



CLEANLINESS IN HOTELS SHOULD BE A GIVEN SAYS MYSTERY GUEST FIRM

Survey finds 3 out of 5 hotel guests have complained about state of rooms

Cleanliness only causes issues for hotel operators when it is poor, however, a review of housekeeping responsibilities could see customer satisfaction and repeat business improve dramatically according to the director of guest experience review firm The Mystery Dining Company.

In a survey of more than 320 consumers, three out of five respondents said they had been forced to make a complaint about a room's cleanliness in the past. It also revealed that, when taking room price out of the equation, the reputation a venue - be it a hotel, guesthouse/B&B or inn - has for cleanliness, is a priority for guests, second only to location, when selecting where to stay.

"Cleanliness in hotels should be a given - it is a basic standard that only becomes a focus for the guest when it is poor," explains Sally Whelan, director of The Mystery Dining Company.

"Making the right impression is especially important in a competitive market - the fact that a quarter of guests immediately put cleanliness ahead of location speaks volumes. In areas where there is a higher concentration of accommodation options reputation - whether from online reviews and word of mouth - can have a significant impact on occupancy levels," she adds.

9 out of 10 guests also said that a previous experience would influence their decision to stay at another venue within the same group or chain.

Whelan believes that it is important that hoteliers and guesthouse owners remember to "think like a guest would" and consider what is important to them if they want to raise standards. For example, she says "the majority of guests - around 40% - are likely to use the state of the bathroom as the key indicator for a venue's cleanliness." The general appearance of the bedroom (28%), and the hotel's reception and entrance areas (21%) are also commonly used by guests as they build an opinion of the operation.

“Detailed cleaning audits can be a useful way for management to monitor what is being done in terms of cleaning and what needs to happen more frequently. It can also be invaluable to gain an outsider’s perspective of a hotel’s appearance as it can be harder to evaluate this with a critical eye if it is an environment that you are spending time in on a daily basis,” she adds.

The survey also revealed that the manner in which complaints are handled varies widely across the sector. In 56% of cases the individuals affected were offered a new room either immediately or within a short period of time, around a third of incidents were handled by sending a member to improve the situation within an hour of the complaint, and, worryingly, in around 12% of occasions no action was taken by the management to improve the guest’s situation.

The Mystery Dining Company’s assessors regularly undertake overnight assignments where they are required to report on all aspects of their experience, from their first impressions and how helpful staff are, through to how comfy the pillows are through to the quality of the coffee at breakfast.

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