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CEO OF THE YEAR - NATIONAL

AJAY BAKAYA

MD, SAROVAR HOTELS AND RESORTS

When most hoteliers have been wondering how to deal with the threat that OTAs present to their business, Ajay Bakaya decided that they are important to the business. At the same time, he successfully negotiated their commission to 19%. That aside, he increased Sarovar Hotels' top line and bottom line by 10%, riding on the upswing in business sentiment in India.

Over the last 12 months, he orchestrated the addition of over 400 keys, some in unusual circumstances. For instance, RK Sarovar Portico in Srinagar opened in July 2017, when the state's tourism and hospitality industry was affected by insurgency, and other hotels city shut their doors. And it did well.

Bakaya also trained his sights outside India and increased Sarovar Hotels' footprint into Africa. He launched the 5-star 144-key, The Lazizi Premiere in Nairobi, Kenya.

Wanting to ensure that Sarovar Hotels became an environmentally-oriented organisation, Bakaya oversaw the implementation of various energy saving initiatives. These initiatives succeeded in reducing energy unit consumption year on year at every unit.

Sarovar Hotels is a part of Louvre Hotels Group, the second largest hotel group in Europe and a major player in the worldwide hotel sector, currently boasting about 1,175 hotels with a total capacity of nearly 100,000 rooms in 51 countries. It manages around 75 hotels in over 50 destinations and has around 6,000 keys in India and Africa under Sarovar Premiere, Sarovar Portico and Hometel, brands.

