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**Ajay Wadode**

ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in  
+91 8087127814/+91 8767031410

**Jagdish Patil**

jagdish.patil@saffronsynergies.in  
+91 8007992422

**Pooja Nalawade**

pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in  
+91 9769052241

# ProWine Mumbai 2024: A toast to excellence in wine and spirits



## HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Indian wine and spirits industry came alive at ProWine Mumbai 2024, a two-day extravaganza held on November 8-9 at the prestigious Jio World Convention Centre. Co-organized by Messe Düsseldorf India and All Things Nice, the event surpassed expectations, blending business, innovation, and celebration. This year, the addition of ProSpirits underlined the show's commitment to offering equal prominence to the spirits industry, making it a comprehensive platform for networking, learning, and showcasing.

## A Grand Opening

Dignitaries and trade commissions from countries including Chile, France, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, South Africa, and the UK graced the inauguration ceremony. The event opened with the ceremonial popping of Casa Bottega Prosecco, followed by a ribbon-cutting moment that symbolized the beginning of two dynamic days.

## A Platform for Industry Giants

The event offered unparalleled opportunities for stakeholders to connect. From hoteliers and restaurateurs to importers and sommeliers,

attendees flocked to the sprawling 7,000 sqm exhibition space to meet 170 exhibitors representing over 1,000 brands from 18 countries. Exhibitors emphasized the value of high-quality footfalls, calling the event a cornerstone for fostering business ties and industry growth.

"The show has been very rewarding, allowing us to gather valuable insights and establish connections for launching our brands in India," said Wayne Ellis, GM of Duxton Vineyards Pty. Ltd. Echoing the sentiment, Adele Tosanotti, Brand Manager at Casa Vinicola Costanza SRL, noted, "ProWine Mumbai truly embodies the spirit of 'Passion meets Business.' It has been an eye-opening experience, and we're already looking forward to next year."

## Thought-Provoking Panel Discussions

The event wasn't just about tastings; it was also a hub for knowledge-sharing. Panel discussions tackled pivotal industry topics, attracting intelligent audiences eager for insights. Highlights included panels like "For Sommeliers, By Sommeliers," showcasing India's burgeoning wine scene, and "Creating a World-Class Bar Program," which celebrated the intersection of talent and culture in bar management.

Sanjay Menon, a panel host and industry stalwart, reflected on the event's value: "ProWine Mumbai serves as a catalyst for change, awareness, and business. It was incredible to see so many brands and buyers come together."

## Masterclasses and Showcases

Eleven masterclasses captivated attendees, combining brand storytelling with high-quality tastings. Topics ranged from exploring new brands to understanding market dynamics. Each session was packed, underscoring the growing thirst for industry knowledge.

The ProWine & ProSpirits Challenge also took center stage, featuring blind tastings by industry professionals and enthusiasts to identify the finest wines and spirits available in India. Winners were celebrated at the dedicated "Winning Wines & Spirits Bar" during the ProWine Mumbai Night.

## Bartenders Shine Bright

The ProWine Bartenders' Competition showcased exceptional talent in mixology. From over 100 entries, finalists competed in rounds emphasizing creativity and speed, with themes like folktale-inspired cocktails. Nikhil Kamble from Nho Saigon, Mumbai, emerged victorious, winning an international guest shift and industry-wide acclaim.

## Celebrating Excellence

The ProWine Mumbai Night, now a coveted networking event, honored industry leaders through its Honoring Excellence Awards. Unlike conventional competitions, the awards celebrated individuals making noteworthy contributions to the wine and spirits trade.

## A Promising Future

With nearly 6,000 attendees, ProWine Mumbai 2024 was a resounding success. "The event has solidified its position as the premier platform for the wine and spirits industry. We are thrilled with this year's turnout and look forward to an even more spectacular edition next year," said Ajay Kumar Gulati, General Manager, Messe Düsseldorf India.

The fifth edition of ProWine Mumbai is already scheduled for October 31–November 1, 2025. ■



## ‘We are targeting travellers who want to feel the pulse of a destination’

Known for its meticulous restoration of heritage properties and intimate boutique experiences, Teardrop Hotels has carved a niche in Sri Lanka’s hospitality landscape, blending understated modern luxury with cultural authenticity. With over 1,200 boutique hotel rooms spread across unique locations like UNESCO heritage sites, coastal retreats, and serene tea bungalows, Teardrop Hotels is poised to captivate Indian travelers seeking immersive and personalized experiences. In an interaction with **Asmita Mukherjee, Manoj Devaraj, Director of Sales, Teardrop Hotels** shares insights into the brand’s plans for the Indian market.

**Q How do you plan to cater to the preferences and expectations of Indian travellers, and what specific segments of the market (leisure, luxury, wellness) are you focusing on? What are your plans for attracting the Indian market?**

We are already in touch with many travel agents in India, who have the clientele that will appreciate what Teardrop has to offer. Teardrop is a collection of intimate boutique hotels with understated modern luxury. We have been reviving and renovating historic buildings and tea estate bungalows into modern day luxury boutique hotels, each offering a unique taste of locations they are set in. We are targeting travellers who want to feel the pulse of a destination. And Indian travellers have started exploring Sri Lanka beyond the usual tourist spots, and our hotels are placed in unique locations for them to experience the best of Sri Lanka, like Fort Bazaar in a UNESCO heritage site, Kumu Beach on the coast, three tea estate bungalows along The Pekoe trail, Wallawwa near the airport and more in the pipeline. We are doubling down in our efforts to build strong relationships with trade partners as well as media in India.

**Q Could you share any upcoming expansion plans for Teardrop Hotels? Are you looking to acquire or build new properties, or partner with existing boutique hotels?**

Teardrop Hotels is poised for exciting growth, our team is constantly scouring the island for hidden gems that resonate with our passion for restoration and preservation. We are drawn to properties with unique stories, rich history, and see untapped potential in them. We make sure to approach each transformation mindfully, while honouring the original structure’s sanctity and character. We will be unveiling the two new additions to our portfolio in January 2025. While we are not ready to reveal all the details just yet, rest assured that this property embodies the Teardrop essence: authentic, luxurious, and deeply rooted in Sri Lanka’s culture and beauty.

**Q Teardrop Hotels are known for restoring heritage properties. Could you talk about the challenges and opportunities in renovating centuries-old buildings while maintaining their historical charm?**

The biggest challenge is striking a balance between maintaining structural integrity and adding modern amenities while maintaining original architectural features. Moreover, finding the right contractors and skilled artisans who meet our standards. However, the opportunities after renovating these iconic buildings far outweigh

the difficulties. By engaging with the local community, we not only enhance the project’s authenticity but also foster a sense of pride among residents. Sustainability has been another cornerstone of our restoration efforts, incorporating energy-efficient practices, reducing water consumption, and implementing waste reduction programs. Our approach to restoration is guided by a deep respect for Sri Lanka’s cultural heritage and a commitment to environmental stewardship. We conduct thorough research on the historical and cultural context of each property, collaborating closely with local historians and cultural experts to make informed design choices. We reduce transportation emissions and support the local economy by sourcing most of our materials locally. Our goal is to create unique, culturally rich experiences for our guests while preserving the essence of these iconic buildings for future. Through our restoration efforts, we aim to promote responsible tourism and highlight the beauty of these heritage properties. At Teardrop Hotels, we believe that preserving the past is essential to shaping a brighter future.

**Q What are the current occupancy levels at your properties in Sri Lanka?**

We are currently averaging 65% throughout the year.

**Q How does Teardrop Hotels differentiate itself from other boutique hotels in the region, and what are your USPs?**

Each of our hotels, have their own story just waiting to be told while giving you a peek into Sri Lanka’s rich history, diversity, and legendary hospitality. We set ourselves apart by carefully selecting and restoring centuries-old heritage buildings and vintage tea bungalows into contemporary homes, all while maintaining their original charm. The team also curates immersive local experiences that can only be done with us. With sustainability as one of our core values, each of our properties is thoughtfully designed to give travellers an experience that reflects the different regions they are in.

**Q Are you exploring any strategic partnerships or collaborations in India to facilitate your market entry, and if so, could you provide insight into potential partners?**

As of now, our entire focus and mission is to restore and bring more such properties to guests, right here in Sri Lanka that highlight country’s history and culture. ■

*asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in*

# ‘Sheraton Grand Palace Indore is where heritage meets modernity’

**Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad**

In the heart of India’s cleanest city, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore is setting a new benchmark for luxury hospitality. With its heritage-inspired architecture, expansive event spaces, and innovative sales strategies, the property is carving a niche in Indore’s thriving luxury market. Leading the charge is Seema Taj, Director of Sales, whose vision and strategic approach are redefining the hotel’s positioning in a competitive landscape.

“Our primary growth objectives revolve around increasing brand visibility and targeting high-net-worth individuals,” said Taj. To achieve this, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore focuses on personalised experiences, exceptional service, and innovative offerings. Taj also highlighted the importance of corporate partnerships and event planners in driving revenue and guest loyalty in the luxury segment.

The hotel’s strategy is bolstered by leveraging Marriott Bonvoy’s global network, allowing for personalised guest engagement campaigns. “We are implementing data-driven sales strategies to identify and target untapped segments like bleisure travelers,” she added. Collaborations with local cultural and corporate events are also on the agenda, aiming to amplify the hotel’s market presence and attract diverse clientele, she informed.

Sheraton Grand Palace Indore’s defining features set it apart from competitors. “Our

**Seema Taj**  
Director of Sales

heritage-inspired architecture, coupled with expansive 1,16,000 sq. ft. event spaces and the city’s largest pillarless ballroom, are our key differentiators,” noted Taj.

The property’s lush greenery offers a serene escape for guests, blending luxury with tranquility. With a focus on delivering immersive experiences, the hotel positions itself as a destination for both leisure and business travelers seeking exclusivity and grandeur.

Indore’s emergence as a MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) hub has opened new avenues for Sheraton Grand Palace Indore. Taj emphasised the hotel’s readiness to tap into this

burgeoning market.

“Our event offerings are unparalleled, from The Grand Palace and The Great Hall to the magnificent Palace Lawn, spanning 6,178 sq. m.,” she explained. State-of-the-art AV technology, dedicated event planners, and tailored experiences ensure flawless execution for events ranging from conferences to grand celebrations. “These offerings solidify our position as the ultimate choice for MICE in Indore,” she added.

Taj’s leadership style fosters a motivated and aligned sales team.

“Regular training programs, incentive structures, and open communication are the pillars of our team’s success,” she said. Mentorship plays a crucial role in nurturing talent, with Taj encouraging innovation and adaptability to meet evolving market demands.

“Guests always look for innovation and value for money, and we emphasise these qualities in our approach to sales,” she remarked. By nurturing these attributes within her team, Taj ensures that Sheraton Grand Palace Indore consistently delivers exceptional value and unique experiences.

Indore’s hospitality market, while promising, presents its own set of challenges. Rising guest expectations and price-sensitive travelers are key hurdles. However, Taj sees these challenges as opportunities.

“Leveraging Marriott’s brand strength and continuously evolving our service offerings are our strategies for turning challenges into opportunities,” she explained. This proactive approach ensures the long-term growth and sustainability of Sheraton Grand Palace Indore in a competitive market.

Under Taj’s leadership, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore is not just another luxury hotel but a destination that blends heritage charm with modern elegance. By focusing on innovation, personalised service, and strategic market positioning, the property is poised to redefine luxury hospitality in Indore.

As Taj aptly summarised, “Sheraton Grand Palace Indore is where heritage meets modernity, creating unparalleled experiences for our guests while setting new standards for the industry.” ■

[asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in](mailto:asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in)



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**Hospitality  
BIZ**

www.hospitalitybizindia.com

**Editor-in-Chief & CEO :** Sheldon Santwan  
sheldon@saffronsynergies.in**PUNE****Editor & Business Head :** Sumit Jha  
sumit.jha@saffronsynergies.in, +91 9764062266**MUMBAI****Executive Editor :** Prasenjit Chakraborty  
prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in, +91 9819263364**Editorial Team****MUMBAI****News Editor :** Disha Shah Ghosh  
disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in, +91 9619453170**Sr. Correspondent :** Tejaswini Paranjape  
tejaswini.paranjape@saffronsynergies.in, +91 99200 80545**NEW DELHI****Sr. Correspondent–North India :** Shayan Mallick  
shayan.mallick@gmail.com, +91 9818710659**HYDERABAD****Chief Correspondent–South India :** Asmita Mukherjee  
asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in, +91 98342 55360**BENGALURU****Social Media Consultant :** Vinora Crasta  
vinora.crasta@saffronsynergies.in, +91 97438 03969**Social Media Team (Mumbai) :** Nishtha Ganesh  
nishthagang@gmail.com, +91 93240 36308**DESIGN & LAYOUT (MUMBAI)****Madhukar Ingawale**  
madhukar.ingawale@gmail.com, +91 9967433821**CONTRIBUTORS****DELHI**

Anurag Yadav, Nivesh Bhagtani

**MUMBAI**Marcellus Baptista, Bhisham Mansukhani,  
Dominic CostaBir**DATABASE & SUBSCRIPTION****Senior Coordinator (Mumbai) :** Gauri Sawant  
gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in, +91 83690 80796**Coordinator (Mangaluru) :** Priya Karkera  
priya.saffron@gmail.com, +91 9702944562**Tech Support****Design & Development (Mumbai) :** Gilson Prabhudas**Marketing Team****NAGPUR****Head - Sales & Marketing :** Ajay Wadode  
ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in, +91 8087127814**MUMBAI****Sr. Manager – Sales & Marketing :** Pooja Nalawade  
pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in, +91 97690 52241**Manager – Sales & Marketing :** Jagdish Patil  
jagdish.patil@saffronsynergies.in, +91 74000 63663

\*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act



Saffron Synergies

902, 9th Floor, Cozy Apartments, Yari Road,  
Versova, Andheri (W), Mumbai-400061,  
Maharashtra, India.

# OUR HOSPITALITY EDUCATION SAGA



Does education in the hospitality sector in India command the respect that it deserves? ...specially when it comes to those who have to decide on a career path and are prime targets for all the institutions across the country. While there are individual efforts that are being organized by institutions to reach out to the schools, and spread awareness, there is negligible effort being undertaken collectively to make the industry shine in the eyes of those who are needed to steer the operations for the future. For an industry that contributes substantially to the economy and holds the potential to be a leader, as has been seen in many tourist-friendly nations and destinations, the absence of a combined effort aimed at the public at large is a point of concern. Shouldn't the thinking of people that this industry treats its pupil like slaves be changed? Besides working on improving the standards and work culture of staff, specially in the initial years be changed? Just because the previous generations have gone through the grind, is it essential that everyone who joins the industry must go through it?

Have the caretakers of the hospitality fraternity been able to elevate the standards of hospitality industry in India in the eyes of prospective future generation? Is there any dedicated and focused approach to reach out to the students at the school levels, to attract them to the industry? Are we in a position to tell the future generation about the benefits of being a part of this industry? Wish it was true, but unfortunately, it is not! It is only those handful of institutions that offer valuable placements and a successful future path to their staff, that have been sought after. Of course, with most of the large hotel groups having their own training platforms, they are able to take care of their individual requirements to an extent. But then the ones that have not been able to find a niche for their students, have been struggling to get their classrooms fully occupied. And with many new hotels lined up to open and more growth in sight, there is an express need to elevate the image of the hospitality industry in the eyes of public at large, so they feel attracted to the industry. In this issue we present a special feature with view point of industry leaders to understand if the industry is evolving to meet the industry demands.

We look forward to hearing your views.

Happy reading!

Sumit Jha  
Editor & Business Head

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# To be or not to be?

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

There has been a flurry of debate recently on almost all the industry chat groups about the relevance of the IHMs in today's context with industry stalwarts weighing in on both sides. The division is stark. Many site the IHMs contribution to the growth of the industry and the seminal influence some of them have had on the careers of many contemporary senior leaders.

Others site the lack of current industry relevance with some seeking change and others insisting that their model of education has served its time and needs to completely be replaced, though with what is also under debate.

For the record, I am not an alumnus of any IHM so have no first-hand experience of the pedagogy and I also have close and respected friends on both sides of the debate, so perhaps I should not be wading into the conversation. On the other hand, I have been involved in hospitality education from almost the inception of my career and continue to see up close the effects both positive and negative of the system on the current graduates.

What is indisputable is the fact that the industry is losing its appeal to new entrants. The demand that used to be seen for the IHMs and non-IHM institutions has dropped dramatically. Perhaps more noticeably in the case of the IHMs, which begs the question why? Attrition among those who do join is also high, and over 50% of graduates from hospitality colleges do not join the industry. Obviously, the industry is not coming across as attractive enough in comparison to the myriad other options.

This is something that needs introspection at all levels, but as the

institutions are the first point of contact, perhaps it needs to start there. I think it is safe to say that broadly the industry does not meet the aspirations and work habits of Gen Z and Y, Old hands will blame the new joiners, but it cannot be all one-sided. The world is changing and the attitude of our staff needs to change as well.

How can we train for and accommodate the gig economy? Does the curriculum address the latent entrepreneur in so many young adults today? Is it time for a more holistic approach to learning and development? Generally, our Indigenous approach to education has been predominantly domain-based, and other learning streams have changed and are changing their approach, maybe the need of the hour is to bring in these changes in our industry as well.

To sum up, I would suggest that we do not throw out the baby with the bathwater, there is much-accumulated wisdom in the system, accompanied unfortunately also by much that is no longer relevant. Let us wisely seek to sift the wheat from the chaff and create learning platforms that will serve the next generation of leaders well. ■

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



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# Edible Escapes: How culinary tourism drives sustainable development

By **Dr. Niraalee Shah, MD**, Dr. Niraalee Shah Travel Design Pvt Ltd



Culinary tourism, the exploration of a destination's culture through its food, has emerged as a powerful driver of sustainable development, as travellers increasingly seek authentic experiences, local cuisines offer a unique window into the traditions, agriculture, and environmental practices of a region. This growing trend is not only enhancing the global tourism landscape but also fostering economic growth, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting environmental sustainability. In this article, we delve into how culinary tourism contributes to sustainable development by supporting local farmers, empowering communities, and encouraging responsible travel practices, all while offering food enthusiasts unforgettable experiences.

Dr. Niraalee Shah, Travel Design Pvt. Ltd, Managing Director, says "Edible escapes offer more than just a taste of local flavors, they are a gateway to preserving culture, supporting local economies, and promoting sustainable tourism. We at Travel Design Pvt. Ltd believe that culinary tourism plays a crucial role in fostering responsible travel and creating lasting, positive impacts on communities."

## THE INTERSECTION OF CULINARY TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

The intersection of culinary tourism and sustainability is a growing trend, where travellers seek authentic food experiences while prioritizing eco-friendly practices, by focusing on sustainable sourcing, such as organic ingredients and locally grown produce, culinary tourism supports local farmers and artisans, reducing environmental impact and preserving cultural traditions, with an anticipated 23% CAGR in India from 2023 to 2033, culinary tourism is becoming a key motivator for travellers. The UNWTO reports that 39% of international tourists are driven by food experiences, often spending 20% more on food-related activities, which helps foster local community connections and supports sustainable tourism.

## SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS

Culinary tourism plays a vital role in supporting local food producers by connecting travellers with regional agriculture. When visitors seek authentic food experiences, they help sustain local economies, support farmers, and preserve traditional practices. In places like Maharashtra's Konkan Coast and Kerala's backwaters, partnerships between chefs and local farmers promote the use of fresh, locally sourced ingredients, for example, Streekon, a women-led social enterprise in Kelshi, collaborates with local farmers and self-help groups to offer eco-friendly culinary experiences, empowering communities, ensuring fair wages, and promoting sustainable farming practices.

## LUXURY EXPERIENCES AND SUSTAINABLE CULINARY TOURISM

Luxury travel is evolving to align with sustainability, with culinary tourism playing a significant role in this shift. High-end travellers seek indulgent yet responsible experiences, with resorts showcasing local, sustainable food practices. Below are examples of luxury resorts that integrate sustainability into their culinary offerings:

- The Oberoi Vanyavilas Wildlife Resort, Rajasthan: Focuses on farm-to-table dining, sourcing fresh produce from local, sustainable farmers to reduce carbon footprints.
- Kanha Earth Lodge, Madhya Pradesh: Features organic garden ingredients and promotes sustainability by composting food waste and dry leaves for better harvests.
- Taj Exotica, Goa: Minimizes food waste through sustainable kitchen practices, aligning culinary offerings with its sustainability commitment.
- Ananda in the Himalayas, Uttarakhand: Emphasizes organic, sustainable ingredients from its garden, supporting local farmers while offering health-conscious meals.

## ENRICHING CULTURAL EXPERIENCES THROUGH FOOD

Culinary tourism offers a unique opportunity to explore a region's cultural heritage through its food, as travellers savor local dishes, they uncover the stories, traditions, and customs behind the cuisine, deepening their cultural understanding and helping preserve these culinary practices, for example, in Kashmir, the Wazwan feast, a multi-course meal featuring lamb and yogurt-based dishes, showcases the region's rich culinary heritage. Similarly, Goa's Food and Cultural Festival celebrates local flavors and sustainable agricultural practices, revitalizing traditional Goan cuisine. Through such experiences, food tourism helps ensure these cultural traditions thrive for future generations.

## FUTURE OF CULINARY TOURISM

The future of culinary tourism is poised for significant growth, driven by the increasing interest in authentic food experiences across the globe. According to a report by IMARC Group, the global culinary tourism market was valued at USD 1,090.5 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach USD 4,210.2 billion by 2033, growing at a remarkable compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.46% from 2025 to 2033. This surge reflects the rising demand for immersive travel experiences centered on local cuisines, food festivals, and cooking tours, making culinary tourism a key driver in the travel industry's future.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, culinary tourism not only offers travelers the chance to explore diverse cuisines but also plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainable development, by supporting local farmers, artisans, and communities, it promotes environmental and cultural preservation while boosting the economy. We at Travel Design Pvt. Ltd understand the transformative power of food experiences and curate tailor-made itineraries that deliver bespoke culinary journeys, allowing you to savor the authentic flavors of each destination while contributing to sustainable tourism practices. Let us guide you on an unforgettable culinary escape that leaves a lasting impact. ■

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



## 'Antarctica Equipment gears up for aggressive growth in India's booming commercial refrigeration market'

**Gaurav Mittal, Director and CEO of Antarctica Equipment Private Limited**, said the company has ambitious plans to scale its operations and strengthen its position as a leader in India's commercial refrigeration sector. With the market projected to reach INR 10,000 crore by FY28, Antarctica is focusing on innovation, customisation, and strategic expansion. In an exclusive interview with **Asmita Mukherjee**, Mittal discusses the company's approach to leveraging growth opportunities across diverse sectors like ice cream, supermarkets, QSRs, and bakeries, upcoming product launches and the evolving demands of the HORECA industry.

### **Q** What are Antarctica Equipment's expansion plans in India market?

We plan to expand our team, enhance our distributor network, strengthen our technical team, and look for ways and means to reach our customers more effectively. Another key focus this year is to strengthen our presence in the Ice cream industry, supermarkets, QSR, and convenience stores to drive growth.

### **Q** How does the company plan to leverage the projected growth in the commercial refrigeration market, expected to reach INR 10,000 crore by FY28?

We are strategically positioned to capitalize on the projected growth of India's commercial refrigeration market by focusing on innovation, customization, and expanding our presence. Through continued R&D, we aim to deliver eco-friendly, state-of-the-art solutions tailored to India's unique business needs. Collaborations with global leaders in refrigeration technology enable us to introduce IoT-enabled smart systems and energy-efficient solutions. Our expanded manufacturing facility in Manesar and enhanced distribution network will cater to rising demand across sectors like QSRs, bakeries, and supermarkets. By educating businesses on FSSAI compliance and sustainability, we aim to drive adoption, build trust, and lead the industry's future.

### **Q** Are there any specific sectors within the HORECA industry you are targeting for growth?

The sectors that we are targeting are Bakeries, Restaurants, Cafes, Sweet Shops, QSRs in Hotel Lobbies or Conventional Centres, Confectionery shops, Gelateria / Ice Cream Shop.

### **Q** Can you share insights into any new product launches or upgrades planned in the near future?

At Antarctica, innovation and technology drive our operations, with R&D at the forefront. Partnering with industry leaders, we've introduced groundbreaking products redefining industry standards. Highlights include the Tonda by Ifi S.p.A., the world's first round, rotating display case, now offering enhanced convenience and engagement. We've also expanded the Esedra refrigerated display range, ideal for pastry and praline presentations. From Valmar Global, the Dosy 3 dosing machine and Valmix 20 multifunction emulsifier are revolutionizing ice cream and gastronomy product processing. These advancements reflect our commitment to

elevating culinary experiences through superior technology and design.

### **Q** How do your customised offerings cater to the specific needs of diverse sectors like food, beverage, confectionery, and gelato?

Our customised offerings are designed to address the specific needs of diverse sectors like food, beverage, confectionery, and gelato, ensuring the best value for money and solutions tailored to Indian conditions. While many customers opt for standard models, we also cater to those with unique requirements stemming from space constraints, small store footprints, cost effectiveness or specific customization needs.

Customisation allows us to create solutions that meet unique space requirements, fit compact layouts, and align with budget considerations. We provide durable, high-quality products backed by reliable service support, ensuring our customers have access to efficient and effective refrigeration solutions, regardless of their specific challenges.

### **Q** What challenges do you foresee in the Indian and global markets for commercial refrigeration, and how does Antarctica plan to address them?

The commercial refrigeration industry faces several challenges, but at Antarctica Equipment, we tackle them through innovation, strategic partnerships, and forward-thinking solutions. We actively educate customers on the importance of quality refrigeration for food safety, cost savings, and customer satisfaction. While advanced systems may have higher initial costs, our energy-efficient and durable solutions ensure significant long-term savings. Staying competitive, we leverage global partnerships like Future Products Group (FPG) for cutting-edge technology and integrate smart automation for sustainable, high-performance systems. Our flexible solutions cater to diverse business needs, from small cafes to large retail chains, ensuring we exceed evolving market demands.

### **Q** How does Antarctica Equipment align its offerings with the changing demands of its clients in the HORECA sector?

We collaborate closely with our partners to ensure each product we bring to market is tailored to meet the unique demands of the Indian market. From the initial stages of product development to comprehensive market testing, we actively contribute valuable feedback and insights. This ensures that the final product not only aligns with market needs but also delivers the exact solution our customers desire once launched. ■

*asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in*

# India's Hospitality sector shifts focus: HVS ANAROCK Report highlights growth amid challenges

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The latest HVS ANAROCK Monitor: November 2024 report reveals a dynamic but challenging landscape for India's hospitality sector. While October 2024 saw a decline in occupancy rates across most cities, the industry experienced an encouraging boost in Average Room Rates (ARR) and robust growth in hotel signings, pointing to a cautiously optimistic trajectory.

Nationwide, October 2024 occupancy rates fell compared to both October 2023 and September 2024, signaling a demand dip. Chennai, Kolkata, and Mumbai saw the sharpest declines, with rates dropping by 3-5 percentage points. In contrast, Ahmedabad stood out with a 4-6 percentage point increase, thanks to Navratri-driven demand.

Despite occupancy setbacks, ARR's surged. Hyderabad led the way with a remarkable 21-23% year-on-year rise, driven by strong market demand. Jaipur and New Delhi also posted double-digit growth in ARR's, showcasing resilience even amidst occupancy challenges. Ahmedabad, however, reported a significant 30% drop in ARR's, attributed to last year's inflated rates during ICC Cricket World Cup matches.

The report highlights a surge in branded hotel market signings, with 33,407 keys added across 333 properties by October 2024—a 45% year-on-year increase in keys signed. Notably, Tier 2 and Tier

3 & 4 cities contributed over 75% of the total signings, reflecting developers' growing focus on emerging markets.

Greenfield developments dominated the pipeline, accounting for 43% of signings, followed by brownfield projects at 38%. This surge indicates renewed investor confidence in India's hospitality sector post-pandemic.

By October 2024, 8,073 keys had been launched across 119 properties, with nearly half concentrated in Tier 3 & 4 cities. This trend underscores the rising prominence of non-metropolitan markets as key growth drivers, addressing regional demand for high-quality hospitality infrastructure.

The report also captures critical industry movements, including Indian aviation reaching a milestone of over 5 lakh domestic passengers in a single day, and Ahmedabad unveiling its first luxury river cruise—a ₹25 crore project aimed at boosting tourism.

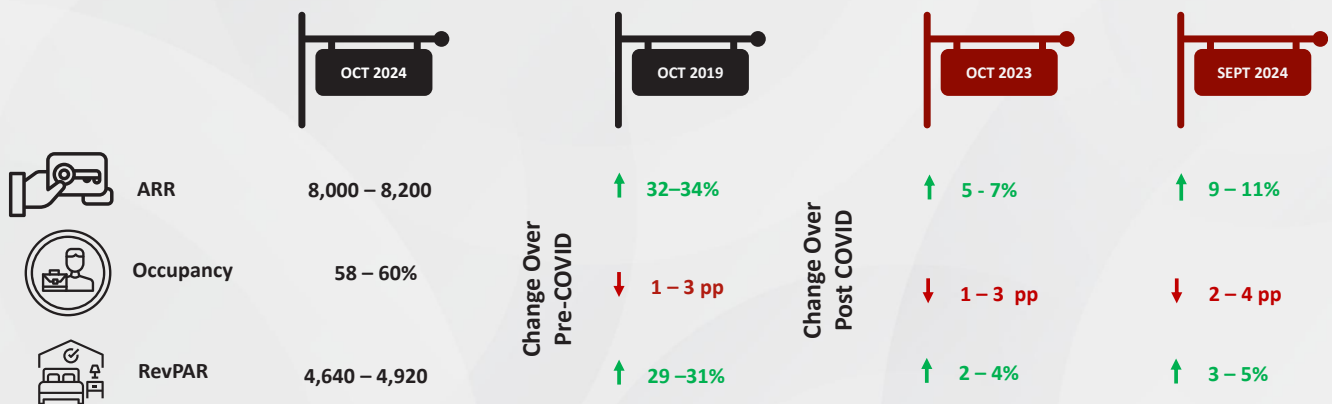
Additionally, international partnerships are strengthening India's tourism ties, with Russia set to offer visa-free travel for Indian passport holders by 2025.

While challenges like declining occupancy rates persist, rising ARR's, expanding hotel portfolios, and significant activity in Tier 3 & 4 markets indicate a promising future for India's hospitality sector. Developers and operators are increasingly leveraging data-driven strategies to navigate fluctuating demand while focusing on sustainability and regional growth. ■

## India Hotel Sector Performance

(October 2024)

- October 2024 witnessed a nationwide decline in occupancy rates from both the previous year and the previous month.
- On the other hand, nationwide average rates increased by nearly 10% from the previous month and nearly 6% from October 2023.



Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year



## ‘We don’t just serve meals—we craft immersive experiences’

**Sharad Madan, Director & Co-founder, Bel Cibo Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.,** is on a mission to revolutionise the hospitality landscape by blending culinary artistry with unforgettable experiences. Since the launch of Khubani in Aerocity, the journey has been nothing short of transformative. With standout ventures like Begam, Noor, and Parra by Khubani, the brand has redefined dining as a multi-sensory experience. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Madan to learn more about the brand’s expansion plans.

### **Q** What inspired the creation of Bel Cibo Hospitality, and how has the journey unfolded since the launch of Khubani in Aerocity?

Bel Cibo Hospitality was founded with a vision to redefine dining experiences by blending culinary artistry, immersive design, and a touch of elegance. The journey began with Imperfecto, a trailblazer in creative social experiences. Building on this foundation, Bel Cibo introduced Khubani, where every detail—from palace-inspired interiors to authentic baklava—was carefully crafted to evoke wonder. Over the years, the portfolio has grown to include Parra by Khubani, known for its imaginative dining concept, Begam in Delhi and Noida, celebrated for its regal charm, and Noor by Khubani, which combines cultural entertainment with exceptional cuisine. Each concept reflects a commitment to creating memorable experiences that celebrate flavour, design, and human connection.

### **Q** With Begam Noida being your latest addition, what are your immediate and long-term expansion plans for Bel Cibo Hospitality?

Begam Noida represents an exciting milestone, offering a space where culinary artistry meets contemporary sophistication. Our immediate goal is to establish Begam Noida as a premier destination for intimate celebrations and social gatherings. In the long term, we aim to introduce Begam to metropolitan cities across India, positioning it as the preferred venue for luxurious dining experiences that blend cultural heritage with modern refinement.



Future Begam outlets will carry signature elements such as intricate interiors inspired by Mughal and Rajasthani aesthetics, menus that seamlessly blend Turkish and Mediterranean flavours, and unparalleled service that elevates every visit. These venues will cater to diverse occasions, from intimate dinners to family gatherings and corporate events.

The expansion strategy will ensure that Begam becomes synonymous with elegance, grandeur, and the charm of modern luxury, reinforcing its identity as a go-to destination for extraordinary dining experiences nationwide.

### **Q** Are there any new markets, geographies, or formats you are exploring in India or internationally?

In India, Bel Cibo is venturing into diverse terrains, each project tailored to reflect the essence of its locale. On the bustling Delhi-Jaipur Highway, Bel Cibo is crafting a fort-inspired 5-star hotel, a landmark property designed to cater to the growing demand for grand wedding destinations. This project aims to seamlessly integrate traditional Rajasthani aesthetics with contemporary luxury, making it a premier choice for large-scale celebrations and events.

Moving westward, Bel Cibo is bringing its vision to Goa’s iconic beaches with a boutique resort dedicated to personalised, sustainable hospitality. This property will emphasise eco-friendly practices while offering guests an immersive beachside retreat, complete with curated experiences that highlight Goa’s rich cultural and natural heritage.

In the north, Bel Cibo is exploring the tranquillity of Himachal Pradesh with a collection of luxurious mountain homestays. Nestled in serene, unspoiled settings, these homestays are designed for travellers seeking solace and connection with nature. Guests will enjoy bespoke services and the opportunity to unwind amidst breathtaking landscapes, far from the hustle and bustle of urban life.

Internationally, Bel Cibo is set to make a mark with flagship properties in London and Dubai. These projects aim to blend the brand’s distinct design ethos with the cultural vibrancy of each city. In London, Bel Cibo plans to showcase Indian culinary heritage through a contemporary lens, offering an experience that bridges tradition and modernity. Similarly, in Dubai, the brand will curate a venue that celebrates its commitment to immersive hospitality while embracing the city’s cosmopolitan flair.

### **Q** What’s your vision for Bel Cibo Hospitality in the next five years? Are there any new concepts or experimental formats you’re planning to introduce to the Indian or global hospitality market?

Our vision for Bel Cibo Hospitality over the next five years is to redefine luxury and experiential dining while setting new industry benchmarks.

We are focused on expanding our footprint globally, with flagship properties in London and Dubai that celebrate Indian culinary traditions in a contemporary global setting. Innovation is key—we’re planning to introduce concepts like immersive dining theatres and culinary pop-ups to revolutionize guest engagement. Sustainability is another cornerstone, with zero-waste kitchens, ethical sourcing, and eco-friendly practices at the forefront. Bel Cibo aims to be a name synonymous with elegance, innovation, and purposeful experiences worldwide. ■

*asmita.mukherjee@safronsnergies.in*

# ‘We help property owners monetise their second homes while offering guests exceptional stays’

**Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad**

In the burgeoning Indian luxury vacation rental market, ELIVAAS has emerged as a transformative brand. Founded by Ritwik Khare, Founder and CEO, ELIVAAS, whose hospitality acumen was honed through his leadership in building the hotels vertical at MakeMyTrip, ELIVAAS is a story of innovation and perseverance.

“Our journey began with a vision to redefine the luxury vacation rental experience in India,” says Khare. He recognized a gap in the market for curated, high-end vacation homes and set out to fill it. However, establishing ELIVAAS wasn’t without its challenges. “Two years ago, luxury vacation rentals were a novel concept in India. Guests were unfamiliar with the idea of short-term stays in opulent homes, and property owners were hesitant to embrace this model.”

Khare emphasizes that educating the market and building trust with property owners were among the most significant hurdles. “Convincing property owners to work with a professional team like ours was key. We had to demonstrate the value we could bring to their assets.”

Today, ELIVAAS has carved a niche, not only addressing these challenges but also thriving as a pioneer in the space.

ELIVAAS recently raised USD 5 million in funding. Khare elaborates on how this capital will propel the company forward: “The funds will be allocated strategically. A large portion will go towards enhancing our technology platform to make the entire booking process—from discovery to post-checkout—seamless and intuitive.”

Marketing and branding will also see a boost, with efforts to amplify ELIVAAS’s presence in domestic and international markets. “We aim to expand our portfolio by acquiring more properties across top Indian destinations. This will allow us to cater to the growing demand for personalized and sustainable luxury stays,” he explains.

The luxury vacation rental market in India is undergoing a rapid transformation. Khare highlights several key trends:

“Today’s travelers seek highly personalized experiences. They want more than just accommodation; they want tailor-made stays that reflect their unique preferences.” He also notes the increasing demand for sustainability in travel. “Eco-conscious guests prioritize properties that align with their values, from sustainable construction to minimal ecological impact.”

The rise of remote work has further shaped the market. “Workations are becoming a norm. Guests are looking for spaces that balance functionality with comfort,” Khare shares.

Family and group travel has also fueled demand for spacious, private

villas. “People want meaningful shared experiences, and our properties are perfect for that,” he adds.

Khare attributes the company’s success to its meticulous attention to detail and guest-centric approach. “Every stay is personalized, from chef-on-call services to curated local experiences. We focus on creating memories, not just providing accommodation.”

Each property undergoes a rigorous 30-point quality check, monitored through an app to ensure consistency across the portfolio. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and ongoing staff training further reinforce service quality.

“Our model is dual-sided,” Khare explains. “We help property owners monetize their second homes while offering guests exceptional stays. This balance ensures that both sides benefit from our expertise.”

ELIVAAS’s vision is deeply rooted in its Indian identity. “In the short term, we are focused on expanding our property portfolio within India. Our goal is to offer a wider range of high-end options to discerning travelers,” says Khare.

Long-term, ELIVAAS aims to expand internationally. “Southeast Asia and the Middle East are key regions for us. We want to cater to the growing demand for luxury vacation rentals and experiential travel in these markets,” he adds.

As second-home ownership grows in India, ELIVAAS sees immense potential. “We offer homeowners a hassle-free way to monetize their properties,” Khare says. “Our platform provides insights into market trends, pricing strategies, and end-to-end rental management.”

This segment represents a significant opportunity. “As more individuals invest in second homes, we foresee a growing demand for platforms like ours,” he notes.

Khare is clear about what sets ELIVAAS apart in a competitive market: “We are obsessive about quality. Whether it’s the design of a villa, the amenities, or the service provided by our staff, we ensure every detail exceeds expectations.”

The company’s 30-point checklist and adherence to SOPs ensure that every guest enjoys a consistent, high-quality experience. “This is how we’ve built trust and loyalty among our guests and homeowners,” Khare concludes.

As ELIVAAS continues to evolve, it stands at the forefront of a rapidly growing market, redefining luxury vacation rentals in India and beyond. With a strong foundation, strategic investments, and a guest-first philosophy, the brand is poised for even greater success in the years to come. ■



**Ritwik Khare**  
Founder and CEO, ELIVAAS

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in

# Is hospitality education evolving to meet industry demands?

As the hospitality industry evolves, the relevance of NCHMCT (National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology) and IHMs (Institute of Hotel Management) is being questioned. While some argue these institutions have outlived their purpose, industry experts believe they remain vital in addressing the talent shortage in the sector. Calls to shut down or restructure NCHMCT and IHMs are being met with strong opposition, with experts warning that such measures would only worsen the challenges. Instead, they advocate for a comprehensive overhaul, including increased autonomy, closer industry ties, and curriculum updates to meet modern demands. Industry voices also suggest the formation of advisory bodies to guide these changes, ensuring that IHMs continue to play a key role in shaping the next generation of hospitality professionals. *Hospitality Biz* spoke with experts to explore the sentiments surrounding the future of these institutions.

## ‘Privatisation is not a viable solution’

### Q Are IHM and the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) still relevant in addressing talent gaps in the hospitality industry?

NCHMCT remain crucial for bridging talent gaps in the hospitality sector. Established with government support in the 1950s, these institutions were pioneers in hospitality education, not just in India but across Asia. Over the years, they have evolved into a network of IHMs and food craft institutes, offering affordable, high-quality education to middle- and lower-middle-class students.

While these institutions provide foundational knowledge, industry demands have evolved, requiring updates in areas like automation and artificial intelligence. Efforts to revise the curriculum are underway, reflecting a positive shift.

Students often face challenges aligning their education with specific brand standards of hotels. Closer collaboration between institutes and the industry during internships and training could address this gap.

Another issue is the declining intake of students, particularly post-COVID. Admissions to hospitality courses have dropped, partly due to the industry's treatment of staff during the pandemic. This is now recovering, with enrollment numbers rising, but more needs to be done to attract and retain talent. Also, a lack of awareness among students and parents about hospitality as a viable career option has resulted in declining enrollments. Proactive outreach by the industry and institutions is essential to attract talent.

Independent hotel operators face greater challenges compared to large chains in accessing skilled graduates. While agreements between NCHMCT and big hospitality chains are beneficial, they risk leaving smaller players behind. To ensure inclusivity, the industry must advocate for representation of all stakeholders, including independent hotels, in

policymaking and training initiatives.

NCHMCT and IHMs require collaboration with industry leaders and regional associations to address evolving challenges and ensure their programs are aligned with both current and future demands.

### Q Should the government privatise these institutions to improve their efficiency?

Privatisation is not a viable solution for improving these institutions. While it may raise funds in the short term, it could significantly

increase the cost of education, making it inaccessible to many aspiring students from economically weaker backgrounds. The privatisation of IHMs would also risk neglecting independent hotels, which rely on these graduates for their workforce. Instead, the government should focus on partnerships with the private sector to enhance curriculum, infrastructure, and placement opportunities while maintaining affordability.

### Q How can the government and industry work together to improve the situation?

Collaboration is the way forward. Industry leaders and associations must engage with NCHMCT to design relevant curricula and provide meaningful training

opportunities. Structured internships that align with hotel brand standards and provide fair stipends can help bridge the gap between education and employability. Additionally, the government must continue to support these institutions by investing in infrastructure and promoting hospitality careers through campaigns and school outreach programs.

Ultimately, the collective responsibility of the government, industry, and institutions can ensure that hospitality education evolves to meet modern challenges while remaining accessible to all. ■



**Jimmy Shaw**  
President, Hotel And Restaurant  
Association Western India

## 'A broader national conversation involving all stakeholders is essential'

### Q Are institutions like NCHMCT and IHMs still relevant in addressing the talent gaps in the hospitality industry?

Institutions like NCHMCT and IHMs have undeniably been and are the cornerstone of hospitality education in India. With their comprehensive curriculum, focus on practical skills and industry-aligned training, they have been pivotal in nurturing talent for the sector. Their strong alumni network and collaboration with the industry further ensures they stay at the forefront of hospitality education, shaping professionals equipped to meet modern challenges.

### Q Should NCHMCT and IHMs undergo a significant overhaul to meet modern industry demands?

Yes, NCHMCT and IHMs would benefit from a significant overhaul to align more closely with modern industry demands. By integrating advanced technology, contemporary global trends, and specialized skills like sustainability, data analytics, and customer experience design into their curriculum, they can further enhance their relevance. Such updates will ensure graduates are well-equipped to thrive in a rapidly evolving hospitality landscape while maintaining their legacy as premier institutions for hospitality education.

### Q Do you believe that closing down NCHMCT and IHMs would solve the challenges in hospitality education?

No, closing down NCHMCT and IHMs would not solve the challenges in hospitality education. These institutions have been the bedrock of Indian hospitality education, producing legends in rooms division, food and beverage service, and culinary arts. Their alumni have set benchmarks in the industry, showcasing the immense value these institutions bring. Rather than shutting them down, the focus should be on modernizing and enhancing their frameworks to address evolving industry needs while continuing their legacy of excellence.

### Q What is the biggest issue facing NCHMCT and IHMs today?

IHMs have consistently laid the foundation for excellence in Indian hospitality so I wouldn't say issue but an opportunity for NCHMCT and IHMs to embrace new industry technologies, global trends, and specialized skills. Also further aligning their curriculum and training with the ever-evolving demands of the hospitality industry will always prove beneficial. With their strong legacy and dedicated alumni, they are well-positioned to address these challenges and remain at the forefront of hospitality education.

### Q Would you support the integration of modern learning systems like hybrid, phygital, and open credit systems in hospitality education?

Yes, the use of technology is always a progressive step. These approaches can offer students greater flexibility, access to diverse resources, and practical exposure to emerging technologies.

### Q Should private institutions or alternative platforms replace the current public structure of hospitality education?

I believe instead of replacing adopting advancements & innovative methods, technology will leverage the strengths of both. IHMs, with their legacy and proven methodologies, can certainly integrate innovative technologies and practices to enhance their offerings. By adopting such advancements within the public framework, we can create a more dynamic and future-ready hospitality education system.

### Q What role should the industry play in shaping the future of NCHMCT and IHMs? How important is hospitality education for sectors beyond traditional hotels and

#### restaurants?

The industry should actively support students during their training by providing practical exposure that complements the knowledge acquired in the classroom. Real-time application of skills in diverse scenarios helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring students are industry-ready. Today, service and customer centricity are at the heart of every business, whether at a hospital or a car dealership, and no one understands the true essence of service and the "Guest is Like God" approach better than a hospitality student. This unique expertise positions them to excel in a variety of sectors beyond traditional hotels and restaurants

### Q What is the best way forward for NCHMCT and IHMs?

The best way forward for NCHMCT and IHMs is to build on their legacy while embracing modernization to stay ahead of industry demands. By integrating advanced technologies, global best practices, and innovative teaching methodologies, they can enhance their already robust curriculum. Strengthening industry partnerships for real-time learning and fostering a culture of adaptability will ensure that IHMs continue to produce exceptional hospitality professionals who excel across diverse sectors.

### Q Do you think a broader national conversation involving stakeholders is needed to determine the future of NCHMCT and IHMs?

Yes, a broader national conversation involving all stakeholders is essential to shaping the future of NCHMCT and IHMs. Such dialogue can bring together the expertise of educators, industry leaders, alumni, and policymakers to align the institutions with the evolving industry trends and global standards. ■



**Param Kannampilly**  
Executive Chairman,  
Concept Hospitality

## ‘Closing down NCHMCT or IHM is not a solution at all’

### Q Are NCHMCT and IHMs still relevant in addressing the talent gaps in the hospitality industry?

Nchmct and IHMs were and are relevant. Both have served the purpose for which they were established in the last 40+ and 75+ years of their existence. IHMs trained lacs of students in HM and Hotel Operation diploma and they are corporate, senior Mgmt. cadre throughout the country and abroad.

### Q Should NCHMCT and IHMs undergo a significant overhaul to meet modern industry demands?

Nchmct was established to set the standard of Hospitality Education, develop a curriculum, arrange for the training of the faculty, conduct a Joint entrance examination for providing students to the HM program and conduct annual/semester exams in all affiliated institutes throughout the country.

In the last 40+ years, Nchmct has been performing these tasks but in the current situation, it needs to be more focused, courage to make difficult decisions in the interest of Hospitality Education and have a more cohesive functioning and should act as a central body to bring all stakeholders of Hospitality Education on one platform and pursue them to take required correction to bring back the glory of Hospitality Education, which is being affected in last five years.

The hospitality management Institute of the country affiliated with NCHMCT/university must look for a fresh strategy to make the academic environment and institute, more professional, Strategies to make their product that students more competent in terms of attitude, personality, soft skills, knowledge, and relevant skills.

### Q Do you believe that closing down NCHMCT and IHMs would solve the challenges in hospitality education?

Closing down Nchmct or IHM is not a solution at all. I believe this thought is not in proper concept and all stakeholders must work for the possible improvement in the functioning so that people get suitable employment in the hospitality industry and the industry also gets a workforce that is properly trained by these institutions.

### Q What is the biggest issue facing NCHMCT and IHMs today?

The biggest issue in front of Nchmct and IHMs is this lack of interest among the students for a career in hospitality management and operation, which has affected enrolment in hospitality management programmes in the last 5 to 6 years. In my opinion, blaming Nchmct or IHM is running away from the real issues.

These institutions are engaged in preparing students for Hospitality jobs in the hospitality industry.

### Q Would you support the integration of modern learning systems like hybrid, phygital, and open credit systems in hospitality education?

Integration of modern learning systems like hybrid and open credit

systems or need of the hour. In NEP, 2020, emphasis has been laid on these and NCHMCT also incorporating this concept into the curriculum development.

We all need to focus on self-learning concepts along with the classroom teaching by faculty. Faculty should act as a guiding force and create a situation where Students engage in self-learning mode, and creative thinking with an eye on entrepreneurship abilities.

### Q Should private institutions or alternative platforms replace the current public structure of hospitality education?

Private institutions and alternate platforms are already available in other spheres of education like management & engineering but IIT and government engineering College and IIMs and management institutions of universities are still functioning hand in hand with the private

institutions, thus, the idea of replacing IHM's with private IHM's is not the solution at all.

### Q What role should the industry play in shaping the future of NCHMCT and IHMs?

In my opinion, the present crisis of low Hospitality enrolment And the suitable placement of the students who completed, the HM programme are key issues And the hospitality industry these burning issues can be resolved by bold and positive steps by the industry in association with the NCHMCT and IHMs.

### Q What is the best way forward for NCHMCT and IHMs?

The best way forward for Nchmct is to grant statutory status to the Nchmct by the act from

Parliament and more autonomy in its functioning so that it can take and implement the bold decisions in coordination with the industry and other stakeholders in the least possible time.

IHM's are also required to keep their house in order, recruit Faculty Only with minimum 3 to 5 year hospitality industry experience at the post of Lecturer, develop policy of exposing every faculty for two weeks in a year and strictly implement that, upgrade their training infrastructure and have more intensive coordination in corporation with industry so that passing out students are "industry ready".

### Q Do you think a broader national conversation involving stakeholders is needed to determine the future of NCHMCT and IHMs?

There is always need of the conversation among all stakeholders and it is appropriate to constitute a high power advisory committee, comprising of all stakeholders to discuss, deliberate, and come out with the strategies for implementation to have better hospitality in management enrolment, improved initial pay for HM degree holder/ trade diploma holder and 2-3 months Skill trained workforce.

Drafting the policy of strong mentorship in the industry and defined and visible career path with time frame will be a master stroke and short period of time to attract and retain talent in hospitality industry. ■



**Arun Kumar Singh**  
Director, The FHRAI Institute of  
Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM)



## ‘There are ongoing concerns about declining admissions’

### Q Are NCHMCT and IHMs still relevant in addressing the talent gaps in the hospitality industry?

It is also true that there is a huge gap between the education provided in these institutes and what is required by the industry today in the market.

Institutions such as the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) and the Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs) in India play a crucial role in addressing the talent gaps within the hospitality industry by providing structured education and training. This enables them to supply a skilled workforce that meets the demands of the industry.

Currently, the hospitality sector is facing a significant talent shortage, with reports indicating a demand-supply gap of approximately 55-60%. Projections suggest that around one million new jobs will be added in the coming years. This disparity highlights the need for these institutions to adapt and expand their programs to align with the evolving needs of the industry.

To tackle this challenge, NCHMCT has begun collaborating with private educational institutes through affiliation schemes. This strategy aims to bridge the gap between the demand and supply of quality professionals in the growing hospitality sector. Additionally, there have been proposals to elevate NCHMCT to an

Institute of National Importance, which would give it the authority to award degrees in hospitality and related fields.

Despite these efforts, there are ongoing concerns about declining admissions and the need to enhance the visibility of hospitality management programs. The annual general meeting of NCHMCT emphasized the urgency of implementing significant measures to boost admissions to IHMs under its council.



**Prem Anand**  
Founder, The London Butler Academy,  
Aubree Elite Swiss GmbH  
Switzerland

### Q What is the biggest issue facing NCHMCT and IHMs today?

A significant reason for the drop in admissions at NCHMCT and IHMs is the declining appeal of the hospitality industry.

Long working hours reports of ill-treatment at work, and low pay have made careers in this sector less attractive to young talent.

Combined with outdated curricula, policy stagnation, and poor marketing efforts, institutions struggle with over 60% of their seats vacant.

Sadly students leaving after a year or two is prevalent.

Financial instability and a shrinking talent

pipeline are the inevitable outcomes.

To reverse this trend, these institutions must modernize programs, improve student outreach, and work closely with the industry to make this an appealing vocation. ■

## ‘The quality of the faculty is a bigger concern’

### Q Are NCHMCT and IHMs still relevant in addressing the talent gaps in the hospitality industry?

The gap has exponentially increased as staff are overworked, underpaid and underappreciated leading to an exodus to the service industry. Further hospitality industry aspirants used IHMs as a means to this end (joining the industry). Over the years since the industry lost its shine the numbers and quality of aspirants have dropped. Now, IHMs no longer select; they take what they get. With low-quality ingredients can any Chef turn our masterpieces?

### Q Should NCHMCT and IHMs undergo a significant overhaul to meet modern industry demands?

The syllabus needs significant changes but that won't solve the problem. The industry is unattractive. Modern or traditional industry requires staff with an attitude of Atthi Devo Bhava, discipline, punctuality, humility etc. Hire for attitude, educate for knowledge and train for skills.

### Q Do you believe that closing down NCHMCT and IHMs would solve the challenges in hospitality education?

The quality of colleges is a secondary issue. Primarily the industry is unattractive. Improve the culture within hospitality organisations and feel the difference.

### Q What is the biggest issue facing NCHMCT and IHMs today?

The syllabus needs upgrades and making it relevant. The quality of the faculty is a bigger concern. Most faculty have quit the industry - they couldn't stand the heat. Now, how are they to inspire or prepare students for the challenges ahead? Infrastructure in colleges needs upgrades. Would you support the integration of modern learning systems like hybrid, phygital, and open credit systems in hospitality education?

Yes of course but this will not solve the problem.

### Q Should private institutions or alternative platforms replace the current public structure of hospitality education?

Hospitality staff are from middle and lower-income families. Privatisation of hospitality colleges and universities will make it prohibitively expensive and out of reach for this target group.

### Q What role should the industry play in shaping the future of NCHMCT and IHMs?

Industry should support it but at arm's length. Leave education to educationist. The service industry at large is the new horizon. Students should be prepared for it along with hospitality.

### Q What is the best way forward for NCHMCT and IHMs?

Shape up the syllabus. Upgrade faculty. Upgrade facilities. ■



**Dominic Costabir**  
Director  
Hospitality Training Institute (HTI)  
and Woosh Biz

## 'Private institutions or alternative platforms cannot replace the existing IHMs'

### Q Are NCHMCT and IHMs still relevant in addressing the talent gaps in the hospitality industry?

Yes, institutions like NCHMCT and IHMs remain relevant in addressing the talent gaps in the hospitality industry. They continue to play a crucial role in providing a structured education and training platform for aspiring hospitality professionals.

IHMs offer structured and standardised curriculum that cover a wide range of areas, including food production, front office operations, housekeeping, and management. They provide practical training through industrial internships and on-campus labs, ensuring students gain practical experience. These institutions have a strong reputation and their degrees are recognised globally.

They attract students from diverse backgrounds, prepare them into skilled professionals. We should acknowledge their contribution in providing thousands of families an affordable opportunity to educate their children and make a living by serving the hospitality Industry. They have also given us industry leaders domestically as well as globally throughout the years which cannot be undermined.

### Q Should NCHMCT and IHMs undergo a significant overhaul to meet modern industry demands?

Yes, I strongly believe that change is the only constant and over time, everything evolves. There is a pressing need for a shift in their approach and workings to foster innovation, growth, and adaptability. The hospitality industry is evolving rapidly with advancements in technology, sustainability practices, and changing customer preferences. To stay relevant, curriculum and training methods need to align with these trends. Emerging fields like revenue management, data analytics, digital marketing, and AI-driven hospitality services require specialised knowledge that IHMs need to incorporate.

As a matter of fact, stronger collaboration with the industry can ensure that students are prepared in line with the industry needs. To compete globally, IHMs must benchmark themselves against international hospitality institutions. Adopting global best practices and fostering an international outlook among students will enhance their employability and broaden their perspectives.

Drawing parallels, it is worth noting that a similar situation arose about four decades ago when the industry faced comparable challenges. At that time, necessary initiatives were taken, leading to substantial growth and development.

As a suggestion, I would recommend the establishment of an advisory body comprising representatives from the Ministry, NCHMCT, IHMs, associations, and industry thought leaders. This collaborative approach can help in shaping strategies that align with contemporary trends and ensure these institutions remain at the forefront of hospitality education and industry requirements.

Additionally, I would suggest to have a running hospitality establishment within the IHM premises so as to give students hands-on

practical learning while being a revenue generating source too.

I feel that adapting to the changing dynamics of the industry is not just necessary for the relevance of NCHMCT and IHMs but also for the future success of their students and the broader hospitality ecosystem.

### Q Do you believe that closing down NCHMCT and IHMs would solve the challenges in hospitality education?

No, certainly not! We deplore all such suggestions.

Some may believe that NCHMCT and IHMs have served their purpose at a particular time period during the evolution of the hospitality education and development of the industry and now they

have outlived their time and are liability than assets but I don't agree with this. Yes, there are few aspects where there is a need to relook and change the way it works but closing it down will only escalate the issues. The IHMs have a good track record in preparing industry leaders, they really have done this for years. Throughout the years, they have been surviving on their own and have never been any financial burden on the exchequer.

Closing IHMs will also increase the cost of education by around 3-4 times. It will be a grave injustice to that very section of people who still see value in having their children join hospitality trade but now will not be able to afford it and be forced into choosing other vocation.

We certainly need to look for solutions beyond shutting down NCHMCT and IHMs and what is the guarantee that doing this will benefit the industry.



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Vice President  
FHRAI

### Q What is the biggest issue facing NCHMCT and IHMs today?

I personally feel that Ministry of Tourism and NCHMCT need professionals with domain expertise to run hospitality education. IHMs need more autonomy in all areas - Academia, administration and Finance.

In IHMs, there is need to infuse domain experts along with competent professional leadership and faculty. The teaching infrastructure in IHMs require upgradation to match with the industry practice. The faculty needs to be trained accordingly. They need to adapt their curriculum to keep pace with industry trends and emerging technologies, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for the evolving hospitality landscape. They should have industry collaborations to facilitate placements and industry exposure for students. There should be proper classification of programs and courses that fit the levels of employment in the industry - skill modules at vocational level, certificate level professional programs, supervisory level diploma or vocational associate degree programs, management degree programs, business administration and leadership programs, etc.

### Q Would you support the integration of modern learning systems like hybrid, phygital, and open credit systems in hospitality education?

Yes, definitely.

This integration will surely offer enhanced learning experience to students by providing flexibility, convenience, personalised and interactive learning. It will reduce the cost of education and make it more accessible while offering cultural exchanges and global industry exposure.

This can easily facilitate regular workshops and guest lectures by experienced professionals and industry experts to enhance students' communication, adaptability, and leadership abilities. This will also expose them to industry trends and practices to align their knowledge with real-world demands.

**Q Should private institutions or alternative platforms replace the current public structure of hospitality education?**

No, it is not going to happen. Private institutions or alternative platforms cannot replace the existing IHMs due to their affordability and the reputation.

Since long, we have so many private colleges, some even with international affiliation too. The alternate platforms are new thing, especially there has been spur after the pandemic. There is always scope for all models to co-exist in harmony and keep on preparing globally competitive hospitality workforce.

We should welcome and encourage the private sector to continue to invest and grow private educational institutions, so IHMs can also measure and compare curriculum, teaching standards and more. There is clearly space for all the models to grow side by side.

**Q What role should the industry play in shaping the future of NCHMCT and IHMs? How important is hospitality education for sectors beyond traditional hotels and restaurants?**

The hospitality industry can play a crucial role in shaping the future of NCHMCT and IHMs. The industry can provide the relevant and practical suggestions, inputs and guidance on various matters related with hospitality education.

The industry can help in industry-relevant and skill-based curriculum development as well as faculty development by collaborating on industry

guest lectures, faculty training programs and industry mentorship. Industry and academic institutions can also collaborate on student internships and placements.

Research and Innovation is another area where industry's role can be significant. There can be Industry-Sponsored Research, knowledge sharing between industry and academia through conferences, workshops, and publications. Industry can support student entrepreneurship by providing incubation centres and mentorship programs. They can collaborate to incorporate the latest technology and digital tools into the learning environment and promote sustainable practices in hospitality education, aligning with industry trends.

**Q What is the best way forward for NCHMCT and IHMs?**

During the recently concluded FHRAI HR Summit, this topic was widely discussed and deliberated. As per the discussions and our research, it is evident that NCHMCT and IHMs needs to work closely with the industry. They should openly embrace the reforms, improve curriculum, regularly consult with industry experts. There is need for domain experts who can lead and guide the hospitality education in right direction to prepare the workforce. The hospitality education needs to satisfy the students' aspirations and the industry's needs. This will make India achieve global competitiveness in the hospitality world.

In my opinion also, the best way forward is to work together.

**Q Do you think a broader national conversation involving stakeholders is needed to determine the future of NCHMCT and IHMs?**

Yes, indeed! NCHMCT and IHMs need to partner and actively collaborate with the industry and especially not to keep the industry away and impose upon what they perceive to be good or right for the industry. I am very optimistic as NCHMCT itself is very receptive at present and industry is equally serious to also work on its own failure and weaknesses. This is the right time to take measured initiatives and script the future of hospitality industry. ■



# Luxury Hospitality in India: A Market on the Rise

India's luxury hospitality sector is experiencing a transformative boom, fueled by the rising affluence of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), growing corporate travel, and an increasing preference for exclusive, immersive experiences. Post-pandemic recovery has accelerated this growth, with the market projected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.92% between 2023 and 2029, reaching a valuation of USD 51.11 billion, according to industry reports. Leading this evolution are brands like Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center and Grand Mercure Bangalore, which are reshaping the luxury hospitality landscape with personalised services, state-of-the-art facilities, and tailored guest experiences. To explore the market sentiment and the demand for luxury hospitality among HNWIs and Indian travelers, **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with industry leaders to understand the market sentiment.

## The Rising Demand for Luxury

"India's luxury hospitality market is experiencing dynamic growth," says Varun Malhotra, Director of Sales and Marketing at Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center. "Bengaluru, as a tech powerhouse and cosmopolitan hub, is seeing a surge in demand for luxury stays that blend sophistication with tailored services. Sheraton Grand is perfectly positioned to meet these needs, offering world-class amenities, cutting-edge convention facilities, and culturally immersive experiences."

This demand is mirrored in other metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Hyderabad, where a growing number of affluent domestic travelers are seeking exclusive stays. Additionally, destinations like Goa, Rajasthan, and Kerala cater to leisure travelers looking for unique, personalised getaways.

Rahul Jadav, Director of Sales and Marketing at Grand Mercure Bangalore, emphasises the role of 'bleisure' travel in driving demand. "The convergence of business and leisure has reshaped expectations. Guests now seek impeccable business amenities alongside indulgent leisure experiences. It's about creating value that goes beyond the traditional hotel stay," he explains.

## Average Room Rates on the Rise

The luxury segment's growth is evident in the steady increase in Average Room Rates (ARRs). According to Malhotra, ARR in



**Varun Malhotra**  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
Sheraton Grand Bengaluru



**Rahul Jadav**  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
Grand Mercure Bangalore

the upscale luxury segment have grown by 5-8% from FY2024 to FY2025, fueled by the resurgence of business and leisure travel. Premium hotels in key cities like Bengaluru are now reaching or surpassing pre-pandemic rate levels.

Jadav adds, "At Grand Mercure Bangalore, we've seen a remarkable 30% increase in ARR's compared to pre-COVID levels. This aligns with industry data indicating ARR's across India's premium hotels now range between INR 7,200–INR 7,400, with projections reaching INR 8,000 in FY2025."

The recovery is supported by major international events such as the G20 Summit and ICC World Cup, which have driven higher occupancy rates and stronger demand. Despite some softening in leisure destinations like Goa, overall market conditions remain robust, with a compounded growth in room nights at 7.2% and RevPAR growth at 7.8% over the past five years.

### What Guests Want: Personalisation and Purpose

The evolving preferences of luxury travelers are reshaping the hospitality landscape. "Guests

today are seeking meaningful, personalised experiences," says Jadav. "At Grand Mercure Bangalore, where 24% of our business comes from long-staying guests, we focus on blending world-class amenities with local cultural immersion to ensure an unforgettable stay."

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield, too, has adapted to these trends by offering bespoke concierge services, exclusive culinary experiences, and advanced wellness programs. "Luxury is no longer just about opulence," says Malhotra. "It's about exclusivity, personalisation, and sustainability. At Sheraton Grand, we've integrated eco-friendly initiatives and high-tech amenities to cater to the modern luxury traveller."

### A Growth Trajectory Backed by Market Dynamics

The projected USD 51.11 billion valuation for the luxury hospitality market by 2029 underscores the sector's immense potential. This growth is driven by rising disposable incomes, the expansion of domestic and international tourism, and the increasing demand for experiential travel.

"India's affluent travelers are no longer looking abroad for high-end experiences," says Jadav. "With the market projected to grow from USD 2.72 billion in 2024 to USD 4.39 billion by 2029, there is significant room for innovation and elevation of guest experiences."

Malhotra adds, "Bengaluru's business tourism and MICE activities, coupled with the city's attraction for high-net-worth individuals, make it a focal point for luxury hospitality. Our focus

on sustainable luxury and culturally immersive offerings ensures that we're well-positioned to capture this demand."

### Challenges and Opportunities

While the luxury segment is thriving, challenges persist. The need for sustainable practices, rising competition, and evolving consumer expectations require hotels to continually innovate. Both Malhotra and Jadav agree that the future of luxury hospitality lies in creating unique experiences that combine luxury with purpose and authenticity.

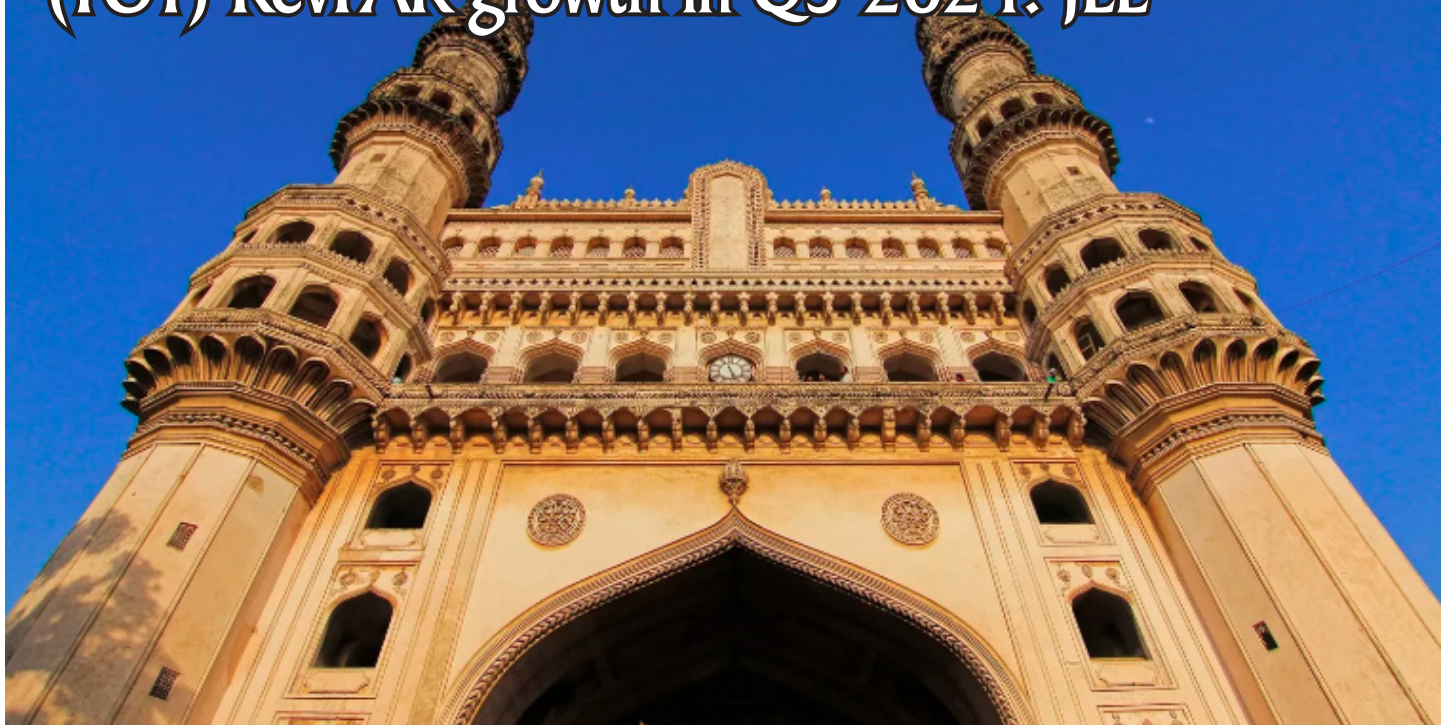
"At Sheraton Grand, we believe in staying ahead of the curve," says Malhotra. "Whether it's through advanced wellness programs, technology integration, or sustainability initiatives, our goal is to provide experiences that resonate with today's discerning traveler."

Jadav echoes this sentiment. "As travellers prioritise wellness, sustainability, and personalisation, it's essential to adapt. Grand Mercure Bangalore is committed to these values, ensuring that every guest leaves with lasting memories." ■

*asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in*



# Hospitality sector registers 10.8% Year-on-Year (YOY) RevPAR growth in Q3 2024: JLL



HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The hospitality sector continued to witness Year-on-Year (YoY) growth in performance in Q3 2024 (July – September 2024), primarily driven by a rise in Average Daily Rate (ADR), resulting

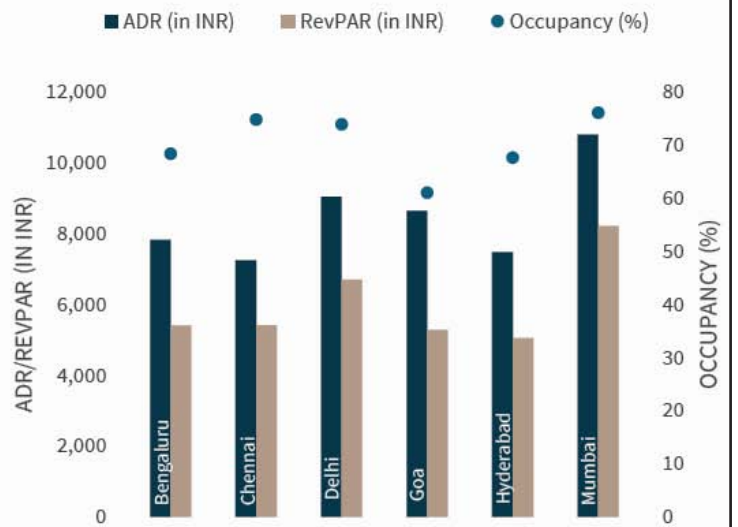
in a RevPAR growth of 10.8%. In terms of quarterly growth, the sector continued to mark its ascendancy, registering a positive RevPAR growth of 2% Q-o-Q in Q3 2024, compared to Q2 2024. This can be attributed to the typical nature of the third quarter of the year witnessing higher corporate travel as compared to the second quarter, according to JLL's

## Key Hotel Market Performance

Cities	Q3 2024		
	Change over same period last year		
	RevPAR Change (%)	OCC Change (pp)	ADR Change (%)
Bengaluru	↑ 15	↑ 2.9	↑ 7.8
Chennai	↑ 17.7	↑ 4.7	↑ 11.5
Delhi	↑ 1.4	↑ 5.4	↓ -3.2
Goa	↑ 1.8	↔ -0.6	↓ -2.2
Hyderabad	↑ 23.6	↔ 0.7	↑ 16.2
Mumbai	↑ 16.8	↔ 0.1	↑ 15.7

Source: STR RevPAR: ↑ Increase ↔ Stable ↓ Decrease

## Q3 2024 Performance Trend Chart



Source: STR

Hotel Momentum India (HMI) Q3, 2024.

Apart from a slight decrease in the average daily rate (ADR) of Delhi and Goa, all other major markets (Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai) showed considerable growth in ADR and revenue per available room figures, with Hyderabad leading the list. Although occupancy levels remained relatively stable across the board in Q3 2024 compared to Q3 2023, ADR levels improved, leading to an increase in RevPAR across all major markets.

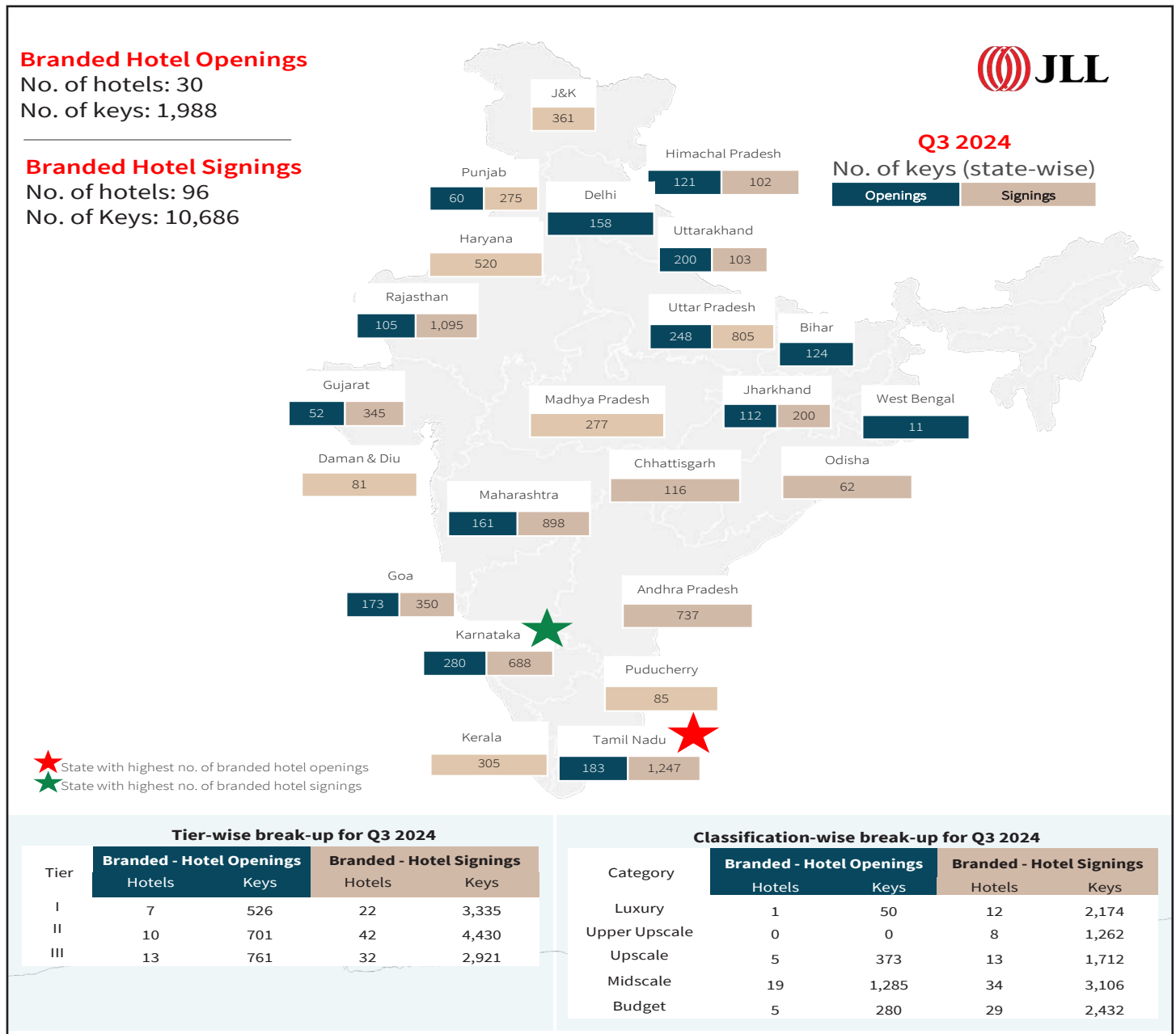
The upcoming quarter is anticipated to benefit from the continued resurgence of corporate travel, festivals, and other corporate and social Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE). The industry's strong momentum and sustained domestic demand for business travel, as well as corporate and social MICE events, will drive a busy season.

In Q3 2024, there were 96 branded hotel signings comprising 10,686 rooms. Furthermore, 12 hotels signed were conversions of other hotels, accounting for 11% of the inventory signed in Q3 2024. Branded hotel

openings comprised 30 hotels with 1,988 keys, of which approximately 80% of the total number of keys were located in Tier II and III cities, including Tirupati, Udaipur, Ranchi, and Mussoorie to name a few.

Hyderabad emerged as the RevPAR growth leader in Q3 2024 registering a growth of 23.6% over Q3 2023, followed by Chennai and Mumbai with YoY growth of 17.7% and 16.8% respectively.

“Backed by strong performance of hotels across India, we continue to see investors moving money in this asset class. There is strong momentum on both greenfield developments as well as operating assets across business and leisure markets. Although the summer season has brought down corporate room night demand in Q3 2024, the sector continued to demonstrate growth in average daily rates (ADR) compared to Q3 2023. Looking ahead, the sector's performance in the upcoming quarter appears promising due to the festival season, general rise in domestic corporate travel, the strengthening of MICE events, weddings, and other social gatherings”, said Jaideep Dang, Managing Director, Hotels and Hospitality Group, India, JLL. ■



# An Indian EV Traveller | Truly Discharged

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



India has set ambitious targets for EV penetration by 2030, aiming for 30% in private cars, 70% in commercial vehicles, 40% in buses, and 80% in two- and three-wheelers. This translates to a goal of 80 million EVs on Indian roads by 2030. For sustainability sensitive folks like me, early EV adopters, the clean energy approach to mobility and urban EV commuting experience, was a distinct pleasure in the beginning. It warms one's heart to see city buses with green number plates, committed to reducing the AQI in the maximum city. Yet reality bites when an EV hits the road on a cross country vista, to examine a potential transition to more sustainable tourism. For the Indian EV traveller, there appear to be a plethora of service providers, charging options, pricing offers and apps. Yet the reality of our charging infrastructure leaves a lot to be desired. This corroborated, from a recent EV driving experience having bravely set out from Mumbai to visit the state's tourism and cultural capital, now called Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, with a 27 KWH battery powered EV last week, mission clean travel.

Kudos to the Hindu Hriday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samriddhi Mahamarg. Driving on this, an ICE engine cuts down travelling time dramatically. A 300 plus kilometre distance can be covered in under 5 hours from Mumbai. This infrastructure makes one's heart swell with pride as the driving experience unfolds, irrespective of some minor niggles, road closures and chinks in the road armour. The driving experience is as close to world-class as it gets, in comparison with the former state of road travel in the past, particularly in Maharashtra's prime heritage attraction, formerly called Aurangabad. HHSBTMSM has two rest stops where EV charging stations are merely showpieces! Having tested this on three occasions, within the past few weeks, the EV traveller is left stranded on a 200 plus km stretch of pure driver's joy. In contrast, the charging process has been nearly perfected on the other side at the Mumbai Pune Expressway, at least in the food court stops and HP gas stations.

Impressive when you download the HP eCharge app, the UX though somewhat cumbersome, delivers the goods in a first charging option available in Khalapur. Important to mention, that the back-end responds on call proactively and spontaneously, if there are plug-in niggles. One wonders why this cannot become a standard across all HP energy stations! Having said that, the real challenge emerges only thereafter, as we drive towards Pune! A recommended detour towards Talegaon and Chakan through the Dehu-Alandi exit, is when the charging adventure kicks in. While apps and finders show a Statiq charger, its ownership is questionable. Calls to the advertised number on the public charging device result in a merry-go-round from manufacturer to service provider with limited liability. They bounce you off to location providers claiming that, the electrical connection is the premise owner's responsibility. An enterprising security guard says that the charging point is not within his circle of influence/concern. And this in the land of *Atithi Devo Bhava*, leaders in service delivery excellence.

Enter global service provider Shell Select in a swanky new avatar, evocative of gas stations abroad. The quality of service here must be commended. The charging premises, the retail options as well as the sheer quality of the 120 KWH charging terminal is praiseworthy. After a few calls back and forth to their Gurgaon support centre, a high quality UX/UI is experienced in their mobile app. An enterprising manager also actually walked out to assist plug in to a high-quality charge, that then

lasted the rest of the journey until the next pit-stop. The speed, updates and ease of use of the terminal, definitely leaves you with the intention to come back for more. Now here is a standard worth emulating, but is sadly inconsistent in the multi-generation chargers sprinkled all over the EV traveller's journey. After a fairly engaging driving experience in what is real, two-way, unstructured, state highway traffic, one reaches Shikrapur just outside Pune. This round-about can be well avoided, if HP e-Chargers on HHSBTMSM make sure that they uphold their promise of delivering happiness!

Just outside Dharashiv (formerly known as Ahmednagar or Nagar) lies a popular pit-stop called Smile Stone. The Tata charger (from an ancient generation of chargers) prominently installed, did not function, on account of a 'hardware' problem, a shock for the now depleted EV battery. A lackadaisical phone support system, mechanically asks you to contact a closed dealership in Nagar at 2030 hrs. Google comes to the rescue recommending back-tracking 8 kms towards Pune, to a prominent industrial location called Supa. Fortunately, and hearteningly now, an HP eCharge station remains accessible (though the charger randomly shuts down on account of a 'server-problem' without warning). The relief comes only when the interface decides to let the charge progress to 93%, where one reaches a sense of comfort to re-start the onward journey. And this is the third charge to the 27 KWH battery, prescribed charging between 40% and 80%, to enjoy a consistent EV driving experience.

Many hotels today, boast CCS-2 charging stations for guest cars, as do public fast-charging ports. These are known to kill battery life from repeated use, understandably eight to ten continuous fast charges kill the EV battery. This despite multiple auto manufacturers providing 7-year warranties on EV batteries. The real sustainability question to answer, is how these batteries would be recycled, repurposed or even decimated, considering the nature of lithium-ion residue after that 7-year period or earlier! Since many hotels that use EVs for airport transfers have slow charging stations, it allows for a dramatic reduction in per km driving costs. Add smoother, noiseless and nimble drives, on urban roads, where quick pick-up responsiveness is needed in perennial traffic jams. While such luxurious driving experience in EVs are welcome, rising transfer costs to recover initial CAPEX mandates debate. Logistics have evolved with better technological options; it does raise questions on their sustainability.

For those familiar with my previous writing on SUSCONPAR (Sustainability Contribution Per Available Room) in light of the empirical inadequacy of ADR, ARR and REVPAR, the use of EVs in hotel operations represents both sides of the sustainability coin. While on the one hand clean energy, reduced per kilometre costs and a high-quality driving experience are welcome, initial CAPEX for EV adoption needs simplification through attractive leasing arrangements. On the other hand, longer-term impacts need to be examined more closely for its ambivalent sustainability. The proactivity with which hospitality service providers need to assess replaceable energy and dying battery packs is a critical carbon question. The quality of driveable roads will only get better



with time, given new consumer obsession with powerful ICE engines! So the speed of expensive EV adoption represents a genuine challenge. And while 1 in 3 vehicles are mandated to be EVs in the near future, the profusion of newer ICE models on our roads spewing fumes from fossil fuels is a glaring contradiction. EVs are definitely a step in the right direction for mobility, baby steps like charging infrastructure, renewable battery packs are moot.

Finally, after reaching destination IXU, 15 hours from departure, for a journey which can be completed in under 5 hours using the HHSBTMSM (provide 2 additional hours for charging, in a relevantly viable alternative), crawling sustainably to Maharashtra's heartland, truly beleaguered and beaten to exhaustion, remains the other option! Sustainability, clean energy, smooth driving experience aside, the basis to achieve clean

mobility goals; needs a functional charging backbone, currently fractured in multiple places. For an Indian EV traveller, the passion for clean energy travel is bludgeoned, and as for the power (pun intended) one needs to continue driving, it is fully re-liquidated in favour of fossil fuel. Imagine the implications of EV adoption in hotels, hospitality, healthcare, logistics, transportation using sustainable energy! If charging methodologies including instantly replaceable batteries or parking lots with charging points don't take centre stage soon, the effects could be counter-productive. And really, of what avail is EV travel using clean energy if inaccessible, truly discharged? ■

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

## FLAG OFF



### The Leela Hyderabad

The hotel offers 156 rooms and suites, designed to reflect a balance of modern luxury and the cultural legacy of the Deccan Plateau. The interiors draw inspiration from the region's storied heritage, featuring bespoke design elements, intricate craftsmanship, and curated art pieces. Set on 2.5 acres in the heart of the city, the hotel blends business and leisure, catering to the discerning traveller.

The hotel offers a curated selection of world-class dining venues providing an unmatched culinary experience. It also features a dedicated wellness center spanning 1,900 sq. m. offering a luxurious spa, fitness facilities, and a serene pool area. With over 930 sq. m. of event space, including a stunning terrace courtyard, The Leela Hyderabad is an ideal venue for both corporate gatherings and social celebrations.

### Cygnett Inn Kharagpur, West Bengal

This full-service, midscale hotel will cater to the rising demand for quality and affordable accommodations in Kharagpur.

Cygnett Inn Kharagpur has an inventory of over 75 rooms positioned to meet the needs of both business and leisure travellers. It will feature 6,000 square feet of banquet facilities and 5,000 square feet of manicured lawns for events and gatherings. The property also offers a diverse range of dining and leisure amenities, including an all-day dining restaurant, a lobby lounge, a bar, health club and a swimming pool.



### La Estoria, Goa – IHCL SeleQtions

La Estoria, translating to 'The Story', celebrates the intricate history and modern elegance of Goa. Located a short walk from Candolim Beach, this 122-key resort weaves Goa's vibrant cultural tapestry into its architectural elements. Each room offers a private balcony, inviting guests to embrace the seaside serenity.

Guests can enjoy a curated culinary journey at Trattoria, renowned for its authentic Italian fare since 1981, and unwind at Canterbury Bar, which exudes old-Goan charm. The resort also features a modern gym filled with natural light, an inviting open swimming pool framed by swaying palms, and a spa offering a retreat.



### Hafele's Columbia Series Architectural Lights

Hafele's Loox Range has been meeting the demands for lighting in furniture as well as the growing needs for networking and digitalization since the last 10 years. The solutions offered within this range maximize simplicity and flexibility as well as assure high reliability. The range presents itself as a unique combination of elegant design and state of the art technology making it the perfect choice for any home furniture application, be it Task Lighting for Kitchen cabinets and plinths, Decorative Lighting for Living Room Showcases, Mood Lighting for Bedroom Applications or pure Functional Lighting in Wardrobes.



### GRAFF India Unveils Exquisite Festive Collection

GRAFF India, the global leader in luxury faucets and shower systems, unveils a stunning festive collection designed to transform living spaces with elegance, functionality, and innovation. Blending timeless artistry with advanced engineering, the festive assortment draws inspiration from nature, architecture, classic automotive design, and the opulence of Art Deco, offering a range of products that celebrate both tradition and modernity.

### Tilaknagar Industries Launches Mansion House Gold Barrel Whisky

Tilaknagar Industries Limited, one of the leading Indian-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) manufacturers, has announced the unveiling of Mansion House Gold Barrel Whisky, its latest offering under the company's flagship brand, Mansion House.

In the first phase of its launch, Tilaknagar Industries' premium whisky product, a unique blend of Select Scotch Malts and Indian Grain Spirits, has been made available in Assam, India. This will be followed by launch in other key markets across the country.



### Octaga Green Presents Its Premium English Dry Gin, Guy

Octaga Green, a prominent name in the spirits industry and part of the esteemed B.B. Paul Group, proudly announces the launch of the Bom Bay Blanche English Dry Gin, popularly known for its recognition at the prestigious IWSC London for its exceptional quality and unique flavour profile. This premium gin blends the refined tradition of English dry gin with the bold, exotic flavours of Indian spices and botanicals, further cementing Octaga Green's vision as a brand that seamlessly merges heritage with innovation while maintaining a strong focus on sustainability.

## HILTON WORLDWIDE


**Shyam Kumar, General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Bengaluru Whitefield**

Shyam brings with him over two decades of experience in managing Luxury and Upscale Hotels. In his last role as General manager at DoubleTree by Hilton Agra he spearheaded hotels growth, performance and expansion making it the preferred destination for

Upscale weddings and leisure travellers. His innovation and strategic foresight helped elevate hotels reputation in the region. He strongly believes that business is all about spreading light and warmth of hospitality between all stake holders. Personalisation and eye to detail is the new definition of luxury as per him. Empowering team to perform their best is the key leadership style for Shyam.


**Sharin Joseph, Commercial Director, Conrad Bengaluru**

With over 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Sharin will be focusing on various arenas at the property such as business development, budgeting, forecasting, and achieving the hotel's commercial objectives. Sharin's body of work also includes successful stints at Hilton Bangalore Embassy Golflinks, Courtyard by Marriott & Fairfield by Marriott, Bengaluru,

Hyatt, Royal Orchid Hotel etc. Having pursued his Bachelor of Hotel Management degree, Sharin comes with a wide gamut of knowledge pertaining to the industry. He is a result-driven sales leader with a proven track record of success in new client acquisition, managing revenue streams and fostering strong business relationships.

## THE FERN HOTELS


**Gourab Biswas, HR Head, The Fern Brentwood, Mussoorie**

Gourab brings over a decade of experience in human resources, specialising in employee development and fostering inclusive work environments. His background across various sectors of the hospitality industry aligns with The Fern's values of nurturing talent, promoting sustainability, and building a

supportive workplace culture. With extensive expertise in people management and employee engagement, Gourab will lead efforts to strengthen the resort's team and enhance guest experiences.

## MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL


**Rajasekar, Beverage Manager, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel**

With an impressive career spanning over eight years in the hospitality industry, Rajasekar brings a wealth of experience in delivering top-tier guest satisfaction and driving impactful beverage operations.

Rajasekar's career journey has been defined by his successful roles in premier hospitality establishments, most recently at Aloft Bengaluru Outer Ring Road, where he excelled as the Beverage Manager. His contributions included spearheading innovative beverage concepts and introducing cost-effective strategies that elevated the guest experience.


**Ravi Rawat, Assistant Pastry Chef, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel**

Chef Ravi's impressive career spans some of the country's most esteemed establishments, including Grand Hyatt Kochi, The Westin Hyderabad, and Aloft Hotel Bengaluru.

In his new role, Chef Ravi will oversee the bakery and pastry operations at Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center. With his artistic vision and leadership, the hotel's dining experience is set to reach new heights, offering guests an exquisite array of desserts that perfectly complement its world-class hospitality. In his part time hobbies he likes to do food photography and creating innovative recipes.

## ACCOR HOTELS

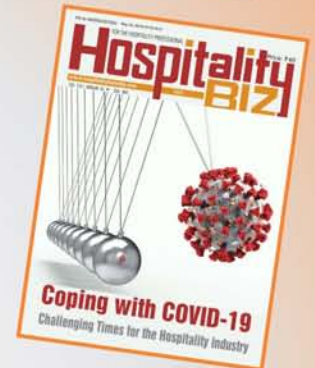

**Puja Singh, Director-Marketing & Communications, Raffles Udaipur**

Singh brings extensive expertise to her role. As Director-Marketing & Communications, Singh will lead the Raffles Udaipur's marketing and communication initiatives with the goal of boosting its profile and establishing a distinguished presence. Working closely with

the management team, she will be instrumental in developing and executing strategies to increase the hotel's visibility. She will also seek out strategic partnerships and collaborations that align with Raffles Udaipur's brand values, aiming to create exclusive guest experiences and strengthen the hotel's competitive edge in the market.

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**Ajay Wadode:** +91 80871 27814  
ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in

**Jagdish Patil:** +91 8007992422  
jagdish.patil@saffronsynergies.in

**Pooja Nalawade:** +91 9769052241  
pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in

**For Subscription**

**Gauri Sawant:** +91 8369080796 | gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in