



**Daniel Chao**



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**Daniel Chao**, Cluster General Manager, Novotel and ibis, Chennai, says, "In the recent years, Southern India has experienced stunning business growth, especially in the IT and manufacturing space. Cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai have now been dubbed as the epicentres of IT growth for the country and also earning a name for themselves in the global start-up diaspora. Cities like Kochi, Coimbatore, Mysuru and Vishakhapatnam are also fast playing catch up. Owing to this, as hoteliers, we have seen a very large increase in corporate travel over the last few years."

Overtime, he has seen the guest mix evolve from a relatively homogenous reliance on a single segment to a much healthier and more diversified combination of travellers with varied expectations and priorities. "It is a welcome change that has shaped our strategy and helped us better cater to the evolving guest needs. On the business front, this evolution in the guest mix has been of great benefit as unlike leisure travel, business travel has no season and hence, occupancy rates remain healthy year-round. The spurt in corporate travellers has also given a boost to MICE business, a segment increasingly contributing to revenues of the industry," adds Chao.

## **SOUTH-CENTRIC TOURISM**

According to **Narendra Prabhu**, General Manager, Signature Club Resort, If tour operators are cramming up on South Indian history and culture, they have the globetrotting tourist to blame or thank. "Ever since the Tourism Cell first came into being, followed soon after by the creation of South India Tourism Development Corporation in the mid-sixties, tourism has tended to be south-centric. This year, the skew in southern tourism has been sharp enough to make those in the travel business sit up and take notice of the land south. Contrary to popular opinion, neither Goa, nor even Jammu and Kashmir is the most popular tourist destination in India for foreign travellers. India's most popular state with foreign tourists is Tamil Nadu. According to data published by India's Ministry of Tourism, Tamil Nadu contributed almost 20 percent of the total foreign visits to India in 2016. The state remains popular despite the tragic floods the state endured in 2016," he adds.

He further adds, "Travel agents claim that South India tourism registered a 30 per cent increase in traffic, they also estimate that average tourist