

VIEW FROM THE TOP

Just like the travel agencies it serves, Amadeus, too, is expanding into new business lines, says newly appointed Asia-Pacific president Angel Gallego



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PEER POWER

As P2P travel sites multiply, will the rise of the sharing economy grow the pie or eat into it?



BETTING BIG

Sri Lanka is mulling whether to raise its stakes in casino development, as it seeks to compete with other Asian neighbours who are also building IRs



AN INDEPENDENT STREAK

Why do some hotel owners prefer to be independent? How do they choose a hotel marketing company to represent them?



GEARING UP FOR ACTIVE HOLIDAYS

Asians are becoming daredevils, with more seeking out adrenaline-pumping activities in New Zealand



AMBITIONS ON THE RISE

Developments in Dubai and Abu Dhabi continue unabated, as both cities ready to reap the benefits from Expo 2020

Guide Hotel marketing representation

AN INDEPENDENT STREAK



ONE FARRER HOTEL & SPA, SINGAPORE
– PREFERRED HOTEL GROUP

No. of rooms 250

Positioning Five-star luxury hotel, three hotel concepts in one, trend-setting urban resort. Opening in phases from August

One Farrer Hotel & Spa is the hospitality/lifestyle centrepiece of a mixed use development called The Connexion that includes a state-of-the-art conference centre, a private hospital and specialist clinics.

The owning company, The Farrer Park Company, believes that being an independent hotel gives One Farrer Hotel & Spa full autonomy to tailor its offerings and establish a unique hospitality, wellness and F&B experience for its guests.

The hotel has chosen Preferred Hotel Group (PHG) to represent it, saying PHG will give it a global platform, the endorsement of a renowned brand, connectivity to online and travel agency reservations

systems, and on the consumer front, its point-based loyalty programme iPrefer. PHG also has a network of 36 global sales offices and access to 16 frequent flyer programmes.

Richard Helfer, director of The Farrer Park Company and chairman of One Farrer, likes that each member hotel is required to meet or exceed the Preferred standard of excellence, which is anonymously reviewed yearly.

He added: “PHG’s integrated quality assurance measurement programme, which allows member hotels to aggregate and analyse reviews and comments from 45 consumer review and social media sites, is also a valuable platform for helping the hotel to understand residents’ experiences. This will be a significant tool that aids the hotel’s efforts in continuously improving its standards.”

THE PATINA, CAPITOL SINGAPORE
– LEADING HOTELS OF THE WORLD



No. of rooms 157

Positioning Experience-led hospitality, celebrates individuality, art, architecture, heritage and culture. Opening 1Q15

The Patina, Capitol Singapore, is owned by the Kwee family, which owns luxury hotels such as The Ritz-Carlton, Capella, Conrad and Regent in Singapore. The Patina represents an amalgamation of over 50 years of expertise and experience in luxury hospitality, and the move from owning to operating a hotel.

For representation, it has picked Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) as its collection of luxury hotel brands fits the bill, and has track record and international presence, said Marc Dardenne, CEO of Patina Hotels & Resorts. He likes its “bespoke” rather than “cookie cutter” sales/PR efforts based on each hotel’s needs.

“With their global sales, marketing and PR presence, we can leverage and tap on their databases and expertise in target markets, especially emerging markets like India, Russia and China,” said Dardenne, adding that LHW’s loyalty programme, Leaders Club, also enables Patina to reach out to high net worth individuals.

PRINCE HOTEL & RESIDENCE KUALA LUMPUR
– WORLDHOTELS



No. of rooms 445 (plus 157 serviced apartments)

Positioning A corporate hotel located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur

The hotel is a franchise of Prince Hotels & Resorts Japan and is operated independently with affiliation to Worldhotels.

Being independent allows autonomy on decision-making among the hotel executive committee team on strategies pertaining to branding, positioning, providing a unique guest experience and driving profit, said general manager Tim Quarm. Hence, senior managers are trained to be entrepreneurs of their own business units and to be creative hoteliers, he said.

The challenge commonly faced by independent hotels is a lack of awareness of the property and connection to the international travel trade as compared to international hotel chains. A marketing representation gives that exposure, and it picked Worldhotels for “its relevant tools, up-to-date innovations/strategies and experienced marketing personnel based in various regions”, said Quarm, who also likes the bridge to multinational corporations that Worldhotels provides.

TRIED & TESTED

The House Hotel, Istanbul

Raini Hamdi checks into Design Hotels member, The House Galatasaray, Istanbul, and gives her verdict on representation

LOCATION In Istanbul’s bohemian Cukurcuma quarter. The Design Hotels’ affiliation reassures me that ‘bohemian’ is hip, not hippie – I would not have booked it otherwise. The taxi winds its way through streets of artsy cafes and antique shops. A good and interesting location indeed, with the tramway and subway that take you direct to major attractions being within walking distance of the hotel.

DESIGN This is a 20-room boutique property conserved from a 1890s five-storey Ottoman mansion. It therefore has an original story, architecture and, restored by a leading Turkish design firm, Autoban, it has design. So Design Hotels is true to its selection. But is it comfortable?

ROOMS With a mansion-turned-hotel, there are clearly limitations. There is no elevator and there is a rain-shower cubicle standing in a corner of my bedroom, looking odd. My suite is on the third floor – just perfect as the breakfast room is

on the rooftop, fifth floor, so two floors up for breakfast and two floors down for sightseeing.

I love my suite, which comprises a living room, bedroom and a small bathroom. The ceilings are so high, enhancing space and light. The polished parquet floor adds warmth. The whole accommodation is crisp white and on one wall are golden dove ornaments, a fitting symbol of the city which has doves flying around its towering structures. The amenities are luxurious – two flat-screen TVs, excellent Wi-Fi, a crisp white bed you just want to dive into.

I would say the design aspects are subtle and admirable if you spare a thought to



how they come together. But if you’re not a design buff, it’s still a luxurious, comfortable room with a modern makeover.

FACILITIES The breakfast room is a delight as it offers views of downtown Istanbul and Galata Tower, and feels so homely and inviting, what with its fireplace, exposed wooden beams and brass-studded leather sofas.

SERVICE Like a private home, this house opens its heart to you. Upon arrival, they send up a bottle of wine, a huge box of gourmet chocolates and fruits. Housekeepers along the corridors smile warm-

ly, as we would if we were making the guest room in our homes. Overall, the service is friendly and efficient.

VERDICT In line with Design Hotels’ portfolio and as good as its name promises – it really is a house hotel!

Name The House Hotel Galatasaray, Istanbul
No. of rooms 20

Rate From 119 euros (US\$162)

Contact details

Tel: (90-212) 252-0422

Email: reservation@thehousehotel.com

Website: www.designhotels.com/hotels/turkey/istanbul/the-house-hotel-galatasaray

Why do some hotel owners prefer to be independent and how do they choose a hotel marketing company to represent them? *Raini Hamdi, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Paige Lee Pei Qi, Mimi Hudoyo and S Puvaneswary* find out

INDIGO PEARL, PHUKET – DESIGN HOTELS



No. of rooms 177

Positioning Offering cultural, design and architectural lifestyle experiences

Indigo Pearl is owned by veteran hotelier Wichit Na-Ranong who prefers to be independent so he can embrace the brand pillars of cultural heritage, creativity, design and architecture and a close connection to north Phuket with its rich history, national parks, high-quality beaches and tin-mining origins.

For representation, it needed a company that understands this positioning and its unique product. Thus, it settled on Design Hotels which, said general manager Christopher Oakes, also shares its entrepreneurial spirit and enables it to reach high-quality niche markets.

Said Oakes: “Indigo Pearl is not a typical resort; it is very art- and design-focused with a deep connection to the destination. So it is not mass market, but attracts a more refined guest profile.

“We feel Design Hotels demonstrates a strong understanding of our ideals and, with its ability to open up new regional markets to us and increase business across direct and retail channels, we believe they are a good fit.”

Oakes said the resort has expanded its visibility and profile with new travel consultants at events, exchanges and sales missions organised by Design Hotels.

ALEENTA PHUKET -PHANG NGA RESORT AND SPA – SMALL LUXURY HOTELS OF THE WORLD



No. of rooms 44 (plus 44 in development)

Positioning Luxury, “all suites, all private” concept, smallest room being 80m²

Aleenta Phuket is owned and managed by AHMS-The Collection, a hospitality management company under the leadership of founder/MD Anchali Kijkanakorn, who aims to cater to like-minded hotel owners/developers around Asia.

For representation, it picked Small Luxury Hotels (SLH) as it shares the same ethos as AHMS. Anchali is also chairman of the board of SLH, the first female and Asian representative to be elected to this position. “SLH has a wide reach globally and their selection of hotels guarantees the correct brand associations and connotations for us at all times,” she said.

“SLH has regional sales and PR teams worldwide including key emerging markets like China, India and Russia as well as all traditional markets.”

On the technical side of distribution SLH provides a state-of-the-art Internet booking engine, seamless packaging opportunities, full GDS connectivity with systems support from a dedicated account manager, she said. It audits all hotels each year. SLH Club Members also has over one million customers who book SLH hotels at least twice per year, and Anchali said they are “perfect guests with the highest ADR and incremental spend”.

THE BALE, NUSA DUA, BALI

** Name of former representation company withheld*



No. of rooms 29

Positioning A hideaway for couples, adults-only policy, luxury pool villas, butlers, gourmet cuisine, spa

The resort is owned by an Indonesian-based company and is managed by Lifestyle Retreats, a Singapore-based boutique hotel management firm. It ended its hotel representation partnership last year as the actual room/revenue production had decreased yearly while production from OTAs and the hotel’s websites increased.

“This is a market shift which I believe is affecting marketing affiliations across the board,” said Jose Luis Calle, managing director, Lifestyle Retreats. Calle believes representation firms can help properties without a brand or solid marketing team to penetrate markets, but once these hotels have positioned themselves, it is a challenge to justify the expense of representation if it’s not supported with actual production of room nights and turnover.

“Representation companies are not always necessary, although I sincerely appreciate their contribution especially during the pre-opening of The Bale in 2002. It put The Bale on the map and gave us the right exposure in a number of magazines. Production through their website represented a significant amount of the overall turnover of the property. Those were the good days definitely,” he said.

ROYAL PLAZA ON SCOTTS, SINGAPORE – PREFERRED HOTEL GROUP



No. of rooms 511

Positioning Deluxe business hotel

After being part of a hotel chain for 25 years, Royal Plaza on Scotts, owned by Sajahtera Investments, went independent to “allow us the flexibility to respond to a fast and ever-changing market”, said general manager Patrick Fiat, who believes personalised service delivery is a challenge for chain properties around the world to implement and manage.

Saying it takes two to tango in all partnerships, the first criterion in selecting a representation firm is to ensure it has similar business practices and ideals. He thus settled on Preferred Hotel Group (PHG).

Fiat said: “We have seen a healthy growth in business every year since we embarked on the partnership more than 15 years ago.

“We have gained support from various regional offices to secure corporate RFPs from global MNCs. This translates to a substantial amount of direct business from frequent business travellers of these corporations. PHG also helps to enhance our brand in the global market.”

He added that PHG also reaches out to global travel agencies online and offline, which is a good source of business. “The hotels can use this to their advantage by balancing out the seasonal demands and booking costs,” he said.

iPrefer



POINTS = REWARDS



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