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Hotels Give Up the Old Ways as Younger Guests Check In

Making Room Hotel chains, travel cos jazz up services to manage expectations of guests, whose avg age has fallen by a decade

Anumeha Chaturvedi

New Delhi: From launching brands that encourage checking in at a bar to reviewing loyalty programmes and co-curating unique itineraries, hotel chains and travel companies are tailoring offerings and services to see how they can better manage the expectations of their increasingly younger guests. The average age of the customer, said some of India's travel and hospitality companies, has reduced by a decade in the past five to 10 years.

Vishal Suri, managing director of SOTC Travel, said the digital focus of the company has helped attract

young customers. "To cater to the unique preferences of this younger and more enthusiastic segment, we are offering co-curated holidays across destinations," said Suri.

Some of these include "staying in a see-through luxury capsule that

hangs atop a mountain in Peru's Sacred Valley, and in an igloo in Finland's Kakslautanen Arctic Resort".

Nikhil Sharma, market managing director for Eurasia at Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, said the chain is

actively considering getting more brands tailored for younger guests in India. "With the introduction of Ramada Encore, and with plans to bring our Vienna House brand, we're trying to align with the lifestyle, cultural ethos and budget

considerations of young Indian travellers," said Sharma. "These brands offer modern amenities and community engagement, appealing to socially conscious demographics. We have also transformed our amenities and services to cater to the evolving preferences of younger guests such as introducing more flexible co-working spaces. Our culinary experiences feature more health conscious and local cuisine options," he added.

Manish Tolani, vice president and commercial director, India, at Hilton, said the concept of loyalty is rapidly evolving among young consumers.



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The hotel chain is working on enhancing the Hilton Honors programme to address customer needs and travel pain points. Hilton has partnered with Kipsu in India to expand the mobile guest messaging platform to more than 7,000 Hilton properties worldwide by the end of 2024, which will enable two-way, immediate exchanges between Indian guests and hotel teams.

"The average age of our guests has dropped by about ten years, and they have a different lifestyle. They sleep later, get up later. We are thinking about how to better meet those very different expectations," said Patanjali Keswani, chairman and managing director of Lemon Tree Hotels.

A young India is powering Thomas Cook's growth story, said Rajeev Kale, president and country head for holidays, MICE and visa at Thomas Cook (India). "Multiple mini-cations is the ask of young India. With our internal data reflecting



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that over 80% of our Gen Z and millennial travellers prefer air travel, we had launched our online holiday bundler with easy-to-book holidays combined with a range of flight options. This has grown 50% year-on-year," he added.

In an interview with ET in January, Ranju Alex, area vice president for South Asia at Marriott International, said the launch of its new brand Moxy in India

will disrupt the hospitality market. "While every brand is unique, Moxy presents a very quirky and playful side of hospitality. For example, check-in at Moxy Hotels is at the bar, where guests are greeted with a complimentary cocktail," she said. "It's also a very tech-savvy brand targeted at modern travellers. It will have a lot of co-working areas and there are innovative room features such as smartphone control," she added.

Hyatt recently unveiled its boutique resort, Ronil Goa — a part of the JdV by Hyatt portfolio — that offers a swim-up bar besides poolside picnics and entertainment programmes.

"With India being home to the world's largest population of millennials and GenZ, the country's youth hold immense potential to steer India's trajectory across various sectors, including hospitality and tourism," said a Hyatt spokesperson.

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