



MARKETING MATTERS

In this month's column, Angie Petkovic asks you to put yourself in your guests' shoes and see things from their perspective

I previously got you thinking about de-cluttering and now it's time to put yourself in the shoes of a guest. This is to test how convenient a stay within your hotel actually is. I challenge you to become your own guest, stay the night in your hotel and see what you notice. Understanding how inconvenient certain things might be will show you what you can change.

Recently I became a 'mystery shopper' at a hotel. From the minute I walked in, it was apparent that no-one had considered the convenience of the customer. The door entry at reception actually opened onto a table, which if you had two suitcases would have meant you had to enter sideways. This shows a complete lack of thought about the customer journey. How easy is it to be a guest these days? It's worth thinking about.

Easy-to use technology in the room (if applicable to your guest profile) will improve your guest experience. It's actually really cheap to put Wi-Fi in your property but make it accessible, simple and free if you can. The big chains are under fire for having some of the most expensive guest charges in the world for Wi-Fi. In some airport executive lounges and some of the well known chains, the steps before you actually log on are often over-complex and long-winded. Making it simple goes a long way.

Entertainment hubs in the guest bedrooms are probably not necessary for many of you, but perhaps offer guests international plug adapters or a charging point for laptops, ebook readers and mobile phones in the room to make their stay easier. If you do provide multi-channel TV and DVD facilities, choose a non-confusing interface and remote. The six-second rule says if you cannot figure out how to use the technology in a guest room in six seconds, your guests will not want to use it.

How user-friendly is the room itself? Does the light switch work as you walk through the door? In another hotel I visited, I walked in groping in the dark to find the switch located behind the door. Of course, turning the door around would have solved this but why is it always guests that have to point these annoyances out?

A mirror is pointless unless it is near a plug socket – for a woman this scenario is an impossible situation. I've also seen many mirrors in alcoves where you

can't stand back – these are no use to anyone. It's great to have hairdryers and if they are not available in every room, state on your website that guests can ask for one. When it comes to lamps, simply having one by the side of the bed isn't the end of the story. I once stayed in a hotel where two little supermarket value lamps were positioned on tables either side of a large four poster bed – reading a book or seeing across the room would have been impossible!

I've also seen a TV mounted near the ceiling with no remote. If I hadn't been as tall as I am, I would never have managed to have turned it on. The crick in my neck from watching it for 10 minutes made me switch it off!

In your bathroom you need the shelf near the mirror and washbasin. Having no shelf to put hairspray, shaving foam and glasses on can make a stay infuriatingly awkward. Have a look around and see if there is a shaver point or adapter and is the lighting good? A single light bulb with a cheap lampshade is not suitable in any bathroom. I am shocked at the number of hotel bathrooms with no lavatory brushes. Least said but you get my point!

Micro fit-for-purpose kettles also drive me mad. I don't understand why you have a nice cup, a beautiful room and the kettle conveying completely the wrong image. There is also no excuse for a broken remote, light bulb or lamp. A hook to hang a dressing gown on the back of a door is a must.

How easy is it for your guests to obtain knowledge about their stay? Most guests do not want to feel that they are a nuisance and

will rely on a handbook in their room offering information on where to visit; a sample menu; the facilities available; and a list of things they might need that they have forgotten or run short of such as an iron, an adaptor plug, shoe cleaning, fresh milk for tea, indigestion remedies or toothpaste. This list will not only make the customer journey easier, it will make you feel that you have gone over and above the level of service you offer. It might also mean that the high chair provided or the availability of a courtesy area to dry clothes might be the winning element that makes them recommend you to others.

Enjoy your stay, but prepare to be surprised and act on it....



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