

# Hotels embrace the personalisation trend in 2018

When the popular 1980s American TV programme, Cheers, used to reign the airwaves, its signature "...where everybody knows your name" conjured up thoughts of a relaxed, convivial environment - a home-away-from-home haven where the bartender knew what drink you were going to order, where you were going to sit and which days you were likely to visit. As a result, you would get the personal attention that made you feel special and kept you coming back to the place where everybody knew your name.



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## Rising expectation for personalised experiences

As with so many things, we appear to have come full circle. For years, we were content to be unknown by our hotel hosts – just another booking and room number. Today, however, the trend towards personalisation has filtered down to the hospitality sector.

At least 86% of international consumers say personalisation plays an important role in their purchasing decisions, according to a recent report by Infosys, a multinational business consulting and technology services provider.

This statistic shows the rising expectations for a more personalised experience. People are actively seeking an experience that is relevant to them and a service that makes them feel like they matter as an individual, rather than merely being clumped together with every other consumer and offered the exact same treatment.

## Nurturing the guest, strengthening the brand

Personalisation is about fostering a relationship with guests, not only to build customer loyalty but also to strengthen your brand, says Jeff Rosenberg, head chairperson of the Federated Hospitality Association of Southern Africa (FEDHASA). "Hotels are starting to focus on the smaller details that might seem insignificant at first but when executed well, make a memorable impact on each guest, like knowing whether Mr. Smith prefers Marmite instead of Bovril, or Mrs. Jones an orange-vanilla scent instead of white-cedar in her room," he added.

“*...hotel guest personalisation also comes down to really knowing your brand and implementing online marketing*

*strategies that will target and attract the right customers to your specific hotel or lodge.* ”

Personalisation in the hospitality sector is not something that happens automatically. Rather, it is nurtured over time and is at the heart of the company's culture, says Sharmila Ragunanan, group marketing manager for Dream Hotel & Resorts. “Each guest should take it for granted that their individual needs will be catered for, regardless of if they are a VIP, or not. In fact, this individualism is so important, that Dream has a ‘One Guest’ approach that regards each guest as an important individual in their own right.”

## **Data critical to delivering personalised service at every touchpoint**

Both Rosenberg and Ragunanan agree that when it comes to guest personalisation, hotels should look at how they can collect and interpret data about their guests to deliver a user experience pre-booking to post-stay, which will resonate with their guests and build loyalty.

“That means even when you book a hotel, the reservations staff make an effort to build a rapport and foster a personal relationship with you which then continues at check-in, during the guest's stay and well after. From the breakfast attendant to the pool staff, personalised service is important at every touchpoint that a hotel has with its guests.

“With online bookings, preferences can be determined by including an easy checklist so that the hotel provider can collect data and prepare a personalised experience for guests prior to their arrival. We find that most guests are happy to provide some personal information if it means that they're getting personalised service and relevant information, post-stay about deals that would suit their specific requirements.”

## **Know your brand, target the right customer**

Ragunanan also added that hotel guest personalisation also comes down to really knowing your brand and implementing online marketing strategies that will target and attract the right customers to your specific hotel or lodge.

“If you know who you want as your guest, the personalisation process becomes a lot easier to achieve, and through personalisation, hotel groups can achieve a competitive edge.”

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