

How can the skilling India initiative become a solution to the critical need for skilled labour in the Indian hospitality industry?

India has sustained economic growth for most of the past two decades, characterised in part by a rapid transition from agriculture to services and rising per capita incomes. Given the contribution made by tourism and hospitality services to the Indian economy, the pace of development is increasingly dependent on “skill India” a government-led initiative that aims to equip large numbers of young people for careers in this industry. In this issue, theme editors Sandeep Munjal, Shweta Tiwari and their writing team review progress to-date and with the assistance of a wide array of stakeholders (industry, education, training, government agencies, students and trainees), identify ways in which the skill India initiative could be refined so that it better supports industry and its employment goals. I would like to thank Sandeep, Shweta and all the authors, reviewers and other participants for their important contribution to India’s national debate about preparing people for the workplace and careers in hospitality and tourism.

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT) aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a *WHATT* theme editor, do please contact me.

Richard Teare

Managing Editor, WHATT

The Indian hospitality industry has been charting impressive growth for the past decade; this growth has come from capacity development across segments and has largely been supported on the demand side too as the Indian economy has sustained a GDP growth rate of between 5.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent throughout the period from 2008 to 2018. Though impacted by debateable policy actions like demonetisation and the introduction of a goods and services tax, hospitality sector growth has largely remained robust in terms of both revenue and profitability. Furthermore, domestic and international tourism-related travel has responded well to positive governmental support in the form of a progressive tourism policy and infrastructure investments.

A key challenge for the hospitality industry – voiced by all stakeholders – has been the shortage of skilled and well-trained labour required across a range of job roles. The background narrative began when the Modi-led government came to power in 2014 and announced the “skill India” mission. In 2014, this was seen as a well-timed intervention to address the critical manpower shortage suffocating the growth potential of the hospitality industry. The initiative has a socio-political motive as it aims to ensure that unemployed youth, especially in the semi-urban, rural hinterland are able to secure meaningful employment. The mission was seen as a game changer of sorts and was expected to leverage India’s demographic dividend through skilling and supporting industry with employable talent, strengthening the government’s simultaneous push for “make in India”.

This theme issue’s strategic question aims to probe the reality “on the ground” by reviewing the implementation of the “skill India” initiative and its impact on the hospitality industry with respect to the shortage of labour. Akin to most government-led initiatives, the talk is seldom the same as the walk. While it would be unfair to dismiss the complexity associated with implementing an initiative of the scale attempted by skill India, it is equally relevant to highlight the gaps that are occurring. This theme issue examines the issues and



challenges arising by examining various key aspects of the initiative. The issue also offers recommendations that would help to resolve the bottlenecks and enable the outcomes to match the intent more closely. We hope that readers will find the issue interesting and that skill India stakeholders will derive inspiration as they continue with India's skilling agenda.

Sandeep Munjal and Shweta Tiwari
Theme Editors

About the Theme Editors

Sandeep Munjal is Professor and Director of Vedatya Institute, Gurgaon, India. Sandeep has diverse experience of industry and academia over a 23-year period. During his early career, he worked in management positions in the hospitality and retail sectors both in India and internationally. Taj Group of Hotels, Aramark Corporation (USA) and Compass Group are some of the prominent companies he has worked for in various management positions. In academia, his specialisms are strategic management, operations management and sustainable tourism. He is an active researcher who has published widely in international and domestic journals, aligned with his teaching interests. He has also presented papers at numerous national and international conferences. Professor Munjal has also worked on a range of consultancy assignments for industry partners and NGOs.

Shweta Tiwari is Assistant Dean Academics and Assistant Editor of the *Journal of Services Research*, an International Journal of Vedatya Institute, Gurgaon. She completed her PhD at Mohan Lal Sukhadia University, Rajasthan, and began her academic career in 2003. Shweta has 14 years of experience in teaching, training and academic administration in higher education institutions in India and at international university campus locations in India.