

Hotel seasonality impacts guest experience

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While many hotels are unique, most share one characteristic: the seasonality of demand. We know that demand for hotels fluctuates in a predictable pattern of high seasons and low seasons. But does this seasonality impact the guest experience? And if so, does this impact on the guest experience have positive or negative implications?

Lower scores during June, July and August indicate that the guest experience clearly is affected by the busy summer period. Additional pressure on staff and facilities can have a negative impact on the guest experience. And, if new employees are added during peak seasons, maintaining service levels is difficult.

Conversely, hotels deliver higher guest satisfaction during November, January and February—traditionally slower periods for hotels. Guest satisfaction reaches its peak in November. Perhaps during these traditionally slower periods, guests take advantage of reduced rates. They are happier to pay less, and as a result, expect less but are more likely to receive good service because of lower occupancies.

Because guest satisfaction does fluctuate over the year, guests may have varying experiences depending on the time of year. Brands with a highly variable guest experience might not meet expectations and disappoint guests during critical peak periods. The resulting negative word-of-mouth communication can affect growth and impact future business.

Economy and midscale-without-food-and-beverage hotel segments provide the most consistent guest experiences during the year, while guests staying at luxury hotels report the most variability month to month. Interestingly, guests in the midscale-w/o-F&B segment also tend to be very loyal, indicating that these customers appreciate a consistent brand experience.

Luxury hotels not only have the greatest variability of guest experience, they also have the biggest variability in customer mix. August is the peak season for luxury business travel and the slowest month for luxury leisure travel. This changing customer base requires hotels to shift services and amenities to accommodate the needs of these guests.

Smoothing demand may reduce the negative impact of seasonality. For example, targeting promotions, services and activities that attract customers during the slow periods will smooth occupancy and reduce overall impact on staff. When smoothing demand is not possible, operators should anticipate the change and take steps to minimize service volatility in order to maintain a more consistent brand experience throughout the year.

This study is based on The Market Metrix Hospitality Index.

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