

FOR THE HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONAL

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**‘For us, it has
been a journey
of creating
mid-market
excellence’**

Ajay Bakaya

Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels &
Director, Louvre Hotels India

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FHRAI celebrates 69th anniversary; marks 7 decades of industry advocacy

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), the country's leading hospitality association, is celebrating its 69th anniversary.

Founded in 1955 by the legendary M S Oberoi, FHRAI has grown into the world's third-largest hospitality association. It boasts over 3200 direct members and represents 100,000 hotels and restaurants across India.

FHRAI serves as a vital link between the hospitality sector, government bodies, academic institutions, and international organisations. Their core mission is to advocate for the industry, securing better policies and concessions for its members. They also keep their members informed on industry trends, government regulations, and important updates.

commented on the anniversary stating, "We celebrate not just a milestone, but a heritage of impeccable hospitality excellence."

He emphasised FHRAI's unwavering commitment to promoting tourism and



hospitality through transformative experiences that foster cross-cultural interaction and socio-economic growth.

"The hard work of FHRAI and its members has significantly contributed to India's reputation as a symbol of hospitality excellence," Shetty continued.

"We aim to continue this legacy by embracing diversification and sustainability, building a path to a brighter, more diverse future for all," he said.

FHRAI's vision is to make India a three trillion-dollar tourism economy by 2047. The Ministry of Tourism has formulated a Draft National Tourism Policy with a holistic

framework for sustainable and responsible growth of the tourism sector in the country. In line with this vision, 2024 is expected to witness a reinvigorated spirit of travel, presenting a surge in domestic and international tourism.

Among the well-wishers is Kamlesh Barot, Director, Vie Hospitality, a past President of the Western Region, FHRAI and a member since 2000. "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to FHRAI on this momentous occasion," Barot said. He reminisced about the association's founding in 1955, recalling the signing of the MoU by legendary figures like A.P Sabavala, Maneck S. Shaw, S.W. Edwards, K. Heuer, C.Green, Geeta Sinha, M.S. Oberoi & S.S. Reen.

Barot's own initiatives, ranging from skill development programs and steering their Hotel Management Institute, till date to onboarding members with pan India seminars after refining the FSSAI Act (Food Safety and Standards Act of India), during his term as FHRAI President. "We've been actively involved in the industry's progress and have become a strong voice for our members in discussions with the Ministry of Tourism," he said. ■

Uttar Pradesh targets INR 32,000 crore investments to boost hospitality and tourism sector, anticipates 850 million annual footfall by 2028

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Uttar Pradesh government is setting its sights on attracting investments totaling Rs 32,000 crore into the hospitality and tourism sector, according to a senior government official. With an anticipated annual tourist footfall of 850 million by 2028, the state is gearing up to address the growing demand for accommodations by adding approximately



80,000 new units through the development of hotels, resorts, and homestays.

Focusing on popular tourism destinations such as Varanasi, Ayodhya, Prayagraj, and Agra, the state is keen on boosting hospitality offerings, including heritage properties like forts and palaces, which are being made available for private sector development. Additionally, there's a push towards promoting homestays, with homeowners encouraged to enlist their properties and owners of heritage properties invited to convert them into heritage hotels.

Recently, the UP tourism department inked an agreement with rural homestay providers, catering to backpackers seeking authentic farm stay experiences infused with local culture, cuisine, and folklore. Minister Jaiveer Singh highlighted the state's support for setting up unique countryside farm stays, offering

subsidies under the Tourism Policy 2022. Selected villages are transformed into rural tourism hubs, fostering economic development and cultural exchange.

Furthermore, the state aims to enhance connectivity and diversify tourism experiences, including wellness centers and adventure tourism. With over 500 tourism and infrastructure projects underway in key destinations like Ayodhya, Varanasi, Vrindavan, Prayagraj, Kushinagar, and Mirzapur, the sector is expected to generate over 250,000 new job opportunities across various segments.

Religious tourism, particularly in Ayodhya following the consecration of the Lord Ram temple, has gained significant momentum, with the state government projecting an annual tourism revenue of Rs 55,000 crore in the initial years. This ambitious growth trajectory reflects Uttar Pradesh's commitment to becoming a premier destination for domestic and international travelers alike. ■



‘We consistently deliver on our brand promise, which sets us apart and keeps us ahead in this market’

Virender Razdan, General Manager, The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru is a hospitality professional and an astute business matter expert with over three decades of experience, having held positions at renowned hotels such as Hyatt Regency Delhi, Hilton New Delhi, Oberoi Hotels Mumbai, The Leela Mumbai, and ITC Hotels across various cities in India. With a track record of effective team management and stakeholder engagement, he excels in translating strategic goals into actionable plans to drive sales growth and profitability. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with Razdan, to know more about his plans for the growth and profitability of the property.

Razdan reflects on a three-decade journey marked by evolution, innovation, and unwavering commitment to excellence. “Every sunset is an opportunity to reset. Every sunrise begins with new eyes,” he remarks.

For the last three decades, the hospitality industry has undergone a massive change in terms of technological advancement, guest preferences, etc., speaking about the changes Razdan said, “The hospitality industry has undergone significant transformations, which are fuelled by technological advancements, changing consumer/guest preferences and the emergence of new market players. These changes have pushed traditional hospitality businesses to innovate and adapt to stay competitive in an evolving landscape.”

Amidst these changes, Razdan emphasises that the fundamental formula for business growth remains anchored in simplicity. “Our approach in driving sales growth and profitability is anchored in simplicity, as we focus on sales and it’s supported by unreasonable hospitality to our guests and colleagues,” he said.

“We do adopt dynamic pricing, yield management, distribution channel optimisation, upselling and cross-selling techniques and enhanced and differentiated guest loyalty programs,” these features have been instrumental in staying ahead in the game, Razdan highlights.

Acknowledging the challenges posed by a competitive market, Razdan stresses the importance of equipping frontline staff with the necessary training of tools and knowledge of the product that they are selling. “We give a lot of emphasis to training all frontline staff in knowing the product and selling it effectively. Likewise, our team is trained in a few logic. You Know More – You Tell More – You Sell More.”



As a General Manager, Razdan’s priorities lie in commitment to understanding and exceeding guest expectations. “Our key priorities and strategic initiatives for the property are centered around fundamental principles. We aim to thoroughly understand our guests’ expectations to ensure personalised experiences and exceptional guest services. Leveraging social media platforms, we engage with our audience effectively to enhance brand visibility and connect with potential guests. Constantly monitoring online

reviews allows us to gather valuable feedback and address any concerns promptly, thereby maintaining our reputation for excellence. Additionally, we foster a culture of innovation, continually seeking new ways to elevate the guest experience and stay ahead in a competitive market landscape,” he added.

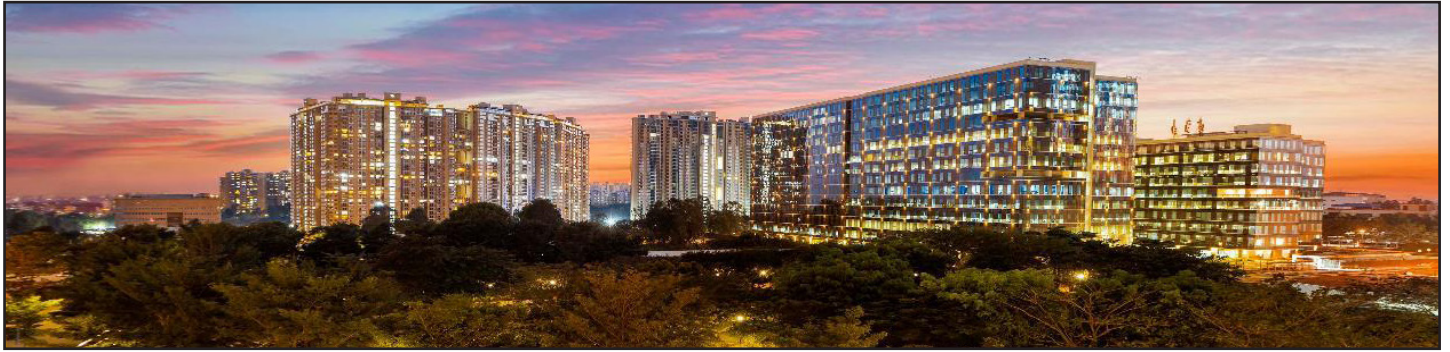
In the competitive market of Bengaluru,

Razdan’s strategic vision revolves around reinforcing The Leela’s position as a market leader. With a strong brand presence built over two decades, the property distinguishes itself by delivering on its brand promise. “We have a strong brand presence in Bengaluru as a market leader for the past two decades. 100% deliver on our brand promise keeps us ahead in this market,” said Razdan.

Addressing the pressing water crisis in Bengaluru, Razdan shed light on The

Leela Bhartiya City’s proactive measures on sustainability. “Our asset is built on the “The LEED” deliverables. We focus on carbon positive, water positive and zero waste principles.” Not only that but the property also is undergoing rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, etc to save water, explains Razdan, “In addition to having rainwater harvesting at the premises, all wastewater is reused in the form of common area cleaning, cooling tower, flushes and gardening. This makes The Leela Bhartiya City as the water-positive hotel in Bengaluru.” ■

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Luxury Redefined: The Leela Bhartiya City sets new standards in Bengaluru hospitality market

HBI staff | Bengaluru

Nestled within Bengaluru's thriving Special Economic Zone, The Leela Bhartiya City stands as a beacon of luxury and sophistication, offering guests an unparalleled experience in hospitality. As a gateway to this vibrant city's future-shaping rhythm, the hotel promises not just accommodation but an immersion into the bustling energy of India's leading startup hub.

From its prime location, accessing Bengaluru's key destinations is a breeze, whether it's the IT corridor, Financial District, airport, or the myriad parks, lakes, and museums that dot the landscape. The weather, famed for its

pleasantness, invites leisurely strolls around the township, allowing guests to soak in the city's ambiance without breaking a sweat.

Upon stepping into the elegant suites, guests are enveloped in comfort and luxury. The amenities rival the best in the world, ensuring a stay that's as indulgent as it is relaxing. Culinary delights await at the hotel's celebrated restaurants, where global cuisines come alive in a symphony of flavors. As the sun sets, guests can unwind by the pool with a refreshing drink or partake in The Leela's traditional lamp lighting ritual, a testament to the hotel's rich heritage.

The culinary journey at The Leela Bhartiya City is nothing short of extraordinary. Five exceptional restaurants cater to every palate, promising a fusion of impeccable taste and discerning indulgence. Falak, perched on the 17th floor, offers panoramic views alongside slow-cooked delicacies from Awadh and the Northwest Frontier. The Lotus Oriental transports diners to the Far East with its flavorful Oriental delicacies, while The Library Bar beckons with its Indo-Victorian charm, offering a curated selection of wines, single malts, and artisanal cocktails.

For corporate and social gatherings, The Leela Bhartiya City's convention center is a seamless blend of contemporary chic and timeless elegance. With over 80,000 square feet of space, including the opulent Grand Ballroom and Royal Ballroom, the hotel offers extensive choices for bespoke events. The meeting rooms, including Bidar, Hampi, and The Boardroom, cater to gatherings of various sizes, ensuring that every event is executed with perfection.

While the hotel boasts several exclusive venues for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE), Rajat Sharma, EAM Conventions, The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru, sheds light on their offerings, "Our hotel's dedicated convention center, spanning over 80,000 square feet, boasts a personal arrival porch and lobby, seamlessly connected to the hotel through a sky bridge. Featuring an inventory of 280 spacious rooms, with a minimum size of 470 square feet, exceeding the city's average 5-star room size by over 20%, The Leela Bhartiya City ensures utmost comfort for attendees."

With over 70% of its inventory standardised to accommodate the need for uniformity during events, the hotel offers versatility in event planning. Sharma highlighted that the majority of their clientele hails from metropolitan hubs such as Mumbai, Delhi NCR, and others. "Outdoor activities and team-building exercises find ample space in our expansive lawns and terrace, each spanning over 12,000 square feet. Moreover, the hotel's proximity to a shopping mall adds a touch of leisure to conference proceedings, with amenities like a multiplex available for private screenings and entertainment. Furthermore, The Leela Bhartiya City caters to the logistical needs of event organisers with multiple breakaway meeting venues and boardrooms, facilitating parallel programs and sessions," he added.

In addition to its world-class amenities, The Leela Bhartiya City offers the Amaris Salon and Spa, where guests can rejuvenate their mind, body, and soul with a range of therapeutic treatments and wellness experiences.

The Leela Bhartiya City stands as a beacon of luxury in Bengaluru, offering an unforgettable blend of opulence, comfort, and hospitality. ■



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Ground Reality

There has been a steady surge among hospitality brands for announcements of ambitious hotel openings and expansion in newer and niche destinations hitherto not frequented by the Indian traveller. Take the example of Ayodhya, a host of hotel companies have jumped on the bandwagon to get their fair share of tourists visiting the pilgrim destination to seek blessings at the Ram Temple.

But it is between these announcements lies the ground reality. Such gigantic development of real estate projects would require a huge workforce to manage the property, and deliver on the brand virtue of exceptional service and sustainability ethos. This requires localisation of the brand and tweaking of the umbrella guidelines to meet the needs and suit the profile of the traveller visiting a relatively newer destination in search of an overwhelming experience.

No longer are we living in times when a cookie-cutter model would work across different geographies. The more sensitive the brand is to the evolving traveller, the easier it is to meet their expectations. There is every possibility that the experience at a certain brand in a city location is unsatisfactory, while the similar property would outperform on guest expectations in a largely underdeveloped location. The reverse of this could also be a circumstance. While the addition of new and upcoming hotels is a positive sign, and demonstrates the scope of growth of tourism and interest in newer locations, the crucial requirement of manpower with necessary skill sets and technical know-how in an extremely competitive world is non-negotiable.

And that's where established brands and skill development agencies like THSC have a key role to play by not only creating a dialogue for level-playing field on pay parity, but also making enough room for up-skilling of workforce at regular intervals. The final onus is on the hotel management companies and chains to drive the industry in a direction that is not only prepared for today, but also ready for the future.

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The Den Bengaluru: Blending luxury, sustainability, and expertise in bleisure

The Den Bengaluru, a LEED Gold Certified property, is a prime example of how luxury hospitality can coexist with environmental responsibility. In a freewheeling conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee, Vinesh Gupta, General Manager, The Den**, elaborates on their eco-friendly initiatives.

The property is leading eco-friendly initiatives that benefit the environment and uplift the local community. Gupta sheds light on the establishment's unwavering commitment to sustainability. "The Den Bengaluru was conceptualised as a responsible and sustainable business," Gupta remarks, "keeping in mind our impact on the Earth and the local & hyperlocal neighborhood." The hotel proudly holds the prestigious LEED Gold Certification and operates as a "Zero Discharge Unit," processing all wet waste internally and independently of municipal systems. Furthermore, The Den champions energy efficiency with its use of eco-friendly equipment and appliances, with 80% of the kitchen being electric. Gupta emphasises the hotel's collaboration with self-help groups and NGOs to bolster eco-friendly practices, such as recycling and promoting homemade produce.

Understanding the rise of 'bleisure' travel, The Den caters to the evolving needs of business travelers seeking a work-life blend. As Gupta explains, The Den positions itself as a Millennial Luxury hotel with the core philosophy of eating. Work. Sleep. Play. "Though the advent of Bleisure is an offshoot of Covid, we believed in this concept at least 5 years before. The idea is how the guest should sleep comfortably, work effectively, eat gloriously and play...well...we hope enjoyably. This is Bleisure is all about, and it is encapsulated in our DNA. Apart from the usual offerings that all hotels have, we at The Den have a Play House – a place where you can unwind and relax – Play station or Xbox, get on to the table games like Tetris and Monkey Kong, apart from the Carrom, Chess, Pool and the other board games," he added.

Amid fluctuating market dynamics, the hotel has witnessed a significant increase in public rates and ADRs (Average Daily Rates), however, Gupta believes that Bengaluru still has room for growth compared to national averages. "This is an extraordinary year, where we have seen Public rates going upwards of USD 200 – something we are experiencing after a long time. However, though the ARR and ADRs have increased by about 20% plus, Bengaluru and Whitefield still has catching up to be done vis-à-vis the national averages." Gupta notes that weekdays witness high occupancy levels driven by corporate demand, whereas weekends present opportunities for rejuvenation and leisure.

The Den Hotel in Bangalore is the first venture of Israel-based brand Dan Hotels in India. It seamlessly combines the values of its



parent company with the unique cultural and business environment of Bangalore. Gupta highlights Dan Hotels' dynamic and innovative approach, "We believe in total localisation and minimal imports; and a classic example is that there is no Head Office representation in India as they believe in local talent and values. We were one of the few hotels that never shut during COVID-19, we did no layoffs and paid full salaries to the team. This very strongly demonstrates our core values and commitment to the team and understanding of local situations where the social security system is still in nascent stages."

Setting itself apart as a top staycation destination in Whitefield, The Den sees competition as an opportunity for self-improvement. Gupta emphasises a philosophy of continuous enhancement, focusing on delivering honest service, stimulating experiences, and seamless efficiency.

"My constant endeavor is "How to Beat Myself". When it comes to product, undoubtedly, it is incomparable, We respect our competition and always learn from them, but we believe that our guests want and yearn for True Hospitality, and that's where we are different," Gupta added.

In the face of Bengaluru's water crisis, the Den leverages its experience as part of the Dan Hotels chain, known for water conservation practices in Israel. Gupta outlines the hotel's initiatives, stating that he said, "We believe in sustainability and protecting our natural resources. We have been at the forefront of water and resource conservation from inception. Apart from Total Rainwater Harvesting and a Zero Discharge Unit; we use flow restrictors at all the Egress points. We have origins in Israel and the country is known for its water management and conservation. The learnings and inspiration come from the Head Office where we are very careful in handling Natural Resources and value every drop of water used." ■

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EVENTS | MEDIA | ONLINE | PROMOTIONS

Neo-Skilling #3 | Changing Culinary Careerscapes

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

Neo-Skilling #2 uncovered exponential approaches to enhance emerging talents using multiple facets of modular skilling. This exposition reveals use-cases wherein the principles of neo-skilling have been adopted by society today. An emergence of several choices with diverse alternatives through which talents express themselves, has reincarnated staid belief systems. Industry pressures for talent need tapping every potential source, with the ability to apply diverse skill-sets in VUCA conditions. Traditional approaches that have been followed for decades supported career opportunities only from unidimensional perspectives. Talents seek multi-dimensional opportunities for application today as exploding non-traditional business formats also welcome neo-renewal of culinary competences. Heterogeneous modes have now arisen, challenging the status-quo of old homogeneous approaches.

Examining the neo-culinary career-scape closely reveals that the joy of cooking is not restricted by technical training but enhanced by



1. Customary Choices: Food production jobs have historically required micro-skilling and specialization. Typical unidimensional approaches led to the dedicated evolution of talents in cuisines, bakery, pastry and chocolate as an example. Such options led to chefs gaining additional related administrative skills for career-growth, while others chose entrepreneurship. Signature offerings were branded by restaurateurs who remained homogeneous specialists. These approaches only served the requirements of limited contexts.

2. Amalgamated Choices: Supply-chains, logistics, delivery, packaging models integrated as an aftermath of the pandemic creating business synergy. Amalgamations facilitated production competences heterogeneously by bringing the quintessential food package to doorsteps. Innovative business models like zomato, swiggy, dunzo, blink-it etc provided incremental advantage to delivery systems like amazon and big-basket. Incorporation of transportation as a crucial element also led to amalgamations like uber-eats progressing disruptive possibilities.

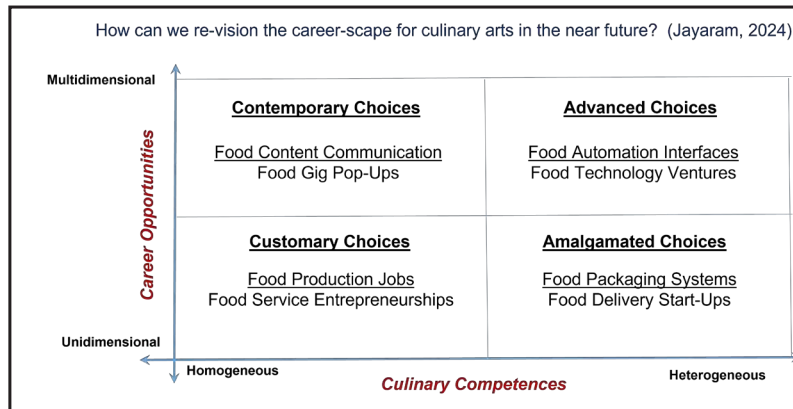
3. Contemporary Choices: The renaissance of a new breed of culinary specialists who research, train and publish digitally has set off a low capital, highly popular food content dimension as seen on social media handles. Chefs' competences with food content communication have led to the re-positioning of culinary specialists in new avatars. Whether highly sought-after signature private practitioners or celebrity pop-ups with bespoke recipes, this rare experience continues to extract a premium in urban food-gigs with a branded social value and pizzazz.

4. Advanced Choices: Technology ventures integrate with culinary careers as AI synergizes with chefs today. Apps and food-automation interfaces lend greater value to food as responsible, sustainable and appropriate eating provides impetus to solutions like calorie-mama. While mechanical blenders and

processors have enhanced chef performance, the emergence of models like wonder-chef in domestic applications strengthens heterogeneity. An AI based cooking platform cloudchef, empowers moderately skilled chefs for careers in food-service!

Unidimensional approaches to chef-careers have limited meaning in current contexts. Multidimensional application requires amalgamation of higher, complementary and related competences - critical to any new-age career. While future forecasts for chefs continue to follow linear projections, these limitations arise largely from homogenous paradigms. Anticipate many innovative culinary explosions to follow - whether with technological hard systems or cultural, anthropological and social systems. Garnishing these on social media to engage eye-balls requires a deeper empathy of how food experience-seeking human minds tick today. Future chefs do not wish to remain beleaguered life-long slaves in kitchens. Digital knowledge updates, focused, sharp, physical micro-skilling, empowered higher education global exposures in diverse training formats will now shape our *neo-chefs*. Neo-skilling- one real solution to incubate our future bound, talented culinary professionals. ■

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



an all-encompassing passion. Complementary competences in science, engineering, technology and media have created modes of application celebrating food quality, convenience or even communication. The emergence of neo-culinary careers like food-stylists, food-photographers, food-writers, dietitians, nutritionists, private food-pop-ups and even content creators is the writing on the wall. A smattering of multiple competences is being integrated today as experimental talents find their manna in the food space. This is also leading to the emergence of hitherto undiscovered demands and target audiences that are shaping their life-styles to leverage these unique services. The juxtaposition of opportunities with competences will reveal greater scope.

Unidimensional culinary career opportunities have remained at the fore-front - building generations of career chefs, restaurateurs and food entrepreneurs. These competences have also expanded to accommodate the demand of scaled-up business model formats. Older formats have been challenged by individual contributors who operate multi-dimensionally. Culinary core competences are not seen any more as limiting factors, since their homogeneity has been expanded. A plethora of supported business opportunities have emerged by amalgamating with sectors like logistics and transportation.

M+A+S=H

By Nathan Andrews, Author & Hospitality Consultant

Years back, when I had the privilege of setting up the first Ecole Hotelier Lausanne EHL campus in India, I remember the then CEO Yateendra Sinh saying that what set EHL apart from other hospitality institutes in the world was that they gave equal emphasis to the 'art' and 'science' of hospitality. What he meant was that historically European and Indian educational institutions had focused on the 'art' aspect, training students to deliver a great customer experience, be it through the rooms or through food and beverage, both production and / or service; while ignoring the 'science' of hospitality, the equally important business elements of marketing, finance and human resources.

The American colleges on the other were very strong on the 'science' part, but paid little attention to the 'art'.

While EHL was absolutely correct in the need to incorporate and balance both aspects, I believe there is a third element that has been completely missing from most training and development programs, which is the 'math' of hospitality. What do I mean by this?

In a nutshell, I am talking about Return on Investment ROI, Return on Investment to the owner of the property. The hospitality industry is largely a micro focused business, focusing on the finer details to



delivering customer satisfaction, they now have unhappy owners and management companies complaining about poor ROI breathing down their neck and are bewildered because no one told them about the math of hospitality.

The math is much more than just a healthy GOP, the math goes below the line beyond the NOP, EBIDTA to the PAT, which is the final return to owner who has invested in the development of the hotel. Quite often by this stage there is nothing much left for the investor after accounting for management fees, depreciation and tax; the owner is disgruntled, starts looks at the business as an underperforming asset and takes out his or her frustration on the hapless General Manager.

All this could be avoided if all parties involved understood the third element, i.e. the math. The 'math' is not just good financial structuring and tax planning, the math is the real estate element of our industry. My own learning in this regard came from one of my former bosses Mr. Unmesh Joshi CMD of the Kohinoor Group. At that time, I was heading his real estate business, but he mentioned once that at the end of the day he looked at all his businesses which included hotels, education and the real estate business through a real estate lens. Were they delivering an equivalent or better return than the real estate opportunity cost?

A hotel is at a fundamental level a piece of real estate, there is cost of land, cost of development and cost of finance. The returns by nature are slow in comparison to other real estate asset classes where the investment cycle can be much faster sometimes even under five years, however at some point definite point in the foreseeable future, in my opinion a maximum of eight years the investor must be able see a positive return on their investment which includes their holding cost for the interim period.

Management companies and their General Managers need to understand this. Too often the investment required by the brand bears no relation to the actual ROI. The pitch to the investor is more emotional, or ego driven backed up by unrealistic terminal values that make the projections look positive. The sad reality is that the real 'math' soon raises its head and the bragging rights of an inordinately expensive

asset soon wear off, giving way to dissatisfaction at best, unserviceable debt at worst. Without the resources and the patience to wait for that elusive terminal value the owner throws in the towel, is unable to reinvest in the maintenance of the property and a vicious downward spiral begins detrimental to all concerned.

'Art' and 'science' are indispensable to our industry but the 'math' is equally critical, if the business has to add up!! ■

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



ensure customer delight. Consequently, the first years of any aspiring manager is focused on ensuring this last mile service delivery and if they do this well, they find themselves entrusted with a hotel to manage independently. Here is where the missing elements of science and math becomes critical.

From a micro focus the GM is now suddenly expected to make and deliver annual budgets, maintain a healthy GOP, capture market share and keep the owner of the asset happy. Most stumble at this stage, ending up sadly as 'Maitre d's in the General Manager's office and wondering why the ask from them has suddenly changed. Great at

‘We have cutting-edge tools designed to optimise revenue generation’

With over two decades of experience in sales and marketing, **Rajan Malhotra**, serving as the **Commercial Director of Conrad Bengaluru**, believes in creating unforgettable experiences and introducing innovative offerings for guests. In a conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee**, Malhotra discusses the dynamic shifts within the hospitality industry, the cutting-edge technology the property is using to optimise revenue management, and highlights Conrad Bengaluru’s dedication to crafting personalised guest experiences.

Q Could you provide insights into the current market trends shaping the hospitality industry?

The hospitality industry in India has rapidly evolved in recent years, embracing innovation and technology to enhance guest experiences. There is a focus on providing ultimate comfort and tranquility through culinary advancements and curated stays.

Currently, the industry is prioritising sustainability, eco-conscious practices, and health and wellness, while also offering personalized and locally immersive travel experiences. At Conrad Bengaluru, we have noticed a significant increase in guests visiting for both business and leisure purposes. Our property, conveniently located in the CBD area, caters to those seeking a convenient work stopover without missing out on the opportunity to explore the city’s rich heritage and tourist attractions.

Q What are the main sources of revenue for the property, and what strategies do you plan to implement to enhance revenue through diverse channels?

Our revenue is generated from several avenues, both online and offline. We are present on all major OTAs and GDS channels to provide optimum visibility to customers traveling to Bengaluru. Our banquet facilities and restaurant offers are also featured on numerous online platforms. Additionally, we have a dedicated sales team that reaches out to corporates, individuals, and allied services.

We offer various packages and services to different people since we understand that everyone’s demands are unique.

Q How does your hotel approach revenue management, and what tactics have proven successful in maximising revenue streams?

We have cutting-edge tools designed to optimise revenue generation across multiple facets of hotel operations. The G3 RMS ensures intelligent revenue cycle optimisation for rooms, maximizing RevPAR by effectively managing demand across room types. Additionally, various tools are available to maximise opportunities in F&B catering outlets and ancillary revenues, allowing for a comprehensive approach to revenue enhancement.



Q As the Commercial Director, what new products or initiatives is Conrad Bengaluru introducing to stay ahead in the competitive hospitality landscape?

In today’s hospitality landscape, guests eagerly anticipate tailor-made experiences that cater to their specific preferences and needs. With this in mind, we continuously innovate by refining our stay offerings to ensure a personalised touch.

For leisure travellers, for instance, our executive lounge provides an ideal, tranquil setting for work and meetings, complemented by a selection of culinary delights and beverages. After a busy day of work, guests can unwind and recharge at our spa, which offers rejuvenating treatments and services.

Families with children for example can expect engaging packages featuring exciting activities, allowing parents to enjoy some well-deserved relaxation, whether indulging in our crafted delicacies, unwinding at the spa, or a refreshing swim in our pool with stunning views of Ulsoor Lake, we make sure our packages curated are well suited for each guest.

At Conrad Bengaluru, we are committed to creating unforgettable experiences for our guests, constantly introducing new flavors and exciting events to ensure lasting memories and satisfaction.

Q What unique amenities does your hotel offer?

Located at the CBD, our hotel offers a prime advantage, making it an ideal choice for guests seeking quick work-related stopovers or families looking for convenient staycation options.

We are committed to staying innovative and keeping up with current trends and preferences. Our diverse range of restaurants offers a variety of delicious cuisines from Pan Asian and Mediterranean to inspired Indian and global culinary offerings. Right from MIKUSU’s Pan Asian cuisine to TIAMO’s Mediterranean delights, inspired Indian delicacies of Indian Durbar to the global culinary offerings of Caraway Kitchen, our centrally located hotel ensures a feast for every palate.

Additionally, our spa provides a relaxing sanctuary with a wide selection of rejuvenating treatments. We provide a wide selection of options tailored to help guests within the city to unwind and relax from all the hustle and bustle in Bengaluru. ■

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‘For us, it has been a journey of creating mid-market excellence’

The Sarovar Hotels was set up in 1994 with a dream to provide the best possible experience in the mid-market segment. **Ajay Bakaya**, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels & Director, Louvre Hotels India talks to **Sumit Jha** about the dream, their journey, and the success story of the Sarovar Group.



Q What is the Sarovar story? What has been at the core of the evolution of Sarovar Hotels group?

The Sarovar story is one of long-term management excellence in the mid-market segment. Our core strengths lie in cultivating enduring relationships with owners, emphasizing stability and trust over two to three decades. This commitment to sustained partnerships has been instrumental in our ability to bring business to our hotels through effective sales strategies and technological advancements. The journey began when Mr. Anil Madhok, departing from the Oberois and a brief tenure in the Middle East, established a management company in India. Around the same time, I returned from overseas assignments in Australia and Holland. Recognizing a significant gap in the mid-scale hotel segment in India, we saw immense potential for development. Unlike others, we eschewed the franchise model, opting instead for straightforward management, enabling us to maintain stringent standards in housekeeping and F&B. Our emphasis on building a robust team of professionals, including corporate chefs, housekeepers, engineers, and IT experts, has been pivotal. This people-centric approach has not only attracted but also retained top talent, underscoring our commitment to providing unparalleled support to hotel owners across India.

Q Does Sarovar only have management hotels or are there also self-owned hotels?

The majority of our portfolio consists of hotels under management operations. Currently, out of a total of 115 operational hotels, only 2 are owned by Sarovar. Additionally, we are in the process of establishing our third-owned hotel in Sriperumbudur, located 40 km southwest of Chennai. With the acquisition of the Golden Tulip portfolio, many of these properties operate under a franchise model, devoid of a management contract.

Q Is the Golden Tulip portfolio undergoing a change?

Yes, the Golden Tulip portfolio has undergone significant changes. Previously part of a separate joint venture, we have fully integrated it into the Sarovar group over the past three years. As a result, we now exclusively manage the portfolio, having streamlined it from 30 hotels to 9. We made the strategic decision to eliminate what we perceived as weaker hotels in order to focus on building a stronger brand presence. Looking ahead, we anticipate



substantial growth over the next five years, with an emphasis on larger and better-positioned properties. Our primary growth area will be Sarovar Portico Hotels, which have already gained prominence in the 3-to-4-star category, with 65 properties operating within our portfolio. Golden Tulip also holds immense potential and will serve as another driver of growth for us. However, Sarovar Portico Hotels are expected to lead the growth trajectory.

Q What about Sarovar's international presence?

Sarovar primarily operates within India but has a growing international footprint in Africa. Existing properties include two in Nairobi (Kenya) and one in Lusaka (Zambia). Exciting developments lie ahead, with four projects in Nepal—Birganj, Chitwan National Park, and Lumbini—scheduled to open this year. Additionally, two more Africa hotels are planned for 2024: one in Kampala (Uganda) and another in Hargeisa (Somaliland).

Q Could you walk us through the initial days of the organization?

In the initial days of our organization, we began with modest beginnings, operating from a shared office space in Janpath, Delhi, with minimal infrastructure and resources. Despite these challenges, we embarked on our journey with a small yet dedicated team consisting of a chef, a housekeeper, and an engineer. Despite our limited setup, we were committed to laying a strong foundation for our venture. Our sales and marketing efforts were initially managed from three offices, a number that has since

expanded to sixteen as we have grown and expanded our operations over time.

Q What are the elements that brought out Sarovar as a brand that is it today?

Sarovar Hotels owes its success to a combination of factors, rooted in our founders' vision and a commitment to excellence. Mr. Anil Madhok's decision to establish a management company upon his return to India from the Middle East, alongside my own experience gained abroad, sparked the realization of the vast potential in developing mid-market hotels in India. Rejecting the franchise model, we opted for straightforward management, allowing us to maintain and uphold our own high standards in all aspects of hotel operations. This hands-on approach has been instrumental in shaping Sarovar's identity as a brand synonymous with quality and reliability. Additionally, our enduring relationships with asset owners, cultivated over decades, have played a crucial role in our growth and success. We are grateful for their trust and confidence in our ability to manage their properties effectively. Furthermore, our dedicated team of professionals, carefully selected for their expertise and integrity, has been pivotal in delivering exceptional experiences to our guests and ensuring the continued success of the Sarovar brand.

Q Could you share with us some pure statistics on the number of properties, the places in which these are situated, the number of rooms, and the turnover for last year? What has been the average occupancy,

ARR, and RevPAR for the group?

Currently, Sarovar Hotels has 115 hotels in 75 different places. Together, these hotels have 8,133 rooms available for guests.

Q When you all created the brand and as Sarovar has evolved over the years, what kind of guest profile are you all targeting?



As Sarovar evolved over the years, our target guest profile has remained focused on individuals aged between 35 to 55 years. This demographic includes a mix of both leisure

and corporate travellers, with approximately a 65-35 split, respectively. Our guests seek diverse experiences, ranging from leisurely getaways to business engagements and spiritual expeditions. Destinations like Agra, Jaipur, and others hold appeal for leisure travellers, while corporate travellers comprise a significant portion of our clientele. However, our primary segmentation revolves around providing highly functional hotels that offer excellent amenities, clean accommodations, and value for money. As the hospitality industry undergoes significant transformation, we are dedicated to adapting to these changes. Emphasizing technology, sustainability, and inclusivity, we strive to enhance the guest experience and maintain our position at the forefront of the industry.

Q Your business mostly has been through the management contract model and not the franchise route. Tell us more about it.

While our primary business model has predominantly revolved around the management contract model, we have also embraced franchising to a certain extent. Currently, out of the 115 hotels within our portfolio, 11 operate under the franchise model, specifically under the Golden Tulip brand. The adoption of franchising offers us a level of flexibility, particularly in scenarios where we already have a managed presence in a city but see an opportunity for further expansion. However, we exercise caution when pursuing franchising opportunities, meticulously assessing factors such as hotel background, location, potential for value addition, and the adaptability of owners to our brand standards. Maintaining the integrity of our brand and ensuring that franchisees adhere to our stringent standards are paramount considerations in our approach to franchising.

Q What is a typical management contract model that you all follow?

Our management contract model spans a duration of 15 years. In essence, this model involves both a fee based on the top line and a fee based on the bottom line. We are open to incorporating performance parameters into the agreement, ensuring that it is not a unilateral arrangement. Simply put, if we fail to meet agreed-upon performance standards, we do not retain our management of the property.

Q When you select a particular hotel for giving your brand name to it. What are the properties that you look for?

When selecting a hotel to affiliate with our

brand, we prioritize properties that we believe are financially viable and where we can contribute substantial value. Our minimum requirement typically includes a property with at least 50 rooms, while for our Portico brand, we seek a minimum of 70 rooms. If the project doesn't meet these criteria, we communicate this to the owners. However, if we identify potential for value addition, we proceed with the collaboration. We prefer to engage with the property as early as possible, ideally upon land acquisition. Integral to our selection process is the involvement of skilled professionals such as architects, interior designers, and consultants specializing in areas like kitchen design, back-of-house operations, lighting, and service planning. We prioritize quality over cost when it comes to hiring consultants, ensuring that every aspect of the hotel's development is meticulously planned and executed to uphold our standards of excellence.

Q You believe that any brand is made by the people behind it. What do you look for in the people who come on board with Sarovar?

We seek individuals who possess the patience and maturity to effectively manage owner relations, recognizing that the satisfaction of our property owners is paramount to our success as a management company. Our growth is primarily driven by positive word-of-mouth and references, highlighting the importance of maintaining strong relationships with owners. We value individuals who share our owner-centric mindset and understand the significance of prudent financial management. While we uphold certain quality standards, we also emphasize the rationale behind them, ensuring that every investment yields a tangible return. Our team members are encouraged to think like owners, prioritizing the viability and long-term success of the properties they oversee. Additionally, we look for candidates who are adaptable, willing to travel, and adept at listening to the needs of both owners and employees. Patience is also a key attribute we seek, recognizing that building successful partnerships and achieving operational excellence requires dedication and perseverance.

Q How focused is Sarovar on training for their employees?

Sarovar Hotels places a strong emphasis on employee training and development right from the start. Our training initiatives span across corporate, regional, and unit levels, ensuring that every team member receives

comprehensive and tailored instruction. In addition to existing programs, we are in the process of establishing our own in-house management training programs designed specifically for managers, chefs, and housekeepers, cultivating a skilled and dedicated workforce. We prioritize flexibility in working hours to accommodate the diverse needs of our employees, including the removal of split shifts for our F&B department. Recognizing the importance of work-life balance, particularly for women employees juggling familial responsibilities, we offer increased flexibility in working hours and, where feasible, opportunities for remote work. We are committed to creating a supportive and empowering work environment that enables our employees to thrive both personally and professionally.

Q Work-life balance – How do you manage it for yourself and for your people?

Ensuring work-life balance is a top priority for Sarovar Hotels, both for our employees and myself. For our team members, I adopt a policy of granting leave whenever requested, without exception. Over the past 28 years, I have never refused leave to anyone. I firmly believe in empowering our employees to manage their own work-life balance according to their needs and preferences. Our organization fosters a supportive environment where individuals have access to HR personnel and department heads to discuss any concerns or issues. We have established committees to address important matters such as sexual harassment, ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels. Additionally, our managers have open offices, encouraging open communication and collaboration.

As for myself, I prioritize health and well-being above all else. I have maintained a routine of dedicating an hour each day to physical activity, recognizing the importance of regular exercise for overall health. Moreover, I place great emphasis on getting adequate sleep, understanding its critical role in maintaining productivity and overall well-being. Balancing physical and spiritual engagement is also essential, and I make it a point to invest time in both aspects regularly. By prioritizing health and fostering a supportive work environment, we aim to promote a healthy work-life balance for everyone associated with Sarovar Hotels.

Q Do you have an internal recognition system for the employees?

Yes, at Sarovar Hotels, we have a robust internal

recognition system in place to appreciate and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our employees. We believe in recognizing excellence at every level and fostering a culture of appreciation within our organization. To achieve this, we have implemented various awards, rewards, and recognition programs designed to celebrate the achievements of our team members.

These recognition initiatives are conducted on a regular basis, including monthly, quarterly, and annual programs, both at the property level and across the entire group. By consistently recognizing outstanding performance and contributions, we aim to motivate our employees, boost morale, and reinforce a culture of excellence and camaraderie within our organization.

Q Where do you see Sarovar as a brand by 2030?

Looking ahead, we envision a steady and sustainable expansion trajectory for our brand. Currently, with 115 operational hotels, we anticipate reaching approximately 150 hotels by 2025. Our approach to growth is measured, focusing on maintaining the quality and integrity of our brands rather than pursuing rapid expansion for the sake of numbers.

Our goal is to continue growing in a manner that preserves the essence of our brands and ensures that each Sarovar property reflects our commitment to excellence. We are discerning in our expansion efforts, carefully evaluating opportunities to maintain the integrity of our portfolio and avoid diluting the value of our brands.

Q Food is one of the bigger components of the hospitality business. How much focus does Sarovar have on the food and the restaurants that you operate within the hotels?

Food plays a significant role in the hospitality industry, and at Sarovar Hotels, we recognize its importance. Moving forward, we are placing even greater emphasis on enhancing our food offerings to elevate the overall guest experience. In addition to our existing corporate teams, we are enlisting the expertise of culinary professionals such as pastry or kitchen consultants and food specialists to undertake specific projects across our hotels. Acknowledging that our team's capacity is often consumed by routine tasks, we are proactively engaging senior chefs on a contractual basis to drive innovation and introduce positive changes to our food offerings. These seasoned professionals will work on special projects

aimed at enhancing the quality and diversity of our culinary offerings. For instance, we currently have teams dedicated to revamping food offerings in locations like Rajkot and Puducherry, including the development of



rooftop restaurants and the redesign of entire menus. This collaborative approach, combining the talent of our in-house teams with the expertise of external culinary specialists, underscores our commitment to delivering exceptional dining experiences to our guests. As we continue to prioritize food quality and innovation, we are confident that these efforts will further distinguish Sarovar Hotels as a leader in culinary excellence within the hospitality industry.

Q What is your general view about the scenario of the hospitality industry in India and how it has been changing?

The hospitality industry in India is poised for significant growth, with increasing demand outpacing supply in the coming years. This trend is expected to drive up rates and stimulate a booming market. Despite this optimistic outlook, a key challenge lies in the shortage of skilled professionals to meet the demands of this expanding market. ■

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Water Sustainability: Need of the Hour

In this modern era, the hospitality industry is facing a significant challenge - the need to pursue water sustainability. With growing global concerns over water scarcity and environmental degradation, hotels are increasingly recognizing their pivotal role in conserving this vital natural resource. Introducing sustainable water practices isn't merely a matter of compliance but a strategic imperative for the industry's longevity and ethical responsibility. From luxurious resorts to budget accommodations, the impact of water consumption reverberates across every facet of hotel operations, from guest amenities to landscaping and kitchen facilities. As the demand for eco-conscious travel rises, hotels that endorse water sustainability stand not only to mitigate their environmental footprint but also to enhance their reputation and competitiveness in an increasingly discerning market. **Asmita Mukherjee** spoke with industry leaders to understand the initiatives taken by the industry to pursue water sustainability.

Bengaluru, India's "Silicon Valley," is grappling with a severe water crisis. The scarcity of this natural resource poses a significant challenge to the city's thriving hospitality industry, where water is the lifeline of hotel operations. Due to this crisis, ensuring water sustainability in hotels is crucial now more than ever. Hotels play a vital role in conserving water resources, and it's imperative for them to adopt eco-friendly practices. Implementing water-efficient fixtures and appliances across all areas, including guest rooms and kitchens, is key to reducing water waste and showcasing a dedication to environmental stewardship.

There are several reasons behind this imbalance. Firstly, the city's rapid growth has surpassed its water infrastructure capacity. Secondly, unpredictable rainfall patterns and climate changes have worsened the situation. Thirdly, reliance on overexploited groundwater has further exacerbated the issue.

A Cause Beyond States:

The water crisis isn't unique to Bengaluru. Hotels in tourist destinations like Gulmarg, Kashmir, and Shimla in the Himalayas are facing similar challenges. This highlights the widespread nature of India's water woes.

The Impact

The Water crisis has a direct impact on hotels, forcing them to re-evaluate their water usage and implement sustainable practices. From ensuring clean linens and guest hygiene to maintaining functional kitchens and landscaped gardens, hotels require a constant supply of water. With dwindling resources, hotels are struggling to maintain their high standards of service.

Fortunately, Bengaluru's hospitality industry isn't going down without a fight. Hotels across the city are embracing eco-friendly practices to conserve water and reduce their environmental footprint. According to the hoteliers one key strategy is implementing water efficient fixtures and appliances. Low flow showerheads, faucet aerators, and water-saving toilets are becoming commonplace, significantly reducing water usage in guest rooms. Similarly, hotels are looking at water-efficient appliances in their kitchens and laundries.

Efforts for conservation

Conservation efforts go beyond just hardware. Many hotels in the city are encouraging guests to participate in water stewardship initiatives. Options like towel reuse programs and shorter showers empower guests





Vinesh Gupta
GM
The Den Bengaluru

to contribute to conservation. Additionally, hotels are exploring alternative water sources. Rainwater harvesting and treated wastewater recycling are gaining traction, helping to reduce dependence on municipal water supplies.

Addressing the pressing water crisis in Bengaluru, Virender Razdan, GM, The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru shed light on The Leela Bhartiya City's proactive measures on sustainability. "Our asset is built on the "The LEED" deliverables. We focus on carbon positive, water positive and zero waste principles. "Not only that but the property also is undergoing rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, etc to save water, explains Razdan, "In addition to having rainwater harvesting at the premises, all wastewater is reused in the form of common area cleaning, cooling tower, flushes and gardening. This makes The Leela Bhartiya City as a water-positive hotel in Bengaluru."

The hotel industry in Bengaluru is setting a commendable example in its fight against water



Virender Razdan
GM, The Leela Bhartiya City
Bengaluru

scarcity. Their innovative and collaborative approach provides valuable lessons for other cities grappling with similar issues. By prioritizing water conservation, not only are hotels ensuring their own sustainability, but they are also contributing to a more responsible and eco-conscious future for the entire hospitality sector.

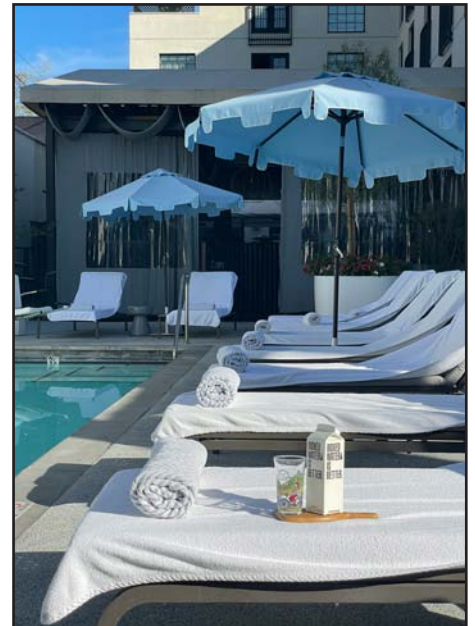
In the face of Bengaluru's water crisis, The Den leverages its experience as part of the Israeli brand, Dan Hotels chain, known for water conservation practices in Israel. Vinesh Gupta, General Manager, The Den outlines the hotel's initiatives, stating that he said, "We believe in sustainability and protecting our natural resources. We have been at the forefront of water and resource conservation from inception. Apart from Total Rainwater Harvesting and a Zero Discharge Unit; we use flow restrictors at all the Egress points. We have origins in Israel and the country is known for its water management and conservation.

The learnings and inspiration come from the Head Office where we are very careful in handling Natural Resources and value every drop of water used." The property implemented rainwater harvesting, flow restrictors, and a zero-discharge unit, demonstrating a deep respect for every drop.

Conclusion

The water crisis in Bengaluru serves as a stark reminder of the importance of responsible water management. While the challenges seem daunting, they are not insurmountable. By adopting sustainable practices, promoting guest participation, and exploring alternative water sources, the hospitality industry can lead the way towards a more water-secure future for Bengaluru and beyond. ■

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HICSA 2024: Record attendance marks Hospitality Industry's recovery and innovation

Hbi Staff | Bengaluru

Hotelivate hosted the 19th Edition of its Hotel Investment Conference – South Asia (HICSA) at the JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa on 2 – 4 April 2024. This annual event is India's largest hospitality investment conference and this year it saw over 725 delegates in attendance representing various businesses across the hospitality spectrum which indicated a turning point in the industry's recovery.

The theme this year was "Savouring South Asia: Innovations in Food, Tech, and Design" which focused on the food and beverage sector and all the innovations and possibilities around it. This industry event united leaders, visionaries, and influencers from the hospitality and investment sectors for an immersive exploration of the region's rich culinary heritage, technological advancements, and cutting-edge design trends.

This year, HICSA saw the presence of three Global CEOs as speakers for this conference. Sébastien Bazin – Chairman & CEO – Accor, Mark S. Hoplamazian – President & CEO – Hyatt Hotels Corporation and Federico J. González – Executive Vice-Chairman – Radisson Hotel Group and CEO – Louvre Hotels Group.

This year's highlight was also the Culinary Carnival which brought together talented chefs, artisanal food vendors, and passionate hoteliers



on Wednesday, 03rd April 2024 at the JW Marriott Bengaluru Golfshire Resort and Spa.

At the Culinary Carnival, there was a diverse and mouth-watering array of dishes from some of the most famous restaurants across India. From street food classics to gourmet delicacies, there was something for every palate. This flavorful adventure was open for all for dinner, as a part of the conference main agenda and received very good feedback. The participating restaurants were – Le Cirque – The Leela Hotels Resorts & Palaces, Glass Kitchen & Bar – IHG, Thai Soul – Hyatt, East – Marriott International, Dum Pukht – ITC Hotels, Farzi Café – Massive Restaurants and Inja – Atelier House Hospitality. The celebrations partners were Paul John Distilleries.

Commenting on the 19th anniversary of HICSA, Manav Thadani, Founder Chairman of Hotelivate said "This year has been truly exceptional, with attendees showing remarkable morale and spirit, and the numbers speak for themselves! We were thrilled to host numerous global CEOs as speakers at HICSA, making it an event of global significance and impact. All the sessions were extremely well received in terms of attendance as well as content. We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from our delegates, speakers and sponsors for both the conference as well the culinary carnival. None of this would have been possible without them".

A collection of presentations, keynotes, interviews and panel discussions covered a plethora of themes and topics as industry stalwarts addressed the changes that hospitality is facing in the recovery phase of the industry and highlighted the growth potential and investment opportunities going forward. HICSA 2024 was spread over a span of three days and aimed to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of South Asian hospitality, spotlighting the intersection of food, technology, and design within the industry. The conference featured an array of engaging sessions, keynote presentations, panel discussions, and interactive workshops led by esteemed industry experts and thought leaders.

Some of the key highlights of the event apart from the thought-provoking sessions were Kapil Bhatia, Executive Chairman, Interglobe Enterprises who was felicitated with a Lifetime Achievement Award,



celebrating a professional journey like no other. He was seen attending the event with his grandson. The 'HICSA Hotels of the Year Awards' presented by MakeMyTrip, recognizes the most remarkable new hotel developments in the South Asian region and as usual saw a great number of nominations. The awards have over the past ten years grown from strength-to-strength and now encompass a wide range of accommodation products across the lodging industry. Since its inception, more than 500 hotels have been nominated in various categories.

The winner of the Critics' Choice Award for Leisure was Ahu Bay, Sri Lanka and for the Urban was Greenpark Bengaluru. The winners across the other six categories were: JW Marriott Goa in the Luxury/Upper Upscale Hotel Segment; Storii by ITC Hotels Moira Riviera, Goa for the Boutique Hotels segment; Greenpark Bengaluru in the Upscale Hotel Segment; Novotel Mumbai International Airport in the Upper Mid-Market Segment; Ginger Mumbai Airport in the Mid-Market Segment and Ibis Styles Goa Vagator in the Budget/Economy Segment.

The General Manager of the Year Awards, presented by MakeMyTrip was another highlight this year. These awards used to be a part of the Hotel Operations Summit India (HOSI) and while that conference took a hiatus in 2023, our commitment to celebrating excellence in the hospitality industry remains steadfast. The prestigious GM of the Year Awards were seamlessly integrated into the Hotel Investment Conference South Asia (HICSA) as the closing event of the main conference on Thursday, 04th April 2024. These awards are a wonderful opportunity to recognize and highlight the hard work and outstanding performance



displayed by the General Managers untiringly running the show. The Jury Special Recognition Award went to Satyajeeet Krishnan – Taj Mahal, New Delhi. For the Budget Category of hotels, the winner was Tarun Singh – Country Inn & Suites by Radisson Manipal, for the Mid-Market/ Upper Mid-Market segment – the winner was Arjun Kaggallu – Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences, in the Upscale / Upper Upscale category, there were two winners with the exact same score: Sanjay Pandita – Aurika, Coorg – Luxury by Lemon Tree Hotels and Rajneesh Kumar – Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort, and for the Luxury Category, the winner was George Bennet Kuruvilla – The Ritz-Carlton Bengaluru.

The conference ultimately concluded with the famous "Hot Seat Debate" moderated by Manav Thadani, which put the spotlight on its panelists, bringing it all out in the open and with this, it brought an end to the most exciting three days. ■



Feast of Transformation: Bengaluru's Hotels Elevate the F&B scene in 2023

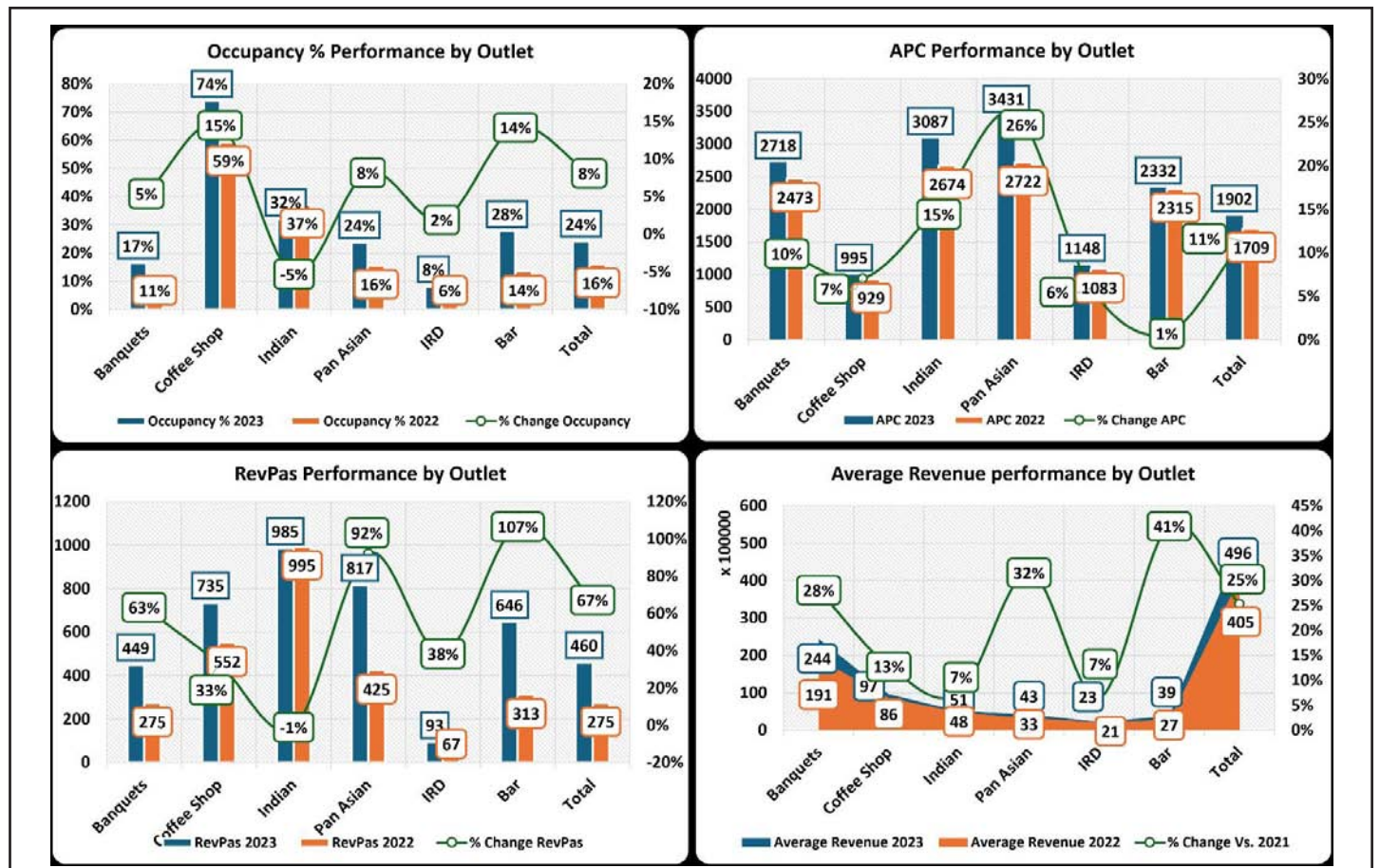
The year 2023 marked a period of significant resurgence for the Food & Beverage sector within Bengaluru's luxury and upper upscale hotels, charting a

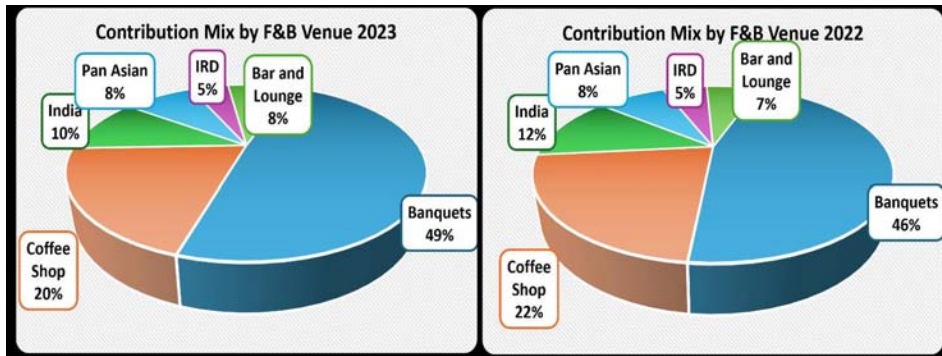
course through renewed consumer confidence and a reinvigorated market. Occupancy rates across the outlets experienced a notable uptick, with Banquets and Coffee Shops leading the

charge, showcasing an increase of 5% and 15% respectively, reflecting a year rich with engagements and celebrations. This surge is mirrored in the Average Per Cover (APC),

DISSECTING PERFORMANCE - THE HEARTBEAT OF HOSPITALITY								
		Banquets	Coffee Shop	Indian	Pan Asian	IRD	Bar	Total
Occupancy %	2023	17%	74%	32%	24%	8%	28%	24%
	2022	11%	59%	37%	16%	6%	14%	16%
APC	2023	2718	995	3087	3431	1148	2332	1902
	2022	2473	929	2674	2722	1083	2315	1709
RevPas	2023	449	735	985	817	93	646	460
	2022	275	552	995	425	67	313	275
Average Revenue	2023	2,44,28,710	97,06,477	51,04,533	42,83,520	22,50,618	38,61,454	4,96,35,313
	2022	1,90,73,813	86,06,419	47,55,260	32,55,296	21,13,176	27,40,042	4,05,44,006
% Change Vs.Ly	Occupancy	5%	15%	-5%	8%	2%	14%	8%
	APC	10%	7%	15%	26%	6%	1%	11%
	RevPas	63%	33%	-1%	92%	38%	107%	67%
	Average Revenue	28%	13%	7%	32%	7%	41%	25%

Full year Outlet wise break up of Occupancy, APC, RevPas and Average revenue along with % Change vs Q1 2022 done by the F&B department in a luxury and upper upscale hotel.





which saw a commendable rise, particularly in the Pan Asian outlets that enjoyed a 26% increase, heralding a pivot towards high-end gastronomic adventures.

As the city's culinary hubs navigated the new normal, the Revenue per Available Seat (RevPas) and Average Revenue demonstrated a robust upswing, signifying a sector that has adeptly tailored its offerings to the evolving palates and preferences of its clientele. With a 28% growth in Banquet revenue and a 41% increase in Bar earnings, the story of 2023 is one of triumph over adversity, underscored by a 25% boost in total F&B revenue, painting a picture of a sector that not only endured but thrived.

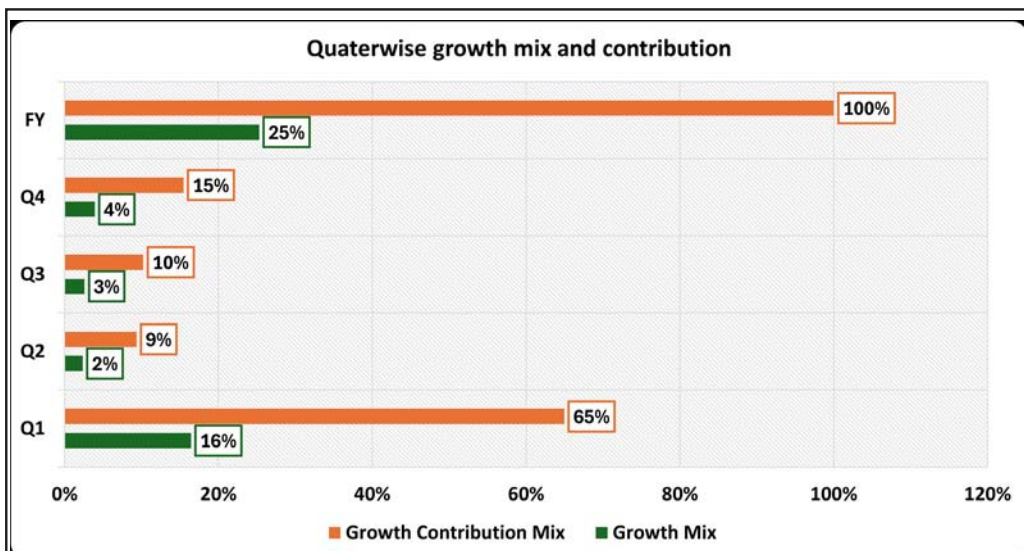
DISSECTING PERFORMANCE - THE HEARTBEAT OF HOSPITALITY

The tapestry of 2023's F&B performance is rich with detail, where each outlet contributed its unique thread to the sector's overall vibrancy. The Coffee Shop, a perennial favourite, fortified its position as a key player with a staggering 74% occupancy, reinforcing its role as the social and networking nucleus of the hotel. The Banquet space, reimagined through innovative offerings, capitalized on the renewed demand for social gatherings, reflected in a significant 63% increase in RevPas.

The monthly pulse of F&B operations beat strongest in the festive months, with December showcasing the zenith of occupancy and revenue, aligning with global festivities and local celebrations. This period highlighted the sector's capability to scale operations, meet heightened demand, and deliver exceptional experiences that resonate with guests.

The data further elucidates a shift in dining preferences, where the splendour of Pan Asian cuisine captured the imagination and appetite of guests, contributing a sizeable 32% increase in average revenue. Meanwhile, the Indian outlets, despite a slight dip in occupancy, held steady in their revenue contributions, underscoring the enduring appeal of authentic culinary offerings.

The F&B segment analysis for 2023 reveals a discernible change in the dining landscape. Banquets gained prominence, accounting for nearly half of the F&B revenue, a growth reflecting an increased patronage for events. The Coffee Shop and Indian cuisine segments saw a slight decline, hinting at evolving consumer preferences. Meanwhile, the steady figures for Pan Asian cuisine and IRD suggest a consistent demand for these services. Notably, the Bar and Lounge segment experienced growth, indicative of a rising preference for



leisure dining experiences.

Q1 2023: A QUARTER OF SIGNIFICANT RECOVERY

The first quarter of 2023 was pivotal, accounting for the majority of the year's growth. This surge is attributed to the sector's recovery from the pandemic's impacts, with increased consumer confidence and demand for dining experiences. The remarkable rebound in Q1 set the tone for a year of prosperity and growth across all F&B outlets.

STRATEGIC RECOVERIES AND EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

The sector's ability to rebound and demonstrate potential for further growth is noteworthy. With strategic focus areas identified, there is a clear path forward to sustain and build upon this growth. Emphasizing customer experience and leveraging data-driven strategies will be crucial in navigating the future landscape of the F&B sector.

ENGAGEMENT AND INNOVATION: THE ROAD AHEAD

As Bengaluru's F&B sector continues to flourish, the emphasis on enhancing customer experiences through innovative offerings and strategic market positioning will be key. The sector's resilience and adaptability to changing consumer preferences and market dynamics will shape its trajectory towards sustained growth and profitability.

CALL TO ACTION: UNVEILING DEEPER INSIGHTS

We invite industry professionals, enthusiasts, and stakeholders to explore the detailed contributions of each F&B outlet and the strategic insights derived from this year's performance. For an in-depth analysis and to understand the factors driving this success, visit Compset.in or reach out at support@compset.com.au. Delve into our comprehensive report to navigate the intricacies of Bengaluru's F&B sector and leverage these insights for strategic decision-making and growth. ■

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Echor Hotels & Resorts, Srinagar

Echor Hotels & Resorts launched its property, Echor Srinagar, expanding its luxury hospitality footprint into the picturesque landscape of Kashmir. Located near the iconic Dal Lake, Echor Srinagar is designed to offer a serene and immersive experience to travellers seeking tranquillity and beauty in the heart of Kashmir. The launch of Echor Srinagar signifies a major milestone in the company's expansion across Northern India, reflecting its commitment to enhancing the tourism landscape with premium hospitality services. Echor Srinagar features 40 opulent rooms, some rooms offer breathtaking views of Dal Lake, while each room is equipped with modern amenities for a comfortable and rejuvenating stay. The property also includes a cosy café, an apple orchard for leisurely walks and a diverse multi-cuisine restaurant to cater to the culinary tastes of global travellers.

Vivanta Chitwan, Bharatpur, Nepal

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) launched Vivanta Chitwan, Bharatpur. The hotel is a confluence of the vibrant tapestry of Nepal's culture and contemporary luxury. Vivanta Chitwan in Bharatpur is a haven of individuality, exuding style and vitality across its 45 keys. Each room and suite, elegantly adorned, offers guests captivating views of the Devchuli Mountains. Indulge in a culinary journey at Mynt, the multi-cuisine all-day diner, or unwind at Wink, the vibrant bar. For relaxation and fitness, the hotel features a modern fitness centre and an outdoor pool overlooking the stunning Siraichuli Mountains. With 2,400 sq. ft. of meeting space, including a business centre, it's ideal for gatherings and events. Nestled along the Narayani River, Bharatpur serves as a vital commercial hub in Nepal's central region. The country beckons travellers with its rich tapestry of experiences, from its historic and sacred sites to the awe-inspiring landscapes of the Himalayas.



Pramod Lands End Resort, Gopalpur, Odisha

In pursuit of its ambitious expansion strategy in the untapped destinations of India, Radisson Hotel Group is thrilled to set foot in Gopalpur, Odisha with the signing of Pramod Lands End Resort, a member of Radisson Individuals. The 100-room hotel has been developed by Padma Eastern Hotels Private Limited and is set to open its doors in Q2, 2024. Pramod Lands End Resort, a member of Radisson Individuals is strategically located on the scenic Gopalpur Beach in southern Odisha and promises guests a tranquil escape. The hotel is conveniently accessible from major nearby cities via roads and railways, with Berhampur Airport just a short drive away. The resort is at four-hour drive from prominent religious hubs such as Puri and Konark. The property boasts multiple room categories, including suites and villas with private pool access post-opening. In addition to its fine accommodations, guests can savour delectable dishes and drinks at the all-day dining, bar, and specialty restaurant. With

expansive banquet spaces for meetings and events, the hotel caters to leisure and business travellers alike. Additionally, swimming pool, fitness centre, and spa can be availed.

The Ritz-Carlton, Jaipur, Rajasthan

Marriott International, Inc. signed an agreement with Gurnani Resorts & Hotels to introduce its globally acclaimed The Ritz-Carlton brand in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Anticipated to debut in January 2028, the 250-key resort will bring its legendary service and classic modern design to the iconic 'Pink City of India'. The Ritz-Carlton, Jaipur is set to elevate the city's luxury hotel landscape with its destination-inspired design and highly personalized service. The Ritz-Carlton Jaipur is poised to offer travellers a sanctuary of royal luxury intertwined with culturally rich local experiences. The resort's planned location enjoys superb connectivity to key tourist attractions via NH48, with historical landmarks like Amer Fort, Hawa Mahal Palace, The City Palace, Nahargarh Fort, and the iconic Jantar Mantar all conveniently located within a 50-minute drive from the resort. Anticipated to feature 250 modern guest rooms and suites, plans also call for the resort facilities to include The Ritz-Carlton Lobby Lounge, a destination spa, replete with an indoor pool, six eclectic casual and fine dining restaurants and bars and state-of-the-art meeting and event facilities.



IHG HOTELS AND RESORTS



**Anand Nair, GM,
InterContinental Chennai
Mahabalipuram Resort**

Anand Nair is renowned for his acute business strategy, competitive market stabilization and a proven track record of year-on-year profitable business growth. He is recognized as a highly motivated and dynamic leader with a deep understanding of the business and luxury market.

Nair joined IHG South West Asia in 2018 as General Manager and most recently served in the same capacity at Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park. In his new role, Nair will oversee the complete operations and management of the resort, ensuring the highest levels of guest engagement, profitability to build on the positioning and reputation of InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort.

RADISSON HOTELS



**Sachin Malik, Executive Chef,
Radisson Blu MBD Hotel**

Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida has appointed Sachin Malik as the hotel's new Executive Chef recently. Malik brings over 18 years of culinary expertise garnered from Indian hospitality chains and international giants, offering a diverse fusion of international cuisines and authentic Indian flavours to the Food & Beverage industry. In his most recent

role, Malik contributed his talent to Wyndham Hotel Group in Bahrain, overseeing F&B operations and crafting themed menus to delight guests. In one of his roles, he led a team of chefs responsible for catering to prestigious state events held at the President's House of India, including dignitaries such as the King of Bhutan, the President of China and various VIP delegations.

**Nikhil Sharma, MD and ASVP
(South Asia), Radisson Hotel
Group**



Radisson Hotel Group has appointed Nikhil Sharma as the Managing Director and Area Senior Vice President (ASVP) for South Asia. In his new role, Sharma will lead Radisson Hotel Group's operations in the dynamic South Asia region, which boasts over 165 hotels in operations and development. He brings a wealth

of experience and will play a pivotal role in strengthening the Group's leadership in the Indian market, nurturing relationships with its valued partners, driving revenue growth and ensuring operational excellence. Sharma joined Radisson Hotel Group from Wyndham Hotels & Resorts (WHR) where he served as Market Managing Director Eurasia, overseeing Business Development, Operations, New Openings, and Sales & Marketing.

INDIAN HOTELS COMPANY LTD



**Ranjit Phillipose, Sr VP,
Operations Goa, IHCL**

The Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) appointed Ranjit Phillipose as Senior Vice President – Operations, Goa recently. A celebrated visionary for his outstanding achievements in opening new hotels and rebranding initiatives across the world, Phillipose brings a wealth of experience in exceptional hospitality leadership spanning three decades with IHCL. Phillipose

embarked on his professional journey in 1993 with IHCL at Taj Coromandel, Chennai. Over the years, he has showcased versatile skills and remarkable leadership acumen by spearheading pre-opening task forces in Mumbai, Seychelles and Mauritius. As Goa's tourism landscape continues to evolve, Phillipose stands at the helm of it all with a portfolio of over 30 units and a mammoth workforce of 2500 personnel steering the brand toward new horizons of success.

ACCOR HOTELS



Rajat Sethi, GM, Fairmont Jaipur

Fairmont Jaipur has appointed Rajat Sethi as the new General Manager. Bringing over 25 years of rich experience in the hospitality sector, Sethi offers a mix of leadership acumen, operational proficiency and a history of achievements to his latest position. As General Manager, he will be responsible for leading Fairmont Jaipur towards continued success and excellence in guest service. Sethi will

work closely with the hotel's leadership team to develop and implement strategic initiatives aimed at driving revenue growth, maximizing operational efficiency and maintaining Fairmont Jaipur's position as a premier luxury destination in Jaipur. Prior to joining Fairmont Jaipur, his most recent position as General Manager, at ITC Grand Bharat, a Luxury Collection Retreat and ITC Classic Golf and Country Club.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL



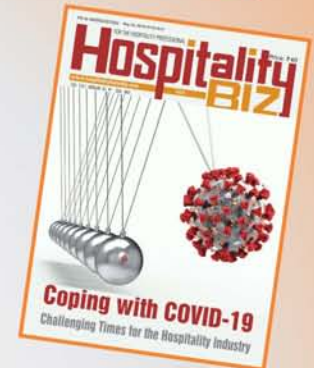
**Peeyush Sinha, F&B Director,
JW Marriott Bengaluru**

JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa appointed Peeyush Sinha as the Director of Food and Beverages. In his capacity as the Director of Food and Beverages, Sinha will provide strategic leadership to the F&B operations, focusing on maximizing revenue, introducing innovative concepts and enhancing the overall dining experience for guests.

His responsibilities also include ensuring synergy between departments and maintaining the highest standards of guest service. His previous role as Food & Beverage Manager, coupled with his experience at esteemed properties such as Westin Hyderabad Mindspace and Le Meridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa, has equipped him with the skills necessary to excel in his new position.

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