

IN-STORE

## Waldorf Astoria struts its stuff with celebration gala

April 20, 2011



By RACHEL LAMB



Hilton Worldwide's Waldorf Astoria Shanghai on the Bund

celebrates its luxury hotel title with a gala meant to drive guests to the location to marvel at its amenities.

The hotel won the Best New Hotel in Shanghai designation at the China Travel Awards on April 14. It prides itself on its design, food and beverage, stunning views and hospitality.

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“Waldorf is Hilton’s new luxury brand and the strategy is capture their already high-market demographic to a Waldorf China experience,” said Lisa Holt, creative director for [DLS Hotels](#), Napa, CA.

“I think it is a very smart move and a natural one for Waldorf to position themselves in

China, a country with the largest population in the world,” she said.

Ms. Holt has no affiliation with [Hilton](#) or the [Waldorf Astoria](#). She agreed to comment as a third-party expert.

Waldorf Astoria did not respond by press deadline.

### Born China

The gala consisted of 600 guests including leading representatives from Shanghai’s high society, government agencies and Hilton Worldwide executives.

The event took place April 18.

Waldorf Astoria opened the Waldorf Astoria Club, comprising 20 suites in the century-old heritage building.

The property added a second tower of 252 additional rooms and suites, dubbed the Waldorf Astoria Tower. An outdoor courtyard connects the two buildings.

Waldorf Astoria has six food and beverage dining environments, banquet facilities including a grand ballroom, six meeting rooms, two function rooms and a gym and spa.

The hotel has received other awards including Best Hotel Design, Overall Luxury Hotel Brand Best New Arrival, China Hotel Development of the Year and 2010/2011 Best Contemporary Cuisine Restaurants in Shanghai.

Waldorf Astoria is drawing recognition to these achievements with activities like the gala and public relations outreach.

### Billions served

Given the booming luxury market in China, prestige brands are targeting the consumers there.

“This will benefit the Waldorf brand by opening up China to their Hilton brand guests as well as expose the Hilton brand to the huge Asia markets, China in particular,” Ms. Holt said. “The Chinese love Americans, in general, and they respond locally to westernized marketing and branding.”

Many hotel brands have been expanding their reach worldwide and garnering attention to their properties in unique ways.

For example, St. Regis is targeting its most loyal St. Regis Aficionados through polo programming meant to drive traffic to exclusive properties worldwide ([see story](#)).

Meanwhile, hotels such as the Four Seasons ([see story](#)), Trump and Fountainbleau ([see story](#)) are all wooing affluent consumers to their properties for Mother’s Day packages.

Hilton already has 17 hotels and resorts in China.

However, some brands still have trouble when extending across different cultures, languages and customs.

“Be sensitive to the culture and work within their cultural norms while exploiting your brand,” Ms. Holt said. “Decor and design sensitivities are crucial and can make-or-break a project if the design teams ignores place.

“Patience, politics and deep pockets are key to successful developments and long-term relationships,” she said. “Hilton has very accomplished international development teams and they should get it right with Waldorf.”

Final Take

*Rachel Lamb, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily*

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