MAXIMIZE THE GUEST EXPERIENCE BEFOR, DURING & AFTER THEIR STAY

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A COMPANION GUIDE TO THE WEBINAR
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GUEST EXPERIENCE is more than a buzzword - it has emerged as the next competitive battlefield for hoteliers. So why has guest experience become such a hot topic these days? Consumer expectations are higher, word of mouth travels faster. Because of social media and the connected environment we live in, a good experience can lead to thousands of new connections while a negative one can lead to the detriment of potentially more than that. Regardless of where that first reservation came from, it’s your job to keep that guest coming back and developing an advocate for your brand. The only way to do this is to stay in touch and make them feel valued during their stay, personalize their experience with meaningful offers and stay in touch when they leave.
What are guest touch points?

A guest touchpoint is any moment when a guest comes into contact with your brand. This includes before, during, and after the stay. Possible guest touchpoints can be your website, emails, social media, mobile, hotel lobby, front desk, housekeeping, spa, restaurant, service waiters, maintenance department, and so on. Your goal is to make sure your guests are happy every step of the way. As mobile becomes an increasingly popular platform for guests to research, book, connect and interact, it’s impossible to ignore this channel when enhancing the guest experience at every touch point.

The best way to find these touchpoints is by thinking like a guest who has never experienced your brand before and is going through the entire process of doing business with you. Common touchpoints include:

**Before the stay:** This could be one of your best opportunities to make a great impression with a pre-stay email series and set the stage for their upcoming stay. This includes the idea, research, and booking.

**Question 1**

Does your hotel have a strategy in place to engage and connect with guests?

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<td>48%</td>
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Guest expectations are higher than ever and word of mouth travels fast! That is why it is more critical than ever for hoteliers to have a strong strategy that leverages technology and data to map the guest journey. This will ensure that you reach your audience with the right message at the right time and in the right way to inspire a great impression at every touchpoint.
In between booking and arriving: The period between when your guest book and before they arrive is key for communication.

During the stay: From the moment they arrive, your guest might interact with all the services your property has to offer and engage with your staff.

After the stay: This involves the checkout process, guest feedback surveys, ongoing email communications, and offers.

It's important for hoteliers to put themselves in the shoes of today's guests. With all the new tools and tactics in your arsenal, it's vital to go beyond just email. By combining data with channels like mobile and SMS, savvy hoteliers marketers can better connect with guests on their preferred communication channels to drive more revenue and personal service.

**Question 2**

What communication channels do you use...

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<th>E-mail</th>
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Understand how touch points create the experience

Guest experience is all about ensuring the guest enjoys the experience of booking with you, that you have the right services and amenities, that those services are available when they’re looking for them, and that when they have a question or a concern that someone is there to help. And it pays off in the long run. When it comes to down competing on price or the experience, Gartner
found that 64% of people found customer experience to be more important than price when it comes to purchasing something. Keep this in mind as your guests may be willing to pay a little if it means that they will receive a better and more pleasant experience during their stay.

Always put the customer’s needs first. Always!

Today, guests want to collaborate with hotels to produce services, whether it is through collaboration with an employee or technology. Designing services around the guest journey will provide more opportunities to engage them and, better yet – get and retain their business. Gartner has found that 89% of companies plan to compete mostly on the basis of customer experience in 2016. Your hotel might have a superior location, better amenities or top-notch service, but they won’t amount to much if your guest have trouble accessing them. Smoothing out the touch points on the entire experience with the guest in mind will improve satisfaction and loyalty.

To get a clear picture of how you are performing throughout the guest journey, survey your guests to find out how they came across your property, how they felt before, during and after the stay and what
could be improved. Try using cloud-based property management technology systems to scale your efforts and to get real-time feedback and dashboard reports everywhere you need them.

**Before the Stay**

Think out of the box to differentiate your property and increase conversions. Offer creative packages, dynamic options and make booking with you a fun and frictionless experience. What about using Twitter to book via a tweet or booing via Instagram Messaging? Also, make sure you capture emails as early as possible in the booking process. Without that, you can’t send emails to try and get those who didn’t book to finalize their reservation.

Conventional hotel marketing practices still focus more on the acquisition phase of the lifecycle, with less energy devoted to engage, upsell, retain or win back lost guests. But the truth is, you can generate more revenues from existing customers at a much lower investment cost if you engage them with via social media, on your website, via email, and once booked, using pre-stay messages.

Consider sending an alert that invites them to check into their room remotely using their phone, notifies them about room readiness,
offers a room upgrade or a unique spa service catered to the preferences from their last visit. Before arriving, enable guests to send messages to the front desk to request a car service from the airport, order an in-room amenity for arrival or ask for an early check-in.

**In Between Booking and Arriving**

Make sure you reinforce your hotel brand and brand promise from the start and set the tone for a memorable stay. By leveraging your guest enthusiasm for their upcoming stay hotels can drive ancillary revenue through upsells and upgrades.

Based on Revinate’s data we see that pre-arrival emails sent out either 7 or 3 days before your guest arriving on site get the best open rates, an average of 57%. By using the word ‘upgrade’ in the subject or call to action the average open rate even increases to over 61%.

**During the Stay**

Most hoteliers are facing an increasingly competitive landscape and always looking for that little extra something that will make guests
choose their property over their competitors. To deliver a memorable guest experience, you need to know your guests. With a clear outline of your guest history and preferences, you can provide a much more personal service, which is likely to increase retention and loyalty. Consider empowering your staff with mobile devices and tablets so they can access guest information and take requests without being tethered to the front desk. Guests now have the opportunity to interact with hotels directly, send messages via mobile, SMS text, email, Facebook, and share their interests and reviews of products on social media - so ensure your property is connected and listening on all those same channels. Guests want to get all the information at a finger’s tip. Make it easy for guests to use any channel for in-room food ordering, communications with staff, and concierge services for activities information, destination tips, dinner reservations and more.

After the Stay

This is the home stretch and moment of truth, but the journey is not over. Continue to offer conveniences like self-checkout or late check-out. Encourage guests to provide feedback on their experiences.
Join the conversation and be present - addressing both positive and negative reviews. Automate follow up marketing aimed at building relationships over time by focusing on the individual person and their journey with your brand. If you engage a broad spectrum of guest needs with generic emails at best, your success rate will be hit-and-miss, at worst, just miss. Marketing campaigns to specific users based on who they are will transform your marketing campaigns into meaningful and engaging initiatives. The gold is in the data so gather as much information about your guests as you can. Leveraging data and technology to collect insight into the key drivers of your business translates into revenue. Remember to use these insights to send the right offer, to the right, person, on the right channel, at the right time.

The main goal is to create a consistent guest experience across all touchpoints to exceed your and your guests’ standards. By keeping an eye on the entire journey, you’re making sure that the promise of a positive experience is kept and that you’re offering a superior service. Embrace a guest-centric strategy, and stand out from your competitors by making sure today’s guest become tomorrow’s brand advocates.