

Enhancing the Guest Experience through Well designed Bathrooms

(A study on Five Star Deluxe Business Hotels in Mumbai and Pune City)

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Abstract: - The Hoteliers know the fact that if they want their customers to choose them over the competitors they have to provide something extra to the guests through the facilities and the services. Guests' expectations of hotel amenities and facilities are affected by the type of hotel and its sophistication level. Nothing sends a stronger message than the cleanliness in the hotel and especially in the bathrooms. . New age bathrooms are sophisticated and showcase great designs and technological innovations. The recent trend in luxury hotels is to transform the guestroom bath into a relaxing and rejuvenating space that could almost be considered similar to a spa experience. The other important factors which affect the choice of hotel is the size of the bathroom, the faucets, the quality of toiletries and linen, vanity space, jetted bathtubs, shower cubicle with modern faucets, personal spa, mirror television. The findings of this research suggests that the Five Star deluxe Hotels in Pune and Mumbai have well designed and technologically updated bathrooms to provide the guest with utmost comfort, luxury and a wellness experience. The well designed bathrooms are an important feature for the repeat guests for the hotel.

Key words-

Guest bathrooms- *A bathroom is a room for personal hygiene, generally containing a bathtub or a shower, and possibly also a bidet in the hotel room.*

Faucets-Taps

Mirror Television- *The specialised reflection technology of optical lens transforms the television into a mirrored screen, when the screen is switched on the television images magically appear through the optical mirror glass and then when the display device is switched off, the screen surface reverts back to normal mirror.*

Ensuite-bathroom attached to and accessible from the bedroom

I. INTRODUCTION

The Hotel industry is expanding with every passing day due to the boom in the leisure and corporate tourism. Hoteliers know the fact that if they want their customers to choose them over the competitors they have to provide something extra to the guests through the facilities and the services. Guests' expectations of hotel amenities and facilities are affected by the type of hotel and its sophistication level. Pampering seems to have taken a new meaning altogether for the hoteliers and

the consumers of luxury services. The luxury hotels go over and above the standard room layout to give a sense of comfort and opulence. They redefine the hotel design, explore new room configurations, as well as experiment with the new trends though at high cost per room ratio as the components often have to be customised.

Nothing sends a stronger message than the cleanliness in the hotel and especially in the bathrooms. No level of glamour can equal the sensation a guest has upon entering a spotless, tidy and conveniently arranged room. A good bathroom can make or mar a hotel leaving a guest with positive memories of a pampered experience or negative thoughts of poor water pressure. The designs and technology in creating bathrooms have been changing from time to time. In India, the true essence of a modern bathroom has evolved only over the past five to seven years and it is now that the developers and hoteliers have taken up the seriousness of a good bathroom design. Historically the bathrooms in the hotels have always been neglected. The hotel bath used to be in the basic, small areas with poor standards of fixtures and design. Importance of a good designed ensuite bathroom was never a necessity for the hotels in the old days. However, in the modern times the design, look and feel of the bathrooms have evolved drastically and hotels have started showcasing them. The business hotel has evolved, wherein the segment ranges from a budget hotel to super luxury seven stars. New age bathrooms are sophisticated and showcase great designs and technological innovations. The luxury segment has quite a lot of modern, creative design, the finest sanitary ware and fixtures in the bathrooms.

The recent trend in luxury hotels is to transform the guestroom bath into a relaxing and rejuvenating space that could almost be considered similar to a spa experience.

There are various factors influencing the choice of bathroom amenities-

The size of the bathrooms-

It is equally important as the size of the guestroom. The modern bathrooms takes up anywhere between 30-40 per cent

of the overall room space. The right sized bathroom helps in proper division of dry, semidry and wet areas for the guest convenience. The amount of space dedicated to the bathroom has increased and defining different zones is fast becoming the norm for the hotels.

A bathroom has the following fixtures-

- A bath tub and shower area with shower curtains or glass shower cubicle
- A water closet(WC)
- A full length mirror at the entrance
- A tissue holder with a tissue roll, affixed on the wall near the water closet
- The handicap room will include changing and shower area suitable for the wheel chair access in the bathroom, a lower level water closet, faucets, switches, vanity counter for easy access for the guest.
- Retractable Clothes liners

A proper space to keep robes, towels, disposables and towel warmer with good arte facts completes a luxurious bathroom experience. The colour and material used for the tiles of the bathroom sets the tone for the bath. The dark wood, pale stones or shades of white help to create a tranquil foundation upon which are created the relaxation spaces. Good quality of work finish with detailing and selection of quality brands gives the bathroom elegant and timeless look.

Sanitary ware and faucets-The hoteliers spend a lot of time on the selection of fittings and fixtures. Most of the top brand five star deluxe hotels have quite a lot of automation, finger touch sanitary ware, sensor taps and fixtures. The faucets are slicker, appealing, have better functionality and made of stainless steel, nickel, brass or chrome coating. The touch panel switches add hi-tech ambience to the area. The tiles and the sanitary ware are available in variety of materials, in any shape and size as per the decor requirements.

In fittings, Digital Mixture Diverter is a new product which is electronically operated, shows the temperature of water and controls the flow of water allowing personalised settings.

Range and quality of toiletries and linen -More and more hotels are opting for toiletry ranges evolved after research and experimentation on the potent healing, curative properties of essential oils and based on natural sources. The shampoos, conditioners, creams, lotions are procured by the hotels from the well-known brands as the guest is very choosy while using the toiletries. The guest prefers toiletries that smell neither too flowery nor masculine but mostly without peculiar strong smell. The bath linen is expected to be spotless, fluffy and of high quality terry towels. The towel rack has the following linen-

- Bath towels and bath sheets on the towel rack with hotel logo
- Hand towels and face towels(near the vanity counter)
- Wash cloth
- A bath mat(near the bath tub)
- A turkish or silk bathrobe

Space for vanity counter and accessories- A good size washbasin counter to keep a range of toiletries is a basic need for the guest. A double vanity counter or a wider one can accommodate more than one person in the rush hour. They are made of ceramic, marble, granite. Basins may be cantilevered or may stand on a pedestal and should include smooth-edged soap wells.

The supplies on or near the vanity counter includes-

- Toiletries-Monogrammed soaps, shampoo bottles, moisturizers, cologne, aftershave lotion, bath gels, body scrub
- Other supplies-shower caps, gargle glasses, tissue box, razor blades, dental kit, shaving kit, tissue holders
- A mirror mounted on the wall of the bathroom, an additional makeup mirror with a swivel handle and appropriate lighting
- A sani-bin beside the water closet or under the vanity counter
- A weighing scale under the counter
- A mountable, thermally insulated and splash proof hair dryer and electric shaver
- Bath slippers
- A flower vase or foliage to add the aesthetic value

Jetted soaking bathtub- The luxury brand of hotel bath features good sized jetted soaking bathtub made of cast iron, with a big shower stall with adjustable shower temperature faucets, a hand held shower and a good rain shower. Tub for two is also highly popular among elite guests. A freestanding bathtub in the centre of the rooms brings focus to the ritual of bathing and is seen in many guestrooms.

Shower cubicle with rain showers and jets, one touch control- A separate shower cubicle with full water hitting showering experience from rain showers and body jets from multiple angles has become a desired feature for the guest. The maximum space is allotted to the shower area in the designing of bathrooms. The shower system can be customised to everyone's different tastes and preferences. It is possible to choose from different types of sprays and shower head sizes. Digital shower systems are emerging as the next big thing in luxury showers. The system offers many other features including one-touch control, touch screen controller for shower panel with integrated, multi-sensory experience that wraps four elements-water, sound, light and steam together in a plug-n-play system which gives hi-tech luxurious feeling and comfort to the guest.

Intelligent Water Closet or WASHLETs with convenient activation panel, hygienic self cleaning dual action spray help saving water, time and is high in demand for bathrooms. A spacious bathroom with separate water closet and bidet enclosure or cubicle is a part of a luxury hotel bathroom. The new WASHLETs feature technology in which after use, the toilet bowl is sprayed with electrolysed water, which has a cleansing and antibacterial effect.

Glass panels between bed rooms & bathrooms-Glass as walls between room and bathroom came to India much later than the trend overseas. Initially there was much reservation for fear of guest being old fashioned and conscious. The trend of making bathroom and room as one with open doors and washbasin in the room are limited to the luxury brand hotels. Large glass panels between bedroom and bathroom gives an extension to the room. The orientation is such that the guest is able to look out through a glass wall or window to enjoy the view, sometimes right across the bedroom. Another concept which is used wherever possible is the barn door. A barn door stays outside the bathroom and slides in front of the room opening and allows for a wider opening into the bathroom, adding to the illusion of more space.

The new trends in the bathroom designing of the hotel-

Eco Friendly or nature based toiletries and cleaning agents with the minimal use of chemicals for cleaning-. Eco sensitivity is now a must while designing a hotel bathroom as guest tends to splurge on water. Use of foam taps, low flow or dual flow flush technique is used. Solar water connectivity, recycling of water is planned when the project basics are finalized. Sensor spouts are used to avoid waste of water. The use of cold or LED light cut down on the power consumption. The washbasin cum water closet that reuses water from the basin for flushing the toilet uses about 25% less water than a dual flush toilet. The fixture is also equipped with an automatic cleansing system which prevents bacteria from entering the water cistern. Rain air shower gives high pressure shower experience with up to ten percent less water usage.

Housekeeping should not use heavily ammoniated or other highly chemical-smelling cleaners, or cheaply perfumed cleaning products while cleaning the guest rooms. The new trend is to use nature based products.

Pump Dispensers installed in the bath rooms instead of small toiletry packs/refill bottles-

To appeal to the environmentally aware guests, the hotels are providing soap, shampoo and other toiletries via pump dispensers. But most of the guest still prefer to have small bottles for toiletries There is a fear among the guest that the soaps in the dispensers may not be hygienic or tampered, even though the dispensers have a locking facility.

Removal of bath tubs-One of the trends seen in today's bathrooms, especially in the business hotels, is a room without the bathtub. The business traveller is more likely to take shower than use the bath tub. It not only saves water but also cuts minutes off a housekeeper's routine with only a shower to clean. Many newly built hotels have put showers in 75 percent of the rooms and bathtubs in 25 percent of the rooms. The Marriott Hotel research shows that business travellers prefer showers to baths but families like the flexibility of a bathtub as well as a shower.

Lighting in bathrooms-Lights play an important role to create a sense of space and a mood of relaxation in the bath. Soothing LED lights are an emerging change for mood lighting in bathrooms. Natural lighting for the bathrooms and in-room spas gives complete relaxation and a natural feel.

Mirror Television-One more product which adds to the luxury of the bathroom is a mirror television which redefines the wall mounted bathroom mirror for complete entertainment while the guest refreshes. It offers a complete solution for bathroom mirror with a fully integrated television and a speaker.

Personal Spa in the bathroom- Once a room for cleansing and grooming, the bathroom is now a place where the guest spends quality time indulging in himself. Spa bathrooms are investments for health and wellbeing of the guest. They transform the daily rituals into sensational experiences.

Modern bathrooms are technologically designed as art pieces and are extensions of guestroom for an unforgettable experience.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the role of the bathrooms in the hotels by seeking perspectives from hotel guests and management of the hotel.
2. To study the new trends used to enhance the guest experience in the hotel bathrooms.
3. To assess the impact of improved bathrooms on enhancing the guest experience.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Peter Yesawich, Hotel and Resort Selection: The criteria are changing, Hotel Mngement.net, September 2012

The study states that the criteria for the selection of a hotel by the guests have changed. It states that the relative influence of many selection criteria the industry promoted aggressively in the recent years has plateau. This includes the appeal of soundproofed guest rooms, bathroom amenities, premium quality bedding and linen, hotel frequent-stay points, suggesting that they no longer provide the degree of service or product differentiation and are expected by the guests.

Steve Timmermand, Guests are willing to pay extra for sought after features, Hotel Management net magazine, in September 2012

In this article Mr. Steve says that the hoteliers should grab the business not only through the services which the consumer wants but also for which the guests are willing to pay extra to the hotel. It was observed that in-room comfort facilities are the most sought after features for the guest. The guest is least interested in paying for style and decor, flexible cancellation policies and reward points. Whereas the guest is willing to pay extra, when it comes to the comfort of the room and the amenities involved. There is a 20% rise in the business of the hotels which are giving top priorities to the bed, and other room amenities including the bathroom. The guests prefer

those hotels who handle their issues on the priority basis and also their preferences are taken care in all the visits.

Clare Jay, Role of guest amenities in Wellington Hotel, Lincoln University, 2011

It seeks to understand the reasons for a hotel’s choice, of the amenities and features they provide as part of their accommodation offering. Also to understand to what extent a hotel’s amenity selection provides the hotel with a competitive advantage or differentiation assists with brand identity and provides a merchandising opportunity.

Meade, Bill, and Patricio Gonzalez-Morel. "Improving water use efficiency in Jamaican hotels and resorts through the implementation of environmental management systems." Emerging issues in global water management, July 2011

The paper is about the introduction of environmental management systems (EMS) in changing the nature and shape of the tourism and hospitality industry in every hotel guestroom, housekeeping, laundry or maintenance facility .It emphasises on the benefits hotels can achieve by adopting an EMS, a comprehensive organizational approach designed to help properties achieve environmental care in all aspects of their operations. It states that by partnering environmental practices, the hotel can save cost, and implement the best practices.

Nelson Barber, Joseph M. Scarcelli, (2010), Enhancing the assessment of tangible service quality through the creation of a cleanliness measurement scale, Managing Service Quality, Vol. 20, Issue 1, pp.70 – 88

The paper examines the dimension of cleanliness in detail through the creation of a measurement scale and considers customers' perceptions and willingness to return.

The paper emphasises on considering cleanliness as a customer service quality dimension and assesses customers' opinions on cleanliness by gender and education. The results indicate that customers have made decisions to select, stay or return to an establishment based upon cleanliness. The results also confirm that education and gender are significant factors in assessing perceptions of cleanliness.

Alfred Ogle, Making Sense of Hotel Guest Rooms, May 2009

The purpose of this paper is to explore the importance of hotel guestroom design in contribution to a ‘guestroom experience’ which underpins guest satisfaction and return patronage decisions. It analyses to what extent hoteliers may be using this element to their own advantage, including the marketing of their product to an increasingly discerning clientele.

Customer’s satisfaction with hotel guestroom: A Case Study in Ubun Rachathani Province, Thailand, Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, volume 12, issue2, 27th June 2007

The highest mean of most customers' satisfaction was overall cleanliness in guestrooms, especially the bathrooms. The hotel category was affected by the overall cleanliness of the guestroom, the cleanliness of linen sheets, pillow covers and

blankets, the quality of equipment in the bathroom and bathroom amenities offered.

Sara Dolnicar, Business travellers` hotel expectations and disappointments: A different perspective to hotel attribute importance investigation, Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, volume 7, issue1, 2002, pages 29-35

The research investigates the expectations of the business travellers and their dissatisfaction factors related to the hotel attributes. The study also focuses on providing additional insight for customizing hotel offers.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Collection of Data:-

The data required for the research was collected using the following techniques:-

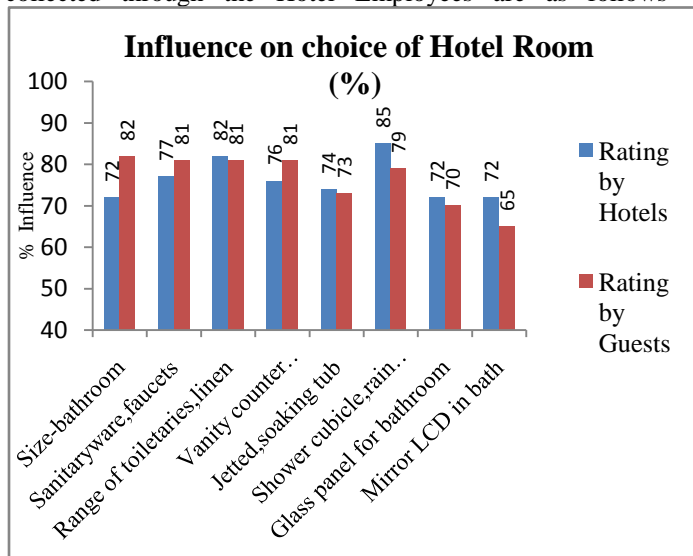
The scientifically prepared and pre-tested questionnaires were used for the collection of primary data. The researcher collected the data from the Managerial and Supervisory levels in the five star deluxe hotels. The data was also collected from the guests to understand the awareness about the concept of well designed bathrooms for better guest experience. The secondary data was collected by means of articles published in the hospitality journals, books and internet.

Sampling Techniques:-

The study was done for 15 Five Star Deluxe Hotels in the city of Pune and Mumbai by random sampling method. The sample size was 128 which included 84 Managerial and Supervisory level employees and 44 hotel guests.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed by percentage method and the representation was done in graphical form. The data was analyzed as per the responses obtained from the respondents and interpreted to draw the conclusions. The results obtained from the data collected through the Hotel Employees are as follows-



VI. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the research can be concluded as follows-

1. The five star deluxe hotels in Pune and Mumbai emphasize on well designed bathrooms and it is a prime product to sustain in the competitive market.
2. From the above data it is understood that the size of the bathroom, the sanitary ware and faucets, the range of toiletries and linen, vanity counter space and accessories, are the most important factors for choice of hotel rooms for the guests.
3. It is understood that the range of toiletries and linen, shower cubicle, rain shower, one touch control are the most important factors from the hotelier's perspective.
4. There is a difference in the perception of Hoteliers and the Guests regarding the size of the bathroom, shower cubicle, rain shower and one touch control, mirror LCD facility in the bathroom.
5. The guests are aware of the well designed, automated bathrooms with added amenities and it is one of the deciding factors while choosing the hotel.
6. The new trends in the guest bathrooms are ecologically friendly trends to save water, natural bases for toiletries and cleaning agents, use of pump dispensers for shampoos, shower gel in bathrooms instead of small bottles, personal spa in bathroom, removal of bathtubs to some extent, mirror television, mood lighting, and use of natural light.

VII. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Hoteliers should keep an update of the new trends in the hospitality sector and implement those for their hotel guestrooms and bathrooms.
2. The Hoteliers should emphasize on the larger size of the bathrooms and updated faucets for better guest satisfaction leading to repeat business.

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