Q&A
Minor Hotels Brand Evolution Q&A With Ian Di Tullio,
Chief Commercial Officer, Minor Hotels

**Why is Minor Hotels evolving its masterbrand?**

We want our brands – Minor Hotels and our eight hotel brands – to matter more, especially to consumers. By taking a value-driven evolution, we looked for ways to reduce friction points and increase utility for our guests. The repositioning of Minor Hotels as a consumer-facing brand with a new brand essence, look and feel, purpose and refreshed digital strategy, we will increase connectivity amongst our brands, and an easy way to interact with Minor Hotels. All our stakeholders – guests, team members, investors, and owners, will benefit from greater awareness of our brands.

**Why now?**

We are the right size where investing in the Minor Hotels brands makes sense to accelerate our growth. The NH Hotel Group acquisition, back in 2018, was a critical moment for Minor Hotels, tripling our property count, growing in Europe and the Americas, and adding three hotel brands to our portfolio – NH, NH Collection and nhow. Before that, Minor Hotels ran a region-specific business where hotel brands had minimal overlap across regions, and our total portfolio was around 150 properties. For instance, you could find Anantara and Avani in Asia and the Middle East, Tivoli in Europe, and the Elewana Collection in Africa. Today, we are cross-developing brands across regions, building global footprints within each brand’s portfolio by bringing Anantara and Avani to Europe and NH and NH Collection to Asia and the Middle East. Our investment in the Minor Hotels umbrella brand will help us build our loyal customer base by providing a seamless experience across our global portfolio.

**How is Minor Hotels differentiating itself from other major hotel chains?**

One of the biggest differences of Minor Hotels’ strategy is our ‘asset right’ approach. Minor Hotels has a long history of asset ownership, and we have an ownership stake in most of our portfolio. Owning strategic assets gives us the ability to control the end-to-end guest experience. It has also allowed us to become a pioneer in many areas like wellness with concepts like Layan Life by Anantara in Phuket, guest experience with the Jungle Bubbles at Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort in Chiang Rai, and our branded residence projects. As owners ourselves, we know what matters to our partners in the ‘asset light’ portion of our portfolio in ways other groups do not. Our stake in our hotels means we understand how to run profitable hotels that deliver results and return on investment for their asset too.

In terms of our brand evolution, we are growing the Minor Hotels brand by focusing on our direct distribution and loyalty propositions. For the first time, we are offering multi-brand distribution through the Minor Hotels website and a single Minor Hotels app. We are confident that focusing on building strong direct distribution will work for Minor Hotels, as it has for larger global players.

We will continue to differentiate ourselves through our loyalty proposition with our membership in the Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) and recognise our guests through GHA DISCOVERY and, more specifically, Minor DISCOVERY. Another differentiating point will be our continued emphasis on creating innovative and insightful hospitality experiences for our guests, which is one of the main reasons guests choose Minor Hotels, especially our luxury brands.

**How will guests benefit from the brand evolution?**

Guests will notice two main improvements from our evolution: direct booking and recognition. Today, consumers like to shop against a portfolio of brands and will be loyal to brands that make it worthwhile. The shift to direct booking, an increasingly important segment of our distribution mix, means we must offer intuitive platforms for guests to book with us. In response, we are simplifying our digital ecosystem by relaunching minorhotels.com as a consumer site and releasing a Minor Hotels app, encompassing all our brands and enabling booking across our portfolio in one location.

We are also improving how we recognise our guests and deliver personalised experiences. A significant component of our recognition strategy is the move to one loyalty programme – Minor DISCOVERY – versus multiple ‘insert-brand-name-here’ DISCOVERY programmes, such as Anantara DISCOVERY, Avani DISCOVERY, NH DISCOVERY, Oaks DISCOVERY and Tivoli DISCOVERY. This simplification will reduce confusion for guests as you only need one DISCOVERY to ‘earn and burn’ with Minor Hotels and our GHA partner brands.

**Will there be any changes to the customer experience at your hotels?**

We are still taking a hotel brand-led approach to delivering exceptional guest experiences, even with the addition of the consumer-facing Minor Hotels brand. Our hotel brands will retain their distinct brand identities and positioning under the Minor Hotels umbrella brand. We will use the recognition of these brands to help us grow awareness of and endorse the Minor Hotels brand.

Guests will start to interact with Minor Hotels on more frequent basis, in tandem with our hotel brands, through a new minorhotels.com website, Minor Hotels app and other key touchpoints.

Over time, we will be creating unified customer profile across our brand portfolio, something that we have not leveraged enough previously. Before, if a guest stayed with us at Anantara, they would not be recognised during a stay at an NH. The unified profiles will enable us to elevate our guest experience across the portfolio versus within individual brands.

**How does Minor Hotels plan to drive awareness for the Masterbrand?**

The rollout of Minor Hotels will be a journey versus an event. We will build off the recognition of our world-leading hotel brands through an endorsement strategy of Minor Hotels, such as ‘Anantara Hotels & Resorts, a Minor Hotels brand’ or ‘NH Hotels & Resorts, a Minor Hotels brand.’ Minor Hotels will always appear alongside our hotel brands rather than on its own, especially in the initial phase. Most of all, we plan to prove the value of Minor Hotels to our stakeholders by delivering world-class hospitality experiences versus a massive ad or sponsorship blitz. We are all about delivering exceptional guest experiences and will show, not tell, how we are the best.

For our loyalty programme, Minor DISCOVERY, we will be running a promotion for new members to earn $100 in DISCOVERY DOLLARS by completing two stays at Minor Hotels properties.

**Is Minor Hotels launching its own loyalty programme?**

No, but we are evolving our current offer. What we are changing is moving away from multiple ‘insert-hotel-brand-name’ DISCOVERY programmes – Anantara DISCOVERY, Avani DISCOVERY, NH DISCOVERY, Tivoli DISCOVERY – into one Minor DISCOVERY. This move reduces guests’ confusion about earning rewards and benefits and attaining status with Minor Hotels and GHA member brands.

We are a proud member of the GHA and the alliance’s loyalty platform, GHA DISCOVERY, is incredibly rewarding for our guests. Participating in GHA, an alliance of likeminded luxury and premium brands, is a differentiator for us, giving our guests the power of choice beyond our portfolio and disproportionate reach for a company our size. As the largest GHA member, making up more than half of all GHA-participating properties, we will continue to act as a magnet for people to the DISCOVERY programme as they travel the world. For guests, the programme is one of the most transparent out there, with straightforward percentage-based earnings, D$1=US$1 currency equivalency versus points-based, and no minimum redemption amount, making it valuable to frequent and occasional travellers.

**How does this masterbrand refresh help simplify your loyalty proposition?**

Introducing Minor DISCOVERY will reduce confusion when our guests stay at different brands under Minor Hotels or GHA more broadly. Common feedback we hear from guests is that they think they need to register for that brand’s DISCOVERY programme to earn rewards, and they can only use those rewards within that brand. This is not the case. The single loyalty programme name for all Minor Hotels’ brands will make it easier for people to ‘earn and burn’ with Minor Hotels and our GHA partners.

**Will this rebrand include changes to your mobile app and digital experience?**

We launched a beta version of the new minorhotels.com and Minor Hotels app on 11 November 2024. Our digital properties will be updated incrementally through multiple updates, taking on user feedback. Our longer-term vision is to launch a brand-new website, IBE and app with increased functionality, contextual content and personalisation within the next few years.

**What is the rollout plan?**

It will be a gradual rollout of the evolved Minor Hotels brand. Our new branding – logo, look and feel, and brand essence – will start appearing on our digital properties and later in print materials and at our properties. The new Minor Hotels website, shifting to a consumer-facing site, and app have launched. We will continue to iterate, take on feedback and refine our digital experience to ensure we provide our guests with the best possible booking experience.

**How will this refresh affect team members?**

We’ve designed our evolution strategy to deliver what matters most to our stakeholders, including our team members. One of the biggest changes for our team members is how we communicate who we are and what we offer to guests. Previously, we took a hotel brand-centric approach and rarely discussed how the brand is part of the group. Now, we will actively communicate the how are brands are part of the world of Minor Hotels. We also hope our team members feel a sense of pride from belonging to something bigger, Minor Hotels, not just their hotel brand or individual property.

**How does this decision tie into Minor Hotels’ long-term growth strategy?**

We’re growing fast and plan to add nearly 300 new openings by the end of 2027. We are looking for most of that growth to come from Hotel Management Agreements (HMAs) and franchising opportunities. This means that we need to offer investors and owners strong distribution and loyalty propositions, which are key considerations for why they choose a hospitality group and its portfolio of brands.

Investing in direct distribution and guest recognition approaches is also compelling to us, as well as an ‘asset-right’ company with ownership in over half of our portfolio. When we create value for our owners and investors, we also benefit directly too.

**What impact will this rebrand have on your B2B partners and corporate clients?**

We are simplifying our B2B proposition by merging our hotel brand-specific offerings into one Minor PRO programme. Minor PRO presents and encompasses all the products, services and communications destined to B2B audiences that Minor Hotels develops for professional audiences, serving companies, event planners, agents and tour operators.

We are also forming a dedicated luxury sales division within our global sales organisation to best cater to the needs of luxury travel agents and partners, focusing on our Anantara and Tivoli brands, and upcoming additions to the luxury portfolio.

**What is the significance of this refresh for investors?**

As an ‘asset-right’ company with an ownership stake in most of our properties, currently around 70%, we are heavily invested in delivering results to our investors, including ourselves. As we pursue more HMAs and franchise agreements, we need to bolster our direct distribution via our website and app and simplify our loyalty proposition. Together, these investments will help us increase the proposition of direct bookings and revenue from that channel and encourage more stays with Minor Hotels, and, in turn, offer owners and investors a more compelling argument to choose Minor Hotels as a partner.

**How will Minor Hotels ensure the masterbrand does not dilute the identities of its existing brands?**

If anything, we feel there is room to add to our brand portfolio to address unmet guest and owner needs and are less concerned about diluting our existing brands.

We will continue to take a brand-led approach, with each hotel brand retaining its distinct identity and service offering. The experience our guests have at a luxury Anantara property will differ from one they will have at an NH; they offer different service levels. Using hotel brands to endorse Minor Hotels will connect the brands further and present guests with additional options to match their experience with their needs, whatever the trip’s purpose.

**Will Minor Hotels introduce new brands / expand its brand portfolio as part of this strategy?**

We are still relatively light when it comes to our brand portfolio, especially for lifestyle and conversion brands. We will increase our hotel brand portfolio from our eight brands over the next few years to curate further options for guests and owners. We won’t be creating new brands for the sake of adding new brands. Each brand will address an unmet need that our existing brands do not fulfil, and there is enough demand to fill up its portfolio. The last thing we want is to create too many brands with only a handful of properties for each.

**How will this refresh impact your relationship with online travel agents (OTAs) like Booking.com and Expedia?**

Investing in our direct booking platforms, our website and our app, will put us in greater competition with OTAs. Even as consumers are shifting to booking directly with hotel brands, we will continue to co-exist with OTAs as they still make up a significant portion of our bookings.

For us, we need to make it easy for people to book with Minor Hotels and communicate how interacting with Minor Hotels directly benefits them and improves their experience with us, including how we offer the best price, stay inclusions, and recognition through Minor DISCOVERY.