

6 Tips for Creating Coveted Guest Experiences



TIP

#1.

Guests want more control – give it to them

It is a common refrain that is getting increasingly louder: We want more control. And guests want it during every phase of the travel lifecycle. That growing desire became evident in our research as guests expressed their interest in various ways. For example, 45% of hotel guests want the capability to select specific room locations, and 94% of business travelers want to use their smartphones to request service and message hotel staff. If guests regard their hotel stay as their personal sanctuary – to do whatever they want, whenever they want – it is the hotelier's duty to facilitate their requests. **Deploying the right technology can help on many fronts, from making it easier for guests to watch or listen to their own entertainment content to providing apps that enable instant communication with staff.**



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TIP

#2.

Become your guests' confidant and orchestrate their experience

Competitors lurk at nearly every phase of the travel lifecycle, conspiring to come between you and your guests. But once travelers arrive on property, their notion of a memorable experience can be shaped entirely by the deeds and words of your staff. Yet hoteliers often don't capitalize on this opportunity to serve: Our research shows more than 60% of guests turn to non-hotel sources for in-destination queries, including recommendations for activities and restaurant reservations. Orchestrating guests' in-destination experience is a role that hoteliers must seize because it pays dividends immediately and in the future. By better promoting and bolstering the concierge, for example, the hotelier can become a trusted confidant to guests, building relationships and documenting preferences in guest profiles to ensure an even better stay next time.

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TIP

#3.

Know your guests: Business travelers can be your most-important leisure travelers

Far too often, hoteliers treat business and leisure travelers as if they are different species. And though they may exhibit distinctive behaviors and have unique preferences, it's important to remember one point: They are often one and the same. **In fact, 80% of US business travelers stayed in hotels for a leisure trip during the past year, and they are more likely to book stays at hotels for vacations than leisure travelers. They also make an attractive consumer group because 65% of them participate in a hotel loyalty program, increasing the odds of winning their repeat business.** So, why not invite them back for a vacation? Considering that business guests likely will morph into leisure travelers, marketing your property to them as a vacation destination makes perfect sense. Enhancing their guest profiles to identify when they are traveling for business or leisure – and to be aware of their preferences during either scenario – is bound to “surprise and delight” them, too.



TIP

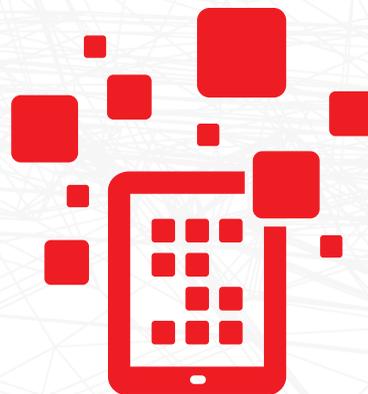
#4.

Design and offer apps that are integral to the hotel experience

In recent years, hoteliers have rushed to create guest-facing apps only to encounter what can be best described as a lukewarm reception: Nearly two-thirds of US travelers said they never used one during the past year. A likely reason? Consumers have limited storage capability on their smartphones and won't make space for hotel apps that only provide ancillary services. Don't mistake their response as a rejection of apps; rather, view it as an urging to do better.

Guests make it emphatically clear that they value technology, and they want hoteliers to continue investing in it.

And when it comes to apps, they offer plenty of suggestions for improvements. They want features that enable virtual check in/check out, keyless room access, and booking of activities and ticket purchasing. Perhaps, the most-interesting revelation: 73% expressed interest in downloading an app that automatically provides connection to hotel WiFi.



TIP

#5.

On social media: applaud your advocates; consult your critics

Nearly a majority of US travelers (47%) shared their hotel experience on a social network post-stay.

Providing the best guest experience possible is important not just to accommodate travelers during their stay, but to influence what they'll say about your hotel afterward: Nearly a majority of US travelers (47%) shared their hotel experience on a social network post-stay. Guest reviews likely will become even more prevalent, especially with millennials' travel activity accounting for a greater share of the industry. Our research shows millennials (ages 18-34) share hotel experience on social media (33%) far more than older travelers (26% for ages 35-54). Considering the impact of word-of-mouth advertising, it is imperative for hoteliers to respond to social-media commentary. Segment your commentators into advocates and detractors. For champions, consider rewarding their behavior – or encouraging more of it – with special promotions or recognition. For critics, listen to their complaints as an opportunity to improve service and address deficiencies. Remember, ignoring guests is the only sure way to lose them forever.



TIP

#6.

Embrace technology's flexibility to best individualize the guest experience

Factors such as size, budgets and geography often dictate hoteliers use of technology, but its flexibility allows it to be deployed in a variety of creative ways. Even in limited fashion, technology is a pivotal asset because it addresses the industry's seemingly conflicting goals: operate efficiently at scale and provide individualized service. **Our research shows that more than a majority of guests are comfortable sharing with hoteliers certain information about themselves, including food, activity and entertainment preferences.** Technology can help use such information to give guests exactly what they want. For example, staff can be equipped with mobile devices that access guest profiles, empowering them to provide personalized service anytime, anywhere. By linking scale and enhanced service, technology can generate greater guest loyalty – and revenue – for chains and independents alike.





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OracleHosp_ww@oracle.com

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