

# hotel management international

Autumn 2018  
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An official  
publication of



## Come into bloom

Portugal emerges as Europe's  
most exciting market

### Take on board

The industry's need for more  
female leaders

### Blue sky thinking

How operators are  
reinventing the airport hotel

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**Hotel Management International**  
Autumn 2018

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**Phin Foster, editor**

# Where next?

**A**t the Hotel Investment conference Europe (Hot.E) back in late September, Fimdale co-founder and chairman Tim Kemp was asked where next for the boutique brand.

Fimdale has, thus far, restricted itself to the global hospitality mega capitals of London and New York, so it was only natural that Kemp revealed an interest in Paris. His other answer, however, was more surprising – and indicative of the arrival of a new heavy hitter on the European hotel scene: “We are looking very closely at Lisbon.”

Fimdale and pretty much everyone else, Tim. In PwC’s ‘European Cities Hotel Forecast 2018 & 2019’, analysts placed Lisbon and Porto in first and second place for anticipated RevPAR growth across this year and next. Hoteliers in all segments have taken note.

Portugal has long been a market synonymous with resort holidaying, so what accounts for the increased success of its cities as business and leisure destinations in their own right? Furthermore, how is this impacting hotel development elsewhere in a country enjoying its best performance levels in two decades? In our latest cover story, Greg Noone talks to regional leaders, including Gustavo Castro of Colliers International’s and Jorge Rebelo

de Almeida, the managing director Vila Galé, to find out (page 44).

Tim Kemp, along with his wife and Fimdale co-founder Kit, were keen to talk about a lot more than just Portugal at Hot.E. Theirs is a brand forged and operated in a very different manner to the industry norm; like its founders, playfully contrarian, colourful and fun. They discuss its founding principles, carving out their own spheres of influence and “circling one another like a pair of old sumo wrestlers” (page 14).

Fimdale has forged a reputation as one of the best employers in the business and also stands out as one of the few international operators with a female leader. In fact, female representation in the boardrooms of global hospitality’s biggest players remains depressingly low, despite long-standing efforts to promote diversity and a relatively even gender split further down the ladder. In an important and timely piece, Elly Earls meets Women in Hospitality 2020 chair Tea Colaianni; Marriott International’s president and managing director for Europe, Amy McPherson; Whitbread CEO Alison Brittain; and IHG’s VP for global talent Louise Byrne to find out what steps are being put in place to correct the balance (page 54).

As always, I hope you enjoy our latest edition and greatly look forward to hearing your thoughts.

On the cover: Torel Avantgarde, Porto © Luis Ferraz

## Also in this issue

**Page 18:** Radisson Hotel Group’s Elie Younes talks us through the brand’s myriad endeavours.

**Page 61:** Airport hotels are going through an overhaul; we look into the companies looking to reinvent the space.

**Page 64:** Spas and hotels have circled each other for decades; has wellness design finally created the new hybrid?



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Cover story

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London, New York, Paris... Lisbon? We investigate the not-so-surprising rise of Portugal.



Kit and Tim Kemp on their unique roles at Firmdale



Discussing brand identity with Elie Younes.

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According to a recent study by Magma Hospitality Consulting and STR, thanks to the strong performance growth in several markets, Spain's hotel industry has seen a surge in investment interest despite the political situation in Barcelona.

EHMA

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EHMA president Hans Koch looks at the challenges of staying relevant and competitive in a changing hotel landscape.

The big interview

14 A different take

As the founders and leaders of Firmdale Hotels, Kit and Tim Kemp are among the industry's most influential boutique hoteliers. Phin Foster hears them speak about the

importance of maintaining their own spheres of control, taking a personalised approach to hotel development and why it sometimes pays to do things a little differently.

Business management & development

18 Bring it to fruition

A new brand identity, corporate restructuring and marked changes in developmental strategy all mean that Elie Younes, EVP and CDO of Radisson Hotel Group, is an incredibly busy man. Abi Millar meets the hotel exec to talk about a shift of focus back onto Europe, a renewed willingness to consider leases, what he is looking for in new development partners and the importance of brand purity.

23 Light up hotels

Simon

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Meliá Hotels International

26 Big issues

Delegates recently convened in London for the latest Hotel Investment Conference Europe. Subjects for discussion included new growth opportunities, shifting investor profiles, and the need for developers and hoteliers to think more creatively. Inevitably, however, one topic loomed above all others. *Hotel Management International* reports.

Security

30 The age of consent

The European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance deadline has passed, requiring every hotel in the world to have guidelines in place that protect EU residents' personally identifiable information against security breaches. Six months down the line, however, reports are coming through of some operators managing the scale of these demands better than others. Robert Holland, chief technology adviser to

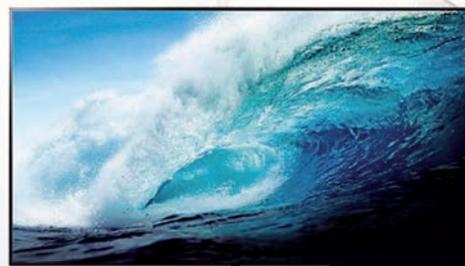
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# Make a clear statement...

## LG OLED Wallpaper Hotel TV

Marvel at the beauty of the world's first paper thin OLED Wallpaper Hotel TV, designed to wow your guests and enhance your in room styling

The WU960H series features an impossibly light and thin "Picture-on-Wall" design and supports premier hotel functionality and intense, rich colour reproduction. Breathtaking picture on glass design, cinematic sound and ultra slim bezel sends guests a clear statement of opulence, refinement and luxury.



the British Hospitality Association, and GDPR expert Nick Crawford discuss the challenges with Patrick Kingsland.

### Technology

#### 33 Reality check

Augmented reality platforms have emerged as new marketing and operational tools over recent years, allowing hotels to preview and enhance their pre-existing selling points, and possibly offer whole new ones. But to what extent do these tools still lean more towards gimmickry than utility, and what might the next generation of AR and VR solutions provide in terms of added value? Tim Gunn assesses how hotels can best augment their approaches.

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RMG Networks

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### Regional focus

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Lisbon and Porto have experienced unprecedented hotel growth over the past decade. But how much longer can it last? Greg Noone talks to Gustavo Castro, the head of Colliers International's office in Porto, and Jorge Rebelo de Almeida, the managing director of Portuguese hotel group Vila Galé, to find out more.

### Food & beverage

#### 47 Simple genius

Hide was one of the most keenly awaited restaurant openings of the year, and its blend of fine dining with

a relaxed atmosphere is just what star chef Ollie Dabbous intended. However, in order to realise his vision, getting the kitchen design right was a fundamental element. Jim Banks speaks to him and Ed Bircham, an associate member of the Foodservice Consultants Society International, about bringing to life a chef-led vision of simplicity, serenity and style.

#### 51 The case for convergence

Sleep + Eat

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Le Cordon Bleu

### Special report

#### 54 A catalyst for change

Although hotel companies have no problem attracting women, they are failing to provide the necessary support for them to progress to senior positions. Elly Earls meets Women in Hospitality 2020 chair Tea Colaianni; Marriott International's president and managing director for Europe, Amy McPherson; Whitbread CEO Alison Brittain; and IHG's VP for global talent, Louise Byrne, to find out what steps are being put in place to correct the balance.

### Operations

#### 59 Hitting new heights

There was a time when the airport hotel was a straightforward concept: a property focused on short-stay business guests looking for nothing more than the basics. But over the past few years, a number of operators have sought to draw in travellers through selling points beyond mere convenience. What should a 21st-century airport hotel look to achieve? Abi Millar asks David Marr, SVP and global head of full service brands at Hilton, citizenM CMO Robin Chadha and Yotel CEO Hubert Viriot.

#### 63 Cordless flexibility

Alfred Kärcher

### Design

#### 64 All's well that starts well

Wellness architecture is the process of designing buildings that make their inhabitants healthier and happier. Elly Earls meets architects Veronica Schreiber Smith and Julia Monk to find out what this means in a hospitality context, and why wellness needs to be a part of design discussions from day one.

### Guest amenities

#### 68 The beauty of tradition

Cinq Mondes

#### 70 Embracing environmental responsibility

Rising awareness of single-use plastics' environmental impacts has led hotel operators to introduce strategies to outlaw their use across their properties. Grace Allen asks Daniella Foster, Hilton's senior director of corporate responsibility, and Marié Fukudome, Hyatt's director of environmental affairs and corporate responsibility, about the eradication of plastics and sustainability strategy.

#### 75 Sweet smell of success

HD Fragrances

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EHMA delegate and Melia Hotels International area director for Italy Palmiro Noschese is finally getting the chance to establish official certification for hotel managers. He explains how the project is going so far, and his plans to expand certification far beyond Italy.

## International Winners of the Roca Awards to the Hotel Initiative

The **most important hospitality awards in Spain**, a country that stands out for the quality and innovation of its hotel infrastructures.



### Best hotel in China China (Minhang - Shanghai)

**Le Meridien Shanghai, Minhang** is the ideal gateway to discover the perfect combination of ancient and modern Shanghai in an inspiring environment. The overall design aesthetics is discreet and elegant. Its 240 completely new rooms and suites guarantee the ultimate experience in comfort and exclusivity.

### Award to the hotel innovation Portugal (Lisboa)

**Palácio do Governador**, a five-star hotel with 60 rooms, all of them different, in the heart of Lisbon's historic centre. Built in the former house of the governor of the Tower of Belém, beautifully restored on the Roman remains of the 1st to the 5th centuries, this hotel is a palace building, with a reception that was once a chapel, a restaurant with original ceilings and vaults and a modern spa that recalls the ancient thermal traditions of Mediterranean cultures.

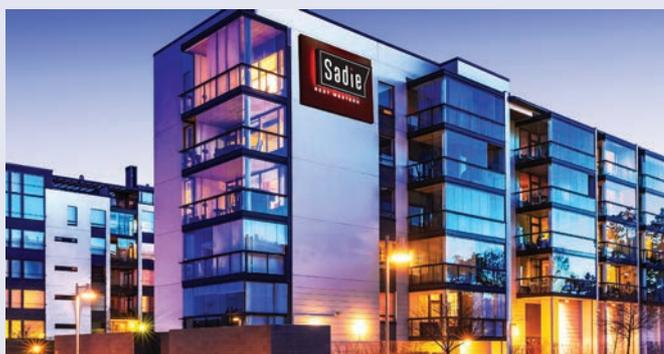


### Award to the hotel innovation Russia (Moscú)

The first member of the Design Hotel™ in Russia, **StandArt Hotel Moscow**, surprises at first sight with its monumental Art Nouveau facade, unexpected modernism and elegant lines. Its 105 rooms and suites have been carefully designed, some of which offer stunning views on Pushkin Square. Guests and locals mingle in the lobby and on the roof terrace, or enjoy the views of the city in the Sever-Yug restaurant.



# News



Sadie Hotel will fit into Best Western's upscale segment.

## BRAND EXTENSION

### Best Western launches new brands

Best Western has announced the creation of two new boutique brands. Sadie Hotel will fit into the upscale segment, and Aiden Hotel into the upper midscale. Both will feature multiuse common

spaces with a cafe or bar, and will make use of technology such as mobile check-in. "Sadie Hotel and Aiden Hotel are chic, sophisticated and unique hotel brands that will reflect the style and pulse of the community they are in – bringing a sense of adventure and fun to guests at each hotel," said David Kong, president and CEO at Best Western Hotels and Resorts.

## DIVERSIFICATION

### New record label for W Hotels

Luxury lifestyle brand W Hotels has announced the launch of a record label, W Records. The label will support emerging artists chosen by the Marriott International-owned W Hotels, record their music at W Sound Suites – recording studios based in W Hotels – and release music online and on vinyl. The first W Records artist, Amber Marks, laid down two tracks in the Sound Suite in W Hollywood and shot a music video at W Montreal. The brand already hosts a music festival, Wake Up Call, with events held in 2018 at W Hollywood, W Barcelona and W Bali.

## RECRUITMENT

### Hyatt announces youth employment programme

Hyatt has launched RiseHY, an initiative to offer career opportunities to young people. The programme incorporates a pledge to employ 10,000 'Opportunity Youth' (those aged between 16 and 24 who are not in education or

employment) worldwide by 2025, and also includes community-based training programmes and the use of artificial intelligence to match up candidates and roles. "Hospitality is one of the few industries where entry-level opportunities often lead to fulfilling, life-long careers that can change the trajectory of someone's life," said Hyatt's chief human resources officer Malaika Myers.

## BRANDING

### Marriott International's residential portfolio grows

Marriott International is set to expand its portfolio of residential properties by 70% in the next four years, under the auspices of brands such as Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis and W. More than 60 projects are planned, with 17 signed in 2017 alone – the company already has 90 residential properties open. "As the number of residential condominium buyers grows globally, Marriott International's well-known brands are ready to welcome them 'home' and deliver a distinct experience," said Tony Capuano, executive vice-

president and global chief development officer at Marriott International.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Changes to ratings in UAE

Abu Dhabi's government has unveiled changes to its hotel classification system. The decision follows consultation with the hospitality sector. The new framework will allow a simplification of infrastructure requirements in guest rooms and physical assets in general, reducing certain costs and making it more profitable for investors to build hotels in the emirate. There will also be increased provisions for sustainability, accessibility and the promotion of Emirati culture, and a distinction made between essential and value-added criteria at the five-star level.

## M&A

### Accor completes SBE deal

AccorHotels has completed its acquisition of a 50% stake in SBE. Through this partnership, the operator aims to expand its offering in the luxury lifestyle hospitality segment

and its footprint in gateway cities across North America. SBE, meanwhile, will now have access to AccorHotels' hospitality platform while remaining an independent lifestyle operator. SBE will continue to be led by its founder and CEO Sam Nazarian, and its management team while keeping its global headquarters in New York.

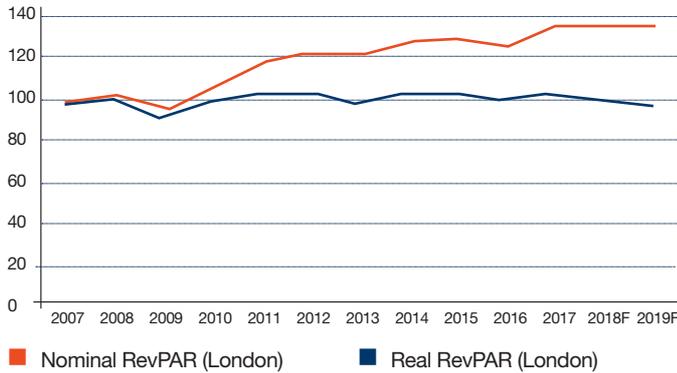
## EXPANSION

### Ten new hotels announced in Africa for Radisson

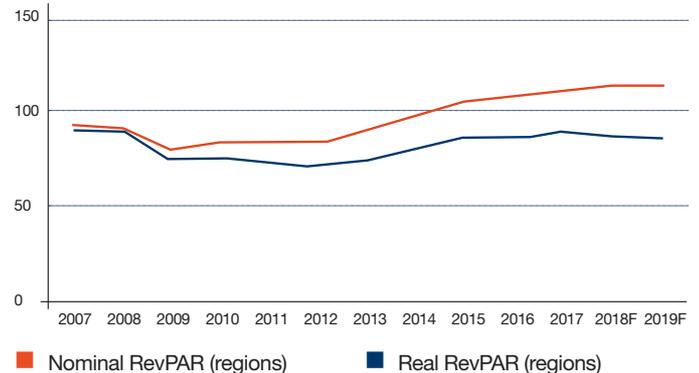
Radisson Hotel Group has announced the addition of ten hotels to its portfolio in Africa, in line with the group's ambition to reach 130 hotels on the continent by 2022. Three will be in Nigeria, including the 92-room Radisson Hotel Lagos Ikeja, the country's first Radisson-branded hotel. Others will include the Radisson Blu Hotel Niamey, Niger and the Radisson RED Hotel Abidjan, Ivory Coast. "We strongly believe in Africa," said Elie Younes, executive vice-president and chief development officer at Radisson. "We're thrilled to add ten new hotels in just nine months."

# Vital statistics

## London RevPAR growth (%)



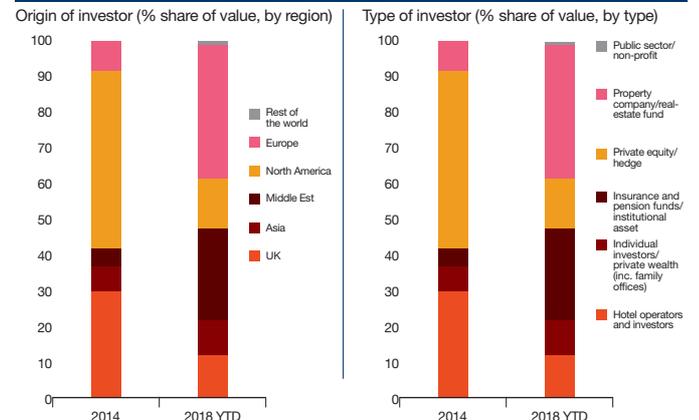
## UK regions RevPAR growth (%)



## UK hotel deal volume (£ billion)



## Where is investor appetite coming from?



Source: PwC's UK hotel forecast 2019

## Movers and shakers



Mario Maxeiner.

IHG has appointed **Mario Maxeiner** (pictured) as managing director Northern Europe. Maxeiner moves from his previous role as IHG's vice-president commercial in Greater China and will be responsible for masterminding sustainable growth in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Benelux, Scandinavia and Poland.

**Ramine Behnam** has been made Minor Hotels' vice-president of development for Europe, Middle East and Africa. He will be and operate out of Dubai. Behnam joins Minor from a role as director of development at Marriott International – Middle East and Africa.

IHG has promoted Eric Viale from his position as area general manager for Portugal to become managing director for Southern Europe, where he will be based in IHG's Paris office.

**Markos Tzamalīs** has been named general manager for the JW Marriott Venice Resort and Spa. The resort, set on the private island Isola delle Rose, featured on the 2018 *Condé Nast Traveler* Gold List and was voted the world's leading honeymoon resort at the World Travel Awards. Tzamalīs joins JW Marriott from a position as general manager at the Sheraton Rhodes Resort.

Four Seasons has made **Jeff Rednour** general manager of the 232-room Four Seasons Hotel Doha. Rednour started his career at

Four Seasons as an intern at the company's Las Vegas corporate office, and before taking up his role in Doha was general manager at the Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui in Thailand.

**Khirstie Gunn Myles** has become Yotel's senior vice-president of design and construction, moving from her previous position as IHG's vice-president of design and engineering in Asia, Middle East and Africa. Based in London, UK, Gunn Myles will oversee the brand's worldwide development, design and construction.

# An era of growth

**S**pain as a whole recorded 37 consecutive months of growth in revenue per available room (RevPAR) between March 2015 and March 2018. There have been marginal RevPAR decreases in recent months, mainly driven down by declines in Barcelona – the country’s largest hotel market (more than 60,000 rooms).

“Investment into Spain’s hotel sector has been largely driven by strong international tourism demand, even during the financial crisis,” says Albert Grau, founding partner of Magma. “Increasing holiday tourism, as well as ‘bleisure’ travel, has set the market up for numerous development opportunities, with several operators currently working to improve their products and services to meet this increasing demand.” According to STR analysts, throughout most key Spanish markets, including Madrid (more than 50,000 rooms), hotel performance remains on a strong upward trend. Hotels in several Spanish markets benefitted from a shifted demand from resort markets, such as Gran Canaria, throughout 2016 and 2017 as they struggled with security concerns.”

## Madrid

In 2017, Madrid experienced the highest RevPAR growth

(+17.4% to €77.34) in Spain, mainly driven by a strong increase in average daily rate (ADR) (+14.2% to €106.79). Madrid is one of Europe’s top ‘short-break’ destinations, and demand has been steadily increasing in several markets in Asia as well as the UAE, particularly in group bookings (bookings of ten or more rooms at once).

“There is tremendous potential for hotels in Madrid to continue driving rate growth,” says Robin Rossmann, managing director for STR. “Compared with other European capitals, Madrid is still operating at a relatively inexpensive average daily rate. As demand continues to grow, and as the market’s landscape continues to change with more higher-end hotel properties coming online, we should see rates start to rise as the market attracts a larger customer base with strong purchasing power. This, in turn, should help the revenue and profitability of the Spanish hotel sector continue to grow.”

Madrid’s corporate demand continues to rise because of a strong international events calendar as well as the relocation of several company headquarters from Barcelona. For the year end of 2018, STR forecasts ADR growth of roughly 3% for Madrid.

According to a recent study by Magma Hospitality Consulting and STR, thanks to the strong performance growth in several markets, Spain’s hotel industry has seen a surge in investment interest despite the political situation in Barcelona.

## Barcelona

Despite ongoing political uncertainty, Barcelona hotels have managed to maintain somewhat steady rates, with more notable declines recently. Following the 1 October referendum, the market’s occupancy levels dropped considerably. In the first half of 2018, occupancy declined by 5.2%, while ADR fell by 1.4% compared with the first half of 2017.

“While it is still too early to make any sort of prediction on what will ultimately happen in the market, Barcelona will likely make a quick recovery when the situation stabilises,” Serrano says. “Prior to last October, Barcelona hotels were consistently seeing monthly double-digit RevPAR growth throughout 2016 and 2017, when the market was still benefitting from strong international demand and shifted tourism demand from destinations in Turkey and North Africa. Barcelona’s recent instability has stunted these previous growth levels, with drops in occupancy driven by decreases in domestic and international demand, mainly from the US. However, if the market can maintain steady rates, we should see growth resumes as consumer confidence returns to Barcelona.” ■



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 Hotel, London - Excelsior Hotel Gallia, Milan - Fairm  
 Milan - Grand Hotel, Tremezzo - Hotel Alfonso XIII  
 Cannes / Project / Hotel Danieli, Venice - Hotel Eden, I  
 - Hotel Selman, Marrakech - Buddha Bar, Montecarlo  
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 / Lighting / Six Senses Duxton Hotel, Singapore - Ch  
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 aux Le Grand Hôtel - La Mamounia Hotel, Marrakech  
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 Hotel, Marrakech - The Vagabond Hotel, Singapore

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# Staying competitive

EHMA president **Hans Koch** looks at the challenges of remaining relevant and competitive in a changing hotel landscape.

**J**ust recently, the new Bürgenstock Hotels & Resort near Luzern, Switzerland, celebrated its grand opening. Invitees from across the world participated, and they enjoyed this new luxury resort and its impressive historical background. There are amazing facilities throughout the site, offering a versatile and appealing range of services and stunning views across central Switzerland. Everybody is talking about it, so please check it out.

But beyond such grand luxury properties, boutique and design hotels are a hot topic on many people's lips. Newcomers are offering and accomplishing surprising and exciting accommodation projects. The media is looking for stories, and highlights those that make use of fresh concepts, working so differently to classic hotels. I am not talking about the fast-growing brands like Airbnb, Motel One, Ibis Styles or Moxy, for example. Rather, I am thinking about new concepts that pop up in unexpected locations, in the centre of historical cities, upcoming districts, on the peripheries of major international metropolitans or close to top tourist spots – hotels that offer original concepts, comfort to all and radiate the flair of a laid-back and straightforward atmosphere.

Such hotels have built a reputation of outstanding and trendy architecture. They appeal to very specific target groups by making fantastic offerings, and are very much appreciated. These establishments are visited by young and elder international travellers, and are scattered across the world.

People who create such new concepts are usually very open to new ideas; they think outside the box, they travel a lot themselves, and they get inspired by

## Hans Koch

Hans Koch is president of EHMA and official delegate for EHMA's Swiss chapter. Throughout his 35-year career, he has worked for hotel operators all around the world, ranging from Hilton International to ITC Hotels. He is also managing director of Hans E Koch Hospitality Solutions.



feedback from other frequent travellers. They often also include individuals whose careers have nothing to do with tourism. CitizenM co-founder Hans Meyer, now developing Zoku in Amsterdam, is a typical example of such an entrepreneur, stretching the definition of a traditional hotel into a place where people truly engage with the world and the people around them.

## The guest of today

Thanks to reviews on online platforms and social media, word spreads quickly when a new hotel with an extraordinary concept opens its doors. Our own guests are also looking for new names and concepts, and they can find them on various booking platforms and websites. They don't just limit their search to our traditional luxury hotels. 'Why not try something different for once?' they ask, and all of a sudden, instead of booking our hotel they go for bold newcomers in the industry.

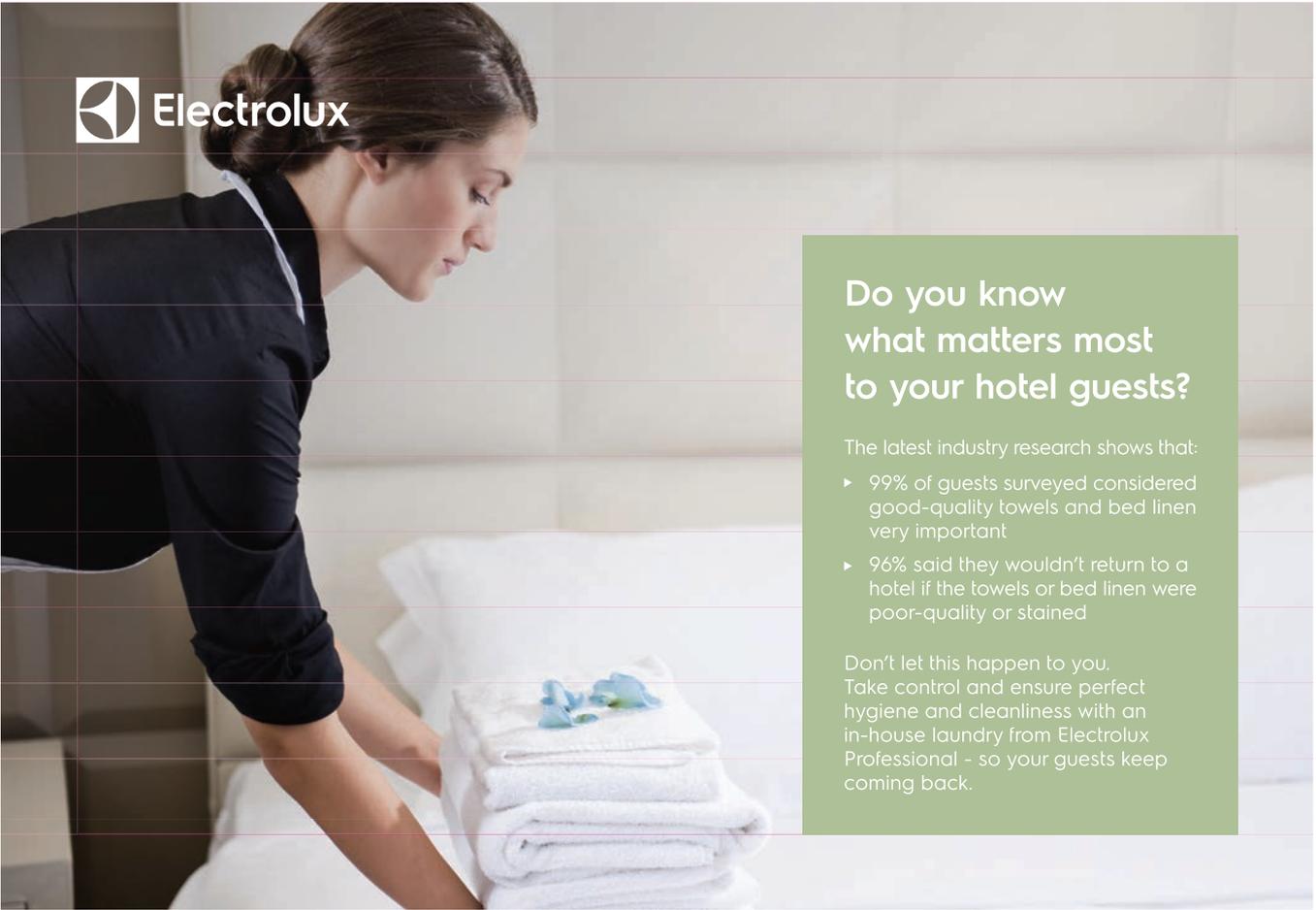
Sure, guests love stepping into the exclusive lobbies of well-known luxury hotels. They love to talk about the top hotels they stayed in on their last visits to Paris, London and New York. Nonetheless, a lot of hotels around the world unfortunately increasingly resemble each other, at least in their appearance and presentation online. Just take a critical look at photos of lobbies, rooms and other facilities at five-star and luxury category hotels on the web. Try to find out what is the real difference between your room and a room of the same category on the other side of the planet.

Should it then amaze us when well-travelled guests with a high purchasing power prefer to try new design hotel and concepts? Where beds are just as comfortable and bathrooms just as modern? Where well-trained employees have a touch of playfulness about them? And where service is easy and straightforward, yet flawless?

The hotel industry is, and will remain, a fascination for years to come. Welcoming guests, making them feel comfortable and surprising them with some 'wow' experiences is our top priority. Usually people – whether as guests or investors, management, chefs, concierges or service employees – love to be on stage at hotels. The credo of our luxury hotel business must therefore be to relearn the art of enchanting and surprising guests. This is the only way to give our guests the experience of true care and friendship, at a level just as good as, or even better than, the competition. This is the challenge these innovative concepts pose us.

The conclusion is to reinvent luxury. What does luxury mean for today's travellers, and what are the expected developments for the future? The current trends – researchers have been preaching for a few years – are real care, authenticity, originality, or simply 'less is more'.

Therefore, the theme of our upcoming EHMA Annual General Meeting in Paris in February 2019 will be 'Welcome to the Future', focusing on what is required to stay competitive in a more aggressive and disruptive business environment. ■



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Kit Kemp takes the lead on all Firmdale interiors.



# A different take

As the founders and leaders of Firmdale Hotels, **Kit and Tim Kemp** are among the industry's most influential boutique hoteliers. Phin Foster hears them speak about the importance of maintaining their own spheres of control, taking a personalised approach to hotel development and why it sometimes pays to do things a little differently.

**O**perators like to extol the virtues of uniqueness, reinvention and identity ad nauseam, but, when one looks beyond all the talk of lifestyle-led new concepts, affordable luxury and total connectivity, today's hotel market can appear to be a

somewhat homogenous, monotonous landscape. As an increasing number of brands compete for a decreasing amount of space, genuine markers of difference stand out like never before.

Counter-intuitiveness is rarely an intentional building block for a business

model, but, accidental or not, in an increasingly beige environment, it can quickly become a wonderful selling point. Firmdale Hotels design director Kit Kemp reveals she is "scared of beige", and, having founded the hotel group with her husband Tim in 1985, the couple have witnessed the

industry around them change to such an extent since that their unwillingness to bow to the prevailing winds seems almost wilfully, joyously reactionary.

In an age of private equity investment and asset-light operations, they are owner-operators of a growing portfolio. During a period dominated by conversions and rebrands, they built full-service, luxury hotels in the heart of two of global hospitality's capital cities from the ground up. Amid a dominant emphasis on scale and scalability, the Kemps have forged a brand defined by the individuality of the properties that sit within its portfolio.

Said portfolio now numbers ten operating hotels – eight in London and two in New York – but the Kemps' influence transcends figures. In the playful, vibrant, colourful feel evident within the service and design culture of each Firmdale property, one can see the template that any number of multinational behemoths are currently trying to ape through the ongoing launches of new boutique, lifestyle brands. One can make a case for the couple being the most influential boutique hoteliers working in the industry today.

Acknowledgement of such significance came in the form of the Hall of Fame Award at this year's Hotel Investment Conference Europe. It seems apt that they should jointly receive the accolade; they lead separate, but essential components of the business and, unlike so often when hearing from business partners, in conversation one senses no indication of there being an ultimate leader. This feels very much like a partnership of equals. Is there a boss?

"It's somewhere in the middle," Tim answers, demurely.

Kit laughs. "We do work somewhat autonomously," she explains. "We have our own buildings, and that gives us plenty of space, but we're a bit like two old sumo wrestlers; we know when to circle each other and when to go in for the kill."

### It works

Tim serves as chairman – "the money man", in his wife's words – while Kit is responsible for the look and feel of the hotels, though neither works in a vacuum. "I think the secret is to very much have our spheres of control, though there is



Kit and Tim Kemp of Firmdale Hotels.

also clearly a lot of collaboration," he explains. "You don't want to be treading on each other's toes."

And they agree on everything? "Pretty much, most of the time," he says, smiling.

One area on which they clearly speak as one voice surrounds the founding principles of good hospitality and the ingredients that have made Firmdale such a success. Here at Hot.E, the couple stand out amidst the formal business attire and aggressive networking of a city centre investment forum, and it is a difference that goes beyond mere aesthetics.

"I've been listening to everyone else this morning," Tim begins, indicating towards the conference going on around us. "So much of the focus is on the top, levels of finance and so forth, but we actually start at the bottom. The guest comes first; what do they want? One of the easiest ways of doing that is remembering that you're a guest yourself: 'What do I like?' You hope if you like it others will too, that people are looking for similar quality, levels of service, value for money and all the rest of it. In the end, it really is that simple."

Seeing everything through the eyes of the guest also dictates much of Kit's work, in terms of interiors and a more general sense of what a hotel should be. "Staying in a hotel is a luxury, an adventure," she explains. "You mustn't forget about all those interlinking areas, how to draw the eye from one area to another. I feel it's a success if guests who are not interested at all in their surroundings suddenly want to know more about things.

"People are so sophisticated now; they understand about good art, they

understand design. You're playing up to them all the time and that means we too need to be learning continuously. We spend a lot of time travelling, studying other hotels, always buying, discovering art and artists. Staying in hotels is work of a sort, I suppose, though it's good when it doesn't feel as such."

### Brand awareness

Tim and Kit both agree that Firmdale is a brand, though not in the sense that it is something that could be scaled up, franchised and rolled out. They believe the name ultimately stands for quality, even if the way that quality is articulated, aesthetically at least, is to a large extent site specific.

"All our hotels are quite different and the whole point is that if you come and stay you won't be entirely aware that it is a brand because that building should speak for itself," Kit says. "That's what we aim to do. And it's not just about staying in the hotel itself; we also do art walks, we get authors in to talk about their books. So many guests seek engagement; they want to not only have leisure time, but also to learn."

Like a number of lifestyle operators, however, Firmdale faces the challenge of maintaining this sense of personalisation and intimacy as the portfolio grows. Work has just started on the next New York site, near the city's financial district – "It could be a world-beater," according to Tim – and the chairman acknowledges that he is keen to find locations in Paris and Lisbon. Could there be a tipping point where Firmdale gets to such a size that



The bar at Ham Yard Hotel, London, showcases the brand's unique style.

development and management models need to be overhauled?

"I don't think so," he responds. "It will never be InterContinental Hotels or anything like that. We don't do many transactions; it's one at a time, so they're bespoke and not cookie cut. But we're in competition with a lot of other great brands in this space and we're at the bottom of the list in terms of finance, so we have to take what's left over. It's therefore more difficult to find good sites, but we manage."

That prompts another question about expenditure and control. A number of Firmdale's properties have been new-build projects. All have been self-financed and the temptation to take outside investment must be significant. One wonders whether the pair might be convinced to enter into such an arrangement should it promise to gain them a foothold in a competitive gateway city such as Paris.

"It could change," Tim acknowledges. "I must say, it's a challenge coming up with the money. Then, on the other hand, the time difference between starting and finishing a project, as the building progresses, people lose interest or things change. It's not just you anymore. You have more control this way."

Kit interjects, "I always say to Tim, I wish he would buy an architectural gem, but the problem with gems is that they're so expensive. That means we

have to make some of our own instead: New York, Ham Yard, Soho. I guess that's how we get them. The funny thing is, very often, I'm showing somebody around and they'll ask, 'Did you have to do much here?' I take that as a compliment because there wasn't anything here before."

### Ape escape

The overriding factor in why these new properties feel so established and lived in so quickly is the design director's unique style. Synonymous with colourful textiles and a carefully curated maximalist approach to interior furnishings across a variety of scales, Firmdale properties feel simultaneously grown-up and playful. It is also an incredibly difficult approach to ape, something a number of larger, cookie-cutter brands have found to their cost.

"You look at every hotel, every space, individually and it's always a panic at the beginning; you get butterflies in your stomach, seeing something for the first time, realising the scale of the task," she explains. "But you must have that belief in yourself, stick to your guns. In so many areas, people will tell you that's no good, it will never work, forget it. My message is always, come back when I've finished."

This approach has been so successful that Kit has become a brand in herself, launching an array of products, from

wallpaper to patchwork toys, and collaborating with classic, British brands, including Wedgwood and Wilton Carpets. "I adore fabrics, beautifully made crafts," she says. "These are things we've always championed. We love to discover and commission very good artists and craftsmen, so much so that we soon can't afford to buy their work because they become quite famous themselves."

Such is her passion, one wonders whether Tim is allowed any input whatsoever when it comes to matters of design. "I have significant input and I'm very grateful for it," he replies. "That's not to imply that everything I say is taken notice of, but it seems to work out alright."

### Inside and out

But when discussing the boutique sector, there is always the danger of failing to see beyond aesthetics. While Kit's interiors are certainly a defining feature of the brand, within the industry at least, Firmdale has become almost as celebrated for being an employer of choice across all levels of the business. Staff retention is incredibly high, with a quarter of employees boasting more than five years' service, and success in this sphere clearly provides the couple with enormous pride.

"It starts with a smile, if you can possibly produce one in this day and age," Tim says of trying to be the best employer he can be. "You offer lots of training, the promise of promotion, an understanding of other people's needs and requirements – after all, we all began at the bottom somewhere. A sharp memory therefore helps; empathy; [and] it should be fun to start a new job, to be appreciated. I've never been very good at remembering names. We employ around 1,800 people and I used to know everyone and then, when they left, it was incredibly emotionally disturbing. Now I think of everyone as 'darling', really."

It sounds more natural coming from Tim's mouth than that of most hotel group chairmen, you'd have to imagine. Then again, being defined by their differences has served the Kemps pretty well thus far. ■

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# Bring it to fruition

A new brand identity, corporate restructuring and marked changes in developmental strategy all mean that **Elie Younes**, EVP and CDO of Radisson Hotel Group, is an incredibly busy man. Abi Millar meets the hotel exec to talk about a shift of focus back onto Europe, a renewed willingness to consider leases, what he is looking for in new development partners, and the importance of brand purity.

**I**n March 2018, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group changed its name to Radisson Hotel Group with a view to leveraging the "wide awareness of the Radisson brand name globally". The new name, which remained under wraps until February, came as part of a comprehensive rebrand, as the company embarked on a new five-year operating plan.

The rebrand answers a number of longstanding questions surrounding where the group might be headed. The company has said it will pursue



a strategy of organic growth, reinvest in its brands, and invest significantly in its online presence. Meanwhile, at least 10% of the worst-performing Radisson hotels in the US will be asked to leave the system.

Elie Younes, executive vice-president and chief development officer, explains how the change in strategy has been well received by the company's development partners. "The proof is in the pudding – we have already seen a great result in Europe, with deals now in Vienna, Oslo, Poland, Rome, Venice, Madrid, Liverpool, Prague and many more to come," he says.

"In the first six months of the rebrand, we signed and converted ten Radisson Collection hotels, three Radisson RED and four Radisson, so there's a lot of appetite in the market and responsiveness towards the new brand architecture."

### Balancing risk

Tasked with leading the company's expansion across the EMEA region, Younes has had a remarkably busy few months. He describes his role as having become "a bit more exciting, a bit more challenging and certainly more fun".

"We are already very strong in Europe, but we want to grow our share of the market here," he says. "Radisson Blu is the largest upper upscale brand in Europe, so we want to leverage and exploit that to grow our other brands. This has necessitated some adjustments for our organisation, so we have opened new development offices across Europe to enable the expansion."

He adds that the company has increased its risk tolerance slightly, moving away from its former strategy of pursuing risk-free business.

"This is where the term 'asset right' comes from – it means we take a little bit more risk to secure more income," he says. "It means the right partner, the right location and the right risk-return profile, so basically the right balance of risk that can slightly increase your financial exposure but will optimise your return on investment and bottom line."



Prizeotel, Hamburg-St Pauli: Younes has big plans for growing the brand internationally.

At the time of the rebranding, Radisson Hotel Group outlined plans to become 'one of the top three hotel companies in the world'. Currently, as the 11th largest operator in the world, the company clearly has some way to go before it makes such a jump in scale. However, Younes points out that this statement was not just meant to be taken literally.

"This is more an attitude that shapes our behaviour," he says. "We need to behave in such a way that, whenever an investor thinks of a hotel company, we are one of the top three that comes to mind. If you look at it clinically and say it means top three in terms of size, of course the aim will be impossible to achieve as it would need a lot of M&A, and right now our focus is on organic growth."

"But with the recent potential acquisition of our group by Jin Jiang, the scale ambition to become a top three player will also be achieved," he adds, without any further comments on the subject.

The goal, then, is to improve brand recognition across all its markets and become a name on a par with Hilton or Marriott. All the brands, he asserts, will be relevant and clear to the customer. And to him, customer means the guest and the owner. Currently, there are eight brands under the Radisson

umbrella, ranging from full-service luxury to economy-select service. These are the Radisson Collection (formerly the Quorvus Collection), Radisson Blu, Park Plaza, Park Inn by Radisson, Country Inn & Suites by Radisson, Radisson RED, prizeotel, and of course the core Radisson brand itself. Altogether, the company has more than 1,400 hotels in operation or under development.

### Pursuing organic growth

"We have distinct brands that are relevant to the owners and the guests – that's why we've chosen so far not to have 30 or 40 brands like some of our colleagues in the industry. It becomes confusing to the guest and the owner," says Younes. "In Europe, we are focusing on six brands with distinct positioning: Radisson, Radisson Collection, Radisson Blu, Radisson RED, Park Inn by Radisson, and prizeotel. Each brand has its own target in our expansion plan."

To take prizeotel as an example, this is a modern economy brand with a high-design concept and a focus on technology. It has ten hotels in operation or under development, and aims to grow across Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Benelux countries. Recently, the expansion plans have also shifted to the UK.

Radisson Blu is seeking to maintain its position as Europe's leading upper upscale brand. It is also looking to



The Radisson Blu Hotel, Bordeaux: Radisson Hotel Group has plans to increase its portfolio from 188,000 to 255,000 rooms worldwide by 2022.

expand its presence across Africa, where it has become the continent's fastestgrowing hotel brand.

While Radisson Hotel Group has ambitious growth plans – it wants to increase its global portfolio from 188,000 to 255,000 rooms by 2022 – this will mostly come down to honing what's already there. As Younes explains, the company wants to focus solely on its existing brands for the time being.

"We are mainly looking at organic growth rather than consolidation, and it's unlikely that we'll launch new brands in the immediate future," he says. "Having said that, we are expanding our existing brands in some alternative lodging opportunities, such as serviced apartments."

He adds that, while the company has shifted some of its focus back to Europe, it does want to accelerate its growth in emerging markets – not least Africa, the Middle East and some parts of Eastern Europe.

### The ideal partner

Younes describes Radisson Hotel Group's business model as "wide, dynamic and versatile". When you are working across eight brands and multiple markets, no single strategy will suffice. Rather, it is important to

build flexibility and creativity into the way deals are structured.

For this reason, the company will continue to adopt different types of franchising agreements and management contracts, along with hybrid contracts between the two. There is also a renewed willingness to consider leases, following increased demands from institutional investors. In March, the company announced it would take on up to €400 million of lease risk over the next five years as it looks to expand in Europe (Younes says 30–40 European cities are being targeted in particular).

"All our transactions are responsive to the market realities in a way that limits our risk within the framework that we set," he says. "I am a big fan of simplification, but it takes a lot of expertise to engineer a transaction that has the optimal risk/return balance that is simple, creative and fit to all stakeholders."

Younes is loath to describe what the 'right' partner looks like to Radisson Hotel Group, claiming that this is like trying to describe your ideal romantic match – you will not know what they look like until you meet them. However, there are certain key traits common to all the company's development partners,

whether they are in Moscow or Lagos, Hong Kong or Barcelona.

"It's someone we can do business with for a long time, during the good times and the bad times," he says. "We look for responsible, balanced and transparent relationships, and we try to find partners who fit into that simple way of doing business. Further, we prefer someone who's focused on the long term to a short-term player."

### Brand purity is key

Of course, the other question worth asking is why, in an ever more competitive global marketplace, should investors pick Radisson Hotel Group? For Younes, it boils down to one thing – behaviour.

"We are approachable, pragmatic, responsive, humble and results-driven," he says. "This is what makes us different from other colleagues in the industry; it's as simple as that. And we also enjoy having a bit of fun in what we do."

While a shake-up of this nature is not without its challenges, this is an exciting time for Radisson Hotel Group. The next few years should spell hard work and rewards, as the company endeavors to bring its ambitious plans to fruition. ■



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# Light up hotels

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**S**imon, which is present in 90 countries worldwide, offers the possibility of creating spaces and atmospheres that can be touched, seen, heard and felt. The company's product portfolio includes a collection of mechanisms, connectivity for workplaces, indoor and outdoor lighting, control systems, security and electric vehicle charging.

## Light up emotions

Dressing up for June's DecorAcción show in Madrid, the ME Reina Victoria Hotel used Simon's light and sound settings to surprise the tourists and locals with the creation of projection mapping on its facade. Unlike other shows, people who walked through the Plaza de Santa Ana could interact with the projection by using the mechanisms of Simon – Detail 82 and Simon 100 – which were located in a number of retro-illuminated totems in the centre of the urban square. This showed that Simon's mechanisms go beyond just turning the light on and off to create emotions and connectivity.

## Controlling the light

In Spain, the Madrid Marriott Auditorium hotel – the largest hotel in Europe – uses the Scena lighting control system in its facilities. Simon's lighting control system, which is designed to transform spaces into dynamic and multifunctional environments, feature in 56 event halls, plus the common areas and the auditorium of the hotel. In the auditorium, the Scena system controls more than 300 luminaires from a single point, either adjusting the overall lighting or a single luminaire.

The Simon Scena lighting control system allows clients to adjust the colour and brightness settings to produce static or dynamic lighting designs, which are tailored to the requirements of customers. Users can easily and intuitively programme, enable and disable various settings with the Simon Sense keypads, which are located in each room.

The Simon Scena app – which is built for iOS and Android – puts the power of light control in hotel staff or guests' hands. Any changes made in this easy-to-use app are immediately and accurately rendered in real-time lighting conditions. At the Madrid Marriott Auditorium hotel, Simon Scena is used in the reception, bar and restaurant, and the common areas to adjust the lighting to synchronise with a natural light cycle to be brighter during the day and softer at night.

## Lighting for perfect atmospheres

In the convention halls, Simon Scena makes colour and brightness adjustments that match brand-identity colours



ME Reina Victoria hotel surprised tourists and locals with an interactive projection mapping on its facade.

at corporate events, among other applications. Although Scena is a universal system, which is compatible with other types of luminaire, Madrid Marriott uses Simon downlights with RGB strips and built-in DALI technology to allow easy installation and individual control of luminaires, ensuring excellent brightness and lighting throughout the space.

Downlights 705.20 and 705.22 from SimonLed are ideal for creating cosy atmospheres, making any room in the building feel warmer. Consisting of a discreetly embedded focus, Downlight 705.20 gives a more accentuated light in certain details. This feature, along with the substantial reduction in energy consumption and the three colour temperatures available, enables customers to create all kinds of atmospheres.

Highlighting products that are displayed on shelves is a strategy integral to any food and beverage business. In bars and restaurants, it is very common to apply more focal lighting to bar counters so the light enhances the attractiveness of the drinks. The strip of Simon LedStrip 811's flat profile and four diodes fulfils this function to provide the desired visibility.

With such a low heat emission, it is also very flexible in creating backlight effects on materials that are more sensitive to high temperatures. ■

### Further information

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With the growing demand for tourism that caters equally to business and leisure, **Meliá Hotels International**, with its vast experience and range of hotel brands, offers everything the modern traveller could want.

**M**eliá Hotels International is one of the 20 largest hotel companies in the world; the leading hotel company in Spain, where it was founded 63 years ago; and the third-largest European hotel chain.

With almost 100,000 rooms in 380 hotels across more than 40 countries, Meliá is a mid-sized global player with a dominant position in the southern Mediterranean and the most popular Caribbean destinations, as well as the leading hotel operator in Cuba, with 38 hotels.

One of the attributes that makes Meliá Hotels International unique within the industry is that it's the only company in the international 'top 20' of hotel chains that began as a resort or leisure hotel group. Born on the beaches of the beautiful island of Mallorca, its origins lie in the resort hotel industry, and it has now evolved into a global company with a balanced portfolio of urban and leisure hotels: 59% of the company's rooms are in leisure hotels and 41% are in city hotels.

This balanced distribution of rooms – with not only a powerful resort component but also a strong brand presence in major cities – and its impeccable track record as a hotel management company, led Meliá to change its corporate slogan in 2018 to better define the way the company is today: 'Leisure at heart, business in mind'.

Thanks to the excellence and rigour of its management, Meliá is an expert in providing the best leisure and vacation experiences for guests and in creating value for its shareholders, investors and hotel owners.

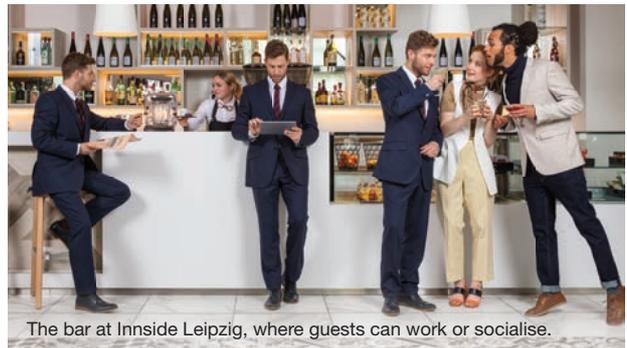
## The rise of 'bleisure' tourism

Looking at the data, the fact that people are prioritising a healthier work-life balance means that a growing number of business travellers are seeking personal fulfilment through leisure experiences during their business trips. Young professionals are also increasingly able to work anywhere, in any context. Nearly three quarters of millennials rate leisure time while on business trips as important, and baby boomers and Generation X consumers say that authentic local culture is the most important aspect of their travel-purchase decisions.

The answer to this trend is 'bleisure' (business and leisure) hotels, which are adapted to business travellers who want to enjoy leisure experiences during their trip, and get to know the location and its culture. The experience and international leadership of Meliá in leisure hotels enables it to attract an increasingly leisure-inspired urban market, known as the bleisure segment. The company's outstanding bleisure brand, Ininside by Meliá, brings together these qualities and is growing strongly thanks to its versatility and excellent response to the needs of bleisure travellers.



Inside Palma Bosque is part of Meliá's innovative bleisure brand.



The bar at Ininside Leipzig, where guests can work or socialise.

In line with the strength of Meliá in the leisure and bleisure segments, the company has deployed a consistent brand strategy, supporting its growth strategy and enhancing its leadership in leisure hotels while consolidating its positioning in major cities with bleisure hotels. Meliá has built a strong collection of brands with a clear focus on upmarket hotels targeted to diverse profiles, but not competing in the economy-hotel segment. Each of the brands that constitute the company's portfolio is aimed at clearly defined psychographic profiles, and they complement each other in order to respond to the needs of today's diverse travellers.

ME by Meliá is a collection of hotels where design, exclusive attention and lifestyle combine to offer a unique experience. Gran Meliá is the contemporary expression of Spanish luxury. Paradisus resorts transport guests to a holiday setting that strikes a balance between a sensation of luxury and an atmosphere of paradise. Meliá Hotels and Resorts stands out for its passion for service and for the personalised attention it provides to guests. Ininside by Meliá offers innovative services, impressive spaces, unexpected surprises and great value for money. Finally, Sol hotels reinterpret the modern holiday experience to address the changing expectations of today's leisure travellers. ■

### Further information

Meliá Hotels International  
www.melia.com



# Big issues

Delegates recently convened in London for the latest **Hotel Investment Conference Europe**. Subjects for discussion included new growth opportunities, shifting investor profiles and the need for developers and hoteliers to think more creatively. Inevitably, however, one topic loomed above all others. *Hotel Management International* reports.

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**H**otel conferences usually follow a pretty predictable format. First, a presentation from an analyst providing a generally optimistic message about industry performance, tinged with an obligatory note of caution. Then a panel

populated by investors and financial institutions that deals heavily in percentage points and ROIs, followed by a roundtable of operational leaders liberally using terms like 'experiential' and 'design-led'. Finally, there is an intimate 'fireside chat' with an industry leader that will, at some point in the conversation, turn to the subject of managing a 'work-life balance'.

It has the makings of a comprehensive, if niche, new form of bingo, and pointing out these features is by no means intended as a criticism; the format generally works. For the past couple of years, however, for those of us who attend enough of these events to complete our bingo cards many times over, another B-word has threatened to make the whole undertaking a lot less fun. Since the June 2016 vote by the UK to exit the EU, it's rare to witness any conversation take place that doesn't soon turn to Brexit.

This year's Hotel Investment Conference Europe (Hot.E), held in late September at London's Hilton Bankside, was the third iteration of the event since the referendum



result, and the final instalment prior to the scheduled March 2019 denouement. Having attended all three conferences, it is noticeable that, while Brexit continues to dominate the conversation – or at least loom menacingly behind all else discussed – delegates are no nearer to reaching any kind of consensus or certainty when it comes to diagnosing what it all means. The UK, particularly London, has continued to perform robustly throughout this period, in many cases posting record occupancies, but the extent to which the Brexit deal (or lack of one) might undermine such success divides opinion.

### Front and centre

There was no escaping the subject during a panel discussion entitled 'Opportunities in the UK', featuring Peter Anscomb of Edwardian Hotels, IHG's Jon Colley, Neeraj Handa of Cairn Group and PwC's Samantha Ward. Growth is slowing, the panellists agreed, but this was more down to new supply than anything else. Yields are also down, and we are witnessing a change in the investor mix.

"We're seeing longer-term capital, more of an influx from the Middle East – Israel, interestingly – and more of an interest from Europe," Ward observed. "Less from US, with traditional private equity funds struggling to see the level of return short term that was previously available, and also a fall in the level of UK buyers."

Developers and hoteliers were having to be more creative in the way deals were structured and properties run, all agreed, but opportunities were still there for those willing to show patience and, in Anscomb's words, "think outside the box". In terms of operations, one major area of uncertainty remained: staffing, with the effects of a domestic talent shortage compounded by a lack of clarity over Brexit, and access to skilled and unskilled foreign workers.

"We're waiting for a sensible solution; which might sound a little like putting your head in the sand, but as an industry and a country we have to see where the employees are likely to come from," said Colley. "The idea is to get people interested in hospitality and then develop them through any cycle."



Left to right: Moderator Justin Salkeld of Baker McKenzie with Edwardian Hotels' Peter Anscomb, IHG's Jon Colley and Cairn Group's Neeraj Handa at the 'Opportunities in the UK' panel.



Anscomb stressed the importance of investing in existing talent in the face of staffing uncertainty.

Whatever happens in March, Anscomb insisted that it had never been more important to invest in one's existing talent. "Build the employees you have," he said. "Value staff. Our staff facilities should not be different than public facilities, and keep ahead of legal requirements. Lower-entry jobs are the hardest ones to fill. We need to look at incentives and training."

Anscomb also spoke at length about an intriguing project from Edwardian, currently under way in Leicester Square. The £300-million, 350-room development will include bars and restaurants, two Odeon cinemas, a banqueting suite and leisure facilities, all housed in six levels below ground – "London's deepest hotel basement". Special digging equipment has had to be imported into the UK. "When you find the right opportunity,

especially in London, the argument for investment remains incredibly strong," Anscomb commented.

### Award winners

Intelligent investment was celebrated elsewhere through the announcement of this year's Hot.E Deal of the Year Award winners. These came in the form of Merger & Acquisition/Portfolio of the Year and Single Asset Transaction of the Year, awarded to the Principal Hotel Company portfolio sale to Covivio by Starwood Capital Group, and the €148-million sale of Schiphol Real Estate's Hilton Amsterdam Airport Schiphol to Host Hotels & Resorts' European joint venture respectively.

Awards were followed by the aforementioned, obligatory fireside chat, though this year's subject marked

something of a departure from the typical chief executive. There was a

industry from a more detached vantage point.

“ If Brexit isn't causing more of a ripple in the UK hotel investment market, it certainly should be. ”

– Kenneth Hatton

time when Richard Solomons had been one of the most powerful individuals in global hospitality, but, having stepped down as CEO of InterContinental Hotels Group last summer, he is now able to take a look at the state of the

The conversation with Geller Capital Partners chairman Laurence Geller delved into Solomons' feelings on the sector as a whole, but also took time to reflect upon his quarter century of service at IHG. Looking back, did he

have any regrets? “I don't think it's any secret that we took a long, hard look at Starwood,” he acknowledged. “But you cannot build a strategy that's dependent upon getting exactly what you want. I never believed in being big for the sake of being big. I wouldn't call it a regret.”

Solomons did admit that there were times he wished he'd acted with more decisiveness at an earlier stage in proceedings. “If you are sure about something, get on with it, but I might have taken too long over some things, mainly in the people area,” he explained. “I might have got the right people in earlier, perhaps.”

#### Now in session

Speed and clarity of purpose were themes carried into the conference's final session: 'View from the top: development insight'. Moderator Andreas Scriven of Deloitte was joined on stage by Hyatt Hotels Corporation global head of development Jim Chu and Kenneth Hatton, SVP for global development at Belmond. The conversation was marked by the different interpretations of development opportunity for multi and single-brand operators, though both agreed that, in such a brand-saturated landscape, clear, discernible identity was vital.

“It is about discipline for us at the top end of the tiers we compete in,” Chu said. “This is a strategy that allows us to differentiate ourselves in each segment and allows our customers to find one of our products in the cities they are travelling to. Our customers understand it, and also, importantly, our owners understand it too.”

“Historically, we're a collection of hotels, but since the creation of the Belmond brand, it has allowed us to bring out the commonalities; not so much the brand standards,” Hatton said, going on to explain that each property must still have its own unique identity. “Then we ask, 'how can we find other places that are that special?' We must be comfortable in saying no, so we spend a lot of time filtering through to find something that is special.”

In terms of development, Chu was particularly bullish about Europe, citing record performance levels and the still significant proportion of unbranded

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Andreas Scriven of Deloitte in discussion with Jim Chu, Hyatt Hotels Corporation global head of development, and Kenneth Hatton, SVP for global development at Belmond.

stock. “Despite the things that raise an eyebrow, Europe has good performance metrics,” he said. “Yes, it’s expensive to get deals done, but there is a lot of interest. Maybe it is time that is the issue, to get things done in an expeditious, efficient time span.”

Hatton was a little more measured, insisting that, even on the continent, one needed to take things on a market-by-market basis. “Each is so specific as to why development will grow or not grow,” he said. “There are certain markets that are absolutely critical for us, where we simply

should be. To take one example, it’s obvious that there’s a need for high-quality product coming into Rome, but they just can’t get out of their way to allow developers to get on with it. [Four Seasons founder] Issy Sharp had a great line: ‘After ten years negotiating, I understood why Rome wasn’t built in a day.’”

But, inevitably, all roads now lead to Brexit. On this topic, Hatton was less circumspect than a number of his predecessors on stage. “My feeling is that, among a lot of people in our industry, when it comes to UK hotel investment there’s this sense of ‘it will be alright on the night’,” he lamented. “I don’t really see where that confidence is coming from. If Brexit isn’t causing more of a ripple in the UK hotel investment market, it certainly should be. We see a lot of non-European capital still coming in, but either they share that feeling, or they know something we don’t.”

The truth is that we still know very little. It will be interesting to see how much more informed we are when delegates reconvene in London in 12 months’ time. ■

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# The age of consent

The European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance deadline has passed, requiring every hotel in the world to have guidelines in place that protect EU residents' personally identifiable information against security breaches. Six months down the line, however, reports are coming through of some operators managing the scale of these demands better than others. **Robert Holland**, chief technology adviser to the British Hospitality Association, and GDPR expert **Nick Crawford** discuss the challenges with Patrick Kingsland.



# GDPR

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

**F**ailure to comply with GDPR requirements is a major security risk. Anecdotal evidence of companies, inundated with correspondence about their use of personal information, having difficulty keeping up with the volume of requests, has been seen

throughout the industry. In July, the world's largest operator, Marriott International, was forced to request extensions to the one-month response period.

The commitment to getting GDPR right is understandable. 2017 saw two high-profile data breaches come to light within

the international hospitality sector. The most notable concerned Hilton, which was slapped with a \$700,000 fine in November for two incidents dating back to 2015, in which the company was hacked and lost the credit card details of 350,000 customers.

Hyatt, too, reported that it had suffered a second security breach in the space of a year regarding payment card information.

Barring a couple of headlines in the trade press, the revelations over Hilton and Hyatt were hardly earth-shattering. The breaches appear to have done little to damage financial performance either, with both groups reporting year-on-year increases in RevPAR during the fourth quarter.

Yet, following the implementation of GDPR in May, the implications have become significantly more serious should operators fall victim to data violation. The legislation marks the most significant overhaul of European privacy laws since the bloc was first established, requiring any company anywhere in the world in possession of data belonging to EU citizens to exercise the utmost transparency in how it collects, stores and processes it. GDPR also includes a 'right to be forgotten' subclause, in which consumers can ask for copies of their data to be deleted, if they so wish.

"GDPR is, in essence, ensuring that we only retain data that is essential to providing our services, and that we are fully aware about how we are collecting and storing this data," says Robert Holland, chief technology adviser to the British Hospitality Association.

"While hotels have had to comply with payment-card industry data security standards [PCI DSS] for some time now, tokenisation is likely to become a necessary standard, ensuring that credit card details are not stored in a way that their data may be breached."

Data, so long viewed as a great opportunity for hoteliers, is now also looked upon as a threat.

"We have long held extensive profiles on guests who have visited our hotels or eaten in our restaurants," explains Holland. "Some of this is relevant to ensuring that the guest has an enjoyable stay, such as knowing which pillow they prefer, if they have a particular room preference or if they have made a previous complaint.

"But we now need to decide whether it is important that we record, say, the name of their pet and whether this is really necessary to deliver our service standards."

The penalties for failing to comply with GDPR are unprecedented. Operators



Despite the harsh penalties in place for those who fail to comply with GDPR, many hoteliers remain confused over how best to adhere to the new legislation.

risk being fined up to 4% of their annual turnover for any reported data breaches. Financial punishment aside, Holland suggests that the implications of GDPR from a brand perspective could be even more damaging.

"The reputational damage that may ensue after a breach could mean that your guests no longer wish to share their details with your hotel – not such a problem not knowing about those pillows, but definitely a problem if you do not have the credit card details in order to charge a deposit or no-show fee."

### Are you ready?

But how prepared are operators when it comes to getting their houses in order ahead of GDPR? According to Holland, "Hoteliers are still confused with regard to what is consent." For Nick Crawford, who served as head of eCRM at Travelodge during the transition period into GDPR, some operators are paying more heed to the legislation than others.

"It's pretty much divided into three camps," he explains. "You've got your businesses that have been working on GDPR for a while, and see it as an opportunity to run some hygiene checks and internal process improvement.

"Then there are those that know that they need to do something, but it feels like a bit of a mountain to climb. Many of them only started looking at GDPR after Christmas, in terms of their communications. In the third camp are

those that are not really worried about it at all and see it as all a bit Y2K."

A large part of Crawford's remit at Travelodge was helping the group prepare for the May deadline. Great efforts were made to ensure compliance, he says, with the group adopting a business division-based approach.

"We divided the workload into departments – meaning you've got different stewards for marketing, customer service, sales, IT and law," he explains. "Each of those areas had an owner, and part of their role was actually helping with the audit and process tracking.

"So by listing all of those processes in terms of priority, you can start to understand how well those processes are working or not, and how compliant they are. We also asked lots of questions. What's the legal basis on which we will be operating GDPR? Is it consent? Is it a legitimate business interest? Is it contractual?"

### In or out

What should be clarified is that GDPR does not require explicit 'opt-in' consent if personal data is used to help the hotel provide the service it is obliged to deliver to the data subject – the guest – as part of a valid contract. However, if a hotel then takes that data and uses it for a specific additional purpose, such as remarketing, then it requires explicit consent.

"The hotel should, of course, ensure that the personal data is not retained

beyond the period required to deliver the service, so once the guest has checked out, then the personal data should be purged," says Holland.

For Holland, the operators that have best prepared themselves for GDPR all have one thing in common: they all established new data protection officer (DPO) roles within their organisation.

"The DPO could be an IT manager or a financial controller, for example," he says. "The DPO can then fully understand how data is collected and stored. Some insurers will offer secure data storage as part of their cover to minimise claims over breaches in data security. The DPO should then set out a code of conduct for the hotel and its staff that defines how this data is controlled, who has access to it and how long they plan to keep it."

According to a recent report by PwC, hotel companies have fallen behind in payment card industry compliance. So while there may still be some confusion around the complexities of GDPR, it could ultimately serve as the much-needed shot in the arm when it comes to making the right improvements in the areas of consumer data and payment privacy.

"One of the biggest challenges for operators is the sheer number of data

streams they have to maintain and look after across numerous sites and areas," says Crawford.

"Travelodge, for example, has more than 530 hotels. So, in terms of real estate, that's a number of centres of operation which amplifies any situation for it. As a business, you need to ask yourself what data you have, why you are holding it, where it is coming from, and how you are using it. That, in itself, is a major task for any business."

Even six months down the line, Crawford accepts that many operators "aren't going to be 100% GDPR-compliant". There is also "no wrong or right way, necessarily", when it comes to implementing guidelines.

"The one thing I would say is that an approach based around risk mitigation will always serve you well," he says.

"Due to the wide-ranging auditing of all those data processes that's required, it's a tall order for some operators to be completely ready for GDPR.

"But what they can do is have a priority-based approach in place, which looks at which data areas are most likely to lead to a complaint, financial risk or brand damage. They need to be tackled first." ■

### Six ways GDPR affects the hospitality trade

- 1. Getting consent from your customers:** every person who visits your hotel's website needs to know the exact ways in which their personal data will be used in the future. That is why such an explanation needs to be included in the "terms of service" section of your website.
- 2. Data access:** your customers need to know who will have access to their personal data. In addition, when this data is no longer needed, it needs to be deleted from the system.
- 3. The accuracy of the data:** all personal data needs to be up to date at all times and updated on a regular basis.
- 4. Data accountability:** your hotel is fully responsible for using GDPR-compliant tools.
- 5. Data portability:** every customer needs to be allowed to ask for you to provide them with a readable format that will include all the personal data they have previously shared with your business.
- 6. Data minimisation:** your website needs to gather only the minimum amount of an individual's personal data needed to make arrangements.

Source: mycloud Hospitality



GDPR could serve as an opportunity to implement long overdue reform in the areas of consumer data and payment privacy.



The PAI AR Park app brings PAI hotel rooms to life, transforming pillows into fluffy clouds.

# Reality check

Augmented reality platforms have emerged as new marketing and operational tools in recent years, allowing hotels to preview and enhance their pre-existing selling points, and possibly offer whole new ones. But to what extent do these tools lean more towards gimmickry than utility, and what might the next generation of AR and VR solutions provide in terms of added value? Tim Gunn assesses how hotels can best augment their approaches.

**I**n the summer of 2016, hoteliers worldwide glimpsed a way of capturing a new generation of customers. Everywhere they looked, smartphone-wielding explorers were searching for creatures only visible on screens.

The world was playing *Pokémon Go*, an augmented reality (AR) game that used smartphone cameras and GPS technology to place beloved fictional monsters in real-world locations. But more than that, millions of players were moving away from their couches and generating location-specific content.

In response, hotels began renting 'lures' from the game's developers in order to

attract the coveted creatures and the consumers trying to catch them. Those businesses lucky enough to have a community hub like a 'Pokéstop' or a 'Gym' on-site or nearby highlighted the fact in their marketing. Others aligned themselves with one of the game's three teams and offered special deals to players. Most eye-catchingly, Marriott International partnered with Expedia to fly the US's first Pokémon Master around the world in search of the three region-specific monsters that he couldn't catch at home. At the craze's peak in July 2016, one study showed that almost one in ten US hotels were engaging with customers online about *Pokémon Go*.

It has been more than two years since *Pokémon Go* blasted AR into the mainstream. Its success is yet to be replicated, but the technology continues to advance. Apple, Google and Facebook are all investing in their products' AR capabilities, and the generation so enthralled by *Pokémon Go* is becoming a serious target for hotels. If AR is ever going to become something more than a game or gimmick, that time is fast approaching.

## Digital décor

Simply put, AR technology superimposes computer-generated images on real-world objects. The experience of using it is halfway between virtual reality (VR), which

completely replaces our view of the physical world with a computer-generated one, and the world as it appears to us in day-to-day life. Moreover, while VR technology requires a bulky headset, or at least some way of attaching a screen to a face, AR is simple enough to be almost inescapable: many Facebook and Snapchat photo filters rely on it. In fact, one of Deloitte's Digital Predictions for 2018 was that over a billion smartphone users will have created AR content at least once by the end of the year.

Deloitte was even more confident in forecasting the impact AR technology could have on the travel and hospitality industries. According to its report, "AR-enhanced tours and consumer-generated content will change the way that we experience tourist destinations." Still, Professor Dimitrios Buhalis, head of Bournemouth University's eTourism lab, urges caution. "In the hotel industry itself,

AR is more of a novelty than a revolution," he says.

PAI (π) hotels, a subsidiary of China's Plateno Group, would not necessarily disagree, but it still sees AR-integrated design as a vital part of its brand identity. Launched in 2015, the PAI brand now operates over 280 budget hotels and targets young people by focusing on creating personalised experiences. The Plateno Group debuted the PAI AR Park app at its second-ever 'fashion show' in Guangzhou, China, in December 2016. Like the idea of hosting a hotel fashion show, the app emphasises individual style and the importance of creating 'social spaces that reflect internal emotions' to appeal to its target demographic. It works by bringing PAI hotel decorations to life on guests' smartphones. Through the smartphone camera, PAI paper cups become cartoon lips, snouts and beaks, and pillows appear to be fluffy clouds floating in a bright blue

sky. The app is more whimsical than functional, but there's a clear insight to be drawn from PAI's emphasis on it: AR can make budget hotel experiences far more interesting and shareable.

Similarly, charges of novelty for novelty's sake have not slowed the growth of Whitbread's AR-enriched 'hub by Premier Inn' concept in the UK. Along with a host of other high-tech features, each Premier Inn hub hotel room includes a wall map that, when viewed through the hub app, becomes a sophisticated city guide. The first hub was opened in Covent Garden in December 2014, and there are already ten such hotels in city centre locations across London and Edinburgh, with another seven in the pipeline. The hub hotels have been so successful that Whitbread is aiming to open a similar number of Premier Inn and hub by Premier Inn bedrooms in the 2018/19 financial year.

Of course, a hotel does not succeed or fail on account of having AR maps on its walls, but Whitbread's focus on smartphone integration is an innovation with a real impact. On the surface, it offers a money-saving twist on the hotel concierge that comes with its own wow-factor. Perhaps more importantly, however, it makes wall space functional, which is more than a neat trick when the average Premier Inn hub hotel room is a little over half the size of a suite in a traditional Premier Inn (11.4m<sup>2</sup> rather than 21.3m<sup>2</sup>). In effect, one of the room's most exciting selling points neither requires a screen nor takes up any floor space; it is stored on customers' smartphones. Hub and PAI rooms are both bigger on the inside – as long as guests download the right apps.

### Luxury developments

Budget hotels are not the only ones to have started leveraging AR technology. Luxury locations that lack neither space nor visual interest can also entice guests through their smartphone screens. In 2015, The Mansion at Casa Madrona, the opulent centrepiece of a luxury spa hotel near San Francisco, California, began using AR as a key tool to 'enhance the guest experience' and increase revenue 'through vcommerce versus the more traditional ecommerce'.

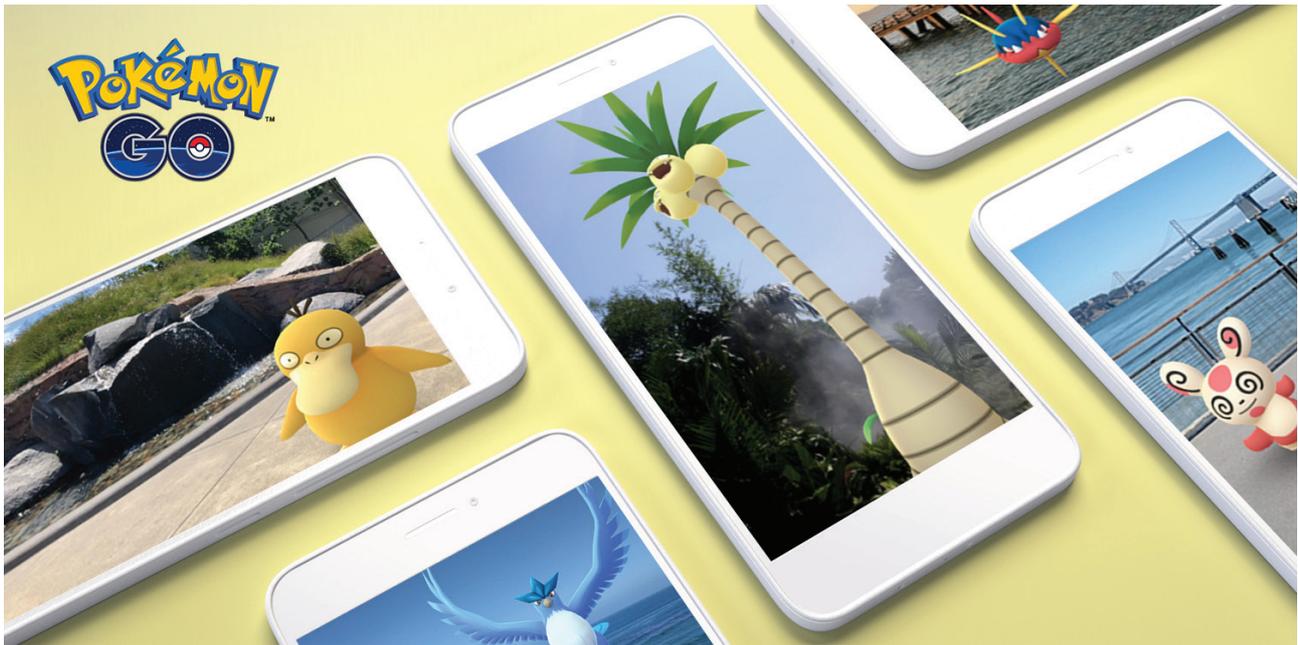
As part of the resort's AR initiative, prospective guests could request an



Every hub by Premier Inn room includes an interactive wall map, which becomes a sophisticated city guide when viewed through the hotel's smartphone app.



PAI has used AR to make budget hotel experiences more interesting, whimsical and shareable.



Many hotels were quick to seize the opportunities provided by *Pokémon Go*'s explosion of popularity in the summer of 2016, demonstrating the range of potential benefits AR could provide the industry if used efficiently.

AR-enhanced brochure and use their smartphone to translate two-dimensional floor plans into three-dimensional models that appeared to sit on top of the paper. After event bookings, the same technology, developed by AR specialists Augment, allowed Casa Madrona to deliver personalised sneak peeks of suites in The Mansion kitted out for weddings, birthdays and anniversaries. Guests could even post AR-enabled 'postcards' to social media.

As marketable as all this might sound, The Mansion at Casa Madrona has not kept up its focus on AR. Users of Augment's app can still grab their phones and tour the property, complete with its computer-generated guest trapped eternally on the phone in the master bedroom, and a lively, mimed conversation on the deck overlooking the harbour, but it no longer links to a live page on the Casa Madrona website. It is a tantalising, but not particularly high-fidelity, experience. Still, this was developed in 2015, and Buhalis believes that even *Pokémon Go*, released a year later, came out before smartphone AR technology was able to properly handle it.

As such, it is worth taking a look at what has changed since. Apple and Google, the two leaders for smartphone technology, have both released newer and considerably

more powerful AR development kits that completely avoid many of the bugs that plagued earlier AR programs. Facebook, meanwhile, has begun to include AR adverts in its news feed and messenger, and can now use 'target tracking' technology to make movie posters come to life when viewed through a smartphone camera. Impressively, Marriott International experimented with something similar with an advert in *Wired* magazine in 2013, which became a video when viewed through a particular app.

### Portals to paradise

As *Pokémon Go* demonstrated, Marriott has developed a knack for adapting to different realities. As far back as 2014, its phone booth-like VR 'teleporter' was causing a media stir by giving customers in select locations the opportunity to trial virtual holidays. A year later, it made a version of the same experience more widely available by placing \$900 Samsung VR headsets in select suites. It may seem almost contradictory to offer guests holidays from their holidays, but a notable 51% of those who used the headsets said the VR experience made them more likely to stay at Marriott properties in future.

Like PAI and Premier Inn, Marriott has found that sometimes one person's gimmick is another's life enhancement. Since high-quality VR headsets are exciting

and covetable objects that have yet to crack the consumer market, there's plenty of room for hotels to win guests and attention by devising packages around them and the experiences they make possible.

According to Buhalis, hotels are a perfect match for VR technology. He gives the example of a bride-to-be "teleporting" to a Marriott resort in Hawaii to preview and perfect her wedding". It is a compelling vision, but in order to achieve it, Marriott's marketers have actually pivoted back towards AR. Marriott Caribbean & Latin America Resorts' Portal to Paradise app tempts consumers with the chance "to 'visit' eight beautiful resorts in some of the region's most sought-after locations" by opening a digital portal directly in front of them. Since it does not require any technology beyond the ubiquitous smartphone, the free app is perfectly suited to developing what Alex Fiz, regional vice-president of sales and marketing at Marriott, calls a "daydreaming experience" into a specific plan for a Marriott holiday.

As Marriott International has clearly realised, the level of comfort and familiarity that almost all consumers have with AR technology simply as a result of using their phones is what makes it such a powerful marketing tool. The hotels that can make it feel like a natural extension of their brands are those that can gain the most from using it. ■

# More than welcome

The digital future is already with us, and hotels need to embrace it to stay ahead. Joe Rabah, managing director EMEA at **RMG Networks**, explains the ways innovations such as augmented reality and artificial intelligence are transforming the industry.

**T**he hotel industry is changing, as digitalisation in aviation, travel and tourism is expected to migrate around \$100 billion of value from traditional players to new competitors. If hospitality brands are to stay relevant and competitive they must offer not just great hospitality – but an experience too.

Brands such as Marriot and Hilton are launching specifically tech-focused rooms, with smart speakers capable of ordering hotel services from verbal instructions being just one of the projected amenities. Many guests are likely to prefer this, for privacy, convenience and entertainment – the fully connected hotel stay is set to take over traditional practices.

## Enhancing authentic visitor experiences with augmented reality (AR)

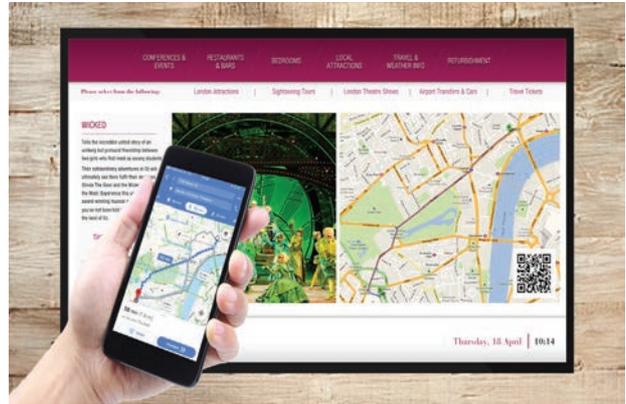
AR allows digital information to be presented in immersive forms within the environment, so rather than presenting an entirely new and often fictional context, it simply enhances and deepens what the customer is already experiencing – it quite literally, and perceptibly, adds value.

One way in which the hotel sector is enhancing the customer experience is through immersive AR wayfinding, which helps guests easily navigate their way through the city they are in as well as within the hotel building itself, and even offers a fun and useful experience.

## Pushing personalisation to its limits with artificial intelligence (AI)

AI comes in many forms and can transform the client journey drastically. The companies making the very best use of AI tend to be those providing genuinely omnichannel services, whereby their AI devices ‘learn’ from information about each customer, gleaned from various channels and systems at different times and adjusts services to exponentially improve the experience accordingly.

For example, a customer booking a hotel stay via their online account can be greeted by name when a virtual receptionist installed in the hotel reception ‘recognises’ them. Interactive bot concierges – such as ‘Rose’ of the Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas – are one method of digital engagement which is becoming more widely used. Alternatively, information collected from various streams such as online, telephone contact or previous visits, as well as contextual and external information and events can be cleverly used by bots and displays to provide a genuinely customised experience for each client, providing accurate information, services and advice on demand.



Hotels embrace new technology to enhance guest experience.

## Keeping in the loop with inimitable mobile phone technology

Mobile phone communication and embedded or complementary technology, such as NFC and RFID beacons can stitch together the entire communication journey and create an interactive bridge between displays, bots, organisations, data, information and the audience.

A brand app powered by RMG Networks' KorbytGO can provide real-time performance statistics and relevant information to employees around the globe, as well as allowing displays to interact with clients, and relay relevant information instantly.

## Connecting the dots with powerful content management systems (CMSs)

Creating a seamless journey across time and space, and across visual platforms and devices is crucial to elevating customer and employee experiences engagement levels. Managing the visualisation of the relevant data and content and visual applications needs to be as smooth, efficient and automated as possible across all visual end points.

That is why CMSs should lie at the heart of every hospitality business's strategy. The best hospitality CMS will keep employees and consumers informed, providing data-driven insights and content to create superior engagement. A great CMS has the ability to enhance and gamify immersive hospitality applications so they make a lasting impact on visitors and clients. RMG Networks' Korbyt is the industry's best-in-class CMS, powering up exceptional visual communication applications for hospitality. ■

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# Leading well-being resort

The Grand Resort Bad Ragaz in Switzerland is Europe's leading well-being and medical healthcare resort. Daniel J Müller, chief financial officer, gives some insights into the philosophy of the resort, the increasing role and complexity of payment, and how **SIX Payment Services** ensures seamless integration of payment functionality into the company's operations.

## Can you tell us more about the Grand Resort Bad Ragaz?

**Daniel J Müller:** One of our key points of distinction is that we do not belong to a hotel group. The Grand Resort Bad Ragaz consists of four different hotels in five styles with a combined total of 273 rooms and seven restaurants. Additionally, we opened a family spa in Bad Ragaz on 1 May, which further follows the three-generation principle of the hotel, whereby we welcome grandparents, parents and children. The Grand Resort Bad Ragaz is distinguished by the Ragaz thermal water, which has been used for health treatments within the spa for over 175 years. The thermal water, which remains at a comfortable 36.5°C, fills all the pools at the resort, and is actively used by our doctors and therapists for patients and guests, and is also available to our visitors as drinking water at our restaurants. More than half of our guests are from Switzerland, followed by visitors from Germany, the UK, Russia, Ukraine and the Middle East.

## What are the most important aspects for you about a payment service provider?

It is very important for us that the payment service provider can consult and support us holistically within the payment process: from the integration of the point-of-sale (POS) terminals, the actual payment by the customer, up to the automated booking in the accounting operations.

## Which payment solution has been used in your resort?

We are currently using more than 45 mobile and integrated POS terminals, which operate throughout the whole resort, including card acceptance for all international payment cards. Additionally, we have an online shop for hotel reservations, restaurant bookings, gift voucher sales and reservations for treatments.

## Why did you choose SIX Payment Services?

SIX Payment Services, with its experience and expertise in the hospitality sector, is able to support us throughout the entire payment process and provides us with the latest state-of-the-art software and hardware, which ensures that we are always up to date with the latest developments in payments.

## What role does the 'payment' function play?

Payment as such is becoming more complex within the hotel. Our aim is to make sure that our guests can concentrate on enjoying their stay and spend as little time as possible on the payment process. As a hotel with a diverse range of facilities, we must be able to offer our customers, both national and international, their



preferred payment method, and ensure that the payment function is as seamless as possible. Some guests prefer to pay during checkout at reception, while others want to pay in advance from their room via a smartphone or a tablet. Around 50% of our turnover is paid via credit cards. As a hotel, we appreciate the so-called pre-authorisation function, which is the option of booking and blocking an amount on the guest's credit card on arrival.

## How important is dynamic currency conversion (DCC) to you?

DCC is an easy way to offer our guests the choice to pay in their home currency, which is greatly appreciated by guests from abroad. DCC is not only appealing to our guests, but we also benefit from every transaction.

## How important are online reservations and online payments?

Online processes are becoming increasingly important to us and are being used by our guests more frequently. Online capabilities mean that it is state of the art to book and pay for the fitness course online – directly and conveniently from your hotel bed or from home.

## What are the biggest payment challenges and how has SIX Payment Services helped you?

The seamless technical integration of the payment solution into our broad company's system landscape is always going to be a challenge. However, SIX Payment Services, with its competence and experience in the market, is able to advise us and ensures that the increasing payment card industry requirements are met. ■

### Further information

SIX Payment Services  
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# Enhancing guest experience

The latest technology by **Distech Controls** features an exciting easy-to-use device that puts the power of control in the hands of hotel guests. Enhancing guest experience while boosting energy and operational efficiencies, Allure UNITOUCH presents hotels with a path to success.

Allure UNITOUCH gives users the opportunity to monitor and control the room's environmental conditions with the touch of a button.



**F**irst impressions count, especially in a hotel. From stepping into the lobby to walking through the corridors and entering a bedroom, guests are evaluating the ambience of the hotel, its look and, most importantly, how comfortable and welcoming it is. The building's management system can play an important role in improving environmental conditions for hotel guests, as well as reducing the operating and maintenance costs for hotel owners and operators.

Part of improving the well-being and comfort of guests is placing control in their hands, giving them the opportunity to change the temperature, air conditioning, and even the lighting within a space to suit their own preferences and maintain a comfortable environment.

## Allure UNITOUCH

It is important to provide a high-quality user interface that enables guests to understand what the current conditions are and how to adjust them, whether it is wall mounted or controlled via an app on their smartphone. Distech Controls, for example, has just launched the new Allure UNITOUCH, an easy-to-operate device that can be accessed and operated with a high-resolution 3.5in capacitive touch screen or wirelessly from a smartphone using Bluetooth. Users can view and adjust environmental settings to meet their requirements; this includes fine-tuning the temperature and fan-speed settings, as well as controlling the light levels and adjusting the sunblinds. Everything can be done via this one-user interface, making it extremely simple for guests to navigate.

This type of device is more than a room controller: it is a revolutionary way of interacting with a space. Working in conjunction with the new my PERSONIFY mobile app, it provides users with higher level of control through the touch of a button.

## Greener hotels

Although guests' comfort and well-being are becoming increasingly important issues, energy efficiency still remains high on the agenda for hoteliers; and these two elements can be interlinked.

With Allure UNITOUCH, users will see an innovative ECO-Vue leaf pattern on the interface, which shows energy consumption in real time to promote energy-conscious behaviours. As more leaves appear, greater energy efficiency is being achieved, while fewer leaves will encourage the user to take corrective actions to optimise the system's environmental performance.

## Increased operational efficiencies

Using room-control devices, such as Allure UNITOUCH, also give hotel owners and operators a vast amount of data about the building. It can monitor and analyse occupancy data, allowing settings to be changed and updated whenever an occupant is in the space. Different environmental settings can also be configured for bedrooms, meeting rooms and lobby areas. The data can also be analysed to understand which rooms are being occupied, in order to streamline cleaning rotas or ensure the right amount of breakfast is prepared based on the number of guests. This all adds up, increasing operational efficiencies as well as cost savings for a hotel.

Great guest experience is vital to the success of a hotel. The building management system has always been an important element when it comes to monitoring and controlling operational and environmental conditions within a hotel, but it also has the ability to help guests feel more comfortable during their stay. ■

### Further information

Distech Controls  
www.distech-controls.com



# Creating luxury experiences

A premium hotel experience demands an innovative, tailor-made and smart television. **LG's** Pro:Centric Direct television content management allows guests to experience personalised and interactive content, while their OLED televisions push the boundaries of viewing experience.

**P**remium hotels have always been a source of inspiration for the latest trends in ambitious lifestyle and design; now they also show the best of modern technology. Innovative and exciting technology is as much a sign of distinction in the hospitality industry as fine materials, top facilities and exceptional services. As guests become increasingly knowledgeable and accustomed to technological excellence, hotels must be at the forefront to offer an experience that will be considered truly luxurious.

## A groundbreaking screen technology

LG's OLED Wallpaper TV is an outstanding example of this, reflecting luxury through technological invention and boasting a design with immediate impact. Slimmer than a painting and mounted directly on the wall, it refines the concept of a television to its purest element – a window into another world. OLED is one of LG's technological jewels, giving the market a new vision on what a screen can do.

The aesthetics of the OLED screen make it an ideal choice for high-end hotels. Although televisions have not always been attractive items from the point of view



High-end hotels appreciate the beautiful aesthetic of LG televisions.

of design, this wall-mounted screen, with its thin depth and almost weightless design, allows the television to be a standout feature.

OLED televisions are equipped with self-lighting technology, with no backlight units; when the pixels are off, there is no parasitic light in the background and the picture is totally black. The self-lighting pixels create greater contrast between light and dark, and represent



LG has a range of televisions designed specifically for the hospitality industry, which have a vast array of features that are beneficial to hotels.

gradations in colour with unprecedented fidelity. LG's OLED is known for its black level and infinite contrast; the units display vivid colours and give incomparable picture quality.

OLED screens also have an extremely fast response time, meaning the fast-moving, highly detailed picture created by high-definition resolution is displayed without any delay. The screen can also be seen accurately from a wide viewing angle, meaning it is possible to watch from multiple locations in the hotel room.

This technology has the potential to lead the market for years to come. The technology used for the first television screens, the cathode ray tube, dominated the market for decades before being replaced by plasma screens, LCD and later LED. LG believes that OLED will remain in place as the market-leading solution for a significant amount of time. However, LG's current offerings are not the last word for this technology, as the company focuses on innovation; developments will include advancements in bezel dimension and maximum curvature radius.

The premium offer in the hospitality industry stretches throughout the hotel. It's expected that not only will rooms offer televisions of the highest grade, but also that hotels themselves are employing innovative technological solutions to give guests the best possible service. The need to offer the best possible service is the way of thinking behind LG's holistic hospitality television solutions, which meets the guests' experience and the needs of hoteliers.

LG offers hotels televisions specifically designed for the hospitality industry – commercial-grade televisions – which differ significantly from consumer televisions. LG's hospitality televisions can be connected with management systems, allowing volume and channel settings to be set externally, and for hotel-specific welcome screens to be created.

### Personalised and interactive contents

LG's hotel television management systems – Pro:Centric Smart, Pro:Centric Value and Pro:Centric Direct – are particularly important tools for the hospitality industry. Pro:Centric Direct allows Internet Protocol (IP) and coax (RF) network-based remote management, which means that televisions can offer guests a personalised experience. Channels can be managed by grade and group to tailor them to the needs of the guest. This means that an individual business traveller can get information on a hotel's conference facilities, while a family could see details of childcare and children's films.

Pro:Centric Direct's easily editable templates make it possible to create television welcome screens that reflect the hotel's specific branding and design, play marketing videos, and advertise hotel facilities and services. The units can even be updated to greet the guest by name.



LG's OLED range is ultra-light, slim and offers stunning picture quality.

Televisions in all the hotel rooms can be managed externally, eliminating the need to spend time and resources going from room to room. Through Pro:Centric it is possible to edit channel labels and set the start volume level, as well as the brightness and colour of the display. A key lock blocks the remote menu key, stopping guests from altering the televisions settings. Remote management also means that software can be installed and updated remotely.

Pro:Centric Direct enables the hotel room television to take guest experience to a new level, allowing guests and hotel management to interact with each other. Messages can be sent to specific rooms via the server, providing information on promotions and available facilities, as well as information such as menu options. For guests, the server creates a seamless and easy way to communicate their needs via its interactive solution, including one-click services on the television. This makes it possible for guests to book an appointment at the spa, request more towels, order room service, see their invoice, and, at the end of their stay, check out – all via the LG Hotel television.

### A hospitality solution

Combining groundbreaking screen technology, and the system management tools to impress guests and contribute to the smooth running of a hotel, LG provides holistic television solutions designed to appeal to the hotel industry on numerous levels. LG will continue creating and refining solutions for the hospitality industry; seen by consumers as an industry leader, quality, design, price and innovation are of the highest importance to LG Electronics. ■

#### Further information

LG  
[www.lg.com/b2b](http://www.lg.com/b2b)  
[b2b.europe@lge.com](mailto:b2b.europe@lge.com)



# Ports of Call

Lisbon and Porto have experienced unprecedented hotel growth over the past decade. But how much longer can it last? Greg Noone talks to **Gustavo Castro**, the head of Colliers International's office in Porto, and **Jorge Rebelo de Almeida**, the managing director of Portuguese hotel group Vila Galé, to find out more.

**T**he Ascensor da Bica struggles up the Calçada de Bica Grande like a weary carthorse. Inside the yellow tram are tourists – some Germans, but mostly British – packed together like a tin of Lisbon's famous sardines. If they reach out of the windows for a photograph, they'll be able to see the grand view of the city's harbour receding in the distance, and above them apartment buildings, painted the colours of summer. The paint is peeling though, and there's little room to turn around and grab a photograph.

Lisbon's tram network was founded in 1873, when the carriages were actually pulled along by horses. It was designed for a city in decline. By the time the tram network reached its greatest extent in 1959, Lisbon was a

backwater city. That year saw the opening of Lisbon Metro, after which the number of passengers stepping aboard these cramped yellow cans began to ebb.

Tourists, however, can be found clinging onto the hanging straps of the trams in plentiful numbers, disregarding guidebook warnings about pickpockets. The past decade has seen an explosion in tourists across Portugal, with growth at its most pronounced in Lisbon and the country's second city, Porto. According to Gustavo Castro, an analyst at Colliers, the reason is simple.

"I will tell you that in Porto, it started more or less 15 years ago," says Castro. "Growth was essentially driven by low-cost carriers, especially Ryanair. They

started to include Porto in their European routes, and soon enough, tourists started to arrive at a fast pace."

The lure of flight prices in the double digits soon began to boost the capital's prospects. "Lisbon always had a terrific appeal," says Castro. A rise in tourist numbers followed on a little after Porto's boom. "People started to combine Porto and Lisbon, which drove Lisbon upwards. Suddenly, the capital was driving tourists on its own."

It helped that Lisbon was in easy reach of more conventional holiday destinations at the time: the Algarve, where hotel growth in Portugal was traditionally concentrated, as well as

The Vila Galé Nautico, in the Algarve town of Portimao.



the former royal mountain retreat of Sintra and the beaches of Cascais. As the country's largest city, says Castro, it also benefitted from having "more carriers and more flight routes", which naturally brought more people. According to a Collier's report on hotel growth in Lisbon and Porto in 2017, passenger traffic increased by 22.3 and 18.5%, respectively.

Local hotels benefitted enormously, and property prices began to climb precipitously as the Portuguese economy – in the doldrums until 2013 – recovered. According to PwC, that growth is going to continue, with Porto alone set to experience a 10% rise in RevPAR against Lisbon's 7%. This is in spite of the palpable lack of space in both cities, which are built on steep coastal inclines. "In not too long, any unoccupied building became a potential hotel," Castro explains of the boom. "This drove people who, a few years ago, wanted to sell their buildings at almost any price, but now were standing on their buildings and asking for the Moon."

### State of the interior

Not all hotel growth in Portugal has been confined to its two largest cities. In Elvas, a two and a half hour drive from Lisbon, the Convento de São Paulo sits red-roofed and squat between the Avenue 14 de Janeiro and the town's 16th-century walls. Once stuffed with chanting nuns, the building has now been converted into a hotel and conference space by Portuguese operator Vila Galé, as part of the nationwide 'Revive' project. It's just the latest in a long line of initiatives by the Portuguese Government to restore and revitalise some of the country's oldest structures, many of which have long since fallen into disrepair.

"We are attentive to the programme, and we are keeping pace with the launch of new tenders," says Rebelo. "We will restore the former São Paulo Convent, which had been abandoned for years and even burned twice. It does not make sense to have such a rich heritage in our cities, in the historical centres, and not care for them nor give them a more dignified and economically viable use."

Vila Galé is one of the major success stories of the Portuguese hospitality



The Hotel Vila Gale Marina, in the popular area of Vilamoura, which is known for its large harbour, golden beaches and fantastic golf courses – the quintessential Algarve resort.

market. Founded over 30 years ago, growth has been steady and, according to Rebelo, largely self-funded. In recent years, as property prices in Lisbon and Porto have skyrocketed, Vila Galé has been prudent in balancing its commitment to the valuable urban market and expanding into Portugal's interior.

"We keep the ambition of having a boutique hotel, along the lines of Vila Galé's Collection Palacio dos Arcos, in the historic centre," explains Rebelo, in reference to Lisbon. "We have analysed several options, but either they are not large enough to have the number of rooms that fit our strategy or their prices are very high."

Not that opportunities in some of the more well-trodden areas of the country are completely absent. Vila Galé already has nine properties in the Algarve, and recently opened a new hotel on Porto's riverside district. Even so, the interior beckons, on the one hand as a place where the operator can balance its portfolio, and on the other – according to Rebelo – as somewhere it can leverage the totality of Portugal, for the benefit of the world.

"We actually see opportunities there," he explains. "There are certainly risks involved, as those are less-obvious destinations where demand is not as great as it is on the coastline. But these regions have much to offer. "From the

tourism perspective, creating this new offer is a way of attracting our visitors to new destinations and letting tourists get to know more than just Lisbon, Porto and the Algarve."

### Rent-a-city

Back in the cities, however, tourists are still arriving in greater numbers, notwithstanding the lack of new-build hotels. Other signs of strain have also emerged. In March 2018, Bloomberg reported on a growing shortage of hospitality workers across Portugal. But according to Rebelo, this is not as serious as it might seem. "We have not been much affected," he says, citing Vila Galé's investment in professional training and career development incentives.

"It's an ongoing struggle for the hotel business, because workers are never enough," says Castro. It's almost impossible, he adds, to attain the right number of workers, simply because occupancy fluctuates. "It doesn't strike me that there is a shortage. I'm really not sure if that is a relevant issue. Well, it probably will be if unemployment keeps going down."

That is a very real possibility. This summer, Portugal's experienced its lowest-ever unemployment rate, a proud moment for a country that only six years ago had to formally request a bailout package from the IMF and the EU. Since



The Vila Galé Clube de Campo, set among the charming, rustic beauty of Beja, an inland municipality in the Alentejo region.

then, Portugal's economy has snapped back to health, to a degree that has prompted some to ask whether things are getting too good to be true.

It's certainly a pertinent question for the hotel market. Despite the lack of physical space to grow in Portugal's main cities, plenty of new deals are being signed, with 25 new hotels and 2,400 extra rooms expected to be added next year, according to PwC. "Just last month it was publicised that perhaps the biggest deal, as far as value per room was concerned, was accomplished in Porto: more than €400,000, which is a very relevant value in Portugal," says Castro.

### Trading on natural charm

The problem, of course, remains ascertaining whether this is as much down to the innate demand that Portugal commands as a destination as it is the lack of space in Lisbon and Porto. One metric suggests it is the former that continues to form the bedrock of hospitality growth in the country: the rise in the number of holiday rentals in both cities.

According to market data firm Airdna, there are over 16,079 active rentals in Lisbon alone, 74% of which comprise an

entire home. Moreover, out of all professional hosts, 72% owned more than one property, all of which is suggestive of a hollowing out of the Portuguese capital's already lucrative rentals market.

Even so, the analyst questions how sustainable the boom – for hotels and holiday rentals – actually is. Airbnb, for one, is facing action from local legislators seeking to impose a quarantine zone for new rentals in Lisbon. "I'd say that is a major shift," says Castro, although, "it's not a definitive stance yet."

Tourism also has its existential benefits. The vitality of this market is seen by many Portuguese as a sign that the country is now far removed from the dark days of economic privation it experienced just five years ago. "Tourism was an important factor in overcoming that recession," says Castro. "So there's still a sense of appreciation."

Whether or not international operators can easily reap the benefits in the medium-term is hard to say. Although Marriott operates Lisbon's largest hotel, and Meliã and Accor seem set to increase their presence in the capital, smaller players, like SanaHotels, VipHotels and Turim, also maintain a significant hold over the market.

The appearance of regional operators is more pronounced in Porto, where Vila Galé operates the largest hotel, while Grupo Hotusa – headquartered in Barcelona – is busy increasing its room portfolio.

### Preparing for the lows

Nevertheless, there are grounds for international operators to remain optimistic. Capacity is increasing, albeit slowly, while the innate appeal of Portugal as a destination remains high: the cost of flights and living are low; and even with present constraints, this seems set to place the country's hospitality market in a good position in the long term.

"Those who have worked in this business for 30 years know that there are ups and downs, and one should be prepared for the not-so-good years," says Rebelo, citing signs that the current boom period in Portuguese tourism will begin to taper off in the next few years. "We have to do our homework. That is, we have to know how to maintain our assets and quality, invest in the qualification of human resources, in innovation, and in an excellent and professional service." That, at least, will keep the tourists on Lisbon's trams. ■

# Simple genius

Hide was one of the most keenly awaited restaurant openings of the year, and its blend of fine dining with a relaxed atmosphere is just what star chef **Ollie Dabbous** intended. However, in order to realise his vision, getting the kitchen design right was a fundamental element. Jim Banks speaks to him and **Ed Bircham**, an associate member of the Foodservice Consultants Society International, about bringing to life a chef-led vision of simplicity, serenity and style.

**W**hen Ollie Dabbous opened his eponymous first restaurant in 2012, he quickly became a star of the London culinary scene. It was one of the city's busiest restaurants and earned him a Michelin star, so when he closed it in 2017 to move on to something new, it was sure to be an innovative and ambitious project.

It turned out to be just that. Partnering with Hedonism Wines and its director, Yevgeny Chichvarin, Dabbous chose to renovate a three-storey site at 85 Piccadilly, overlooking Green Park, to create a new fine-dining venue called Hide. Set over three floors, each with its own unique style of dining, the restaurant offers a beautiful and relaxed setting for fine dining, whether

it's breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea or dinner.

Hide is driven by the passion for food that Dabbous has shown throughout his career, and with the extensive refurbishment of the site that was required, he was given the chance to create a bespoke kitchen that would allow passionate chefs to put their hearts into every dish.

"The owner had very defined views of how the restaurant would be set up, and wanted quirky charm with a lot of attention to detail," says Ed Bircham, associate member of the Foodservice Consultants Society International

The stunning spiral staircase that runs down the centre of Hide.

and director of consultancy Humble Arnold Associates, who translated the initial design into an efficient and user-friendly kitchen.

“When I first met Ollie, it was on a dusty site that had been part-progressed to a previous design, but he had his own very clear ideas from the beginning. It needed great synergy with the layout of the spaces. There were great details in his sketches and it was a privilege to work alongside him because he understands the challenges of a site like this, especially in London. His approach is one of simplicity, using just the right ingredients to create the best design,” he adds.

Through a collaborative process based on a mutual understanding of what chefs and diners need from a kitchen, Bircham and Dabbous took a simple sketch and helped to create the perfect solution for the kitchen.

“We started out with a drawing I made on a sheet of A4 paper with nothing to scale,” says Dabbous. “I gave it to Ed, who put it in CAD and added all of the standards and specs. The kitchen was pretty close to my original brief. Ed and Humble Arnold Associates were very detailed in their approach, and I never felt they would miss anything. I had not worked with Ed before, but I could tell straight away that he got the idiosyncrasies of a chef. I had a clear idea of what I wanted, and he trusted me. I know what I need to do my job.”

### Three floors of wonders

Each part of Hide has its own unique purpose, and the kitchen facilities need to



The light, simple, airy interior of Hide above: it's menu reflects these qualities.



A champagne trolley full of bottles from Hedonism Wines, which partnered with Dabbous on the project.

showcase this. Hide Above is a light-filled dining room that offers diners tranquil views over Green Park. This is reflected in a menu that is light, elegant and pure. Hide Ground is simple but sophisticated – the beating heart of the restaurant. Serving breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner, it has an extensive à la carte menu full of seasonal food. As far as possible, everything

is made in-house, from charcuterie and bread to jams and juices.

Hide Below is the basement bar, for those who like classic and contemporary cocktails, rare spirits and fine wines. There are also separate private dining rooms – the Broken Room, the Shadow Room and the Reading Room, which are located in subterranean vaults, serving up to six



The two Hide restaurants at 85 Picadilly, Mayfair. Beneath ground is Hide Below, a late-night bar serving cocktails and fine wines.

people with food from Hide Ground. The Hide and Seek Room, on the mezzanine, offers private dining for up to 20 people, serving dishes from Hide Above.

To serve all of these areas, Hide has a main production kitchen and storage area in the basement to support the ground floor restaurant. There is also a front-of-house bakery on the ground floor, with a solid-fuel-burning oven. The mezzanine level, which was made by removing much of the first floor, has a kitchen for fine dining run by the sous chef. It is partly hidden behind glazing, which is frosted apart from a central band that allows diners to see the production area. There is also a small but self-contained breakfast kitchen, which has been deliberately segregated so it doesn't interfere with chefs getting ready for lunch.

"The idea was to share the mezzanine kitchen with diners sensitively and discreetly, without being a brash open kitchen," says Bircham. "All credit to the interior designers for achieving that. The biggest challenge in all the kitchens was the spatial constraints and the service infrastructure, which is true of any project in London. You need to optimise the space."

"The kitchen is based on the menu," says Dabbous. "You have to think about the food offering and the numbers first, then you have to consider all of the pre-existing factors that you need to work around. One floor is open all day, while the other floors are just lunch and dinner, so you have a lot of food coming through the kitchen. On a busy day, we have 450 covers. The first thought was to simplify the organisation and make it more methodical. For a restaurant in London, you have to be efficient and use every centimetre of space while still maximising storage."

### The necessity of ergonomics

The need for efficiency in the kitchen resulted in some interesting tweaks to the standard design features. For instance, under-counter handwash basins were installed to maximise worktop space. Dabbous and Bircham also worked with specialist manufacturers who understood that storage space is more important than ease of installation. Morrone cooking suites, Rational combi ovens, and refrigeration solutions from Foster

and Adande all feature in the final design. Dabbous wanted simple cooking equipment and chose everything on its functional merits, rather than the brand.

"For the main kitchen downstairs, I wanted it to be pleasant to work in, so climate was very important," says Dabbous. "I want people to stay here. I don't want a transient workforce in the kitchen, so I wanted the conditions to be as good as possible. That affected things like the distance between the stove and the workstations because I didn't want people to have to take an extra step. The

worktops are also slightly higher because I don't want people to get backache.

"So much kit has changed since I opened Dabbous, and I had less pressure on the budget this time, so I got equipment that would last, based on quality and capacity. What is good for the kitchen is good for the restaurant, and happy chefs produce better food. There were some limits on what we could do, particularly in terms of space, but this is a new kitchen designed by a chef who will be in it, and we were trying to keep it uncluttered. It is easy to have a kitchen

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that is over-engineered. I've never been one for getting designer kit. I don't care what the label is on the equipment, as long as it does what I need it to do," he adds.

### Being open to the best ideas

The choice of equipment for the kitchens was based, in part, on the knowledge brought to the table by Bircham and Dabbous, but they also have a desire to learn more. Factory visits and design trips to explore new possibilities were a key part of the process, during which the two developed a strong bond.

"I didn't know Ollie before this project but he has been very respectful of our advice," says Bircham. "He embraced our experience in order to optimise his kitchen. We didn't dictate to Ollie, but we made introductions for him. It was a real collaboration, and it was really enjoyable. He wanted to keep it as simple as possible, and he is delighted with the design and the workflow. As consultants, we have to deliver solutions for the people who work in these spaces for many years, so we need to support their vision."



The ground-floor restaurant is open all day, and was designed to reflect its hearth-like nature.

Dabbous agrees, "You need someone like Ed. You need a consultant on board who knows how to facilitate everything. He has worked with more kit than I have because I only know what I've used as an employee in other restaurants. Ed could give me options. We flew to factories, spoke to engineers and through it all there was a high level of attention to detail. It has paid off – since we opened, we have been very busy and the kitchen

has worked how we wanted it to. Ed did an absolutely fantastic job."

Proof of the successful design process is easy to find. Hide was probably the most anticipated London restaurant opening of 2018, and it has quickly become the hottest ticket in town. ■

**The article first appeared in FCSI's Foodservice Consultant, Q3 2018. [www.fcsi.org](http://www.fcsi.org)**

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# The case for convergence

Contemporary hospitality is changing. Hoteliers now face a more demanding clientele who are increasingly looking for interesting food and drink experiences. Mark Gordon, brand director at **Sleep + Eat**, explains how the event can help the industry tackle this new challenge.

**N**ot very long ago, everything knew its place. Food and beverage (F&B) services in hotels existed mainly to serve breakfast, often in cavernous dining rooms, which sat empty for the rest of the day. Meanwhile, restaurants were changing the face of high streets, and pubs were becoming 'gastro' in order to capture a wider clientele. Eating and drinking out became an experience at the time when people were choosing to spend their money on experiences rather than on possessions. However, while the high street buzzed, most hotel restaurants remained stubbornly quiet. This is now changing.

## Adapt to changes

Hotels are realising the advantages of leasing their restaurant operations to specialist third parties or well-known restaurant brands, which are finding respite from high-street pressures by locating inside hotels. There is evidence that a popular F&B offering can leverage room rate, as well as provide a neighbourhood destination for staying guests. In our 21st-century culture, which blurs the lines between business and leisure, and in a world where people are endlessly travelling through time zones, the demands from guests are not only to eat and drink what suits them at all times of day and evening but also to have genuine, ethical and local experiences. Helping to fulfil these demands are consultants, designers, operators and investors, who are merging the benchmarks and trends of one sector or a part of the world with another to create new hybrids for socialising, working, networking and relaxing over food and drink.

Hence the rationale this year for Sleep – Europe's leading event for hotel design and development – becomes Sleep + Eat. Mark Gordon, brand director at Sleep + Eat, explains, "There can be no denying that for many hotels, their food and beverage component has become more of a challenge and an opportunity than ever before. If they are going to do it well and make it financially successful, it has to be an experience – food, drink, service and environment – that appeals to staying guests and the local community alike. A lot of convergence has gone on: hotel bars that appear to be stand-alone, high-street restaurants chain in hotels, restaurant brands becoming hotel brands, and top-class restaurants opening a few bedrooms upstairs. So, we decided it was time to nudge Sleep into a more holistic reflection of contemporary hospitality."

## Something recognisable and new

The emphasis is on evolution, not revolution. With a theme of 'Recognisable and New', regular visitors who attend the show from across the UK, Europe and farther afield will find all the



Sleep + Eat is expanding its interactive offering to include Eat Sets, which are additional installations based on restaurant and bar spaces.

staples of the Sleep event that have kept them coming year after year. These include a Sleep conference where emerging ideas and success stories are shared; round tables providing opportunity for informal conversations between funders, operators, developers and designers; 150 high-quality exhibitors, from long-term Sleep devotees to newcomers, many of whom choose Sleep to launch new collections; and the much-lauded Sleep Sets, which are created afresh each year by design firms from around the world, provoking thought and stimulating innovation.

The 'new' comes in equally enticing forms. The event has moved to the National Hall in Olympia, providing more space for additional installations and features. These will include Eat Sets; disrupting conventional ideas about restaurant, cafe and nightclub design; and the inaugural Eat Conference, which will feature speakers who are shaping the restaurant and bar experience around the world.

Sleep + Eat will be open from 10am to 8:30pm on Tuesday 20 November and from 10am to 6pm on Wednesday 21 November. ■

### Further information

Sleep + Eat  
[www.sleepandatevent.com](http://www.sleepandatevent.com)





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# Cultivating culinary arts

Hotel restaurants are under pressure like never before, having to compete with other luxury hotels as well as with free-standing eateries. Top **Le Cordon Bleu** chefs Emil Minev and Eric Briffard explain how its teaching and consulting services can help the sector stay up to speed.

**F**ounded in Paris in 1895, Le Cordon Bleu is today considered the largest network of culinary and hospitality schools in the world, with more than 35 institutes in 20 countries and 20,000 students from over 100 nationalities. Its brand name is internationally renowned, and one that encapsulates the highest professional standards in the food and beverage (F&B) segment of the hotel market.

## Learn from the best

According to Emil Minev and Eric Briffard, culinary arts directors at the London and Paris institutes respectively, the secret to its success is its relationship with key stakeholders in the industry. The constant communication between the school and leading global establishments in the culinary market enable Le Cordon Bleu to remain at the forefront of the industry and meet its standards and demands. "Our teaching is done by professional chefs, who have had several years of professional experience at the highest level," says Briffard – two-Michelin-star former executive chef at the Four Seasons Hotel George V in Paris.

Passing knowledge down to the next generation is an essential part of every chef's job. According to Minev, former executive chef at the five-star Shangri-La hotel in London, there is no greater satisfaction than seeing younger F&B professionals progressing and developing under his supervision. Le Cordon Bleu's prestigious role as a trainer also strengthens its role as an adviser on the latest developments in the segment. "In the digital age, information is moving fast and the standards of the hotel industry are shifting like the rest of the world," Briffard says. "In order to meet the expectations of our sector, training must not be static. Therefore, we invite leading chefs and professionals in the hotel segment to regularly perform demonstrations and conferences for our students at Le Cordon Bleu."

When modern hotel restaurants have to compete not only with those of other luxury hotels, but also with free-standing eateries, Le Cordon Bleu's courses come into their own for many related businesses. According to Minev and Briffard, many enterprises now face a clientele who are more vocal about what they want



Coming from five-star hotels and Michelin-star restaurants, Le Cordon Bleu's chefs are dedicated to teaching students fundamental culinary techniques.

and have higher expectations as to what luxury outlets should deliver. In order to train the next generation of F&B managers and hospitality executives, Le Cordon Bleu offers an array of professional programmes ranging from culinary arts and wine diplomas to bachelor and master degrees in partnership with leading universities, such as Paris-Dauphine University and Birkbeck, University of London.

## Stay up to date while preserving authenticity

Minev states that Le Cordon Bleu regularly reviews its programmes to ensure that they still reflect trends in the industry and match its demands. He cites the introduction of new programmes at Le Cordon Bleu, such as its Diploma in Culinary Management, as evidence of how the institution still connects the culinary arts with today's topical F&B concerns. The course covers, among other things, how to deal with digital marketing, including social media, sales and financial matters.

Meanwhile, his colleague Briffard explains that this evolution still includes a thorough grounding in the fundamentals of traditional approaches to cooking. He thinks it is essential to preserve local and regional food diversity, and thus the pleasure that travellers feel when discovering authentic local cuisines. The gastronomical heritage engrained in the regions stimulates the pulse and senses of a traveller. This is why, Briffard adds, it is important that hotel brands change their customer offerings city by city. "Fashionable and modern culinary concepts can become quickly outdated and shift quite regularly," he says. "Today's clientele is curious for new experiences, very volatile and always moving about. But ultimately, these trends always come back to the basics, such as how to identify quality products, how to eat well and where to go to enjoy the local cuisine." ■

Le Cordon Bleu offers professional wine and beverage training.



## Further information

Le Cordon Bleu  
www.cordonbleu.edu



# A catalyst for change

Although hotel companies have no problem attracting women, they are failing to provide the necessary support for them to progress to senior positions. Elly Earls meets Women in Hospitality 2020 chair **Tea Colaiani**; Marriott International's president and managing director for Europe, **Amy McPherson**; Whitbread CEO **Alison Brittain**; and IHG's VP for global talent, **Louise Byrne**, to find out what steps are being put in place to correct the balance.

**I**ts diverse customer base combined with the fact that women are estimated to make more than 80% of travel decisions should make gender equality at the highest levels of leadership a no-brainer for the hospitality industry. Research has shown time and again that businesses with more women at board level perform better, not just financially but also with regard to innovation, problem solving and team engagement.

And yet, research carried out by PwC for the Women in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure 2020 Review, which is working

alongside various industry players to achieve 33% female board representation in hospitality by 2020, found that although the sector has no problem attracting women, who make up 60 to 70% of female graduates from hospitality management programmes, they are failing to progress to senior management positions. Only 26% of senior management in hospitality is female, a figure that drops to 20% when HR roles are excluded.

The review, which involved interviews with over 100 chairmen, CEOs, non-

executive directors and group HR directors, as well as executive search firms and millennials entering the world of hospitality, also identified several barriers to women's progression. These include male chairmen and chief executives hiring in their own likeness, unconscious bias in recruitment decisions and the sector's poor record in managing the talent pipeline, resulting in a smaller female talent pool.

"The single biggest issue and the one that needs our greatest attention is that of the pipeline of female executives," says Whitbread CEO Alison Brittain.

"Without a healthy flow, there is no hope of getting more senior female executives onto the boards and executive teams of UK businesses.

"The issue is not a scarcity of talented, qualified women, but rather that they fall back either because it becomes too culturally or practically difficult to progress, or they are overlooked when it comes to appointing senior executive roles."

Tea Colaiani, who led the review, is chair of the Women In Hospitality 2020 (WiH2020) working group.

She agrees that the dearth of women in senior positions is a



symptom of the industry's inability to promote women from within.

"Most of the organisations we looked at as part of the research have between 60–70% representation across the whole workforce so we don't have any issues attracting women. Where we do have an issue is that when talented women get to the stage in their life where they need to take a break – whether that's for maternity leave, to look after an elderly parent or something else – we really struggle to get them to return to work for us," she says.

And although she acknowledges that much of this is perhaps "benign discrimination", it still creates a mindset where decisions are being made for – instead of by – the women in hospitality organisations.

"For some women, yes, their priorities will have shifted, but it won't be the case for everybody," she says. "So let's not make the decision for them – let's give everybody the same opportunities.

"This is a major obstacle and if we're able to crack the issue of allowing flexibility when women need it, and then helping them to come back and support them, I think we will be able to crack a significant obstacle to women progressing through our organisations. There needs to be a shake-up and a change in mindset. It is happening but it's not happening everywhere."

### Leading from the top

Marriott, which was the first hospitality company to establish a formal diversity and inclusion programme nearly 30 years ago, is decidedly ahead of the curve, with eight women leading Marriott International divisions with revenue greater than \$100 million, four women on its board of directors and an overall split of 50-50 on the company's executive C-suite leadership team.

Over 20 years ago, the company also established its Committee for Excellence, which pledges to support and value diversity as part of its corporate culture, and has resulted in the creation of several leadership accelerator programmes focusing on



Clockwise from top left: Whitbread CEO Alison Brittain, Tea Colaianni of WiH2020, IHG's Louise Byrne and Amy McPherson of Marriott International.

“ The single biggest issue and the one that needs our greatest attention is that of the pipeline of female executives. ”

– Alison Brittain

the development of a diverse leadership pipeline for its hotels.

The company's commitment to supporting women extends to its communities, owners and supply chain too. In 2017, Marriott spent \$352 million with over 3,500 women-owned businesses globally and also works with long-term partners such as Women's Business Enterprise National Council and WEConnect International to support and engage with women-owned businesses around the world.

Amy McPherson, president and managing director for Europe, says it's crucial that diversity initiatives are led from the top.

"Marriott's Global Diversity and Inclusion Council is led by the president and CEO, Arne Sorenson, and comprised of all continent presidents and other Marriott global officers who also sit on the Committee for Excellence," she says. "The council's purpose is to advance Marriott's commitment to inclusion around the world and ensure the

integration of our diversity and inclusion initiatives across all aspects of our global business strategy.”

For Colaianni, there’s no other way. “Unless there is real leadership, and ownership and accountability at the most senior level in the organisation, and it starts and stops with the CEO, you won’t carry out the shift and won’t really be able to move the dial,” she stresses.

“I would advocate against diversity being a project for the HR department. It needs to be treated like a critical business issue like any other issue, with specific targets and metrics, and accountability.”

““ We look at and monitor our statistics and progression; but if you set a target, that’s a limit and why have a limit? ””

– Louise Byrne

### Diagnose the problem

While establishing mentorship programmes like IHG’s RISE initiative, which is designed to inspire female leaders to ‘lean in’ to GM roles, and women’s networks like Whitbread’s Women at Whitbread, are important steps to take, they won’t be enough on their own, Colaianni advises.

“It’s not just by sending people on a training programme that you change the culture,” she says. “You have to go much deeper and look internally at what you can do better.”

Colaianni cites Travelodge as an excellent example. “They’ve put together focus groups with people from different parts of the organisation and they’ve asked the questions, what are we good at and what are we less good at in terms of diversity? Because sometimes companies just don’t know.

“Everybody knows that they don’t have enough women at the top but they don’t know what internal barriers are preventing women from progressing within a specific organisation. Doing that diagnostic piece around the organisation about what’s good, what’s less good and what’s really bad that needs to be stopped can only be a good thing.”

Louise Byrne, vice-president of global talent at IHG, agrees. Since she joined the company in 2012, the percentage of females in senior leadership positions has leapt from 17% to over 40%, but she knows there is still work to be done.

“We have engaged with Accenture to scratch beneath the surface of why we have fewer women in GM roles and women transitioning from director to VP level,” she says. “They are doing focus groups and one-to-ones to help us understand the real and perceived barriers to inform us about what we need to do differently. Something about having that real diagnostic is key.”

Meanwhile, at Whitbread, diversity has been built into the company’s performance management schemes, setting targets and incentivising against them.

“I tend to think about targets in a simple business context,” says Brittain. “In my experience, rarely, if ever, do we agree to implement something that is strategically important in our business without setting an objective, and then measuring and monitoring our progress towards that goal. Targets, internal or external, hard or soft, are a great tool to focus people’s minds and get things done.”

Although, believes Byrne, there is something to be said for a ‘nudge theory’ approach too. “Our goal at the moment is simply to have more – we’re not setting a target because we think it drives the wrong behaviour,” she says. “We look at and monitor our statistics and progression; but if you set a target, that’s a limit and why have a limit?”

### Technological solutions

Technology is an important tool in the battle to promote greater gender diversity, according to McPherson. “The great thing about it is that it aids transparency and promotes the sharing of information,” she says. “Where women may have had to

search out advancement opportunities in the past, technology now enables information to be accessible to all, aiding inclusion efforts.”

At present, Marriott is optimising all of its HR systems in order to remove any unconscious bias during the recruitment process – an approach IHG will also be investing in next year – as well as using its dedicated social media channels and careers platforms to ensure that there is a constant emphasis on promoting diversity and inclusion.

“A great example of this is our new Marriott Careers Chatbot – a mobile friendly careers concierge that uses artificial intelligence to better target the job search experience, and tell the story of Marriott and its rich culture to external communities,” McPherson says.

### Work together

Key for Colaianni is that the buck doesn’t stop with individual organisations, a sentiment IHG CEO Keith Barr echoed at a recent meeting with the WiH2020 team. “He said this isn’t an issue where we need to compete with each other; it’s an issue where we need to collaborate, pool our resources and learn from each other,” she says.

There’s also a lot to be learned from beyond the hospitality sector. Two initiatives Byrne sees as particularly innovative are Aviva’s group-wide commitment to offer men and women equal parental leave and Lloyds Bank making flexible working the rule rather than the exception; employees must opt out rather than opt in.

Colaianni hopes the WiH2020 initiative will be a good way to encourage the industry to work together and learn from each other. Not only has the team put together a number of work streams, including performance metrics and mentoring, which hotel group HR directors are already coming together to address, they’ve also created a charter, which commits organisations to putting in place internal diversity and inclusion initiatives, and collaborating with other companies in the industry to tackle barriers to diversity. “We want it to be a catalyst for change, a catalyst for action,” she anticipates. ■



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# Hitting new heights

There was a time when the airport hotel was a straightforward concept: a property focused on short-stay business guests looking for nothing more than the basics. But over the past few years, a number of operators have sought to draw in travellers through selling points beyond mere convenience. What should a 21st-century airport hotel look to achieve? Abi Millar asks **David Marr**, SVP and global head of full service brands at Hilton, citizenM CMO **Robin Chadha** and Yotel CEO **Hubert Viriot**.

**F**rom the standpoint of the average traveller, there can be few phrases more depressing than 'airport hotel'. These are equipped for travellers who are looking to be somewhere else; they are not typically somewhere one would stay through choice, but rather a last resort if they have a flight delay or early departure. Perhaps relatedly, many

hotels in this segment are utilitarian at best. Offering nothing more than the basics with uninspiring design and amenities, such as cursory menus, uncomfortable beds, and rooms overlooking a car park, they have historically been more about convenience than creativity.

Luckily, this stereotype is starting to seem out of date. With passenger numbers growing all the time, many operators are eyeing the opportunities and attempting to reboot the segment. As David Marr, SVP and global head of full service brands

at Hilton, explains, guest expectations are rising. "For many years, travellers overlooked and underestimated the quality of airport hotels, perceiving them only as a last-ditch option for delayed flights or extended layovers," he says. "As Hilton continues to introduce airport hotels to some of the world's top travel hubs, we are seeing that those who were unlikely to stay at an airport hotel a few years back are now excited by the prospect."

The Hilton presidential suite is an example of the brand's market-leading ideas for the airport sector.





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Amsterdam Schiphol Airport is in close proximity to the city, making it more appealing as a location for citizenM. Essential designs have been implemented, such as a 24-hour canteen that will cater for time-zone-specific appetites.

### Beyond convenience

With more than 390 airport hotels across the world (the highest of any hotel company), Hilton is inarguably one of the leaders in this area. In 1959, it opened the world's first airport hotel in San Francisco, followed by the second in New Orleans just two weeks later. Nearly 60 years on, it boasts a number of award-winning examples. Hilton Frankfurt Airport stands on 92 pillars above the train station, earning its reputation as 'the tallest lying skyscraper in the world', while Hilton Amsterdam Airport Schiphol is housed in a 43m tall atrium with an expansive glass roof.

"Hilton continues to innovate in the hotel category by opening airport hotels that not only serve business travellers with outstanding business and meeting facilities, but also appeal to leisure guests with elevated design and sophisticated amenities," says Marr. He adds that we are witnessing the development of 'airport cities', in which airports are no longer simply transit hubs but shopping, leisure and business destinations. Hotels play a key role in this transformation.

"Our airport hotels are transforming more and more into sophisticated destinations," he says. "More modern and design-driven than ever, these hotels now offer resort-style amenities – ranging from upscale dining options to high-end spas and even great art."

The big question, then, is whether airport hotels are becoming a go-to space in their own right – somewhere travellers might actively choose to book if they have a few nights in a city, rather than somewhere they stay through necessity. Robin Chadha, chief marketing officer at citizenM, thinks that depends mostly on location.

"Schiphol's a good example – you're ten minutes from the city so there's no reason why you can't stay at the airport hotel and then wander into the city," he says. "Some other airports are a little more challenging. Take Heathrow for example – it's quite far out, especially with the traffic; so I wouldn't stay there if I had meetings in London."

### Designed for travellers

With two airport hotels, one at Amsterdam Schiphol and the other

at Paris Charles de Gaulle, citizenM has been established in this area for a decade. Two years ago, its Schiphol hotel underwent a renovation, expanding from 230 to 355 keys with added meeting rooms. As Chadha explains, the expansion has made no difference to occupancy levels, which stand at around 95% all year round.

"Our airport hotels are made for the traveller who wants the best of class but doesn't want to spend €500," he says. "A lot of people are transferring or have an early morning flight, or they're just working in the airport. They want to have the freedom and efficiencies they'd have at home, within a fun and friendly lifestyle environment."

While the Schiphol and Charles de Gaulle hotels are not noticeably different from citizenM's other properties (all are targeted at business travellers) they do have a few features designed expressly for airline passengers. For instance, the canteen is open 24 hours a day and offers food options to suit all time zones. If so desired, you can have a beer for breakfast or a pain au chocolat at midnight. >>



YOTELAIR properties are situated within the airports themselves and are available by the hour. They are focused heavily towards people on layovers or victims of flight delays.

On top of that, citizenM's self-check-in and self-check-out system – revolutionary when first implemented – allows passengers to continue the frictionless experience they have come to expect at airports. "I bet 99% of all airport hotels still have a standard check-in desk, which is so strange because with airlines, you don't even go to a check-in kiosk, you just check in on your phone," says Chadha. "After you've done everything you can to go through this journey as quickly as possible, why should you have to wait in line at the airport hotel?"

Unlike Marr, Chadha feels that the airport hotel sector has not evolved as much as one might hope. He cites a recent bad experience at an airport hotel, which he likens to "walking into the 1980s". "We arrived there and there was a long line to check in, but there was a separate area with a red carpet and ropes for people who'd got the loyalty card of the brand," he says. "It was a bit dated, the design was uninspiring and the people who worked there looked like they'd rather be at the beach. This is the reason we started citizenM – the industry has been sleeping for a long time and they've lost the most important thing, which is seeing what the guest actually wants."

### A novel experience of luxury

Of course, what the guest wants will differ from hotel to hotel. To take Amsterdam Schiphol as an example, we might well find business executives staying at the Hilton or Sheraton, younger business travellers at the citizenM, and those with an early morning flight at the Mercure Hotel Schiphol Terminal.

For guests at the YOTELAIR (located past security and passport control), their needs are likely to be even more specific. Since YOTELAIR properties are situated within airport terminals, they make no attempt to emulate city properties. In fact, a YOTELAIR room would barely make sense out of context. The rooms, called cabins, can be booked for a minimum of four hours, which is perfect for guests with a layover. With SmartBeds converted from a couch, monsoon showers and superfast Wi-Fi, they are notable for making clever use of minimal space, much like an aircraft cabin.

"One of our founders, Simon Woodroffe, was on a long-haul first-class flight and saw how it was possible through clever design to achieve not only a luxury feel in a compact space, but to have everything you need at your fingertips, whether you wanted to work or rest," says Hubert Viriot, CEO of Yotel. "The Yotel

team enlisted the help of specialist aircraft cabin designers at PriestmanGoode to design and build a prototype room in keeping with the airline theme. Our first airport hotels opened in Gatwick and Heathrow in 2007, followed by Amsterdam Schiphol in 2008."

These properties, then, are less interested in emulating city hotels and more interested in working creatively within the constraints of an airport. Viriot says they appeal to business and leisure travellers, and adds that today's travellers are typically excited to undertake novel experiences.

Currently, the company has two new airport hotels in the works: one at Istanbul New Airport (opening Q4 2018) and one at Singapore Changi Airport (Q2 2019). The Istanbul property will be one of the biggest airport hotels in the world, with 451 rooms, and airside and landside access. "YOTELAIR's hospitality offering is still unique in the sense that we are in the terminal and bookable by the hour – there are not many hotels, especially in the markets we operate in, that offer similar experiences," says Viriot. "Over the past decade, hotels have noticed that what the modern traveller sees as luxury is quite different from what it was 20 years ago. Yotel was designed to meet these needs from inception."

### Back to basics

As air travel continues to grow, we are sure to see a corresponding growth in the airport hotel segment, with operators going to great lengths to find their niche. However, as Chadha points out, any good airport hotel needs to come from the starting point of the stressed-out, time-poor guests.

"The first thing that all airport hotels should look at is how we can make this experience stress-free and fluid," he says. "Airports are already stressful places and everyone has a different story when they arrive – some have been delayed, some have lost their luggage; it's very rare to have a perfect journey. Hotels need to ask themselves how they can alleviate any additional stress." ■

# Cordless flexibility

**Alfred Kärcher**, a leading provider of cleaning technology, is launching a new backpack vacuum on the market. Featuring a carrying frame that maximises comfort for users and improved battery technology, BV 5/1 Bp provides hotels with a convenient, easy-to-use and energy-efficient cleaning tool.

**W**ith the BV 5/1 Bp, Kärcher is launching a new backpack vacuum on the market. The carrying frame has a padded shoulder and hip straps, which can be individually adjusted to suit the user. A spring steel frame with mesh keeps the machine away from the body and allows air to circulate. The vacuum cleaner is controlled via a panel on the waistband, which indicates the battery charge status.

This new backpack vacuum is very versatile and manoeuvrable; being cordless, it is ideal for fast and efficient cleaning in heavily furnished areas. BV 5/1 Bp is suitable for various uses. Apart from selective cleaning, it can also be used for maintenance cleaning in hotels, buildings, public facilities and in the transport industry – buses, trains or aircraft cabins. Thanks to the low noise level, the vacuum cleaner is also suitable for use in noise-sensitive public areas.

## Improved battery technology

BV 5/1 Bp features refined battery technology to deliver the power of corded machines. Power is supplied from a 36V, 7.5Ah lithium-ion battery. This new lithium-ion battery enables the vacuum cleaner, for the first time, to deliver the same power as a mains-operated machine.

## Increased power and run time

With a fully charged battery, the vacuum cleaner has a run time of 24 minutes. The power input in normal operation is approximately 730W. BV 5/1 Bp's eco-efficiency mode can also extend the run time of the machine. Operated in this energy-saving mode, it only requires 400W, which is more than enough for numerous cleaning tasks. While the



The carrying frame features a padded shoulder and hip straps to maximise comfort.

## BV 5/1 Bp backpack vacuum specifications

Battery runtime	24 minutes/46 minutes
Charging time	60 minutes
Container capacities	5L
Sound pressure level	57dBA
Battery voltage	36V
Dimensions (LxWxH)	400x320x636mm
Weight (with battery)	8.7kg
Air flow rate	46L/s
Power	730W/400W



Being cordless, the BV 5/1 Bp backpack vacuum comes into its own in heavily furnished areas.

“ This new backpack vacuum is very versatile and manoeuvrable; being cordless, it is ideal for fast and efficient cleaning in heavily furnished areas. ”

consumption of the vacuum cleaner is almost halved, the run time is doubled from 24 to 46 minutes. For continuous operation, only two batteries are required in the energy-saving mode and the new quick-charger BC 1/7 fully charges a drained battery in only 60 minutes. Battery replacement with the new Kärcher BV 5/1 Bp backpack vacuum is simple at the push of a button. ■

## Further information

Alfred Kärcher  
www.kaercher.com



# All's well that starts well

Wellness architecture is the process of designing buildings that make their inhabitants healthier and happier. Elly Earls meets architects **Veronica Schreibeis Smith** and **Julia Monk** to find out what this means in a hospitality context, and why wellness needs to be a part of design discussions from day one.

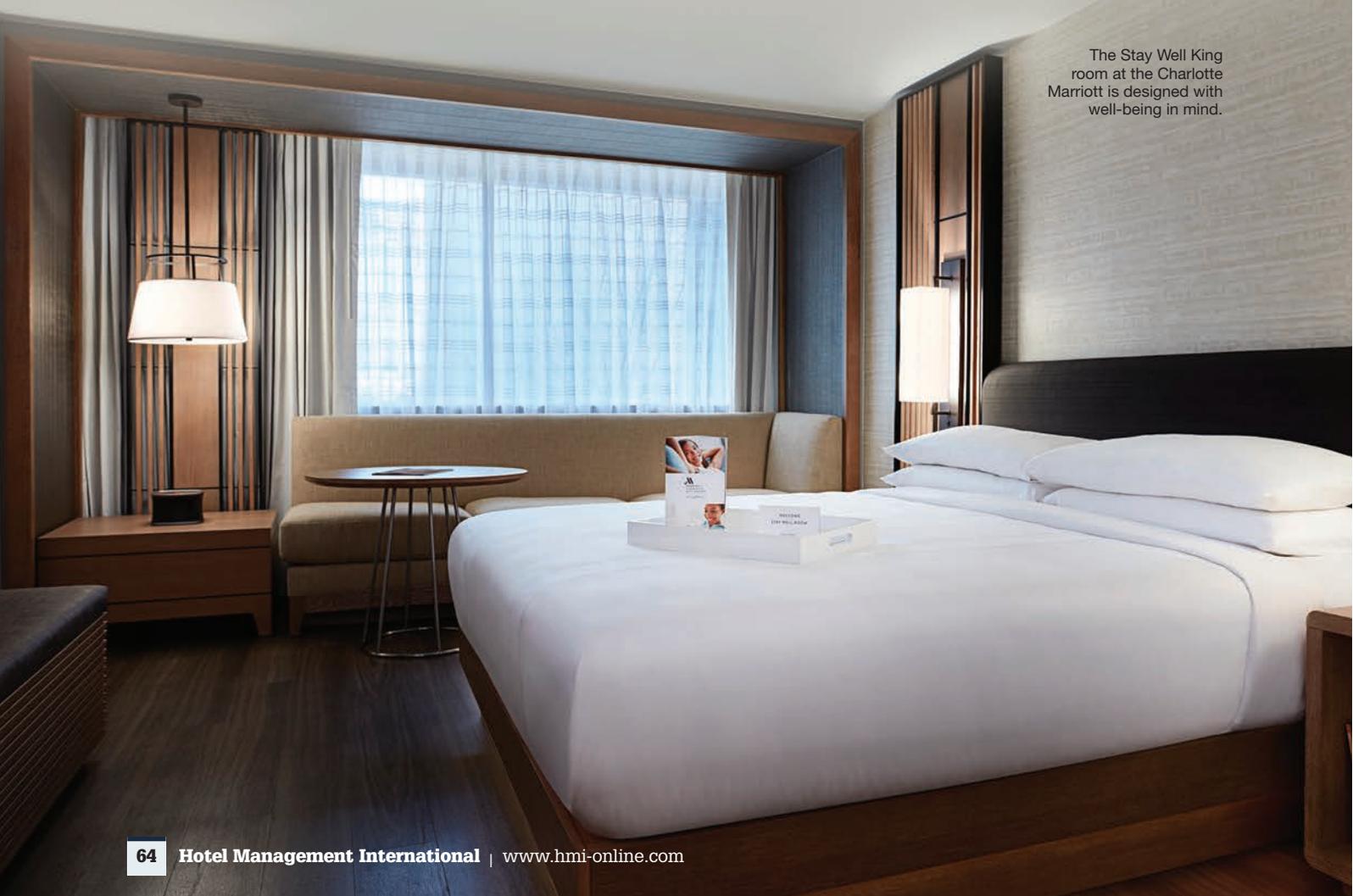
**I**n 2000, the United States Green Building Council introduced the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standard for energy and environmental design. By mid-2016, there were nearly 80,000 projects in 162 countries recognised as environmentally sound – based on a combination of their energy and water

efficiency, sustainable use of resources and low waste generation – and the numbers continue to grow.

More recently, human wellness has become a greater priority during the design stage of buildings in various sectors, whether that is through ensuring enough natural light can enter offices, or softening the stark, clinical

aesthetics traditionally associated with hospitals and health centres.

It is no different in hospitality. With wellness vacationing growing twice as fast as global tourism and guests increasingly seeking transformational experiences, hotel operators are quickly realising that squeezing a gym into the basement or throwing a yoga



The Stay Well King room at the Charlotte Marriott is designed with well-being in mind.



Functional elements such as air filtration systems can improve a guest's experience, as they have been doing at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis.

mat into the room will not cut the mustard for today's guests.

Westin has responded with a promise that all guests will sleep well, eat well, move well, feel well, work well and play well at each of its hotels, while brands like Wyndham and Hilton have introduced specific fitness rooms with exercise equipment, guided fitness and wellness routines.

Operators are also integrating greenery into the hotel experience, adding walking and running routes, improving air quality, and changing the narrative around fitness and wellness by recognising that it extends far beyond the four walls of the gym.

### Good intentions

According to architect Veronica Schreiber Smith, the CEO and founding principal of Vera Iconica Architecture and chair of the Global Wellness Institute's Wellness Architecture Initiative, the next step is to focus on wellness much earlier in the design process and move beyond creating buildings that 'do less harm' to the environment to building hotels that 'do good' – not just for the planet but also for their human inhabitants.

As Schreiber Smith explains, "Wellness architecture is the art and science of including life-enhancing design strategies in the built

environment so as to really empower well-being. While health architecture is focused on physical health, which might include things like clean air and pure water, it leaves out some aspects of being human, such as joy, happiness and comfort."

In a hotel context, wellness architecture covers everything from the inclusion of biophilia to lighting, air quality, and electricity and sound pollution, right through to the proportions of the hallways and rooms, the balance of materials used and even cultural factors.

"When a guest arrives in the room, it should be uplifting and give them a sense of privacy, security, cleanliness and comfort," says Shreiber Smith. "This can be achieved through balancing the materials, textures and colours used in a space and by paying attention to not only biophilic design but also things like feng shui, which might be based on ancient wisdom or sacred geometry.

"Culture influences wellness architecture too," she adds. "For example, including colourful tiles and beautiful bricks that were made a mile away is really important when it comes to wellness architecture and cannot be overlooked. It gives that human connection to the local community and culture, and landscape."

### Back to the well

Although many of the elements surrounding emotional and spiritual happiness are difficult to define or prove scientifically – "Some of it may seem religious or frou-frou and this whole idea of wellness architecture is only just starting to be tested," Shreiber Smith admits – the architecture industry is putting its best foot forward.

In 2014, after six years of research and development, the WELL Building Standard was launched, which shifts the focus from environmental to human sustainability, taking into account air, water, nourishment, fitness, comfort, light, the mind and innovation. The goal is to harness the built environment as a vehicle for supporting human health and well-being.

In the past four years, the standard has been embraced in 35 countries and a variety of building types, and some architecture studios are starting to incorporate it into their usual design practices.

HOK, for example, which was the first large architecture and design firm to form a global strategic partnership with Delos, the founder of the standard, is undertaking a significant initiative to educate and professionally accredit its design teams so they can incorporate principles of health and wellness into all of their projects, whether or not their clients are pursuing WELL certification.

And while no hotels have yet done so, a handful of big hospitality players, including Marriott and Wyndham, have signed up to Delos's Stay Well programme, through which they can have their existing hotel rooms upgraded over the course of three days with state-of-the-art wellness technologies designed to mitigate the countless variables travelling introduces into a hotel guest's routine. By doing so positively impacts their health, vitality, relaxation and well-being.

"Stay Well is the evolution of sustainability," says Julia Monk, director of HOK's hospitality practice based in Hong Kong. "From advanced air purification to dawn simulation, circadian rhythm lighting and a healthy mattress, the wellness features of Stay Well



The living wall at the Long Island Marriott is an example of modern wellness-inspired design.



A Circadian Remote at the Mirage Stay Well rooms allow occupants to control their experience.

rooms are specifically designed to allow rejuvenating sleep, deliver purified air, provide specially filtered water, and protect guests against allergens and germs.

“They are the first of their kind to offer evidence-based health and wellness features in hotels to help travellers maintain their health and well-being while on the road.”

### Energising the people

While Schreiberis Smith has been encouraged by initiatives like Stay Well and believes the hospitality industry is on the right track, she still thinks there is a long way to go.

“You can look at it as an X-Y grid,” she says. “The lower down you get, the more energy you’re consuming and the more

energy it takes a human to recuperate from being in the environment because it might be toxic or unhealthy or circadian rhythms might be off. But when you get higher up, the building is creating energy in the people and in the environment; it’s regenerative, it’s symbiotic with nature.

“Right now, we live in the lower-left-hand corner of that grid, and we’re too often creating unhealthy buildings that are depleting our natural resources and taking energy. And while sustainability should be a target, what’s even better and what people should be reaching for is to be able to use the physical architecture to enhance the local ecology of a place and enhance wellness.”

The first step for a hotel owner, Schreiberis Smith advises, must be a

clear commitment to a wellness architecture approach.

She continues, “It needs to be incorporated into the business plan and the ethics, just like a green project. With green projects, what people find is that when they go above and beyond what codes require, their buildings are healthier, which people prefer, and there is a payback in occupancy and rental rates that they can charge.

“The business model for wellness architecture needs to be similar but also expand on this and incorporate how they’re going to get their ROI out of it. It’s possible but it takes a commitment because there is always going to be an easier, cheaper, more harmful way to do things.”

The Stay Well initiative is a small-scale case in point. “We’ve seen considerable room rate premiums on Stay Well rooms; about 20–25% after a three-day installation process,” says Delos CEO and founder Paul Scialla. “The qualitative and quantitative feedback has been phenomenal, and the programme is growing by the day.”

Schreiberis Smith also suggests that, at initial design discussions, a wellness architecture consultant should have a place at the table. “It’s not just about checking boxes,” she stresses. “To have a really successful project, you need passion and drive.”

Finally – and most crucially for Monk – it’s essential that, as with all hotel design, the process starts and ends with the guest. “Through time, as our awareness as guests, hotel operators, hotel owners, architects and designers becomes more sophisticated, the environments that we design also become more sophisticated,” she says.

“Today, wellness is a priority in hospitality design. Guests are demanding it and willing to pay more for it. Hotel operators, in turn, will demand that their properties are built or adapted to meet the guest’s needs or run the risk of lower occupancy or lower room rate, neither of which will be satisfactory to the hotel owners.

Just as accessibility, ergonomics and sustainability have become a human right rather than just a movement, wellness is next.” ■



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Sales Management Hospitality  
s.kleinmann@brinkhaus.de



# The beauty of tradition

Sustainable development, traditional beauty practices and client satisfaction have been the core values of **Cinq Mondes** since it was founded nearly 20 years ago. Jean-Louis Poiroux, the company's CEO and founder, talks to *Hotel Management International* about the special history of his company, and how its founding principles still make it the luxury spa partner all hospitality businesses should want today.

**C**inq Mondes got its unique start after CEO and founder Jean-Louis Poiroux and his wife Nathalie became fascinated with traditional medicine, and how it could be applied to beauty regimes and health treatments. The pair subsequently spent 18 months travelling across the world in search of the most authentic beauty rituals. Their discoveries in India, China, Japan, Bali and Morocco provided the principles for the later creation of their personal brand.

The pair's first spa was the only one in France to offer its clients health regimes designed in partnership with international experts from the different forms of traditional medicine across the globe. "Our originality lies in the authenticity of our rituals and treatments," says Poiroux. "We were pioneers in Europe when we started offering our customers special choices like Kobido, a Japanese facial massage that provides a remarkable natural lifting effect."

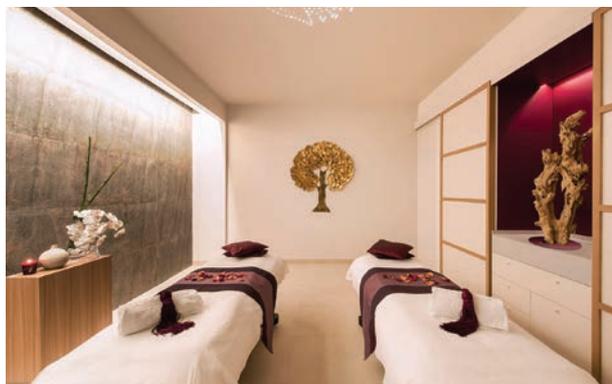
Cinq Mondes is a leader in another sense too, thanks to its insistence on using petrochemical-free ingredients during any product formulation. Its research team develops green products using botanical sources specially chosen for their effectiveness at cleaning the skin, without having any link to the environmentally unfriendly oil industry. The company's commitment to sustainability is also evident in its ongoing pledge to use only Forest Stewardship Council-certified cardboard in its packaging.

## Sparring partners

This attention to detail has brought the company success. Cinq Mondes is now present in over 30 countries, with 14 own-brand institutions and a network of over 1,000 partner spas, including numerous hotel-based ones. These allied operators can use a comprehensive range of 64 cosmetic products, plus a selection of the brand's special treatments. The company also offers the spas sales support, staff training and assistance in running operations, but associated businesses still keep their own history and reputation.

When asked why other companies should partner with his own, Poiroux enthusiastically outlines his company's capabilities. "All our partners have access to the five Cinq Mondes signature treatments, such as Indian Ayurvedic massage, traditional Oriental massage or the Japanese facial massage," he says. "In addition, a franchisee can be given extra training to perform specialist therapies – such as Sirodhara, a relaxing Ayurvedic treatment or four-hand massage."

The guest experience lies at the heart of the Cinq Mondes business model, according to Poiroux, who says his teams work to create an emotional connection with their clients,



In addition to running 14 institutions and over 1,000 partner spas, Cinq Mondes also provides sales support and management assistance.

and to go beyond the usual expectations for such treatments. Afterwards, a personalised recommendation is proposed to visitors when their bookings are finished, so that they can prolong the well-being experience and beauty techniques when they are back home. To be better connected to their customers, feedback is collected through focus groups, satisfaction questionnaires and regular mystery shoppers to the company's facilities and partner enterprises, Poiroux adds.

## Esteemed treatment

Such gestures, and high standards, have translated into solid commercial success for the enterprises that follow Cinq Mondes's lead, Poiroux says. "The global turnover is £36 million, and our flagship, in Paris, has a turnover of €2.5 million, treats 35,000 guests each year and sells €800,000 worth of products annually with a retail-to-service ratio of 38%," he points out.

The excellence of its establishments and franchises have been recognised by outsiders, who have awarded prestigious grades and recommendations, including the 'Spa-A' label of approval and the TripAdvisor 'Certificate of Excellence'.

"We still have the strong relationships we originally built with local experts in traditional medicines, who regularly share their latest discoveries with us," Poiroux says. "The excellence of our treatments, in which our therapists are trained, plus the effectiveness of our skincare products and the attention paid throughout the whole experience, absolutely guarantees the loyalty of our many frequent guests." ■

## Further information

Cinq Mondes  
[www.cinqmondes.com/en](http://www.cinqmondes.com/en)  
[carole.wininger@cinqmondes.com](mailto:carole.wininger@cinqmondes.com)



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# Embracing environmental responsibility

Rising awareness of single-use plastics' environmental impacts has led hotel operators to introduce strategies to outlaw their use across their properties. Grace Allen asks **Daniella Foster**, Hilton's senior director of corporate responsibility, and **Marié Fukudome**, Hyatt's director of environmental affairs and corporate responsibility, about their sustainability strategy and the reduction of plastics.



**A**n environmental catastrophe drifts gently between Hawaii and California. Known by lurid monikers – the Pacific Trash Vortex or the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – this accumulation of marine plastic is not an island built of water bottles and fishing nets, but a vast area of individual pieces of debris, many too small to see, floating in the currents of the North Pacific gyre.

The Ocean Cleanup estimates the Pacific Trash Vortex to stretch over

1.6 million square kilometres, three times the size of France. And while the largest, this is not the only ocean plastic patch; they have formed in areas of circulating currents in oceans across the globe. Awareness of the issue was raised by the BBC's documentary *Blue Planet II*, fronted by David Attenborough, and public concern has resulted in policy change. At the 2018 G7 meeting, the EU committed to a target of 100% use of reusable, recyclable or recoverable plastics by 2030.

The wastefulness of single-use plastics, particularly throwaway items such as drinking straws, has become a pressing issue. The capacity of these items to harm marine life was brought into painful relief by a viral video of a turtle with a plastic straw trapped in its nasal cavity. This is an area in which the hotel industry has been a significant culprit, with single-use plastics appearing as straws and stirrers in restaurants, miniature toiletries in bedrooms and plastic

water bottles in meeting rooms, gyms and spas.

### From awareness to action

Recently, numerous hotel groups have responded to the prevailing mood, recognising the industry's contribution to this form of plastic pollution and taking steps accordingly. "It takes a variety of resources to operate hotels," says Marié Fukudome, director of environmental affairs and corporate responsibility at Hyatt. "Inevitably, there are associated environmental impacts, so it is important that we implement responsible practices."

At Hyatt, from September 2018, straws and picks will be available by request only. Marriott is swapping small bathroom toiletries with larger, recyclable bottles. Hilton has committed to removing plastic straws from its managed properties across the world by the end of 2018, and is taking steps to eliminate plastic water bottles, a process that has begun in hotels in China. AccorHotels announced the intention to ban plastic straws from their hotels in North and Central America from July 2019.

While these moves may seem reactionary, they reflect an ongoing movement in the hospitality industry to embrace environmental and social responsibility. Accor's Planet 21 programme is currently prioritising the reduction of food waste, creating urban food gardens in its hotels, and minimising the carbon cost of new buildings. Hyatt's 2020 Environmental Sustainability Vision sets targets of a 25% reduction of water use per guest night, and 30% in areas with pressure on water resources. "Reducing plastic straws builds on our environmental sustainability goals established in 2014 and represents a meaningful step in our global efforts to reduce their environmental impact," Fukudome says. "It aligns with our goals to purchase responsibly as well as to increase waste diversion in part by reducing overall waste."

In May this year, Hilton announced its 2030 Travel With Purpose goals, part of the wider corporate responsibility



The dining room of Andaz Amsterdam Prinsengracht's Bluespoon restaurant, which participated in the IAmStrawless campaign.



Reusable and refillable water bottles are preferred over plastics bottles at the Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa and EVEN hotels from IHG.

programme Travel With Purpose. They include commitments to cut carbon emissions by 61% (following the Paris Climate Agreement), reduce waste and water consumption by 50% and to invest in local suppliers and organisations. "We're really on a mission to redefine sustainable travel and tourism," says Daniella Foster, Hilton's senior director of corporate responsibility.

In terms of the elimination of single-use plastics, Foster emphasises that their reduction is part of a conversation that has been ongoing for some time. In early February 2018, the Hilton Waikoloa

Village in Hawaii discontinued the use of plastic straws, replacing them with compostable paper in a bid to protect the islands' coastlines and marine life. Hawaii's position in the Pacific means its beaches are frequently littered with marine debris; and in 2017, the resort's more than one million visitors potentially added to this by using over 800,000 plastic straws. "There's also a responsibility to ensure the destinations that folks are travelling to remain a source of discovery and adventure for future generations to come," Foster says.

The challenge of reducing single-use plastics and replacing them with more

sustainable options has led to innovative solutions. Hotel ICON in Hong Kong offers guests pasta straws; at the Hyatt Regency Andares Guadalajara in Mexico, they are made from avocado seed. Earbuds provided at Hyatt fitness centres in North America are now recyclable rather than single use, resulting in nearly 65,000 recycled pairs. At the Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa, water is sourced locally from Mount Dauban, filtered and presented in reusable glass bottles – reducing the use of plastic and

the carbon cost of shipping water to the islands.

**Implementing change is not simple**

Nevertheless, the process of changing a material as familiar and convenient as plastic requires considerable thought. The global movement to eliminate plastic straws has been met with concern from people with disabilities: plastic straws allow many to drink independently and proposed alternatives, such as glass, wood and

metal, are unsafe or inflexible and therefore unsuitable.

“The challenge is identifying where we are overusing plastic and determining how we can reduce the use of it without impacting our service to guests,” Fukudome says. In addition, replacing plastics may result in issues such as increased food waste or difficulty keeping items sanitary. “We are thinking through how you scale these things globally, through a global supply chain, in a way that makes sense,” Foster explains.

The scale of modern hotel groups – with hundreds of properties spread across continents, and many operated through a franchising model – also presents challenges. “Any time an organisation is decentralised and global, implementing change is not simple,” Fukudome concedes. However, there are ways to combat this and even turn the franchising system into a positive.

**Rising to the challenges**

At Hyatt, energy audits allow specific goals and projects for individual properties to be identified and set; IHG allows its properties to achieve levels of certification in sustainability as part of the group’s Green Engage system. Hilton requires all its properties to feed into the LightStay platform, a system measuring and tracking environmental impact and energy use. “Being sustainable is good business,” Foster says. “It’s the right thing to do, but also it helps to ensure you’re running your property as efficiently as you could be.”

A structure that allows individual property independence can also foster improvements. Hilton offers Travel With Purpose Action Grants, which support individual hotels in undertaking corporate responsibility projects

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closely tied to their local area. The Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa's efforts in reducing plastics through local water sourcing, for instance, were supported by an Action Grant.

In addition, the creation of new brands within a hotel group allows environmental responsibility to be built in from the start. IHG's EVEN brand, launched in 2012, focuses on wellness and provides guests with water bottles that can be refilled from stations throughout the hotel. Canopy by Hilton foregrounds sustainability, featuring mattresses made of recycled materials and local ingredients; in terms of reducing plastics, water refills are provided and breakfasts are delivered in recycled brown bags. "Being good environmental and social stewards is just ingrained in our Hilton culture of hospitality," Foster says. "It's important to who we are and how we operate, so increasingly every new brand is going to have a component of that in it."

An important part of sustainability strategy is engaging and communicating

with guests, many of whom – especially younger generations – prioritise environmental issues. A 2018 survey conducted by Hilton showed that 44% of under-25s actively look up a hotel brand's sustainability practice before booking. "There is a rising movement that I think is incredibly positive," Foster says. Interestingly, Canopy by Hilton's website does not focus guests' attention on the brand's reduction of plastics, though the issue is highlighted elsewhere in the company – in China, Attenborough's documentary has been offered on in-room TVs.

"The move to reduce single-use plastics is aligned with our value as a company to care for our communities and our planet, and many of our guests share a similar value," Fukudome says. She points to Hyatt's Hyatt Thrive website as a source of information on the group's policies, and highlights Andaz Amsterdam Prinsengracht's involvement in the city-wide IamStrawless campaign. "As we've rolled out initiatives to reduce our

environmental footprint, guests have responded positively."

**A positive future outlook**

Both Fukudome and Foster stress that the work to reduce plastics and improve sustainability is ongoing. "We are thinking deeply about all of these things, and there will continue to be some exciting innovations and updates that come out as we go into 2019," Foster says. A future without the plastics we currently take for granted in the hospitality industry seems increasingly possible. The Double Tree by Hilton Amsterdam Central Station has created an entirely plastic-free room: curtains, carpets and even do-not-disturb signs have been replaced by naturally and locally sourced alternatives. While it is clear there is some way to go – the plastic-free room sees the television switched for a chess set, which may not be every guest's idea of entertainment – the appetite for sustainability from industry leaders and guests suggests real change is on the horizon. ■



Luxury guest toiletries designed for boutique hotels



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# Sweet smell of success

With hoteliers under pressure to be more environmentally friendly, guests may be offered fewer individual-sized toiletries. However, with the right expertise, hotels can still pamper customers while keeping things green. *Hotel Management International* speaks to Lisa Harrison, managing director at **HD Fragrances**, about the company's range of amenity products.

## Can you tell us a bit about HD Fragrances (HDF) as a company?

**Lisa Harrison:** We are an increasingly sought-after European supplier of guest toiletries designed for boutique hotels. We are known for our niche cosmetic brands, elegant packaging and exclusive fragrances created by our perfumer and founder, Olivier Decoster. Made in Europe, we use only the safest eco-friendly formulations, without harmful preservatives like parabens or phthalates. Our signature collections are designed in the spirit of excellence with competitive prices.

Today, the company partners primarily with prestige properties in France and Belgium, with an expanding footprint under way in Europe and globally. Our clients – from boutique hotels, luxury villas, private chateaux and French winery estates to grand palaces – partner with us to ensure an unforgettable guest experience.

## How can hoteliers be eco-responsible and still provide a memorable guest amenities solution?

Today, only a few travellers expect hotels to have sustainability built into their amenity programme. The vast majority of guests still prefer to receive their own cosmetic products that, if not used, can be taken home to enjoy.

At HDF, we believe it is increasingly important for hotels to embrace green products, such as requesting organic products with biodegradable formulations, recyclable packaging and larger formats. With our wide range of product sizes, we are able to help our clients find the right balance between individual-sized amenities and dispenser formats to better manage costs and environmental concerns. At HDF, we have just introduced two product dispenser solutions in addition to our popular small bottles. One uses a 300ml pump-bottle, and the second uses a 'press-and-wash' mechanism. As a new entrant in the dispenser market, our goal is to offer elegantly designed dispenser packaging and high-quality cosmetics (including certified-organic products). Overall, we are working to change the image guests associate with dispenser products.

## Are you seeing a trend for more organic products that are made from natural ingredients?

Amenity providers and hotels have already made a conscious effort to provide safe cosmetics that are made without parabens and other harmful preservatives.

At HDF, we are also seeing a significant increase in requests for high-quality certified-organic products,



HDF's products respond to hoteliers' need for safe product formulations that do not contain harmful preservatives.

which contain ingredients sourced from renewable sources and natural origins. Our bestselling organic ranges are available in small bottles as well as dispenser bottles.

Our goal is to provide hoteliers with cosmetic products that are safe and gentle on their guests' skin, using European pharmacy-inspired formulations.

## How are niche toiletry brands becoming more important in the luxury hotel market?

New cosmetic and toiletries brands, like those offered by HDF, are building a solid presence within the hospitality market and guests are responding positively. Boutique hotel guests expect something different from the standard and seen-everywhere approach. It is essential to give them an experience they will remember fondly during and after their stay.

A vital element of being 'boutique' is the promise of a personalised, attentive hotel stay for visitors with high-quality amenities. The chance of discovering niche -branded toiletries is one of the greatest joys of visiting a boutique hotel.

## Overall, how would you characterise the company's leading products?

Our signature brands are meant to be discovered. We provide hoteliers with the opportunity to offer high-quality and authentic guest toiletries that smell divine and help to differentiate their establishment from the competition. ■

### Further information

HD Fragrances  
<https://hdfragrances.com>



# Product showcase

## A professional development for hoteliers

The General Managers Programme (GMP) at the School of Hotel Administration, Cornell University elevates decision-makers with the power of strategic thinking through a rigorous face-to-face experience with Cornell's renowned faculty and industry peers on the campus of the world's leading school for hospitality management.

The hospitality industry is constantly evolving. To be successful, hospitality professionals must lead their team with purpose, embrace the industry's evolutionary path and seek opportunities to keep their organisation at the forefront.

GMP is a ten-day transformational learning experience that will provide an in-depth perspective on complex issues facing the hospitality sector now and into the future. Through an experiential approach, hotel professionals will collaborate closely with Cornell's world-class faculty, as well as with their industry peers, to learn, and apply new concepts and strategies to guide their organisation over the long term. During this programme, hoteliers will develop a personalised action plan that will form the framework of how they tackle some of the most pressing business issues.

Unlike other executive programmes that focus on cross-industry general management and leadership skill development, GMP is designed for hospitality management professionals. The curriculum is specialised to address specific and

real-time issues pertinent to hoteliers.

GMP is highly regarded as the hospitality industry's elite career-advancement programme for full-service hotel general managers and their immediate successors. Sessions are instructed by faculty from the Cornell School of Hotel Administration, the world's leading hospitality management school. The programme is offered twice annually on Cornell University's campus in Ithaca, New York, US.

**Further information**  
Cornell University  
[www.sha.cornell.edu/gmp](http://www.sha.cornell.edu/gmp)

## Good for guests, great for housekeeping



The lifting-bed is the flagship product of the 360 Contact range.

With a clear vocation to offer integral sleep solutions through innovation, Ecus keeps growing at a fast pace within the contract industry worldwide.

One of the flagship products of its 360 Contract catalogue is the lifting-bed, a product that improves efficiency on housekeeping duties and is also comfortable for guests. Though it appears to be a regular bed at first glance, it is equipped with a mechanism to automatically lift it. With a simple press of the pedal, this allows the housekeeping staff to make

the bed in standing position, avoiding bending and subsequent lower back pains. Furthermore, the caster wheels let the bed move effortlessly, making the clean-up and hoovering faster and easier.

Comfort is as key as efficiency with the lifting-bed. The bed is equipped with a Europillow Multispring mattress, a pocketed spring mattress with lumbar reinforcement. Based upon guest experience and reviews on platforms, such as Booking.com or TripAdvisor, it is considered to be a game-changer. With a well-balanced medium and firm support, Europillow is the perfect alternative option for hotels attempting to refurbish their rooms or upgrade the comfort of the beds. Ecus Contract offers the best solutions from the tiniest boutique hotel, to great family resorts.

This lifting bed is designed to be comfortable, easy to use and efficient. It is made to make the most of every single minute of our sleep.

**Further information**  
Ecus Sleep  
[www.ecussleep.com/en](http://www.ecussleep.com/en)

## Putting on place solutions

For top-quality hospitality services, plating up for larger groups remains a considerable challenge. But thanks to Plate-Mate, plating up and service have been kept running smoothly for more than 25 years.

The idea of the plate stacker for storing made-up plates in professional kitchens has been with us for some time. However, to ensure maximum reliability and efficiency, the plate-stacking system needs

to be well designed and solidly built. In a busy kitchen, after all, such a system will enjoy intensive use. The patented Plate-Mate system meets all those requirements – and does much more.

To start with, Plate-Mate is available in a variety of heights and capacities, starting at 48 plates. The system is adjustable manually and step by step. This means every type and size of plate and bowl, up to a depth of 5cm, will remain firmly in place, be it round, square, rectangular or oval – and if required, a combination of any or all of the above. There is even an option for complete serving trays. Thanks to the system, the own weight of the plates ensures a solid, safe hold using special protective rubbers, thereby reducing the risk of breakages to a minimum. The Plate-Mate is fitted with four casters, some of which have brakes, to ensure perfect and stable manoeuvrability, while cleaning is a simple task completed in a matter of seconds.

The Plate-Mate's value for money is reflected by its long useful life. Thanks to the solid design in stainless steel and the well-thought-out 'Lego'-style assembly system for the individual components, the trolley system can offer a lifetime of use, even if intensive use results in wear and tear. Although highly unlikely, the modular system means the individual components can be easily replaced if need be. In addition, nearly every Plate-Mate comes



Hoteliers can increase direct bookings via their own website.

with a standard three-year warranty.

All in all: if businesses are looking for an innovative and durable solution for the lack of space in their kitchens or coolers, they need look no further than Plate-Mate, the brand that has held the patent on the ideal professional kitchen solution for more than 25 years. Thanks to constant efforts at innovation, the company expects to still be the leading product for the next 25 years.

**Further information**  
Plate-Mate  
[www.plate-mate.com](http://www.plate-mate.com)

### Bring hospitality online

Hotels are being undercut by online travel agencies (OTAs) 30% of the time. This not only has a huge impact on their direct conversion rate, but also means that with every booking, OTAs learn more about how to target and convert the hotel's guests. As a result, OTAs continue to have an enormous data advantage over the hotel industry. Triptease exists to redress that power balance.

The company empowers hotels to recapture guest relationships, increase direct bookings and learn from every interaction to improve their overall web experience. With Triptease, hoteliers are able to use data to free themselves from a reliance on OTAs.

The direct-booking platform integrates with a hotel's website and booking engine, and allows hoteliers to personalise and continuously improve guest experiences using targeted messaging, automated live chat assistance and industry-leading parity management tools.

Triptease's parity management and Price Check tools help hoteliers to monitor and optimise their parity, so they can offer the guests the best price directly and increase direct bookings via their own website. They also have the opportunity to continuously test and iterate their messaging by identifying high-value audiences and trialling different offers via Message Porter. This combination of tools means that hoteliers can begin

to access the same rate of learning that OTAs have been benefiting from for years.

What makes Triptease products unique is that they are designed to work in unison to enhance the customer's journey – not to complicate it. There is no benefit in having a huge range of messaging options if they don't combine intelligently to provide a logical, joined-up experience for potential guests. With Triptease, hoteliers know that they will be able to provide a more conscious online communication experience, with each element of the platform working together to create a simpler, smarter booking journey for guests.

**Further information**  
Triptease  
[www.triptease.com](http://www.triptease.com)

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# Expand certificates

EHMA delegate and Melia Hotels International area director for Italy **Palmiro Noschese** is finally getting the chance to establish official certification for hotel managers. He explains how the project is going so far, and his plans to expand certification far beyond Italy.



**G**eneral managers are vital to the everyday running of hotels, as well as for supporting the strategic health of the business. Yet, despite playing such a crucial role, I long wondered why general managers could not get certified for their work. These frustrations spurred me, together with five colleagues from EHMA, to set up an Italian certification for hotel managers at the end of 2017.

Each of us put forward ideas about what general managers do day to day. Some of us saw them as architects, while others emphasised the food and beverage aspect of the job. Training staff and organising HR was another common response. Then we began to hunt for a company to conduct the certification exams. We picked Intertek – a multinational leader in the field – to make the test as rigorous as possible.

The exam includes a multiple-choice test, followed by an oral test with Intertek and EHMA. Successful candidates need to take the exam every five years to renew their certificate.

Though we have not been offering the Italian tests for long, we have had very strong results so far. Many Italian general

managers have done their jobs for a long time and feel like they have nothing new to learn. But when you ask these managers specific questions, they tend to struggle.

## Beyond Italy

Of course, it is not that our certifications are only for managers south of the Alps. We are working with international partners to establish a pan-European certification programme. We have involved a lot of international associations – including the *École hôtelière de Lausanne* – and soon plan to unveil a new certification that no longer limits us to Italy but will be available to all hotel managers in Europe.

This is important not only for current general managers wanting to sharpen their skills but also for the new generations. Plenty of my colleagues have worked as general managers for years, and they do not need official certification to do their jobs well. But when the new generations arrive, they will need internationally recognised certificates that prove they are well trained and can think strategically. Having one of our certificates, general managers

can show that they would give value to the clients and the hotels.

## Look ahead

More broadly, I hope our certification can boost the economy. Tourism will develop significantly over the next decade, meaning it can play a key role in all continents. But for this to happen, hotel managers need to be well prepared. My suggestion is that hotel professionals look at these new certification opportunities from a strategic point of view: the more prepared the staff are, the more ahead they can get in the competition.

With this in mind, we plan to expand the certification to include food and beverage managers. The Italian Food and Beverage Association and I are working to develop this new certificate, solving similar problems to the ones we tackled for general managers. Our aim over the next few years is that all hotel professionals – from general managers down – will be certified. ■

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