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HYATT
REGENCY

Slow & Steady

HYATT RAMPS UP CANADIAN GROWTH

+ d3h HOTEL INC.'S
CONCEPT RESONATES WITH BOTH
GUESTS AND EMPLOYEES.

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Free Wi-Fi Reigns but Wanes as Top Hotel Amenity

Global travellers' desire for free Wi-Fi is still the No. 1 amenity when choosing a hotel for both leisure and business stays, but it is slowly declining according to the latest research from leading online accommodation booking service, Hotels.com

Here are the highlights:

Staying Connected for Free

- Complimentary Wi-Fi is the top factor in choosing a hotel for leisure stays (30 per cent), as compared to 34 per cent in 2013. Canadian travellers ranked it slightly higher than the global average at 36 per cent; no surprise considering the country has topped the list of highest internet usage worldwide.
- 50 per cent of respondents said free Wi-Fi is their must-have when travelling for business, down from 56 per cent two years ago.
- Free Wi-Fi is the tech amenity 60 per cent of respondents wish would become standard at all hotels this year, six per cent lower than in 2013. With the increased availability of free public Wi-Fi hotspots and enhanced mobile data plans, travellers appear to have lessened their reliance on hotel Wi-Fi.

Love of Food & Beverage

- Free breakfast is once again the second must-have amenity for leisure travellers (21 per cent) and third for business travellers (12 per cent), who ranked proximity to mass transit, restaurants and shops ahead of a free meal.
- The most desired breakfast items are: Fresh fruit and coffee/tea (tied at 16 per cent), meats and eggs (tied at 12 per cent) and bread/toast, and a nice juice selection (tied at eight per cent). While Canadian travellers were aligned with these classic menu items, there was a definite interest in healthy options for their first meal (22 per cent).
- In-room, high-end coffee makers or espresso machines are travellers' favourite modern in-room amenity (23 per cent). For Canadians, this was closely followed by wired rooms and smartphone docking stations.
- 33 per cent of respondents say complimentary bottled water is the simple amenity they want in all hotel rooms.
- Complimentary breakfast is the top non-tech amenity travellers wish would become standard at all hotels today (27 per cent) and refrigerators for personal use is second (15 per cent). Only three per cent of respondents said they would go without free breakfast in order to pay less for their hotel stay. Canadian travellers were most willing to ditch amenities like turndown service, bathrobes and toiletries in order to get a better hotel rate.
- Travellers' dream amenity is visiting a chocolate parlor to choose their own treats for turndown service.

Hotel Guests' Second & Third Loves

Global travellers also enjoy more than free Wi-Fi and breakfast:

- Free parking is the third consideration when leisure travellers book a hotel (10 per cent). Canucks, however, were most interested in a pool or spa.
- Wired hotel rooms with one remote control for multiple functions and smart device docking stations are the second and third most favourite modern in-room amenities at 22 per cent and 15 per cent respectively.
- Far behind free Wi-Fi, the most desired tech items hotel guests want as standard are gadget charging stations and HD TVs (both eight per cent) and wired rooms (seven per cent).

Falling Out of Love

- 24 per cent of global travellers say minibars aren't worth the hype and 17 per cent say they go unused. For Canadians, anything ending with "butler" wasn't a crowd favourite. These included sun, sleep and bath butlers.
- Phones get no love: bathroom phones are the most unused item (22 per cent) and cordless phones only got one per cent of the vote as the simple amenity wanted in hotel rooms.
- Intimacy and first aid kits scored just a bit higher at three per cent each.

Sticky-Fingered Guests

When asked what they have taken (and never returned) from a hotel room, only 27 per cent of Argentinian hotel guests said "nothing," followed by Singaporean and Spanish guests at 29 per cent and 30 respectively. By contrast, 69 per cent of Colombians and 67 per cent of Norwegians, Koreans, Hongkongers and Danes indicated they have never stolen from a hotel. Canada came in 11th place, beating their U.S. neighbours by a mere one per cent (48 vs. 47 per cent).

The most taken item is stationery at 20 per cent, yet only one per cent of respondents say it's a simple amenity they'd like to see in their rooms more often. Slippers are in second (12 per cent) and key cards are third (10 per cent).

Canadian Business Travellers Find Hotels Lacking on Important Priorities

Hotels are missing the mark in a couple of key areas, according to a recent study of Canadian business travellers commissioned by Active International Canada.

Free Wi-Fi an Expectation, Not an Option

Complimentary Wi-Fi is now an expectation amongst all types of business traveller and is the most common suggestion given to improve the hotel experience. In addition, ambience and amenities play a large role in differentiating one hotel from another. One in five travellers surveyed recommended hotels improve their restaurants, undertake renovations or modernizations, or invest in better fitness centres.

"Overall, hotels are doing a good job meeting the needs of Canadian business travellers," says Nikki Stone, vice-president, business development, and head of travel at Active International Canada. "Good customer service and friendly, knowledgeable staff were commonly mentioned by the survey respondents when describing positive hotel experiences – while the top reasons for requesting different accommodation typically related to the quality and cleanliness of their room or poor service."

Decentralized Travel Decision Making

The Active International study also reveals that travellers, not companies, most often make business travel decisions, including when to travel, what airline to fly with, which hotel chain to select and the type of hotel room to book.

Less than 20 per cent of people surveyed said their company has a central travel coordinator who must make all bookings. A large majority place their bookings directly with the hotel through the internet, telephone, or mobile app.

"Decentralization is an important consideration for hotels and airlines when deciding how to allocate sales and promotional budgets to reach key decision-makers," adds Stone. "To be effective, they will need to target individual business travellers, as well as corporate travel departments and organizations."

According to the study, price, room cleanliness and location are all important factors when travellers select a hotel, but not the only criteria travellers consider when making their decision. Loyalty programs, reliable Wi-Fi and online reviews are also important drivers.

Combining Business and Pleasure

Along with the trend to individual decision-making, blurred lines between business and personal travel are the new normal. Two-thirds of those surveyed have added personal days to a business trip and close to half sometimes or usually bring a spouse, friend or relative.

As the world changes, so does the business traveller's expectation of their hotel and what they are willing, or unwilling, to pay for. "The power is ultimately in the hands of the traveller," says Stone. "Successful hotels and their banners will pay attention and cater to these travellers' needs."