetic style of management that aligns naturally with the spirit of service.

Of course, the path has not always been easy. Late shifts, safety concerns, limited mentorship and lingering biases still make career progression tougher than it should be. Many talented professionals quietly step away midway, not because they lack ambition, but because the system has yet to fully support it.

If Indian hospitality wants to truly evolve, the answer is simple: let more women lead.

Because in an industry built on welcoming people, it is only fair that the doors to leadership remain open for everyone. And perhaps the next time we celebrate Women's Day, there will be many more women not just running the show on the floor but shaping the future from the boardroom..

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Printed and Published by Sheldon Eric Santwan On Behalf Of Saffron Synergies Pvt. Ltd, Printed At Indigo Press (India) Private Limited, 1c/716, 21 Bharat Crown Compound, A.G. Pawar Marg, Dadoji Konddeo X Road, Ghodapdev, Byculla (East), Mumbai 400 027 And Published From Saffron Synergies Pvt. Ltd. 902, Cozy Apartments Chs Ltd. Yari Road, Versova, Andheri (West), Mumbai 400 061. **Editor : Sheldon Eric Santwan**

Gender Equality In Hospitality | Ground Reality In Perspective 2026

By **Prof. Satish Jayaram,** PhD – Co-Creator | Cornell Certified CHRO Leader | Principal WGSHA

2026 promises to bring to life - futurist predictions from four decades ago. It is about the accurate fit of women leaders in emerging contexts. The writing has always been on the wall for rational reasons. But practice had obscured performance in the past. The most powerful contributor is a woman's natural ability for poly-chronicity (the ability, preference, tendency, or cultural norm to engage in multiple tasks or activities simultaneously rather than sequentially). And the cultural advantage for some of our home-grown women leaders, is the factor advantages and supporting conditions, in which they have been incubated, prepared to take charge of disorder. Clearly the better of the species, multiple data sources indicate that over 50% of our workforce is women. Their board room and leadership presence is beginning to emerge substantially. In this column, we reveal three unique perspectives on the advantages that lie ahead for women leaders and practitioners going forward.

1. **Soft Systems Vs Hard Systems:** Considering the many challenges that the hospitality industry has navigated, many solutions have emerged from soft systems - than hard systems. While both need to work in tandem, the power of soft system approaches is the DNA on which the fundamental constructs of hospitality are built. Extending these into a business context comes naturally to women, who are better wired from a scientific perspective to deliver outcomes. Irrespective of hard system constraints, women in operations, practice and leadership can energize existing hard systems with soft power and culture effortlessly (as compared to traditional counterparts). This ability clearly emerges from natural competences that can be celebrated for aesthetics, design, attention to detail, empathy, service and maintaining standards. All these inherent qualities represent what hospitality as a value, truly stands for.
2. **Design Vs Lateral Thinking:** While empathy is the cornerstone on which all design philosophies are constructed, their deployment in real world definition, ideation, incubation and testing is a challenging order. Add to that the complexities of lateral thinking and innovation, which cannot stand by themselves, unless they are practically implemented to bring results. And in this respect, the unilateral existence of creativity in organizations cannot be fully landed without structure. Another unique strength with focus that many women colleagues bring to the table. The answer is in finding the practical bridge between both these existences, which requires enormous dedication, discipline and direction. One that we know too well multiple women colleagues excel in. The development of balanced teams that can integrate both perspectives is ideally set by choosing gender as a contributing variable to deliver results.
3. **Artificial Vs Collaborative Intelligence:** In recent times, the proliferation of AI mandates the presence of a moderating variable. This will ensure that we don't run away with LLM, NLP and models that provide quick fixes, but may not stay the course. While agentic AI can turn around larger volumes of output, the moderation of this juggernaut needs empathy, soft-skills and spiritual intelligence. It represents the collaborative intelligence that intuitively gets provided by women at work. High levels of adaptability and resilience in the collaborative context are also strengths that are required to moderate artificial outputs. The biggest argument in favour of women working with artificial intelligence is their extra sensory perception and peripheral vision. A combination of these bodes well as we traverse through tough times with data overloads. If there was a hybrid intelligence that needs evolution, let the better species win!

If all three perspectives are considered

seriously, the staffing challenges currently faced at many establishments can be creatively addressed to accommodate ground realities. The access and availability of people to serve in many establishments continues to remain a burning challenge. But the deployment of talents differently and increasing role clarity with job role expansion could be the real key to success. The rewriting of job roles based on the competences of people within the context of diversity, equity and inclusiveness is a better approach rather than simply monitoring headcounts. Consider the multiple 'women-only' establishments and the courage they demonstrate by delivering without being obscured by gender biased tradition. It is indeed commendable that creativity, resilience, candour and innovation in application, make such realities come true as women respond… . ■

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

News Bulletin

Middle East tourism crisis: War sends shockwaves through hospitality

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The escalating conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran is sending shockwaves through the Middle East's tourism and hospitality industry, triggering widespread travel cancellations, airline disruptions and a sudden decline in hotel bookings across major destinations.

Hotels in key tourism hubs such as Dubai, Doha, Abu Dhabi, Cairo and Tel Aviv are witnessing a sharp slowdown in reservations as governments issue travel advisories and airlines suspend or reroute flights across the region. Thousands of flights have already been cancelled due to airspace closures, creating one of the most disruptive aviation crises since the pandemic.

Industry analysts warn the economic fallout could be severe. According to estimates from Tourism Economics, the crisis could result in 23 to 38 million fewer international visitors to the Middle East this year, translating into a loss of $34 billion to $56 billion in tourism revenue. The disruption is particularly significant because the region had been experiencing a strong tourism rebound. In 2025 alone, the Middle East welcomed around 100 million tourists, making tourism a critical pillar of economic diversification for several Gulf economies.

Across the Gulf, luxury hotel towers that once symbolised the region's tourism boom are now facing growing uncertainty. Cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi, which rely heavily on international travelers, corporate events and transit tourism, have seen bookings fall sharply as flight disruptions ripple across the aviation network.

Dubai, widely regarded as the tourism capital of the Gulf, has been among the hardest hit. Holiday rental cancellations in the UAE more than doubled immediately after the conflict escalated, with cancellation rates in Dubai and Abu Dhabi jumping significantly within days.

The crisis is also putting pressure on hospitality markets such as Doha, which has positioned itself as a major global aviation hub. With flight schedules disrupted and international conferences being postponed, hotels across the city are experiencing declining occupancy levels. Tourism experts say the situation highlights the vulnerability of global travel to geopolitical shocks. If tensions persist, the current crisis could rival the scale of disruption seen during COVID-19, underscoring how quickly international travel demand can collapse when safety perceptions change. ■

'Our immediate focus is on building scale in India with 6 ATHIVA hotels'

Having launched ATHIVA Hotels & Resorts, **Gaurav Singh, COO, Chalet Hotels Limited** spoke to **Disha Shah Ghosh** about their vision for the brand, overall strategy of the Chalet Group, and the demand-supply ratio amid escalating room rates.

Chalet Hotels has primarily worked with brands like Marriott and Accor to manage its assets. Are you seeking any newer partners for your expansion?

Chalet Hotels has traditionally partnered with global brands such as Marriott and Accor, particularly in our early growth phase. With over 25 years of operating experience, we now have the scale and operational capability to operate hotels ourselves, as well as under franchise or management models. Each asset is evaluated individually based on location, positioning, and demand drivers, and we choose the structure - self-operated, managed, or franchised that maximizes long-term value. There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

India is a diverse market in terms of accommodation choices with hotels, resorts, Airbnbs and homestays. In that context, what plans do you have for expansion among these listed segments for greenfield and brownfield developments?

Our strategy is focused and consistent. We invest in large, high-quality upscale hotels and resorts in major cities and premium leisure destinations within driving distance of airports, balancing business and leisure demand.

On the greenfield side, we are selectively developing ATHIVA properties in Goa and Thiruvananthapuram where demand visibility and returns are compelling. On the brownfield front, we continue to acquire under-optimized assets such as the Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort, NCR and The Westin Resort & Spa, Himalayas, where we can unlock value through operational and asset-management expertise. We are not pursuing homestays or Airbnb-style formats.

What are your strategies for managing debt and maintaining a healthy balance sheet as you continue to expand your hotel portfolio and develop new properties?

We focus on the optimal use of capital. In a capital-intensive business like ours, debt plays an important role in building long-gestation assets, and we are comfortable using it judiciously. At the same time, we maintain strict balance-sheet discipline, with a strong emphasis on debt-servicing capability and a competitive cost of funds. Given our robust cash-flow generation and planned capex, we are well positioned today, with adequate headroom to fund growth through a diversified financing mix led by lease rent discounting and supported by internal accruals, ensuring flexibility as we scale.

Despite high room rates in metro cities like Mumbai and Delhi, there continues to remain competitiveness among hotels. What kind of growth do you drive from your hotels in these metros?

While new supply is being added in certain micro-markets, particularly Andheri, we have continued to gain market share. Corporate demand continues to significantly outperform supply, and as travel, MICE, and social demand strengthen, we expect metro performance to improve even in a competitive environment.

How do your hotels fare in secondary cities and holiday locations?

Our asset-management approach delivers measurable efficiencies. At The Westin Resort & Spa Himalayas, for instance, we reduced the staff-to-room ratio from 2.27 to 1.67, significantly improving operating performance. While leisure demand is seasonal, we remain highly bullish on premium destinations within drivable distance of key airports.

What kind of capital investment is being planned to drive growth with brand ATHIVA?

Our immediate focus is on building scale in India, with six ATHIVA Hotels & Resorts comprising over 900 keys, thereby establishing a strong brand foundation anchored in contemporary Indian hospitality. These include a fully renovated business hotel in Navi Mumbai, The Resort at Madh Island, a K Raheja Corp Group hotel, and three greenfield developments currently under execution - two in Goa and one in Thiruvananthapuram.

ATHIVA is a premium lifestyle hospitality rollout in India, leveraging Chalet Hotels' brand equity with a differentiated, experience-led vision for the future of travel. As the brand gains maturity, we will evaluate opportunities to adopt an asset-light growth model through franchising and managed partnerships to accelerate expansion. ■

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The Decade of the Hostess

Why Women Will Shape the Future of Hospitality

By Rajesh Chakrabarti

For decades, hospitality has presented a curious paradox.

In millions of homes around the world, the kitchen is the domain of women. Recipes travel through generations on the tongues and fingertips of mothers and grandmothers. Flavours are memory, emotion, ritual. Yet step inside the gleaming kitchens of five-star hotels, the boardrooms of hotel chains, or the leadership corridors of restaurants and bars, and the faces change. Aprons become chef whites. Authority becomes masculine.

Professional hospitality, strangely enough, has long been ruled by men.

Executive chefs are men.

General managers are men.

F&B directors are men.

Restaurant managers are men.

Meanwhile, the original custodians of food culture, hospitality instinct, and culinary tradition often remain outside the professional spotlight.

But history has a funny way of correcting its own imbalances.

The coming decade may well witness one of the most important structural shifts the hospitality industry has ever seen: the rise of women as its central force.

And this time, the shift is not symbolic. It is structural, economic, cultural, and inevitable.

The Industry Is Entering Its "Human Era"

Hospitality is no longer merely about service. It is about experience design.

Modern guests do not simply want a meal or a room. They want atmosphere, authenticity, empathy, and story. Restaurants are becoming theatres. Hotels are becoming cultural spaces. Food is becoming narrative.

This shift from transaction to experience favours a leadership style that is collaborative, intuitive, emotionally intelligent, and deeply attentive to human detail.

In other words, the very traits that have historically defined great hospitality at home.

Women, across cultures, have long been trained in the art of hosting. Not as a profession, but as an instinct. The ability to read a room, anticipate needs, balance warmth with precision, and create comfort without announcing effort is the invisible grammar of hospitality.

As the industry moves from scale to sensitivity, those instincts are becoming powerful professional assets.

The future of hospitality will not be commanded. It will be curated.

A New Generation Is Already Rising

Across hospitality schools and culinary institutes, a quiet demographic shift is underway.

The number of women entering hospitality education is rising rapidly. Culinary institutes that once saw female enrollment as a minority now report classes approaching parity. Hospitality management programs across India and globally are witnessing a surge of ambitious women who are not merely interested in operational roles but in leadership.

What makes this generation different is their entrepreneurial mindset.

Many are not waiting for the traditional hierarchy to promote them from commis to sous chef to executive chef over decades. Instead, they are opening bakeries, launching boutique restaurants,

running cloud kitchens, building specialty cafés, and curating food brands.

The barriers that once defined hospitality careers are eroding.

Social media, food delivery platforms, and independent dining concepts have democratised the industry. A talented chef with a strong idea no longer requires a five-star hotel to build reputation. She can build her own stage.

And increasingly, many are doing exactly that.

The Rise of "Soft Power" Leadership

Hospitality leadership has historically mirrored the old brigade system of kitchens: hierarchical, command-driven, and intensely masculine in tone.

But the modern workforce is changing. Younger employees prefer collaborative cultures, flexible management styles, and environments where mentorship replaces intimidation.

Women leaders are often bringing a different managerial grammar into hospitality organisations.

Teams led by women frequently emphasise:

- **Collaboration over hierarchy**
- **Mentorship over command**

- **Guest empathy over operational rigidity**
- **Team culture over individual authority**

These shifts are not merely ideological. They are operationally beneficial.

Staff retention improves. Team communication strengthens. Guest experiences become more consistent. Restaurants and hotels become workplaces where people want to stay, not merely survive.

In an industry famous for burnout and attrition, this style of leadership could become its most valuable reform.

The Consumer Is Also Changing

Another quiet revolution is happening on the demand side.

Women are increasingly powerful decision-makers in hospitality consumption.

They plan family vacations. They organise social dining. They choose restaurants for celebrations. They influence food trends through social media and lifestyle communities.

In India especially, the rising urban professional woman is shaping how hospitality spaces are designed and experienced.

Restaurants today think about lighting, safety, comfort, menu diversity, and atmosphere in ways that would have seemed secondary twenty years ago.

Hotels increasingly design spaces that feel welcoming to solo female travellers.

Cafés are evolving into community spaces.

These changes are not coincidental. They reflect a hospitality ecosystem responding to a customer who is increasingly female.

And when the consumer changes, leadership eventually follows.

A Cultural Reset in the Kitchen

Perhaps the most dramatic transformation will occur in the professional kitchen.

For decades, the culinary world carried the mythology of the "temperamental male genius chef," where aggression and intensity were almost seen as culinary virtues.

But this model is slowly losing legitimacy.

Today's diners care about sustainability, sourcing, storytelling, and authenticity. Kitchens are becoming spaces of creativity rather than combat.

Women chefs are increasingly bringing new perspectives to culinary leadership.

Many focus on ingredient respect, regional storytelling, seasonal cooking, and collaborative menu creation rather than ego-driven culinary theatrics.

This shift could fundamentally reshape the culture of professional kitchens.

Less shouting.

More craft.

Less hierarchy.

More creativity.

And perhaps, finally, a closer relationship between the professional kitchen and the wisdom of the home kitchen that inspired it.

What the Industry Must Do Next

The rise of women in hospitality will not happen automatically. Structural changes are still required.

Hotels and restaurant groups must actively build pathways that support female leadership.

This includes:

- **Flexible work structures,** particularly for women balancing career and family
- **Safe and respectful workplace environments,** especially in late-night hospitality operations
- **Leadership mentorship programs for women professionals**
- **Visibility for women chefs and managers in media and industry platforms**

Industry bodies, hospitality schools, and publications have an important role in telling these stories and amplifying role models.

Visibility creates possibility.

And possibility creates change.

The Future Host

Hospitality, at its heart, has always been about one timeless idea: making someone feel welcome.

For centuries, the world has quietly recognised women as natural hosts in homes, communities, and cultures.

The coming decade may simply be the moment when the professional hospitality industry finally catches up with that truth.

The restaurant of the future may be run by a woman who once watched her grandmother cook.

The hotel of the future may be managed by someone who grew up hosting large family gatherings.

The next great culinary voice may emerge not from the traditional brigade hierarchy but from a chef who sees food as memory, care, and conversation.

In many ways, this is not a revolution.

It is a homecoming.

And if the next decade unfolds the way current trends suggest, the hospitality industry may discover that its most powerful leaders were standing at the kitchen door all along, waiting patiently for the industry to invite them in.

The door is opening now. ■

*"**Rajesh Chakrabarti** has spent 25 years turning chaos into strategy—from Nielsen's boardrooms to World Bank projects and Reliance's innovation labs. Today, he trades in insights, wit, and bold ideas—writing for industries that build, travel, and host the future. Expect a perspective that's sharp, surprising, and impossible to ignore".*

The Quiet Advantage: Why Some Restaurants Always Seem to Win

By Alouk H. Mishrra, CEO – Foodesign Systems Associates | Founder – AMInnovations Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.

Every city has them.

Restaurants that seem to run smoothly, expand steadily, and maintain healthy margins even when the market slows down. While many hospitality businesses struggle with rising food costs, staffing shortages, and operational inefficiencies, a few establishments consistently outperform the rest.

What makes them different?

Surprisingly, it's rarely their menu, décor, or marketing budget.

The real difference lies in how they run their operations behind the scenes.

In today's highly competitive hospitality landscape, restaurant profitability is no longer determined by great food alone. The most successful operators are building a quiet advantage through strong systems, disciplined processes, and data-driven decision making.

Systems, Not Guesswork

Many restaurants still operate on instinct. Owners rely on experience, chefs rely on judgment, and financial reviews happen once a month when the P&L report is finally prepared.

But the most profitable restaurants today operate very differently.

They rely on structured F&B cost control systems, daily operational reviews, and transparent data across departments. Inventory levels are tracked closely, purchasing decisions are aligned with consumption patterns, and menu pricing reflects accurate recipe costing.

This shift from guesswork to data-driven hospitality management is one of the biggest differentiators between average operators and industry leaders.

Turning Data into Decisions

Most restaurants today have access to technology — POS systems, inventory tools, and sales reports. Yet many businesses fail to translate that data into meaningful operational action.

The restaurants that consistently win understand that data without interpretation is useless.

They monitor:

- Food cost percentages daily
- Inventory movement and stock variance
- Recipe yields and portion consistency
- Supplier pricing trends
- Purchase-to-sales ratios

Instead of reacting at month-end, they respond in real time. This allows them to control food and beverage costs, reduce wastage, and protect margins before small issues turn into large financial leaks.

In essence, they turn operational information into profit intelligence.

Discipline Across the Team

Another defining trait of high-performing hospitality businesses is that cost awareness is not limited to the finance department.

It becomes a culture across the kitchen, store, and management teams.

Chefs understand the impact of portion control. Store managers monitor inventory accuracy. Purchase teams negotiate strategically with suppliers. And owners review performance metrics regularly.

This culture of operational discipline is what allows successful restaurants to maintain F&B cost benchmarks closer to 20–22%, compared to the typical industry range of 25–28%.

Over time, these small operational improvements translate into lakhs — sometimes crores — of additional profitability.

From Reactive to Strategic

Many hospitality businesses spend years reacting to problems — rising costs, declining margins, or sudden inventory discrepancies.

But the most successful operators take a different approach.

They treat restaurant operations as a system that can be engineered for performance.

Through better inventory management, accurate recipe costing, and structured cost monitoring, they build operations that are scalable, efficient, and resilient.

Guests may only see the food and service. But behind every successful restaurant is a carefully designed operational engine working every single day.

The Role of Expert Insight

At Foodesign Systems Associates (FSA) and AMInnovations Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., we work closely with hospitality businesses to help them unlock this operational advantage.

Our focus is not merely on reducing expenses — it is on building sustainable profitability systems through advanced F&B cost management, inventory optimization, menu engineering, and operational efficiency frameworks.

Across hotels, restaurant chains, QSR brands, and standalone outlets, we have helped clients strengthen their internal controls and significantly improve their restaurant profit margins.

Because in modern hospitality, success is rarely accidental.

It is designed.

And the businesses that understand this early will always seem to win. ■

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

Goa's hospitality sector is navigating a recalibration. The beach destination is seeing an increase in softer booking windows, sharper value comparisons and experience-first travel decisions. **Vinayak Patnekar, General Manager of Fairfield by Marriott Goa Benaulim**, brings over two decades of operational experience within Marriott International to the table. Having worked across brands, cities and market cycles, Patnekar represents a generation of leaders shaped by both scale and structure.
In an interaction with **Asmita Mukherjee**, he speaks about sustaining culture in high-churn environments, why hiring for attitude outweighs hiring for pedigree, and how technology is quietly transforming back-of-house efficiency while enabling sharper guest personalisation.

'Service skills can be taught; service mindset can't '

You've spent over two decades with Marriott across brands and cities. How has that journey influenced the way you lead Fairfield by Marriott Goa Benaulim today?

Spending over two decades with Marriott has given me the privilege of experiencing diverse markets, brand philosophies, and guest expectations. What has stayed constant is the importance of people — both guests and associates — in shaping success.

Today, at Fairfield by Marriott Goa Benaulim, my leadership approach is grounded in adaptability, empowerment, and consistency. Exposure to multiple operational cultures has taught me to balance brand standards with local sensibilities, ensuring we deliver dependable service while remaining deeply connected to the destination. I focus on creating clarity for my team, encouraging ownership, and building an environment where associates feel valued — because a confident team naturally translates into a confident guest experience.

Looking back at your career, what do you believe really makes the difference between a good hospitality professional and a successful long-term one?

Technical skills and operational knowledge are essential, but what truly differentiates long-term success is mindset. Curiosity, resilience, and emotional intelligence play a far greater role over time. Hospitality is a dynamic industry — guest behaviours evolve, market conditions shift, and expectations constantly rise. Professionals who stay relevant are those willing to learn, unlearn, and adapt without losing sight of service fundamentals. Additionally, the ability to build relationships — with guests, teams, and partners — is invaluable. Longevity in hospitality is less about position and more about consistency in attitude, humility, and the ability to lead through change.

Hiring and retaining talent is a growing challenge. What do you look for most when building your team, and how do you nurture a strong culture on property?

Beyond qualifications, I prioritise attitude and intent. Skills can be taught; a genuine service mindset and willingness to collaborate are far harder to cultivate. I look for individuals who demonstrate accountability, curiosity, and respect for teamwork.

Retention, however, depends on culture. At the property level, we focus on open communication, recognition, and clear growth pathways. Associates need to feel heard, supported, and able to see a future within the organisation. Encouraging cross-exposure, celebrating small wins, and maintaining transparency in decision-making are simple yet powerful practices that help build trust and belonging — ultimately strengthening engagement and performance.

Goa's travel landscape is changing. How are you repositioning the hotel to appeal to guests seeking more value-driven and experience-led stays?

Today's travellers are more discerning — they evaluate experiences holistically rather than simply comparing room rates. Our focus has been on strengthening experiential touchpoints while maintaining the reliability that Fairfield stands for, including our current campaign, "The Art of Slow". We are enhancing destination integration through curated local experiences, wellness-led offerings, and flexible dining concepts that reflect evolving guest preferences. Simultaneously, we ensure operational efficiency so that guests perceive clear value — not just in pricing, but in service, comfort, and meaningful engagement with the locale. Positioning ourselves as a dependable yet experience-rich choice allows us to remain relevant in a competitive leisure market.

If you could roll out one new tech solution across hotel operations today, what would it be and what problem would it solve?

I would prioritise implementing a unified, AI-enabled guest intelligence platform that integrates data across touchpoints — reservations, stay history, preferences, and feedback.

Such a solution would empower teams with real-time insights to anticipate needs rather than react to requests. It would improve personalisation, reduce service gaps, and enable more proactive decision-making across departments. Ultimately, the goal is to create seamless continuity in guest experience while enhancing operational agility.

Goa has seen fluctuating traveller sentiment in recent seasons. What shifts are you currently noticing in guest expectations and booking behaviour?

Guests are booking closer to travel dates and demonstrating heightened sensitivity to perceived value. There is also greater interest in flexibility — whether in cancellation policies, stay inclusions, or experiential add-ons.

Additionally, travellers are increasingly seeking authenticity, comfort, and wellness alongside leisure. Digital research plays a larger role in decision-making, making online reputation and storytelling more influential than ever. Understanding these shifts allows us to remain agile in packaging, communication, and service delivery.

Which trends do you think will shape the future of hospitality in India, especially in leisure markets like Goa?

Several trends will define the next phase of hospitality growth. Experiential travel will continue to expand, with guests prioritising local immersion and curated activities. Wellness and sustainability will move from optional to expected, influencing both design and operations. Technology-enabled personalisation will become standard, while workforce development and retention will remain a strategic focus for operators. Finally, domestic travel resilience and the blending of work-leisure lifestyles will reshape demand patterns. Properties that balance operational discipline with authentic destination storytelling will be best positioned to thrive in evolving leisure markets. ■

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Sayaji Kolhapur launches AI service robots

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

AI-Powered Service Robots Elevate Hospitality Innovation

Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur has introduced AI-powered service robots, marking a significant milestone in hospitality innovation in Kolhapur. The initiative reinforces the hotel's commitment to blending advanced technology with personalised guest service, positioning it among the early adopters of smart hospitality solutions in the city.

By integrating robotics into daily operations, the hotel enhances service efficiency while preserving its hallmark warmth and human-centred approach.

Smart Hotel Technology Enhances Guest Experience

The deployment includes a Lobby Service Robot that greets guests with drinks and water upon arrival, creating a memorable first impression. In addition, a Restaurant Service Robot at Moon Tree Café assists with food delivery, streamlining service during peak hours while adding a futuristic touch to the dining experience.

Designed to seamlessly navigate guest areas, these AI-driven robots support the service team by improving speed, consistency, and operational precision—particularly during busy periods.

Blending AI Innovation with Personalised Service

Mukesh Rakshit, General Manager of Sayaji Kolhapur, noted that the introduction of AI-powered service robots enhances operational efficiency without compromising personalised hospitality. The hotel continues to prioritise human interaction while using smart technology as an enabler rather than a replacement.

He said: "At Sayaji Kolhapur, we continuously seek ways to elevate guest experiences. Introducing AI-powered service robots allows us to blend modern technology with our core values of warmth and personalised service. This step enhances operational efficiency while ensuring that hospitality remains human-centred."

The introduction of robotics reflects the hotel's forward-looking approach to hospitality innovation in Kolhapur. By combining advanced technology with its established service ethos, Sayaji Kolhapur aims to deliver experiences that are efficient, engaging, and memorable, reinforcing its position as a progressive player in the city's hospitality landscape while maintaining the essence of traditional guest care. ■

Women reach 33% of leadership in tourism, hotel boards: Report

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

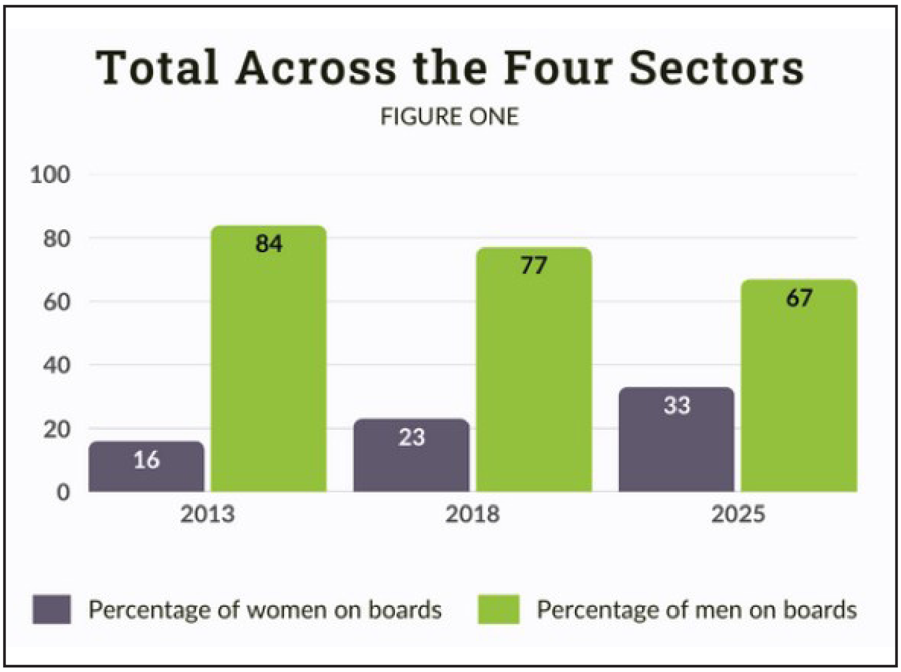
New research by Equality in Tourism reveals women now hold 33% of tourism board positions – significant progress since 2013, yet still falling short of parity goals.

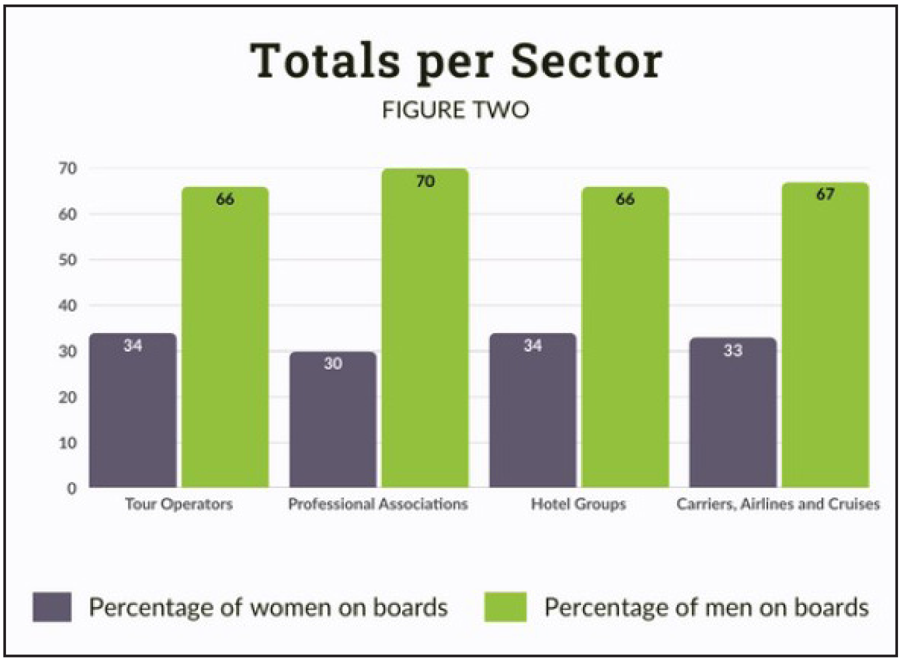
Women's representation on tourism and hospitality boards has doubled over the past decade, climbing from 16% in 2013 to 33% today, according to our latest analysis. While this growth demonstrates meaningful momentum, the tourism sector – where women comprise 54% of the workforce – continues to overlook female talent at the leadership level.

Sun, Sand and Ceilings 2025: Women in Tourism and Hospitality Boardrooms examines executive boards across four key sectors – tour operators, professional associations, hotels and hotel groups, and carriers, airlines and cruise companies. The findings reveal notable progress, particularly in the carriers, airlines and cruise sector, yet persistent gaps remain. Some organisations still operate with all-male boards, and systemic barriers continue to limit advancement opportunities for women.

The business case for change is compelling. McKinsey's 2020 research demonstrates that gender-diverse executive teams are 25% more likelyto achieve above-average profits, with organisations having over 30% women in leadership outperforming their peers by an impressive 48%.

"We're proud to be the only board where women outnumber men in our sector, and proud as well that women currently hold 41% of Department Head roles.





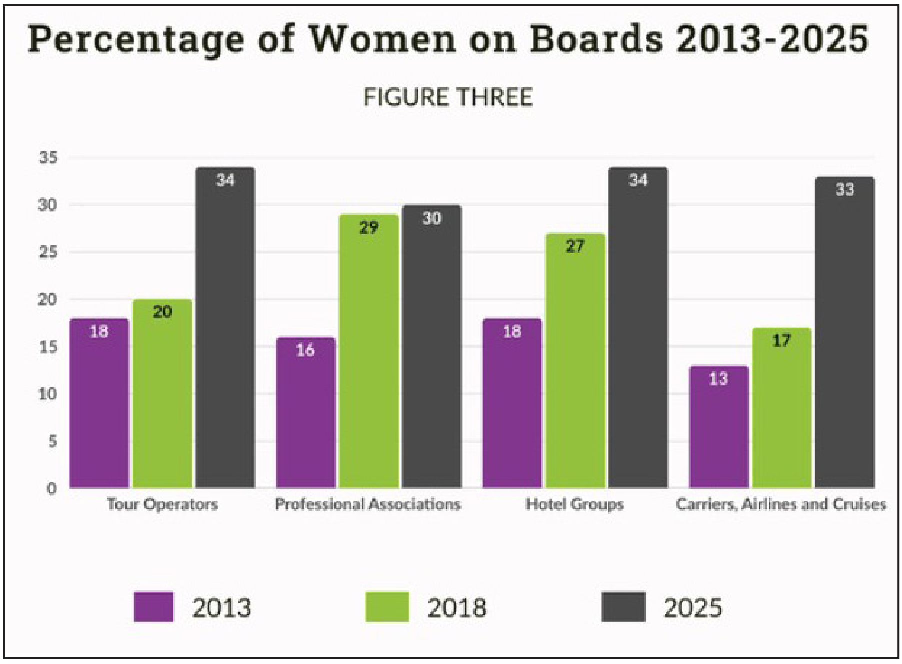
This reflects our commitment to setting bold targets and consistently advancing toward them – because we believe that diverse leadership drives stronger performance, deeper innovation, and a more inclusive culture in line with the social responsibility a leading hospitality group must uphold," said Anne-Sophie Beraud, SVP Social Care & Impact, Accor.

An Action Plan to Improve Gender Equality in Boardrooms

Alongside revealing the current landscape, our report provides tourism organisations with a practical 10-step action plan to advance gender equality. These evidence-based strategies include regular gender audits, targeted mentoring programs, and comprehensive diversity training – approaches already proving successful across the industry.

The recommendations address both immediate actions and long-term structural changes needed to create lasting transformation. From adopting global frameworks to implementing transparent reporting, each step builds toward sustainable gender balance in tourism leadership.

"Tourism organisations should see our recommendations not as a challenge, but as an opportunity," comments Equality in Tourism Co-Director Tricia Barnett. "Putting the 10-step plan into practice will only pay back in benefits – increased innovation, enhanced employee retention, and improved company reputation, to name a few." ■



Leading Ladies

As the hospitality industry marks International Women's Day, conversations around gender diversity are gaining renewed momentum across hotel boardrooms. While women remain highly visible across guest-facing roles and operational teams, their representation still narrows significantly at senior leadership levels.

Industry leaders say the gap is rarely about capability. Instead, it often stems from structural realities of the sector—demanding operational hours, mobility requirements, and limited early exposure to revenue and operational leadership roles. Over time, these factors can slow the leadership trajectory for many talented women professionals.

However, there are signs that the landscape is beginning to evolve. Many hospitality companies are now focusing on structured leadership development, mentorship and clearer career pathways to ensure women move beyond functional roles into enterprise leadership.

To understand whether this shift is truly underway, Hospitality Biz spoke with the leading ladies across the industry about the barriers that still exist, the progress being made, and what the next decade could hold for women in hospitality leadership.

"The challenge isn't about capability, it's about access and timing"

Mandeep Kaur, General Manager, Taj Wellington Mews, Chennai

I genuinely believe the challenge isn't about capability, it's about access and timing. Many women enter hospitality with ambition and energy, but the real drop happens when careers begin to demand mobility, long operational hours and relocation, just as personal responsibilities tend to increase. There are also subtle cultural biases. This is mainly due to challenges such as unconscious bias, fewer opportunities for strong mentorship and sponsorship, social expectations around family responsibilities, and the demanding nature of hotel operations. In India, traditional mindsets about women working late hours or relocating for roles have also slowed their career progression.

That said, the situation is improving. Organisations like Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) and many other forward-thinking hospitality companies are actively working to break these barriers. They are focusing on fair hiring practices, clear promotion processes, leadership development programs, mentorship platforms, and return-to-work opportunities for women. Improved safety measures, flexible work options, and performance systems based on results rather than hours spent at work are also helping create a more supportive environment.

Most importantly, having more women in visible leadership roles is inspiring others and changing workplace culture. The focus today is not just on hiring more women, but on giving them equal opportunities to grow, lead, and succeed.

I am genuinely optimistic about the next decade. The pipeline of talented women in hospitality is stronger than ever, mindsets are shifting, and conversations in Indian boardrooms are far more progressive than they were even five years ago. If we stay intentional, the next 10 years can significantly change the leadership landscape in India.

'Organisations must consciously shape journeys that prepare women for scale'

Shilpa Rameja, General Manager, Taj Connemara, Chennai

We see remarkable women across every department in hospitality, yet representation narrows as we move higher up the leadership ladder. This shift does not happen suddenly; it happens gradually over time.

Often, the difference lies in access to certain assignments. Roles that build commercial exposure, operational command and large-scale decision-making experience are not always distributed evenly. Over time, that creates a visible experience gap, even when capability is firmly present.

There is also the practical reality of our industry. Senior leadership roles frequently involve relocations, extended hours and high-intensity decision-making. In India, women still tend to carry a larger share of family responsibilities, making career choices more layered.

At its core, this is not a question of ambition or ability — it is about how leadership pathways are designed. Organisations must consciously shape journeys that prepare women for scale. Hiring is only the beginning; sustained preparation for the top is where meaningful change lies.

The pipeline of capable women entering hospitality today is strong. They are confident, commercially aware and ambitious about leadership.

The next decade will favour organisations that build leadership consciously and inclusively. If we are intentional in how we identify, prepare and trust women with scale, representation at the top will evolve naturally — not as an exception, but as a norm.

'Representation will improve through experience and opportunity'

Pearl Sanga, Director, Della Group

In hospitality, leadership directly shapes how teams function day to day. Over the years at Della Resorts and Adventure, we have consciously built teams where women are not limited to support roles but are equally present across management and operations.

Today, women are part of operational leadership, revenue discussions, and even culinary teams, which brings a more balanced working environment. This has strengthened collaboration between departments and improved continuity within teams — something extremely important in hospitality where consistency defines guest experience.

The impact is visible in team stability and stronger ownership across levels rather than any single measurable metric.

The most important change is early operational exposure. Careers often take direction in the first few years, and if women are not given operational responsibility at that stage, leadership pathways become narrower later.

At Della Resorts and Adventure, we encourage cross-functional growth so team members understand operations, revenue, and performance together.

Compared to earlier years, we now see women across operations, kitchens, revenue management, and property leadership roles — areas where representation was limited before.

If there is one area I would emphasize, it would be long-term talent development. Identifying potential early and giving individuals varied operational exposure ensures leadership growth happens steadily.

As the industry continues to evolve, representation will improve through experience and opportunity rather than mandates.

'Leadership parity improves when opportunity pathways are designed deliberately'

Isha Goyal, Senior Vice President & Head – Human Resources, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

Hospitality has never struggled to attract women. The real challenge is advancing them into enterprise leadership.

The industry's traditional leadership pathway has historically been shaped around intensive operational immersion, geographic mobility and uninterrupted career continuity. Without deliberate intervention, women often remain concentrated in functional excellence roles rather than being systematically prepared for P&L ownership and operational leadership.

The opportunity lies in redesigning career architecture.

At The Leela, women represent about 25% of our workforce at our Palaces and 22% across the group. Representation alone, however, is not the goal. The real shift happens when women are intentionally mapped into succession pipelines and exposed to revenue-linked roles early.

Through programmes such as the Leela Leadership Development Programme (LLDP), where 41 percent of graduates from our batch that graduated most recently have been women and Leela Executive Accelerated Development programme (LEAD), we are consciously creating leadership pathways. Across our hotels, women are also shaping operational excellence, from our Shefs at The Leela to front office and housekeeping teams who bring the ethos of Atithi Devo Bhava to life every day.

Leadership parity improves when opportunity pathways are designed deliberately.

'Succession planning must consciously factor in diversity'

Yuvika Gogia, Assistant Director, HR Shangri-La Eros New Delhi

In today's expansion-focused yet cost-sensitive hospitality market, gender parity has certainly remained a strategic priority, especially within forward-looking organizations. At Shangri-La Eros New Delhi, we don't see diversity as a separate HR conversation; it's embedded into how we think about leadership, governance, and long-term sustainability. Of course, financial performance is central to boardroom discussions in a fast-growing environment, but what we're increasingly observing, both within our own ecosystem and across Indian boardrooms, is that gender parity is being discussed alongside succession planning, brand credibility, and ESG priorities. Women at our leadership table contribute equally to shaping business strategy and growth decisions. There is definitely a noticeable shift; conversations today are more structured, more outcome-focused, and more accountable than they were a few years ago. The real progress now lies in consistently embedding parity into mainstream decision-making rather than treating it as a parallel initiative.

The real shift, however, begins with intentional career design. Exposure to operational and revenue-driving roles should not be incidental; it must be structured early and integrated thoughtfully into leadership development journeys.

At Shangri-La Eros New Delhi, we view commercial responsibility as a core leadership capability rather than a function confined to a specific profile.

Today, succession planning must consciously factor in diversity, and leadership programs should actively equip high-potential women for roles that carry operational and financial accountability. Simultaneously, evolving workplace structures and more agile operational models are making these traditionally demanding roles more sustainable.

When organisations design systems with intention, the leadership pipeline becomes naturally stronger, more diverse, and ultimately more resilient — delivering meaningful impact for the business.

‘Diverse leadership encourages collaborative teamwork and strengthens inclusive team dynamics’

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

Gender diversity at the leadership level has a meaningful and measurable impact on our organization’s overall effectiveness and culture. A diverse leadership team fosters a fair and inclusive workplace where varied opinions, experiences and perspectives are genuinely valued. This diversity of thought leads to more balanced, well-informed decision-making and stronger strategic outcomes.

It has also contributed to greater consistency in growth and development opportunities, ensuring that talent is recognized and nurtured equitably across the organization. Diverse leadership encourages collaborative teamwork and strengthens inclusive team dynamics, creating an environment where individuals feel heard, respected and empowered to contribute.

Additionally, gender-diverse leadership has positively influenced our approach to work-life integration, promoting policies and practices that support a healthier work-life blend. This has enhanced employee engagement, retention and overall organizational performance.

In Indian boardrooms, the conversation has evolved from basic representation to meaningful inclusion. There is greater emphasis on creating leadership pipelines, strengthening succession planning and ensuring diverse perspectives are present at the decision-making table.

‘Men and women are evaluated differently for leadership potential’

Sushma Khichar, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway

Women have long been overrepresented in the hospitality industry, especially in occupations that involve interacting with guests, but this problem emerges as careers progress. Many women still shoulder a disproportionate amount of household responsibilities, and leadership roles can involve challenging schedules, relocations, and operational limitations.

Men and women are evaluated differently for leadership potential, which is another subtle cultural prejudice that endures. Ensuring that women receive equal exposure, support, and consistency throughout their careers is the problem, not talent or ambition.

We need to make chances happen on purpose instead of waiting for them to happen on their own. Women should be pushed to take on operational and revenue-focused roles early in their careers, even if they seem hard at first.

Structured rotations, exposure to leadership, and active support from senior leaders can all make a big difference. Being able to see operations makes everyone feel more confident, both for the person and the company.

‘Without relocation support, women’s careers stall while men advance’

Jharna Pandey, Housekeeping HOD, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore.

In hospitality, career growth often demands relocation to different properties or cities for better roles. However, women frequently face mobility constraints due to family responsibilities, safety concerns, and societal expectations. These challenges are further deepened by cultural bias, where traditional gender roles shape perceptions about women’s willingness or ability to relocate, take on demanding shifts, or handle high-responsibility roles. Without relocation support and without addressing cultural stereotypes, women’s careers can unintentionally stagnate while their male counterpart’s advance.

It is true that we discuss gender equality in different forum,but its implementation inconsistency is a challenge which organization as a whole should address. Though there is a significant improvement over the past few years but definitely there is a scope of improvement. I want to share my experience where I have personally attended few conferences and training sessions in my current role and got the opportunity to meet few women in leadership role which itself shows that organizations policies have inculcated this change and made an exemplary effort of removing this unconscious bias.

HOPE 2026

Industry leaders, investors and global hotel CEOs debate India's next hospitality growth wave

HBI Staff | Goa

HOPE 2026, a hospitality conclave organised by HVS ANAROCK, commenced on 26th February at Taj Cidade de Goa Horizon.

Designed as a strategic platform to examine the future of Indian hospitality, the event brought together global expertise and domestic insight under one roof, setting the tone for a day of high-impact dialogue and collaborative visioning.

Delivering the inaugural and vision address, Dr Srivatsa Krishna, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, spoke about strengthening tourism infrastructure, improving connectivity, and building a sustainable and inclusive tourism ecosystem. His address highlighted the government's focus on policy support and partnerships with the private sector to unlock the full potential of India's tourism economy.

The keynote address by Karan Singh, Chairman, Bain & Company India, brought a macroeconomic perspective to the gathering. Singh spoke about the rapid rise of India's middle class, evolving travel aspirations, and expanding aviation connectivity, noting that these factors collectively position India as one of the most promising hospitality markets globally over the next decade.

The session titled "The Hospitality Pulse: Leadership Views From The Frontline" brought together leading global hotel executives for an insightful discussion. The panel featured Alan Watts, President, Asia Pacific, Hilton; Dimitris Manikis, President for Europe, Middle East, Eurasia and Africa (EMEA), Wyndham Hotels & Resorts; Rajeev Menon, President, Asia Pacific (excluding China), Marriott International; and Ron Pohl, President, WorldHotels and President, International Operations, BWH Hotels. Moderated by Mandeep Lamba, President and CEO (South Asia), HVS ANAROCK, the discussion explored expansion strategies, technology adoption, and the growing importance of talent development.

In the session "India On The Move: The Economics Powering Travel's Next Decade," industry leaders examined the broader forces shaping travel demand. The panel included Patanjali G. Keswani, Executive Chairman, Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd.; Sandeep Ghosh, Group Country Manager – India and South Asia, Visa; and Vinay Dube, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Akasa Air. Moderated by Rajesh Magow, Co-Founder and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip, the session highlighted how digital payments, aviation expansion, and rising consumer spending are driving India's travel boom.

Investment trends took centre stage during the panel "From Asset Owners To Capital Strategists: Building Hotel Portfolios In A New India." The session featured Aditya Pande, Group Chief Executive Officer, InterGlobe Enterprises; Ashank Kothari, Managing Director – Investments, Real Estate, Brookfield Asset Management; Atul Dangayach, Managing Director, Dangayach Group; Christopher Jones, Co-founder and Managing Director, Junobo Hotels; and Sanjeev Jaiswal, Vice President and Chief Executive Officer, Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA).

The discussion was moderated by Anuj Puri, Chairman and Founder, ANAROCK, and focused on capital strategies, portfolio diversification, and the evolving role of institutional investment in hospitality.

The conversation then shifted to industry wisdom in "Beyond The Play Book: Real Lessons From Real Stalwarts." The panel featured Ajay K. Bakaya, Chairman, Sarovar Hotels and Director, Louvre Hotels India; K.B. Kachru, Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group; and Vijay Dewan, Managing Director, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited. Moderated by Vijay Thacker, Managing Director, Horwath HTL India, the session offered candid insights drawn from decades of leadership in the hospitality industry.

A key highlight of the evening was LeaderSpeak@HOPE, featuring Anthony Capuano, President and Chief Executive Officer, Marriott International, in conversation with Mandeep Lamba of HVS ANAROCK. Capuano spoke about Marriott's long-term vision for India, the growth of luxury hospitality and branded residences, and the importance of people and culture in global hospitality brands.

The session "Tales From Heads – Stories That Inspire" featured Ashish Jakhanwala, Chairman, Founder and Chief Executive

Officer, SAMHI Hotels, in conversation with Dilip Puri, Founder and Executive Chairman, Indian School of Hospitality. Jakhanwala reflected on the entrepreneurial journey of building SAMHI Hotels and navigating the challenges of scaling a hospitality platform in India.

The evening saw the HVS ANAROCK #HASHTAG Awards ceremony, celebrating excellence across development, operations, leadership, and innovation within the hospitality sector.

The event also witnessed ECHO (Exclusive Conclave for Hotel Owners), a by-invitation-only closed-door forum, which brought together leading hotel owners and investors for focused discussions on capital strategy, development opportunities, and the evolving dynamics of the hospitality sector.

Along with ECHO, EDGE (Excellence Development for Global Executives) featured a specially curated masterclass for hotel general managers conducted in collaboration with New York University (NYU), exploring Blue Ocean Strategy for lifestyle hotels and how hospitality leaders can build differentiated business models in an increasingly competitive market.

Day 2

Day 2 of 2026 edition of on February 27, bringing together global hospitality leaders, investors and industry executives.

Day 2 of the summit opened with a recorded conversation between Elie Maalouf, Chief Executive Officer, IHG Hotels & Resorts, and Mandeep Lamba, President & CEO (South Asia), HVS ANAROCK. The session focused on global brand strategy, expansion priorities and the outlook for India within IHG's international portfolio.

The first panel, titled Luxury Reimagined – Catering To The Evolved, Empowered, and Ever-connected Guest, examined changing consumer expectations in the premium segment. Speakers included Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Executive Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts; Gaurav Bhushan, CEO, Lifestyle & Leisure Brands, Accor and Chairman, Accor India; Neil George, Strategic Advisor, Rosewood Hotel Group; and Stephen Ho, President – Greater China and Growth, Asia Pacific, Hyatt Hotels and Resorts. The discussion was moderated by Mohit Nirula, Chief Operating Officer, The Oberoi Group.

In the LeaderSpeak@HOPE segment, Mark S. Hoplamazian, President and Chief Executive Officer, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, spoke with Mandeep Lamba on Hyatt's India strategy, brand expansion and capital allocation priorities.

The session titled Will What Brought Us Here, Take Us There: Addressing The Next Growth Opportunities assessed future growth drivers in South Asia. Panelists included Nikhil Sharma, Managing Director & Chief Operating Officer – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group; Ranju Alex, Chief Executive Officer, South Asia, Accor; Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG; Sunjae Sharma, Managing Director – India & Southwest Asia, Hyatt India Consultancy Private Limited; and Zubin Saxena, SVP, Region Head, South Asia, Hilton. The session was moderated by Akash Datta, Managing Director (South Asia), HVS ANAROCK.

In India's Hospitality Moment: From Cyclical Upswing to Structural Supercycle, Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & CEO, IHCL, and Shaleen Kumar, Executive Director & Head, Investment

Research for Emerging Companies, UBS Securities India, discussed the sustainability of current growth levels. The session was moderated by Nikunj Dalmia, Partner, Shepherd's Hill Group.

The development-focused panel, Hotel Development Reloaded – New Markets, New Models, New Mindsets, brought together Clarence Tan, Senior Vice President, Development, APAC, Hilton; Omar Romero, Chief Development and Luxury Officer, Minor Hotels; Sameer Nayar, Executive Vice President – Strategic Development, Oberoi Hotels & Resorts; Suma Venkatesh, Executive Vice President – Real Estate & Development, IHCL; and Vikram Lalvani, Managing Director & CEO, Sterling Holiday Resorts. It was moderated by Akash Datta.

Post lunch, Same Building, New Guests – Will Hotel Design Catch Up? titled session examined evolving design requirements. Speakers included Ar. Amit Gehlot, Partner, ASA Design; Mrinal Sharma, Co-founder, Flipspaces; and Rashna Kapadi, Director, Design & Technical Services – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group. The discussion was moderated by Ar. Khozema Chitalwala, Founder & Principal Architect, Designers Group.

The midscale segment was the focus of Is Midscale The New Battleground? Consolidation, Collaboration, And The Future of Growth. Panellists included Deepika Rao, Executive Vice President – New Businesses, Hotel Openings and Corporate Communications, IHCL; Jatin Khanna, CEO, Sarovar Hotels; Kahraman Yigit, Co-Founder, Olive by Embassy; Neeraj Jain, Chief Business Officer, Bloom Hotels; and Rahool Macarius, Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts. The session was moderated by Swati Arora, Vice President – Consulting & Valuation, HVS ANAROCK.

Technology-led sessions followed. In Future of Hotel Discovery — Powered by GenAI, Abhishek Logani, Chief Business Officer, Hotels, MakeMyTrip, and Ankit Khanna, Chief Product Officer – Hotel, Growth & Emerging Businesses, MakeMyTrip, outlined the impact of generative AI on distribution and booking behaviour.

The next-generation leadership panel, Tech, Trends and Transformation: The Next Gen Vision for Indian Hospitality, featured Amruda Nair, Founder, Araiya Hotels and Resorts; Arjun Baljee, President, Royal Orchid Hotels and Founder, ICONIQA Hotels & Resorts; Shruti Shibulal, Executive Vice Chair, Board of Directors, Tamara Leisure Experiences; and Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, Concept Hospitality. It was moderated by Anant Apurv Kumar, Co-Founder, Brij Hotels.

The discussion on marketing and communications, Influencer Marketing and Story Telling For The New Age Traveller, included Joanna Lobo, Travel & Lifestyle Journalist & Editor; Malini Agarwal, Co-Founder, MissMalini Entertainment / The Idea Factory; and Ragini Chopra, Group Head, Corporate Affairs, InterGlobe Enterprises. The session was moderated by Madhulika Joshi Pallod, CEO & Chief Creative Officer, Martist.

In When Algorithms Decide – Is AI Now The Real Power Broker In Travel And Hospitality, panelists included Bhanu Chopra, Chairman & Managing Director, RateGain; Santosh Kumar, Country Head, Indian sub-continent & Indonesia, Booking.com; Sidharth Gupta, Co-founder and CEO, Treebo Hospitality Ventures; and Stephen Rushmore Jr., President & CEO, HVS. The discussion was moderated by Ravish Swarup, Founder & CEO, Praxis Services & Onefinerate.com.

Capital markets took focus in Listed, Liquid and Restless: The Race for Growth. Speakers included Neelendra Singh, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd.; Raghu Sapra, Head Hospitality, Embassy REIT; Rahul Pandit, Managing Director & CEO, Advent Hotels International Limited; and Shwetank Singh, Managing Director & CEO, Chalet Hotels Limited. The session was moderated by Dr Sanjay Sethi, Non-Executive Director, Chalet Hotels Limited.

The penultimate session, Rewriting the Playbook: New Paths into India's Hotel Market, featured Nicholas Smith, Vice President of Operations – Asia, Minor Hotels; Rohit Dar, Vice President and Head of South Asia, The Ascott Limited; and Santhosh Raman Kutty, Chief Business Officer – Development, Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India. It was moderated by Amit Ranjan, AVP – Transaction Advisory (South Asia), HVS ANAROCK.

The event concluded with Showtime@HOPE, where Kapil Dev, former Indian cricket captain, was in conversation with Prakash Iyer, author and leadership coach, on performance, leadership and resilience.

The summit brought together senior leadership from global and domestic hotel companies, investment firms and technology platforms. ■

'We aim to add 120-150 outlets over the next 24 months'

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Founded in 2011, RollsKing has emerged as a strong pan-India QSR brand with a diversified network of cloud kitchens and high-street formats. With operations spanning over fifteen cities and a clear focus on the 'Grab and Go' consumer, the brand is now gearing up for its next growth phase. In this interview, **Arjun Toor, Co-founder, RollsKing**, discusses the company's plans to add over one hundred new outlets in the next two years, its shift towards a predominantly company-owned model, upcoming investments, and how RollsKing aims to strengthen its position in both metro and tier-II markets while scaling with discipline and consistency.

What is RollsKing's current footprint in terms of outlets, cities, and operating formats?

Since our inception in 2011, RollsKing has built a robust pan-India presence that now spans over 15 cities. We currently operate a network of 130+ service points, which includes a strategic mix of 58+ cloud kitchens and 72+ QSR formats across high streets and mall food courts. This diverse infrastructure allows us to serve over 3 lakh orders per month, maintaining a strong foothold in the North, South, West, and Central regions.

What are your key expansion targets for the next 2–3 years?

Our roadmap is focused on both depth and diversification. We aim to add 120–150 outlets over the next 24 months to our existing portfolio. This growth will be spearheaded by a multi-brand strategy: our core RollsKing cloud kitchens, the 'Rolling Fresh' hybrid model, and our 'Roast by RollsKing' QSR format. While we are aggressively expanding our footprint in the South, specifically creating a niche in Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai, we are also focused on elevating our brand positioning in the North. By expanding QSR formats in the NCR, we are transitioning from a 'Mass+' to a 'Premium Mass' segment.

Which geo locations are driving your growth strategy, such as metros, tier-II, or tier-III cities, and why?

tier-I cities remain the powerhouse for our QSR and high-street models, where brand visibility and footfall are paramount. However, tier-II cities represent our next frontier for penetration. In these markets, we are adopting a 'delivery-first' approach. By utilising multi-brand cloud kitchens, we can introduce our product range efficiently while keeping unit economics optimised and scalable.

What expansion model are you prioritising: company-owned stores, franchising, or a hybrid approach?

Post-pandemic, we made a strategic pivot to reclaim our brand narrative by buying back the majority of our franchises. Currently, our portfolio is 70% COCO (Company Owned, Company Operated). Moving forward, our priority is almost exclusively on company-owned expansion. While 30% of our business still flows through existing FOCO (Franchise Owned, Company Operated) outlets, our capital and operational efforts are now wholly dedicated to expanding our own footprint to ensure absolute quality control and brand consistency across all major Indian cities.

Are there plans to introduce new formats such as express outlets, food court concepts, or cloud kitchens?

Innovation at RollsKing isn't just about the menu; it's about accessibility. We already have a deeply penetrative cloud kitchen network, which accounts for 58+ of our current service points. Moving forward, we are intensifying our focus on hybrid and QSR formats, including high streets and mall food courts, where we already operate 72+ locations. Our goal is to further bridge the gap between traditional dining and the 'Grab and Go' culture. By expanding our footprint in these high-visibility formats, we are evolving our product line to meet the demands of the modern, fast-paced consumer without losing our core culinary identity.

> "tier-I cities remain the powerhouse for our QSR and high-street models, where brand visibility and footfall are paramount. However, tier-II cities represent our next frontier for penetration. In these markets, we are adopting a 'delivery-first' approach. By utilising multi-brand cloud kitchens, we can introduce our product range efficiently while keeping unit economics optimised and scalable."

What level of investment and tie-ups are planned to support your expansion roadmap?

For the past 14 years, we have operated as a bootstrapped organiation stregthenic and competing brick by brick, a journey that has seen us scale from 0 to a 100+ crore GMV with immense capital discipline. We take great pride in our 'respect for capital,' which has allowed us to grow sustainably while maintaining a 70% COCO (Company Owned, Company Operated) model. We are now preparing for our next phase of evolution: a Series A round in the range of USD10M–USD12M USD. This infusion will be the primary fuel for our aggressive roadmap, allowing us to replicate our success in new territories with speed and scale.

Are you exploring external funding or strategic partnerships to fuel growth?

We are currently exploring a Private Equity (PE) fundraise to leverage our existing operational strengths. Our journey speaks for itself, but we recognise that the right strategic partner can provide more than just capital; they can provide a catalyst for growth in a rapidly expanding market. While we are focused on this transition, we aren't 'gorilla-gripping' a rigid path. We are approaching this one step at a time, ensuring that any partnership aligns with our long-term vision. The QSR market in India is growing exponentially, and we believe there is ample room for a high-quality, product-focused brand like RollsKing to grow by leaps and bounds.

How are you strengthening supply chain, technology, and operations to scale efficiently?

The backbone of RollsKing's scalability is our complete ownership of the production and supply chain. By maintaining company-owned production assets, we ensure uncompromising quality control across our 130+ locations nationwide. A robust, end-to-end supply chain is the primary driver of our bottom-line efficiency. Parallel to this, we are integrating AI-driven tools and advanced technology to enhance predictability and visibility for our teams. Our objective is to leverage tech-led innovations to drive higher consistency and operational efficiency as we expand our footprint.

What challenges do you anticipate while expanding rapidly, and how are you preparing to address them?

While capital is the primary lever for rapid expansion, the most significant industry-wide challenge is the availability of a skilled and semi-skilled workforce. The rise of the gig economy has shifted labor dynamics, with many professionals seeking more fluid working models. We are addressing this by investing in internal training programs and creating a value-driven work culture that offers long-term growth, ensuring we have the human capital necessary to support our YOY growth targets.

Where do you see RollsKing positioned in the Indian QSR landscape over the next five years?

Our organisational vision is to become the most recognised and successful QSR brand championing the 'Grab and Go' culture in a fast-paced India. As consumer behavior evolves, we see RollsKing as the premier choice for high-quality, convenient and consistent meals partner that fit seamlessly into the modern lifestyle. With our projected trajectory to surpass a 100+ crore GMV this year, we are positioned to be a leading category player that defines the standard for protein-rich, high-value wraps and rolls across the country.

What are the challenges that you have faced in building and running a successful QSR?

In our early stages, the primary hurdle was establishing a sustainable product-market fit that could thrive without the immediate cushion of external funding. We chose to focus on building a strong brand recall as the go-to for 'Grab and Go' meals rather than entering a direct burn-race with funded competitors. Additionally, navigating the aggregator landscape has been a delicate balance. While aggregators often push for high Average Order Values (AOV) to suit their own economics, our mission remains focused on delivering high-value, affordable meals for the 'real' India—reaching the vast consumer base beyond the top 1% without compromising on our unit economics. ■

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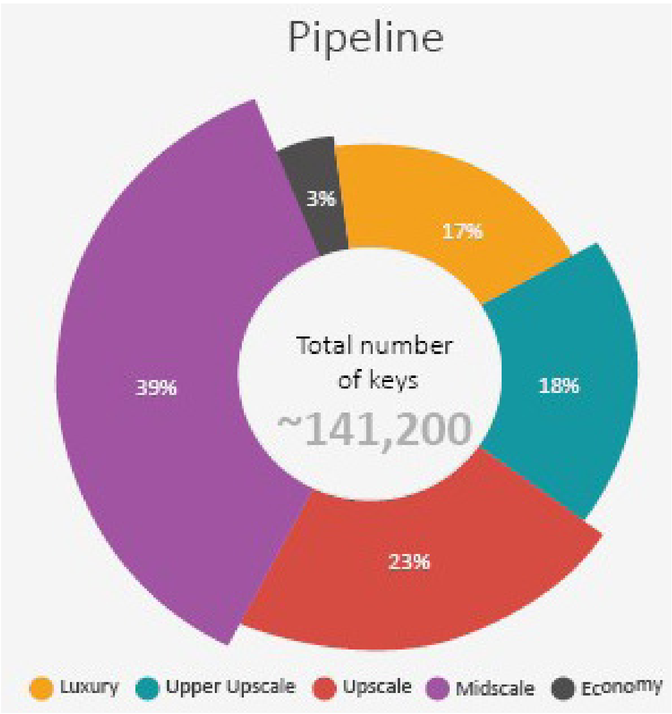
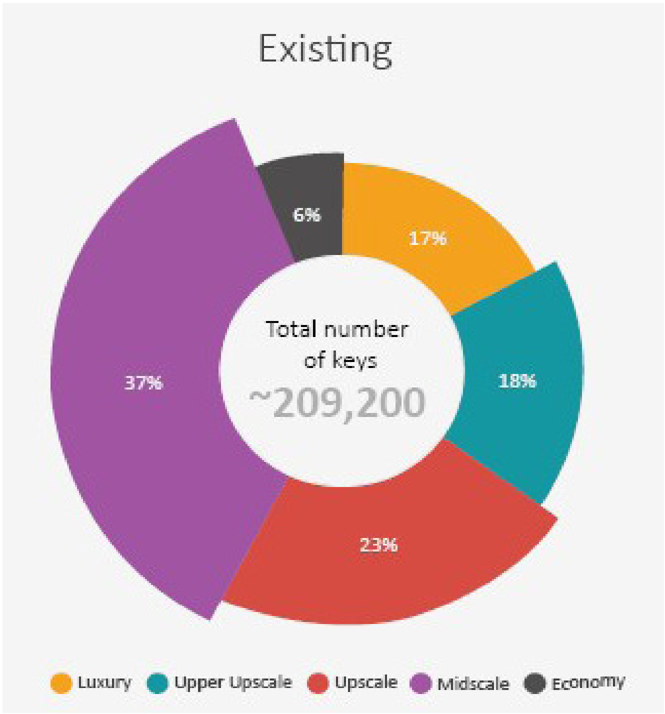
Hotel development costs rise across India in 2025: Report

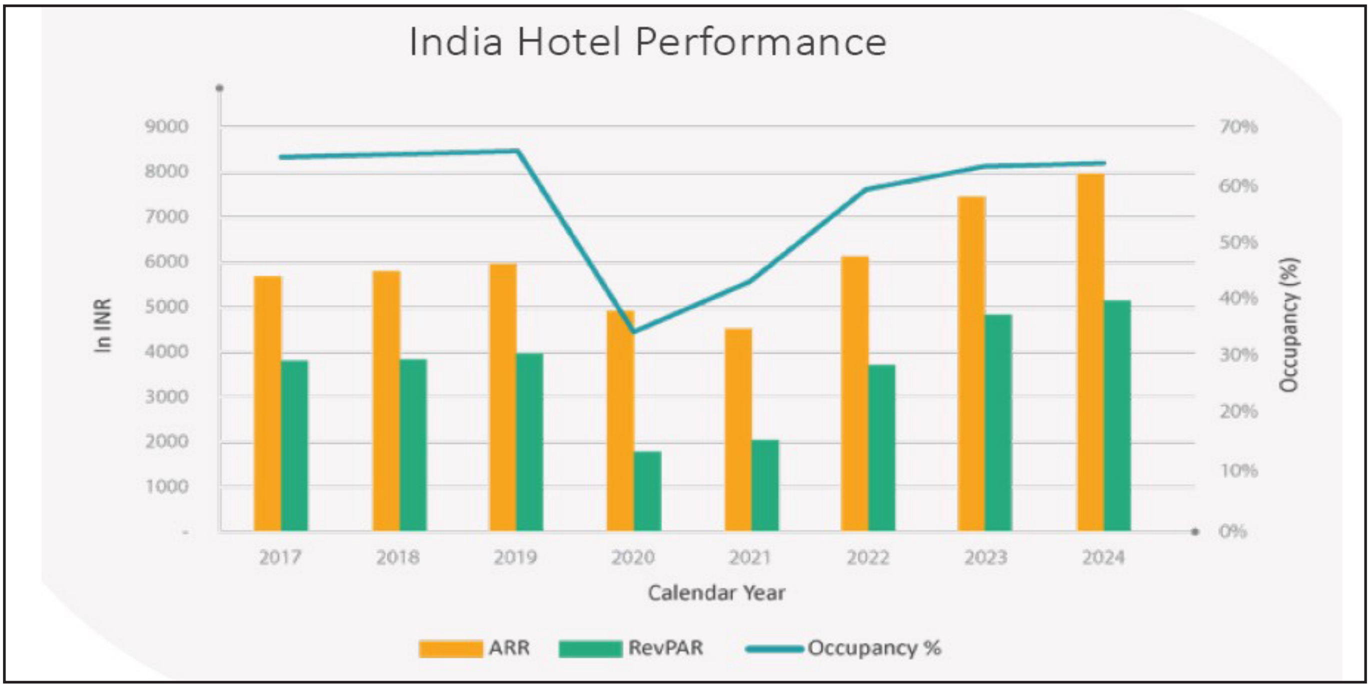
HBI Staff | Hyderabad

India's hotel construction costs continued their upward climb in 2025, with luxury developments in major metros now touching as high as INR 12,000–INR 15,000 per sq ft, according to the latest 2025 Hotel Development Cost Report released by HVS ANAROCK in partnership with Gleeds.

The report notes that upscale and luxury hotels are witnessing the steepest capital outlay, with per-key development costs significantly higher than midscale and budget segments due to premium finishes, expansive public spaces and sustainability







integrations.

Upper-upscale and luxury projects in cities such as Mumbai and Delhi-NCR remain the most capital-intensive, while Tier-II cities and emerging leisure destinations offer relatively lower development costs, albeit with logistical and terrain-linked cost pressures.

Construction cost inflation, driven by higher steel and cement prices, labour cost escalation and supply chain recalibrations, has played a key role in pushing overall project budgets upward over the past year .

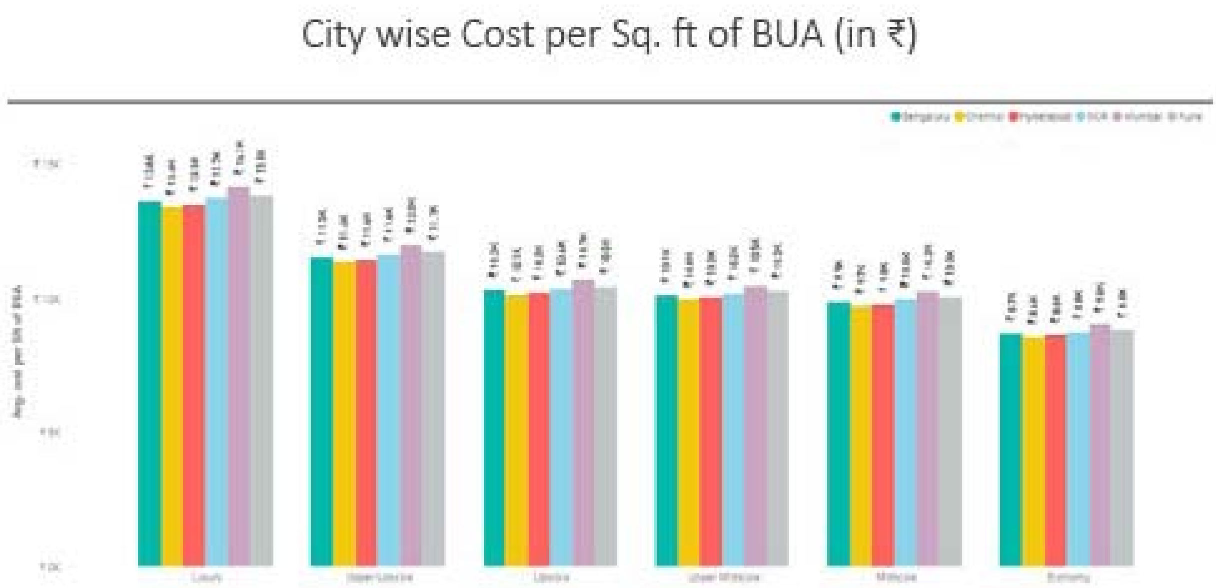
The study highlights that while cost escalation has moderated compared to peak pandemic volatility, developers must still account for pricing fluctuations in core building materials.

Sustainability has also become a defining cost component. Increasing adoption of energy-efficient HVAC systems, water recycling technologies and green building certifications is adding to upfront expenditure but enhancing long-term operational savings and asset valuation.

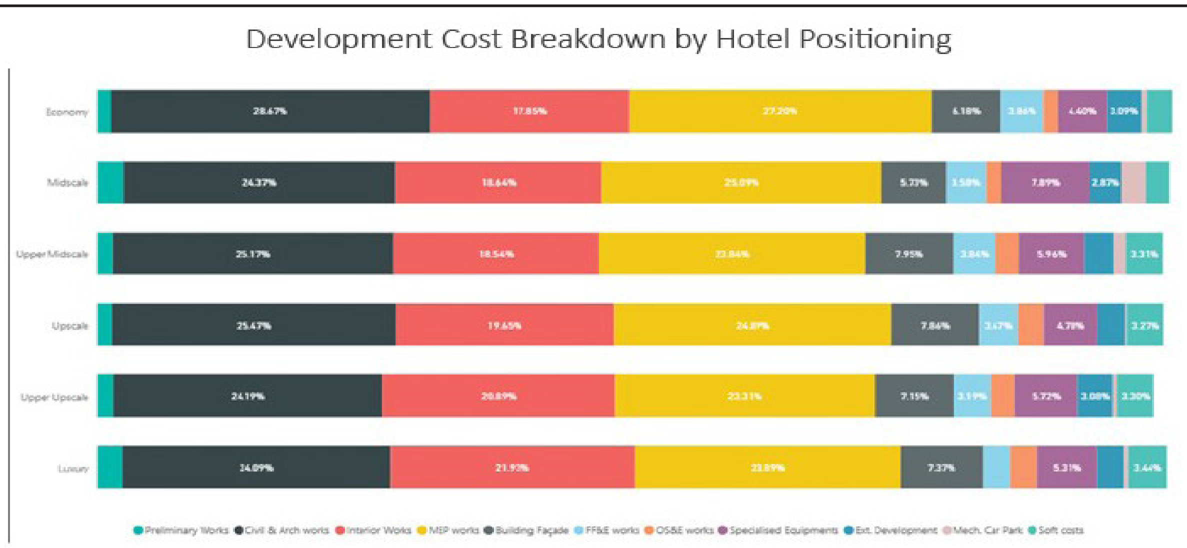
Despite higher development costs, the outlook remains optimistic. Strong domestic travel demand, improved occupancy levels and rising average room rates across key Indian markets are reinforcing investor confidence in branded hotel expansion.

Industry experts suggest that value engineering, lean design strategies and optimized room sizing will be critical to maintaining project feasibility as India enters its next growth cycle in hospitality development. ■

The graph below illustrates the range of cost per square foot on built-up area (BUA) for various hotel positioning for major Tier1 cities.



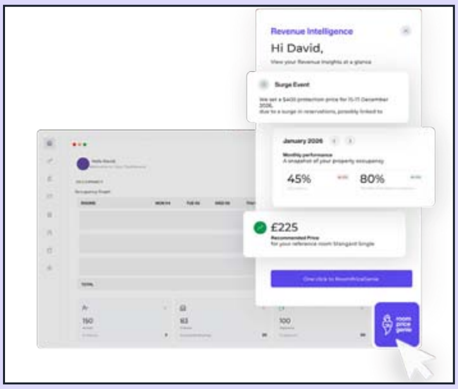
Note: The represented costs are exclusive of land prices, demolition of existing buildings, operator associated improvement works, cost escalation and contingencies, finance cost, forex fluctuation, statutory and approval cost, and all developer overheads



RoomPriceGenie Adds Real-Time Revenue to PMS

RoomPriceGenie has launched Revenue Intelligence, a new feature embedding real-time pricing insights directly into property management systems (PMS). The rollout includes 15 launch partners, among them Planet and Apaleo.

Designed for leaner hotel teams facing volatile demand, Revenue Intelligence delivers live alerts, occupancy and pricing data, and key performance metrics within PMS dashboards. Hoteliers can adjust rates in one click. CEO Chas Scarantino said the tool aligns operational and commercial decisions, giving properties a competitive edge through smarter, integrated revenue management.



Raffles Unveils ‘The Butler Did It’ Collection

Raffles Hotels & Resorts has unveiled “The Butler Did It Collection,” a luxury lifestyle campaign featuring fashion and home goods, marking a bold step beyond its hotel portfolio. The exclusive range is available through March 10, 2026, at Printemps stores in New York and Paris, with select items online.

Collaborations with brands including Globe-Trotter, Frette and Christofle aim to extend the Raffles experience into everyday life. Chief Brand Officer Claudia Kozma Kaplan said the collection captures the brand’s signature elegance, supporting its broader strategy to drive growth through luxury lifestyle expansion.

Corona Cero Launches in India at INR 120

Global brewer AB InBev has introduced Corona Cero in India, marking the debut of the zero-alcohol variant of its flagship Corona portfolio in the country. Priced at INR 120, CoronaCero will be available across modern trade, e-commerce platforms and select on-premise outlets nationwide, as the company accelerates its bet on India’s fast-emerging non-alcohol beer segment.

Third Eye Distillery Enters Spiced Rum Segment with Launch of Lost & Found in Goa

Third Eye Distillery, known for its flagship brand Stranger & Sons Gin, has entered the spiced rum category with the launch of Lost & Found Tropical Spiced Rum. The new product debuted at Hideaway in Goa and is currently available in the state, with rollouts planned for Maharashtra, Haryana and Karnataka. The rum is priced at INR1,600.

Positioned as a tropical spiced rum inspired by India’s coastal culture and native botanicals, Lost & Found draws on flavours associated with spice, sugarcane and the Indian tropics.

Culinary Art India 2026 earns WACS global nod

The 18th edition of Culinary Art India 2026 is set to mark a historic milestone with official endorsement from the World Association of Chefs' Societies (WACS), aligning India's biggest professional culinary challenge with global culinary sport standards. Organised by the Indian Culinary Forum (ICF), the event will be held from March 10–14, 2026, at India Trade Promotion Organisation's Pragati Maidan alongside AAHAR – The International Food & Hospitality Fair.

Over 600 professional chefs, apprentices and culinary students from across India are expected to compete across 18 categories, ranging from artistic pastry showpieces and wedding cakes to international three-course menus, regional Indian cuisine, sushi platters and live cooking challenges.

UNOX India Launches Lounge in Kochi

UNOX India has strengthened its South India footprint with the launch of the UNOX Lounge Kochi. The new experience centre, unveiled at Rising Loaf Academy of Baking and Pastry Arts, marks a strategic milestone in the brand's India expansion journey.

Launched in collaboration with Savvy Kitchen Equipment, represented by Partner Ajith Prasad, the lounge brings UNOX's advanced cooking technology closer to chefs, restaurateurs, bakers, and hospitality entrepreneurs across Kerala and neighboring markets.

Radisson, MBD Target 50 Luxury Hotels in India

Radisson Hotel Group and MBD Group have signed a long-term master franchise agreement to develop 50 co-branded luxury and lifestyle hotels across India over the next decade, marking a decisive move in India's fast-evolving premium hospitality market. The agreement positions MBD Group as a key development and operating partner for Radisson Collection and Radisson RED across mutually agreed Indian markets. The expansion will follow a predominantly asset-light model, with nearly 80% of the portfolio comprising managed and franchised hotels, while 20% will be owned assets. MBD's property exposure is projected at approximately 25%, balancing growth ambitions with capital discipline.

IAAPI Amusement Expo 2026 to showcase global innovations in Mumbai

The 24th IAAPI Amusement Expo 2026 will take place from March 10–12 at the Bombay Exhibition Centre, Goregaon, Mumbai, bringing together global leaders and innovators from the amusement and entertainment industry. Organised by the Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries and supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India under the "Incredible India" banner, the expo will span 15,000 sq. metres and host 200+ exhibitors from over 10 countries including the USA, UK, UAE, Germany, and China. The event aims to drive innovation and growth in India's rapidly evolving amusement and leisure sector.

Gateway Dehradun

The 100-key property offers expansive green valley views and curated hospitality experiences tailored to modern travellers. Dining venues include Earth Pavilion, an all-day restaurant serving Indian, Continental and Asian cuisines, and Aanch, a specialty North Indian restaurant inspired by the North-West Frontier culinary tradition.

The hotel features an outdoor swimming pool, spa & wellness centre, fitness facilities and versatile event spaces, including one of the city's largest banquet halls. Guests can savour regional offerings such as Uttarakhandi Pahadi Thali, Tibetan delicacies, and local sweets like Bal Mithai and Singori.

Le Méridien Debuts Resort & Spa Dehradun

The resort features 103 rooms and suites with views of the surrounding hills and riverfront. Its design draws inspiration from mid-century modern aesthetics, incorporating natural tones, regional art, and architectural elements influenced by the iconic Forest Research Institute. Dining and leisure offerings include an all-day restaurant serving global and regional cuisine, a café and bar concept that transitions through the day, a poolside bar, and the brand's signature gelato programme. Wellness facilities include the Explore Spa with treatments inspired by Himalayan traditions, a fitness centre, and family-focused recreational activities.

The resort also targets events and destination gatherings with over 24,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor venues, including riverside lawns suited for weddings, social functions, and corporate meetings.

Regency Palani by GRT Hotels

Located at the foothills of the Palani Hills, Regency Palani features 31 rooms with views of the surrounding landscape. The hotel offers curated services for pilgrims, including a complimentary shuttle to the Arulmigu Dhandayuthapani Swamy Temple, darshan facilitation assistance, a dedicated meditation lounge, flexible check-in and check-out options, and a special senior citizen launch offer. The property is also pet-friendly.

The hotel houses Dhanyam, a multi-cuisine restaurant offering Sattvik and traditional South Indian meals, and Madhuram, a bar designed as a relaxed evening space. It also features banquet and outdoor venues, positioning it as a destination for weddings and social events in Palani.

Seclude Willows, Ramgarh

Located on the edge of the Kumaon range, the property spans around 2.5 acres of hillside landscape and features 11 themed rooms along with spacious outdoor areas designed for slow, immersive travel experiences. With pet companionship increasingly shaping travel choices, the retreat has enhanced its offerings to ensure both guests and their pets enjoy a comfortable stay.

The property has introduced two curated stay options — the Paw Premium Package and the Royal Woof Package — which include pet-friendly accommodation and essential amenities such as pet beds with disposable covers, meals, water bowls, leashes, towels, toys and welcome kits with treats.

HYATT HOTELS

Manu Nair, General Manager, Hyatt Centric Ballygunge

With over 18 years of hospitality experience, largely with Marriott Hotels, Nair is set to steer the property into its next growth phase.

The appointment strengthens Hyatt Centric's positioning in Kolkata's competitive premium hospitality segment, aligning with the brand's focus on curated experiences and design-led stays. Hospitality Leadership Backed by Marriott Experience Prior to joining Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata, Nair served as Hotel Manager at Fairfield by Marriott Rajajinagar, where he oversaw operations and finance while enhancing guest engagement metrics. He has also held key leadership roles at Indore Marriott Hotel and Goa Marriott Resort & Spa, driving operational efficiency and F&B excellence.

INTERGLOBE HOTELS

Sachin Maheshwary, Cluster General Manager, ibis Mumbai

With over two decades of experience across luxury, upscale, and economy hospitality, Sachin brings a rare blend of operational depth, people leadership, and brand-building expertise. His career spans hotel pre-openings, large-scale renovations, food and beverage innovation, and driving performance across diverse market conditions. In his new role, he will oversee the ibis portfolio in Mumbai, with a clear focus on strengthening day-to-day operations, elevating guest experiences, and building sustainable, long-term growth for the brand in the city.

ACCOR HOTELS

Neha Sharma Yadav, Hotel Manager, Raffles Jaipur

Yadav brings nearly two decades of distinguished service in luxury hospitality, with comprehensive expertise spanning rooms division management and multi-faceted hotel operations across prestigious international hotel brands. Her career has been characterised by a distinctive leadership philosophy that prioritises talent development and operational precision, consistently driving superior performance metrics while elevating service delivery standards. Throughout her tenure in the industry, she has demonstrated an exceptional ability to cultivate high-calibre teams and implement best practices that enhance both guest satisfaction and operational efficiency—embodying the very qualities of grace, authenticity, and mindfulness that define Raffles Jaipur's ethos.

ROYAL ORCHID HOTEL

Keshav Baljee, Executive Director, Royal Orchid Hotels

The Board of Directors of Royal Orchid Hotels has appointed Keshav Baljee as Executive Director, marking a decisive step in the company's next phase of structured growth and brand expansion.

Keshav has been on the Board since 2019, playing a pivotal role in shaping strategic initiatives, strengthening the asset light model and sharpening the company's brand architecture across markets.

Keshav is the Founder of Kensington Villas, a curated luxury villa development company, with successful projects in Alibaug. He earlier founded and led Spree Hotels – a budget hotel management company, building it into a pan India hotel management company under the "Zip by Spree" and "Spree" brands.

In his previous tenure as President of Royal Orchid Hotels from 2007 to 2011, Royal Orchid's portfolio expanded from four to 24 hotels in under five years, with over 1.2 million square feet of hospitality assets jointly developed. He led investor relations, private equity and debt engagements, and institutionalized governance and corporate processes during a high growth phase. He was responsible for spearheading the asset light strategy, and signed the first few management contracts in the company, a division which now has over 100 + operational third-party management contracts.

ITC Hotels

Amruta Deshpande, Cluster Manager – Revenue, Corporate Headquarters Fortune Hotels

An accomplished hospitality professional with over 15 years of experience, Amruta is known for her strong analytical acumen, strategic revenue management expertise, and results-driven approach. In her new role, she will oversee cluster revenue performance, with a focused mandate to optimise pricing strategies, maximise profitability, and strengthen overall revenue outcomes across the portfolio.

Prior to joining Fortune Park Hotels Ltd., Amruta held key leadership roles with leading hospitality brands, including IHG Hotels & Resorts, Radisson Hotel Group, and Eros Hotels. Most recently, she served as Portfolio Revenue Manager, leading revenue management for the Holiday Inn Express portfolio for IHG Hotels in India and playing an important role in strengthening commercial performance.

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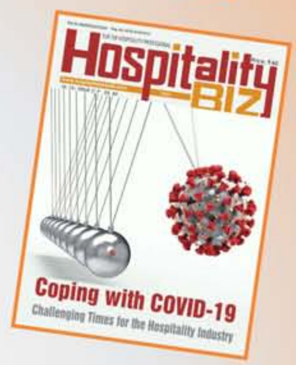

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Printed and Published by Sheldon Eric Santwan On Behalf Of Saffron Synergies Pvt. Ltd, Printed At Indigo Press (India) Private Limited, 1c/716, 21 Bharat Crown Compound, A.G. Pawar Marg, Dadoji Konddeo X Road, Ghodapdev, Byculla (East), Mumbai 400 027 And Published From Saffron Synergies Pvt. Ltd. 902, Cozy Apartments Chs Ltd. Yari Road, Versova, Andheri (West), Mumbai 400 061. **Editor : Sheldon Eric Santwan**