

Wowprime to expand in China market: chairman

OVERSEAS OBJECTIVES: The company has six brands in China, including its flagship Wang Steak restaurant, and is to open a Yakiyan branch in California in August

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Wowprime Corp (王品), a leading restaurant chain operator in Taiwan, yesterday said that it would continue to expand in China by introducing new brands to the market.

At an annual general meeting, Wowprime chairman Park Chen (陳正輝) told shareholders that while China's economic growth has slowed, Wowprime still aims to open eight or nine new outlets in China by the end of this year.

The company is also targeting a 10 percent increase in sales in that market this year, he said.

Chen said that competition in China has intensified, but added that Wowprime is still determined to boost its presence by expanding its portfolio of brands while limiting the size of outlets operated by each brand.

Last year, Wowprime opened its first brand in China offering Chinese cuisine, Madam Goose, and a second Chinese food brand is to be launched there later this year, Chen said.

Wowprime has six brands in China, including its flagship Wang Steak restaurant, which has a total of 150 outlets.

The group's revenue from its operations in China last year picked up 23 percent from a year earlier to NT\$6.53 billion (US\$201.53 million), accounting for about 37 percent of the company's total revenue for the year, company data showed.

In Taiwan, where Wowprime operates 13 brands and 283 restaurants, sales totaled NT\$10.31 billion last year, a drop of 11 percent from a year earlier.

Chen said the company would introduce a new brand in Taiwan in the second half of this year.

In addition to the China market, Chen said Wowprime plans to expand to other overseas markets, including California, where it is to open a branch of its barbecue restaurant brand Yakiyan in August.

Wowprime signed an agreement with US-based Panda Restaurant Group in 2014 to set up a partnership to jointly penetrate the US market.

Chen said last year was a challenging year for Wowprime, because the company went through a restructuring process that resulted in closures of 35 outlets in Taiwan.

Due to of the reorganization, the company booked a heavy one-time loss and posted earnings per share of NT\$0.45 last year, a sharp decline from NT\$9.14 a year earlier.

Chen said that the worst is over as profit in the first quarter rebounded to NT\$1.07 per share, helped by the improvements made to Wowprime's operations through the restructuring initiative.