

Customized Services: A Key Strategy In Guest Services - By Osvaldo Torres Cruz

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It is often heard that one of the best ways for a hotel to be successful and stand out in the increasingly competitive hospitality industry is to offer customized services. The question is how to approach customers and learn what they want and how they want it.

The answer is: by customizing services.

Some hotel chains have understood the significance of getting to know the preferences and needs of their guests. However, by failing to determine which data should be collected and the way in which this should be done, they have come to the conclusion that the concept is wrong or that it cannot be applied to the industry.

Customized services have been instrumental in attracting guests and establishing a long-term relationship with them, for they have a positive effect on the guests' level of satisfaction and on the degree of comfort experienced during their stay.

When a guest lacks something, this is translated into a need that must be met through a specific service. In turn, the guest has certain requirements as to the manner in which such service should be provided.

Customized service is based on both adapting the qualities and properties of a service to a specific guest and determining the guests' expectations regarding the way in which such service should be provided.

Customized service demands more time and dedication, as well as permanent contact with the guests, so as to be able to get to know their requirements and their expectations regarding the services offered. The persons in charge of offering customized service must have at their disposal all the theoretical and practical tools needed for such purpose.

Let's analyze some of the characteristics of customized service:

1- Close contact with the guest: It is necessary to have as much information on the guest as possible before, during, and even after the guest's stay, therefore, the person in charge of delivering customized service must be allowed the time and resources needed to such end.

2- Flexibility: Guests' needs often generate the creation of a new service or the introduction of changes that had not been contemplated, therefore, they may modify existing regulations and policies. The secret lies in flexibility: looking for ways to satisfy the guests' needs without significantly affecting the business.

3- Creativity: A key element of customized service is offering something that no one has offered before, or doing it in a different way. This requires ongoing market research on international business trends as well as the analysis of the guests' opinion on the services offered and of guest's suggestions.

4- Adaptability: Service has to be adapted to each individual guest. This is a major factor to be considered when creating new services, ensuring that they offer an acceptable range of adaptability.

Customized services offer the following advantages, among other:

1- The description of the primary and secondary qualities of service for each guest.

2- The determination of the level or degree of service quality for each guest.

3- Service homogenization

4- Knowledge of the guests' needs, so that they can be anticipated

5- Increased knowledge of the guest

6- Positive effect on guest retention rates and brand loyalty.

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