

Global Hospitality, Travel, and Tourism Trends

A conversation with Hari Nair of Expedia Group

by Chekitan S. Dev

Introduction

On May 27, 2023, at the opening session of the 2023 Global Hospitality Conclave held at The Oberoi in New Delhi, India, I had the pleasure of speaking with Hari Nair of Expedia Group, a distinguished alumnus of the Cornell Peter and Stephanie Nolan School of Hotel Administration, about the changing world of hospitality, travel, and tourism. We framed the discussion around ten major travel trends. This report presents some of the detailed insights from our discussion.



Global Hospitality Conclave

Professor Chekitan S. Dev, Cornell University

Hari Nair, Senior Vice President, Lodging Partners, Expedia Group

The New Normal Is “No Normal”

We began the session with a one-minute video prepared by Expedia Group on global travel trends. The text of the video, which reveals some key insights on Expedia’s point of view on the state of travel, is as follows:

This year is the year of “no normal”: travelers taking new trips, not relishing memories and not booking holidays they have been used to. People are getting out of the woods and into the biggest culture capitals of the world. Even better, they’re visiting the cities where their favorite shows take place. They’re buckling up for staycations in wide open spaces. They can make new traditions with loved ones and a pizza under the stars. They’re even taking on a new wave of wellness and looking for more unusual places to spend their time and money—immersed in nature, foraging for mushrooms, or finding a little fish exfoliation.

This year is not about making up for lost time; it’s about making up your own time. This is the year of the “no normal.”

Ten Provocations

Chekitan Dev: Welcome to the opening session. I want to thank the organizing committee for giving us the awesome responsibility of being the opening act. I’ll jump right in, but I want to offer just a little bit of background on my “co-conspirator,” Hari Nair. In the 34 years I have served as a professor at Cornell, there is one number I’m proudest of. That number is 15,000. 15,000 represents the number of students I’ve taught and had the pleasure and the honor of working with. These students are now working in over 100 countries. My purpose in highlighting that fact is to introduce one of the best and brightest of my former students among the 15,000. Hari Nair is at the top of the list of people I have worked with over the years as a former star student, as a treasured colleague, and as a dear friend. When I asked Hari if he would jump on a plane in New York to travel halfway around the world and be my partner in this session, he quickly and enthusiastically said yes! I am grateful and pleased to welcome Hari to this conclave.

If I could summarize the proposed takeaway from the next 45 minutes of this session, I’d say it will be collecting the dots and connecting the dots.

From my own world view on the state of global hospitality, travel, and tourism, I have compiled ten trends or themes. These, in my view, are the ten forces that are shaping the current and future of our industry. Provocations, I call them, intended to make you think about your own businesses. These ten trends will serve as the outline for our discussion, and I will ask Hari to share one or two key insights on each one.

Collect the Dots and Connect the Dots

1. **Changing customer profile.** Understand the “new” customers and learn how they are changing in their age, gender, ethnicity, and lifestyle.
2. **Shifting consumption patterns.** Study changes in buyer behavior and how customers are changing the way they live, work, play, and travel.
3. **Intensifying competition.** Develop a better competitor orientation by understanding new competitive approaches and strategies.
4. **Growing segmentation.** Learn how the market is breaking down into smaller and smaller subsegments or “niches” and the products and services needed for each.
5. **Dwindling differentiation.** Become more aware of the inevitable “commoditization” trap and how the best companies can work to avoid it.
6. **Diminishing brand loyalty.** Understand trends in brand loyalty and learn ideas on how to reverse the decline.
7. **Evolving value orientation.** Learn how the definition of value is evolving and how to develop the best package of amenities and services.
8. **Escalating concern for the environment.** Understand the new consumers’ personal, social, and environmental priorities and learn how to deal with them.
9. **Continuing consolidation.** Understand the market consolidation trends and learn how to better compete within a more complicated and consolidated industry.
10. **Increasing power of digital.** Learn how technology is changing the ways in which you connect with your customers, conduct commerce, and create communities.

VIDEO: https://vod.video.cornell.edu/media/GlobalTravelTrendsChekitanDevinconversationwithHariNair/1_mo52mbxq



Travel is back, with a vengeance.
—Hari Nair

Provocation 1: Changing Customer Profile

Chekitan Dev: I’ve had the privilege of working with many companies in over 50 countries and hear companies all over the world telling me: “Our customer profiles are changing in fundamental ways,” whether it’s demographics or in other ways. Hari, how is the customer profile for Expedia Group changing, and what are you doing about it?

Hari Nair: If you look at global trends, post-Covid travel is back with a vengeance. But the pace of its comeback is different depending upon where you are in the world. The most resilient region has been Latin America, where domestic travel has been strong. And if you look at the demand profile of Latin America, it is usually North Americans. That has been stable.

The slowest to recover, but the fastest growth region now, is Asia-Pacific. It is extraordinary to see what is happening in Asia. Then I think Europe: they’ve gotten hit with the war, economic uncertainty, and so forth. But we see travel there coming back like never before.

Consumers initially thought like this: *In the last two or three years I haven’t traveled. I have enough cash that is going to allow me to take four or five or six trips now that this whole Covid thing is behind me.* But it turns out that they can’t travel that much. They can take only, say, three trips because there are fewer airlines and fewer flight paths, so the prices are high.

Then, staff shortages are a real thing. Attrition in this industry is a real thing. Flexibility and the ability to work hybrid positions are a real currency these days.

There is also a rising middle class—particularly in emerging markets. India is a great example, and so is Brazil.



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If you look at gender, today the world population in terms of travel is more balanced between female and male. And we could expect women to become the more dominant travelers in the future. Now, that has got some interesting connotations. How do you make a solo woman traveler feel safe when they travel? It's a question on a lot of people's minds. What are the amenities and services that you can provide to make a female traveler feel safe, no matter where you are in the world?

From a lifestyle standpoint, it really is about sustainability. A lot of talk about wellness. Take a look at some of the videos that are out there. TV-driven travel is a real thing. I mean, imagine the number of people who've gone to New Zealand after *Lord of the Rings*. Or the number of people who are going to the U.K. because of *Downton Abbey* and *Bridgerton* and so forth. According to Expedia's data, "TV travel" is responsible for 44 percent of people's initial interest in wanting to travel, or inspiring travel. That's followed by family and friend recommendations, at about 40 percent.

Chekitan: Could you give us one specific step that Expedia Group is taking to turn these trends into opportunities?

Hari: I think the biggest thing for us is that we spend a lot of time on our website. We are a company that is centered around trust. This is embedded in the fabric of all we do. However, we are not afraid to fail. In fact, a lot of our tests fail. And that's okay. It is about investing further in markets like Brazil, and soon enough India, and really tapping into those emerging markets.

Chekitan: What was a test that blew you away, some result that astonished you?

Hari: People in Brazil do e-commerce differently. They pay in installments for anything and everything. When Expedia Group first came up with our website, customers only had a choice of paying either now or later. But you had to pay in full. The moment we introduced pay by installment, our conversion rate speedily went up.

Provocation 2: Changing Consumption Patterns

Cheki: Fascinating! Let's go to a related second point, and that is shifting consumption patterns. We hear about leisure travel; we hear about shrinking booking windows. What do you see in terms of people's purchase behavior, and how that is evolving?

Hari: I'll tell you something about travel. Travel is tough. Travel is grunt work. Prospective travelers are spending a ton of time researching: where do I go, where do I book, what flight do I catch? Can I get a nonstop? Does it have a stopover, if so for how long? What the heck am I going to do there? Where do I stay? Is it safe? What travel documents are required? It can be a complicated process. And nobody in the world has managed to figure out how to make travel seamless. Because there are lots of possible choke points where things can go wrong.

One of the things we see from a travel standpoint is in the 45 days leading to the time when you want to travel, people on an average go to 180 web pages. 180! You may not realize it, but every tap on your phone, every web page that you go to, is counted as you're trying to discover something. Here is a great, great opportunity for marketers in this room, right? You will be surprised that when people start planning and thinking about travel, they often do not know where they want to go. They're happy to be influenced.

We track people on our web pages all the time. You may start a search with Dublin, Ireland, but I promise you that 90 days later, you might actually land yourself up in Majorca, Spain. This means that as marketers you have the opportunity to inspire travelers. And as marketers, you have the ability to seduce travelers to actually choose your brand. If you can think about ways in which you can interject your brand through media advertising, through IP address targeting, there are lots of ways in which you can do this. You can actually sway people and sell them.

Chekitan: I'm going to invoke a competitor of yours. Three weeks ago, I heard Brian Chesky of Airbnb say that we've moved from a typical "where and when" on the landing page to "what and why." When you go on the Airbnb planning page, there's no booking widget—just amazing places. Tell me about that. Is Expedia Group moving in that direction on its site?

Hari: We tried that approach a number of years ago. This world of hospitality and travel is dynamic. Just because things didn't work a couple of years ago, maybe the world was not ready for it. We came up with a concept that was called Inspirator. For the most part, people know how much time they have. At the end of the day, travel is all about buying time. That's

what you're buying. You're buying a capsule of time for a certain period where you are ready to just step away and have a great escape.

So, people usually have a certain amount of time, and they know how much budget they have and they're happy to be inspired. Send me somewhere, tell me where I need to go. There are 196 countries on this planet.

We tried the Inspirator almost six or seven years ago. It didn't quite work the way we wanted it to work. But this is a new world. We're happy to test and learn from it. I think that as a transaction site, we are a little different from Airbnb. We see our worlds a little differently. And that's okay. But it'll be interesting to see what Airbnb learns.

Provocation 3: Intensifying Competition

Chekitan: The next provocation is to provoke you a little bit by thinking about Expedia Group's future. My question is very simply, what are you doing to make sure that Expedia Group is alive five years from now? Because, you know, the competitors all would love to put you guys out of business.

Hari: Look, when it comes to online travel, we invented online travel. In 1997, for the most part, when people would travel, they'd book their travel through a travel agent. The booking screen faced the travel agent while you as a traveler were on the other side. All Expedia Group did was to turn the screen around, and we gave you the power to do whatever it is that you would like to do. And we're going to give you the breadth and depth of choice that is required. We love competition and we are not afraid of it. But one of the things that is important for us as a company is, stay true to your core. That's important to us.

I think companies have different visions, they have different plans. I think companies, for the most part, go wrong when they look across the aisle and try to imitate somebody else when it doesn't run in their own fabric. That's a recipe for failure. For us, we are going to go straight to our core. Our core is, we are all about building a trusted marketplace, where it is about travelers, as we call them—not customers, travelers and partners. We are here for our partners and for our travelers. And we want to do it on an amazing tech platform.

We are a tech company. If you ask me when I joined Expedia Group in 2002, are you travel or tech? We would say we are a travel company with a core competence in technology.



Travel is hard work, partly because there are so many possible choke points. Nothing is seamless.—Hari Nair

Chekitan: Let me ask about stickiness and your moat; how you're creating "barriers to exit" for your customers and protecting your firm. Talk about super apps as a company that has multiple brands and product lines.

Hari: Super apps are hard. Super apps work for Uber, for example, which has an amazing super app that they're trying to build. Super apps came from companies in China. It takes a lot of time, expertise, and investment to build them. Super apps also work where you're trying to create an entire ecosystem: where you want people to stay within that ecosystem and have them do multiple things, particularly when it comes to e-commerce. It is not for everybody. It is not a bad idea if you want to create an ecosystem, to go and create an affiliate partnership with somebody who does it well, rather than trying to do it yourself.

If you have the ability and the means to do it, go for it. But you need to create it; you need to think about what ecosystem you're trying to create. For us, our business model as we see it from a competition standpoint is this: we are relentless about our technology. If you think about it, underneath the technology lies amazing data. Since the time we were formed as a company, we've helped create a billion trips. We sit on a lot of data. If you go to an Expedia Group app, we were the first company in the world to have integrated ChatGPT. We don't know where it's going to end up, but we feel there's a lot of future in ChatGPT.



We are
relentless about
our technology.
—Hari Nair

A couple of years ago people said, oh, Alexa, voice commerce is going to be the next big thing. It really wasn't. And that's okay. But I think that with ChatGPT, and the ability to have people in an entire ecosystem, we will have trips starting with a conversation. For example, this morning I was on my Expedia Group app and I asked, what are places I can see near the Oberoi New Delhi? That is something I could not have done last month. I didn't need to go to Google. I went to an Expedia app, and it showed me directions for this, that, and the other. It created an amazing trip plan for me, and it is waiting for me to press the button and it'll create a trip for me. Right within the ecosystem.

Provocation 4: Growing Segmentation

Chekitan: Provocation number four has to do with the fact that when you and I started in the business, we talked about massive markets—the four big ones: individual business, group business, individual leisure, and group leisure. Now we're talking about a million different subgroups, niches, and investing in the long tail. Talk to me a little bit about that. How are you dealing with this fragmentation or “demassification” of the marketplace?

Hari: It's a great question. Look, for us, we are all about empowering travelers to travel everywhere. Make travel accessible for travelers everywhere. Not just the luxury travelers or the value-seeking travelers—travel is for everybody. For us, we care deeply about making travel easy. Making things easy to be discovered on our website, including all of the products and services offered by partners. We are also paying close attention to a large community of travelers that are un-

derstood. Twenty percent of people in this world have a disability—20 percent—one in every five people! And it doesn't need to be a physical disability. It can be all kinds. You have populations where we need to be careful about how we're going to serve their needs: solo woman travelers, travelers of color, minorities, and many more.

How do you make persons in these communities feel welcome? These are the emerging markets. How do you help these community members feel safe? That is going to be a key differentiator between good and great.

Provocation 5: Dwindling Differentiation

Chekitan: All the OTAs have started to look the same, at least as a consumer and outsider. Give us one example of the relentless pursuit of differentiation—one aspect that keeps you distinctly different from all the others.

Hari: Where we spend time on differentiation is something that this group might not expect. And that is, we feel that every property, every airline, every activity, or every car rental agency is different. They are unique. They have unique things. That's because there's a lot of questions about commoditization. We believe that everybody has got something different and unique. What we do is spend a lot of time thinking about how we can showcase these products to our travelers.

I'll tell you the biggest challenge we have in our business. We rarely get to speak to our travelers. We don't own the product. It's an e-commerce website that is speaking to my girlfriend or my parents or my son. For us, it is all about how we can create a marketplace where we are going to be truthful to the traveler about what they can expect when they buy something on our site.

Because I will tell you there are a vast majority of hotels in the world who will take care of the travelers no matter what channel they have used to book. But there are also a number of hotels that will discriminate against the traveler based on the booking channel, and we are tired of it. We are going to stand up for the traveler and we're going to be truthful to them, saying this is what you can expect when you choose this property. The flip side, we're going to be equally transparent to a partner, saying this is how you're doing and these are the things you can do to fix it. We're going to be bringing out differentiation between the almost 3 million properties that we have on our platform.

Chekitan Dev: We used to talk about massive markets, but now it's a million subgroups. How do we deal with fragmentation?



Hari Nair: We work at making travel accessible for all, particularly underserved groups.

Provocation 6: Diminishing Brand Loyalty

Chekitan: Let's talk about brand loyalty. Tell us a little bit about your initiatives around branding and the loyalty program, as well as the brand architecture of Expedia Group, and how that's evolving.

Hari: A lot has been said about brand loyalty and whether loyalty programs work or not. We believe they do. Less than 5 percent of our travelers search for a hotel by brand name on our platform. If they did search by hotel brand, they would book the hotel directly, and they would not be our customers. We have a large base of loyal consumers, but we've completely de-leveraged our loyalty proposition. That's because we have Expedia and Hotels.com and Vrbo and so on. We are a house of brands, and some brands have loyalty programs, but others don't. And the currencies are different.

We are setting all of that aside! For the last three years we have been building the world's largest loyalty program. It'll be called "One Key." The thing that differentiates One Key is this: our loyalty approach is all about "earn and burn." So, for instance, you can earn on Expedia, and then you can burn on Hotels.com; you can earn on air fares and burn on a hotel stay; you can earn by booking a vacation rental and burn on a car rental. That mix and match that you're able to do, you will not be able to do it with any other company. The anticipated size, our membership base, is 168 million people and growing. If it was a country, it would be the ninth largest country on this planet. It would sit behind Bangladesh and above Russia. That would be the size.

Provocation 7: Value Orientation

Chekitan: Let's talk about value orientation. One of the challenges you have is to consistently sharpen your value proposition. What's happening today and in the future to make it even better for customers as they use your site?

Hari: Value is an interesting word, and I have a different take on it. I think value is about meeting expectations. Our life is all about creating memories, as I have done as I stayed here at the Oberoi Hotel. It is about creating those magnets on the refrigerator that you're going to see. The magnet on my refrigerator is not going to be showing the amazing buffet spread that they have here. But I will tell you what I will remember when I go back. I am going to remember the note that I got from Deep Joy in housekeeping when I walked back into my room last night saying, "I noticed when I was cleaning the room that you had a lot of [business] cards, and here is an Oberoi [business] card [holder]." And there was the card holder. I will also remember that next to my shoes, which were nicely placed, there was jasmine potpourri. A card with that said, you can use this to aromatize your belongings. I will remember those things.

To me, value involves creating the unexpected. So, for us, in an e-commerce world, value is about what memories we can help create. We try and do that with things like price tracking and attributes-based shopping, and so on. There are a lot of things that we do. But I think what is really important for us is captured in a 1962 story of President John F. Kennedy

when he went to the NASA Space Center in Houston. He took a detour from the official NASA tour. He saw a janitor and asked him what he was doing. And the janitor told him, “President Kennedy, I’m helping put a man on the moon.”

It’s an interesting thing for us to think about. We are in the business of making beds and serving hot coffee and so forth. But we are actually in the business of creating memories for people which they will remember for a lifetime. Our question is, how do we do that?

Provocation 8: Concern for the Environment

Chekitan: Let’s talk about the environment, ESG, carbon, and climate change. Where are things today? What’s happening, what’s working, and what’s not? What are you doing about it?

Hari: It’s a messy topic because people talk about sustainability and climate change, but you don’t really know whether they mean it. That’s one issue. Another issue is there’s a lot of goals out there. I think for us we are a part of Travalyst Coalition. We work with booking.com, Airbnb, Google, and Visa, and so forth. I think our biggest thing that we work on is, how do we help people make sustainable choices?

The challenge that we have on a global basis is, you would think that if people make sustainable choices, it should be cheaper. Organic things should be cheaper than non-organic stuff. Because otherwise how do you create a movement, and get it subsidized by the government, so that you can make it cheaper for the public? But it’s quite the reverse. When things are expensive, you’re going to shy away from them because you may not have the means. So, for us, it is all about how we can make sure that if there are sustainable services and products on the platform that we show it in a manner that makes sense, is easy, and is comprehensible. Sustainability is a thing. This is going to take time.

Chekitan: Let’s talk about the work environment in general, and include diversity, equity, belonging, and inclusion. What about that?

Hari: It’s huge. For us, over half of Expedia Group’s employees are women. We have four presidents, two women and two men. One example on how we can reach a better representation is our innovative hiring process. Driving inclusivity and removing bias and discrimination throughout our hiring process is critical to ensure that the diversity of our candidate population is reflected in our hiring results.



The biggest challenge we have
in our business is that we rarely get to
speak to our travelers.
—Hari Nair

This includes updates such as mixed-gender interviewing. We have mandated mixed-gender interviewing (both candidate slates and interviewing teams) to improve candidates’ interview experience and increase the likelihood of improving gender balance through hiring.

Provocation 9: Continuing Consolidation

Chekitan: Let’s talk about consolidation. Three days ago, it was announced that Choice might buy Wyndham. You’ve done a lot of consolidation on your end. How’s that working out? What’s the current state of affairs?

Hari: Consolidation is easy, but it takes a lot of time. You pay a lot of tax. The tax you pay is not necessarily money. Instead, the tax you pay is that it distracts you from your core for a long period of time, because you’ve just spent a whole boat load of money trying to buy other companies. But now you have to think about how you are going to integrate the platform, the people, the culture—all of those things that come along with it. We’ve had a fair share of consolidation, having acquired Vrbo, Hotels.com, Travelocity, and Orbitz. But it’s tough and the list is long, and sometimes certain elements that are important for you as a business actually take a back seat, because you want to make the integration work.



Training is essential to change
“hearts and minds”
for underserved groups.
—Hari Nair

Provocation 10: Growing Power of Digital

Chekitan: Let’s finish with digital, Chat GPT, and AI. Where things going? Are we all going to be out of jobs? Are people going to be traveling with robots?

Hari: It’s all about how you use technology. It’s the application of it and not to be afraid of it. Travel is hard, like I said. But I think if you use technology wisely, you can make travel easy and accessible. Where we are spending a whole lot of time is in creating a technology platform that we can extend to our partners. We truly believe that a rising tide raises all boats. So, we seek a way to create a platform where we can deconstruct it into small pieces and give it to individuals who need it.

I’ll give you an example. You have a lot of hotels who tell us, we have an amazing website of our own. But, Hari, I only support four currencies. I’m interested in Canadians, but my website doesn’t support Canadian dollars, while Expedia supports over 30 currencies. Can I get access just to your payment platform? Can I get access to your conversation and virtual agent platform?

We are creating an entire travel OS, an operating system where every interaction of a platform is going to make it better and better the more partners we plug in. It’s going to be quite an extensive digital menu for our partners to choose from.

Reaching Underserved Groups

Audience questioner: You spoke about senior citizens groups or other demographics. I’ve read much about apprehensions with diversity where it concerns LGBTQ+s. And you can keep going on the list whether it’s in recruiting this group as travelers or recruiting them as customers. What limits that? I understand that that community is one of the highest spenders. Just to digress, at home, we did a little chat group among ourselves, and I said, how would you all feel if you were snubbed by the community? It was amazing. Now this is our age group and the kids who were there, of course, took it differently. But 85 percent of the people around the dining table said they would be uncomfortable. The whole social, old-community kind of a piece. How do you break that barrier? Because again, like you said, there is a segment of travelers—20 percent—who are differently abled. The LGBTQ+ community, as I understand, is close to 17 or 18 percent, if not more. That’s two communities, 40 percent, totally underserved. But nobody seems to talk too much about it. So, what are the next steps?

Hari: This is really about changing hearts and minds. Let me put it this way: if you have an organization who wants to go off with this community, you’re going to need to make an investment. And the investment is going to be around changing people’s hearts and minds. The question you really need to ask your team members is not about what it’s going to cost you to do it. It is about what it’s going to cost you to *not* do it. And the moment you’re able to unlock that is a key. The ability to embrace people is different depending upon where you are in the world.

Potential Platform Prejudice

Questioner: The guests in the hotels, according to your experience, are being treated according to the channel they book? You mean because the OTA is charging a high commission and the reception may treat them differently?

Hari: Yes, in general. There are many hotels who don’t fall in that category. But there are a number of hotels who say, this is a person who booked direct. I’m going to give that person a preference. This other person booked through a wholesale agent. This is a person who booked through an OTA, and even though the customer may have paid the same price, the hotel takes a look at the distribution cost differently. But regardless, the point was that we have no interest in selling hotels on our platform who are going to do a disservice to our travelers. Period. That is the marketplace that we’re trying to create, so that we can be transparent.

Focusing on Business-to-business Growth

Questioner: The India plan of Expedia Group seems to be actually more focused on the back office or top platform rather than B2C platform. And we've seen it dwindle and get more focused on larger chains like Oberoi and so forth. Any plan for expansion or push for looking at this market more widely?

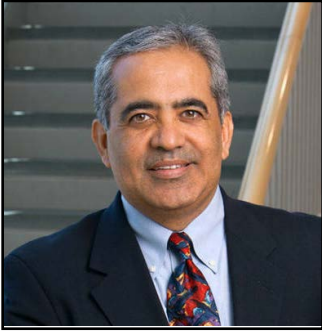
Hari: Yes, it was by design. We came into India in early 2010. I remember as a proud Expedia employee coming to India, opening up the *Times of India* newspaper, and I saw an Expedia ad that made my chest beam with joy. But like I said, we went through a bout of acquisitions that distracted us onto other priorities that were important for the company. And then Covid played its part in depressing business levels. But now that all of that is settled and behind us.

As we think about where we want to grow in the world, Brazil and India certainly stand out as two areas where if you want to win globally, you've got to win in these two markets. We are not going to be going from 0 to 100 overnight. It is going to be a combination of growing a B2B business, which we see has enormous potential, and a B2C business that you will see over the next couple of years. But it's not going to be an overnight billboard, TV advertisements everywhere thing. Because there's a bunch of operational work that we need to do before we do that. ■



We expect women to be a larger group of travelers in the future. We must make solo women travelers feel safe when they travel.—Hari Nair

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS



Chekitan S. Dev, the Singapore Tourism Distinguished Professor at Cornell University's Nolan School of Hotel Administration, is an internationally renowned scholar and thought leader on marketing and branding in the hospitality, travel, and tourism industries. As an expert witness, he has testified in deposition, trial, and at arbitration in numerous hospitality-related matters, in the United States and internationally, including multiple cases involving hotel owner-brand relationships and the online travel industry.

Professor Dev has consulted on marketing and branding to major corporations. He has more than forty years of experience analyzing an array of issues involving hotels, travel, and tourism. His recent research has focused on how branding and rebranding affect both public perception and profitability in the hospitality industry. In particular, he has assessed key drivers of profitability and customer loyalty, including branding, digital marketing, and consumer service. Professor Dev has also evaluated brand portfolio strategy in the context of hotel mergers.

An award-winning author, Professor Dev wrote *Hospitality Branding* (Cornell University Press), as well as over one hundred articles in leading academic and practitioner journals, including the *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Harvard Business Review*. He has coauthored multiple case studies for Harvard Business School, and in 2019 received the overall winner award for best case study from the Case Centre at the Cranfield School of Management (UK). The American Marketing Association recognized Professor Dev and his coauthors as finalists for the Best Service Research Paper of the Year Award for their article "Return on Service Amenities" (*Journal of Marketing Research*, 2017).

Professor Dev is a sought-after commentator on hospitality trends. He has been interviewed numerous times in the mainstream media, and his research featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *The Economist*, and the *International Herald Tribune*, among others. The Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) has selected Professor Dev as one of the "Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Sales and Marketing."

At Cornell's Peter and Stephanie Nolan School of Hotel Administration, Professor Dev teaches courses on services marketing and brand management.

Author's note: I am grateful to Glenn Witham (CHR Contributing Editor) for helping craft this report from the conference recording, and to Ludivine Allagnat (Senior PR Manager, Industry Relations, Expedia Group) for carefully reviewing and approving the text of the report for public release.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS



Hari Nair is Senior Vice President, Lodging Partners, at Expedia Group. Hari leads Expedia Group's Global Account Management business across lodging, including hotels and vacation rentals. In this role, he works with supply partners to make them successful on the Expedia Group platform and stay ahead of digital innovation.

Hari joined Expedia Group in 2002. In his twenty-year tenure with the company, he has built a unique B2B, B2C and media advertising knowledge that can benefit all supply partners as they charter the complexities of the travel ecosystem. Previous to this role, Hari was the Global SVP Expedia Group Media Solutions, the digital advertising arm of Expedia Group where he oversaw all facets of the business including product development and execution, engineering, operations, marketing, media sales and business development for destination marketing organizations. Before this, he focused on two B2C brands as Vice President and General Manager of Orbitz.com and CheapTickets.com, subsidiaries of Expedia Group, and was responsible for overseeing retail operations and profitability of the business, brand strategy, marketing efficiency and customer lifecycle management.

Prior to joining Expedia, Hari worked in corporate training and food and beverage operations at Oberoi Hotels, a leading luxury hotel chain that owns and manages thirty hotels and five luxury cruisers across six countries under the Oberoi and Trident brands.

Hari holds a master's degree in Hotel Management from Cornell University. In his spare time, he is an avid runner, not shy of displaying his Bollywood dancing skills and a regular visitor to India, his beloved native country.

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Cornell Hospitality Report
Vol. 23, No. 9 (September 2023)

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Cornell Hospitality Reports are produced for the benefit of the hospitality and service industries by the Center for Hospitality Research at Cornell University.

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