



Bridging Hospitality Across Egypt and the UAE

Hozpitality's Trendsetter series celebrates visionary leaders who are shaping the future of hospitality. This week, we feature the Chief Executive Officer of Stella Di Mare Hotels & Resorts, overseeing operations across Egypt and the UAE. Leading in two of the region's most dynamic markets, he shares his insights on leadership, innovation, and the evolving definition of luxury.

"At the core of my legacy, I hope to leave behind not just a stronger company but a stronger culture of hospitality: smart, soulful, and built to last."

Navigating Two Unique Markets

Operating across Egypt and the UAE provides a unique perspective on two distinct but rapidly evolving markets. The UAE caters to a highly international clientele, including tourists, business travellers, and long-term expats, all accustomed to luxury, tech-driven experiences, and personalized service. Guests expect seamless efficiency, innovation, and experiences that blend leisure and business effortlessly. In contrast, Egypt primarily attracts regional travellers who are more value-conscious and seek culturally immersive, heritage-focused stays. While global tourists do visit, a significant share of demand comes from regional guests, influencing the focus on family-centric packages and authentic local experiences.

The markets also differ in their operational demands. The UAE has a strong appetite for ultra-luxury properties, wellness offerings, and multifunctional spaces, requiring tech-forward operations and sophisticated talent retention strategies. Egypt, on the other hand, emphasizes cultural and historical tourism, midscale growth, and seasonal planning, with a workforce that is widely available but requires continuous training and upskilling. Collaborations with government and tourism authorities are also critical in Egypt to maximize the impact of national campaigns and initiatives.



SIMON SAMIR

Chief Executive Officer
Stella Di Mare Hotels Management

Maintaining Brand Identity Across Borders

Balancing consistency with local adaptation is both a strategic and cultural necessity. Stella Di Mare's core brand DNA, including service standards, standard operating procedures, and structured training programs, is standardized across all properties, ensuring a recognizable experience for guests anywhere. At the same time, experiences are tailored to the cultural expectations of each market. In Egypt, value-added offers and family-focused packages resonate strongly, while in the UAE, guests expect tech-enabled check-ins, wellness services, and exclusive lifestyle events. Constant monitoring through brand audits and guest feedback ensures that service quality remains high without compromising the brand promise.



Leadership Built from the Ground Up

Simon's leadership philosophy is rooted in his early experiences as a front desk agent. There, he learned the importance of first impressions, respecting every role, and managing challenges firsthand. This foundation gives him a unique understanding of each department: housekeeping, kitchen, engineering, HR, security, sales & marketing, and F&B, which informs his people-first approach as a CEO. A pivotal moment in his career came when he was promoted to General Manager at a flagship property that was underperforming both operationally and financially. Facing a demoralized team, high turnover, and escalating guest complaints, he chose to focus on people rather than numbers. By listening to department heads, fostering collaboration, creating a shared vision, and celebrating small wins, he transformed the property within a year—raising guest satisfaction by over 30% and significantly reducing employee turnover. This experience shaped his leadership philosophy: empathy over ego, presence over perfection, and purpose over process.

Nurturing Talent and Fostering Growth

In an industry known for high turnover, he emphasizes talent development and retention through mentoring, career growth, and recognition. Building a culture where employees feel connected to the guest experience, fostering wellbeing, and maintaining engagement are central to his strategy. He views exit interviews not as administrative tasks but as opportunities to learn, adapt, and strengthen relationships with alumni who may one day return.

Redefining Luxury for Modern Travelers

Luxury hospitality itself is undergoing a transformation, moving beyond chandeliers and high thread counts to experiences that are meaningful, personalized, and seamless. Modern travellers value wellbeing, convenience, cultural immersion, and sustainability. Stella Di Mare responds by integrating wellness, local experiences, and digital convenience into every guest journey, from pre-arrival preferences to curated cultural and culinary experiences. Innovations like AI-powered concierge services, mobile check-ins, and immersive AR/VR previews enhance the guest journey without losing the personal touch. For Simon, every innovation is evaluated against a simple criterion: does it enhance comfort, convenience, and emotional connection?

Sustainability as a Core Value

Sustainability is another cornerstone of the brand. Stella Di Mare integrates environmentally responsible practices into daily operations, from green training programs for staff to eco-conscious guest experiences. The brand has achieved recognition through initiatives like the Dubai Sustainability Stamp and Egypt's Green Star Certificate, demonstrating a commitment to preserving destinations while delivering luxury. For Simon, sustainability is not a campaign—it's a long-term responsibility that enhances guest experience, operational efficiency, and brand reputation.



Recharging and Gaining Perspective

When not immersed in operational strategy, he recharges by traveling purposefully, reading across disciplines, exploring culinary traditions, and mentoring emerging talent. These pursuits provide fresh perspectives, inspire innovation, and reinforce his connection to the human side of hospitality. Patience, he notes, is a guiding principle—whether in cultivating culture, developing talent, or introducing innovation. In an industry driven by speed and immediate feedback, long-term thinking and consistency create sustainable success.

A Legacy of Human-Centered Hospitality

Looking forward, he hopes his legacy will be twofold: for Stella Di Mare, a brand remembered for authentic, human-centered luxury that prioritizes people as much as performance; and for the Middle East hospitality industry, a model for talent development, ethical standards, and sustainable growth. His philosophy reflects a simple truth: success follows engagement, and lasting impact comes from building strong cultures, meaningful experiences, and empowered teams.