

PIPELINE YEARBOOK 2016

SAURABH RAI

WITH A CORPORATE RE-BRAND AND 80 NEW PROPERTIES ADDED TO THE PORTFOLIO, SAURABH RAI, AREA MD FOR PREFERRED HOTELS AND RESORTS, LOOKS AHEAD TO 2016

IN 2015 PHR ADDED MORE THAN 80 HOTELS TO THE BRAND PORTFOLIO, INCLUDING PALAZZO VERSACE DUBAI AND ENTERED INTO A MASTER PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH KATARA HOSPITALITY FOR THE LAUNCH OF ITS STANDALONE HOTEL OPERATING ARM MURWAB HOTEL GROUP. WHAT WERE THE DRIVING FACTORS BEHIND THESE AMBITIOUS ACTIVITIES?

The independent hotel space continues to gain momentum worldwide, feeding the desires of today's travel consumer who wants a unique, authentic experience from their hotel. Asset owners with operating ability are now more confident in their pursuit of building distinctive and autonomous hotel brands that increase in value over time. The fact that most of the major hospitality brands have decided to enter the independent space by creating brand extensions that afford hotel owners a degree of flexibility is testament to this mindset.

WHAT WAS THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF YOUR COMPANY IN 2015?

In March 2015, the company transitioned from Preferred Hotel Group, Preferred Hotels and Resorts, one master brand with five distinct hotel collections: Legend, LVX, Lifestyle, Connect and Preferred Residences. The new brand architecture aligns each property with one of the five new collections, providing a more intuitive way for consumers to search, consider, and book their lodging based on the type of luxury experience they are seeking. By focusing on experiences versus brands, the company is better equipped to capture more guests for our member hotels and improve market share.

Saurabh Rai



HOW WILL THE COMPANY DEVELOP IN 2016?

Our regional efforts will be focused on establishing and expanding the aforementioned hotel partnerships. The Middle East has provided one of the company's fastest growing revenue

streams, and we are now keen to enter other key markets such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

On a global scale, we will implement a number of consumer-focused initiatives to drive brand awareness and demonstrate our value proposition with complete clarity.

As an integral part of the company's rebranding, we launched #ThePreferredLife as our consumer-facing campaign to represent our appeal and promise to providing authentic independent hotel experiences.

In 2016 we will be introducing more interactive social campaigns to support this theme as a way to promote our hotels, engage consumers in our brand story, and encourage global travel. We will also introduce significant changes to our points-based loyalty programme iPrefer.

WHICH INDUSTRY TREND DO YOU PREDICT WILL DEMAND YOUR ATTENTION IN 2016?

Hotels in the region need to pay close attention to continuity in service excellence. Access to quality human resources and investing in professional training and development will be the keys to success.

WHAT ARE YOUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES FOR 2016 AND HOW WILL THESE BE ACHIEVED?

In addition to our development goals for 2016, we have a long-term objective to become one of the five best known hotel brands globally and the number one independent hotel brand in the world.

To achieve this, we are committed to growing our worldwide portfolio to more than 1,000 hotels in over 100 countries.