



MICE IS NICE

Hoteliers are betting big on MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions). MICE is becoming a big revenue driver in hotels.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

India's strong and consistent economic growth has led to increased business activities and trade, resulting in a higher demand for conferences, seminars, and exhibitions that cater to networking needs. The expansion of domestic and international businesses in India has driven the need for various corporate events, including product launches, workshops, and meetings, contributing to the growth of the MICE sector. Hotels are an excellent choice for MICE as they provide a comprehensive package, including event spaces, accommodation, food and beverage, audio-visual equipment, event planning and technical support.

FACILITIES FIX

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts offer modern and latest technology integrated MICE facilities in its properties. Radisson Blu Palace Resort, Udaipur has built an in-house dedicated events team comprising extremely talented domain experts and seasoned professionals. The Taj Hotel & Convention Centre, Agra, seamlessly blends opulence with functionality, these facilities are meticulously designed to provide an unparalleled experience for a diverse range of gatherings. JW Marriott Chandigarh has state-of-the-art architecture



Abhishek Rao, Director of Sales & Marketing, JW Marriott Chandigarh

that seamlessly blends innovation with sophistication, creating an unparalleled setting for events.

Abhishek Rao, Director of Sales & Marketing, JW Marriott Chandigarh, says, "Our tailor-made arrangements let our guests immerse in the grandeur of our venues. Everything is thoughtfully designed to accommodate intimate gatherings as well as larger events. In addition, our hotel's prime location offers convenience and accessibility for our guests. What truly sets us apart is our team of dedicated event planners and culinary masters. They bring a wealth of experience, expertise, and creativity to the table, assisting our guests in every step of the planning process. From conceptualizing the event theme to arranging customized ca-

tering menus, our team works closely with our clients to bring their visions to life. MICE business contributes to approximately 30% of our annual hotel revenues."

ALL INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES

The robust demand for MICE events is attributed to the unique opportunities it offers for networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange in a single location. "The integration of in-person and virtual components allows a wider audience to participate, overcoming geographical limitations. Incorporating advanced technologies such as AI-driven event analytics and virtual reality experiences enhances engagement and customization. MICE attendees are valuing wellness offerings, from healthy catering options to incorporating wellness activities into the event schedule," says Salil Fadnis, General Manager, Hotel Sahara Star.

"The current success of the MICE segment can be attributed to the resurgence in business travel and corporate engagements. We at THE Park Hyderabad, provide versatile event spaces that can accommodate gatherings of various sizes. The convenience of a large room inventory for accommodation reduces logistics for attendees, the availability of state-of-the-art audio visual equipment, catering services make the event planning a breeze. Our central location, established brand reputation, and technology infrastructure makes us an appealing choice," says Ajit Singh Garcha, Area General Manager, THE Park Hyderabad.

MARKET DRIVERS

According to an estimate, the Indian MICE market itself is 25K crore, and 8% growth every year is huge. The booming Indian domestic market and the infrastructure development have played an important role in generating demand for the MICE business. Amidst the global turmoil, the Indian economy is a shining star. With India hosting G20 events under its Presidentship, has further fuelled the demand for MICE venues. The MICE industry has been one of the important markets, contributing significantly to the country's economy. The sector is growing rapidly and it is ex-



According to an estimate, the Indian MICE market itself is 25K crore, and 8% growth every year is huge.



Salil Fadnis, General Manager, Hotel Sahara Star



Ajit Singh Garcha, Area General Manager, THE Park Hyderabad



Somesh Agarwal, Chairman, and MD, Radisson Blu Palace Resort, Udaipur

pected India will emerge as a leader in MICE tourism in the Asia-Pacific region in the times to come.

"One of the major factors driving this trend is the rising demand for infrastructural advancements and tech-driven facilities. Their prime location and proximity to airports, stations, public transportation services, entertainment spots, further make them the ideal choice for organizing prominent industry-led MICE events. Post-Covid, the emergence of trends like work-life balance, nurturing work culture, and supportive leaders have emerged at the forefront. Today, corporates are willing to shell out money and view team-building activities and offsites as necessary expenditures. They demand high-end experiences, state-of-the-art facilities, and modern infrastructure that only star-category hotels can suffice," says Somesh Agarwal, Chairman, and MD, Radisson Blu Palace Resort, Udaipur.

TREND CHECK

There was a growing emphasis on sustainability in the MICE industry. Event organizers started focusing on reducing waste, promoting eco-friendly practices, and choosing sustainable event venues. Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, says, "The MICE industry is dynamic and constantly evolving to meet changing preferences, technologies, and global circumstances. Sustainability is a growing concern in the MICE industry. Event planners and venues are implementing eco-friendly practices, reducing waste, and choosing sustainable suppliers to minimize the environmental impact of events. Technology continues to play a significant role in enhancing the MICE experience. This includes hybrid and virtual concepts for meetings, even the metaverse events are also getting popular in this age of 5G. MICE attendees are also looking for unique destination experiences beyond the event itself. Planners are curating programs that incorporate local culture, cuisine, and activities to offer a well-rounded experience." Unique destination experiences are curated to extend beyond



➔ Attendee personalization gained traction that led to harnessing data analytics to tailor event experiences to individual preferences.

the event itself, while diversity, inclusivity, and safety measures were emphasized to create an enriching and secure environment. Attendee personalization gained traction that led to harnessing data analytics to tailor event experiences to individual preferences. Cutting-edge technologies like AI, AR, and VR are integrated to enhance engagement.

HOTELIER ADVANTAGE

Despite technological advancements, face-to-face interactions remain invaluable. MICE events provide a platform for professionals to connect, collaborate, and foster relationships. Hotels offer conducive environments that facilitate these interactions in a comfortable and professional setting. Hotels are an excellent choice for MICE opportunities due to their all-encompassing offerings that cater specifically to the needs of business and professional gatherings. The convenience of having event spaces, accommodation, and catering services all under one roof streamlines logistics for both organizers and participants. "With a diverse range of event spaces available, hotels can accommodate anything from intimate weddings to large-scale conferences and exhibitions, often equipped with essential technical infrastructure like audio-visual setups and high-speed internet. Additionally, the availability of on-site accommodation with special rates for event attendees eliminates the hassle of finding lodging elsewhere. Event planning teams on panel at the hotels provide expert assistance in coordinating every aspect of the event, from pre-event preparations to on-the-day management. Hotels also foster networking opportunities in their common areas, while offering recreational facilities for relaxation. Their distinct locations and established security measures further enhance the overall appeal, making hotels an ideal and comprehensive choice for successful MICE experiences," says Abinash Manghani, Chief Executive Officer, WelcomHeritage Hotels. Hotels offer dedicated event planning teams and on-site staff experienced in executing seamless events. Their expertise ensures that events run smoothly, addressing logistical challenges, and ensuring attendee satisfaction.



➔ Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts



➔ Abinash Manghani, Chief Executive Officer, WelcomHeritage Hotels



➔ Rahul Joshi, General Manager, Taj Hotel & Convention Centre, Agra

NEW VISTAS

The MICE space reflects a dynamic shift towards hybrid experiences, embracing sustainability, and enhancing attendee well-being. The rise of hybrid events, seamlessly blending in-person and virtual components, addresses the evolving need for broader participation and global reach. "Sustainability initiatives, including eco-friendly practices and reduced carbon footprints, align with the growing emphasis on responsible event hosting. Moreover, prioritizing attendee well-being encompasses offering wellness-focused activities, health-conscious menus, and implementing stringent health and safety protocols, a significant consideration in the post-pandemic landscape. As the MICE landscape evolves, these trends underscore the industry's adaptability and commitment to delivering meaningful, inclusive, and responsible event experiences," says Rahul Joshi, General Manager, Taj Hotel & Convention Centre, Agra. Hotels situated in well-connected locations or tourist destinations provide an added incentive for attendees. The prospect of combining business with leisure can attract a broader range of participants. And this kind of integrative approach will certainly augur well for hospitality as an industry. ■