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Hospitality Trends: The Latest Trends in The Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry is extremely competitive, and it is important for businesses operating within it to keep up with the latest trends, in order to avoid being left behind. Furthermore, keeping pace with the wider industry is one of the ways owners can help to ensure their business is delivering an excellent customer experience. In this article, you will learn about ten of the most significant hospitality trends right now and in the future.

10 Hospitality Trends to Look Out For

The hospitality industry is diverse and includes everything from hotels and other accommodation types, through to restaurants, bars, travel agents and tour operators. Nevertheless, there are some trends that are fairly typical across the hospitality industry and ten of these are explained in more detail below.

1. Local Experience

Another trend that those in the hospitality industry are getting to grips with is the desire for tourists or travellers to enjoy local experiences. Many people do not simply want to experience a life similar to their own, but in a different location. Instead, they want to experience the authentic way of life in the location they visit.

Businesses in the hospitality industry are responding to this, in order to cater for these demands. Hotels might provide local products, while other options like Airbnb and farmhouse accommodation can offer a more authentic guest experience. Moreover, travel agents and tour operators can help travellers to take part in local activities.

1. Healthy and Organic Food & Drinks

In the past, a substantial section of the hospitality industry was made up of fast food restaurants and bars selling sugary alcoholic drinks. However, there has been something of a cultural shift, with people becoming more aware of the things they are putting in their bodies, leading to a healthy food and drinks trend.

For restaurants, this has meant re-vamping menus with healthier options, including gluten free, dairy free, low fat, vegetarian, vegan and organic options. However, the trend for healthy food and drinks extends to hotels, catering services and even holiday as well, with healthier room service options, as well as healthier drinks sold behind bars.

2. Sustainability

Increasingly, customers are concerned with environmental issues and want to know that the businesses they deal with are behaving ethically. For this reason, sustainability has been one of the most noticeable hospitality trends of recent times, with a growing number of hospitality businesses promoting their eco-friendliness.

Examples of this range from restaurants promoting their vegetarian and vegan options, through to hotels that make use of smart light bulbs and smart heating to save energy. Within the accommodation sector, there are also decisions to be made about using more sustainable materials for things like towels and bed sheets.

3. Personalisation

Across almost all industries, the need for personalisation is a major trend, and the hospitality industry is no different. This is primarily driven by the rise of big data. Meanwhile, a growing number of hotel guests want to be treated as individuals, rather than just another anonymous customer.

Personalisation can be deployed in a variety of ways. Within hotels, for instance, returning customers can be automatically provided with similar services to last time they stayed, while they can also be personally greeted by a member of staff upon arrival, using GPS technology and booking data. Furthermore, with the rise of smart devices, hotel guests can also be enabled to use their own devices and accounts on entertainment platforms.

4. Smart Hotels

In simple terms, a smart hotel is a hotel that makes use of internet-enabled devices, which are capable of sending data to one another. Smart hotel designs are tied in with the idea of the 'Internet of Things' and have emerged as a more popular concept since smart speakers and smart hubs became popular consumer products.

A smart hotel might, for example, allow guests to control the heating or air conditioning from their phone, or turn on the TV by giving a voice command to a smart speaker. In many cases, smart rooms also automatically adjust things like the brightness of light bulbs, or the temperature of a radiator, in order to maintain optimal conditions.

6. Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence plays a number of different roles within the hospitality industry, but the main one is to improve customer service. One example of this is AI-powered chatbots, which can be used for online customer interactions, removing lengthy waiting times and providing swift, intelligent responses to questions.

However, there are additional uses for artificial intelligence technology too. For instance, some hotels have introduced AI and voice controlled customer service or tourist information hubs within their hotels. Meanwhile, AI can also be used to sort through data, automatically make adjustments to processes, and so on.

7. Robots

One of the most exciting hospitality trends is the emergence of robots, which are defined as machines built to carry out complex tasks, either autonomously or semi-autonomously. They are often equipped with artificial intelligence, and can help those operating in hospitality management by generating speed, cost and accuracy improvements.

Hilton, for example, introduced a robot concierge recently, which is able to respond to human speech and answer questions. Some travel agencies have experimented with robots to pre-qualify customers as they wait to speak to agent, while the Henn-na Hotel in Nagasaki, Japan is entirely robot-staffed.

8. Bleisure Travel by Millennials

'Bleisure' is the name given to trips which combine business travel with leisure activities, and it is increasingly popular, especially among the millennial generation. As an example, a traveller may initially visit a location to attend a business meeting or conference, but then extend their stay to turn it into a holiday.

This is one of the most interesting hospitality trends for those in the industry to respond to, as 'Bleisure' travellers are likely to want spontaneous services, excellent access to information and fast communication. Mobile apps are one way to achieve this, while hotels need to try to remove as many barriers to booking as possible.

9. Virtual Reality

Over the past few years, virtual reality headsets have become mainstream consumer products, bringing virtual reality technology into the mainstream. This is one of the most potentially game-changing hospitality trends, because VR technology has the capacity to digitally alter a person's entire surroundings.

This can be applied in a number of interesting ways by those in the hospitality industry. Hotels might use VR technology as part of their booking processes, allowing users to experience a highly realistic digital version of their hotel rooms before booking. Meanwhile, travel agents can use virtual tours/ 360 videos of tourist attractions to sell holidays.

10. Augmented Reality

Finally, augmented reality technology is similar to virtual reality technology in many ways, but rather than creating a new digital environment for users, it is concerned with enhancing real-world environments through graphical or informational overlays. Unlike VR technology, it also usually requires nothing other than a smartphone and an app.

Augmented reality apps can be designed so that users can point their phone at a restaurant and see reviews, or opening times. Hotels and other accommodation types can also use augmented reality to provide interactive tourist information maps within their properties, or to create fun opportunities to create user generated content.

It is important for those in the industry to keep up with the latest hospitality trends, so that they do not fall behind competitors. While the hospitality industry itself is diverse, the ten trends cited in this article apply to many different aspects of it, and can help to improve the customer experience.