

# HOME AWAY FROM HOME

A hotel-branded apartment is viable for the developer and hotel operator as it ensures regular business from a wider customer base

BY VINITA BHATIA

Over the past couple of decades, tourists have gradually gravitated towards branded residential accommodations while travelling for pleasure or business. The reason they prefer these over hotel rooms is because they can enjoy more space and amenities. These include a living room where they can entertain guests, a functional kitchen to cook their own meals, bedrooms, etc., in a luxurious setting?

A fully serviced, luxury apartment becomes even more appealing if a guest plans to stay in the city for a longer period – it sure beats being confined to a singular hotel room. A branded residence can easily double up as their home away from home and even become an extension of their workplace. Is it any wonder then that brands like Marriott International, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, IHG, Accor, Banyan Tree and Hyatt Hotels Corporation have ventured into this space?

Closer home, the concept of branded hotel residences is beginning to gain ground, and even hoteliers are bullish about this segment. Due to the ongoing pandemic, guests are more inclined towards serviced apartments; they are more confident that safety and security protocols will be followed rigorously here, even as they enjoy the trappings of a hotel environment.

Chris Franzen, Area VP-Western India, Hyatt Hotels Corporation and GM, Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel & Residences tells Vinita Bhatia that these accommodations offer a wholesome experience when associated with a prestigious address. Hence, Hyatt Delhi Residences and Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel & Residences are designed to offer luxury and tranquillity under one roof – so guests can be assured about hygiene, safety and comfort throughout their stay.

**How would you describe a standalone branded residence, especially those affiliated with well-known hotel brands?**

Such properties bring the best of both worlds to customers. It is perfect for an extended stay, for relocation or even if one is temporarily in another country for work purposes.

Guests get the luxury of a hotel with the warmth of a home. They also have access to exclusive privileges, often attached to global standards of hotel brands, which make residences a comfortable and ideal stay.

**Are standalone branded residences more popular in cities that are business hubs or holiday destinations?**

As a concept, residences are definitely more prevalent in business hubs, because they have high tourist throughput, especially those who need to stay for longer durations. However, you do see its presence in holiday destinations as well. With regards to business



## ABOUT CHRIS FRANZEN

A Swiss national, hospitality industry veteran and a professionally trained chef and sommelier, Chris Franzen was appointed as General Manager for Grand Hyatt Mumbai and Area Vice President for Western India in 2019. Prior to this, he worked for six and half years as GM of the luxurious Grand Hyatt Doha Hotel & Villas in Qatar. In fact, he has been associated with this hotel chain for over two decades.

Franzen has over 30 years of experience having worked in Europe, the US, Australia, Russia and the Middle East before moving to India. Some of the hotel operators and luxury boutique hotels that he worked with include the Gourmet Restaurant Glashof in Zug, the Hilton Hotel in Zurich, Kofler & Kompanie in Germany, The Inn on Fifth in Naples, Florida, and Hotel Kurrajong in Canberra.



Guests increasingly prefer branded apartments over hotel rooms as it offers more space and amenities.

hubs, residences extend comfort and independence along with luxury.

**What premium does a branded residence command as compared to its non-branded equivalent?**

Branded residences definitely command more premium and are more prestigious as compared to a non-branded equivalent. The reason behind this is that they carry their promise of quality and the goodwill of the brand.

Residents of private homes at these residences are offered an exclusive extension of the luxury hotel experience. One always has the guarantee of like-minded neighbours and a prestigious address.

**In the past, most branded residences targeted high-income households. Has the trend now shifted to encompass other customer segments?**

Each brand has different target customer groups. The Hyatt Hotels Corporation has always welcomed every guest who would like to experience its properties.

Other than high-income households, we have seen a new trend emerge who are opting for branded residences. These include groups ranging from guests looking for relocation, single female travellers who travel frequently, corporate travellers, families, expats, medical tourists, embassies and professionals working on specific long-term projects.

**What benefits can these accommodations offer to residents as compared to a stay at a premium hotel?**

Besides the sense of comfort and homeliness, guests can be assured of a hassle-free stay. There is also the promise of quality experience and hospitality. For instance, all our residences offer all-inclusive serviced apartments to guests.

**Are branded residences a good opportunity for players in the**



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**hospitality sector, especially in the post-COVID era?**

Branded residences carry the promise of quality and trust. In this post-COVID era, guests are looking for options that provide them a sense of security, hygiene and safety.

We do see that once the industry and businesses open a little more, people will be willing to travel. However, they will prefer brands and options that assure them 100% hygiene, safety and comfort.

**Why are branded residences a viable business proposition for hotel operators, especially those wanting to diversify their existing revenue stream?**

Branded residences are a viable and lucrative proposition for hotel operators as it targets different sets of individuals and locks in long-term business on lease. These residences also allow limited use and offers flexibility in changing the type of apartment in case one of the guests is joined by extended family.

**How are well-designed hotel-branded residences a win-win proposition for the developer, hotel operator and guests?**

A well-designed hotel-branded residence is ideal for the developer, hotel operator and guests. To begin with, it strengthens regular travel from guests who have stayed there before.

Moreover, these accommodations are designed keeping in mind the rising quality expectations of guests and their standard of living. The residences provide the ultimate set-up for international and intra-national travel for business and leisure. It also boosts the volume of expat accommodation, who might not enjoy the constrictions placed by a hotel room in terms of space and inability to entertain guests. ■