

Hospitality



Thai-Inspired Hospitality

An Interview with Lim Boon Kwee,
Chief Operating Officer, Dusit International



dusitD2 Hotel Constance Pasadena exterior (left); and studio suite (above)

EDITORS' NOTE *Lim Boon Kwee joined Dusit International in March 2013 as President of Dusit Fudu Hotel Management Company Ltd. Prior to this, Lim was the Senior Vice President of Millennium and Coptborne for Asia. He has worked for companies such as Westin, Intercontinental, Sedona Hotels International, Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, and New World Hotels & Resorts. Lim holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Denver in Hotel and Restaurant Management as well as a Master of Business Administration from the Nanyang Business School of the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.*



Lim Boon Kwee

COMPANY BRIEF *Dusit International (dusit.com) has more than 60 years' experience in the hotel and hospitality field. Founded in 1949 by Honorary Chairperson Thanpuying Chanut Piyaoui, whose first hotel was the Princess on Bangkok's New Road, Dusit International has since acquired a unique portfolio of distinctive hotels, building upon Thai culture and tradition to create a personalized welcome for all guests made distinctive under the Dusit International brand promise; the delivery of an 'experience that enlivens the individual spirit, no matter the journey.' Dusit International comprises four hotel brands: Dusit Thani, dusitD2, Dusit Princess, and Dusit Devarana. It also operates Dusit Residences and its own signature Devarana Spa.*

What makes Dusit so special and what has been the secret to its success?

As a hospitality brand, Dusit is unique. Founded in 1949, the company has since gone on to establish a presence in key markets across the globe and is one of only a few Thai-owned hospitality brands to have a multinational presence.

The secret to our success is our gracious, Thai-inspired hospitality, which we have carefully implemented at our properties overseas as well as across four unique hotel brands.

The company also has a fast-growing Education Division. Established in 1993, it comprises Dusit Thani College, which offers vocational and postgraduate hospitality degrees at campuses in Bangkok and Pattaya; Le Cordon Bleu Dusit Culinary School; and the recently opened Dusit Thani Hotel School, which is Thailand's first hospitality school based on the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals.

In 2018, Dusit will open the pioneering Dusit Hospitality Management College, a unique fully integrated hospitality school and dusitD2 hotel in Manila, Philippines.

What are the key characteristics of a Dusit hotel and how do you provide consistency within the properties while also customizing your product to the local market?

The key characteristics of any Dusit property revolve around our gracious, Thai-inspired service. We are proud of our heritage, and we want the world

to know it. This transpires in our brand promise – “to deliver an experience that enlivens the individual spirit, no matter the journey.” To ensure we achieve this, the management and staff at each of our properties receives Dusit's core training about how to best deliver our signature service to our guests.

We pay close attention to the fine details, so that no matter where a guest is in the world, if they enter a Dusit hotel, they will find the same set of signature amenities and facilities as they would find in a property of the same brand in Thailand.

Each property also customizes its F&B offerings to suit the local market.

What are your plans for expansion into new markets and would you highlight some of the properties in development for Dusit?

We are actively growing globally and now have 45 confirmed projects in the pipeline. In the next three years alone, the number of operating Dusit hotels is set to double. Specifically, we are growing well in emerging markets such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. We are also working on many new projects across the Middle East and Africa.

Our first dusitD2 in the Middle East opened in December, and our first resort in Singapore, Dusit Thani Laguna Singapore will be open at the end of this year.

How does Dusit approach food and beverage and what are the keys to having a successful hotel restaurant?

The key to success for any restaurant, whether stand-alone or hotel based, is offering value with quality food and beverages at a reasonable price – and ensuring people regularly frequent our venue.

To ensure there is a buzz about our F&B operations, we regularly refresh our restaurant menus by adding enticing new dishes, and we also regularly introduce exciting new concepts and promotions. Across our brands, we have dining outlets

to suit both gourmets and casual diners alike, and we always make a point of employing top culinary talents who use only the finest ingredients.

How critical is Dusit's spa component?

Thailand is famous for its signature massage treatments, and our guests, both business and leisure travelers, very much enjoy using our spa services. Under the Dusit brand, we operate two distinctive spa experiences – Devarana and Namm. The former is an upmarket sanctuary offering a wide range of treatments conducted using premium products; the latter is an urban retreat offering the latest in beauty and wellness treatments conducted in contemporary surroundings.

Our many years of experience operating successful high-end spas means we are also well-positioned to offer consulting for luxury spas operating under Dusit's own spa brands, or a customized concept.

With the impact that technology has had on the hotel industry, how do you ensure that Dusit does not lose the human touch and personal interaction the brand is known for?

As a modern hospitality brand, people and technology are at the core of everything we do. While we do embrace new technology and all the benefits it has to offer, we will always ensure that human touch and personal interaction remain at the forefront of the Dusit hospitality experience. These hallmarks make us unique, and to keep them intact we must carefully implement technology in a way that reinforces our staff's ability to offer gracious, personalized service rather than detract from it.

While we are in the process of revamping our technology, leveraging the latest digital tools to improve operational efficiency and improve online transactions, we are also using it for training purposes and skill development. Not only does this mean that our staff is better positioned to offer a high level of service to our guests, but they are also happier, too. And happy staff means happy guests.

What are the key ingredients to a true luxury hotel experience today and has it become more about customizing the guest experience?

The key ingredients of a true luxury hotel experience today all revolve around the guest experience and how we can best tailor our services to meet our guests' needs. From check-in through to check-out, luxury guests expect to be thoroughly pampered throughout their stay. Facilities and amenities should always be top of the line, service must be personalized, and staff and management should go beyond expectations to deliver a truly memorable experience. ●