

## Accor North America Selects VFM Interactive as Rich Media Services Provider

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Accor North America To Enhance Online Presence of Sofitel and Novotel Brands; Selects VFM Interactive as Rich Media Services Provider

Accor North America, a division of Europe's largest hotel company, is upgrading its Sofitel and Novotel still images with more engaging visuals to help capture the attention of more online travelers. VFM Interactive has been selected by Accor North America to produce and distribute new rich media elements that will enhance and better display the unique features and services of each of Accor's Sofitel and Novotel properties in North America.

For Accor's 11 Sofitel properties in North America, VFM will be producing PhotoMontage Videos, providing a more interactive experience for consumers through the power of rich media. These short-segment videos are created by using still images that are digitally enhanced with motion graphics and blended with music and voice-over to offer a more engaging visual for online consumers.

Six of Novotel's North American properties in the United States and Canada will take advantage of another VFM rich media solution called PhotoFlicks. Similar to PhotoMontage Videos, PhotoFlicks add entertaining movement to still photography using advanced imaging, music and voiceovers. PhotoFlicks are brief and fast-paced rich media that help inform and motivate consumers with a captivating overview of a hotel and its amenities. Both PhotoMontage Videos and PhotoFlicks offer cost-effective rich media solutions for hoteliers as they provide many of the benefits of a full-motion video without the production expense of an on-site video shoot.

Accor's decision to integrate rich media into its hotel distribution is an important marketing move as the interactive features of rich media are proven means of increasing brand awareness and influencing purchases among online travelers. In the online travel category, rich media advertising is 60 percent more effective in aiding consumer recall than static ads, according to a report recently issued by DoubleClick, The Evolution of Rich Media September 2005 Report. In addition, nearly 50 percent of online travelers cite travel Web sites (the company sites and third-party sites) as the single greatest influence in making a purchase decision - placing travel Web sites ahead of offline media TV, radio and print and other online marketing vehicles, according to another recent DoubleClick study.

The value of third-party Web site distribution is an important component of the VFM and Accor relationship as after production, VFM will distribute the new Sofitel and Novotel rich media content through its industry-leading network of 5,000 distribution points that includes some of the notable names in search and travel: Yahoo!, Travelocity, Orbitz, Priceline and Worldspan.

'The Web and its interactive features are the most effective ways to attract - and convert -- online travel shoppers,' said Scott Wiseman, Vice President of Marketing for Accor North America. 'As more consumers turn to the Web to research and book hotels, we want our brands' online presence to fully convey the distinct and attractive features of each of our properties. 'VFM's rich media quality and experience along with their impressive distribution network make them our ideal partner to help our brands' online image to ultimately reach more consumers.'

While the significance of travel Web sites overall continues to increase, the complementary marketing relationship between online travel agency Web sites and hotel direct sites continues to evolve. According to PhoCusWright's latest Travel Trends Survey, 55 percent of shoppers who start their search on an online travel agency site actually make their purchase from another source. This underscores the symbiotic relationship between online travel agencies and hotel direct Web sites, which now account for 45 percent of online hotel bookings, up from just 9 percent in 2001, according to PhoCusWright.

'The power of the Internet in online purchase decisions is mounting and we're seeing a clear groundswell in the online marketing of hotels - from both hotel companies and third-party distributors who want more interactive hotel content,' said Paolo Boni, president and CEO of VFM. 'Given the shopping patterns of online travelers and the reach of third-party sites, more hotel companies are seeing the value of integrating rich media brand marketing content into channels previously viewed as pure distribution like online travel agencies and GDSs.'

For specific examples of the types of rich media that will be used by Accor, visit [http://www.vfmii.com/products\\_services\\_photomontage.html](http://www.vfmii.com/products_services_photomontage.html) for PhotoMontage Videos and [http://www.vfmii.com/products\\_services\\_slideshows.html](http://www.vfmii.com/products_services_slideshows.html) for PhotoFlicks. Inquiries about VFM's suite of production, management and distribution services can be made to VFM Interactive toll-free at 1-877-593-6634.

### **About VFM Interactive**

VFM Interactive is the leading distributor and producer of rich media content for the lodging and travel industry. Operating the largest and fastest-growing distribution network, VFM enables hotels to maximize their presence online using the power of rich media on more than 5,000 travel-related distribution points where consumers are researching and purchasing travel products. In addition to sites such as Travelocity, Orbitz, Priceline and TripAdvisor, VFM's distribution network also includes major search engines like Yahoo! and GDSs, including Worldspan. VFM also produces a variety of media marketing content including still images, rich media videos, 360° virtual tours and Flash productions. VFM's clients include more than 8,000 hotels and resorts from brands and management companies such as Best Western, Choice, Crowne Plaza, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Interstate, Le Meridien, Marriott, MGM, Outrigger, Radisson, Regent, Sheraton, W, Westin, and

Wyndham.

### **About Accor North America**

With nearly 4,000 hotels in 90 countries, Accor is the European leader and one of the world's largest groups in travel, tourism and corporate services. Accor North America, headquartered in Carrollton, Texas, operates more than 1,200 upscale and economy properties including nationwide economy leaders Red Roof Inn, Studio 6 and Motel 6 and the upscale Sofitel and mid-scale Novotel and Ibis hotel locations in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. For more information, visit [www.accor-na.com](http://www.accor-na.com).

### **About Sofitel North America**

Created in France in 1964, Sofitel is the prestige brand of Accor hotels with more than 180 upscale hotels in 53 countries, including 11 in North America. Sofitel hotels are ideally placed in business and leisure locations across North America, including Chicago Downtown, Chicago O'Hare, Houston, Minneapolis, Miami, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

### **About Novotel North America**

A contemporary international hotel chain with more than 415 properties in 56 countries, Novotel hotels are located in the heart of business centers and tourist destinations making it an ideal choice for people traveling on business or pleasure. Novotel North America has eight properties with more than 2,200 rooms in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico in New York City, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto (3), Mexico City, and Monterrey, Mexico

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