



Christoph Franzen
Hyatt Hotels Corporation



You are also looking after the properties in Oman in addition to your responsibilities at Grand Hyatt Doha. What is the difference as far as challenges are concerned? Is skilled resources a challenge in both these countries?

Yes, I am looking after our operation in the State of Qatar and the Sultanate of Oman. The challenges are somewhat similar but each market has its own nuances.

Oman is a much more 'protected' and predictable market than Qatar is; this is mainly also because of the large additional supply that has been introduced in the Doha market over the past months. Qatar is more volatile in terms of the business but on the other hand in Oman the manpower challenges are different in the Sultanate of Oman. Due to Omanization, something we wholeheartedly support, the recruitment, training and engagement process is much more important.

What difference do you see in the millennial travelers in terms of their preferences and dependence on technology?

I would not say they are more 'dependant' on technology. What I would say is that they enjoy using the benefits of technology. The millennial traveller is savvy, checks out the hotel and pricing online on various platforms, and then sees what is the best value for money. This does not mean that he or she will book the cheapest accommodation, they still will pay more for a brand they love, but they want to ensure that they get the best deal for their preferred hotel.

They want a hassle free experience; they do not mind kiosk an online check-in, they do not ask for a newspaper as their source of information is on their smart phone or tablet. They also interact much less in the traditional way with the Concierge or Reception; they book their transportation and tickets online without assistance.

This, of course, also means we have to tailor our pre-arrival and in-house communications to their needs so we are in tune with those guests.

Do you feel there is room for sustainable growth for the hospitality industry in Doha in the run up to the world cup?

Very much so! Qatar Airways goes to great length to promote the destination and as a brand is probably the most visible tool to create country and brand awareness.

Qatar Tourism has gone to great lengths in the past few years with appointing PR agencies and opening offices in strategic cities around the globe to support tourism.

What we need, to gain crucial momentum, is a clear strategy to develop tourism infrastructure. As a tourist destination, we need more than just shopping malls. Additional recreational activities are required and visa restrictions need to be reviewed for certain markets to make it easier to book a vacation in Qatar.

The World-Cup is just a milestone, but no hotel owner or investor planned to build a hotel just for the world-cup. Qatar has and will attract many more international events to feed occupancies in the city; some of them are recurring events like the Golf, Tennis or MotoGP; others are one off events like the Handball World Cup last year.

There is an impression that Qatar is a slow market and a lot of world class suppliers shy away because of this reason. How true is this?

Not sure I understand the question to be honest. What do you mean with 'World Class Suppliers'? All global hotel brands of name and fame are here.

When it comes to airlines serving the Doha market, yes, there is still some opportunity. More carriers would make the destination more affordable as ticket prices with Doha as the end point are still relatively pricey compared to other destinations in the GCC.

What are your expectations from the 2nd Edition Hospitality Business Conclave on the 18th of May?

To get a better understanding of the challenges we all face through the views of my colleagues. To see if there is a way forward to address our current challenges as a united body with the relevant parties. And of course to meet and catch-up with fellow hoteliers!