

## Hotels must adapt to needs of modern traveller, says HVS

**Hotels are in** danger of failing to adapt to a new breed of guest whose needs and demands are entirely different to those of previous generations.

This is the conclusion of a new study in the changing nature of hotel guests undertaken by global hotel consultancy HVS London.

The report, '**A New Breed of Traveller**', says the impact of rising affluence, globalization and technology has led to modern hotel guests valuing experiences and the feeling of 'being connected' over traditional hotel luxuries.

'It seems that many hotels have barely changed over the last decades still consisting of the same in-room amenities, the same heavy curtains, the same check-in process, and the same small desk. This is no longer a place where the modern-day traveller feels at home,' states report co-author HVS associate Veronica Waldthausen.

'This new segment of traveller is no longer looking for white-linen service, bellboys to carry their luggage up to their room or a concierge. When the current generation of young travellers enter a hotel, they want to feel completely at home, connected and to be in a setting where they can be part of an experience,' she adds.

The study, which includes interviews from leading hotel executives, outlines the fact that the new generation of travellers see luxury more in the storytelling of having an experience, rather than in the abundance of luxury items. They are much more satisfied with a hotel lobby they can sit in and drink coffee surrounded by other people, than having a coffee machine in their room.

'You can buy status symbols, but buying an experience is much harder. Whereas leading hotels used to be equipped with gadgets and technology, the new breed of traveller wants the confidence of places that understand them, and to be surrounded by a community of like-minded people, wherever they go,' adds Waldthausen.

The changing nature of hotel guests is also prompting change in the traditional layout of hotels. Lobbies, for example, are becoming larger, more open social hubs and gathering spaces, with a mix of comfortable couches, communal workstations and meeting spaces.

Formal divisions between the lobby, restaurant and bars are also disappearing with guests able to sit where they like or help themselves to what they want.

Rooms are changing too, with many lifestyle hotels having smaller rooms as guests spend more time in social places. Desks are becoming less necessary in the room, as people prefer to sit on chairs or on beds to work when using their laptop or tablet.

Meeting rooms are becoming less formal and more 'homely' with brighter colour schemes and comfortable chairs. Hotels are becoming creative with their breakout spaces to allow guests to feel that they are in their own home some with breakout space with a communal kitchen.

Hotel service is becoming more intuitive and casual, albeit with the same level of respect. Some hotels are abandoning uniforms and the days of scripting responses to guests are over.

'Guests are looking for home-from-home. The new era is about participating in an experience, rather than flaunting wealth. Travellers today don't want to feel like they are in a corporate setting, but thrive in environments where they can interact with people, be it face-to-face or virtual. They want everyone to participate and don't mind interacting with new people,' says co-author Arlett Oehmichen, HVS London director.

'The new-breed of 'lifestyle' hotels have adapted, differentiating themselves in both style and service and are offering a new kind of product that is comfortable and simple, a place where guests can become part of an experience by interacting with the people that live there as well as staff. There will always be a market for wall-to-wall luxury, but it is lifestyle hotels that are prompting change

throughout the industry,? Oehmichen concludes.

(ends)

Download a copy of 'A New Breed of Traveller ? how consumers are driving change in the hotel industry' by Veronica Waldthausen and Arlett Oehmichen at <http://www.hvs.com/article/6675/a-new-breed-of-traveller>.

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