

Community integration key to sustain in hospitality : InterContinental GM

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Dhaka : Community integration or acceptance can be a key benefactor to drive business forward sustainably in the hospitality industry of the country. Together with new partners, innovating new areas of collaboration can be a winning move to tap the domestic market in the capital's hospitality sector. Hence, the city's iconic luxury property-InterContinental Dhaka-is forging several partnerships in the community to have a long-reaching positive effect that the hotel as well as the partners both can reap benefits from.

Ashwani Nayar, General Manager of InterContinental Dhaka said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at his office in the capital.

It may be mentioned here, the hotel has become partners of the country's several sports federation and associations including football, golf, archery, olympic, gymnast, and boxing, among others.

Bringing these sports and their activities from the small venues to a luxury hotel like InterContinental Dhaka allows them to enjoy a bigger outreach to participative audience and serious sponsors alike, mentioned the General Manager.

On the other hand, in the long run, these partnerships and initiatives will turn out to be key drivers of business to the hotel, he further claimed.

In another creative move, InterContinental Dhaka will be adding further value to its popular Café Social, showing how innovation can drive business.

The hotel's General Manager informed they will be turning the F&B outlet to an art gallery to support the country's artist community while bringing in more footfall in an effort to drive business further sustainably.

"InterContinental, in collaboration with a renowned art professor from University of Dhaka, will be curating artworks to display at the gallery, allowing guests to enjoy something new and attractive like art, while they spend a relaxing time at the café," added Ashwani.

That is not all. InterContinental Dhaka will also be organising 4-6 art exhibitions a year in collaboration with the DU art professor where impressive artworks of both renowned and emerging artists will be displayed free of charge unlike any other gallery, further informed Ashwani.

Café social, on an average day, welcomes over 100-200 customers that the artists will be able to reach by displaying their artworks at the exhibitions to be held at InterContinental Dhaka.

"Now is the time hotels started reinventing their business models focusing on their key strengths for a more sustainable presence," said Ashwani, mentioning, a boom in the hospitality demand is on its way following the mega infrastructure development works currently taking place in the country.



"Once T3 opens, there will be more airlines coming in the country, thereby, more guests, the hotels have to accommodate. However, the number of room capacity across the capital currently is far less than the coming anticipated demand," he further claimed.

Also, thanks to the recently launched Elevated Expressway, almost every hotel in the city benefits from access to a much larger number of customers as transport has become easier now, noted the GM.

Therefore, works to increase quality room numbers in the city must be expedited, he also stressed.

Asked about the current challenges that are becoming hindrances in the way of the hospitality industry to flourish further, Ashwani sighed, due to having a poor number of quality hotels in the capital, the backward integration in supply chain is also limited.

"This, in turn, makes the cost of acquiring products like raw materials expensive. If there were more buyers, the cost will surely reduce," he explained.

"Once more number of hotels come up, we will have to reach out to the producers or suppliers of raw materials directly," he further noted.

Another shortfall of the industry currently is the lack of skilled manpower.

"We must collaborate with the institutions to ensure a good supply of manpower," said the General Manager, adding, "On the other hand, we also have to find ways to make the hospitality career attractive and aspirational enough to encourage skilled manpower to join."

Nevertheless, in another positive note, the General Manager shared, InterContinental Dhaka has surpassed pre-pandemic business numbers.

"We no longer need to benchmark ourselves against pre-covid business levels as the numbers currently are much higher," rejoiced Ashwani.

Further ahead, Ashwani is looking at tapping more of the promising domestic traveller segment of the country, claimed the General Manager, adding that this particular segment will be the biggest benefactor to the hotel's business sustainability in the coming years.

He said, "The domestic tourist number is currently at 10 million and it continues to remain on a vertical rise, to be doubled, in the days ahead."

"Thus, the top priority of a hotel, at present, should be catering to the rising domestic demand," claimed the General Manager.

Mentioning the current guest mix at the hotel, Ashwani informed, domestic travellers currently occupy 30 per cent of the room capacity. According to him, this number is massive compared to similar cities in neighbouring countries.

On the other hand, F&B and MICE show a completely opposite scenario where 70-80 per cent of the business comes from domestic guests, as per the GM.

This reflects how the domestic segment can be the biggest supporter of business in hospitality, concluded Ashwani Nayar.