

Independent F&B brands to supplant hotel outlets?

Lucy Taylor, March 9th, 2010

The future of hotel F&B offerings lies with independent brands, according to top regional operators.

BinHendi Hospitality business development manager for F&B Khalil Fakih said he was certain the region would increasingly see independent outlets in hotels “because nowadays you need a hook or an established brand to draw people in”.

RMAL Hospitality director of restaurant operations Simon Penhaligan added that branded outlets could add “significant value” to a hotel portfolio.



“We’ve got two very strong branded outlets in the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr — Frankie’s and the Marco Pierre White Steakhouse — and although it’s a new property, the outlets are buzzing,” he revealed.

“If you had a normal Italian restaurant in there, I don’t think it would have got the same reaction.”

The group behind The Ivy and Le Caprice, Caprice Holdings — which formed a partnership with Dubai Holding’s Tatweer in 2008 to bring its brands to the Middle East — is another firm receptive to the idea of putting its outlets into hotels.

“Our focus is on offering a service as similar as possible to what we do in the UK and America, which does entail having an alcohol license,” pointed out operations director David O’Brien.

The group’s first outlet in the region, Rivington Grill, has avoided the issue with a location in Dubai’s Souk Al Bahar, where outlets can attain a license through a neighbouring hotel. But O’Brien said the company would “definitely consider” putting its brands into hotels in future.

“Of course, it would very much depend on the brand and the property,” he noted.

The success of this type of initiative is evident at The Monarch Dubai, a hotel featuring independent outlets Ruth’s Chris Steak House and Okku.

“The industry in this region has seen a strong trend of internationally-acclaimed independent brands taking up residence in hotels,” noted the property’s general manager Henning Fries.

“This has resulted in an influx of innovation and originality, which could otherwise only have been achieved at great effort and expense on parts of the individual hotel owners.”

According to Joe Van Jaarsveld, general manager at The Meat Co, Souk Madinat, the growing need for recognisable F&B brands in hotels is due to today’s “very loyal” consumers.

“People don’t eat out as often as nowadays, so they’d rather go back somewhere they’ve had a good experience in the past,” Van Jaarsveld explained.