

FOR THE HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONAL

Hospitality BIZ

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New Year
2022**



**A year of Hope
2022**

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Country Inn Hotels & Resorts introduces refreshed brand identity and plans expansion

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Country Inn Hotels & Resorts that own and operate mid-market hotels and resorts in well-established locations like Jim Corbett, Haridwar and Bhimtal, is all set to expand its footprint in more than 12 other locations in 2022, including Goa, Dehradun, Mussoorie, Varanasi and Vrindavan. The company recently launched a brand new logo and identity, and plan to have 20 hotels in the portfolio by the end of 2023. The most recent introduction



to the portfolio was Country Inn Tarika Riverside Resort, Jim Corbett, brand's second resort in the location.

The brand's recently launched Country Inn Tarika Riverside Resort, Jim Corbett is set in the natural surroundings, only 25 meters away from the Kosi River. The resort offers a fusion of nature and adventure. It features an outdoor swimming pool, play area, a unique bonfire set-up and two dining outlets including The Courtyard, multi-cuisine restaurant and The Kebab Factory where one can relish an unlimited feast of the most celebrated Indian kebabs and curries.



Commenting on these developments for Country Inn Hotels & Resorts brand, Akhil Arora, Chief Operating Officer, Espire Hospitality said "We are excited about our brand's fresh vision, identity and the expansion plans. It's a crucial time for the tourism industry and with the unwavering increase in domestic travel in last few years, we see an enormous potential for our Country Inn Hotels & Resorts brand. We plan to grow our portfolio exponentially, making it a leading mid-market resort brand known for its quality of service." ■

Budget FY23: COVID battered hospitality sector demands infra status for hotels

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

With the fresh wave of COVID-19 plunging the hospitality sector back into uncertainty, industry body HAI said that it has asked the government to consider granting infrastructure status to hotels, extend moratorium on loans and rationalise taxes.

In its pre-Budget memorandum, the Hotel Association of India (HAI) said policy interventions are imperative for the sector's survival and its early and quick rebound to normalcy. "The hospitality industry was slowly getting into a recovery mode on the strength of domestic tourism - leisure and events, only to be plunged back into uncertainty on account of the Omicron threat. It is critical to protect the industry during such prolonged periods of flip-flop in business prospects," HAI said in a statement. Among the major demands from the sector is according hotels the status of 'Infrastructure' as it will resolve a large number of the issues being faced by hotels and hospitality companies, it added.

The step will also help survive operationally and encourage



HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

investments in the sector. "Access to softer funding, longer periods to repay loans, resultant shortening of the gestation period will make hotel investments more attractive and sustainable. More hotels would mean more jobs, more development," HAI said. Stressing that the sector's cascading effect on the economy has already been well established and documented, the association said, "infrastructure status will also enable hotels to avail benefits

of lower taxation, utility tariffs and simplified approval process for projects." Additionally, it said, "The road to recovery can also be aided through measures like extended moratorium, rationalisation of taxes and facilitating ease of doing business." According to

HAI hospitality industry contributes 9 per cent to India's GDP employing nearly 4.5 crore people and providing livelihoods to around 16 crore people. "Due to the pandemic, the potential shock to the livelihood of millions working in the hospitality industry is enormous. The Indian hospitality sector has a critical role to play in the post-pandemic economic revival and has been announced as the fourth pillar of the Indian economy," it said. ■

Enabling 'Access' As A Post Pandemic Mantra in 2022

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

As we welcome a new year, a fresh wave and a reinforcing of changed business constructs, the incorporation of the most binding of all variables - 'Access' remains our greatest priority. Even as the prospects of another impending freeze become palpable, the resequencing of business DNAs emulate their own mutation versions, for even thriving enterprises need to achieve herd immunity! 'Quality' and 'Price' have forever been touted as the two factor balance in older commercial approaches. It is now time to reconsider this in a four corner contest, with two new post pandemic balancing factors. 'Access' alongside 'Value' created - within restrictions, for this AVQP story to be told differently today.

Newer models of digital/electronic consumption have redefined growing expectations of what Quality means to our customers today.

The frills and fancies of many complex product or service delivery sequences have been stripped down to their core avatars. Disruption has demonstrated that service skill sets requiring delivery partners to ride safely, speedily and surely - means more to food consumption, than the flair of traditional waiting skills. Survival has driven Price parameters down to levels where offers, deals and multiple bundles of sales stimulation are deployed, to keep cash registers ringing. Volumes clearly rule the roost, when it comes to bringing in a critical mass of cash.

But are we focusing on what needs to change - as we continue to drive business using old gears and levers? Fitness for purpose will continue to define what quality means

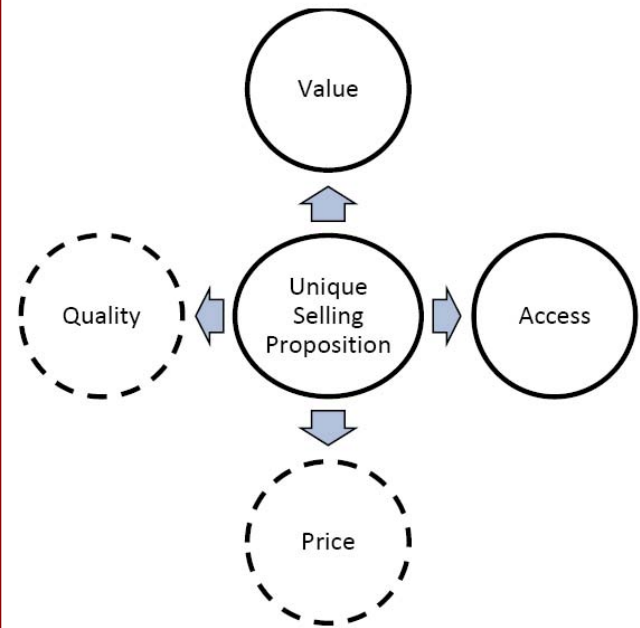
to our customers, so it is important to get the fundamentals right. The wide array of price options at which solutions are offered, requires us to focus on what is gaining prominence, in strengthening the USP of our offerings. Mature forces from the traditional Price - Quality corner are surely shifting into the Value - Access quadrant. Value, like quality is relative but it has higher degrees of sensitivity - like the availability of a hospital bed or core medical support at that precise point of time. Such Access is at a premium now.

The mantra is to ensure that this Value is consistently delivered across time periods, with repeated renewals of post experience repurchase. And this can be coded into new business value chains and value delivery networks by enabling Access. Bringing the experience to the consumer, rather than the consumer to the experience, is clearly the way forward. What remains to be seen is how we facilitate this reverse distribution philosophy. Businesses will also rethink their USPs - to reposition in renewal.

Though this is not a comprehensive list of panaceas to remedy all the challenges that face our products and services today, here are the big five of what could change, as customers experience us differently.

1. Allow customers to gain remote access: Are your restaurant menus on third party websites? Food pictures on social channels? Quick recipe demonstrations on Instagram? Reviews of how users

Are Access and Value Gaining Prominence over Quality and Price as USP Variables? (Jayaram, 2022)



felt about reaching you easily? Has remote access replaced physical immersion today?

2. Simply make it easy to renew experiences: Do you send samplers of newer offerings with standard orders from repeat users? Do customers know your changing repertoire? Are your range of offerings changing with reviews online? Are you openly sharing renewed portfolios?

3. Deliver what was ordered but add value: Did you feel an extra plate, reusable cutlery or a recyclable container matter? Do you serve half portions but add value to compensate? Do dips, crisps, salads, high quality packaging leave a lasting impression? Are you detail focused?

4. Incentivize the repeat consumption pattern: Do customers really hold coupons, freebies for exchanges? Should we remember to offset/incentivise or expect them to produce evidence? Can you throw in a side order with a substantial main order? Observe order patterns and act?

5. Celebrate the relationship, not the discount: Do discounts really drive profits? Do ticket sizes represent order worth? Does deep discounting hurt your positioning? Are you creating re-order value? Are your repeat relationships built from steady customizing and personalizing?

Consider these simple questions, which may apply differently to your business. At the end of the day, ask your customers if you added Value and made it easier for them to Access your uniqueness fully.

Some new Quality will result from the Value you add, but remember that Price has no meaning unless it is substantiated by Access. *Of what worth is a beautifully curated experience if one can't reach it?* ■



'Branding, revenue, and positioning are all important factors to consider'

The hotel industry is going through a very tough phase. Due to the pandemic and its various variants, the needs of the business alter on a daily basis. The business spike which the industry was witnessing in the recent festive months has suddenly taken a dip, with business cancellations totalling crores due to the spread of the highly infectious Omicron variant. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with **Suhas Sharma, Director of Sales, Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel** to know more about the real-time situation that the hoteliers are facing due to the devastating nature of the pandemic.

Q According to you, how are hotels working to regain the lost revenue of 2021?

We are all aware that the hotels' road to recovery will be difficult. We did notice a consistent growth in revenue in Q4 of 2021. However, it was really sociable, and here



is where hotels could step up. There is no simple strategy, but it is critical to follow dynamic decisions. The key will be to look for new business prospects in new sectors. Set the groundwork and the fundamental procedure in place. If it is necessary now, it was intended to be completed yesterday. The most crucial criterion will be satisfied once we verify that guests are adequately taken care of while staying at the hotel. In terms of rehabilitation, Renaissance Hotels has a clear goal; we are dynamic and will explore all potential solutions at our hotel to create a memorable experience for our guests.

Q What hospitality practices in the new normal do you think will persist in the short term and in the long term?

It will be necessary to create and promote hygiene principles such as 'Commitment to Clean.' And, while we're at it, we need to make sure the implementation is flawless.

More essential, educate customers about the initiatives in order to build long-term client confidence. Hotels will roll out clean technology and supplies at their locations while keeping engaged with clients through loyalty programs. To summarize, hotels will continue to educate and inform their clients on sanitation measures. The more such awareness initiatives a hotel offers, the more guests will have faith in it. This will undoubtedly put the hotel ahead of the competition. After all, in the future, it will all be about safety and hygiene. In addition, we should identify key staff and re-skill them to fulfill additional duties at our hotels. Even in human resources, things are changing quickly; the average amount of time a person spends at work is decreasing, particularly in the hospitality industry. Upskilling will guarantee that the service delivery gap is reduced.

Q What operational changes do you think hotel operators need to focus on as the industry recovers?

Operators cannot ignore the fact that protocols are here to stay, and they must learn how to use them and focus on all of them. These kinds of strategies can be framed by management, but implementation will be the key. Any hotel's fate will be determined by how effectively protocols are followed. Domestic social, weddings and other associated segments are expected to be the hotel's best-performing segments. The operators will be thinking about how to

make the most of it and guarantee that we become a favoured hotel in this regard.

Q What will be the primary focus areas for Renaissance Bengaluru year?

For the year 2022, we have a clear emphasis. Branding, revenue, and positioning are all important factors to consider. We'd want to chat about the brand and show it off. Marriott Hotels' Renaissance is a lifestyle brand. It is a brand that has to be highlighted since it is youthful, energetic, indigenous, exciting, inspiring, and independent. Revenues are vital, but the appropriate approach to daily rate will be the emphasis.

Q What kind of revenue growth are you foreseeing for your property this year?

With an aggressive effort, we expect to recover 65 percent of 2019 revenue. Our hotel goal is straightforward: we will place our hotel on the market for our consumers to discover. As more guests enter the hotel, they will see how gorgeous it is.

Q What role does food & beverage play in getting repeat clientele for Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel?

Food is still a hot topic for many of us. And you'll never forget a delicious meal, right? The food and beverage business is now expanding, with exciting innovations, and it continues to be a talking topic. This is what F&B is capable of; it will continue to entice and urge people to taste delectable meals, whether at a restaurant or at home. F&B will be the ideal approach to engage with a consumer, and we love doing it as salespeople. Invite our customers over for a delectable lunch. Food enlivens all of our senses, and we'll continue to extend a red-carpeted welcome to our guests. For those seeking an authentic supper, Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel has been a popular choice.

Q What, in your view, are the biggest obstacles and challenges hotel operators are likely to face over the next few years?

The current dynamic environment poses the greatest difficulty. Any strategy or company plan needs time to bear fruit, and how can you assure that in the current scenario? The needs of the business alter on a daily basis. While income increased steadily in the fourth quarter, situations shifted abruptly, resulting in business cancellations totalling crores. ■

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SO DO AN INDORE ON VARANASI

**Building infrastructure is good.
Maintaining it needs a larger
public involvement.**

There was quite some hype in the national press about the developments at Varanasi, especially in context of the improvement of space around the ancient temple complex there. The PM has often emphasised it as a model city development process and plan, for other urban areas to emulate.

Varanasi watchers perceive a significant change in the city's infrastructural evolution. The vast road connectivity, riverside developments and heritage building is evidently much publicised. We are told the city is being modelled to serve as a beacon for other urban centres development. If tourism is the focus, almost any city and site suffers the same fate - utter mismanagement and callous neglect of cleanliness. Unkempt sites and cities have always the bane for tourism and the industry has always bemoaned this fact.

Now there is another model city that can impart more solid lessons on the entire gamut of urban development in the country. The city of Indore stands out as a remarkable island of cleanliness, in a sea of unkempt and inefficient workings of municipal corporations across the country. Earning the 'cleanest city award' five years in a row is no mean achieving. Indore had the same type of officials at the helm, similar business establishments and shops, the same crowded bazaars and same issues as any other city. Today a cursory visit will reveal how a rickshaw driver will upbraid a passenger if they want to toss rubbish in the street. The sense of 'ownership' seen in the city's residents is to be seen to be believed.

How did this come about?

Varanasi has only 231 GPS monitored vehicles and 4700 safai workers. Today, the Indore Municipal Corporation has a fleet of 1,500 vehicles and 11,000 safai workers. But the secret of its success is the cultural shift that has happened with residents taking it as their responsibility to keep the city clean.

How Indore did that should be a text book study for every city to follow. Under force of law, if deemed necessary.

Anurag Yadav
Industry Expert

Anurag Yadav is a travel author and columnist, writing on hospitality and design. An avid traveller, he has published five books and divides his time equally between Delhi and London.

The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.

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‘Yu is currently in discussions with a leading airline to launch its instant oats and pasta bowls’



Bharat Bhalla and Varun Kapur, the Founders of Yu Foodlabs, love discovering delicious foods but remain conscious about what they eat. During the conceptualization phase of Yu, they met with over 500 consumers to gather their feedback on packaged foods. As part of this primary survey, they found that people often felt guilty about consuming packaged foods owing to their artificial flavours, added preservatives or nutritional deficiency. After 12 months of extensive research & development, the team at Yu was able to imagine the future of consumer packaged foods – ‘Instant Meal Bowls’ that combined artisan natural flavours and nutrition without the use of any preservatives or artificial ingredients. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with the founders to know more about their unique offerings.

As part of their research efforts, the founders identified a significantly advanced biochemistry process used in the 2020 NASA SpaceX mission to the International Space Station that provided healthy meals to its astronauts in outer space. “Using lyophilization (or freeze-drying), preservative and additive-free packaged foods were provided to astronauts for everyday consumption during the 3-month mission. It is at that point that a rather fundamental question started brewing in the minds of the Founders – that if indeed technology is available that provides 100% natural, preservative-free packaged foods and tastes as good as fresh, why not adopt this technology for everyday consumers? Thus began the adventure of ingredient analysis, recipe formulation and product development alongside some of the best culinary chefs and food technologists,” they added.

While elaborating about Yu’s various offerings the founders said, “Yu’s current range of products include Instant Pasta Bowls in 3 variants (Creamy Chunky Tomato, Peri Peri and Three Cheese), Instant Fresh Fruit & Nut Oat Bowls in 3 variants (Berry Apple Cinnamon, Banana Caramel, Peanut Butter Berry) and Instant Halwa Bowls in 3 variants (Moong Dal Halwa, Gajar Halwa, Multigrain Halwa), thereby providing all-day meal options.”

The company also has plans to launch more than 15 additional products. “These will be launched during the course of 2022 in order to complement its existing range of products,” said Kapur. “The new product launches will be coupled with significant capacity expansion at Yu’s fully integrated 12,000 sq. ft. facility at Gurugram taking food preparation/preservation capacity from 400 kgs per day to 2,000 kgs per day in 2022. Along with this, Yu’s omnichannel (offline and online including hyper-local) distribution will continue to grow in 2022 with an added emphasis on institutional/alternate channels,” he added.

Apart from focusing on the consumer segment, Yu will also be specifically targeting institutional segments in 2022. These include airlines, airports, metro stations, corporate offices, hospitals and large format canteens. Yu intends to create bespoke products for this extremely large B2B alternative sales channel. “Yu is currently in discussions with a leading airline to launch its instant oats and pasta bowls. Additionally, we are also in discussions with leading travel retail formats that will ensure availability across metro stations, airports, university campuses and corporate offices. Under HORECA, we plan to target budget hotels, self-service hotels and hotels which do not have elaborate F&B options etc. Our pre-prepared, hassle-free, 12-month shelf life, 100% natural instant meal bowls across breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert categories fit perfectly well into the above mentioned B2B segments,” informed Kapur.

While speaking about their expansion plans, Bhalla said that Yu follows an omnichannel approach. It has launched its products on offline channels in Delhi NCR, which is its home market, and the company has already secured tie-ups with all leading retailers like Reliance, Spencer’s, Natures Basket, 24x7, SPAR, Le Marche, Modern Bazaar, Krishna SuperMarche 37, etc. “The offline distribution in Delhi NCR is estimated to increase to 1,500+ stores by March 2022. Based on the highly positive feedback from customers, Yu has advanced its launch in West



India and will be launching its products across 50 leading stores in Mumbai MMR by January 2022. Apart from Mumbai, we are also in the process of expanding its distribution in Uttar Pradesh across cities like Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra, Bareilly etc. Given the attractive price point (INR 75-125 per bowl), we believe that Yu’s instant meal bowls cater to a large geographical target market in India,” Bhalla concluded. ■

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OUTLOOK for 2022

By **Mr. M. P. Bezbaruah**, Secretary General, Hotel Association of India

2022 has been a year of hope, survival, and subtle recovery for the hotel industry in India. Easing up of local restrictions while ensuring an aggressive vaccination drive, coupled with the implementation of strict protocols to ensure safety and hygiene by hotels provided a major relief and boost to confidence amongst the travelling community. Visitors are more cautious than before and proactively follow

Covid-appropriate behaviour. Although restrictions on international travel continue to take a toll on business, recovery was led by domestic travel which helped many hotels to stay afloat. Categories like leisure and staycations saw a major uptick in demand as travellers were more comfortable visiting locations at a motorable distance to avoid crowding and immerse into experiential stays. This trend is expected to continue in the foreseeable future as well

The rate per room has also largely returned to pre-covid levels as far as leisure locations are concerned. Hotels across categories in metros continue to maintain average rates and are more likely



to return to usual prices by the end of this fiscal. The sentiment among business travellers is currently low owing to the Omicron scare and that is expected to take a toll on bookings during the Jan-March 2022 quarter. The impact on hotels will largely depend on how the situation with the new variant evolves. Although, many states have already put the night curfew as to contain the virus spread. The general expectation is that the real impact of the new variant will hit during February and improve post-April.

At the same time, the recent restrictions imposed by some state governments to allow only fully vaccinated guests to visit hotels is likely to accelerate the vaccination programme further and help in building the confidence necessary for growth in demand. Talking about the industry, it has been fully supportive of all national efforts to fight the pandemic and we look forward to responsive and supportive government policy to enable the industry to revive and make its full contribution to the national economy and employment creation. Our member hotels continue to follow all the necessary protocols to provide a safe and hygienic environment for travellers and hotel associates alike. Hotels encourage and remind guests to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour to enjoy their travel safely and to the fullest. Our industry is alive to the new trends that will shape the future—like the use of technology, digitalisation, sustainable practices and increasing productivity in



The hospitality industry after a long lull witnessed an encouraging uptick in occupancy in the last year; however, the third wave of the deadly pandemic has again managed to instil fear in consumer minds. This resulted in heavy booking cancellations during Christmas and New year holidays. As we stepped into 2022 with the terror of a new variant, hoteliers are now more assured as they have successfully fought along with the previous two waves of the deadly pandemic and survived. According to the hoteliers, the pandemic is a true catalyst of ideation, innovation, and transformation of the industry. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with industry experts to understand their expectations and wishes for 2022.

A year of hope 2022



‘We see the ever-resilient hospitality industry doing well and getting better and better’

Revenue Expectations

We are hopeful of better revenues in comparison to the previous financial year. There are challenges owing to varying restrictions on incoming flights etc so the hospitality sector may see a temporary dip, but revival and growth are sure to follow. India is faring wonderfully on the vaccination front. Booster doses have begun, so there is some degree of confidence and optimism. We see the ever-resilient hospitality industry doing well and getting better and better.

Trends

For now, besides the obvious spurt in business travel, short staycations, friendcations and family reunions are definitely trends that are here to stay. Domestic travel has witnessed unprecedented growth. We see a whole new trend of personalised travel services and eco-tourism emerging too. The focus has now shifted to experiential travel.

Innovation

We are in the process of launching our own labels this year. These include a very fine selection of signature wines, coffee, tea and beyond. We recently launched ‘Chocolates by Roseate’

a collection of delectable gourmet chocolates this Christmas. Also, look out for our line of luxury fragrances and soaps. It’s all about living mindfully, loving yourself, savouring every moment, experiencing truly the unimagined.



Kush Kapoor
CEO
Roseate Hotels & Resorts

Manpower Management

2021 brought about a host of challenges till where retaining talent was concerned. Covid disruptions displaced people across the length and breadth of the country. Many outstation professionals returned to their hometowns and eventually decided to stay close to their families. We at Roseate Hotels and Resorts are working relentlessly to hire young professionals, train them, guide them and empower them. We are investing in training programs and are determined to get back on track, even stronger than before.



**Sonica Malhotra
Kandhari**
Joint Managing Director
MBD Group

‘It is important for organizations like us to realise and maintain our core strength which is our people’

Revenue Expectations

We are looking at expansion plans for both MBD Steinberger in the luxury space and MBD Express in the mid-market space. However, the mid-market space in hospitality in India is highly underserved and deep, and hence prognosis of the MBD Express brand is extremely good. Even during covid, we have already signed five properties for MBD Express in different states and we

are pragmatic of many more sign-ups across the country. We have already signed five greenfield properties - three in Mumbai and one each in Gurgaon and Udaipur and are hopeful of them becoming operational over the next two years. These properties will be in the range of 80-150 rooms.

As for operational hotels, food and beverage and domestic travel will be the segment of great importance and delivering very good returns, although ADR's might be slightly stressed.

Trends

Going forward, contact-less and exceptional customer services will be the key driver in instilling confidence among the guests. Also, smart technologies such as Artificial intelligence, Machine learning or IoT, and futuristic technologies will continue to be used by the hospitality players to ensure contactless experiences and sustain

guests confidence. Also, multitasking is the name of the game and it is therefore imperative to inspire people whether they are from the front office, housekeeping, or engineering department, everyone has to work out of their department silos and cross-train into other departments and become multi-skilled in the future.

Auxiliary revenue

There is one factor which we do not know – the third wave, the fourth wave – and what kind of impact these will bring, hence it is imperative that the hotels have to look for auxiliary revenue streams, like Firstly, in-room dining where we should have very attractive food and beverage packages for the in-house guests as there are restrictions which are currently being imposed in the restaurants and dining outlets. Secondly, take away and niche ODCs are coming up in a big way where exquisite menus and lavish dining experiences are in and seeing the current trends. Thirdly, is it time to advertise and garner the expertise of our best of the best-trained team members via retailing of our bakery products in a big way, there are very well-defined channels and mediums already available to promote them.

Manpower Management

The pandemic era of Covid-19 is not hidden by anyone and more or less each and everyone has been hit badly by the pandemic, in these circumstances, it is important for organizations like us to realize and maintain our core strength which is “our people”, hence we have full strength in our organization which was at par as pre-covid era. Training and cross-department training and employee retention through various ways will be the key at such times.

‘We are looking at 30% growth in total revenue when compared to last year’

Revenue Expectations

At an organizational level, we are looking at 30% growth in total revenue when compared to last year. Our resorts are growing 22%, O by Tamara is growing 37%, and Lilac hotels are expected to grow 33% over this year.

We have also recently acquired our fourth hotel in Germany to expand our European portfolio which further contributes to our projections. We also remain positive about the industry at large and continue to remain bullish on expansion throughout this year.

Auxiliary revenue

At our hotels and resorts, we have a range of ancillary revenue streams that can contribute upwards of 10% to total revenue. These include anything from Ayurveda to board games. Not only do we cash in on the experience economy as a revenue stream, but also differentiate ourselves responsibly from other competitors who provide similar services.

Some of our guests enjoy the simple joys of chocolate making and pottery, while others love stargazing or nature trails. Our coffee lovers opt for plantation tours, while wellness guests prefer Forest Therapy or Yoga retreats. Some are at an additional

supplement to room rates; some are included in accommodation rates.

Innovation

We also have new policies which will be announced over the coming quarter that focus on making our guests' stay completely customised and cohesive with dedicated attention to their travel preferences and goals.

Manpower Management

In 2022, we plan to increase the weightage of our fractional sales teams in India and abroad. We are also looking to hire specialized inside sales team members for super specialities like Ayurveda doctors who will act as counsellors at our upcoming Ayurveda centre and resort in Kerala. As our revenues increase by 30% this year, our advertising budgets will correspondingly increase as well.



Shruti Shibulal
Chief Executive Officer
Tamara Leisure
Experiences



Sarbendra Sarkar
Founder & MD
Cygnett Hotels and
Resorts

‘We will operate in over six international locations within the next five years’

Revenue Expectations

We are extremely upbeat about this year. We have been working to open 100+ hotels across 75+ cities in India and this forms the crux of our expectations in terms of revenue. We will operate in over six international locations within the next five years. Furthermore, we are aiming to add 6000+ keys by 2026 and to benchmark “Cygnett Service & Experiences” in the industry. Considering that the

business has already come back to normalcy even though restrictions to travel and other aspects are there due to the pandemic, we expect business travel to rise, which will fuel our expectations. Currently, Cygnett group has over 35 alliances with 20 operational hotels and 15 hotels in the pipeline and various stages of pre-opening. Soon, we will have our presence in the South Asian countries—which surely points out our robust action plan.

Auxiliary revenue

Long-stay options did see a lot of appreciation among people, who wanted to spend time away from their residence, enjoy nature’s

beauty and carry on ‘working’ without taking leave. Offices are getting into hybrid models, which for sure are going to open up the proposition of business travel and leisure travel equally. I say leisure travel where travellers may go to different secluded places to live for a week or more and continue working intermittently to enjoy nature and travel. Therefore, if we could work around diverse room selling models based on property dynamics, it may create additional revenue streams. For example, fragmented room rates at transit hotels on the basis of duration are pretty known, and this concept can be adopted by the mainstream players—which will have to be assessed judiciously before implementing so.

Manpower Management

We want to position ourselves strongly in manpower to per room ratio. It is extremely important that while employees in a hotel are adequate and address all needs, there has to be a great balance among work distribution. Hence, this area will be focused well, even if we come back to normalcy to keep the cost proposition for the owner at the lowest while creating value for money through attractive price points. So, manpower management will be crucial in deciding how cost and value are well balanced for a property to offer the best step forward.

We will use our technology to have the right manpower and our dedicated call centres, e check-ins and QR menus also give a helping hand in maintaining the minimum staff at the hotel premises.

‘Employees are the sole brand ambassadors’

Revenue Expectations

We have added 8 properties to our online portfolio of hotels last year taking the count to near 40 in India. There is a strong pipeline of various hotel projects under different stages of development in the year 2022. As we onboard these new hotels, we would continue to garner business from traditional sales efforts online channels including our brand website/online aggregators existing hotels.

Trends

Sustainability, a hospitality trend that has been a key driver for the industry, lately. Considering sustainable alternatives like avoiding the use of single-use plastics, eliminating unnecessary paper consumption, reducing food wastage are shaping the future of the hospitality industry.

With stringent covid protocols and an upsurge in expenses of international foreign travel, people have started opting for travelling fewer staycations, especially on weekends.

Hygiene has got a new meaning post-2020. Guests are really concerned about safety protocols being followed and entering an uber clean room. From aesthetic cleanliness, hotels have graduated to clinical cleanliness.

Remote working has become commonplace for many employees. Many companies have shifted the gear to a hybrid or flexible working model. Hence hospitality venues are being used as makeshift offices on a leisure trips. This has given a great opportunity to the hotels to capitalize as much.

Manpower Management

The job market witnessed growth in the last quarter of 2021. We are a customer-service-driven industry, which means employees are the sole brand ambassadors. Due to the pandemic, our industry is facing a shortage of great talent.

The situation demands the workforce to multitask and support each other in tough times. The situation may demand a reduction in manpower cost as we are a labour-intensive industry, we shall continue watching our costs closely.



Shivali Verma
VP of Sales & Marketing
Choice Hotels India

‘It is hard to expect a decent business in the first quarter of 2022, but we are optimistic’



Varun Mohan is the **General Manager of Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore**, which is the first Hyatt Centric Hotel in India that opened in 2018. Mohan is known for being tech-savvy, people-oriented, an active listener, and a strong believer in transparency and working ethics. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Mohan to know more about his plans for the hotel.

According to Mohan, although the calendar year has changed, many of the same factors that influence hotel forecasts remain the same, including the outlook for business transient and group travel, the impact of inflation on travel demand, the longevity of leisure travel, and the emergence of the COVID-19 omicron variant.

“With 2022 in mind, we expect a new good start and the situation will change soon. It is hard to expect a decent business in the first quarter of 2022, but we are optimistic,” said optimistic Mohan.

According to Mohan, providing a safe and clean environment for colleagues and guests is a top priority for Hyatt, he added, “We always want guests to feel confident in the care we provide. The uncertain times definitely made all the hotels plan and re-plan their strategies.”

Mohan believes that despite a disruptive start, a positive shift in revenue growth across the hospitality industry is expected. “The growth in travel is expected to continue as India further ramps up its vaccination rate resulting in progressed sentiments. We expect the situation to recover in the holidays and wedding seasons. But if the spread continues for a long time, the peak business seasons will be no better,” he said.

Speaking about utilising technology, he expressed that the coronavirus has made the world aware of the possible risks associated with physical touchpoints, and hence the goal of a hands-free experience has become crucial for both travellers and brands. From



replacing tangible restaurant menus and paper in-room compendiums with scannable QR codes to contactless hotel check-in capabilities, mobile room keys, touchless payments, almost every aspect of the hospitality experience can now be accessed through guests’ own mobile devices.

According to Mohan, customer demands and expectations are shifting. He stressed on one of the alternative revenue streams that he witnessed flourishing at his hotel by saying, “The focus has shifted to alternative mealtime solutions. While eating out is still considered risky, home delivery of cooked meals is gaining popularity. For the same, we introduced a contactless home delivery system, from the freshest produce salads to homely combo meals with a unique indulgence of flavours at home as comfort food is the need of the hour.”

“Also, with an aim to serve something new every time to our patrons, our team of chefs have come up with a Globe-Trotting Food Menu that offers lip-smacking cuisine from around the world curated to suit everyone’s taste buds,” he concluded. ■

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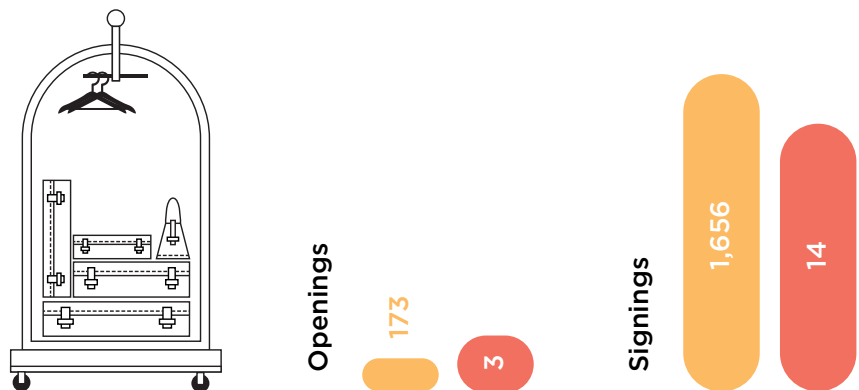
Nationwide hotel occupancy during November 2021 declined marginally compared to the previous month, says HVS Anarock's Hotels & Hospitality Overview

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

According to HVS Anarock's Hotels & Hospitality Overview (H2O), December 2021, report, India's domestic air traffic grew by over 17% in November 2021 compared to the previous month, owing to increasing travel demand over the festive period. However, nationwide hotel occupancy during November 2021 declined marginally compared to the previous month, as the initial news of Omicron dampened travel sentiments near the end of the month. Travelers adopted a wait-and-watch approach, and group/corporate bookings were placed on hold or postponed because of the uncertainty. The report said that average rates have been rising, especially in markets with strong demand, driven by the confidence that travellers are willing to pay a premium. It also said that November 2021 was especially good for most commercial destinations, with strong growth in either occupancy or ARR.. ■

Branded Hotels³ (Nov 2021)

By Keys  By Properties 



³ Data collated by HVS from 11 hotel operators and media reports as of 23rd Dec 2021

Hotels Sector

Key Stats (India Average)

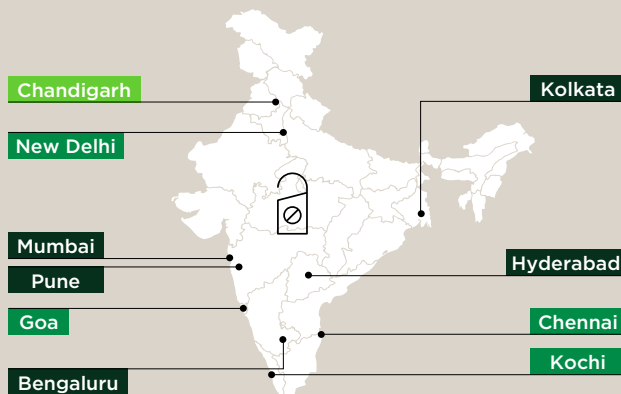


	Nov 2021	M-o-M	Y-o-Y	Nov 2021	Oct 2021	Sep 2021	Aug 2021
ADR	₹5,300 - ₹5,500	↑ 13-15%	ADR	↑ 42-44%	↑ 25-27%	↑ 19-21%	↑ 22-24%
Occupancy	54% - 56%	↓ 1-3pp ¹	Occupancy	↑ 24-26pp	↑ 25-27pp	↑ 29-31pp	↑ 27-29pp
RevPAR	₹2,862 - ₹3,100	↑ 9-11%	RevPAR	↑ 156-158%	↑ 133-135%	↑ 163-165%	↑ 174-176%

Occupancy Change¹

Key Indian Markets Y-o-Y (Nov 2021)

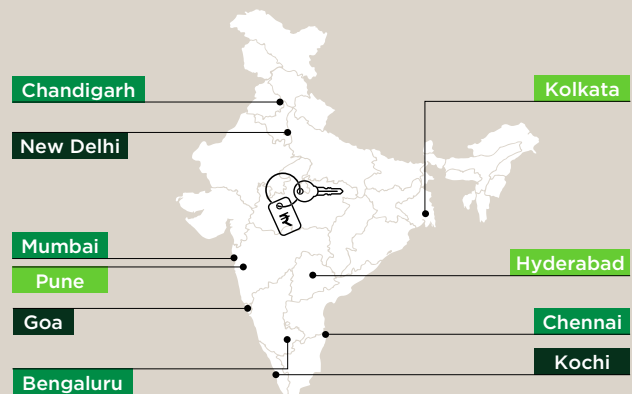
20-30 ↑
10-20 ↑
0-10 ↑



ADR Change²

Key Indian Markets Y-o-Y (Nov 2021)

40-60 ↑
20-40 ↑
0-20 ↑





Hitesh Keshwani, Owner, Silver Beach Entertainment and Hospitality Pvt Ltd started his career as a baseline manager in Mumbai with brands like Mocha and Hawaiian Shack, way back in 2004. He then went on to open his first outlet, Silver Beach Cafe in Juhu, Mumbai in 2010 where he invested his savings of INR 60 Lacs into the business. The success story of Silver Beach Cafe was followed by Nom Nom in Versova and Bandra, trailed by Copa in 2013, Sirocco and Radio Bar in 2015. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Keswani to know more about this new-age restaurateur's journey.

“We will continue to invest and reinvest in our brands”

Speaking about the history of the growth of the number of restaurants he owns today, Keswani added, “After Sirocco and Radio Bar in 2015, we quickly added Ministry of Salads and The Terrace (both in Mumbai) in 2016, followed by the iconic Estella in Dec 2016. The latter is Mumbai's most sought after beach-front restaurant and bar. We expanded to Goa with The Lazy Goose in 2017 which was followed by Silver Beach Cafe Dubai and Lokhandwala, Mumbai in 2018. The year 2019 saw the opening of Basanti in JBR, Dubai and Mumbai's opulent theme bar – Radio Bar (second outlet) in Chembur. Silver Beach Hospitality also manages villas in Canary Farms Lonavala, Alibaug and Silver Beach Villa, Assagao, Goa. Most recently, we launched the popular Dubai-based Greek restaurant Opa Kipos at Worli in August 2021 which has made its way to being one of the city's must-visit and top-ranking restaurants in a very short span of time.”

While speaking about his vision and plans for Silver Beach Entertainment and Hospitality Pvt Ltd in the next 5 years, Keswani said, “We have some exciting plans to not only spread the wings of our existent brands, but also create some memorable destination ones across unique geographies,” he added.

According to Keswani, his biggest professional success is the grace and strength with which he has kept his team together, while Silver Beach Hospitality's turnover of INR 200cr ranks a close second.



Elaborating on his expansion and investment plans, Keswani said, “Silver Beach Hospitality has always had a very strong check in place for our finances. Our brands are sustaining the business and we are very mindful of the fact that it has to be ‘real’. On that note, we will continue to invest and reinvest in our brands and grow with responsibility. While we do receive interest from investors, our due diligence is very detailed while onboarding partners. The fundamentals and thinking have to complement and those in themselves are tough to come by.”

According to Keswani, the biggest challenge lies in the management of time, discipline and commitment. “Once that is in order, there is little else in this world that is hard to gain control of,” he concluded. ■

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Millennials are budget conscious with greater preference for accommodation and transportation options, says report

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Noesis - hotel investment advisory firm presents a report on Millennials- How they influence the Travel and Hospitality industry. The report reveals the evolution of the hospitality and travel industry with regards to millennials.

Globally, millennials roughly account for 23% of the world population. While in India, millennials are around 34% which is 440 million of the country's population. Due to steady advancement in their professional careers, higher disposable income, and flexible work hours, they have more spending power. Hence they hold great potential for the travel and hospitality industry. Millennials alone have contributed 200 billion dollars on travel alone in the U.S in 2019 and this number has been growing over the years.

As per the findings on average, millennials in China & Singapore take 4 vacations within a year for a duration of 4 days. While the millennials in India and Indonesia would take only 2 vacations for a duration of 5 days. Most of the millennials use OTA's to book or plan their vacation but there is a difference here as well. The millennials in China are more brand conscious as compared to millennials from India, Indonesia, and Singapore who travel more for an experience. One thing in common among all of them is they look for value for money.

With a median age of 28.4 in India, Millennials have already become the primary breadwinners in their homes and would account for 75% of the workforce by 2030. Here the hospitality industry has a major task for the next couple of years to adapt and change to this ever-demanding generation where there is no single solution.

Millennials are tech-savvy, they are well connected and use many Internet of things (IoT) in their daily lives. They are likely to spend less time in their rooms as compared to the previous generation. Therefore designing the room, using optimum utilization of

space is of utmost importance. Apart from that they also work remotely and need a place to work. From the dining point of view, they extensively use online platforms such as Trip Advisor and Zomato for reviews. These reviews help them decide what to eat and where to eat, it can be a takeaway or a good dining experience. Adventure sports, nature trails, local experiences, and recreational activities are on their to-do list.

The white paper also states how the hospitality industry is adapting itself to accommodate the millennial segment. Some of the well-known brands have already

started operating specifically targeting Millennials. Moxy is a millennial hotel by Marriott, similarly, Tru is developed by Hilton, 25hrs by Accor, and Indigo hotel by IHG. There are many more hotels such as Mama Shelter, Motel One and Citizen M which all are designed to attract fellow millennials.

Millennials are budget conscious with greater preference for accommodation and transportation options. Most of them are likely to opt for a packaged tour and to start their travel planning without a clear destination in mind.. ■



‘Kneed’s products are vegan, without chemicals and additives which is the toughest challenge any baker can take’

Kneed is an artisanal bakery that offers vegan, fresh, cruelty-free kneads for everyone’s daily needs. Founded in July 2021 by two professionally-trained and rich-in-experience chefs, Uday Malhotra and Arjun Sethi, the bakery follows a cloud kitchen business model, which are then offered on the brand’s website. Kneed intends to cater to its clients with the healthiest recipes made from freshly-sourced savagery-free ingredients. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with **Arjun Sethi, Co-founder, Kneed** to know more about his plans to promote the unique chemical-free bread.



People are happy with no contact ordering and have time to communicate with us about their choices.

Q What are the technology investments you’ve made in Kneed?

Talking about the technology investments, we have just started our journey and are a new entrant in the market so for now, the focus of the company remains on building a strong foundation and a team that can share the same passion and vision. But as we grow and progress we aim to start venturing out into advanced technological updates to meet our scaling requirements.

Q What are your future plans (Investment and Expansion) for Kneed?

Our future plan is to provide the best sit-down experience studio which will be named The Kneedy Table. This concept will be based on plant-based dishes curated with influences of different cuisines and dishes from all around the globe which would be guilt-free. We will also open a modern conventional store that will be called Kneed Essentials where ingredients and FMCG products will be sold being vegan, artisanal, handmade goods that will be used for kitchen preparations etc. ■

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Q What attracted you to baking, vegan & cruelty-free bread in particular?

The world’s best Chef for me, my mother inspired and made me an enthusiast to learn cooking. The art of tapping the market

revolves around exploring different kinds of flour combinations, the usage of eggs, butter and other chemical agents makes it a whole less nutritious and a lot more cruel, hence it tags the entire category as cruel and not environment friendly.

As a chef & a baker, I not only aim but continue to explore ways to make cruelty free baked goods. I also want to tap on the generic perception around “Baking” and welcome people to explore plant-friendly healthier alternatives.

Q What has been the biggest challenge for you as a baker and entrepreneur?

At the nascent stage of my journey, there were a lot of challenges that I faced building up a niche artisanal vegan bakery. Firstly the main challenge was to develop recipes which influences the authentic way as it is very time-consuming and also requires a lot of effort and patience.

The products which are being sold at Kneed are vegan and are without chemicals and additives which is the toughest challenge any baker can take. Due to a huge market presence of niche brands in the market and with a lot of competition, it is very challenging to keep up with all the factors and trends but we knew what we were getting into and our vision and belief helped us accomplish what we wanted to achieve.

Q How have consumer trends changed during the pandemic?

Customer trends have surely changed in the pandemic as people are more aware and want to know what they are eating. Our approach to sales and providing a better customer experience is more inclined towards fresh, vegan and healthy products.

Q What drives vegan bread’s popularity in India?

The term “bread” in general around the world carries an image of being highly cruel in the plant-based friendly world. Even though the base of any baked product



demands eventually turned me into a baker. My aim was to provide healthy baked stuff with good quality and fresh ingredients without using any additives, as there are a lot of chemicals present in a baked product to boost its appeal and taste.

Evolved Foods unveils Plant Protein and Plant Meat

Bangalore-based Evolved Foods has introduced their 2 variants, Plant Protein and Plant Meat. Delicious, protein rich and offering the same texture as meat and paneer, the 100% plant-based ingredients are great substitutes in everyday cooking. The Plant Protein is firm and non-chewy in texture whereas the Plant Meat is chunkier and chewier, giving the exact feel of the animal protein products. Low carb, low fat, no trans-fat, 0 cholesterol, the products are truly revolutionary, designed with an aim to improve both the taste and the overall experience of replacing animal protein with an ingredient lower in fat and with a higher fibre content. Starting price of the product is from INR 249, and will be available at Evolved Foods website.



Hafele introduces Noir Bath Accessories

Häfele introduces its New Noir Range of Bath Accessories which as its name suggests comes in an intense Black Matt finish. The introduction of this accessories range seamlessly complements the current market trend of using black finished bathroom fittings and hardware like shower heads, faucets, door handle etc. The Noir Bath Accessories are made of stainless-steel grade 304 making them highly sturdy, durable and corrosion resistant.

American Standard launches City Collection

American Standard has introduced the City Collection. It is designed specifically for city dwellers, mainly individuals or young couples, to maximize space and effortless cleaning- perfect for your urban living lifestyle. One can now create more smart living spaces with multi-function storage compartments and transform your bathroom into living spaces. It has a CrystaSleek toilet seat and cover that uses a dual injection moulding method to produce a sleek, timeline, and long-lasting design. The concealed tank in toilets also highlights a contemporary-looking glass panel with metal frame and logo tag to appeal to the city dwellers..



Agro Tech Foods Ltd. forays into mini meal kits range

Agro Tech Foods Ltd. expands its ready to cook segment under their Sundrop brand name. Known for offering healthier and tastier options, Sundrop introduces its first Mini Meal Kit with the launch of Sundrop 5 Min Yum Pasta with an authentic pasta sauce. The all new Sundrop 5 Min Yum Pasta is quick, tasty and authentic. It is non-fried and made with 100% Suji, has 70% less fat with no added preservatives - offering a wholesome and healthier mini meal option to the consumers. Agro Tech Foods Ltd's new Sundrop 5 Min Yum Pasta contains two packs inside – one with the pasta to be boiled and other with Red sauce, all together priced at INR 50.

ACCOR HOTELS



Yaman Rai, Food & Beverage manager, Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach

Rai is a passionate and proficient hospitality professional with extensive knowledge and more than 11 years of experience spanning across various hotels in India. He has an excellent understanding of F&B operations, guest servicing, communication skills, quality compliance, and accuracy in budgeting in the hospitality

industry. Yaman's key responsibilities will include achieving customer satisfaction, profitability of the outlets, maintaining food quality & hygiene practices along with implementing new & exciting engagements across all the 5 restaurants at the hotel.



Mahzarine Baria, Front Office Manager, Novotel Chennai Sipcot

Mahzarine has began her career with Accor as a Guest Service Associate in the Novotel Pune pre-opening team in 2013 and quickly rose through the ranks to become the hotel's guest experience manager. Later, she joined Novotel ibis Chennai OMR hotel complex, where she shadowed the department head and was in charge of a large and

busy operation. Mahzarine's current responsibilities include overseeing overall Front Office operations, with a special emphasis on guest experience and loyalty development, as well as instilling the Accor Live Limitless culture in the team. She would be crucial in managing guest sentiment toward the hotel while focusing on increasing revenue streams for the hotel.

MARRIOTT HOTELS



Suhas Sharma, Director of Sales, Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel

A young and dynamic hotelier par excellence, Sharma has enriched his professional expertise in the areas of sales, business development, strategic planning, and team management, after having worked with some of the key brands in the Hospitality Industry. At Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, Sharma's core responsibilities lie

in maximizing hotel revenues through result-oriented sales programs and exploring new business opportunities. He will not only focus on the business recovery of the hotel post the pandemic, but he will also work towards creating a new and sustainable business stream for the hotel..



Chef Vikram Khatri, Director of Culinary, The Westin Pune

Chef Khatri, in his current role, will be focusing not only on providing guests with a curated and immersive dining experience post the pandemic, but would also work towards redefining the hotel's gastronomic offerings, recognizing unique blends of creative flair and passion for food, balanced by strong business acumen.

Chef Khatri comes with 21 years of experience in hospitality, working alongside international chefs. He believes a satisfying meal is one that has harmony, both in flavor and color. Flavors should complement each other and not overpower. In his opinion the art of flavor pairing is instinctive and can't be taught and differentiates a good chef from a great one.



Sandeep Udupa, Assistant Director of Human Resources, JW Marriott Bengaluru

Bringing in over 14 years of experience in the industry and an expert in end-to-end Human resource functions, he has successfully strategized, co-created and executed business transformation through people processes to enhance business and sustain organization.

Starting his career in 2012 with Goa Marriott Resort and Spa, Sandeep gradually forayed into the Human Resource space when he joined Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield. He has held multiple managerial-level positions and worked with eminent brands such as, Fairfield by Marriott Rajajinagar Bengaluru and Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel.

SAROVAR HOTELS



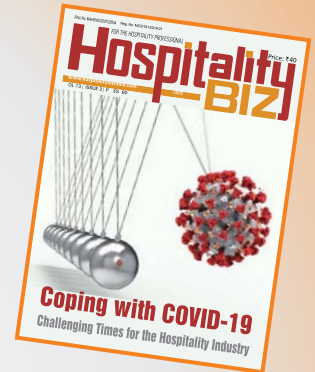
Manoj Soni, Chief Technology Officer, Sarovar Hotels

Soni has more than 25 years of experience as technology leader for Hospitality and Media Company. In his new role he will be responsible for company's digital transformation, overseeing IT operations, integrating new technology, cyber security and risk management. Before becoming the part of Sarovar Hotels, Mr. Soni has worked with Oberoi Hotels for more

than two decades as Head of Information Technology for various properties of Oberoi Hotels and Resorts. He was responsible for various IT Projects at Oberoi Hotels and took several Initiatives like setting up of the IT Data Centre for pre-opening domestic and international Oberoi and Trident Hotels, forming an Internal Competency Team to reduce dependencies on PMS/POS vendors and consolidation of multi property data centers.

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