

Accor to launch Sofitel and Pullman in India this year

Accor currently operates eight hotels and is committed to 52 more, many of which are under construction. However, the development of their Ibis brand will be the main focus for Accor in 2011.

Accor will open around 10-15 hotels in 2011

2011 is the Year of Ibis

"Our main focus in India is in the budget and economy brands as there is a great growth potential in these segments. We plan to position 2011 as the Year of Ibis," Daniel Tannenbaum, regional director, sales & marketing, India, Accor, said. The Group currently operates three Ibis hotels, in Gurgaon, Pune and at Mumbai airport. "We will open four more Ibis' this year, in Bengaluru Tech Park, Ibis Delhi airport, Ibis Nashik and Ibis Navi Mumbai," he said. According to him, while Ibis in Bengaluru is slated to open in July 2011, the hotels in Navi Mumbai and Nashik will open by the end of this year. Ibis New Delhi airport will open in 2012," he added. The prospects for the Ibis brand are very strong in India due to the demand for economy hotels, driven primarily by the significant and consistent growth of domestic travel.



Daniel Tannenbaum

Pullman, Sofitel to foray into India this year

Accor, which currently operates brands like Ibis, Novotel and Mercure in India, is all set to bring in three more brands this year. "2011 will see Accor's luxury Sofitel, upscale Pullman and low cost Formule 1 brands debut in India. "We are going to open Pullman Gurgaon in June and construction has also commenced on Pullman hotels at Delhi International Airport and in Lavasa," he informed.

"We are also opening Sofitel, our five-star product, in the Bandra-Kurla Complex in Mumbai in April-May this year," Tannenbaum said, adding that the foray of Sofitel would bring French luxury to the Indian market for the first time. A second Sofitel is committed for Mulund in Mumbai and due for completion in 2013.

Accor eyes 16 Novotel in India

Accor, which entered India with the Novotel brand in 2006 and currently operates



Pullman Gurgaon will be the first Pullman to open in the country. The photo of the mock room gives an idea about the brand.

three Novotels, has committed for a further 13 throughout the country. "We aim to establish Novotel as one of India's leading upper midscale hotel brands by the end of 2012 when eight Novotels will be operating throughout the country," he added.

Accor, InterGlobe set up investment funds for Ibis

Accor and InterGlobe set up an investment fund for a portfolio of Indian hotel assets last year in which an affiliate of Singapore-based Pacifica Partners, a capital management company, will take a significant stake of up to 36 percent equity. Accor and InterGlobe will each hold 32 percent equity in the fund. The fund will initially hold the assets for

seven hotels in India which are currently jointly owned by Accor and InterGlobe, representing 1750 rooms with a value of approximately \$325 million on the completion of the hotels.

Online bookings doubled in last three years

Without divulging any figures, Tannenbaum said that the share of the online bookings in India for Accor has doubled in the last three years and it is growing. "We are also getting a good volume of business from travel agents. We have a system called 'Star Rates' which enables travel agents to get the special rates for booking any Accor hotel in the world," he said. —MURARI MOHAN JHA

Xn Hotel Systems enables hotels to keep their opex low

UK headquartered Xn Hotel Systems which specialises in the supply and support of business applications and electronic booking services to the hotel industry is upbeat about the growth prospects in India. Sanjay Verma, country manager – India, Xn System, shares his vision for the Indian market.

When did you foray into the Indian market and how has the growth been since then?

We started in mid-2008 and our first group deal was with Lemon Tree Hotels who were at that point evaluating their PMS strategies and chose Xn's Protel Multi-property Edition as a right fit to their requirements. Initially, we focused on just our first customer and kept adding properties pan-India. With 13 properties on a centralised model for Lemon Tree and 3 properties of Red Fox hotels we have proven tremendous cost savings for our customer. Moreover, Protel was installed in ITDC's hotel Ashok, Janpath and Samrat during the Commonwealth Games. In South India, we have implemented our solutions at Raintree Hotel which runs two five star ecotel properties in Chennai.

In the Western Region, we have signed with the Citrus group of hotels and have installed our solutions at their Kerala and Goa property. Citrus has 5 major running properties and plans to add 2000 more rooms. Our in-principle and initial acceptance by the first Movenpick Hotels property in India will see our solutions getting installed at their upcoming property in Bangalore.

How many hotels have adopted Xn systems in India in 2010 and what is the growth projection for 2011?

As many as five hotel chains in India have already adopted Xn solutions and we are in talks with more hotel chains that are keen to adopt our solutions that work to their advantage.

How cost effective is your system for hotels and how does it help in streamlining their operations?

As a central property management system, Protel MPE can transform even a global hotel chain into a single unit. All connected hotels access the same guest information from a central database. Data and functions are available in real time at every property. And you can reap the enormous benefits of having clean data stocks and lean business processes. The Protel Multi Property Edition offers reservation, marketing and reporting in one package, enabling hotels to control all their activities such as revenues and reports across the entire organization. Moreover, Protel also helps hotels



Sanjay Verma

to keep their capex and opex low. Protel's centralised solutions help hotel chains to effectively use and implement their centralised call-centre operations, cross-property reservations, loyalty program, rate strategies and centralised reports.

There are other companies which offer similar services. Hence, how do you view the competition and what is your strategy to stay ahead in the market?

We compete with some of the best known PMS and hotel IT companies globally; however our products and services make us stand apart from the competition. Our strongest product is the Protel Multi-property Edition that is best suitable for hotel chains in India. We focus on customers as our partners and help them grow their businesses. Understanding the customers' need is very critical in today's time, hence, we focus on their needs and suggest to them the best available solutions.

In India, we feel that there is a huge gap as this market has been dominated by a few select global players that restrict the choice of selection for the hotel chains. On the other hand, there are local players that cater to a specific segment which is governed by price rather than features. This is the reason that we are in talks with the majority of recognised chains operating in the hospitality domain as they are keen on our product offering.

We are a long term player in this market and we intend to grow steadily, keeping customer satisfaction on a high, as they are powered with a global product.

How are you planning to promote your products in India and what is the investment you have earmarked for promotion in India?

We have seen that our customers buy any one product from us and they are so impressed with our products and services that they end up buying at least 2 or 3 additional products. Number of our clients begin with one product and seeing how easy it is to use, they keep adding different modules – that in fact is one of our greatest marketing USP's. We regularly take part in all major technology related trade shows and we have been fortunate enough to get a lot of word of mouth referrals. We believe such publicity is an important tool to explain the advantages our product brings with it. —TEAM T3

HIGHLIGHTS

Five hotel chains in India have already adopted Xn solutions

Xn Hotel Systems to grow steady in India

Protel Multi-property Edition is best suitable for hotel chains

in brief...

◆ Omega TC Holdings acquires minority stake in Roots Corp

Singapore-based private equity firm Omega TC Holdings Pte Ltd has decided to acquire a minority stake in Roots Corporation Ltd, a subsidiary of Indian Hotels, that runs the Ginger brand of hotels for Rs 150 crore. Omega will acquire stake in RCL by making investments in various tranches. Moreover, the private equity firms will also acquire compulsorily convertible preference shares from some existing holders for an aggregate consideration of Rs 70 crore. This apart, Omega will have an option to invest a further Rs 100 crore in RCL by March 2014, subject to satisfaction of certain conditions.

◆ Absolute Hotel Services Signs Second Hotel in Jodhpur

Absolute Hotel Services India recently took over the management of Desertscape Jodhpur Resort. This follows last year's announcement of the new build 63-room U Desertscape Jodhpur that is due to open in 2012. The two resorts are owned by the same developer, Prescon Hospitality.

◆ Movenpick Hotels to open second property in India

Swiss-based Movenpick Hotels is opening Movenpick Dharamshala Resort & Spa. This is the second property of the group in India with the first to be unveiled in mid-2011 in Bengaluru. The 124-room resort will have a 2,500 square metre Ayurvedic spa, which will feature preventive health programmes, detox sessions and international treatments alongside Ayurvedic meditation and yoga therapies. The rooms will vary in size from 45 to 70 square metres.