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Hotels Emphasising on Banquets

By Sharmila Chand

Banquets have emerged as a major revenue source for big and luxury hotels in the Indian hospitality industry. The needs and demands of the increasing numbers of discerning guests in the Indian hospitality industry have evolved greatly over the years and banquets in hotels and resorts need to keep pace to cater to these changing requirements. And they are doing so.

The banqueting operations in India, like almost every other facet of hospitality business, have embraced the latest trends. It involves theme concept, food styling, table layouts, bar set up, crockery, cutlery, choice of linen, staff uniform, flower decoration... in fact, the list of things to make a successful banquet event seems to be endless.

A major contributor to the revenue of hotels today, we look into the F&B challenges that come with the banqueting operations.

Evolving Business

Now more guests in hotels in India have exposure to international travels than they had a decade before. Thus they are likely to be exposed to what is available in banquets, internationally. Many discerning

guests (whose numbers are increasing in the Indian hospitality industry) are also looking for innovative ways of celebrating important events in their life. Thus the banqueting business in hotels and resorts in India need to match international standards and be innovative.

"There is vast potential in the banqueting business today. What is required for a successful banqueting business is innovation, while keeping the personal touch intact," averred Mayuresh Deodhar, Director of Sales and Marketing, Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre.

"Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre aspires to be a preferred venue for business, and celebrations and weddings is one of the largest segments for the hotel. People

of Ahmedabad are well travelled and prefer to have menus with a blend of traditional and international cuisine," he added further.

"Live and interactive food counters with Chefs in action are preferred by the guests," observed Deodhar while discussing the banqueting trends in hotels.

Banqueting Challenges

Banqueting has an advantage to drive in high volumes of business, which can lead to higher profitability. As is the case with all businesses, banqueting also has its fair share of challenges.

"We don't see any unmanageable challenge in the banqueting business, which cannot be handled. Each guest has his/her own needs and expectations with the hotel, which have to met. We see most of our weddings have a large room requirement and this can sometimes be a challenge, while balancing the corporate and the social demand," affirmed Deodhar.

"Satisfying each & every taste bud can be a challenge in big weddings. Also forecasting portions can be challenging as well as the presentation of cooked food in chafers. Food safety & hygiene is a

"We provide competitive packages to our clients for hosting wedding receptions. We also market our brand on all social media platforms to ensure maximum possible reach."

Navin Suchanti, Managing Director,
Sinclairs Hotels & Resorts

big challenge for big events,” explained Kumar Sambhav, Director, Food & Beverage at The Grand New Delhi while talking about the challenges in hosting wedding banquets.

“The major challenge in wedding banqueting for hotels is anticipating requirements of wedding parties. Keeping up with wedding trends is also a challenging task. Wedding trends keep on changing. Something that is trendy now could be passé in no time,” asserted Navin Suchanti, Managing Director, Sinclairs Hotels & Resorts.

Of course, cost is certainly a major factor to be taken into account while hosting banquets in hotels. Suchanti emphasised on this factor. Food, decoration and other aspects of banqueting have to be chosen in such a way that they are cost-effective for both the hotel and the hosts.

Besides costs of course, several other factors also needed to be kept in mind for hosting successful banquets in hotels. The profile of the guests, the cuisine, the infrastructure are only some of the important issues which needed to be taken care of.

“Some of the factors we keep in mind are the guests’ demographic profile, the type of seasonal fresh ingredients available in markets, the balance between live cooking & food counters, weather, and the cuisine we are strong at,” Kumar Sambhav said.

Playing to Strength

Running a successful banqueting facility in a hotel requires a fine eye for details pertaining to infrastructure, services and marketing. “We at the hotel host food tasting sessions with the client, personally attended by the Executive Chef. Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre has a team



“Wedding banqueting business is going to grow at a very fast pace in the future. Everyone wants a great wedding and many want their weddings to be different. In this regard, hotels must keep up with the demand from the guests by regularly upgrading themselves & training their teams. They need to keep experimenting with new food concepts and cuisines. Hotels who regularly upgrade themselves will create a niche for themselves and can be ahead of competition.”

Kumar Sambhav, Director, Food & Beverage at The Grand New Delhi

of dedicated Crown Meetings Manager to ensure that we meet the expectations of the clients,” said Deodhar.

More importantly, he added, “The hotel is crafting special wedding packages for non-auspicious wedding dates to attract incremental revenue.”

“Sinclairs has properties in several exotic locations and that is our USP. In Port Blair, one can have the banquet with us, with the sea as the backdrop; in Ooty our three level gardens make the venue adventurous and interesting. Similarly in Chalsa, you can have the function amidst pristine green surroundings. For the bride and the groom, we also offer pre-wedding casual and candid photography sessions,” pointed out Suchanti.

“IHG that operates the Crowne Plaza brand has partnered with celebrity Chefs to form a panel of ‘Culinary Ambassadors,’ each of whom have contributed bespoke recipes that can be incorporated in the wedding menus. This helps to elevate the F&B profile of the event and facilitates to attract new customers apart from retaining regular customers,” proffered Deodhar.

“The entire business of hosting great weddings needs a very special approach with a lot of emotional involvement and flexibility to adapt to the different needs of different communities.”

Mayuresh Deodhar, Director of Sales and Marketing, Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad City Centre.



The Role of Marketing

Right marketing and advertisement is required to facilitate the guests and potential guests are aware of the banqueting facilities in the hotel.

“Our wedding banqueting marketing strategies are manifold including, tie-up with celebrity Chefs, developing specialised wedding brochures; developing a panel of vendors specialising in weddings and organising wedding fairs and jewellery exhibitions,” expressed Deodhar. Kumar Sambhav told that the marketing focus of their banqueting is through word of mouth. Generating leads for the current events and offering rewards for the bookers are some of the other marketing endeavours for The Grand New Delhi to market banquets, according to Kumar Sambhav.

“Weddings are more of creating an experience as it is a once in a lifetime event and we would prefer to focus more on the overall feel and the experience of the client and the rest follows,” summed up Deodhar.

For Profitable Wedding Banquets

I queried on the tips to run a profitable wedding banquet operations in a hotel to the experts. “Creating an unmatched experience and concentrating on the quality without compromising on delivery standards can lead to a profitable wedding banquet in a hotel,” observed Deodhar.

“Keep on innovating in set-up, keep on investing in props to create nice set-ups, do proper menu planning and control wastage. These are the factors needed for a profitable wedding banquet in a hotel,” stated Kumar Sambhav. ■