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Edge students hit the Boutique Hotel Summit

22 MAY 2014 , *SUNNY BASRA*

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They say “He who dares wins!” Well, my journey goes something like that. My involvement with the [Boutique Hotel Summit](#) (held last week in London) began when I came across the event's website.

As I was in the process of researching for my final year dissertation for the BA (Hons) Hotel Management degree at the EDGE Hotel School, I immediately recognised the intrinsic value of being involved with such an event and the benefits that would inevitably come with attendance. I emailed the organisers directly and asked if I could attend, in exchange for helping out. To my surprise I got a reply from the Vice Principal of my school! Was I in trouble?! With my head held high, I went to see the Vice Principal. It went something like this...

VP: “I just found out you contacted the BoHo Summit organisers. Why did you do that?”

Me: “Nothing really...just thought I'd be cheeky and try to get a free ticket by helping out.”

VP: “That is cheeky! Why do you want to go?”

Me: “Two reasons really - firstly because my dissertation is based around the popularity and characteristics of boutique hotels, so where better to go research? Secondly, because I can't get over the fact that as the first fully commercialised hotel school in the UK, we should have the opportunity to show what we were capable of, and this is the perfect opportunity...”

And as they say, the rest is history! What followed was months of careful planning, working closely with my lecturer and mentor Glyn Adams. Recruiting was not easy, especially from my cohort as everyone thought I was crazy going to this event 10 days before our dissertation deadline! It wasn't my fault they couldn't see the benefits of this, is it?

Ultimately, I ended up with the fantastic team that included Geanina Lungu, Fatima Bangura, Sam Stratford, Emily Kaye and Emily Bullock and the BoHo Summit organisers who looked after us very well. I believe that as our first ever project with them, we have started a strong relationship

that will help future events and future students mutually, fostering a stronger partnership between the industry and the future leaders of it.

Pre-Arrival

The preparation for the summit started months before where we had a few meetings planning the event, discussing all the important aspects and preparing our marketing material. We toured the hotels to further prepare ourselves for navigating around central London for the tours, which on the day proved to be very useful. Our academic practitioners Glyn Adams and Kelly Vadukar also supported us before and during the event, by offering guidance and making sure we would benefit from this opportunity.

Day 1

On the first day of events, we had mixed feelings of excitement and nervousness until we were introduced to the hosts Piers Brown and Natalie Taylor. Throughout the day two of us worked alongside Natalie setting up and allocating stands for the exhibitors. The other four worked with Piers and George Sells showing some of the delegates around a couple of boutique hotels in London: Eccleston Square, the most technological hotel in London, and Thompson Belgraves, a hotel thriving on old world charm. Both are inspiring bring their unique spin to the boutique hotel sector.

As the day drew to a close, delegates headed to The Montcalm for cocktails, wine and a chance to network. The room was alive with inspiration, with everyone sharing their thoughts and ideas on the industry. Once all of the delegates had arrived, the speed card swap started, which was a frantic 45 minutes that involved fast paced conversations and plenty of laughter. After the card swap more drinks and conversation flowed between the delegates in preparation for the next day.

Day 2

We started early, setting up and preparing for the main event. We were allocated jobs such as setting up the stage for the panellists, preparing the reception desk and testing the microphones that would be used later in the day. Around 8:30am we began to greet the guests as they arrived for breakfast while also ensuring the registration process went smoothly. We had to deal with a few unexpected errors such as missing a few name badges, but we managed to handle it promptly. As the delegates were mingling amongst the exhibitors, the team finished off the final preparations and the summit was then underway.

The day involved lots of sessions, with guests speakers from all across the world, and all across the boutique hotel sector; including Bill Walshe; CEO [Viceroy Hotels](#), Niki Leondakis; CEO [Commune Hotels](#), Andrew Sangster; [hotelanalyst.co.uk](#) and the keynote speaker John Quilter (that's me interviewing him at right). John re-booted his life as a top restaurateur to become a renowned 'food-busker'. He is now working alongside Jamie Oliver and launching his organic coffee company, CRU Coffee. (He provided the coffee for the espresso martinis drank on the first day.)



The sessions varied from a panel interview on the importance of introducing spas into boutique hotels, country house hotels, and the importance of loyalty schemes to boutique hotels. During the lunch break, delegates had the opportunity to speak with exhibitors including the students manning the [EDGE Hotel School](#) stand.

Everyone was competing for the best 'tweet' prize by using the #BoHoSummit in their tweets throughout the day. There was also a business card raffle at the end of the day where some amazing prizes were being given to the winning delegates including a three night stay at the ION Hotel in Iceland. We were very impressed with how everyone worked well together, including the staff of the host Montcalm hotel, to make sure this event was a success and ensure people would want to return the following year.

That will be it from me now. I wish to leave you with the accounts of my team, who were instrumental in the success of the event, and allow them to share with you their experiences.

"The overall experience was extremely beneficial for us, it offered us a different perspective of the events organisational process. Besides the experience we gained, we had lots of fun and hopefully we'll collaborate again in the future." - *Geanina Lungu*

"I was glad I took the opportunity to be part of the BOHO summit 2014, an event I will never forget." - *Fatima Bangura*

"My time at the Boutique and Lifestyle Summit 2014 has been an exhilarating experience." - *Sam Stratford*

Overall the two days were very busy and action packed but worth all the hard work put into it by all; and I personally would love to visit again next year." - *Emily Kaye*

"When the EDGE Hotel School was invited to be part of the Boutique and Lifestyle Summit 2014 I signed up without hesitation: this was an opportunity not to be missed." - *Emily Bullock*



The Edge team at the end of Day 1

About the author

Sunny Basra is in his final year studying for the BA (Hons) Hotel Management degree at the [EDGE Hotel School](#).

Source: [The EDGE Hotel School](#)

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