4 myths related to guest feedback

By RJ Friedlander, CEO of ReviewPro

Like many other hoteliers trying out new business practices, you may be unsure of how to earn the most ROI from your investment in Guest Intelligence solutions. ReviewPro has compiled the top four myths related to managing online and direct guest feedback.

TripAdvisor's recent TripBarometer Report showed that 60% of hoteliers surveyed were planning on investing more in online reputation management (ORM) in 2015. If you are planning on investing in ORM this year, it is important that you have a proper understanding of the concept of Guest Intelligence, prior to doing so. Guest Intelligence is the in-depth analysis of online reviews and guest satisfaction survey data – which includes both during- and post-stay surveys, to provide detailed insight into what guests like and dislike about their stay, and determine how to improve your property's service. Using Guest Intelligence is the only way that you can accurately identify the operational and service improvements necessary to improve your property's overall guest satisfaction rates – and your ranking on key review sites.

Like many other hoteliers trying out new business practices, you may be unsure of how to earn the most ROI from your investment in Guest Intelligence solutions. I've compiled the top four myths related to managing online and direct guest feedback, along with the best practices that will help you to improve your property's Guest Intelligence results.

Myth 1: Online reputation management (ORM) & guest surveys are two separate data sets.

Truth: Many hotels collect and use ORM and guest survey data separately and some even have different departments handling the two types of data. In spite of this, analytics of the two are much more actionable and effective when used together. Only by collecting and examining both online review data and direct guest survey data, will you be able to get a detailed and accurate picture of your property's strengths and weaknesses, which will help you to prioritize internal action to improve guest satisfaction. As such, Guest Intelligence – which combines both types of data – is much more valuable than traditional ORM data alone and can be used to exceed your guests' expectations and improve your ranking on influential websites like TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Expedia, etc.

Myth 2: It is very difficult to improve your ranking on TripAdvisor and other key review sites.

Truth: This myth combines both fact and fiction. It is true that many hotels struggle to positively impact their overall rating and rankings on key review sites; however, this does not mean it is impossible. The key is to have enough detail in the information about what guests like and dislike about their stay. It stands to reason that if you don't understand how your guests are feeling, it will be very difficult to make the changes necessary to be able to improve guest satisfaction – and, as a result, your ranking on TripAdvisor, as well as other review sites.

However, if your brand and individual properties are equipped with the right Guest Intelligence solutions to properly understand the nuances of your guests' feedback, it becomes much easier to significantly increase your overall ratings and rankings. It is necessary to not only monitor feedback from both online review sites and surveys, but also to make the necessary changes in high impact areas. The final step is proactively encouraging your guests to write reviews about their experience. One program that many hoteliers have found to be very effective is the TripAdvisor's Review Collection Program, which incorporates the TripAdvisor questionnaire within the hotel's post-stay survey and, in most cases, creates a sizable increase in review volume.

Myth 3: More questions, the better.

Truth: It is a common misconception that the more questions you have on your guest survey, the more useful the information that it yields will be. In fact, at a certain point, the opposite is true for two important reasons: firstly, guests are often intimidated by lengthy, overly detailed surveys, especially when it asks questions that don't pertain to their stay, and will choose not to respond to the survey altogether; and secondly, because the most complete insight is obtained by asking the right questions to the right guest (a.k.a. quality over quantity).

The number of questions that you should ask depends on the strategy that you are pursuing. Question logic, which uses filters to show or hide questions based on the responses provided to prior questions, is also particularly useful if you are looking to obtain feedback on the performance of a specific department/area within your hotel because it minimizes the number of standard questions asked of

each guest. In general, surveys should include no more than 10 to 15 base questions (not counting follow-up questions). The use of different types of questions (i.e. multiple choice, freeform answers, etc.) can also be very effective in extracting detailed insight into what actions would have improved the guest experience.

Myth 4: If you only track what is being said about your property on the top international channels, it will be sufficient.

Truth: If you're not tracking responses and generating reviews in all of the relevant and influential OTAs and review sites for the segments of travelers that you're trying to reach, you are not likely to be optimizing your online distribution strategy. There are more than 142 online review sites that generate reviews in more than 45 original languages. The overall review score, department scores and sentiment of reviews posted about your property on each site can vary drastically depending on the cultural and demographic focus of a particular website.

As well, you limit your ability to drive bookings if you don't put a priority on the second-tier channels in the key markets where your clients originate. To address this issue, review your property's overall distribution strategy and ensure that you have a strong presence and positive reputation on all relevant regional and local channels. For each channel that you have online reviews, it is key to actively manage your presence (responding to guests, etc.), as most guests will not book a stay in a hotel if the property has no (or very few) reviews from prior guests.

To successfully increase guest satisfaction and to improve ADR and RevPAR, it is crucial that your property integrate Guest Intelligence into your operational plans for 2015 and beyond.

&UHYIIHZ SUR

ReviewPro - What are the main differences between guest reviews and guest surveys? Get our free Best Practices guide for Guest Intelligence insights:
about an hour ago

ReviewPro - We're at #WTMLAT15! "Brazilian Hospitality is game on!" with Maria & @lacris007 #WTMLATSELFIE http://t.co/2xRCvf3ckt http://t.co/1FyNnWf3lu
about an hour ago

Natasha Drewnicki - "@JosiahMackenzie: How Portugal's biggest hotel brand simplified guest feedback collection @ReviewPro http://t.co/GlbdtwROoV by @tasha_drew"
3 hours ago

Josiah Mackenzie - How Portugal's biggest hotel brand simplified guest feedback collection @ReviewPro http://t.co/Ofxhl0TCX5 by @tasha_drew
3 hours ago

Michael Kessler - Great Insights into how the biggest #Hotel Chain #Pestana improved Guest Surveys with #ReviewPro http://t.co/7rxP5ueo6D
3 hours ago

Neil Anthony James - How Portugal's Biggest Hotel Brand Improved Guest Surveys https://t.co/rF8YuzqEBC
3 hours ago

Dee OHoran Concierge - RT @AreMorch: How Portugal's Biggest Hotel Brand Improved Guest Surveys http://t.co/1BopQ0PICw
4 hours ago

Are Morch - How Portugal's Biggest Hotel Brand Improved Guest Surveys http://t.co/1BopQ0PICw
4 hours ago

ReviewPro - NEW blog: How @PestanaHotels reset feedback system at 70+ hotels: #WTMLAT15 @WTMLAT @Pousadas http://t.co/zmlcyoDqHa http://t.co/uJblcWEapJ
4 hours ago

Cristina Lopez - What is Guest Intelligence? https://t.co/Z4FJFouMwj
4 hours ago

#REVIEWPRO on Twitter