

TAPPING INDIA'S BUSINESS POTENTIAL

HT Bureau

In a conversation with **Rattan Keswani**, Deputy Managing Director-The Lemon Tree Hotel Company & Chairman- Carnation Hotels, Hospitality Talk discovers the various aspects that make Lemon Tree the fastest growing hotel chain in India, including one of its key initiatives of hiring people with disabilities. Read on as he decodes this fresh, fun and spirited brand!

Please comment on supply versus demand in the industry.

In the 3-4 years supply has grown over 16 per cent whereas demand has been up by 10-12 per cent. This has led to pressure on Average Rates and RevPARs.

What are your average occupancy rates?

For this fiscal, we are averaging over 70 per cent in most locations.

How are the Aerocity Hotels doing?

We are extremely satisfied with the performance of our two hotels in Aerocity. Despite not being able to open the complete inventory due to government delays, both hotels are performing exceedingly well.

Who do you think is your closest competitor?

We compete with all mid-scale and economy brands in our competitive set. We have been able to outperform most so far.

Does Lemon Tree Hotels plan to go international?

We shall concentrate and grow in India first. Over the next few years we will go where the Indian customer does - Dubai, Singapore, London, Bangladesh and New York.

Can you tell us something about Carnation Hotels?

Carnation Hotels is a JV between Lemon Tree Hotels and I. We manage other owner hotels with LTH brands, if the properties can be converted or redesigned within our brand standards. It increases LTH's distribution depth pan-India and provides owners with the depth of management capability and performance standards, similar to our owned hotels.

What are your expectations from the new government?

The government needs to reconsider the tax mix, implement the GSTS structure and formulate better financing regulations and employment. They must appreciate the value that hospitality brings to the GDP.

What are Lemon Tree's initiatives for the specially-abled citizens of India?

We believe it is our social responsibility as Indians. We provide employment opportunities for people with special abilities - physical, social or economic. We started this endeavor in 2007. Today, 10 per cent of our employees are employees with disabilities. We are extremely proud of this undertaking. Our guests appreciate our initiative as well, as is evident in the numerous feedbacks we receive on TripAdvisor. If all industries were to embrace this as a passion, it would partially solve the needs of the underprivileged. Our company and every employee believes in this endeavor and are extremely proud of it.



