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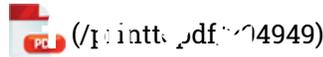
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Accor reaches new guests via lifestyle-division growth

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It's been more than two years since Accor formed a lifestyle division, which includes brands Jo&Joe, Mama Shelter, SBE and Raffles, among others, to cater to a new branch of hotel clientele.



Part of Accor's new lifestyle division, the 25hours Hotel Terminus Nord in Paris displays design, color and style from the Gare du Nord district's Indian and African populations. (Photo: Terence Baker)

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GENTILLY, France—It has been a little more than two years since Accor created its lifestyle division.

With the opening of the flagship of its new Jo&Joe brand this month, this division now spans the entire segmentation curve, according to Cédric Gobilliard, Accor's head and SVP of lifestyle.

"The division came about because we at Accor realized what we were offering was not what our customers were looking for," Gobilliard said. "And then with the emergence of Airbnb, we knew we had to redefine a new type of hotel experience."

Its lifestyle portfolio includes Jo&Joe, Mama Shelter, Raffles, Tribe, 25hours Hotels, Thalassa Sea & Spa and SBE, along with SBE brands Delano, Hyde, House of Originals, Mondrian and SLS Hotels.

Gobilliard pointed out the portfolio's brands are not all luxury but all share the DNA conceived by the Mama Shelter brand created by the famed Trigano family, which also developed resort brand Club Méditerranée, now simply called Club Med.

Serge Trigano, president of Mama Shelter (<http://www.mamashelter.com>), attended the grand opening of the flagship Jo&Joe Paris-Gentilly on 18 April. François Leclerc, VP of brand and operations for Jo&Joe (<http://www.joandjoe.com/en>), said Trigano's appearance at the opening underlined this common thread of Accor's lifestyle hotels being living spaces, not merely hotels.

Gobilliard, who formerly headed up the Mercure brand in France, said Accor created its lifestyle division to attract a new type of customer.

"This is not a shift in our clientele, but a different one," he said. "The general increase in the numbers of travelers all looking for experiences meant we needed a new cake. Yes, our Ibis, our Novotel brands are still so important. Our profitability comes from these guys."

Gobilliard added the division also contains the standalone Restaurants by Accor brand, which contains some 2,500 restaurants.

Flexibility

Sébastien Bazin, president and CEO of Accor, said the development of brands across its lifestyle division is indicative of how the French company has changed in recent years.

He added he envisions a Jo&Joe pipeline of up to 80 hotels.

"Accor was a big vessel, a tanker, super-solid," Bazin said. "It is hard for it to turn 10 degrees to the north or the south, but Jo&Joe is a small boat with the wind behind it. It is one of our sailboats. We have more."

But that does not mean development can continue completely unmonitored.

"My job is to protect these brands. By separating them from the classic departments, even though they will be part of (loyalty program) All, we will protect the equity of owners," Gobilliard said. "Optimizing numbers could dilute the DNA. (Accor's) other brands do not copy (the lifestyle brands) as we have our distinct clientele. Respect who you are."

Gobilliard said these eateries, along with entertainment offerings, provide approximately 50% of the lifestyle division's revenue.

"For a clientele looking for something different, we have the authenticity of these brands and their creators—the Trigano family, Christoph Hoffmann of 25hours (<https://www.25hours-hotels.com/en/hotels>) and Sam Nazarian of SBE (<https://www.sbe.com>), among others," he said.

Accor owns 50% of SBE (<http://www.hotelnewsnow.com/Articles/287146/Accors-50-SBE-buy-brings-it-US-lifestyle-know-how>) and 30% of 25hours (<http://www.hotelnewsnow.com/Articles/84602/Accors-25hours-stake-fuels-goal-to-dominate-lifestyle>).

A key concept of these brands and hotels will be that they will also have a local approach to them, Gobilliard said.

"If it is trendy for locals, then guests will come," he said. "We're investing in entertainment. New experiences only work when they are authentic."

Hugo Martin, sales and marketing manager at 25hours Hotel Terminus Nord, which sits in front of the Gare du Nord station in Paris, said his hotel adopts the sounds, styles and colors of the district's Indian and African populations.

That is very noticeable in the Sape Bar, which pays homage to the stylish, colorful clothes of Africa's "sapeurs," sartorially conscious men collectively known as the Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes (The Society of Tastemakers and Elegant People).

On the move

Of the brands in the division, Mama Shelter will soon be on a growth spurt, Gobilliard said, with assets coming to London, Lille (France) and Santiago.

"(Mama Shelter) has a small team and is very selective," he said.

Gobilliard said Jo&Joe should have 10 assets within the next three years.

"We have said no to some offers. The essentials are for Jo&Joe (properties) to be in urban centers or by transportation hubs," he said.

The opened Paris property is in the satellite town of Gentilly, which is a short walk across a bridge from the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris.

"For me volume equals value," Gobilliard said of Jo&Joe. "I need people in my common spaces, and I needed spaces to be packed. It is a different approach."

At the other end of the spectrum, Raffles announced this month that it would open two new hotels in India, in Jaipur and Udaipur.

Editor's note: Accor paid for train and hotel expenses related to the trip. Complete editorial control was at the discretion of the HNN editorial team; Accor had no influence on the coverage provided.