



# ENGAGE

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## Employment SKILLS

Hospitality sector gears up with skilling programs to match guest expectations and digitisation



### SKILL IN INDIA FOR THE WORLD

By Suman Billa, Additional Secretary,  
Tourism, Government of India

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## From the President's Desk



**KB Kachru**  
President, Hotel Association of India  
Chairman - South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

**A**s the Indian hotel industry's contribution to the nation's GDP is projected to soar to \$1 trillion by 2047, driven by a surge in domestic and international tourism, a significant skill gap in the hospitality sector has come to light. According to the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC), between 2025 and 2028, the industry will require an additional three million trained professionals. Alarming, only 1% of the estimated 5.8 million young individuals interested in the sector have received formal training.

To maintain high service standards, foster innovation, and improve client experiences, skilled professionals are crucial to the hotel sector. There is immense potential in hospitality to skill staff from diverse backgrounds and any education level, in even the remotest corner of the country. Youth can be easily skilled to be employable for various roles in hospitality. The tourism ministry has recently established a task force to investigate the declining interest in hospitality courses and recommend strategies to enhance both their visibility and quality. There is an urgent need for industry-aligned training programs to address both the issues, of skill gap and of declining interest in hospitality courses.

The recent Union Budget's proposal to skill 20 lakh youth over the next five years, through industry-curated content, is a promising step for sectors like tourism and hospitality. Vocational education and in-house operational training within hotel premises, and combining online learning with practical experiences, will be key to building a competent workforce. These programs must ensure that students receive comprehensive training while immersing themselves in the operational environment. Emerging technologies including AI and robotics are also beginning to address challenges of skills gap in some areas like security, data analytics, revenue manage skills luggage handling, hygiene and so on.

In this Issue, we have gathered insights from the sharpest minds and leading figures in the industry. We delve into the intricate web of skilling, relationship-building, emerging technology and safety protocols that form the backbone of successful hospitality. Our goal is not just to inform, but to inspire and influence the direction of the industry. **HAI**

# CONTENTS

VOLUME 4

ISSUE 4

AUGUST 2024



## LeaderSpeak 8

### Skill in India for the World

As India continues to grow, the tourism sector is poised to create millions of new jobs, potentially reaching 102 million by 2029. To fully leverage this opportunity, there is a need to enhance skill development, adapt to technological changes, and broaden educational offerings.

*By Suman Billa, Additional Secretary, Tourism, Government of India*



## Close Look 26

### Taxation laws in Hospitality sector

Travel and tourism is a major employment-generating sector, offering direct and indirect employment for professionals with varied skill sets. By 2023, the sector is expected to create 5.82 crore jobs in the country.



## Cover Story 12

### Employment & Skilling

The hospitality industry in India is a dynamic and rapidly growing sector that plays a crucial role in the country's economy. As India continues to attract both domestic and international tourists, the demand for skilled professionals in this industry has never been higher. Skilling is essential in hospitality, not only to ensure that employees can meet the high standards of service expected by guests but also to keep up with global trends and technological advancements.

## Destination

28

### Punjab: Lush, green cultural powerhouse

In this issue, we travel to the verdant state of Punjab to dissect its immense tourism potential

*By Riaan Jacob George*



## The Last Word 35

### Skilling for New Tourism

If the industry is not attracting enough talent, is it because of the service conditions or because the remuneration is not competitive? Or, is it a deeper malaise which the industry and the government have to handle together, the problem of a mismatch between what the industry wants and what the training institutions are producing.



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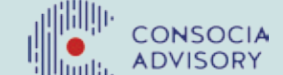
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## Oberoi Group launches hospitality scholarships



The Oberoi Group has launched two scholarship programs in memory of its founders, Rai Bahadur Mohan Singh Oberoi and Prithvi Raj Singh Oberoi. The 'Dare to Dream' scholarship, marking the Group's 90th anniversary, is open to hotel employees from non-Oberoi properties in India. The Prithvi Raj Singh Oberoi 'Be the Best' scholarship is available for Oberoi Group employees in India and overseas. Both scholarships offer the opportunity to pursue an MBA in hospitality at Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), including a Best Practice Tour at some of the world's finest hotels. Vikram Oberoi, CEO, stated, "The Oberoi Group Scholarship Programme honors our founders' legacy by nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and upholding our commitment to exceptional guest experiences."

## 'Indian Hospitality sector to snag \$436 mn investments by year-end'

The Indian hospitality sector is expected to attract \$436 million in investments by year-end, marking a 29% increase from last year and the highest since the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Nihar Ercan, CEO of APAC at JLL Hotels & Hospitality Group, India's hotel transactions could surpass those in APAC markets like the Maldives and approach Thailand's levels, with \$150 million worth of deals.

## HAI members celebrate Independence Day by promoting Har Ghar Tiranga

The members of The Hotel Association of India (HAI) celebrated Independence Day on 15 August by participating in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Har Ghar Tiranga* drive. As part of the celebrations, many hospitality brands marked the occasion in their own unique ways. Hotels across the country were illuminated in the colours of the Indian flag,

showcasing the true spirit of the *Har Ghar Tiranga* initiative.



## UP government eases rules to boost hotel sector

The Uttar Pradesh government has amended building construction laws to boost the hotel industry amid rising tourism. Key changes include reducing the number of land related documents and easing regulations for small hotels, while prohibiting hotel construction on residential plots in planned colonies. Hotels with up to 20 rooms can now be built on narrower roads, and parking rules have been updated. Height restrictions have also been relaxed, with large hotels allowed mixed-use spaces.

Following the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya and the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi, tourism in Uttar Pradesh has surged. The state government expects even more tourists with the completion of projects like the Vindhya Corridor in Mirzapur and the Banke Bihari Corridor in Mathura. To meet the growing demand, the government plans to add 200,000 hotel rooms, which will create substantial jobs and have a positive impact across various sectors. Uttar Pradesh's Minister for Tourism and Culture, Shri Jaiveer Singh, called the reforms a game-changer for the state's tourism industry.

## Booming growth in outbound tourism

India's outbound tourism is on a remarkable trajectory, projected to reach \$18.82 billion in 2024 and expected to surge to \$55.39 billion by 2034, according to the 'Navigating Horizons' report by Nangia NXT and FICCI. Packaged tours continue to dominate the market, accounting for 39.20% in 2024, as travellers opt for the convenience and customisation offered by pre-planned tour packages.

The report highlights robust growth driven by rising disposable incomes, an expanding middle class, easier visa processes, and a growing desire for international experiences. With a young, urban population, the trend towards exploring global destinations is set to continue. Emerging destinations like Egypt, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are attracting Indian travellers with their rich history, cultural heritage, and affordability.

The growth of outbound tourism is also benefitting allied industries such as aviation and hospitality, fuelled by increased consumer spending, visa reforms, and enhanced marketing efforts, according to Suraj Nangia, Head of Government and Public Sector Advisory at Nangia NXT.

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# Chatterati



## LEADERSHIP & LEISURE

As the Area Director at IHCL, **Kanika Hasrat** oversees hotels in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, while also serving as the General Manager at Vivanta Surajkund. Her role allows her to travel extensively across India, indulging in her love for the outdoors. She is passionate about Indian art and collaborates with artists and artisans, offering guidance on trends and helping them showcase their work to build a broader patronage.

Family time is precious to her, and a game of Uno, Monopoly Deal, or online Ludo has become a daily ritual. "Weekends are spent pottering around the garden, unwinding with a good book and coffee, and enjoying long dinners with friends and family, complete with some wine and often a meal prepared by her husband," she says.

## DEVOTED TO FITNESS

**S**hashank Bhagat, Chairman of the BI Group, headquartered in New Delhi, oversees a diverse portfolio that includes Hospitality, Real Estate, Education, Retail, and more. He strongly believes in the principle of "a healthy mind in a healthy body." This belief led him to begin training for a half marathon over 20 years ago, a commitment that has since evolved into a lifelong habit. Shashank's dedication to fitness is unwavering; he has maintained a consistent workout routine for many years, exercising six days a week, every morning before work. His regimen includes running, spin cycling, and weight lifting.

Despite his extensive travel commitments, Shashank ensures that he never misses a workout, even if it means adjusting his schedule to include a Sunday session. In addition to his daily exercise, he practices a 36-hour water fast once a week to detoxify his system. Through his disciplined lifestyle, Shashank exemplifies the importance of balancing professional responsibilities with personal well-being.



Caricatures : Anthony Lawrence

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# Skill in India for the World

As India continues to grow, the tourism sector is poised to create millions of new jobs, potentially reaching 102 million by 2029. To fully leverage this opportunity, there is a need to enhance skill development, adapt to technological changes, and broaden educational offerings to include niche areas like heritage hospitality and luxury tourism. By fostering industry-academia collaboration and focusing on continuous education, India can not only meet domestic needs but also become a global hub for skilled tourism professionals.

By Suman Billa, Additional Secretary, Tourism, Government of India

**T**ourism is a vital engine of the economy in several countries around the world, and it plays a significant role in India, accounting for 5.4% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Unlike other service sectors like IT or Gems and Jewellery, Tourism is consumed entirely at the destination, resulting in higher value addition to the economy in comparison. However, the real importance of tourism, particularly for a country like India, lies in its ability to create jobs across all levels, from executives to unskilled labour. According to the UN, one out of every ten jobs globally is within the tourism sector.

We live in an era dominated by the technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution, especially Artificial Intelligence. As the adoption of these technologies accelerates, we will see enhanced capital investments but a

shrinkage in job creation, particularly in the manufacturing sector.

India has been the fastest-growing large economy for some time now, and that trend is likely to continue. The primary pillar supporting the assumption of continued growth is the demographic dividend. However, it would be complacent to take this demographic dividend for granted. Reaping its benefits depends on the economy's ability to generate quality jobs.

Tourism needs to step up in this context. It is estimated that the tourism sector currently accounts for 78 million jobs, both direct and indirect. If we extrapolate the growth rate of both international and domestic visits over the past few years and expand the supply side in tandem, the sector should account for 93 million jobs by 2029 in a 'business as usual' scenario.

**We need to broaden our courses to cover niche areas like heritage hospitality, luxury shopping, plantation-based tourism, and more, creating adequate specialisations to offer authentic and exceptional service standards**

However, if the sector achieves an optimistic growth scenario with targeted focus, it can create 102 million jobs—a significant contribution to India's job economy.

India has a large pool of job seekers, and the tourism industry, in turn, requires skilled manpower. The challenge today is to build a bridge that imparts quality education and skills to create a world-class human resource base to power our establishments. Over the past ten years, skill development has received tremendous focus, and the results are visible. However, there is a case for augmenting skilling programs by adding more skill sets to cater to the broader requirements of the sector and accurately mapping the demand and supply to ensure optimal placements.

Traditionally, the government led the way in imparting tourism-related education and skills through institutions like the Institutes of Hospitality Management, the Indian Institute of Travel and Tourism Management, State Institutes of Hospitality Management, and the Food Craft Institutes. While these institutions have rendered invaluable service to the





We should aim to 'Skill in India for the World' by actively partnering with global training institutions and ensuring that our manpower compares favourably with the best in the world

sector, their footprint is diminishing in a fast-growing environment. Several private sector institutions have already emerged to fulfil the unmet demand. The time is ripe to unleash market forces to address these market requirements. However, strict quality regulations through organisations like the National Council for Hospitality Management and Catering Technology is vital.

The tourism sector now faces the challenges of rapid change due to the faster adoption of technology and opportunities offered by the gig economy. We need to adapt our syllabus to the opportunities that evolve and strive to stay ahead of the curve.

Most of the education and skilling provided are still oriented toward traditional opportunities in tourism. We need to broaden our courses to cover niche areas like heritage hospitality, luxury shopping, plantation-based tourism, and more, creating adequate specialisations to offer authentic and exceptional service standards. Several of these courses can be built upon an existing base of education and can be delivered online through platforms like Coursera.

Education does not end after earning a degree or diploma. Continuous skilling at all levels of career progression, to refresh and impart additional skill sets to personnel as they progress in their careers, needs to become the norm.

Our education and skilling initiatives need to target far beyond the requirements of the sector in India. Opportunities for talent mobility have increased significantly, with an acute shortage of manpower, especially in the tourism sector, in developed economies around the world. We should aim to 'Skill in India for the World' by actively partnering with global training institutions and ensuring that our manpower compares favourably with the best in the world.

All of our institutions should necessarily offer modules on entrepreneurship and create pathways for mentoring to pave the way for innovation, shifting from being a nation of job seekers to job creators.

We need to foster stronger industry-academia collaboration for structured research, demand mapping, and building a pipeline of talent for a rapidly expanding sector. The industry should also engage in some introspection to create clear career progression paths for those who choose to serve in the tourism sector.

Lastly, the Ministries of Tourism and Skill Development are both working towards several common goals. There is a strong case for evolving a common plan of action and building synergies to ensure that the outcome is greater than the sum of its parts. **HAI**

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# EMPLOYMENT & SKILLING

The hospitality industry in India is a dynamic and rapidly growing sector that plays a crucial role in the country's economy. As India continues to attract both domestic and international tourists, the demand for skilled professionals in this industry has never been higher. Skilling is essential in hospitality, not only to ensure that employees can meet the high standards of service expected by guests but also to keep up with global trends and technological advancements. With proper training and skill development, hospitality professionals can deliver exceptional experiences, drive customer satisfaction, and ultimately contribute to the industry's growth and sustainability. In a competitive market, where customer expectations are continually evolving, investing in skilling is not just important—it's imperative.

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The Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) report released in March this year mentions that between 2025 and 2028, the industry will require an additional three million trained professionals. Alarming, only 1% of the estimated 5.8 million young individuals interested in the sector have received formal training. This skill gap needs to be addressed with urgency so as not to lose the growth momentum that Hospitality is currently enjoying. Overall, nearly 26.8% of young Indians comprise approximately 11.3 crore students. The latest budget proposes substantial investment in education facilities and vocational training programs



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with a focus on establishing partnerships with industry to tailor curricula to meet market demands. Entrepreneurship is gaining traction as a viable career path. There is a need to provide mentorship, networking opportunities and access to resources crucial for new businesses to thrive. Ensuring quality of training and alignment with industry is crucial. The disconnect between skills available and those required by employers can be bridged through partnerships between institutes and industries along with real-time feedback. Promoting flexible, modular education systems and investing in digital infrastructure will also improve access and adaptability. Hospitality institutes are gearing up with timely tweaks in curricula, by adding new courses, emphasising sustainability, and blending physical classes with online modules.

## TOURISM & HOSPITALITY SKILL

## COUNCIL (THSC) REPORT

The Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) launched its report on the Demand And Skill Gap in March 2024. The report says that the tourism and hospitality sector's growth is driven by five core sub-sectors: travel and tourism, hotels, food services, facility management, and cruise liners. It makes some key observations under various heads. Highlights of the report:



### EMPLOYMENT

- The sector employed 39 million workers in 2019-20.
- Employment in the sector is expected to grow to 53 million by 2029.

### SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Only 1% of the workforce employed in the sector received any form of training in 2022 (as per Periodic Labour Force Survey 2022).
- Of those trained, 83% were in full-time programs, and 17% in part-time programs.
- 22% of the trained workforce had training durations between 6 to 12 months.



### TOP JOB ROLES (ENTRY-LEVEL)

- **Hotels:** Assistant Chef (43%), Commis Chef (31%), Duty Manager (29%).
- **Food Services:** Kitchen Helper (45%), Demi Chef de Partie (35%), Food and Beverage Service Associate (35%).
- **Facility Management:** Facility Staff Manager (48%), Multi-purpose Associate (45%), Billing Executive (45%).
- **Tourism, Tours, and Travels:** Assistant Instructor - Rope Activities (58%), Adventure Travel Guide (53%), Customer Service Executive (52%).
- **Cruise Liners:** Chef de Partie (80%), Assistant Chef (60%), Demi Chef de Partie (60%).



### RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

- The top demanded job roles coincide with the hard-to-fill job roles.
- Employers cite a lack of technical and soft skills as recruitment challenges.

### SKILL LEVELS IN WORKFORCE

- 36% of surveyed youth identify as skilled workers, 36% as semi-skilled, and 30% as unskilled.
- Of the 3 million additional workforce needed by 2028: 1.1 million will be skilled, 1.1 million semi-skilled, 0.8 million unskilled.



### GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

- **High Incremental Demand States:** Maharashtra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu.
- **Medium Demand States:** Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Low Demand States:** Punjab, Assam, Telangana.



We have started exploring the possibilities of online and blended learning. These models make education more accessible and allow students to balance work and study.

**GYAN BHUSHAN**  
Sr. Economic Advisor (Tourism)  
and CEO of NCHMCT

**Gyan Bhushan**, Senior Economic Advisor (Tourism) and CEO of National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT), says: "Hospitality courses now focus on new technologies like property management systems, online booking platforms, and CRM software. Sustainability topics such as environmental studies, green building practices, and eco-friendly operations have become essential. Post-Covid, crisis management and resilience training are also included. Industry partnerships offer hands-on experience through internships, cooperative education, and real-world projects, with simulation labs providing practical skills in a controlled environment."

Online and blended learning models are being explored to make education more accessible. Short courses and certifications offer upskilling opportunities, while global perspectives are provided through



exchange programs, international internships, and study tours, he says. Core skills like communication, teamwork, leadership, and customer service remain crucial, with personal development and wellness included in the curriculum. He says that the curriculum is regularly updated with inputs from industry professionals, ensuring it includes the latest trends and technologies. Key skills now include digital, interpersonal, and technical abilities, with new marketing and AI elements integrated into guest engagement training. "Workshops for faculty, such as digital marketing by IIM Kolkata, are being organised. Entrepreneurship is a new module, supported by dedicated incubation cells for student projects, fostering innovation and job readiness. Several IHMs have dedicated incubation cells where students' projects are guided and encouraged," he adds.



social media strategies for guest engagement, and the use of virtual and augmented reality in enhancing guest experiences. To further prepare students for the digital age, regular lectures and guest sessions focus on the rising importance of social media platforms in the hospitality industry. These sessions cover strategies for leveraging social media for guest engagement, geo-targeting, and building a

Traditionally hospitality industry has been infamous for abusing the environment. To curb this an Eco club, called T.R.A.S. (Think Responsible Act Sustainable) was instituted at IHM Pusa a decade back, which has been enforcing responsible uses of resources in the institute.

**KAMAL KANT PANT**  
Principal, IHM Pusa, Delhi



**Kamal Kant Pant**, Principal, Institute of Hotel Management Catering & Nutrition (IHMCN) Pusa, Delhi, states that the curriculum at all IHMs has undergone an overhaul with inputs from the industry representatives as part of the National Education Policy 2020. The revised 2023 curriculum ensures comprehensive student development. Key changes include:

- **Customer Relation Management:** A full course on engagement practices to enhance student understanding.
- **Employability Skills:** Courses are designed to sharpen soft skills, communication, and interview techniques.
- **Yoga:** This has been introduced to maintain student fitness and also due to the new focus on wellness at hotels.

Students are also trained in essential digital skills, covering IT applications in hospitality,





strong online presence. Additionally, students are introduced to the use of virtual and augmented reality devices, learning how these technologies can enhance guest experiences and offer innovative solutions in hospitality management. Through this comprehensive approach, students gain the digital proficiency needed to thrive in the modern hospitality landscape.

Regarding sustainability, he says, traditionally hospitality industry has been infamous for abusing the environment. To curb this an Eco club, called T.R.A.S. (Think Responsible Act Sustainable) was instituted at IHM Pusa a decade back, which has been enforcing responsible use of resources in the institute.

The institute has a long-standing symbiotic relationship with leading hotels, providing manpower for prestigious events and certifying experienced employees. The institute aims to formalise these collaborations for mutual benefit.

Career pathways are evolving, he says, with a shift towards corporate roles involving analysis and strategy, alongside traditional hospitality operations. Graduates are also finding opportunities in e-commerce, retail, and consulting, driven by the skills and grooming they receive.

The curriculum incorporates emerging technologies like AI-driven systems and digital tools, preparing students to effectively manage and enhance guest experiences.

#### **Critical skills emphasised include:**

- Emotional Intelligence: Key for customer satisfaction and employee relations.
- Strategic and Creative Thinking: Essential for problem-solving.
- Communication: Crucial for customer interactions and service.
- Teamwork: Vital for collaborative work in delivering comprehensive hospitality experiences.

**Rishi S Puri**, vastly experienced as Senior Vice President of Operations, Business Development, Revenue Growth, NRG and standardisation with leading Hotel groups and Consultant, The Epic Hospitality, says as the hospitality industry undergoes significant transformation, the importance of skilling and employment generation has never been more critical. "The sector is witnessing a shift towards experiential hospitality, where personalised guest experiences are paramount. Therefore, skilling programs must emphasise not only customer service but also data-driven decision-making, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability practices." While interpersonal skills, attention to detail, and operational knowledge remain crucial, the industry now requires proficiency in digital tools, content creation for social media, and an understanding of global trends. Indian hoteliers must cultivate a workforce that is adaptable and capable of leveraging technology to enhance guest



The sector is witnessing a shift towards experiential hospitality, where personalised guest experiences are paramount. Therefore, skilling programs must emphasise not only customer service but also data-driven decision-making, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability practices.

**RISHI S PURI**  
Principal Consultant, The Epic Hospitality





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experiences. This includes training in digital marketing, revenue management systems, and guest relation management software. The ability to anticipate and cater to the evolving needs of a diverse clientele is what will set industry leaders apart in the coming years.

“As the Principal Consultant at The Epic Hospitality, I focus on equipping teams with the necessary skills to use advanced digital platforms. Training programs are designed to familiarise students with geo-

targeting for personalised marketing, the nuances of engaging with guests on social media, and the application of virtual and augmented reality to create immersive guest experiences. We have implemented virtual tours and AI-driven customer service bots in some of our partner hotels have significantly enhanced guest engagement and satisfaction. Such initiatives are crucial for staying competitive now.”

He observes that the emergence of non-traditional hoteliers at the helm of major hospitality brands has sparked a debate on the relevance of formal hospitality education. “While it’s true that business acumen and innovation are increasingly valued, I believe that a strong foundation in hospitality education is essential. The industry’s core principles—service excellence, operational management, and guest satisfaction—are best instilled through structured education. However, the curriculum needs to evolve, incorporating entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and global trends. The rise of



With the emphasis on healthy eating, sustainability, and culinary innovation, chefs have opportunities to specialise in areas like plant-based cuisine, farm-to-table practices, and the science of gastronomy.

**DR. (CHEF) K. THIRUGNANASAMBANTHAM**  
Principal  
Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel  
Administration, Manipal

boutique hotels and alternative accommodations has shown that a blend of traditional and modern skills is the key to success in the hospitality sector,” he observes.

**Dr. (Chef) K. Thirugnanasambantham**, Principal, Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal (WGSHA) at Manipal, says the sector is undergoing rapid growth, driven by changing consumer preferences, technological advancements, and a demand for personalised and sustainable experiences. This evolution creates opportunities across various departments like Housekeeping, Culinary Arts, Front Desk, and Hotel Operations. Skilling is critical to capitalise on these opportunities. Chefs, for instance, can specialise in areas such as plant-based cuisine, farm-to-table practices, and culinary innovation, focusing on global cuisines, culinary nutrition, and food science. Skills in kitchen management, menu design with sustainability in mind,



and food safety regulations are increasingly important, especially for those aiming for international careers.

As the industry serves a global clientele, professionals must be adept in cultural sensitivity, global communication, and understanding the diverse needs of international guests. Key competencies needed today include digital literacy, sustainability practices, cultural competence, emotional intelligence, crisis management, and adaptability. These skills are essential in managing guest experiences, operational challenges, and staying ahead of industry trends like wellness tourism and hybrid events.

“To attract more students to Hospitality Management (HM) courses, a multifaceted approach is needed. This includes industry partnerships, showcasing career diversity, emphasising global opportunities, and incorporating emerging trends like digital transformation, sustainability, and wellness tourism. Highlighting alumni

success stories can also inspire prospective students,” he says.

He lists out some notable global programs that would interest students who seek international exposure. These include Stanford’s Virtual Human Interaction Lab, Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne’s (EHL) digital engagement training program, University of Queensland program which focuses on emerging technologies in guest experiences, and Cornell’s School of Hotel Administration which emphasises digital strategies. Encouraging students who seek an entrepreneurial path is also important. “At WGSMA, Manipal, the Welcomgroup Entrepreneurship Development Cell (WEDC) launched in 2019 fosters entrepreneurial skills. Initiatives like Innovation Day encourage students to develop business proposals, demonstrating the school’s commitment to entrepreneurship in hospitality. Continued collaboration with industry experts, access to funding, and integrating entrepreneurship modules into the curriculum will further support these efforts,” he says.



With an average attrition rate of 21%, there is clearly a constant demand for skilled staff. Despite the diverse career opportunities being offered, the industry is struggling to attract and retain skilled professionals, especially in specialised and leadership roles.

**SHAILJA SINGH**  
Chief Human Resource Officer,  
The Oberoi Group

**Shailja Singh**, Chief Human Resource Officer, The Oberoi Group says, “The hospitality industry has always offered abundant job opportunities across various levels.” She quotes Mordor Intelligence that says the industry is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 14%. This positive outlook augurs well for the sector. “However, with an average attrition rate of 21%, there is clearly a constant demand for skilled staff.

Despite the diverse career opportunities being offered, the industry is struggling to attract and retain skilled professionals, especially in specialised and leadership roles.”

She says that professionals must develop skillsets that extend beyond basic functional knowledge. Technical skills in areas such as culinary, food and beverage service, housekeeping, and front office operations are essential, and

Soft skill development coupled with practical experience brings about holistic learning.



these must be complemented with a strong guest service ethos. "A genuine attitude for professional service is integral to success. The ability to anticipate and respond to guest needs is crucial for delivering exceptional experiences. Moreover, hospitality professionals must foster inclusivity and understanding by respecting and valuing diversity. The ability to perform under high-pressure situations is yet another core requirement. Professionals need to remain composed and efficient even during peak times or challenging circumstances."

She says that well-structured internships can motivate students to pursue long-term careers in hospitality. "Networking events and career workshops encourage students to interact with industry professionals, gaining insights and making valuable connections." Industry leaders can contribute to the growth of students by mentoring them and exposing them to best practices in the industry, she adds.

"We equip our students with the technological skills through hands-on training with property management systems, practical exposure to CRM platforms and comprehensive training in social media marketing. Students are encouraged to research tech enabled equipment that can be utilised at work to drive efficiency. This ensures they can optimise their learning and stay abreast of technological advancements," she says.

Skilling and upskilling in the hospitality sector is a necessity for the sector's continued growth and success. As the industry evolves and competition intensifies, the ability to offer superior service, innovate, and adapt to changing consumer expectations hinges on the quality of the workforce. By prioritising skill development, institutes and companies can ensure that the professionals engaged are well-equipped to meet global standards, drive customer satisfaction, and contribute to the Hotel's success. **HAI**



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# Taxation laws in Hospitality sector

Travel and tourism is a major employment-generating sector, offering direct and indirect employment for professionals with varied skill sets. By 2023, the sector is expected to create 5.82 crore jobs in the country. Apart from playing a significant role in the economy and being a source of major foreign exchange and employment, the sector generates huge tax revenue for the government. Here are the important taxation laws applicable to the hospitality sector in India:

By Team HAI Engage

## 1. Goods and Services Tax (GST)

| Category of GST on Room Tariffs  | % Charged |
|--|-----------|
| • Room tariffs between ₹1,000 and ₹7,500 per night   | 12%       |
| • Room tariffs above ₹7,500 per night  | 18%       |
| Category of GST on Food and Beverages  |           |
| • Food and beverages served in restaurants within hotels where the room tariff is less than ₹7,500 per night. (No input tax credit available)              | 5%        |
| • Food and beverages in hotels with room tariffs above ₹7,500 per night, provided the hotel has an air-conditioned restaurant (input tax credit available) | 18%       |
| Category of GST on Banquet Services  |           |
| • Applicable on services related to banquet halls, conference facilities, etc.   | 18%       |



## 2. Income Tax Act, 1961

### CORPORATE INCOME TAX

Hotel businesses, like other companies, are subject to corporate income tax on their profits. The tax rate varies based on the type of company and its annual turnover.

Companies with an annual turnover up to ₹400 crore are taxed at 25%, while others are taxed at 30%.

### TAX DEDUCTED AT SOURCE (TDS)

Hotels must deduct TDS on payments such as salaries, professional fees, rent, etc., as per the applicable rates under the Income Tax Act.

## 3. Property Tax

### MUNICIPAL TAX/PROPERTY TAX

Hotels are liable to pay property tax, which is levied by local municipal bodies based on the property's value.

## 4. Luxury Tax

### (Prior to GST Implementation)

Before the implementation of GST, luxury tax was levied by state governments on hotels with room tariffs above a certain threshold. Post-GST,

this tax has been subsumed under the GST regime.

## 5. Service Tax

### (Prior to GST Implementation)

#### SERVICE TAX

Previously, hotels were required to pay service tax on services provided, including room rentals, food and beverages, etc. This has also been replaced by GST.

## 6. Excise Duty

### EXCISE DUTY ON ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Hotels serving alcoholic beverages are subject to state excise duties, which vary from state to state. This duty is applicable at the time of manufacturing or importing alcoholic beverages.

## 7. Customs Duty

### CUSTOMS DUTY ON IMPORTED GOODS

If a hotel imports goods (such as kitchen equipment, luxury items, etc.), customs duty is applicable. The rate of duty depends on the type of goods being imported.

## 8. Professional Tax

### PROFESSIONAL TAX

Some states levy a professional tax on employees, which hotels must deduct from the salaries of their employees and remit to the state government.

## 9. Employee Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952

Although not a direct tax, hotels are required to contribute to the Provident Fund for their employees, which is a mandatory social security scheme.

## 10. Employee State Insurance Act, 1948

Hotels employing staff with a salary below a certain threshold must contribute to the Employee State Insurance (ESI) scheme, which provides medical and cash benefits to employees.

These taxation laws are crucial and all hotel businesses need to comply. Non-compliance can result in penalties and legal challenges, making it essential for hotels to adhere to these regulations. **HAI**

# PUNJAB: Lush, green cultural powerhouse

In this issue, we travel to the verdant state of Punjab to dissect its immense tourism potential.

BY RIAAN JACOB GEORGE





● *Destination*

**T**he land of five rivers, Punjab, needs no introduction when it comes to its thriving culture, warm hospitality and hugely popular cuisine. The land-locked state is a thriving hotbed

of culture, architecture, landscape, ultra-modern cities and a lifestyle that combines tradition with cheeky extravagance quite effortlessly. Given its easy access and amazing connectivity, in addition to its diversity of travel experiences, Punjab is increasingly seeing higher tourist numbers. Both international and domestic travellers flock to the state for its Sikh spiritual trail, cultural experiences, culinary offerings as well as outdoor and adventure activities.

A case in point is the city of **Amritsar**, which boasts a world-class airport with great domestic and international connectivity. Needless to say, the Golden Temple is a huge draw for domestic tourists, both Sikh and non-Sikh. The holiest shrine of Sikhism's golden dome is iconic as is its tranquil Sarovar (water body). Other highlights in Amritsar include Jallianwala Bagh, a poignant reminder of India's freedom struggle. The city's religious diversity can be seen in other sites like the St. Paul's Church and Ram

**Amritsar boasts a world-class airport with great domestic and international connectivity. Needless to say, the Golden Temple is a huge draw for domestic tourists**



Jallianwala Bagh



Khalsa College



Wagah Border



Bazaars of Amritsar



Durgiana Temple, Amritsar



Bajwara Fort, Hoshiarpur



Medal Gallery, Patiala

Tirath. Another of the major tourist draws in the Amritsar area is the Wagah Border. It is indeed an emotional and patriotic experience to attend the Wagah Border Ceremony that takes place every day. This synchronised drill is performed by both Indian and Pakistani border guards, egged on by cheering citizens on either side of the border.

Next on the itinerary is the heritage-laden city of **Gurdaspur**, which is extremely significant to the Sikh community. The quaint and charming town of Batala houses the Gurudwara Kandh Sahib, where it is said that Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism got married. Gurudwara Damdama Sahib Patshahi Chavien Shariffar Gobindpur, a



Sheesh Mahal

**Did you know that one town in this state was once referred to as ‘The Paris of Punjab’? Kapurthala, a former princely state with its illustrious royal family, is unique because it has an interesting blend of Indo-French architecture**

spiritual site of great importance and natural beauty is extremely popular as a peaceful retreat.

Continue onwards to **Pathankot**, which is a gorgeous town tucked away beautifully in the foothills of the Himalayas. Pathankot is considered as a gateway to both Punjab and Himachal Pradesh and boasts a unique culture blending Punjabi and Himachali elements. In fact, Pathankot is one of the major pitstops for road trippers from Delhi to Srinagar or Ladakh and vice versa. From a spiritual point of view Pathankot houses the Mukteshwar Temple, a cave temple in the name of Lord Shiva, and the Prachin Kali Mata Mandir, a site dedicated to Goddess Kali, also draws its fair share of pilgrims. Not too far from Pathankot, if you are able to visit the Shahpur Kandi Fort, you can learn about Punjab’s warriors of yore. A truly informative and offbeat experience and highly recommended too!

For those seeking a luxury heritage experience, the former royal kingdoms of **Patiala** and **Kapurthala** have lots to offer in terms of architecture and history. Both these towns are relatively undiscovered by the larger tourist throng.

In Patiala, the Sheesh Mahal is a stunning palace that, as you would expect, boasts extravagant decor and intricate mirror work. To understand

how the royals of Patiala once lived, visit the Quila Mubarak, which is a grand fort that is the former royal residence of the city’s erstwhile rulers. The Maharajas of Patiala used to retreat to the Moti Bagh Palace, whose well-manicured gardens and beautiful architecture are still preserved today. For spiritual travellers, of course, Patiala’s famous Kali Devi temple draws thousands of devotees annually.

Did you know that one town in this state was once referred to as ‘The Paris of Punjab’? Kapurthala, a former princely state with its illustrious royal family, is unique because it has an interesting blend of Indo-



Mukteshwar Mahadev Mandir

### Industry status to hospitality in Punjab

Punjab is one of the 11 states in India that has granted “industry” status to the tourism and hospitality sector. However, the power and electricity benefits need to be translated.

The hospitality industry is facing a tough time as the rates of electricity, cooking gas, fuel and labour are rising consistently. Rates of power are the highest for the hospitality industry in some cities as hotels, banquet halls and restaurants are allowed only commercial category of power connection. The power charges levied are also high compared to other states that have accorded industry status to the sector.

Similarly, the new excise policy is likely to make a dent due to the enhanced rates of fees and taxes.



Rauza Sharif, Fatehgarh Sahib

**For those seeking a luxury heritage experience, the former royal kingdoms of Patiala and Kapurthala have lots to offer in terms of architecture and history**



The Paris of Punjab, Kapurthala



District Courts, Kapurthala

● Destination



Hola Mohalla Festival



Unique turban

French architecture. It is said that the erstwhile royal family had strong cultural connections with France, which influenced Kapurthala immensely and this can be seen even today in some of the buildings. The city is dotted with beautiful palaces, mansions and gardens that make it quite an offbeat destination for a day trip or an overnight stay.

While planning your Punjab itinerary, keep in mind certain hidden treasures that can be explored. For instance, the often overlooked town of Bhatinda with its stunning Bahia Fort, lakes and amazing food scene is definitely worth spending two days at least. Punjab's modernisation can be seen in Mohali, known for its cricket matches, a growing IT sector and a very cosmopolitan community. The sports goods industry has its hub in Jalandhar, while the hosiery and wool hub in Ludhiana is famous. And finally, end your cultural itinerary with a spiritual element by making pitstops at Hoshiarpur, Sangrur and Fatehgarh Sahib, which are quintessentially Punjabi towns where local culture can be experienced in the most non-touristy and immersive manner.

**Punjabi Food**

It is no secret that the cuisine of this vibrant state has made an international impact, and we see Punjabi restaurants in every corner of the country and globe. Given the agricultural richness of Punjab, the quality of produce is very high, resulting in an outstanding culinary offering. Be it a paratha stall in old Amritsar, a tandoori chicken outlet in Patiala, or a Bhatinda shop serving freshly made sarson ka saag with makki di roti, this state is a foodie's paradise. You can sample some of Punjabi staples like dal makhani, rajma and choley bhature at local restaurants and wash it down with homemade lassi.



Village Kitchen (Rasoi)

With its myriad spiritual centres, historical landmarks and cultural richness, Punjab is a wonderful destination to explore. Its cultural and religious sites notwithstanding, Punjab's heady culture and the warm hospitality of its charming locals is what most appeals to tourists. And, of course, a food scene that draws international tourists and culinary experts. We definitely see the Punjab trail as an itinerary that many Indian and international tourists would like to explore. The road infrastructure in this state is outstanding as is the connectivity to the rest of the country and world. This truly is a memorable destination.

**Our Recommendations:  
Cultural Immersions in Punjab**

Book a village homestay: Especially in the winter months, the charm of rural life in Punjab is gorgeous. Stay with a local family to enjoy the most immersive experience ever.

Food walk in Amritsar: This city has the most astounding food scene and there are many service providers that specialise in food walks. Experience the food scene with a local expert.

Heritage walks in Ludhiana, Patiala, Amritsar: These are cities that have beautiful old neighbourhoods just waiting to be explored.

Festive trail: The Punjabis take their local festivals very seriously, especially Lohri and Baisakhi. If you can coincide your trip to be present in the state for these festivals, you will experience the warm hospitality of the locals as well as taste the festive cuisine. **HAI**



● The Last Word

# Skilling for New Tourism

If the industry is not attracting enough talent, is it because of the service conditions or because the remuneration is not competitive? Or, is it a deeper malaise which the industry and the government have to handle together, the problem of a mismatch between what the industry wants and what the training institutions are producing.

**By MP BEZBARUAH**  
Secretary General, Hotel Association of India



**I**n pursuit of Viksit Bharat, the latest budget of the government identified skilling and employment as among the nine key priorities to be pursued. In collaboration with the state governments and the industry, the government plans to skill 20 lakh youth over a 5-year period. Tucked into the speech is a statement of great significance: "Course content and design will be aligned to the skilling needs of the industry and new courses will be introduced for emerging needs."

Tourism and Hospitality are not mentioned specifically but considering that the sector is acknowledged as the highest employment generator, it is to be expected that the policy will have a correlation with the emerging skilling needs and problems of the sector. Another significant objective of the government is the participation of women in the workforce and employment opportunities for youth. On both these counts tourism stands out.

Ever since the pandemic, skilling has engaged the attention of the Hospitality sector for various reasons. As the industry started taking steps for recovery, globally labour shortages were reported. And slowly it emerged that the training institutions were not attracting as many applicants as earlier. In some places, this led to a new trend, with the CEO of one of the largest hospitality groups, Accor, noting that the

**The world and emerging needs are changing fast. And therefore, the concept of skilling should be dynamic, and capable of adapting to the changing needs quickly**

industry has begun recruiting directly from the market and providing on-the-job training. But it also invited introspection on two important issues with which the industry is still grappling. If the industry is not attracting enough talent, is it because of the service conditions or because the remuneration is not competitive.

Or, is it a deeper malaise which the industry and the government have to handle together, the problem of what the industry wants and what the training institutions are producing. The FM has, as quoted above, succinctly pinpointed this problem for the industry. A general study by Ernst and Young done for FICCI in 2012 indicated that out of 800 MBA students surveyed, only 25% were considered employable. Even the IT industry considered only 25% of technical graduates and 10-15% of other graduates employable without further training.

The other important consideration in skill development is that it should be relevant not only to the industry needs, but it should also be relevant to the emerging needs. The world is changing fast and so are the emerging needs. And therefore, the concept of skilling should be a dynamic concept capable of adapting to the changing needs quickly.

Hospitality industry has been generally very adaptive. At the beginning of the new millennium UNWTO had analysed some emerging trends that were likely to shape tourism in the future. This was the emergence of the experience economy signifying a change in consumer habits to travel for experience something unique, for experiences off the beaten track rather than just a visit. The concept of experiences vary-like open air, hygienic accommodation, nature and rural ambience, local cuisine, craft, art and culture, adventure. Hospitality service providers are expected



**Sustainability was always a concern for tourism but Covid-19 has made it an inescapable necessity. The new training skills should be aligned to the nuances of sustainable service**

to be equipped to service all such varied demands. Education and skilling need to be adjusted to the emerging trends, and multi-skilling is thus the new norm and an integral part of training.

The present concern for skilling is more complex and more demanding, dictated by two prime factors. The first is the new commitment of tourism enshrined in the expression “tourism for the planet, the people and prosperity”. The second is the unbelievable and fast sweep of technology influencing human action and expanding the horizon of human capabilities.

Sustainability was always a concern for tourism but the experience of Covid-19 has made it an inescapable necessity. The new training skills should be aligned to the nuances of sustainable service. It was forecast that we were likely to see a trend towards taking cognizance of environmental costs beyond economic costs; destinations that will move towards a zero-carbon footprint along with higher levels of hygiene; tour operators and hoteliers gravitating towards more responsible and meaningful experiences, creating a sustainable experience for visitors—like the use of organic materials, limiting plastic, picking ecologically-friendly solutions like investing in green energy, preserving biodiversity, water saving, waste reduction, use of electric cars and solar panels. Service providers should be trained to be skilled change agents. The Hospitality industry’s vital contribution towards responsible tourism should start with having service providers skilled in discharging that responsibility. Difficult though it is, the education system has the task of creating human resources capable of not only managing AI and innovations but also be emotionally attuned to the needs of a responsive and responsible tourism and hospitable industry.

**The pace of change seems likely to accelerate due to frontier technologies such as AI, robotics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. The fast pace of change brings problems of adoption and adaptation**

Skill in using technology will have far-reaching impact on the industry and it is the greatest challenge for skill development for emerging needs. Technology is the most enabling change to which the industry has to adapt. Technology is used to serve a purpose. It serves the specific goals of each enterprise using it. And these goals are not uniform. The efficacy of the technology used in an organisation depends on the people using the technology. And education plays a key role in orienting human resources to use technology to advantage. Market dynamics are changing fast. Enterprises would primarily like to use technology to reduce costs, free up time and resources, help customers connect and respond quickly to changing needs.

The system of hospitality education faces some critical and challenging questions. If technology, digitisation, innovation and capacity to adapt to change are the future realities, how equipped are our institutions to face these challenges? True, these institutions provide only the nucleus of the entire system, but that is a vital, motivating nucleus.

The fast changes in recent years call for a remodelling of the entire system. The difference of the 21st century technological wave has been the sheer pace. And this is only the beginning of the unknown frontiers. As the UNCTAD Technology and Innovation Report 2021 points out, the pace of change seems likely to accelerate as a result of frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. The fast pace of change brings problems of adoption and adaptation.

The changes required are not just cosmetics, but more fundamental-teaching methods, course contents, their relevance, interface with the industry and the capacity to appreciate the evolving needs and adapt to them. As it is said, in such a dynamic situation both the teacher and the student will have to be on a continuous training mode. And so will be the managers. The industry too, must adapt to these changes fast.

To quote **John Naisbitt, from Global Paradox**: “In a world that is constantly changing, there is no one subject or set of subjects that will serve you for the foreseeable future, let alone for the rest of your life. The most important skill to acquire now is learning how to learn.” **HAI**

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