

# From a 10-Room Guest House to a Multi-Brand Hospitality Empire



Mansur Mehta and his son Mubeen Mehta

The Mehta family's journey from logistics to hospitality reveals a story of resilience, instinct, and generational ambition.

*By Vinodini Rao*

In Indian hospitality, quick growth stories are common, but stories of multi-generational vision built patiently over years are rare. The story of Suba Hotels belongs to this latter group.

What began as a modest 10-room guest house in Mumbai has grown into a full-fledged hospitality chain offering 6,500 rooms across 73 locations. It now encompasses brands in the budget, midscale, and upper-midscale segments, complemented by strategic global partnerships and a bold expansion strategy.

At the core of this growth story are two generations of the Mehta family - veteran entrepreneur Mansur Mehta and his son Mubeen Mehta - who have together transformed Suba Hotels from a family-owned business into one of India's fastest-growing hotel chains.

And what makes the story interesting is not just the scale of growth but the philosophy behind it: quick decisions, disciplined operations, unwavering hard work, and a notably realistic understanding of India's expanding travel markets.

#### From Transport Trucks to Hospitality

The roots of their business, however, lay not in hotels but in logistics.

"We had a transport business, which exists even today," recalls Mansur Mehta. "My father and I used to run that together."

The transition into hospitality came after a personal family setback. Mubeen shares how his grandfather, after losing both his legs to gangrene, began looking for a business that could generate income without the intense physical strain of logistics.

"My grandfather wanted something that would keep him engaged but was less strenuous than transport," he says, adding, "My father has driven trucks for countless kilometres and spent endless nights away from home."

The family then started with a small setup - four rooms, later expanding to six, primarily serving long-term medical tourists from the Middle East and Africa visiting Mumbai. Gradually, they acquired the entire building and redeveloped it, transforming it into their flagship property, Suba Palace in Mumbai's Colaba area.

"That was our first hotel," says Mansur. "And that's really how the journey began."

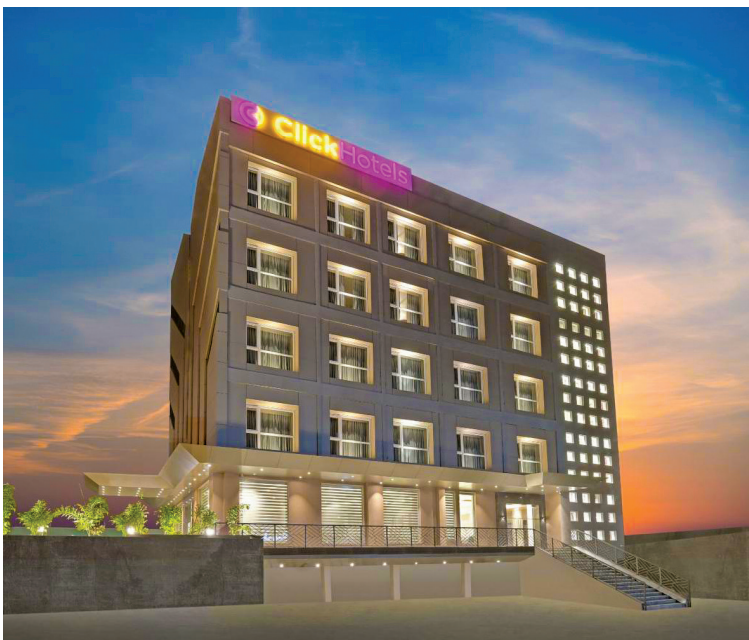
#### The Father-Son Dynamic

While Mansur Mehta offers decades of entrepreneurial instinct and operational expertise, Mubeen symbolises the next-generation leader in hospitality - data-driven, expansion-oriented, and highly attuned to evolving consumer preferences and technological trends. Their camaraderie is evident throughout the discussion.

At one point during the interview, Mansur gently interrupts his son's detailed story of the company's growth to smile and say, "I'm just listening to him and feeling proud that my son is giving such a good interview. I feel happy that my company is in the right hands for the future."

For Mansur, one of his most defining leadership moments has been witnessing the next generation's passionate embrace of the business. "When you pass on your work to your son, and he loves the business as much as you did, that is the most satisfying moment," he smiles.

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### Betting on India Before Everyone Else

Long before tier-II and tier-III India became the hospitality industry's favourite growth narrative, the Mehtas were already building hotels in emerging industrial and pilgrimage markets.

And much of that insight came from their background in logistics.

"We live in a suitcase," Mansur says with a laugh. "Because of our transport business, we travelled constantly across the country. And we realised how difficult it was to find good hotels in smaller cities."

That firsthand exposure led Suba Hotels into markets such as Dahej, Bharuch, Junagadh, and other industrial and emerging destinations years before larger hotel chains began actively targeting them.

"We knew where the pain points were," Mansur explains. "We understood where travellers needed quality accommodation."

This early advantage became one of the company's greatest strengths.

### COVID Became a Turning Point

For many hospitality companies, the pandemic years were about survival. For Suba Hotels, they became a period of aggressive strategic expansion.

Mubeen recalls the uncertainty vividly. "We asked ourselves one question - is hospitality over as a business?" he says. "At that moment, nobody knew."

But instead of retreating, the company doubled down. "On the 11th day of COVID, we were back in the office," he says.

"We didn't fire a single employee. We didn't reduce salaries."

While their logistics operations continued to transport essential goods, their hotel business received support from institutions like Jaslok Hospital, whose doctors stayed with them during the crisis.

At the same time, the Mehtas saw opportunity where others saw fear. "We felt this was the right time to look for hotels," says Mubeen.

The company quickly added properties in Bengaluru, Jaipur, Nashik, and Aurangabad on highly favourable terms during the pandemic.

"Month three onwards, these hotels started doing extremely well," he says.

What followed was an even bigger leap. Suba Hotels acquired 1589 Hotels, a hospitality company owned by the promoter family behind Clarks Hotels & Resorts. The acquisition brought with it a portfolio of nearly 35 hotels across North India, significantly expanding Suba's footprint beyond western India.

"We were at around 15 hotels then, and suddenly this acquisition gave us exposure across North India," Mubeen explains.

Soon after, the company was approached by JLL with another strategic opportunity — acquiring the master franchise rights for US-based Choice Hotels in India, along with its existing hotel portfolio.

For the Mehtas, the move offered immediate access to established global systems, distribution networks, and international brand recognition.

"We were discussing whether we should invest heavily to

*Mansur Mehta explains that they follow a philosophy called "RRR": "Response, Reliability, Relationship. If you respond on time, people trust you. And once trust is built, relationships follow. Ultimately, business is all about relationships."*



*“Pre-COVID, we had eight hotels. Post-COVID, suddenly, we found ourselves with 88 hotels!”*

- Mubeen Mehta

build our own global-scale brand, or associate ourselves with an already established international platform,” says Mubeen. “Choice already had the systems, processes, and global connectivity in place.”

The deal transformed the scale of the business almost overnight. “Pre-COVID, we had eight hotels,” he says. “Post-COVID, suddenly, we found ourselves with 88 hotels!”

### Building a Hospitality Platform

Today, the Mehtas are not positioning Suba merely as a hotel chain, but as a hospitality platform operating across multiple segments and business models.

Mubeen states that the company is one of the few Indian operators operating across budget, midscale, and upper-midscale segments simultaneously. It manages hotels through various models, including ownership, lease, franchise, management, and revenue-sharing arrangements.

“Irrespective of the location or size of the hotel, we want to have a brand that fits,” he explains.

“We are also looking to acquire a hotel management company to strengthen our presence,” he adds.

The company now operates brands including Click Hotels, Click Collection, GenX, Suba, Clarion, and Quality Hotels.

The strongest growth, however, continues to come from the budget and midscale categories. “In tier-II and tier-III India, the ₹2,500 to ₹5,000 rate category is where the real opportunity is,” Mubeen says.

### Technology with a Human Touch

Even as the company invests heavily in technology, AI, and guest analytics, both father and son remain clear that hospitality can never become entirely transactional.

“Hotels are meant to be experiential,” says Mubeen. “You still need that human touch.”

The company is increasingly leveraging AI to analyse guest behaviour, travel patterns, and booking habits, with the aim of improving direct bookings and reducing dependence on OTAs. “We are just scratching the surface,” he says. “The more data we analyse, the more insights we discover.”

Yet Mansur remains firmly rooted in the belief that technology can only supplement hospitality, not replace it. “AI will not check in your guest, cook your food, or clean your room,” he says. “That is why hospitality will always remain a service industry.”

### A Company Built on Relationships

Ask the Mehtas what truly defines their company culture, and the answer is surprisingly simple.

Mansur explains that within the company, they follow a philosophy called “RRR”: “Response, Reliability, Relationship.”



Clarion Hotel Khayal Kochi

“If you respond on time, people trust you,” he says. “And once trust is built, relationships follow. Ultimately, business is all about relationships.”

It is perhaps this grounded simplicity, paired with bold ambition, that explains Suba Hotels’ unusual trajectory.

From a 10-room guest house in Colaba to a fast-growing hospitality chain, the Mehtas have built their business not on grand corporate narratives but through instinct, adaptability, and an unwavering belief in India’s hospitality potential.

And as the father-son duo continue scaling their business across the country, one thing remains unchanged: the family-first entrepreneurial spirit that started it all. ■