

**CONRAN
DESIGN
GROUP**

S O F I T E L



The Sofitel
rebrand

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reframing *joie de vivre* to unlock commercial growth

As the first French luxury hotel chain with hotels across every continent, Sofitel is known for delivering world-class guest experiences across 120 iconic global destinations. But its luxury credentials were being challenged by new entrants to the market, and it was struggling to appeal to new audiences – in particular, families and younger holidaymakers.

At the heart of the problem was the fact that the Sofitel brand was being held back by its supposed USP: its inherent French-ness. With visuals and messaging that felt steeped in cliché, the Sofitel 'French spirit' was being articulated in a way that felt limiting and counter to the quality of its offer.

When the brand began losing ground to competitors, it was clear that a reinvention was needed. Sofitel needed to unlock growth and reposition itself from 'affordable luxury' to luxury as a mainstay of the Sofitel brand experience.

This in turn would build brand love, widen customer appeal and encourage customers to think about Sofitel in a less transactional way. Ultimately, of course, it would lead to revenue growth and an increase in the number of Sofitel hotels being both renovated and developed around the world, a key metric for any global hotel brand.

This is the story of how we used design to elevate Sofitel's luxury credentials, reframe its inherent Frenchness and drive commercial growth as a result.

THE RESULTS

3.3%

increase in total room revenue (2023 vs 2024) – from **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** in 2023 to **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** in 2024 (a total increase of **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA**) [KPI: 2%].

3.1%

increase in Revenue Per Available Room (REVPAR) (2023 vs 2024) – from **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** in 2023 to **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** in 2024. [KPI: 2.5%].

129%

increase in the number of hotels in Sofitel's development pipeline (2023 vs 2024) – from 14 in 2023 to 32 in 2024 [KPI: 30 by 2027].

4

new brand partnerships in 2024: Air France, Nespresso, Devialet and Pommery Champagne [KPI: two new partnerships in 2024].



When the brand began losing ground to competitors, it was clear that a reinvention was needed...

Before

QUEENSTOWN
AUCKLAND
WILMINGTON
NEW YORK
PARIS
MARSEILLE
HONOLULU
ISLAND
BELLEVILLE
ASWAN
ESSAOUIRA
ZHENGZHOU
FLORIANOPOLIS
MIAMI
LONDON
SIEM REAP
LOS ANGELES
MACAU
CASABLANCA
VIENNA
SOCHI
TABA HEIGHTS
PARIS

SOFITEL
HOTELS & RESORTS

NAME: _____
SCENARIO: _____
DATE: _____
RECOVERY DATE: _____
PLATE NO.: _____
MODEL COLOUR: _____

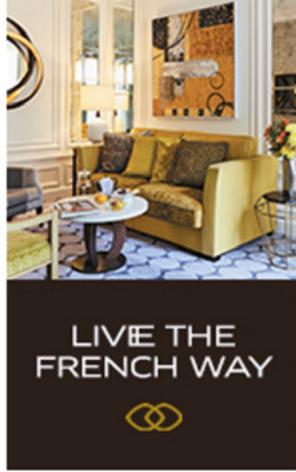
No. 0001

No. 0001

PLEASE CONTACT US AT 001 800 888 888 TO GET THE BEST SERVICE. We are pleased to take care of you. To make your stay with us more enjoyable, we have prepared a special menu for you. Please contact us at 001 800 888 888 to get the best service.

HOTEL NAME
FULL ADDRESS - ZIP CODE
TEL. NO. (COUNTRY CODE) (AREA CODE) (HOTEL NO.)
FAX NO. (COUNTRY CODE) (AREA CODE) (HOTEL NO.)
E-MAIL ADDRESS

I would be happy to meet you at your hotel. Please contact us at 001 800 888 888 to get the best service. We are pleased to take care of you. To make your stay with us more enjoyable, we have prepared a special menu for you. Please contact us at 001 800 888 888 to get the best service.



SOFITEL
LIVE THE FRENCH WAY

SOFITEL
LIVE THE FRENCH WAY

THERE'S A NIGHT'S SLEEP, THEN THERE'S A NIGHT TO REMEMBER.

SOFITEL

PLEASE SERVICE MY ROOM

DO NOT DISTURB

THERE'S A GOOD TIME, THEN THERE'S ME TIME.

SOFITEL



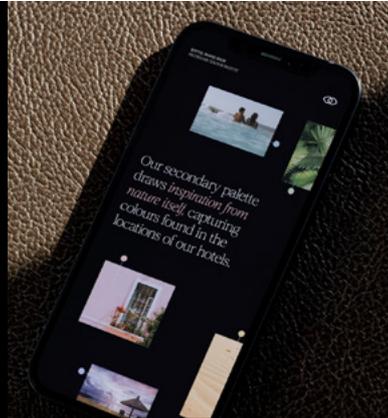
LIVE THE FRENCH WAY AT THE SOFITEL

PALETTE

THERE'S A GOOD TIME, THEN THERE'S ME TIME.

SOFITEL

After



S O F I T E L



SOFITEL



CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

Sofitel's story

Having been acquired by Accor in 1980, Sofitel is one of seven luxury hotel brands within the Accor family; others include Raffles, Orient Express and Fairmont. Accor's reach also extends into the lifestyle, premium, midscale and economy segments, with brands like Pullman, Novotel and ibis.

Sofitel's story began in 1964, when it officially became the world's first French luxury hotel brand with the opening of the five-star Sofitel Strasbourg Grande Île, just moments from Strasbourg Cathedral and the historic district of Petite France.

Sixty years on, the business had expanded significantly – and on a global scale. In 2023, when we began working with Sofitel, it owned 114 hotels, resorts and residences across 49 countries, from



New York and Sydney to Vietnam and French Polynesia, and in 2022 was the proud recipient of more than 400 hospitality awards. As a luxury hotel brand, Sofitel delivers everything you'd

expect – great food, chic interiors, exceptional wellness facilities. And it had big ambitions: by 2027, it wanted to open 30 new hotels, with five – including Sofitel Shanghai – in China alone.

The wider industry context

Having been valued at \$154.32bn in 2024, the luxury hotel market is experiencing strong growth. This is in part down to the rising affluence of the middle classes and the post-pandemic tourism rush. But it's also linked to a growing interest in experiential travel, with travellers looking for experiences that feel tailored, meaningful and memorable – and which often come with a higher price tag.

With the luxury hotel market projected to be worth \$166.41bn in 2025, the outlook for luxury hotel brands is bright. But in a growing and increasingly profitable market, competition will always be fierce.

As well as challenges from direct global competitors – InterContinental, JW Marriott, Shangri-La and Grand Hyatt – Sofitel was also facing stiff competition from non-native hotel players moving into the luxury hospitality space – the likes of Bvlgari, Dior, Versace, Louis Vuitton, Armani, Yves Saint Laurent and Baccarat.

In 2024 alone, LVMH invested in boutique hotel group Les Domaines de Fontenille and Bvlgari Hotels & Resorts announced plans to open Bvlgari Hotel Miami Beach in 2028. In March 2025, Versace opened the Palazzo Versace Macau, the brand's first resort in Asia.

Challenges and obstacles

As a brand, Sofitel was commercially successful and enjoyed strong brand awareness in key markets. And unlike some of its direct competitors (JW Marriott, for example), it had a broad geographic reach, with hotels on every continent. But it also had its fair share of challenges – challenges that went beyond the usual post-pandemic low occupancy rates.

Sofitel was also facing stiff competition from non-native hotel players moving into the luxury hospitality space...

Facing both legacy and emerging competition, Sofitel hadn't been unable to unlock growth at the desired rate. With only one new hotel opening in Europe in the last 10 years – in Barcelona – the development pipeline wasn't as strong as it needed be and the brand wasn't resonating with younger audiences or families, the latter of whom were a key target demographic. According to Travelsify, key brand attributes like 'luxury' and 'stylish' had declined by nine per cent and five per cent respectively in recent years, and guest satisfaction levels were also dropping.

The challenge was evident in the figures:

- In 2023, hotel occupancy rates hadn't reached pre-pandemic levels. The average occupancy rate in 2022 was **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** compared to **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** in 2019.
- Sofitel's Reputation Promoter Score (RPS) was **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** (out of 100) at the end of 2022, a **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** from 2019.
- In 2023, there hadn't been a new hotel opening in Europe for the last 10 years and many regions didn't have a pipeline of new Sofitel properties.

Like other luxury hotel brands with more than 100 properties, personalisation and consistency were at the crux of the challenge. The Sofitel brand, which had remained fairly static over the last decade, was being inconsistently deployed across key markets. And in the world of luxury, attention to details matters – guests want to feel like the experience is tailored to their needs. They want a consistent brand and service experience across every touchpoint, regardless of hotel location, as well as personalised touches to reflect the nuances of the local destination.

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW CONTINUED

The client ask

Sofitel identified two opportunities for growth and differentiation:

1. While Sofitel's revenue had been historically driven by both business (50%) and leisure (50%) stays, it saw greater potential in growing its leisure-stay revenue streams. This meant appealing to holidaymakers by introducing more warmth and emotion to the brand.
2. Sofitel's team had identified a key target market that competitors weren't targeting: families. This was the fastest growing Sofitel audience, and they could see the potential for significant revenue growth in this market.

When Sofitel approached us with an invitation to pitch in 2023, they had some very clear objectives:

1. To increase total room revenue by 2% by 2024.
2. To increase Revenue Per Available Room (REVPAR) by 2.5% by 2024.
3. To increase the pipeline of new properties from 14 to 30 in the next five years.
4. To increase the percentage of family guests from 9% in 2023 to 11% by 2024.
5. To win two new brand partnerships in 2024.

The design solution

Having won the project in 2023 – with a budget of **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA** – our London studio's challenge was to create a brand that embraced and elevated Sofitel's inherent French-ness, reinforced its luxury credentials and resonated with holidaymakers, rather than business travellers, as a result.

To appeal to key audiences – tourists, as well as investors and potential brand partners – the brand needed to feel premium and aspirational, as well as warm, accessible and dynamic. We needed to elevate Sofitel's 'cultural link' symbol, which represents encounters between cultures, people and ideas – we knew this brand device could be used to drive distinctiveness and help the brand stand out in a competitive market.

We started by exploring the true meaning of French-ness in the world today and identifying how Sofitel could relate to it. The existing Sofitel brand's interpretation of French-ness was steeped in cliché – from stock-y photography and outdated colour palette to stereotypical depictions of France.

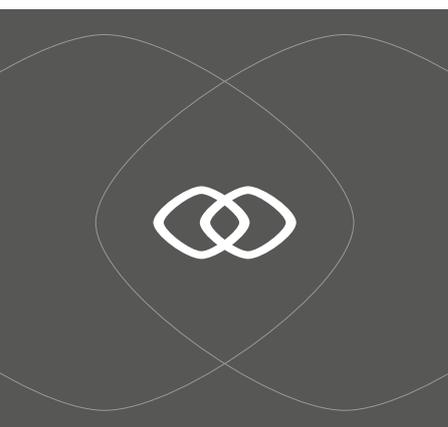
We reframed 'French-ness' or the 'French joie de vivre' as being about joyfully embracing the paradoxes central to French culture – namely, that of

tradition versus rebellion. French-ness becomes about the capacity to embrace life in all its dimensions, from dining out with friends, drinking the best wine, relaxing in a spa or enjoying a restorative night's sleep. This then helped create the framing principles that allow Sofitel to express its French-ness in a way that feels new and relevant.

The 'French zest' became a central part of the brand positioning (*Heartfelt hospitality with a French zest*) and expression. Sofitel's existing brand was exclusively French, but by introducing the 'French zest', that French-ness becomes more subtle and more easily blended with local culture.

The evolved brand is about living life to the fullest but choosing quality above everything; being proudly French yet passionately local; balancing style and elegance with effortlessness and spontaneity. At its heart is the idea of celebrating the life-enriching effect of bringing two worlds together.

Sofitel becomes the place where evenings glow, where stories begin and where life lives. It's a brand that's inherently vibrant, and that balances the cultural fusion of French and local cultures with elegant new visual elements and graphic combinations.



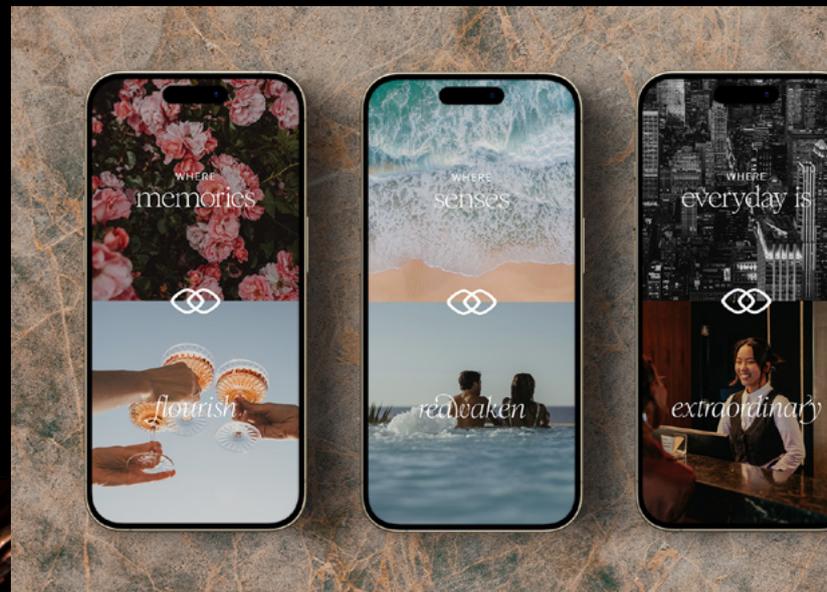
CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW CONTINUED

What this meant in practice

THE CULTURAL LINK SYMBOL

Sofitel's new brand platform elevated the brand's famous 'cultural link' symbol to play a more central role in the brand's expression; as a shorthand for how the brand brings cultures together, it's used across every touchpoint, from uniforms and room accessories to furnishings and OOH brand campaigns.

We transformed the 'cultural link' from being static to dynamic, with two potential applications – the first as an interlocking cultural link bringing places and people together, the second as a connector or bridge that finds the positive tension in imagery or links macro and micro detail. It can be used to express the 'proudly French, passionately local' ethos of the brand – key when targeting both guests and potential brand partners.



CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW CONTINUED

LOGO

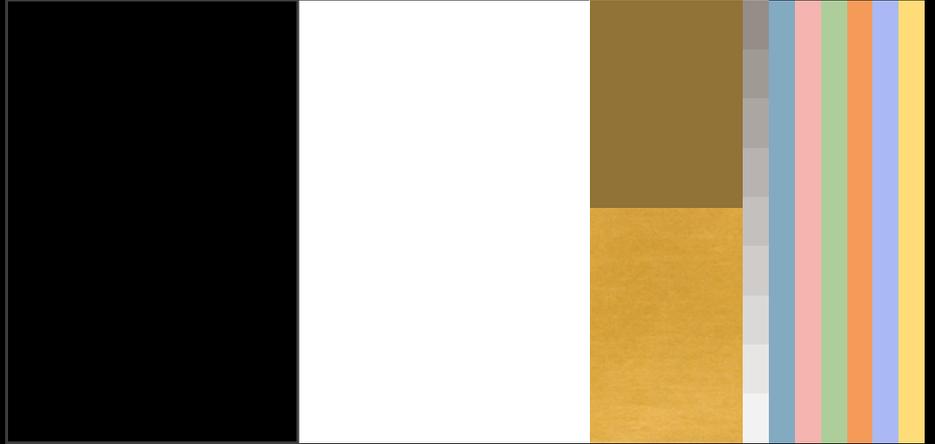
Displayed across the top of hotels and greeting guests as they cross the threshold, Sofitel's logo is undeniably its most identifiable asset. Rather than make any wholesale changes, we refined and simplified the existing logo, strengthening characters and adjusting letter spacing.

S O F I T E L



COLOUR PALETTE

While Sofitel's existing colour palette was a smorgasbord of clashing shades, we wanted the new colour palette to feel more refined and elegant – more premium. It needed to establish an inherent opulence while also referencing local cultures and hotel locations. This is why we doubled down on the core colours of gold, black and white. Our six secondary colours – sunrise pink, sundown orange, sea blue, lavender purple, sun yellow and ivy green – then draw inspiration from nature and capture some of the colours found in Sofitel hotel locations.



TYPOGRAPHY

The brand's new typography provides another way of expressing the effortless luxury of the Sofitel experience, combining simplicity with French flair. The first of the two brand typefaces is Romie, a calligraphy-inspired display font by French type designer Margot Lévêque, which pays homage to Sofitel's zest for life. While aesthetically elegant in its normal typographic state, Romie's expanded glyph set provides moments of flair and expression when needed. The brand's secondary typeface, GT America, personifies the concept of modern simplicity and contrasts nicely with Romie's flowing character forms.

ROMIE

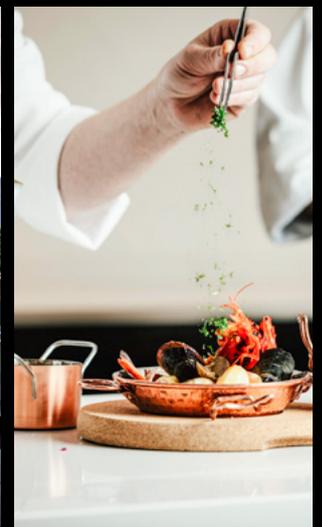
Romie Light
Romie Regular
Romie Italic
Romie Medium
Romie Bold
Romie Black
Romie Heavy

GT AMERICA

GT America Thin
GT America Light
GT America Regular
GT America Medium
GT America Bold
GT America Black

PHOTOGRAPHY

While competitors in the luxury space tend to focus imagery on cold, empty architecture and interiors, we wanted to point the camera at authentic human connections. This would give us the chance to better reflect Sofitel's target audiences (families, for example, feature a lot more in brand campaigns today) and help drive category differentiation. Where the old brand's photographic style was staged and stylised, and in many ways followed the tropes of high fashion, we wanted it to bring more depth, warmth and humanity to the Sofitel brand. This in turn would help connect the brand to target tourist audiences.



RESULTS AND OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Measuring the work's impact

With Sofitel celebrating its 60th year in 2024, it felt like the perfect opportunity to launch the new brand. The launch took place in April 2024, with every consumer touchpoint taking on the new identity:

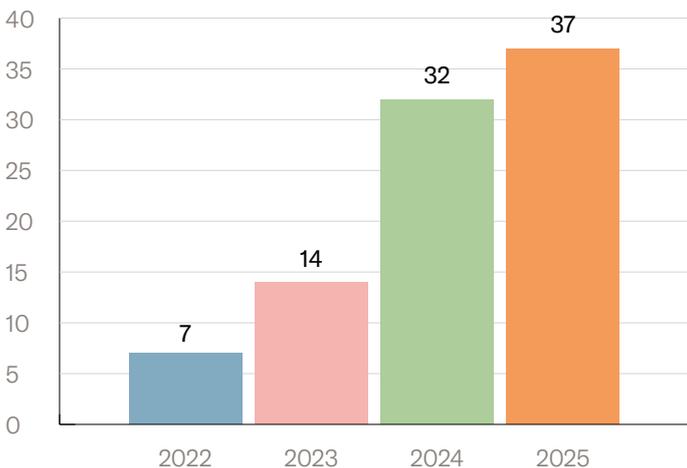
- Hotel signage and branding
- Out of home advertising
- Digital advertising
- Website
- Email communications
- Social media

While the Sofitel team were delighted with the new brand, all eyes were on commercial performance – the much-talked about revenue per available room (REVPAR) and room revenue. Early indications were promising, but when 2024 drew to a close, we were able to make some clear year-on-year comparisons. Every objective had been met or exceeded.

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
<p>Objective 1 To increase room revenue by 2% by 2024.</p>	<p>3.3% increase in total room revenue (2023 vs 2024) – from REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2023 to REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2024 (a total increase of REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA).</p>
<p>Objective 2 To increase Revenue Per Available Room (REVPAR) by 2.5% by 2024.</p>	<p>3.1% increase in Revenue Per Available Room (REVPAR) (2023 vs 2024) – from REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2022 to REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2023 to REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2024.</p>
<p>Objective 3 To increase the pipeline of new properties from 12 to 30 by 2027.</p>	<p>129% increase in the number of hotels in Sofitel's development pipeline – from 14 in 2023 to 32 in 2024. 37 hotels are in the development pipeline for 2025. 7 in 2022.</p>
<p>Objective 4 To increase the percentage of family guests from 9% in 2023 to 11% in 2024.</p>	<p>In 2024, 11% of all guests were families. In 2025, 18% of guests are families.</p>
<p>Objective 5 To win two new brand partnerships in 2024.</p>	<p>Four new brand partnerships won in 2024: Air France, Nespresso, Devialet and Pommery Champagne. The Artistic Director of Dior, Cordelia de Castellane, has designed Sofitel's new uniform collection, which will be worn by hotel teams.</p>

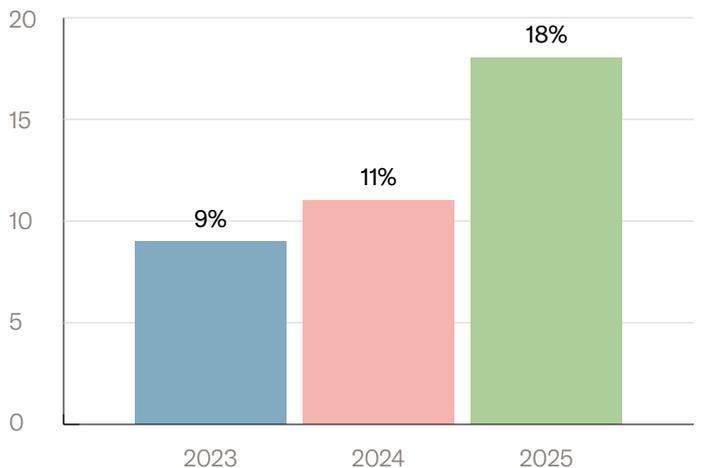
Sofitel's development pipeline

Number of hotels in Sofitel's development pipeline



Percentage of family guests at Sofitel hotels

Percentage of family guests



Four new brand partnerships



Other positive outcomes

612%

increase in organic traffic to Sofitel.com (2023 vs 2024).

4 million

more sessions on Sofitel.com (2023 vs 2024).

700,000

new followers on social media, with social followers now totalling 7.9 million (2023 vs 2024).

38%

increase in average engagement rate on LinkedIn (2023 vs 2024).

9%

increase in average engagement rate across Sofitel social channels (2023 vs 2024) – highest engagement rate of all competitors in luxury hotel space.

21.8%

increase in room occupancy rates (2022 vs 2024) – from REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2022 to REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2023 to REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2024.

1.30%

increase in Reputation Performance Score (RPS), from REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2023 to REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA in 2024. RPS in 2025 is REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA.

6%

increase in positive sentiment (2023 vs 2024).

95%

of users reported that the new brand felt consistent with its positioning in the luxury market (2024).

And last but not least, a number of scenes from season five of the *Emily in Paris* Netflix Series were filmed at Sofitel Roma Villa Borghese hotel in Rome.

The impact of design on achieving these outcomes was significant: the only way in which Sofitel's luxury credentials could be conveyed in any meaningful way was through a more elegant, sophisticated visual identity.

Comms alone would only do so much: the brand itself needed to incorporate the visual codes associated with luxury but do so in a way that felt distinct and original.

The sharp increase in brand partnerships – and with aspirational French brands like Pommery Champagne and Devialet – is testament to the impact of the work too.

It's also true to say that younger audiences have a discerning palette when it comes to the brands they interact with on social (and ultimately spend money with). Follower growth on channels like Instagram and TikTok would not be possible without a visual identity that resonated with younger audiences.

“Sofitel has become the go-to luxury hotel brand for developers across Accor Group's 40+ brands.”

Nicolas Gronier,
Vice President Global Marketing,
Sofitel

RESULTS AND OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS CONTINUED

Other influencing factors

ATL LAUNCH CAMPAIGN

Havas Paris delivered the ATL launch campaign, The Encounter, starring Gillian Anderson and Dali Benssalah, with a budget of **REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA**, in 2024. The creative idea for this campaign was inspired by the revitalised cultural link symbol, central to Sofitel's brand.

This campaign will have contributed to increased awareness of the new brand, but its success was highly dependent on the quality of the new brand, and its ability to marry Sofitel's reimagined world of luxury with narrative-led activation. The new identity would have also played a part in securing the talent, who are unlikely to have wanted to align themselves with an outdated brand.

DISCOUNTS

When the new brand launched in April 2024, no discounts were introduced that wouldn't ordinarily have been part of the sales cycle. With room revenue and REVPAR such critical metrics of success for Sofitel, there was a desire to increase rather than reduce rates where possible.



Thank you

CREDITS:

Nicolas Gronier

Vice President Global Marketing, Sofitel

Emilie Aubin

Global Brand Marketing Director, Sofitel

Lee Hoddy

Executive Creative Director, Conran Design Group

Tim Parker

Brand Strategy Director, Conran Design Group

Emily Palmer

Account Director, Conran Design Group

Curtis Free

Design Director, Conran Design Group

Holly Dennis

Senior Designer, Conran Design Group

Matt Hodges

Senior Designer, Conran Design Group

Amy Salter

Designer, Conran Design Group

Hannah Greenwood

Artworker, Conran Design Group