

BRANDING & ITS IMPACT IN HOSPITALITY

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Being the 3rd largest private-owned hotel chain in India, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts offers hotel accommodations across diverse budget segments. It comprises of 75 hotels within India and abroad, and is also affiliated with Carlson Hospitality Worldwide.

India had a dramatic growth of tourism over the last few years and it is one of the most remarkable economic changes. India is the 12th most attractive tourist destination in the Asia-Pacific as per the report of World Economic Forum and the prospects are only increasing year by year. With this growth, the hotel business has also evolved from its early days to today. Through this evolution, it has become increasingly specialized. Almost every week, there is a hotel opening in some part of the country. There are all sorts of new concepts and offerings flooding the market. Today, the market is privileged with many different hotels, brands and offerings.

With numerous hotel choices now and guests' changing expectations, it has become mandatory for hotel business to distinguish their offerings to attract clients and maintain the competitive edge. Concentrating merely on the facilities and services are not sufficient any longer. The consumer is faced with so many choices, and the only way we influence their decision is the experience we provide – the brand differentiator by creating a personality of your hotel company that defines your offering.

In hospitality, what defines one hotel from the next, or one brand from the next? Every hotel is speaking about offering 'local' and 'authentic', 'premium' and 'unique'. There are literally hundreds of brands. It all boils down to offering a transformative experience and owning that 'experience' which we can deliver to our guests 24/7.

Because the hospitality industry is ultra-competitive, you've got to set your hotel apart from the competition, and that's where branding comes in. Your hotel's branding lets guests know what they can expect from your property. It lets them know what you stand for. Whether it is a heritage property you run, an ultra-modern hotel, or an independently driven property, it is your brand recognition that drives your reservations.

Distribution strategy plays a key role in this exercise and the consequent reservations success at your hotel. Technological innovations have reshaped the hotel distribution landscape. Consumers now have access to numerous options for checking out and booking hotels. When & through which channels to sell the rooms is extremely important. By using the right channel of distribution and driving business to more cost-efficient channels during high demand periods, hotels can maximize their profit-





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ability. Study and understand the different traveller segments who are your regular clientele. This will allow you to diversify your business mix and optimize your distribution strategy. Ensure that your distribution strategy includes a diverse range of channels, both online and offline. This allows you to promote your hotel property to the greatest number of guests from around the world. Complement these initiatives by an investment in the right technology that will bring all the components together.

Additionally, hotel branding involves continuously building a relationship with your guests through various brand management programs such as loyalty programs, PR & advertising, digital marketing, and other promotional activities, making it easier for guests to decide and effectively becoming their very first choice of a place to spend the night every time they need a place to stay. It is about the entire customer journey, or experience.

Some branding methods and trends that are being followed:

Enhanced Guest Experience: Customized service and surprising the guests. Going above and beyond what guests expect when it comes to service. Here, the hotel staff is pivotal to making the guest experience one that customers will remember for time to come. The trend in the world today is customer-centric. To keep your customers, you have to provide exceptional service. When it comes to providing an exceptional customer experience, you can't go wrong if you keep the customer and his needs at the forefront. This is what the best hotel brands are doing.

Delivering Experiences Beyond The Room: An area where brands

can really make a difference in impacting consumer loyalty and perceptions is when the guest is on-site. Amid growing commoditization of amenities offered and increased price transparency through online travel agencies, metasearch, and other travel sites, hotels brands need to invest in delivering curated experiences that will preserve and strengthen their brand equity online. Go beyond the traditional and offer some kind of experiential element that will allow guests an extraordinary getaway in a real sense.

Innovative & Modern Technology: Technology in hotels has become critical to attracting and retaining guests today. Investing in technology has become imperative to create immediate and personal engagement with the guests. Today, hotel industry is adopting technologies to know guest preference to create wow factor and retain them. Technologies that help in digital marketing of hotel and Big data (Analytics and cloud) based application for better decision making are used to know about loyal guest, their likes & dislikes via CRM to retain them. We are investing in technologies that enhance guest experience and help our valuable guest stay comfortable by creating a 'home away from home' experience.

Create Your Own Personality: Finally, it is extremely important to build a personality for your hotel. Know what you stand for, and don't deviate from it. Are you a full-service, budget, luxury or boutique hotel? Have a clearly defined mission and vision and a brand message. Embrace your brand and its message and train each employee to do the same. Your brand is the experience you create for your guests. 