

HOW THE CORONAVIRUS WILL CHANGE THE HOTEL GUEST BEHAVIOR?



The Coronavirus crisis has significantly affected the lives of billions of people around the world in the last couple of months. Tourism has come to a standstill, borders have been partially closed, air traffic has largely ceased, and many travel restrictions have been implemented worldwide.

These drastic events most definitely will not be permanent, and tourism has the capacity to revive. Hoteliers are optimistic in different ways, but everyone agrees that everyday hotel life and processes are changing forever and will be shaped with a new reality in the post-coronavirus era.

Generally speaking, hygiene and safety measures will be the top priority for hoteliers. It is important to anticipate the hotel guest behavior in this new situation to be capable to address their needs in the best way possible. In times of social isolation and avoidance of contacts, it is no surprise that some services will quickly regain their relevance. It is, therefore, key for hotels to deal with what this means for their own bookable services.

An important aspect here is the change in hotel guest behavior regarding the room service. Based on user data from SuitePad in approximately 1000 hotels in March 2020, interesting conclusions can be drawn for the future. At that time, the coronavirus had already arrived in Europe, but hotels were still open.

Room Service Rose Dramatically

Profitable hoteliers tend not to be big fans of room service, as it has been extremely difficult to offer this service profitably in recent years. It was often only offered to meet service requirements for star categories. In a changed situation with the coronavirus, room service will become significantly more important because the guest will be increasingly fixated to his room.

Due to the lower occupancy in hotels, the absolute number of hotel bookings in March 2020 was lower compared to March 2019. In terms of room service orders, we see an increase of 89% from last year, which shows that consumption in the hotel room is indispensable in a "corona world". The fear of infection is relatively high among guests, and alternatives are often missing due to restaurant closings and restrictions.

Classic hotel services, such as room service, suddenly offer great potential to meet the new requirements. But this also means that this service must be organized more efficiently. It is suspected that there will be fewer options in the room service and, as a hotel, you should be particularly prepared for increasing breakfast orders.

Creative Ideas for Breakfast Offers

Rethinking the breakfast offer will be necessary anyway to comply with the new social distancing regulations. Many hotels indicate that even if the demand of guests would increase significantly, they would not be able to operate their hotel at 100% occupancy because the capacities of breakfast rooms do not meet the new requirements. For this reason, a creative breakfast offer would be very beneficial.

This would help reduce the number of guests in the breakfast area and help meet the safety requirements. At the same time, it would not be a classic a la carte breakfast, which will minimize the effort for the hotel staff. The breakfast could be easily composed as a package by the guest (e. g. in different variants from “Vegan” to “Sweet”). This would be ordered digitally along with the time of delivery and the employee would hang a bag with the ordered food on the following day. Other hotels are considering traffic light systems. The guest would choose a breakfast time the evening before and digitally reserve a table. Excessive utilization at peak times would be minimized in this way.

Furthermore, it can be assumed that the hotel guest behavior will also change in the long-term. That is, at least until a vaccine is available. For example, some guests will avoid staying in the restaurant or refrain from leaving the hotel. This also represents an opportunity for hoteliers to replace revenues obtained outside in the past with those generated in their own operation. Busy times with crowded breakfast areas seem far away now, but the vaccine development can go well into 2021. If hotels want to generate revenues by then, improvisation and adaptation will be necessary.

Hotel Rooms as Home Office

Room service and new breakfast offers do not have to be the only services that could be optimized for the in-room area in the hotel. Other offers are certainly heavily dependent on the level of service and clientele. In business hotels – which are already partially converted into alternative home offices – services connected to everyday office life, such as printing documents, certainly play a great role.

In leisure establishments, it is important to consider whether **spa treatments will continue to take place in the same room, one after the other, or whether more time should be allowed for cleaning or if some parts of the process could be moved to the guest’s room.**

What is certain is that the world will be different in the post-coronavirus era and it will be a big challenge for the industry. It is therefore essential to consider the conditions under which hoteliers can open their facilities once again. As mentioned, room service should be given particular importance in this process.

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