

MOBILE

Waldorf Astoria expands mobile strategy with commerce-enabled iPhone app

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By RIMMA KATS

Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts has debuted an iPhone application that lets guests book rooms and check-in prior to their arrival.

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Luxury Daily

The application lets consumers browse 22 hotels via a full image gallery and read the history of each hotel. In addition, guests can search for discounted rates and special offers, book the property of their choice or modify existing reservations.

“The reason we decided to do this and all of our other apps is because we found that after many years of hearing that mobile is going to be important, we saw a huge increase in the percentage of our guests who were booking [via mobile],” said Chuck Sullivan, senior vice president for global online services at Hilton Worldwide, Washington.

“And so when we noticed this increase a year ago, we started to build out applications that were very different than everyone else’s app,” he said. “Many of our competitors have very brand-specific apps, but when consumers download that app, they are not able to book across the brand’s portfolio and we wanted to make sure that we can do that.”

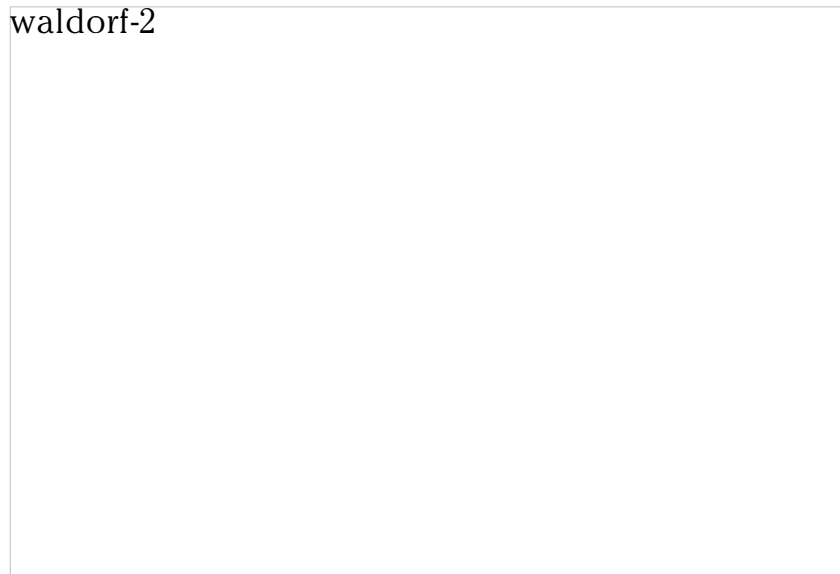
Waldorf Astoria is Hilton Worldwide’s luxury brand of landmark hotels. Some of the most popular hotels and resorts include The Waldorf Astoria New York, Grand Wailea, Boca Raton Resort and Waldorf Astoria Park City.

Mobile concierge

Gold and Diamond HHonors members can exclusively check into guestrooms up to 36 hours in advance using an echeck-in feature.

Users can book their hotels by choosing which location they want to stay in.

Here is a screen grab of the application:



Then, guests can pick the check-in and check-out date they desire, as well as select their room-type preferences.

"We wanted to make sure that we can allow our Gold and Diamond members to check in early if they wanted to," Mr. Sullivan said. "To my knowledge, we're the only hotel that does that.

"The other thing that we did is letting guest check out en route," he said.

Here is another screen grab of the application:



Expanded portfolio

This application enhances Hilton Worldwide's portfolio of iPhone and iPod touch applications that were rolled out in the fall of last year.

Conrad Hotels & Resorts, Hilton, Doubletree, Embassy Suites, Hilton Garden Inn, Homewood Suites and Hampton Inn each have applications and mobile sites.

"We actually were the first hotel company to have an iPhone app and we've had WAP sites

since 2001,” Mr. Sullivan said. “You can access through our site via any smartphone.

“But given the success that applications have, we will be developing a full portfolio for the Android platform, which will be coming out soon,” he said.

Final Take

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