Keytel explores opportunities for independent hotels at a convention focused on AI, reducing seasonality and tailoring offerings to travellers' evolving priorities

- ***The annual convention, held at BLESS Hotel Madrid, brought together experts from Banco Sabadell, Google, LinkedIn and EHL Hospitality Business School to explore opportunities for independent hotels.***
- ***Reducing seasonality, new conversational search methods and differentiation through branding and local identity were at the heart of a day dedicated to knowledge-sharing and exchange among members.***

Madrid, 20 October 2026.- Keytel held its annual convention at BLESS Hotel Madrid, bringing together 100 member hoteliers for a day dedicated to analysing tourism trends and the decisions that will shape the competitiveness of independent hotels. The event combined presentations with networking opportunities for clients and the Keytel team, with the aim of sharing experiences and providing hotels with the knowledge and tools they need to grow their businesses.

The event opened with remarks from Amancio López, President of Grupo Hotusa, followed by a presentation from Xavier Cortés, Managing Director of Keytel, who outlined the company's progress and introduced new agreements and projects designed to expand and enhance the services available to its member hotels.

New partnerships and technology in support of independent hotels

Xavier Cortés challenged simplistic approaches that pit the large hotel chain model against that of independent hotels, emphasising that every property has its own circumstances and specific needs. In this regard, he argued that independent hotel ownership remains a fully competitive and profitable option, provided it is backed by professional and efficient management. He also highlighted alternatives to franchising that can provide the commercial, technological and management capabilities required by today's market without sacrificing a hotel's individual identity. "The industry tends to oversimplify the debate and present models as if they were mutually exclusive. However, when we examine the real needs of each hotel, we discover that there are other ways to compete successfully."

Direct bookings featured prominently in his presentation. Keytel is strengthening its offering through technology partnerships, giving independent hotels access to a digital infrastructure developed, tested and scaled within the hotel industry. This approach combines tools and operational expertise to improve each property's market positioning, personalise the user experience and increase conversion through its own channels.

Among the projects presented was the development of new distribution channels within artificial intelligence environments, designed to connect hotel offerings with the assistants involved in searching for and planning trips. Cortés positioned these initiatives within a strategy of continuous service improvement that combines technology, specialised support and commercial reach to help members compete while preserving their identity and autonomy.

Tourism has room to grow in value and beyond peak season

Sofía Rodríguez Rico, Chief Economist at Banco Sabadell, presented a positive outlook for Spanish tourism, albeit one tempered by geopolitical uncertainty, cost pressures and labour availability. According to the forecasts presented, Spain will welcome 100 million international tourists this year. Further growth potential also lies in increasing the value generated per visitor and expanding activity beyond the months and destinations that experience the highest concentration of demand.

The presentation also focused on the composition of this growth. Data for August 2026 included in the presentation showed a 7% increase in revenue per available room (RevPAR), compared with a 1.4% rise in overnight stays, with room rates emerging as the main driver of hotel revenue. This is compounded by a geopolitical landscape with opposing effects: rising air transport costs threaten long-haul markets, while the diversion of tourist flows from other destinations could benefit Spain.

Rodríguez Rico also explored AI applications across the tourism industry, warning that the advantages associated with scale and access to data could increase distribution concentration and widen the technology gap faced by smaller businesses.

Google: flexibility beats discounts in travel deals, while AI opens up new opportunities to attract bookings

Booking conditions are becoming more important than price. This was the message delivered by Alejandra Vigil and Judit Garroset from Google at the Keytel convention. Looking ahead to Black Friday travel promotions, 45% of respondents in Spain prioritise booking and cancellation flexibility, compared with 29% who expect a discount on the total price. This 16-percentage-point gap offers hotels an opportunity to compete beyond price cuts by giving greater visibility to their booking conditions.

This trend coincides with shorter booking lead times. According to the data presented, Spanish travellers' booking window is approximately 25% shorter than the European average. For hotels, this reinforces the importance of keeping prices and availability up to date and being visible when customers make their travel decisions.

Artificial intelligence is bringing further change to this landscape. Google presented AI Max, citing benchmark results showing 15% more conversions with a similar return on investment. This improvement illustrates the potential of adapting advertising to more complex searches, although it does not guarantee the same performance for every hotel. Search queries increasingly include details about budgets, travel companions and desired services, creating opportunities to match a property's distinctive features with specific needs.

Brand identity and experiences rooted in the local area

Pedro Jareño, Enterprise Account Director at LinkedIn, focused his presentation on hoteliers' ability to build visibility and credibility through a distinctive voice of their own.

Meanwhile, Catherine Rey, Head of Business Development & Sales at EHL Hospitality Business School, explored how hotels can become a destination in their own right. Gastronomy, art and local heritage offer ways to develop a distinctive proposition and create new revenue opportunities.

Knowledge-sharing and closer ties with members

The convention also provided opportunities to connect with clients, share experiences and strengthen relationships between hoteliers and Keytel. As part of its commitment to training, the company gave one of its members the opportunity to attend EHL Hospitality Business School's Hospitality Luxury Brand Management programme at its Lausanne campus. In addition, a stay at one of the hotels in the Domus Selecta collection was raffled among attendees.

With this event, Keytel reaffirms its commitment to supporting independent hotels through specialised expertise, commercial support and access to tools that enable them to respond to market changes and develop their own value proposition.

About Keytel

With more than 3,800 hotels in 90 countries, Keytel is the world's largest alliance of independent hotels. Its innovative approach combines specialised consultancy, technological tools and advanced services.

About Grupo Hotusa

Grupo Hotusa is an established tourism group with nearly half a century of experience and a presence in more than 130 countries. The company has consolidated a business model focused on generating economic activity, employment and a positive impact on the destinations where it operates. It currently employs more than 10,000 people, including direct and indirect employees, and achieved consolidated revenue of over €1.65 billion in 2025.

The company is organised into three business units. The first is hotel operations, which operates under the Eurostars Hotel Company brand and has a portfolio of more than 300 hotels in 23 countries. The second is hotel services, delivered under the Keytel umbrella, the world's largest alliance of independent hotels, with 3,800 member properties. The third business unit is distribution, which operates as Restel and markets more than 130,000 accommodation options worldwide.