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Designing for emotions

26 Mar 2013

Travelers seek a product that constructively stimulates their interest through architecture, ambience and the range of products offered.

Highlights

- For the guest, how they feel is far more important than what they think.
- One of the neglected emotions that resonates with today's tourist is trustworthiness.
- Interesting, fun and nurturing are three of the positive emotions that beg stimulation through exposure to a creative hospitality product.

By Tim Peck
HNN columnist

This is the second part in a three-part series from International Society of Hospitality Consultants focusing on design and renovation. Read the first part [here](#).

As designers of hotels and resorts, we are aware the generation of positive emotions through creative design enhances the guest experience and thereby profitability for our clients. The challenge has been finding the empirical data to back up that premise.

A recent study by [Protean Strategies](#) shed some light on how consumers are making their hotel choices, with more than two-thirds of the survey group admitting to their selection being driven by emotional drivers, such as connection, warmth, excitement and pleasure, rather than a focus on rational features and benefits. For the guest, how they feel is far more important than what they think, and their decision on the selection of a hotel is significantly more emotionally charged than decisions relating to other comparable industries. This just confirms our industry is designing and servicing people's dreams and stimulating their positive emotions.

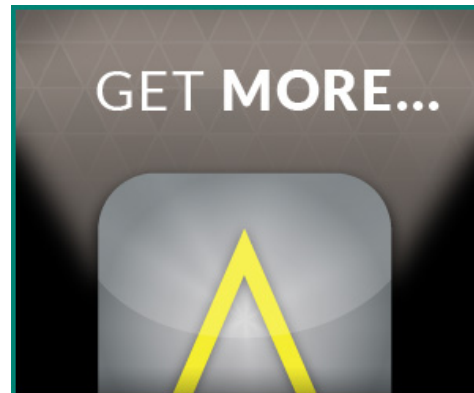
The Protean report goes on to focus on eight hotel brands and reviews the relationship between emotions and brand choice. Their research indicates these brands were identified with three key emotions: those that are inspiring and excite the guest; those that are competent, fulfilling the guest's expectations; and those that are familiar, safe and comfortable.

The brands reviewed only triggered three of the eight anticipated positive emotional segments. The most successful brand falls short in satisfying their guest's emotional needs, only achieving a rating of 0.33 out of a maximum set at 1, indicating there is a significant potential upside to be explored. This offers exciting opportunities to capitalize on the remaining five emotional segments. The challenge is to translate the branding data down to the individual hospitality product.



Tim Peck

One of the neglected emotions that resonates with today's tourist is trustworthiness, a quality inherent to the concept of authenticity. For a



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designer, authenticity starts off with a sense of integrity, a design quality that allows the design approach to be tied into its context without being pastiche. The guest can feel the architecture is of its place and related to the local culture. This, in turn, is tied into the broader concept of sustainability. The contemporary traveler is increasingly seeking a truly sustainable eco-friendly experience, expressed in the architecture and the operations of the destination and in its relationship with the surrounding communities. The visitor wants to stay at a 5-star resort in a natural, beautiful location, but also they want feel a genuine sensitivity to its context and the surrounding community, coming away with a sense their visit had a positive impact on the very place they came to see; it fulfills their wish to "relate" at a personal level.

Interesting, fun and nurturing are three of the positive emotions that beg stimulation through exposure to a creative hospitality product. The term "interesting" can have a number of connotations, some not so positive, but today's experiential travelers seek a product that constructively stimulates their interest through architecture, ambience and the range of products offered. The yearning for something different is evidenced in the success of the high design in areas of the boutique hotel product, the art hotels and the growth of adventure tourism, cultural tourism and educational tourism. The new traveler's idea of fun is an experience that invigorates, educates and adds to their personal growth; the concept of nurturing is fulfilled through offering experiences that positively transform their lives in some way.

According to the Protean survey, the hospitality brands appear to be missing the remaining targeted emotion: friendliness. Stimulating the emotions that conjure up the sense of friendliness may differ in the details across generations. Some aspects that may inspire or excite your guests' emotions might equally appear pretentious and, in some respects, alienating. The successful hospitality product ensures the positive stimuli are harmonized with the sense of comfort and well-being, maintaining the personal connection with their guest.

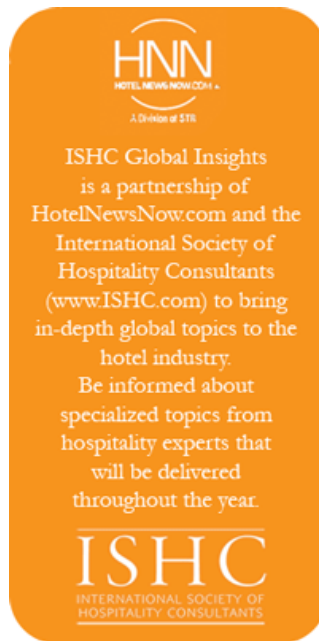
As designers, it is critical that we trigger each of these positive emotions, from the arrival experience through to the ambience of the rooms, the creative development of the physical amenities, all in harmony with the property's target market. Appropriate stimulation of these positive emotions will be a primary influence in your guest's future hotel booking choices.

As Chairman of OBMI, Tim has an intimate knowledge of what has driven the success of the company. Over the past thirty years he has been fortunate to have worked closely with previous visionaries, Bill Bissell and Baudilio Ruiz establishing OBMI as a global architectural presence and he is committed to build upon that legacy. Tim's focus is on quality in terms of service and of design. He prides himself on a tradition of empowering effective teamwork and leveraging the diverse skill-sets of team members thereby releasing the passion and dedication every member of the OBMI team brings to their professional role.

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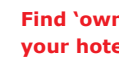


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