Forbes Middle East

Brand Diversification And 2020 Driving Growth In Hospitality

At the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai in April, we spoke to Bastien Blanc, VP operations, Middle East at IHG. He told us about how IHG is evolving to suit new customers preferences.

"IHG stands for Intercontinental Hotels Group, we are one of the largest hospitality companies in the world, operating more than 5,700 hotels throughout the world.

"In this region we are operating 91 hotels. We are going to grow by 37 hotels, so more than 30% growth over the coming three to five years. This growth is not only significant in terms of numbers, but also the brand presence we will bring to the market.

"Things are evolving from two angles. The kind of experience customers are looking for. Before, all what was needed was being reassured about the standards of the hotels - a very standardized product. That is why we came in first with Intercontinental and Crowne Plaza, which are very famous upscale and luxury brands. Now, the new generation is looking for a much more individual experience through hotels. So, we are bringing Kimpton and Indigo, which are much more independent hotels and offer individual experiences.

"Our two strongest markets are UAE and KSA, which are really supported by strong investments. There are mega developments like the Red Sea project and NEOM project in KSA, and in UAE all the investments in amusement parks and museums that drive the demand in the region.

"Every single market is going through different cycles, right now there are many openings in anticipation of 2020. Openings are happeining faster than guests arrival, so by then we anticipate adequate growth in the sector. We are also positive beyond that. This region of the world, and especially the UAE, has proven to be able to constantly reinvent itself, and if you look at business trends beyond 2020, they seem to be very posotitve for the tourism sector throughout the GCC."

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