

Shariah practices — with a digital twist

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DUBAI — Operating as a new player in a saturated hospitality market such as that in the UAE is a big challenge, but Suba Hotel has confidently taken the risk with an innovative approach.

The four-star boutique hotel, located in Al Riqqa, Deira, opened its doors in September 2014 to offer guests a unique experience — a fully Shariah-compliant halal facility — with a digital twist.

“Suba Hotel is a brand from India under the Suba Group of Hotels, which belongs to the parent company, Mehta Road Lines [MRL], and this is our first overseas venture. Our segment target is completely different compared to other hotels. Today’s world is centred on technology, and with this in mind, we aimed to integrate technology in our services to have an edge over competition. We are the first of our kind to have a tablet-controlled in-room management system,” Wajeed Bagwan, general manager of Suba Hotel Dubai, told *Khaleej Times*.

Each room is equipped with an Apple iPad that gives guests instant access to the hotel’s services. Besides the ability to connect and watch the latest Blu-ray movies and music videos on the television screen, the device is fitted with an application that allows users to control the lights, place meal orders, and also set up a “Do Not Disturb” privacy notification for the management.

“We have replaced remote controls, paper tags and a number of conventional items to take on a digital role. Plus, we offer free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel. This means guests are always connected and can access a variety of services digitally,” he said.

Highlighting its position as a halal establishment, Bagwan added that the 92-room Suba Hotel is a “dry” hotel that specially caters to families and Muslim clients. “In line with our Shariah-compliant aspect, we do not take loans, delay any payments, and do not run hotel operations on interest,” he added.

Despite being a new player in the market, it has achieved 96 per cent occupancy rate to date and has plans to open another wing



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close to Deira City Centre. “We have been successful so far and received very positive guest feedback through a number of sources. This gives us good credibility and lets us know that we are on the right track. We’ve had the confidence to open up another hotel with a larger inventory in a short span of six months where we will integrate and enhance all modern requirements as per traveller preferences, with additional digital features such as iPad-controlled air conditioners.”

Following optimistic reviews, the hotel has also been receiving a number of accolades since the start of its operations.

“We recently received the ‘2014 Award of Excellence’ from *Booking.com* for having the top rating in the four-star hotel category. We are fortunate enough to be nominated and shortlisted with the recent Middle East Hotel Awards 2015 for the ‘Best Smart Hotel’ and ‘Best Boutique Hotel’. We were also nominated and shortlisted for the International Hotel Awards for the ‘Best City Hotel’, as well as the World Luxury Hotel Awards, which is based in Africa. We have been shortlisted for ‘Luxury Boutique Hotel’, ‘Luxury New Hotel’ and ‘Best General Manager,’” Bagwan said.

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To date, the MRL Group’s diverse portfolio features hotels in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Baroda and Dahej. Besides setting up more properties in the subcontinent, the company aims to extend its reach in the Mena region, notably in the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, Tanzania, Cape Town, Durban and Oman.

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