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# Hospitality BIZ

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**Indian Hospitality Industry  
Poised for Continued  
Growth in 2025**





# 20<sup>th</sup> Hotel Investment Conference - South Asia

8 - 10 April 2025 | The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake

## 20 YEARS

PAST, PRESENT AND *Prophecies*

### SOME NOTABLE SPEAKERS



**Abdulla Al Abdouli**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Marjan



**Anil Chadha**  
Divisional Chief Executive  
ITC Limited Hotels Division



**Anuraag Bhatnagar**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Leela Palaces,  
Hotels and Resorts



**Ashish Jakanwala**  
Chairman, MD & CEO  
SAMHI Hotels



**Atul Chordia**  
Chairman  
Panchshil Realty



**Atul Jain**  
Chief Operating Officer  
India, Sri Lanka, & Bangladesh  
Best Western Hotels



**Barbara Muckermann**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Kempinski Hotels



**Deep Kalra**  
Founder  
MakeMyTrip



**Dillip Rajakarier**  
Group CEO, Minor International  
& CEO Minor Hotels



**Jatin Khanna**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts



**Kevin Goh**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Ascott Limited



**Mudassar Naqib**  
Director Development South West  
Asia IHG Hotels & Resorts



**Pooja Ray**  
Managing Director,  
Mayfair Hotels & Resorts



**Ranju Alex**  
Area VP - South Asia  
Marriott International



**Ritesh Agarwal**  
Founder & Group CEO  
OYO



**Sébastien Bazin**  
Chairman and CEO  
Accor



**Shwetank Singh**  
Executive Director  
Chalet Hotels



**Suhail Kannampilly**  
Managing Director  
Concept Hospitality



**Vikram Lalvani**  
Managing Director & CEO  
Sterling Holiday Resorts



**Vikram Oberoi**  
Chief Executive Officer & MD  
The Oberoi Group

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## NRAI grossly condemns Zomato & Swiggy doing private labelling and selling food by themselves through their Q Comm apps

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), representing the collective voice of the Indian restaurant industry, strongly opposes the recent foray of food delivery giants Zomato and Swiggy into quick commerce through private-label food delivery. This move undermines the principles of fair competition and poses a significant threat to the viability of thousands of restaurants across India.

Zomato and Swiggy, originally established as marketplace platforms, are now leveraging their dominant positions and access to restaurant data to venture into private-label food delivery either directly or via their subsidiary. This strategy not only cannibalizes the business of restaurants that rely on these platforms but also raises serious concerns under the Copyright Act and related laws.

### Violation of Marketplace Neutrality

As marketplace platforms, Zomato and Swiggy were built on the premise of providing equal opportunities for all restaurant partners. Their entry into delivering food through private labelling and selling on their platforms and also delivering private labelled food via their own quick commerce platforms such as Blinkit Bistro and Swiggy Café / Snacc fundamentally

violates this neutrality, creating an uneven playing field. By monetizing data derived from restaurant partners, they are exploiting a conflict of interest that could decimate the very ecosystem they claim to support.

### Legal Recourse Underway

The NRAI views this as a clear case of misuse of private labels, infringing upon intellectual property rights under the Copyright Act. We are committed to pursuing all available legal remedies to safeguard the interests of the restaurant industry. This includes filing complaints with relevant regulatory authorities and initiating legal action to prevent Zomato and Swiggy from monopolizing the market.

Speaking on the announcement, Sagar Daryani, President of the NRAI, said: Quick commerce in food is here to stay, grow and add more zing to the food delivery space. People want more convenience and so it will add an edge to the restaurants that can adapt to it. We are completely for it. What we are absolutely not okay with is Zomato and Swiggy doing private labelling and selling food by themselves. In Zomato via Blinkit's separate Bistro app and Swiggy launching Snacc for quick food delivery.



They have all our data which they do not share with us. For us there is complete consumer masking. We have no reason to not believe them migrating our customer to the

products they sell as private labels on their apps. Be it data from a tea brand, biryani or momo. We are definitely considering taking a serious legal route. As long as these aggregators are okay working with restaurants and enable restaurants to go quick, we're absolutely fine with it but we will not want to be demolished as an industry where they end up selling our similar products. This has not been allowed for even larger E commerce players operating in the marketplace.

We were always given a verbal assurance by the aggregators that they would never resort to private labelling. This is definitely a breach of trust is what we feel. Our businesses will get severely impacted with these platforms launching their private labels.

The NRAI calls on all stakeholders, including restaurants, customers, and regulators, to join hands in ensuring a fair and competitive food delivery ecosystem. Together, we can safeguard the future of India's vibrant culinary landscape. ■

## OYO Posts INR 114.64 Crore Net Profit in FY24 Despite Revenue Decline

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

OYO Hotels and Homes Pvt Ltd, a major player in the hospitality sector, reported a net profit of INR 114.64 crore for FY24, marking a significant turnaround from the net loss recorded in FY23. This positive result underscores the company's first profitable year since its inception.

However, OYO's operational revenue dropped by 15% to INR 1,112.83 crore as of March 2024, compared to INR 1,312.61 crore in the previous year. Similarly, the company's total revenue fell to INR 1,179 crore in March 2024, down from INR 1,400 crore in the same period last year.

The company recorded an EBITDA of INR 153 crore for March 2024, a stark improvement



from a loss of INR 204 crore in the prior year. This achievement marks OYO's first positive EBITDA since 2020.

For FY24, OYO reported INR 5,388 crore in total revenue, reflecting a marginal decline of 1.37% from INR 5,463 crore in FY23. Despite the dip, adjusted EBITDA for FY24 soared by 215% to INR 877 crore, compared to INR 277

crore in FY23.

The company's per-share earnings (EPS) also turned positive, with a gain of INR 0.36 per share in FY24, as opposed to a loss of INR 1.93 per share in FY23. Meanwhile, total expenses were reduced by 13% to INR 4,500 crore in FY24, down from INR 5,207 crore in FY23. OYO significantly expanded its hotel portfolio in FY24, increasing its inventory to 18,103 properties, up from 12,938 in FY23. This growth was attributed to strong business performance, rising demand, and an improved market outlook.

This turnaround in profitability follows eight consecutive quarters of positive adjusted EBITDA, underscoring the company's strategic focus on cost optimization and market expansion. ■



# 'HICSA to emerge as the global platform for thought leadership and innovation in hospitality investment over the next decade'



This year marks a monumental milestone for the Hotel Investment Conference South Asia (HICSA) as it celebrates its 20th anniversary. Over the past two decades, HICSA has firmly established itself as a premier platform for innovation, collaboration, and dialogue in the hospitality industry, bringing together industry stalwarts, visionary leaders, and experts from across the globe to drive thought leadership and investment strategies that shape the future of hospitality in South Asia and beyond. Returning to Mumbai, the city where it all began, HICSA 2025 promises to be both nostalgic and forward-looking, with the theme "20 Years: Past, Present & Prophecies" exploring the journey of hospitality over the years while addressing contemporary challenges and opportunities ahead. Boasting a stellar lineup of speakers including Sébastien Bazin, Vikram Oberoi, Anuraag Bhatnagar, Aditya Ghosh, and Barbara Muckermann, this year's edition is set to host over 600 participants. As HICSA looks toward the future, its vision is clear—expanding its influence across emerging markets in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, while remaining the definitive platform for thought leadership in hospitality investment. According to **Manav Thadani, Co-founder, Hotelivate**, the 20th edition of HICSA is not just a celebration of past achievements but a stepping stone to an even more dynamic decade ahead.

## Q What is the USP of HICSA 2025?

We celebrate 20 years of Hotel Investment Conference, South Asia (HICSA) this year! This is a momentous occasion, marking two decades of innovation, collaboration, and excellence in the hospitality industry. Over the years, we have brought together thought leaders, industry experts, and passionate professionals from around the globe, creating a dynamic platform for sharing knowledge and best practices. It was only fitting that we went back to Mumbai for this!

## Q Is there a specific theme or focus for this year's edition? Could you please elaborate?

This year the overarching theme is 20 Years: Past, Present & Prophecies. We are dedicated to exploring new frontiers in hospitality, addressing the challenges of today, and embracing the opportunities of tomorrow and hope to continue to shape the future of hospitality, ensuring that our industry remains vibrant, innovative, and welcoming for many more years to come. HICSA started in Mumbai and for its 20th birthday, it was only fitting that we go back to Mumbai. We are also doing the "Owners' Only Meet" at the Grand Hyatt Mumbai, so yes, in a way, going back to Mumbai is nostalgic!

## Q What kind of attendance are you expecting this year, especially after the remarkable turnout of over 700 participants in Bengaluru 2024?

We are looking at more than 600 participants this year but let's see!

## Q Who are some of the prominent speakers or panellists lined up for HICSA 2025?

Some Notable speakers are:

- Abdulla Al Abdoulli, Chief Executive Officer Marjan
- Aditya Ghosh, Co-Founder Akasa Air
- Anil Chadha, Divisional Chief Executive ITC Limited Hotels Division
- Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Executive Officer The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts
- Atul Chordia, Chairman Panchshil Realty
- Barbara Muckermann, Chief Executive Officer Kempinski Hotels
- David Udell, Group President – Asia Pacific – Hyatt

- Dimitris Manikis, President – Europe, Middle East, Eurasia, & Africa, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts
- Dr Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson & MD, The Lalit Suri Hospitality G
- Elie Younes, Executive Vice President & Global Chief Development Officer Radisson Hotel Group
- Pooja Ray, Managing Director, Mayfair Hotels & Resorts
- Gautam Birudavolu, Chief Executive Officer GreenPark Hotels & Resorts
- Haitham Mattar, Managing Director – Middle East, Africa & South West Asia IHG Hotels & Resorts
- Kevin Goh, Chief Executive Officer The Ascott Limited
- Rajeev Menon, President – Asia Pacific (excluding China) Marriott International
- Rajesh Magow, Co-Founder & CEO MakeMyTrip
- Dr.Sanjay Sethi, Managing Director & CEO Chalet Hotels
- Sébastien Bazin, Chairman and CEO Accor
- Vikram Oberoi, Chief Executive Officer & MD The Oberoi Group
- Zubin Saxena, Senior Vice President & Country Head – India Hilton

## Q This being the 20th edition, are there any special celebrations or initiatives planned to mark this milestone?

We actually started with a #20for20 campaign when we opened registrations. For this, we gave the first 20 tickets at INR 20,000 each! This was an expensive initiative for us but saw a great response! We were sold out in 7 minutes! Apart from this, we also have a "Roasted and Toasted" session with Cyrus and Kunal and we are really looking forward to that!

## Q As HICSA celebrates 20 years, what is your vision for the conference in the next decade?

Over the next decade, my vision for HICSA is to solidify its position as the preeminent platform for thought leadership, innovation, and collaboration in the global hospitality investment landscape. While we look at retaining its South Asian essence, attracting delegates, investors, and stakeholders from emerging markets across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa would be on my list for sure. Ideally I would like to forge strategic partnerships with international hospitality organizations to enhance cross-border collaboration and knowledge sharing. ■

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# Top Trends 2025 | Enriching Hospitality Education

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

2025 brings in its wake a series of opportunities despite multiple challenges analysed last year. The first step is to envision a rich future for hospitality education. The next step, garner and redeploy resources, largely intellectual, to make it a distinct reality. Since change begins in the mind, a practical re-imagining of how hospitality talents and prospects could learn this year on is on the anvil. The top five trends that are on my mind: unbounded learning, multidisciplinary empowerment, hybrid models, innovative applications and leveraging AI. Learners will adopt open content sources to gain knowledge access as employment markets demand talented multi-valent associates to meet the exacting demands of a changing workforce. While business imperatives demand innovative approaches, they will need to be backed up by empowered teams. And to that end, dogmatic constraints will give way to potential possibilities to challenge the hospitality education status-quo.

Envision high-school students being able to access best practices shared on smart phones to increase levels of aspiration to engage with industry. Building stickiness with industry norms whether culinary concepts, gourmet dining, grooming standards, tech-enabled business



practice or even simply inspiring interiors, this digital moment of truth is where decisions will be made. For those who choose the profession or pathway of studies, an open environment dip-stick will interest them if vocational experience opens in real worlds. Laboratory practical will be dovetailed with day-to-day exposure in the geography's accessible business provisions. And theory will be learned in a self-paced mode, with the option to drop and seek alternate credits. Building future professionals will be, not by coercion, edict or fear, but by motivation and open choices, early-on in their qualification journey to initiate incubation. Leveraging education policy to practice NEP and NCrF formats will be leader responsibility.

1. **Unbounded Learning:** To address ubiquitous unstructured access to content, academic leaders will focus on creative assessment strategies to build credit accrual processes. Reviewing social media content currency, stitching in industry practice and finally assessing learning outcomes suited to industry requirements will get overhauled in the entire value chain. Early co-creation with industry will ensure positive results in the qualification journey.
2. **Multi-disciplinary Empowerment:** The synergy between vocational skilling and business management will actively metamorphose. The weightage of each one in the light of learner aspiration and industry

requirements will get sharpened. This means that healthcare professionals will benefit from nutritional/culinary knowledge while technology professionals will leverage domain knowledge to enhance app-experiences like food delivery. Domain learning including varied multidisciplinary add-ons, will empower future hospitality leaders.



3. **Hybrid Models:** Practices such as technological and social digitization of knowledge alongside immersive real-world immersion outside controlled environments, will enhance the notion of choice. Imagine a virtual tour through VR/AR to experience a restaurant kitchen or contemporary dining experience to decide if this is what you want the rest of your life to be! Or imagine a 360-degree walk-through inside multiple brand interior experiences or current service provisions, to fathom if you can find meaning in live situations that are on your visor!
4. **Innovative Applications:** Circles of innovation will ultimately lead to the end of dead practices. This is the only way innovation can enter the hospitality learning environment not just incrementally but in a transformational way. APLs and re-certifications will bring in talented yet unqualified workforce elements to enhance future teams. Intrapreneurial risk taking and early start-up incubations supported in institutions will change the way the industry shapes. Focus will shift to co-creating guest experiences rather than competing with such preferences.
5. **Leveraging AI:** The growth of this parallel intelligence in all aspects of human life will gain acceptance in hospitality business and education. The key question to answer will remain the degree to which it is incorporated into curriculum, in-company certifications as well as hands-on application. Will the industry let-go of a high-potential solution to resolve everything from recipe standardization to guest preferences? It is an initiative that will gain active interest. And high profile starred establishments will depend on AI for the much-needed consistency!

While people, culture and talent will remain the single largest variable to deliver business results, the adoption of technology for the purpose of optimization, enhancement and empowerment will define future results. Above all, the integration of people, technology and sustainability will drive business policy as markets evolve and customer preferences change. The real secret to ride into the 2025 journey will be the opening of minds to possibilities that have not been a part of everyday living until now. The pressures to deliver must be matched by the pragmatism to innovate and change, to ensure that the next year does not become a review of constraints but that of achievements. The first barrier to overcome will be that which restricts the fertile human mind in achieving its unbounded potential. And hospitality education will lead the way, co-creating with industry and a high potential business environment. 2025 represents the choice, the challenge will remain our agility to adopt to this change. ■

*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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# SPARE A THOUGHT!

The vibrant and robust Indian ecosystem has led to creating an unmatched growth trajectory for the hospitality industry. The cultural ethos of Indian hospitality, renowned globally for its warm welcome encapsulated in the adage “Atithi Devo Bhava,” is poised to reach new heights. Driven by a combination of evolving consumer preferences, backed by increased business opportunities – resulting in an increase in business travel and further resulting in increase in disposable income for people to travel for leisure; the demand for hotels across the country, and across segments has risen considerably.



Favourable government initiatives, that have resulted in the creation of better business environment, new airports, ports, improved railway network, and better road infrastructure, have all played their role in creating a more robust business environment for the hotels. Not to forget, the interest of large funds for investing in the hospitality segment, has also fueled growth of the segment. There are so many success stories being played out, starting from IHCL aiming at 700 hotels by 2030 with their ‘Accelerate 2030’ strategy under the leadership of Puneet Chhatwal, to various other homegrown brands and international chains announcing the opening up many new hotels in the years to come.

There is still a lot that can be done by the administration to support the industry and to give it its rightful place – for being a crowd puller, a revenue source and an employment generator. The long-standing demands of the industry have been piling up, with a hope for a brighter tomorrow. While there is an opportunity that is being seen in this industry by the outside world, what one fails to see is the hard work and the pain points that goes hidden behind the glitterati. The struggle to ensure everything is picture perfect does not come by only delivering orders, but requires continuous on-the-job surveillance, and that eye for detailing. There has been a lot of talk about a 90-hour work week being propagated on social media, without really thinking that most of the people within the hospitality industry have been practicing it all this time. Is it not time to spare a thought for the hard work and the dedication of this industry players who are helping reimagining the future!

Sumit Jha  
Editor & Business Head

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In the bustling yet serene city of Mysuru, **ibis Styles Mysuru** has carved a niche for itself since its opening in August 2024. As a part of Accor's globally recognized mid-market brand, the hotel offers a unique blend of functionality, creativity, and sustainability, setting it apart in a competitive hospitality market. **Ganeshram Iyer**, the **Hotel Manager**, shares insights into how the property is adapting to the evolving needs of its guests and positioning itself as a standout destination in Mysuru.

## 'We aim to maintain a base occupancy of 30%'

**Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad**

Situated in the heart of Mysuru's industrial area and just 15 minutes from the city center, the property balances business convenience with leisure charm. Inspired by the nearby Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, the hotel's theme reflects the natural beauty of the region. "Our suites and pet-friendly rooms further enhance the appeal, making ibis Styles Mysuru a versatile choice for families, business travelers, and leisure seekers," shares Iyer.

"Our guest profile predominantly includes corporate travelers and leisure guests from Bengaluru, our primary feeder market," explains Iyer. With Mysuru being a popular weekend getaway destination, the hotel caters to these visitors by focusing on the basics—exceptional food and a restful sleep experience. The property also offers eco-friendly exploration options, such as renting electric auto-rickshaws for cultural and historical tours, aligning with its sustainability initiatives.

In its initial months, ibis Styles Mysuru has achieved a 40% occupancy rate, with ambitions to increase this further in 2025. "We aim to maintain a base occupancy of 30%, allowing us to refine our pricing strategy and strengthen ADR," says Iyer. While the city's ARR

averages around INR 5,000, the hotel is optimistic about surpassing this benchmark by focusing on exceptional service and unique guest experiences.

The hotel aligns with Accor's global sustainability goals, implementing measurable green initiatives. "We've introduced in-house bottling for drinking water, sustainable room amenities, and replaced single-use plastic with dispensers for toiletries," says Iyer. Additionally, the property utilizes a government-supported gas pipeline instead of LPG cylinders and is integrating solar energy into its operations. "Promoting sustainable transport, we exclusively offer electric vehicles and auto-rickshaws to guests," he adds.

Post-pandemic, the hospitality industry faces a talent crunch, and ibis Styles Mysuru is no exception.

Iyer emphasizes the importance of attitude over experience when recruiting. "We focus on hiring individuals eager to learn and adapt. Personalized training programs tailored to each team member's strengths help us build a motivated and skilled workforce," he explains.

To cater to Mysuru's growing hospitality demand, the property is set to launch a specialty rooftop bar, KA-16, featuring a unique Sundowner experience.

"Mysuru currently lacks pubs or bars offering Sundowner events, and KA-16 will fill this gap, creating a new attraction for both locals and tourists," Iyer shares.

With increased investments from hospitality brands, Mysuru is poised to grow as a key tier-2 destination. "Cities like Mysuru are becoming hotspots for both leisure and business travel," notes Iyer. "Our Ranganathittu-inspired design and immersive experiences ensure we stay ahead in this evolving market."

As ibis Styles Mysuru continues to innovate and adapt, it sets a benchmark for mid-market hospitality in tier-2 cities. With its commitment to sustainability, guest-centric services, and strategic growth plans, the hotel is redefining hospitality in the cultural hub of Mysuru. "At ibis Styles Mysuru, we're not just meeting expectations; we're creating experiences that guests will cherish," concludes Iyer. ■

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# Indian Hospitality Industry's RevPAR to hit decadal highs in FY2025, and improve further in FY2026: ICRA

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

ICRA expects the revenues of the Indian hospitality industry to grow by 7-9% YoY in FY2025 and 6-8% YoY in FY2026, over the high base of FY2024. Further, ICRA estimates pan-India premium hotel occupancy to improve to ~72-74% in FY2026 from ~70-72% in FY2025. The average room rates (ARRs) for premium hotels are projected to rise to Rs. 7,800-8,000 for full-year FY2025 (up 8% YoY) and subsequently improve further to Rs. 8,000-8,400 in FY2026. ICRA's sample set, comprising 13 large hotel companies, is expected to report strong operating margins of 31-33% for FY2025 and FY2026, against 33% for FY2024 and 20-22% pre-Covid.

Sustained domestic leisure travel, demand from meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE), including weddings, and business travel (despite a temporary lull during the General Elections) have driven demand in YTD FY2025. ICRA anticipates this trend to continue over the next 9-12 months. Spiritual tourism and tier-II cities are expected to contribute meaningfully in FY2026 as well. Domestic tourism has been the prime demand driver in YTD FY2025 and is likely to remain so in the near term. Foreign tourist arrivals (FTA) are yet to recover to pre-Covid levels and the improvement would depend on the global macroeconomic environment.

Vinutaa S, Vice President and Sector Head – Corporate Ratings, ICRA Limited, said: "Demand is expected to remain strong across markets in Q4 FY2025 and FY2026 as underlying drivers remain healthy. Hotel-specific metrics would, however, depend on location, competition and other property-related dynamics. Further, domestic tourism would be the prime driver, with FTA improvement depending on the global macro-economic environment. Mumbai and NCR, being gateway cities, are likely to report occupancy north of 75% for full-year FY2025 and FY2026, benefitting from transient passengers, business travellers and MICE events. The ARR's are likely to witness healthy YoY increase in FY2025 and FY2026 across markets. This sharp rise in ARR's of premium hotels will result in spillover of demand to mid-scale hotels."

The demand outlook over the medium



term remains healthy, supported by a confluence of factors, including improvement in infrastructure and air connectivity, favourable demographics, and anticipated growth in large-scale MICE events, with the opening of multiple new convention centres in the last few years, among others. Healthy demand amid relatively lower supply would lead to higher ARR's. Several hotels have also been undergoing renovation, refurbishment and upgradation in the last few quarters, and these are likely to support the ARR's further, going forward. Larger players would also benefit from revenues/share of profits generated from hotel expansions through management contracts and operating leases.

Sustenance of a large part of the cost-rationalisation measures undertaken during the Covid period, along with operating leverage benefits, has resulted in the sharp expansion in margins compared to pre-Covid levels. The staff-to-room ratio remains ~15-20% lower than the pre-Covid levels. Companies have increased their usage of renewable power while pass-through of the cost inflation and strict control on fixed cost increase have also supported margins. Asset-light expansions have been margin-accretive for larger hotel chains. ICRA's sample set, comprising 13 large hotel companies, is expected to report strong

operating margins of 31-33% for FY2025 and FY2026, against 33% for FY2024 and 20-22% pre-Covid. However, within the sample, it is likely to be a mixed bag, depending on renovations and increase in employee expenses amidst growing demand. De-leveraging of balance sheets has led to lower interest costs and is likely to support net margins.

"The healthy demand uptick has resulted in a pick-up in supply announcements and commencement of deferred projects in the last 24-30 months. Several global brands have made their entry into India. However, supply, which is expected to grow at a CAGR of 4.5-5% at least until FY2026, would lag demand. Compared to the downcycle in FY2009, which saw untimely supply increases of over 15% of the inventory at the bottom of the cycle during FY2009-2013, the current low inventory growth is expected to support the upcycle, as demand improves over the medium term. A large part of the new supply is through management contracts and operating leases. Land availability issues currently constrain supply addition in the premium micro-markets in metros and larger cities. The addition to premium hotel supply in these areas is largely on account of rebranding or property upgradation and the greenfield projects are largely in the suburbs." Vinutaa added. ■



In the heart of Arunachal Pradesh, Tawang is emerging as one of India's most sought-after border tourism destinations. Spearheading this transformation is **Vivanta Tawang**, a luxury property managed by the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL). Under the leadership of **Sandeep Makroo, General Manager**, the hotel is setting new benchmarks in luxury, sustainability, and community engagement while showcasing the untouched beauty of the region. In an exclusive conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee**, Makroo outlines the challenges, opportunities, and vision behind this groundbreaking project.



## ‘Vivanta Tawang is not just a destination—it’s a journey into serenity’

“Tawang’s pristine landscapes and cultural richness uniquely position it as a rising star in India’s tourism landscape,” says Sandeep Makroo, General Manager, Vivanta Tawang. While destinations like Leh and Ladakh have long dominated border tourism, Makroo believes Tawang is set to emerge as a compelling alternative.

“India’s border regions remain largely untapped compared to established destinations,” he explains. “Tawang, with its breathtaking beauty, strategic location, and cultural depth, offers an unmatched experience for travelers seeking adventure and serenity. This makes it an ideal destination for a luxury brand like Taj to pioneer and transform into a must-visit location.”

Makroo believes that Tawang aligns perfectly with evolving travel preferences in India. “As disposable incomes rise and travelers seek exotic

locations to create unforgettable memories, Vivanta Tawang stands out. It offers the perfect blend of adventure and serenity, catering to the desires of today’s discerning tourists.”

Running a luxury hotel in such a remote area comes with its own set of obstacles. “Transportation, staffing, and sourcing supplies are some of the key challenges,” Makroo acknowledges. “However, our commitment to quality and creativity allows us to overcome these hurdles.”

He elaborates, “Finding the right people is vital, especially in a remote location. We’ve built a team of dedicated professionals passionate about delivering the true upper-upscale experience Vivanta is known for. Additionally, we’ve forged strong relationships with trusted suppliers to ensure high-quality materials are always available. We’ve also embraced sustainable practices,

minimizing our environmental footprint while respecting the local ecosystem.”

Despite the challenges, Makroo remains optimistic. “The remoteness of Tawang allows us to offer a truly unique and exclusive experience. This is a rare privilege, and we wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

While Tawang’s proximity to the China border often raises concerns, Makroo paints a different picture. “Tawang is one of the most peaceful areas in the country. Border posts like Bumla, Zimithang, and the Holy Waterfalls are not only safe but also offer picturesque landscapes that attract travelers.”

Makroo points out that while logistics can be a hurdle today, improvements are underway. “Infrastructure development is a game-changer. The recently opened Sela Tunnel, the world’s longest two-tube tunnel at 4,000 meters, has



significantly reduced travel time and ensures year-round connectivity.”

“MICE is a crucial component of our business,” Makroo explains, emphasizing the significance of a balanced segment mix for a property’s success. “Tawang holds immense potential as an exotic destination for corporate retreats and wedding planners. With the ongoing infrastructure development, Tawang is rapidly becoming a top choice for such events, and I’m confident it will emerge as one of the most sought-after destinations for MICE in the near future.”

He adds, “The combination of stunning landscapes, cultural richness, and the exclusivity of Tawang offers an unmatched setting for both business and leisure events. We are already seeing an increasing interest from organizations and planners looking for something truly unique.”

Understanding the challenges of road connectivity and weather, the property has gone the extra mile to ensure a seamless travel experience. “We offer transport assistance, including reliable pick-up and drop-off services, and partner with local drivers who understand the

terrain,” Makroo shares. “Our weather-resilient infrastructure ensures guests are comfortable regardless of external conditions.”

He reveals a unique practice, “We maintain real-time communication with our guests throughout their journey, providing constant support until they safely arrive at their destination. This personalized service underscores our commitment to guest safety and satisfaction.”

Makroo is enthusiastic about the potential for tourism in the region. “Arunachal Pradesh is a treasure trove of pristine landscapes, cultural heritage, and diverse wildlife. It offers an off-the-beaten-path experience that appeals to modern travelers seeking authenticity and tranquillity.”

He sees Vivanta Tawang playing a pivotal role in this growth. “By providing world-class services, we’re elevating the experience for travelers and making the region more accessible and appealing. Our presence also inspires confidence among domestic and international tourists, encouraging them to explore this untouched paradise.”

The property has also developed eco-friendly

travel packages and adventure experiences. “These initiatives cater to eco-conscious travelers and adventure enthusiasts, positioning Arunachal Pradesh as a key destination for nature and adventure tourism.”

Makroo envisions Tawang as a cornerstone of sustainable tourism. “Vivanta Tawang will be more than just a hotel; it will be a catalyst for the development of Arunachal Pradesh’s tourism sector. Through infrastructure investments, heritage promotion, and community engagement, we aim to put this region on the global tourism map.” He concludes, “Tawang has the potential to become one of the most sought-after destinations for both domestic and international travelers. As the region develops, Vivanta Tawang will continue to set benchmarks in luxury, culture, and sustainability, leaving a lasting legacy in the heart of Northeast India.”

“Vivanta Tawang is not just a destination—it’s a journey into serenity, adventure, and the untouched beauty of India’s Northeast,” says Makroo. ■

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## NEWS BULLETIN

# FHRAI Welcomes Andhra Pradesh’s Tourism Policy 2024-29 as a Transformative Step for Growth

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), the world’s third-largest hospitality association, has welcomed the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Policy 2024-29, lauding it as a visionary move to transform the state’s tourism landscape. By fostering a conducive investment climate, bolstering infrastructure, and promoting sustainability, the policy seeks to elevate Andhra Pradesh as a global tourism hub while ensuring economic growth, cultural preservation, and community empowerment.

With the announcement of its transformative Andhra Pradesh Tourism Policy 2024-2029, the State Government has granted “Industry Status” to the hospitality and tourism sector across all segments, recognising its strategic importance as a key driver of economic growth, employment generation, and regional development. This bold step reaffirms the state’s commitment to positioning Andhra Pradesh as a premier global tourism hub and driving economic growth, employment, and cultural enrichment. The Policy 2024-29

sets ambitious goals with a mission-driven approach.

The Vision 2047 focuses on transforming Andhra Pradesh into a global tourism hub, offering world-class spiritual, coastal, ecological, and wellness experiences while prioritising sustainable development. Mission 2029 talks about elevating tourism’s contribution to the state’s Gross Value Added (GVA) from 4.6% to 8% and its share in employment from 12% to 15%. Simultaneously, aiming to attract private investments worth ₹25,000 crore.

The policy emphasizes maximizing tourism potential, by developing seven major hubs and creating 25 circuits spanning across beach tourism, eco-tourism, river cruises, Buddhist heritage, and temple tourism. The policy’s foundation rests on four strategic pillars: Diversified Tourism Offerings; Infrastructure Upgrades; Sustainable Practices; and Robust Governance Frameworks.

The Policy offers robust fiscal incentives such as 100% Stamp Duty reimbursement on land purchases or leases for tourism projects, waiver of Land Conversion Charges, and 100% reimbursement of expenses incurred for getting

quality certification. It also offers a Capital Subsidy at 25% of the fixed capital investment (FCI) for MSMEs and 10% for Large, Mega, and Ultra Mega Tourism Projects with certain capping.

Along with these financial benefits, the policy includes non-financial incentives like a single-window clearance system to speed up approvals and the creation of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to manage anchor hubs and thematic circuits. The Policy also emphasises establishing district-level hubs to support investors and track project progress.

Reacting to this development, Mr. K. Syama Raju, President of FHRAI, further stated: “Andhra Pradesh has taken a giant leap in Tourism and Hospitality. Recognising tourism as an industry, combined with substantial incentives for private investors and a focus on thematic circuits, will elevate the state’s appeal to tourists. With its emphasis on sustainability and community empowerment, this policy has the potential to create significant economic and employment opportunities. FHRAI is keen to collaborate with the state government to achieve these ambitious goals.” ■

# Hospitality Career through IHMs: The Next Generation of Exponential Growth

By **Mr Gyan Bhushan**, (IES) Senior Economic Advisor, Ministry of Tourism and Chief Executive Officer, National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) Government of India and **Dr Pratik Ghosh**, Head of Department, Dr Ambedkar Institute of Hotel Management Catering & Nutrition, Chandigarh

In the world of hospitality, education is more than classroom learning; it's the foundation that prepares students to meet the demands of a fast-paced, customer-focused industry. And as the industry grows, so do the expectations of those at the forefront of hiring—hotel recruiters. At the core of this evolution are the Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs) in India, renowned for supplying talent to top hotels. But, to meet the new demands of the industry, IHMs must stay relevant and strategic in their approach to education.

## Why Recruiters Are Key to Hospitality Education

Picture this: a hotel recruiter walks into a campus, looking for the next generation of hospitality talent. They're on the hunt for candidates who not only know their way around a hotel but also have the leadership, adaptability, and interpersonal skills to deliver exceptional guest experiences. In many ways, recruiters are the bridge between education and the industry, selecting those who will shape the future of hospitality. And as expectations grow, recruiters are no longer satisfied with graduates who only meet the basics—they're looking for standouts who bring fresh perspectives and skills.

For IHMs, understanding these evolving expectations is vital. By aligning their offerings with industry demands, IHMs can strengthen their reputation, making themselves the preferred recruitment ground for top hotel brands. Recruiters notice everything: from the curriculum to the facilities to how well-prepared the students are. They're not just evaluating students—they're assessing the entire educational experience and deciding if it's worth returning to the campus next year.

## Service Quality, Satisfaction, and Service Value: What Recruiters Look For

At its core, hospitality education is about service. IHMs strives to deliver "service quality" through high-calibre teaching, modern infrastructure, and a curriculum designed to equip students with industry-relevant skills. But it's not just about quality alone—satisfaction and perceived value play equally significant roles in whether

recruiters see IHMs as ideal hiring grounds.

Satisfaction isn't just based on the skills of the students. Recruiters value a seamless and supportive campus experience. From clear communication to well-organized interview processes, IHMs have numerous ways to ensure that recruiters have a positive experience, directly impacting their decision to return. And when it comes to service value, recruiters want to know they're getting the best return on their investment in time, effort, and resources. Given the high demands on their schedules, a smooth, efficient recruitment process and a strong talent pool from IHMs can make all the difference.

To gain deeper insights into the behavioural intentions of recruiters toward IHMs, a comprehensive study was conducted involving representatives from over 100 leading hotel brands located in Tier-1

cities across the country. The participants included General Managers, Department Heads, and Learning and Development Managers from these prestigious hotels. Interestingly, our study found that satisfaction was the strongest predictor of recruiters' likelihood to return. They're looking for an experience that's easy, positive, and filled with potential hires who meet their high standards. For IHMs, this underscores the importance of not just preparing students for interviews but also refining every aspect of the campus recruitment experience.



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## How IHMs Can Step Up to Meet Recruiter Expectations

So how can IHMs keep recruiters coming back year after year? The answer lies in strategic improvements that directly address recruiters' priorities. For instance, our study highlighted that the recruiters value competencies such as ethical behaviour, critical thinking, and the willingness to take calculated risks—qualities that don't always come from textbooks. IHMs can help students build these competencies by incorporating real-world scenarios, role-playing exercises, and industry mentorships into their programs. Additionally, it was revealed that adopting cutting-edge technologies such as AI, machine learning, deep learning, blockchain, and digital marketing can transform how students are trained. By embedding these 21st-century skills into their programs, IHMs can prepare graduates to navigate the evolving demands of the



hospitality industry, making them not just employable but indispensable in a tech-driven world. Further, the “attitude” dimension of service quality, which emphasizes attributes like resilience and ethical decision-making, was critical to recruiters and contributed to positive perceptions of IHM graduates.

An intriguing finding from the survey reveals a surprising yet positive connection between recruiters’ perceptions of sacrifice—such as offering competitive salary packages, investing effort, and dedicating time to train recruits—and the value they associate with these hires contributing to their brand. Simply put, hotel brands take pride in having IHM graduates on their teams and actively strive to onboard the best talent from these institutes. Now, this creates an exciting opportunity for IHMs to foster a dynamic and competitive recruitment environment. By strategically inviting multiple hotel brands to participate in campus placements, IHMs can ignite healthy competition among recruiters, leading to better student salary packages and heightened visibility for their talent pool. This competition not only benefits students but also reinforces the institute’s reputation as a premier source of hospitality talent.

### Connecting with National Goals: NEP 2020 and Hospitality Education

Aligning with India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, IHMs can play a major role in producing graduates who are not only technically skilled but also ready to make a positive impact on the hospitality landscape. The NEP emphasizes employability and quality education, both of which are directly connected to how well IHMs meet recruiters’ expectations. By focusing on practical skill-building and staying tuned to industry needs, IHMs can reinforce their relevance, helping India meet its goal of producing highly skilled professionals by 2030.

### Conclusion: Building a Sustainable Path Forward

As hospitality education and industry demands evolve, IHMs have a unique opportunity to stay at the cutting edge. By prioritizing service quality, ensuring recruiter satisfaction, and maximizing service value, these institutions can strengthen their reputation as leading talent providers in hospitality by attracting the budding hospitality professionals. Building a strong partnership with hotel recruiters is not just about meeting immediate hiring needs but about fostering a sustainable relationship that benefits both the education sector and the hospitality industry.

The future of hospitality education in India lies in understanding and acting on what recruiters value most. By focusing on these expectations, IHMs can help graduates excel, provide recruiters with top talent, and ultimately set new standards for hospitality education in India. With a strategy that aligns with quality, satisfaction, and value, IHMs are well-positioned to lead the next generation of hospitality professionals into the future.

In this endeavour, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), has facilitated a much-needed breakthrough collaboration by signing a MOU between all Central IHMs and leading hotel brands across the country to mutually benefit from a strategic partnership for the overall improvement of hospitality education and the employability of students. This step will surely provide the impetus for IHMs to conduct workshops, short internships, faculty development programs and joint research with industry partners. For example, short, intensive internships provide students with hands-on experience, reducing the training burden on recruiters and giving graduates a head start in the industry. Partnerships with hotels to facilitate these internships can create a win-win situation:



recruiters get access to better-prepared candidates, while students benefit from real-world learning. This collaboration also aligns perfectly with the industry’s need for job-ready graduates, further strengthening IHMs’ value proposition.

Further significant steps have been taken by the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) and the MOT to bridge the gap between industry expectations and academic delivery at IHMs. The curriculum has undergone a comprehensive revision, incorporating cutting-edge topics such as AI in hospitality, digital marketing, cultural diversity and sustainable tourism, etc, ensuring that students are equipped with modern skills. A landmark collaboration with Michigan State University, USA has opened new avenues for academic research, faculty development, and student exchange programs, bringing global perspectives to Indian hospitality education. Additionally, the Marriott International Internship Program now offers IHM students hands-on training opportunities in Marriott hotels in Mauritius, providing invaluable international exposure. These initiatives, both implemented and, in the pipeline, demonstrate a strong commitment to aligning IHM education with global industry standards, preparing graduates to excel in the rapidly evolving hospitality landscape.

India has always been known for its rich cultural heritage, warm hospitality, and diversity, making it the perfect place to nurture world-class hospitality professionals. IHMs across the country have a huge opportunity to be at the forefront of this effort, providing students with top-quality education and hands-on training. As the global hospitality industry recovers rapidly post-COVID, the demand for skilled professionals is higher than ever. By incorporating the initiatives of MOT and NCHMCT along with modern technology, sustainable practices, and a global outlook into their curriculum, IHMs are on course in preparing graduates who are ready to excel in a competitive, interconnected world. With their ability to combine professionalism with India’s signature warmth, IHM graduates can meet the growing global demand, positioning India as a leader in hospitality talent and meeting the overall vision of transforming our country into a *Viksit Bharat 2047*. ■

(Ref: Ghosh, P., Jhamb, D., & Yu, L. (2023). *Measuring service quality perceptions of hotel management institutes on hotel recruiters’ hiring intentions: effect of sacrifice, satisfaction and service value*. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 23(4), 469–493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2023.2222076> )

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



# Indian Hospitality Industry Poised for Continued Growth in 2025

The Indian hospitality industry has witnessed remarkable growth over the past three years, driven by strong domestic tourism, rising disposable incomes, and a growing preference for experiential travel. Key metrics like occupancy, Average Daily Rate (ADR), and Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) have consistently improved, with a 3% rise in occupancy, 7.5% growth in ADR, and 10.5% increase in RevPAR recorded in 2023, according to STR reports. Major urban markets like Mumbai, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Bengaluru continue to lead, while tier-II and tier-III cities are emerging as new growth hubs. Leisure destinations, once subdued during the pandemic, are seeing a revival, complemented by robust corporate travel and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) demand. Despite challenges like global geopolitical tensions and slow international travel recovery, domestic tourism remains a key growth driver. With ongoing investments in infrastructure and supportive government policies, the industry is well-positioned for sustained growth, attracting both business and leisure travelers in 2025. **Hospitality Biz** spoke with industry experts to understand the evolving expectations and sentiments shaping the sector's outlook for the New Year.





## ‘Leisure and getaway destinations look promising and will mostly see a surge in popularity’

As the hospitality industry navigates an ever-evolving landscape, **Manav Thadani, Co-founder, Hotelivate**, shares his nuanced yet optimistic outlook for 2025. With a focus on performance metrics like RevPAR, ARR, and occupancy rates, Thadani explores how urban and leisure markets are poised to evolve. He also delves into the continued dominance of domestic travel over international travel, highlighting its impact on the industry.

### Q What are your expectations for the hospitality industry in terms of RevPAR, ARR, and occupancy rates in 2025?

The hospitality industry may lack a crystal ball for precise forecasting, but current indicators suggest a nuanced yet optimistic outlook. We also feel that major urban markets such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru etc. to see higher occupancies than nation-wide average performance while occupancy in other cities are expected to remain relatively stable, with minor fluctuations across various segments. Meanwhile, Average Room Rates (ARR) are anticipated to grow at a modest single-digit percentage, reflecting cautious yet steady market confidence. Leisure markets are expected to experience a meaningful revival by next winter, building on gradually improving travel sentiment. This winter has been relatively subdued, with muted activity across many leisure destinations.

### Q What is your perspective on the growth trajectory of domestic and international travel in 2025? Do you foresee domestic travel continuing to dominate over international travel in shaping the hospitality landscape?

Yes, we observe that domestic travel continues to dominate over international travel, a trend that has firmly established itself in recent

years. In 2023, inbound travel struggled to regain its footing, and while 2024 saw slight improvements, the recovery was far from robust. Even now, the pace and trajectory of international travel's return remain uncertain, leaving many industry stakeholders perplexed. Global geopolitical tensions and fluctuating health guidelines in certain parts of the world have created an environment where inbound travel remains unpredictable. For the hospitality industry, this presents both challenges and opportunities as now the focus has shifted toward catering to the domestic traveller.

### Q What trends or innovations do you foresee shaping the hospitality landscape in the New Year?

Alternate accommodations will continue to attract domestic tourists. Major hospitality players are increasingly launching lifestyle brands like Tribute (Marriott), Voco (IHG) and Storii (ITC Hotels) catering to evolving guest preferences. Leisure and getaway destinations look promising and will mostly see a surge in popularity, offering intimate properties with smaller inventories but rich, immersive experiences. This trend underscores the shift toward personalization and high-quality stay experiences. ■



## ‘We are witnessing an increasing shift towards secondary cities and off-the-beaten-path destinations’

**Suhil Kannampilly, CEO, The Fern Hotels & Resorts**, shares an optimistic outlook on the sector's growth trajectory. With a focus on RevPAR, ARR, and occupancy rates, Kannampilly highlights how rising domestic tourism and experiential travel are reshaping the industry. Kannampilly also underscores the importance of government policy reforms and infrastructure development to unlock the full potential of tier-II and tier-III markets.

### Q What are your expectations for the hospitality industry in terms of RevPAR, ARR, and occupancy rates in 2025?

As we approach 2025, I am optimistic about the direction the hospitality industry is headed. RevPAR is expected to see steady growth, driven by both higher occupancy rates and ARR. Domestic tourism will continue to be a key growth driver, with travelers increasingly opting for weekend getaways, staycations, and longer vacations. We are witnessing an increasing shift towards secondary cities and off-the-beaten-path destinations, and I believe these markets will experience the

most significant occupancy growth. MICE and weddings will play an increasingly important role in driving demand. As businesses resumes face-to-face events, MICE tourism will provide a significant boost to occupancy rates in major cities. Weddings, especially destination weddings, are also contributing to higher occupancy and ARR, with couples opting for premium experiences in luxury and leisure-focused locations. These events tend to drive higher spend per guest, contributing directly to RevPAR growth.

In terms of ARR, I foresee a robust increase as travelers increasingly

seek premium, personalized experiences. There is a growing demand for wellness retreats, eco-tourism, and experiential stays, and guests are willing to pay more for unique, tailored offerings. The rise in operational costs, such as labour and materials, will inevitably lead to price increases, particularly in urban markets. However, hotels that provide exceptional experiences—whether in sustainability or cultural immersion—will still be able to command competitive ARRAs without deterring demand. Tier-II and tier-III cities are seeing a rise in demand, and with more travelers opting for workations, we expect occupancy to rise further in locations that offer flexible workspaces and extended stays.

**Q What specific policy changes or support do you expect from the Ministry of Tourism and other government bodies to enhance the growth and global competitiveness of the hospitality sector in India?**

The Ministry of Tourism and government bodies are crucial stakeholders in shaping the future of the hospitality industry, and their continued support will be pivotal as we look to 2025. I hope to see an acceleration in policy reforms that enhance ease of doing business, including more streamlined regulations related to hotel classification, licensing, and taxation. This will not only encourage investment but also help businesses scale more efficiently.

Further, there should be a focus on building infrastructure in underdeveloped regions, particularly in tier-II and tier-III cities. These areas hold immense potential, and infrastructure development can make them viable options for domestic and international travelers alike. Beyond physical infrastructure, digital infrastructure should also be prioritized, including the development of smart cities that can integrate technology seamlessly into the travel experience, enhancing convenience for guests and operators. Moreover, there is a growing need for policies that foster sustainability. As the hospitality sector increasingly embraces eco-tourism and sustainable practices, government support in the form of incentives for green certification, renewable energy adoption, and waste management solutions will be invaluable. Lastly, continued investment in skill development and training initiatives will be essential to ensure the workforce is equipped to meet the rising expectations of the modern traveller.

**Q How do you plan to leverage the increasing demand for experiential travel and domestic tourism in 2025?**

The surge in experiential travel and domestic tourism presents a significant opportunity for us at The Fern Hotels & Resorts. We are already in the process of innovating our offerings to meet the evolving preferences of today's travelers. In 2025, we will focus on creating more

personalized and immersive experiences that go beyond traditional hotel stays. For example, we are expanding our portfolio of wellness retreats, nature-focused getaways, and cultural explorations that resonate with the growing desire for meaningful and enriching travel experiences.

Given the increasing importance of sustainability, we are also incorporating eco-friendly practices across all our properties, from sustainable sourcing of food to energy-efficient infrastructure. Our 'green' initiatives are particularly appealing to domestic travelers who are becoming more conscientious about their environmental impact. For instance, our properties located in offbeat destinations like the Western Ghats or Rajasthan's desert retreats are designed to offer serene experiences while promoting environmental conservation. Guests can participate in activities like nature walks, bird watching, and conservation initiatives, which allow them to directly contribute to local ecosystems while enjoying a rejuvenating stay. Additionally, we will be enhancing our services for 'workations,' with bespoke packages that provide a blend of leisure and productivity for the growing number of professionals opting for extended stays in non-urban settings. Our properties in scenic, tranquil locations are ideal for those blending work and leisure. By providing high-speed internet, co-working spaces, and the option for extended stays, we are well-positioned to capture this market, enabling guests to work remotely while experiencing the best of India's diverse landscapes.

We are dedicated to fostering an experiential environment, enriched with a strong sense of belonging and a touch of local flair. Our Zinc Journey by The Fern accommodations are renowned for their sophisticated interiors and impeccable style, ideal for today's traveller looking for serene lively escapades. Each property exudes elegance and offers a range of unique experiences with attention to detail and designed to leave a lasting impression. Similarly, the recently launched, The Fern Crown Collection immerses guests in an unparalleled realm of experiential exclusivity, redefining benchmarks of sophistication and refinement. At this curated selection of top-tier Fern hotels & resorts, every moment is elevated through thoughtfully tailored experiences that transcend traditional notions of comfort and opulence. The collection reimagines luxury as more than mere indulgence; it is an immersive journey where every service is meticulously crafted to resonate with the unique desires of discerning travellers.

On a broader scale, we are also working to position The Fern Hotels & Resorts as a key player in the community-based tourism space. By working closely with local artisans, indigenous communities, and regional tourism boards, we aim to provide authentic cultural experiences, thereby encouraging travelers to not just visit a place but truly immerse themselves in it. ■



## 'The demand for branded hotels will surge'

Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder and MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

In 2025, India's hospitality sector will see luxury global hotel brands expanding their presence in both metro and emerging cities. The demand for branded hotels will surge as consumers increasingly seek consistent, high-quality experiences. As a result, independent and standalone players will increasingly look to join established brand umbrellas to leverage global recognition, operational expertise, and access to international marketing networks. This trend will be fueled by a growing affluent middle class and a shift towards premium services. Branded hotels will cater not only to luxury travelers but also to evolving business and experiential tourism markets. ■





## ‘India’s tourism sector should be at the forefront of policy development’

**Girish Divekar, Director of Sales and Marketing at The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace**, shares his optimistic outlook for Hyderabad’s hospitality market. With the city witnessing a remarkable 21% growth in RevPAR in 2023, Hyderabad continues to thrive as a hub for IT development and Global Capability Centers (GCCs), driving corporate travel and boosting Average Daily Rates (ADR).

### Q What are your expectations for the hospitality industry in terms of RevPAR, ARR, and occupancy rates in 2025?

Looking ahead to 2025, my expectations for the hospitality industry are positive, driven by India’s strong economic growth and increasing global focus on the country. Based on current trends, all three key performance indicators—Occupancy, ADR (Average Daily Rate), and RevPAR (Revenue per Available Room)—are expected to show upward momentum. India has already experienced a 3% increase in occupancy, a 7.5% rise in ADR, and a 10.5% growth in RevPAR through 2023 (according to the STR report, YTD November).

In particular, Hyderabad is one of the fastest-growing cities, with a remarkable 21% increase in RevPAR over 2023. The city’s focus on IT development and establishing Global Capability Centers (GCCs) will continue to drive corporate travel, further boosting ADR and overall room profitability. While there has been a noticeable shift toward international travel, which may impact local tourism in the short term, I believe this is a temporary phase. Local tourism will rebound, contributing to the industry’s overall growth.

### Q What specific policy changes or support do you expect from the Ministry of Tourism and other government bodies to enhance the growth and global competitiveness of the hospitality sector in India?

India’s tourism sector should be at the forefront of policy development, as it is a major revenue driver and a significant source of employment, particularly for allied industries. When comparing India’s hospitality industry to other global markets, it’s clear that the country has yet to fully tap into its potential as a leading tourism destination. To unlock this potential, the government should ensure that the benefits of policy

changes extend to hotels and related industries, enabling them to pass on these advantages to end travellers. Additionally, the government should give more attention to the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) segment, which has been successfully leveraged by many other countries. The MICE sector boosts not only hospitality but also airlines, transportation, food and beverage services, and more. To encourage growth in this area, the government should incentivise the development of convention centers and the surrounding infrastructure, fostering a more competitive and sustainable tourism ecosystem.

### Q How do you plan to leverage the increasing demand for experiential travel and domestic tourism in 2025?

In 2025 we plan to capitalize on the growing demand for experiential travel and domestic tourism by highlighting Hyderabad’s unique cultural and culinary offerings. The city remains largely unexplored in terms of its food trail and historical significance. Hyderabad boasts a rich culinary heritage, from traditional dishes like Biryani, Kebabs, and Haleem, to innovative twists on these classics that appeal to modern tastes. As disposable incomes rise and travelers seek new experiences, it is essential for hotels and restaurants to continually explore innovative concepts. By integrating fresh ideas while maintaining a strong connection to tradition, they can enhance their offerings and create memorable experiences for their guests.

We aim to also offer immersive experiences that showcase the city’s rich cultural heritage. For instance, guests can enjoy guided historical tours of iconic landmarks such as Golconda Fort, Charminar, SalarJung Museum and Chowmohalla Palace, where we weave the stories of the past into the journey, giving travellers a deeper connection to Hyderabad’s history. ■



## ‘India’s hospitality sector is undergoing a remarkable evolution’

**Manju Sharma, Managing Director, Jaypee Hotels & Resorts**

India’s hospitality sector is undergoing a remarkable evolution, the Indian traveler is finding new reasons to explore with trends like sleep tourism, medical tourism, and spiritual tourism. From rediscovering serenity in wellness resorts to embarking on purposeful journeys for healing, mindfulness, or adventure, Indian travelers are embracing diverse motivations to travel. This shift reflects the country’s growing appetite for curated, meaningful, and rejuvenating experiences, redefining the way we explore the world.

As we enter 2025, we foresee an even greater convergence of personalization, technology, and sustainability in travel. The future of hospitality lies in creating moments that inspire, connect, and endure. At Jaypee Hotels & Resorts, we are ready to shape this future with bold vision, relentless innovation, and a steadfast dedication to delivering experiences that are timeless, meaningful, and extraordinary. ■

# ‘Weddings and Room Bookings Drive Significant Revenue Growth’

**Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad**

As the winter season approaches, it marks the beginning of India’s busiest and most vibrant wedding season, with 75% of auspicious Hindu wedding dates, or “Saya dates,” clustered in this period. For Radisson Blu Greater Noida, this presents not just a business opportunity but a challenge to manage the surge in demand while maintaining the standards of unmatched hospitality. Anirban Sarkar, General Manager, Radisson Blu Greater Noida, reveals how the property is poised to meet these demands while staying ahead in India’s dynamic hospitality landscape.

The systemic shift of the Indian wedding industry from the unorganized to the organised sector has created unprecedented opportunities for hotels. According to Sarkar, the hotel achieved its highest-ever revenue in Q3 2023 (October–December), which marked a turning point. This year, the property is set to surpass those numbers with a projected 17–18% revenue growth. “After clocking the best-ever sales, to further improve by 17–18% the very next year is kind of unprecedented,” he shares.

Weddings now go beyond the traditional reception, with pre- and post-wedding events such as Mehendi, Sangeet, and bachelor parties becoming revenue multipliers. Sarkar emphasises that these smaller events often generate more income collectively than the main ceremony. “These events, coupled with room bookings, make weddings a substantial revenue driver,” he explains. To capitalise on this, Radisson Blu Greater Noida has introduced comprehensive packages that include bridal grooming, salon services, transport, and even customised gift hampers, ensuring an all-inclusive experience for wedding guests.

Large-scale Indian weddings are synonymous with elaborate buffets, often leading to significant food wastage. The hotel has implemented measures like mono-portioned servings, live counters, and smaller

buffet refills to minimize wastage while maintaining quality. “Despite a substantial increase in food costs, we have managed to control wastage effectively, keeping our food cost percentage steady,” Sarkar notes, emphasising their commitment to sustainability without compromising quality.

While weddings dominate the winter season, the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) segment remains a key revenue contributor, accounting for 60–65% of overall business. Sarkar highlights the property’s strategic location near the India International Expo Mart in Greater Noida as a major advantage. Despite competition from new venues like Pragati Maidan and the New Delhi Dwarka convention center, the MICE business has remained strong.

The hotel expects an 80% occupancy rate in H2 2024–25, with November and February being the busiest months. Sarkar credits proactive revenue management for a projected 15–16% increase in average daily rates compared to the previous year.

Radisson Blu Greater Noida differentiates itself by focusing on quality over quantity. “We avoid large, noisy weddings and cater to smaller, bespoke events,” Sarkar says. This approach not only enhances guest satisfaction but also ensures minimal disruption to corporate clients. The property has also upgraded its infrastructure and formed strategic partnerships with vendors to offer customised experiences that resonate with modern clientele.

India’s hospitality industry is evolving rapidly, driven by trends such as digital transformation, sustainability, and a surge in wedding-related travel. Radisson Blu Greater Noida is embracing these changes by upgrading IT infrastructure, integrating SaaS solutions, and offering carbon-compensated meetings. The property has also designed curated travel experiences for business travelers, leveraging nearby destinations to enhance guest stays. ■

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**Anirban Sarkar, GM, Radisson Blu Greater Noida**





# ‘India offers immense potential for growth’

With plans to add 143 hotels globally by 2027, ibis has identified India as a key player in its ambitious expansion strategy. In an exclusive conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee, Tejus Jose, Director of Operations for ibis & ibis Styles India**, delves into the brand’s growth plans, focus on localisation, sustainability initiatives, and efforts to redefine guest experiences while maintaining its hallmark of value and quality.

**Q** **ibis has plans to add 143 new hotels and 17,474 rooms globally by 2027. What role does India play in these expansion plans, and what are your specific goals for ibis India and ibis Styles in the coming years?**

India plays a pivotal role in ibis’ global expansion strategy. As one of the fastest-growing economies, with an ever-expanding middle class and a burgeoning travel industry, India offers immense potential for growth. We are very clear on markets we wish to grow in and will pursue opportunities accordingly.

**Q** **As the Director of Operations, how do you plan to balance brand consistency with adapting to local market needs, especially in a diverse and dynamic market like India?**

As you rightly said the secret lies in the right ‘balance’. While brand consistency ensures our guests know what to expect at any ibis property, adapting to the unique preferences of Indian travelers is essential. Our design philosophy has evolved to embrace local culture, making sure each property feels connected to its surroundings. By staying in tune with guest feedback and market trends, we ensure that the ibis brand remains true to its essence while also reflecting the unique character of each location.

**Q** **ibis has been a pioneer in sustainable practices and technology adoption. Could you share some upcoming initiatives in India to enhance guest experiences while aligning with sustainability goals?**

Sustainability is an integral part of our ethos, and ibis India is continually working towards creating environmentally responsible and guest-centric hospitality experiences. To minimize single-use plastics, we have transitioned to recyclable materials for toiletries and stationery and have always used wall-mounted dispensers for shampoos and shower gels. Plastic bottles have been replaced with glass water bottles, supported by mineral water bottling plants at select properties.

In addition, several of our hotels feature electric vehicle charging stations, encouraging cleaner transportation options.

Energy efficiency is a high priority for us. Natural lighting is utilized in meeting rooms and restaurants, solar energy is leveraged for day-to-day operations and periphery lighting, and coal or gel fuels have been eliminated from most of our operations. In many of our hotels a large amount of the electricity is sourced from ‘green’ sources. We are also adopting sustainable food practices, prioritizing local and seasonal products, and introducing initiatives like food waste management systems.

These efforts collectively reflect our dedication to sustainability, enhancing guest experiences while reducing our environmental footprint.

**Q** **With over two decades of experience, what do you identify as the biggest challenges and opportunities in the Indian hospitality market today? How is ibis addressing them?**

The Indian hospitality market is at an important point right now. One of the biggest challenges is finding the right balance between affordability and quality, especially in the mid-range hotel segment. But this challenge also gives us a chance to think creatively and offer great value. At ibis, we focus on providing consistent quality, using technology to improve guest experiences, and staying flexible to meet the changing needs of travelers. Another challenge is the rising cost of running hotels, which we manage by being efficient with resources and using sustainable practices. But the real opportunity lies in India’s growing interest in unique travel experiences, and ibis is ready to meet this demand with local touches and memorable guest experiences.

**Q** **With a rapidly growing mid-scale hotel segment in India, how does ibis differentiate itself from competitors, and what are the key drivers for your brand’s continued success?**

What sets us apart is our ability to consistently deliver value without compromising on quality. ibis has earned its reputation as a reliable, modern, and guest-focused brand. Our commitment to innovation, whether through new technology or personalized service, helps us stay ahead of the curve. Key factors in our continued success include our strong brand, prime locations, and our ability to adapt to the changing needs of travelers. Additionally, our focus on sustainability and local offerings aligns with the values of today’s more mindful traveler.

**Q** **How has ibis India adapted its operational strategies post-pandemic to ensure steady growth while maintaining a focus on safety, guest satisfaction, and profitability?**

Since the pandemic, we’ve adopted a more flexible way of running things. We’ve made safety a top priority, with contactless services and strict hygiene practices now being a core part of the experience. We’ve also embraced digital tools to make our operations smoother and more efficient. On the financial side, we’ve focused on cutting costs where we can, without affecting the quality of service our guests expect. By putting guest well-being at the forefront and using technology to improve our processes, we’ve managed to rebuild trust and continue growing, even in a tough market. ■

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# ‘Our strategy focuses on curating bespoke experiences’



With its prime location in Gachibowli, **Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel** has emerged as a key player in the city’s vibrant hospitality market. **Subhankar Bose, General Manager** and recipient of the prestigious Top 20 GM People’s Choice Awards 2024, shares insights into managing a tier-I city like Hyderabad, balancing operational excellence with market demands, and his vision for the property.

## Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

“**H**yderabad’s rapid growth, driven by its thriving IT, pharmaceutical, and startup sectors, presents unique opportunities and challenges,” says Bose. “Our strategy focuses on curating bespoke experiences and adapting to the dynamic market while fostering a sense of community within the hotel.”

Hyderabad’s hospitality market has witnessed steady growth in Average Room Rate (ARR) and Average Daily Rate (ADR). “At Sheraton Hyderabad, we are well-positioned in the upscale segment, leveraging the city’s demand for corporate stays and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) business,” Bose explains. He attributes this to the city’s strong IT ecosystem, international connectivity, and burgeoning leisure travel interest.

Bose highlights, “Factors influencing room rates include MICE demand, seasonal variations, and competition. Our approach balances competitive pricing with value-added services, ensuring we remain a top choice for corporate and leisure travelers.”

Sheraton Hyderabad has consistently outperformed market averages in occupancy rates. “In the past year, our focus on guest satisfaction and strategic partnerships has resulted in strong performance,” notes Bose. “We anticipate further growth, driven by the resurgence of business travel and an uptick in MICE events.”

On revenue management, Bose explains the importance of advanced analytics: “We use historical data to optimize pricing strategies, ensuring the right balance between ADR and occupancy. During peak seasons, we offer value-driven packages, while dynamic pricing and targeted campaigns help us navigate low-demand periods.”

Sheraton Hyderabad is making waves in the F&B space with its innovative dining concepts. “Our Pan-Asian restaurant, Zega, is unveiling a new menu that reimagines classic dishes with global flavors,” Bose shares. “Feast, our all-day dining venue, is introducing themed Sunday brunches, while Link Café is focusing on artisanal cocktails and bespoke coffee blends.”

The hotel also plans exclusive food pop-ups in collaboration with award-winning culinary destinations. “These initiatives aim to create memorable experiences, positioning Sheraton Hyderabad as a leader in the city’s dining scene,” says Bose.

Bose’s leadership is grounded in inclusivity and adaptability. “Building a strong team culture is paramount. I prioritize open communication and celebrate associate achievements,” he explains. “In a dynamic market like Hyderabad, leveraging data-driven insights and encouraging innovation helps us stay ahead of guest expectations.”

Looking ahead, Bose envisions Sheraton Hyderabad as the go-to destination for discerning travelers. “We aim to consolidate our leadership in the corporate and premium segments while championing sustainability and elevating our service standards,” he shares. ■

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## ‘We encourage our chefs and service teams to experiment with new ideas’

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center has earned a reputation as a premier destination for exceptional culinary experiences, seamlessly blending global inspirations with the richness of local traditions. With a diverse array of dining venues, the property offers something unique for every palate. Under the visionary leadership of **Jatinder Pal Singh, Food and Beverage Director**, these offerings have reached new heights. Singh has been pivotal in introducing innovative concepts such as themed food festivals, immersive chef’s tables, and sustainable practices like zero-waste cooking and responsible sourcing. In a conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee**, he delves into the intricacies of the hotel’s F&B offerings and the vision behind them.

### Q How do you approach modernizing traditional Indian cuisine while preserving its authenticity to meet the expectations of today’s discerning diners?

At Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention center, we embrace a philosophy of “modern innovation rooted in tradition.” We carefully modernize Indian cuisine by refining techniques, and presentation, and incorporating global culinary trends while staying true to authentic flavors and time-tested recipes. Our chefs draw inspiration from regional delicacies, using fresh, locally sourced ingredients and contemporary plating styles to deliver a dining experience that resonates with modern palates while honoring Indian culinary heritage.

### Q What are some standout culinary concepts or experiences you’ve introduced at Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield that have redefined the guest dining experience?

We have introduced several signature experiences that have transformed dining into a sensory journey. Feast, our all-day dining venue, offers curated live stations featuring regional specialties and international cuisines. Inazia, our Pan-Asian restaurant led by Chef Rungtiwa, our Thai specialty chef, brings authentic Asian flavors to life with a focus on fresh, bold ingredients. Zarf, our signature Indian restaurant, celebrates the rich culinary heritage of India with innovative dishes that highlight regional delicacies. Additionally, themed food festivals, immersive chef’s tables, and unique beverage pairings have set new benchmarks for guest engagement and elevated dining at our property.

### Q With large-scale events often leading to significant food waste, what measures have you implemented to minimize waste and ensure sustainable operations?

Sustainability lies at the core of our operations. We have adopted portion control strategies, optimised buffet layouts, and implemented zero-waste cooking practices to minimise food wastage. Additionally, we prioritise waste segregation and composting to reduce landfill contributions, in alignment with Marriott International’s Serve360 sustainability initiative. We have also transitioned from LPG to PNG for cleaner energy use and strictly adhere to sustainable seafood guidelines to promote responsible sourcing.

### Q What major shifts in dining preferences and F&B trends have you observed over the years, and how is Sheraton Grand

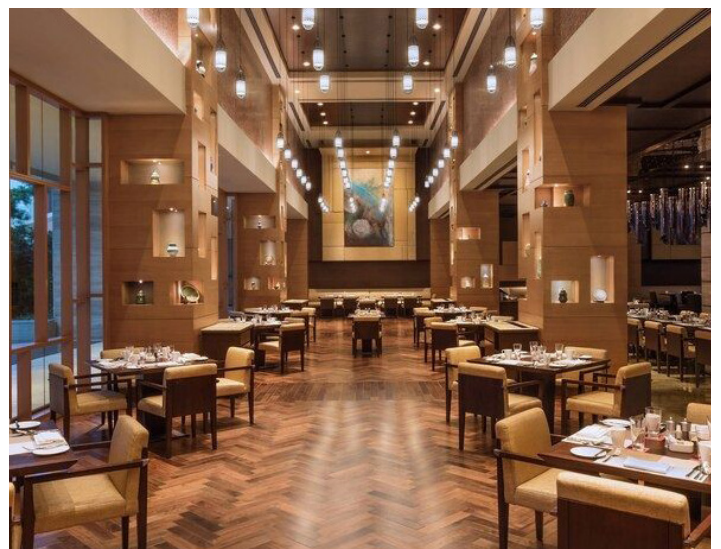
### adapting to these changes?

We’ve observed a significant demand for healthier, plant-based options, sustainable dining, and experiential culinary journeys. Guests today are more conscious of ingredients, sourcing, and presentation. To adapt, we have introduced health-focused menus, locally sourced produce, and seasonal offerings. Interactive dining concepts & personalised experiences have also been integrated to create memorable engagements that cater to evolving preferences.

### Q How do you foster creativity and excellence within your culinary and service teams to consistently deliver high-quality experiences?

Our focus is on building a culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning. We encourage our chefs and service teams to experiment with new ideas, techniques, and global influences while participating in culinary workshops, competitions, and cross-property training programs. Regular feedback sessions and recognition initiatives motivate teams to deliver excellence consistently. At Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center, we believe that fostering passion and creativity translates directly into exceptional guest experiences. ■

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# Indian Hotel Sector Registers Robust Growth in November 2024 : HVS ANAROCK Report

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Indian hotel industry witnessed remarkable growth in November 2024, with occupancy rates increasing by 8-10% year-on-year and 10-12% compared to October 2024, according to the latest HVS ANAROCK Hospitality Monitor - December 2024. The sector also saw a notable rise in Average Room Rates (ARR) by 11-13%, driving Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) growth to pre-pandemic levels.

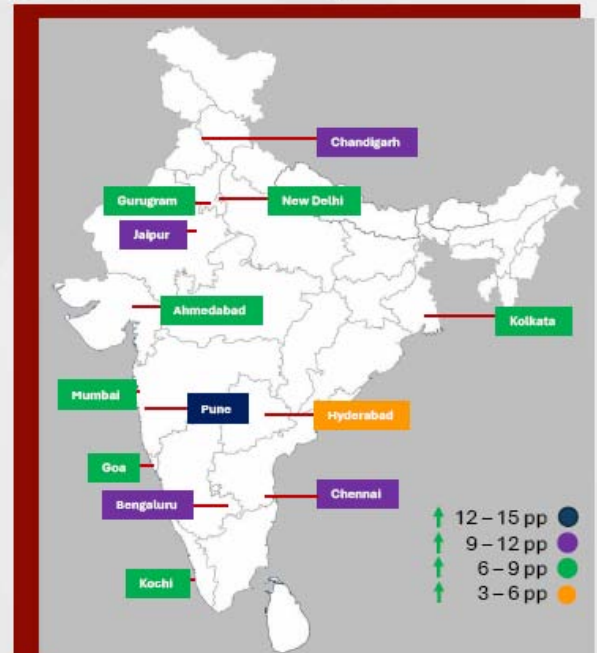
Mumbai led the performance with an occupancy rate exceeding 80%, fueled by MICE events and high-profile gatherings like Dua Lipa's concert. Pune recorded the highest occupancy growth (12-14%), driven by the India International Travel Mart 2024. Bengaluru, Jaipur, and Chandigarh also reported double-digit occupancy growth compared to November 2023.

While most markets recorded an increase in ARR, Hyderabad showed the most significant growth at 28-30%, followed by Bengaluru and Kochi at over 20% each. Conversely, Ahmedabad witnessed a sharp 27-29% ARR decline due to the previous year's inflated rates during the ICC Cricket World Cup Final.

The report also highlighted increased branded hotel signings, with a 44.3% rise in keys year-to-date, signaling confidence in the industry's future. With improved domestic air traffic and growing MICE demand, the Indian hotel sector continues to position itself for sustained growth into 2025. ■

## Occupancy Trends Across Key Indian Markets

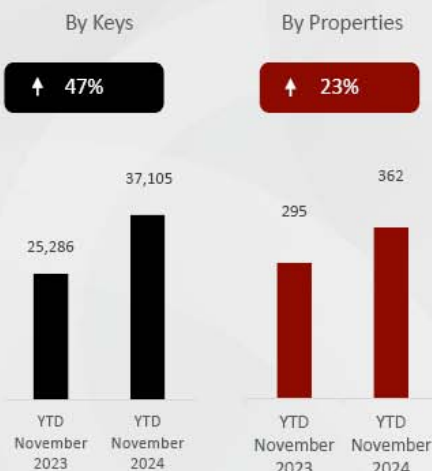
(Change over November 2023)



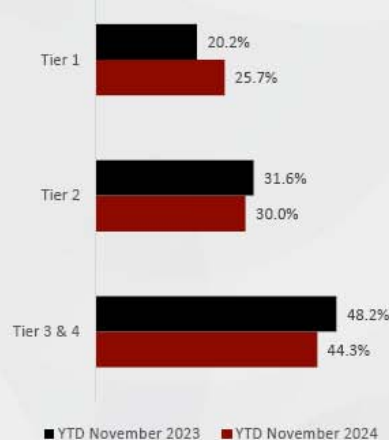
Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year

## Branded Hotel Market Signings Analysis (YTD November 2024)

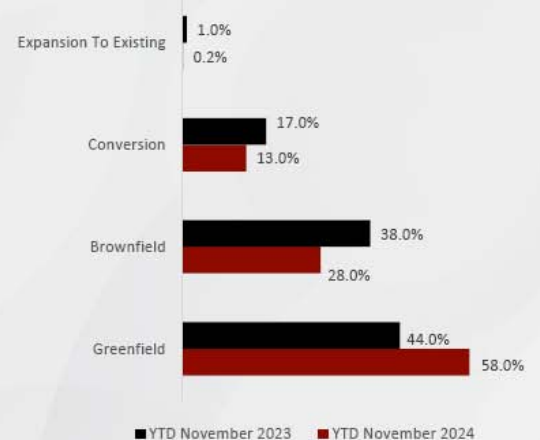
### Number of Signings



### Signings by Keys by City Tier (in %)



### Signings by Keys by Status of Development (in %)



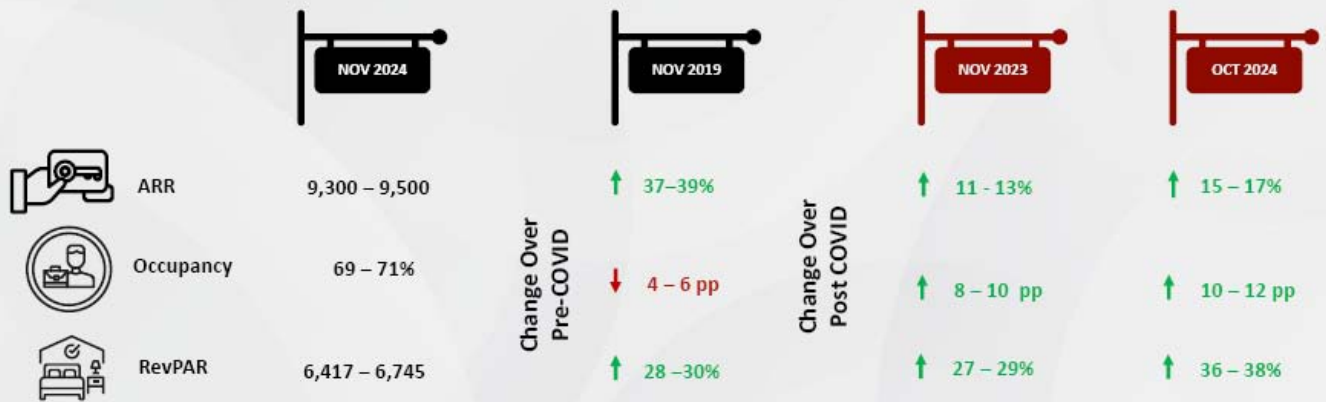
Source: HVS Research; Data collated by HVS from 20 hotel operators and media reports as of 23rd December 2024; Tier 1 cities consist of Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Goa, Jaipur, Gurugram; All data is for the calendar year



## India Hotel Sector Performance

(November 2024)

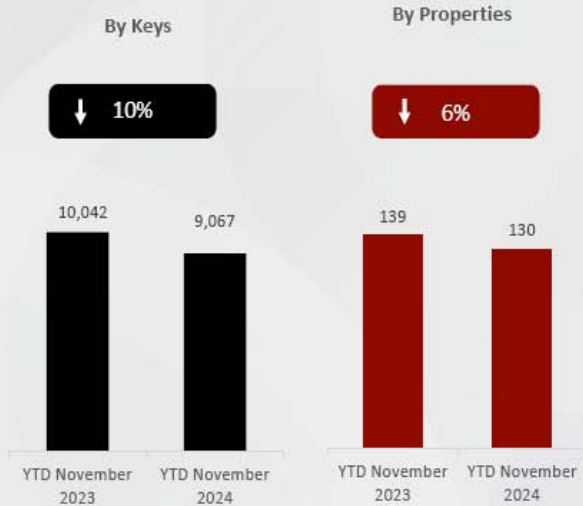
- The Diwali glow arrived a month later for the Indian hotel sector, with November occupancy rates increasing by 8-10 percentage points year-on-year (y-o-y) and 10-12 percentage points compared to the previous month.
- The strong growth in ARR, which saw a 11-13% rise compared to the previous year, further bolstered RevPAR, driving overall performance upward.



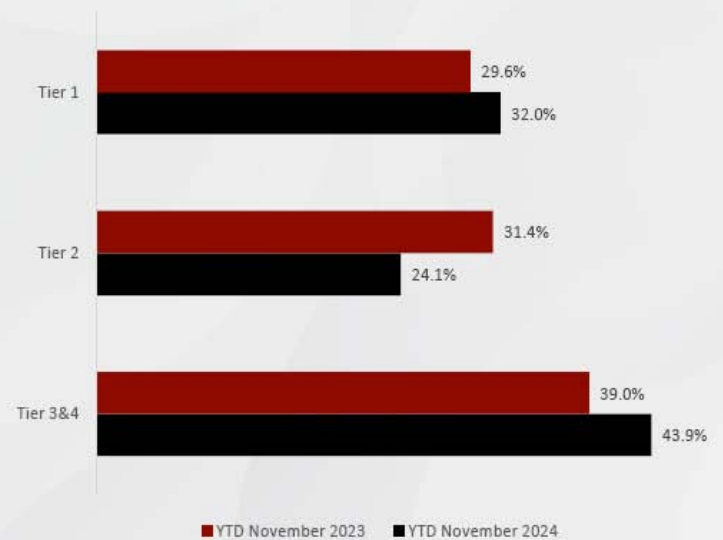
Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year  
Cover Image Courtesy: Taj Sawai, Ranthambore

## Branded Hotel Market Openings Analysis (YTD November 2024)

Number of Openings



Number of Openings by Keys (Tier Analysis)



Source: HVS Research; Data collated by HVS from 20 hotel operators and media reports as of 23rd December 2024; Tier 1 cities consist of Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Goa, Jaipur, Gurugram; All data is for the calendar year; Openings include full and partial openings



## ‘Skyview by Empyrean Eyes Significant Growth in 2025 with Expanded Rooms and New Amenities’

Amid the growing allure of experiential travel, Skyview by Empyrean in Jammu’s scenic Sanget Valley has redefined the concept of mountain hospitality with its unique “Mountain Harbour” offering. With an impressive footfall of 1 lakh visitors in 2024, the destination seamlessly blends adventure, luxury, and sustainability. Known for Asia’s longest zig-zag zipline, India’s first dry tubing sledge, and a gondola ride offering unparalleled views, it’s a hub for thrill-seekers and nature lovers. As Skyview gears up to expand its inventory to 60 rooms by 2025, **Owais Altaf Syed, Director, Skyview By Empyrean** discusses with **Asmita Mukherjee** the brand’s ambitious vision to elevate guest experiences while prioritising eco-conscious growth.

### Q What are your future plans for expanding or enhancing this unique Mountain Harbour concept?

We take great pride in pioneering this unique concept amidst the breathtaking landscape of Jammu, where guests can enjoy the best of adventure, hospitality, luxury and nature from the comfort of an inviting and cosy mountain harbour. Sustainability has been integral in every aspect of Skyview by Empyrean and will continue to remain our focus area going forward. Currently, we have an inventory of 15 rooms and suites, which we plan to expand to nearly 60 rooms within the next 24 months as part of our broader vision to enhance guest offerings while maintaining our commitment to environmental responsibility. Additionally, we will also introduce several new amenities on our premises over the next 12-18 months, including an indoor heated pool, a wellness area, a spa, and a large play area for children, ensuring our guests have much to look forward to!

### Q With the hospitality sector witnessing a significant recovery in 2024, how has Skyview by Empyrean contributed to this growth, and what revenue milestones do you aim to achieve in 2025?

Nestled in the picturesque Sanget Valley in Jammu with Patnitop just a cable-car ride away and the Mata Vaishno Devi Temple just a couple of hours away, Skyview is popular among tourists from across India all year-round. In 2024, our destination continued to be a highly sought-after retreat for both domestic and international travellers, attracting around 1 lakh visitors who enjoyed our diverse offerings, including the gondola ride, adventure activities, dining experiences, and luxury stays.

Adventure-loving guests are drawn to our exciting outdoor activities such as Asia’s longest zig-zag zipline, India’s first dry tubing sledge, hiking, mountain biking, while our luxurious stays and high-quality dining experiences attract guests who want to just be pampered amidst nature. We’re delighted to share that we’ve had several repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth referrals in 2024 that have kept us very busy this year!

As we look ahead to 2025, we aim for significant growth over last year by leveraging our expanded room inventory and new amenities. With our banquet offering seating capacity for up to 200 guests, we also anticipate increased bookings for weddings and private functions, that will significantly contribute to our revenue. Through our various marketing initiatives as well as the curated seasonal packages we offer, we expect our occupancy to be substantially full throughout the year.

### Q Experiential travel continues to gain traction among tourists. How does Skyview by Empyrean cater to this demand through its

### adventure activities, luxury accommodations, and boutique offerings?

Skyview is ‘THE’ place to be for experiential travel! We have it all! From multiple adventures, including Asia’s longest zig-zag zipline, a scenic gondola ride between Sanget and Patnitop over lush green forests and mountain views— this is also India’s highest gondola (in terms of ground clearance).

Guests can indulge in mountain biking, the magic carpet, tubing sledge, ATVs, archery and various hiking trails around the property that will leave them awed by the region’s natural beauty.

In terms of accommodations, Skyview by Empyrean features luxurious rooms and suites designed to offer the highest standards of comfort and hospitality. Each room provides wrap-around mountain views, allowing guests to relax in a serene environment after a day of adventure. The on-site dining options further enhance the experience, with our multi-cuisine restaurant Banana Leaf serving both global and regional delicacies, all against the backdrop of the picturesque Sanget Valley.

By combining these elements—thrilling activities, luxurious stays, and personalized services—Skyview by Empyrean positions itself as a premier choice for travelers looking for holistic experiences that blend excitement with comfort in an idyllic natural setting.

### Q The government’s recent budget highlights the potential for tourism and hospitality growth in India. How do you plan to leverage this momentum to position Skyview by Empyrean as a premier destination for both domestic and international travelers?

The government’s recent budget underscores the immense potential for growth in the tourism and hospitality sector, and we are well-positioned to capitalize on this momentum. At Skyview by Empyrean, we plan to leverage this opportunity by enhancing our offerings and promoting our destination as a premier choice for both domestic and international travelers.

Our strategy includes expanding our room inventory to nearly 60 rooms over the next 24 months, introducing new amenities such as an indoor heated pool, a wellness area, a spa. These additions will elevate the guest experience and cater to the growing demand for luxury and family-friendly destinations. By aligning with the government’s vision and integrating sustainability into our operations, we aim to position Skyview by Empyrean as a must-visit destination that offers adventure, luxury, and an authentic experience of Jammu and Kashmir’s natural beauty and cultural heritage. ■

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## Park Inn by Radisson Vellore

Strategically situated at drivable distance from major metro cities, the hotel is just 3 hours from Chennai and 4 hours from Bengaluru. This prime location makes it an excellent choice for travellers who blend business trips with leisure or spiritual experiences.

The hotel features elegant event spaces, including a large banquet hall and contemporary, well-equipped areas ideal for meetings, weddings, and various other occasions. An inviting pre-function area offers a welcoming and adaptable space, perfect for greeting guests before any occasion. The banquet hall offers a sophisticated ambiance for grand celebrations, while the technologically advanced meeting rooms are designed to meet the requirements of business events.

Park Inn by Radisson Vellore offers a delightful culinary experience with its variety of restaurants and bars. At RBG – All Day Dining, guests can savor a unique blend of traditional Mughlai recipes and South Indian flavors, complemented by a menu that captures the essence of Tamil Nadu. Heaven's Gate, the rooftop outlet, along with Down to Earth and Cheers provide delightful dining options, ensuring a remarkable culinary experience for every guest.s.

## Brookstone Coorg

Conveniently located near Madikeri, a hub of scenic landscapes and rich heritage, the resort provides easy access to iconic attractions such as breathtaking waterfalls, lush coffee plantations, and panoramic viewpoints. With a pleasant climate throughout the year, sprawling greenery, and stunning vistas of the pristine Ghats, Sterling Brookstone Coorg sets the stage for an invigorating getaway. Whether exploring mesmerizing trails or savouring soulful creations by the Chef, every moment at this resort promises to be enriching.

The resort features villa and cottage-style accommodations that offer stunning views, seamlessly blending modern amenities with the serenity of nature. Guests can enjoy an array of facilities, including a swimming pool, banquet hall, and an upcoming spa, making it an ideal destination for a well-rounded holiday. Dining at the in-house restaurant, Planter's Kitchen, is a culinary journey, with authentic Kodagu cuisine complemented by a variety of regional and international dishes.



## The Fern Seaside Luxurious Tent Resort, Daman

Located to the scenic area of Moti Daman, The Fern Seaside Tent Resort combines comfort, elegance and local charm to redefine stays in the region. The resort will offer 84 thoughtfully redesigned accommodations, featuring modern interiors and refined furnishings, with views of lush gardens or the coastline. 38 luxury tents are currently operational in the first phase. Surrounded by the Arabian Sea, a tranquil river and the historic Daman fort, the resort also welcomes pets, making it the perfect getaway for all travellers.

The resort also features a variety of dining options for guests. O Gosto, the all-day diner serves a delectable buffet and à la carte menu, against lush green lawns and serene water bodies. Guests can also enjoy Gardenia, a garden restaurant specializing in barbecue and multi-cuisine dishes and O' Barzinho, a bar-cum-restaurant with stunning views of the river and gardens. For a more relaxed atmosphere, the Tea Lounge serves a delightful selection of teas, coffees and wood-fired pizzas, while Aquaria, the poolside bar, offers refreshments throughout the day.

wood-fired pizzas, while Aquaria, the poolside bar, offers refreshments throughout the day.

## Cheers Group introduces Chameleon, Colour Changing Gin

The secret colour changing magic comes courtesy of nature, usually thanks to an ingredient called the Butterfly Pea Flower (*Clitoria Ternatea*), which enables colours to change from a deep blue to a pink with the addition of an acidic mixer such as Tonic water.

This unique and floral infused gin is made with organic & exotic botanicals infused with butterfly pea flower petals. Normally used in herbal tea, these petals are pH sensitive, changing colour from their natural indigo to pink when mixed with tonic water, lemon or lime juice.



## Volcan de Mi Tierra Tequila by LVMH Debuts in India

Louis Vuitton-Moët Hennessy (LVMH) has launched its ultra-premium tequila brand, Volcan de Mi Tierra, in India, marking a milestone in the luxury spirits market. The brand's portfolio, now available to Indian connoisseurs, includes Blanco, Reposado, Cristalino, and the extraordinary Volcan X.A, a testament to artistry and heritage in tequila craftsmanship.



Founded on over 300 years of tradition, Volcan de Mi Tierra celebrates the legacy of the Gallardo family, whose tequila-making roots trace back to 1774 at Hacienda La Gavilana in Jalisco, Mexico. Partnering with Moët Hennessy, the brand combines artisanal expertise with global sophistication to create tequila that embodies authenticity, innovation, and the spirit of Jalisco's

## Pernod Ricard India Launches Two New Premium Whiskey

Pernod Ricard India has unveiled an ambitious plan to triple its revenue over the next decade by prioritizing premiumization and innovation in the Indian market. The company unveiled two groundbreaking whiskeys – Royal Stag Double Dark Peaty Whisky and Blenders Pride Four Elements Premium Whisky – as part of this strategic initiative following a successful launch of Longitude 77 – the first Indian Single Malt by Pernod Ricard.





## AAMAGHATI RESORT


**Ravindra Nath Purohit,  
General Manager, Aamaghati  
Wildlife Resort**

In this role, Purohit will be instrumental in spearheading the resort's operations, driving guest satisfaction, and ensuring excellence across all aspects of hospitality. Purohit brings over 16 years of diverse experience in the hospitality industry, having worked with some of India's most notable properties, including Taj Rambagh Palace, Jaipur, and Taj Falaknuma Palace, Hyderabad

and Ananta Hotels. Throughout his career, Purohit has demonstrated exceptional skills in operations management, financial planning, staff training, and customer relationship management. His expertise lies in streamlining operations, cultivating guest loyalty, and implementing innovative strategies for profitability.

## GRT HOTELS &amp; RESORTS


**Puneet Dutta , COO, GRT  
Hotels & Resorts**

Dutta will oversee the operations for the brand, which encompasses 22 hotels and resorts in India. This strategic appointment comes as the brand embarks on an ambitious plan to expand its presence both nationally and internationally. With a distinguished career spanning over 20 years in the hospitality industry, Dutta brings a wealth of experience in driving operational excellence and strategic growth.

His expertise also lies in leading cross cultural environment, hotel pre-opening & property turnaround. He is known for his ability to craft strategy & streamline operations to provide creative, regenerative and profit-oriented solutions to lead business in diverse situations.

## STONE WOOD HOTELS &amp; RESORTS


**Subhro Mukhopadhyay,  
General Manager, Aralea  
Beach Resort by Stonewood  
Premier, Morjim**

With over 22 years of diverse experience across the tourism, hospitality and aviation industries, Mr. Mukhopadhyay brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership to his new role.

Mr. Mukhopadhyay's illustrious career spans leading roles with some of the most recognized names in the industry including Hyatt, Sahara Airlines, Jet

Airways, Qatar Airways, Lufthansa Airlines, Zuri Hotels, Royal Orchid Hotels and Fern Hotels. Prior to joining Aralea Beach Resort, he served at Sarovar Hotels.

## MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL


**Ritesh Kumar Sinha, Director  
of Engineering Kolkata ,  
Marriott International**

With a distinguished career in engineering management within the hospitality industry, Ritesh brings a wealth of experience in operational efficiency, sustainability, and property maintenance to his new role.

Ritesh's extensive career in the hospitality sector includes serving as the Director of Engineering at Hyatt Regency Chandigarh, where he oversaw engineering operations and ensured the smooth functioning of the property's infrastructure. His previous roles also include serving as the Chief Engineer at JW Marriott Mussoorie and Swissotel Kolkata, where he spearheaded engineering operations, driving advanced maintenance systems and operational excellence. Additionally, Ritesh has held the position of Deputy Chief Engineer at Taj Hotels in Kolkata, honing his leadership skills in one of India's most renowned hotel brands.

**Abira Basu , Director of  
Human Resources, The  
Westin Kolkata Rajarhat**


With over 16 years of expertise in human resource management across the luxury hospitality and corporate sectors, Ms. Basu brings a wealth of experience and strategic insight to this premier property.

Basu's career includes leadership roles at esteemed organizations such as Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, Hilton, and Taj Hotels, where she successfully led initiatives in talent acquisition, employee engagement, and HR strategy formulation. Her tenure as Senior Manager of Human Resources for a diverse portfolio of group companies further highlighted her ability to drive transformative policies that enhanced organizational efficiency and employee satisfaction.

## HYATT HOTELS

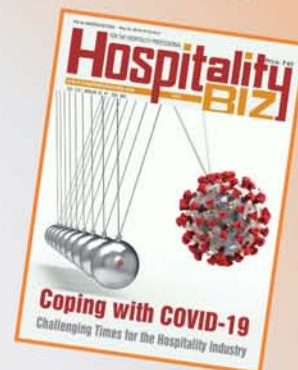

**Prashant Sharma , Director  
of Operations, Hyatt  
Regency Delhi**

With over 20 years of experience in hospitality, Prashant brings a wealth of knowledge and a strong commitment to operational excellence. His extensive background in luxury hotels and leadership roles reflects his dedication to enhancing guest experiences and optimizing hotel operations.

In his new role, Prashant will oversee all operational aspects of Hyatt Regency, New Delhi. He will focus on refining processes, enhancing guest satisfaction, and driving efficiency across departments.

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