

Extended Abstract

A Study of Onefinestay's guest experience in comparison to High-end Hotels: Evidence from Onefinestay's blog analysis.

Research objectives

- Investigate experience of guests who stayed in Onefinestay from the blog analysis.
- Explore in-depth guests' experience at Onefinestay compared to upscale hotels and other peer-to-peer accommodations.
- A calling to the finding provides both theoretical and practical implications.

Literature review

Guest experience is a key competitive advantage in the service industry in general (Schwartz 1990; Pine and Gilmore 1999) and the luxury hotel sector in particular (Lu 2015). Delivering great and memorable experience to guests is the aim of hospitality providers due to the high level of guest involvement in the product and service's purchase and consumption stages (Walls et al. 2011). As in the core value of hospitality, any guest should feel comfortable, secured, being welcome and taken care of (Hemmington 2007). Within the peer to peer accommodation sector, host-guest value co-creation is the key to gain a unique experience (Johnson and Neuhofer 2017). Hospitality service provider also needs to be aware of guest perceiving experience as the whole which is a combination of different elements in a process (Torres et al. 2014). Some key factors guest perceives as more significant may overweight some unpleasant aspects resulting in an overall positive experience (Crotts et al. 2008). The two key aspects to create a positive guest experience in luxury hotel according to Walls et al. (2011) are physical environment and human interaction.

Regarding physical environment, architecture layout, elegant design and good quality furniture can increase guest satisfaction and experience of the stay (Walls et al. 2011). The concept of staging the physical environment to entertain guests is introduced by Hemmington (2007) in which hospitality operation can heighten all five senses of the guests to arouse their emotional response to the setting and at the same time create a personalised and authentic experience.

Knutson et al. (2009) and Dzhandzhugazovaa (2016) confirmed that by using the right balance of sensory notes, hotel can attract more guests. When analysing peer-to-peer accommodation guests' responses, Tussyadiah and Zach (2017) take into account both the property facilities and service & hospitality of the host.

All aspects of staff performance such as friendliness, positive attitudes and professionalism effects guests' experience (Torres and Kline 2013) and it is the main part of human interaction from guests' perspective (Walls et al. 2011). Hemmington (2007) insists that the nature of generosity in host-guest relation inforce excellent service. Mohsin and Lockyer (2009) highlighted that how well employees handle problem resolution and service recovery can impact directly on guests experience. In the peer-to-peer accommodation's case, Johnson and Neuhofer (2017) indicated that host is the main social contact of guest from the starting point. Host is also required to cater guest's needs by using their expertise to provide local guides and cultural information (Johnson and Neuhofer 2017). Host frequent appearance can strengthen the host-guest bonds which consequently makes guest feel more comfortable and enjoy their stay (Johnson and Neuhofer 2017).

Methodology

100 Onefinestay's 2017 guest reviews are collected from Trust Pilot (80 reviews), Facebook (12 reviews) and TripAdvisor (8 reviews). Then, the reviews are transferred into Nvivo 11 software in order to identify the key nodes. The key nodes are analysed against the literature to investigate Onefinestay guest's experience and overall satisfaction. Then, 10 in-depth interviews are conducted with Onefinestay guests in order to explore more aspects of their experience that cannot be found in the blog analysis. The use of this two types of qualitative method (content analysis and interview) allows researchers to get more enrich information of guests experience rather than a quantitative method. Moreover, Onefinestay is operating in a niche market so it is difficult to find survey respondents.

Key findings

So far, all the nodes for 100 Onefinestay reviews have been identified using Nvivo 11 software. It can be seen that the majority of Onefinestay guests are satisfied with the product and the service and they have great return intention. Many criteria used for assessing hotels are mentioned repetitively such as the apartment itself, location, cleanliness, booking and reservation process and service recovery procedure. The majority of reviewers highly regards the property design and the comfort of having a home for themselves on their holiday; some mentioned they definitely preferred Onefinestay over luxury hotels. The main downside of Onefinestay from this blog analysis is service recovery which is the reason some guests are dissatisfied and do not have an intention to return. Bloggers revealed that booking and reservation process and service recovery procedure had been handled unprofessionally by staff in terms of unclear policy, unnecessary charge and reservation cancellation on short notice. The findings from 10 interviews also supports the blog analysis results. Key differences between Airbnb (ordinary peer-to-peer accommodations), Onefinestay (high-end peer-to-peer accommodations) and upscale hotels have been identified. In guests point of view, High-end hotels is the most expensive service out of the three followed by Onefinestay and Airbnb accordingly. Airbnb have an advantage of providing a wide range of options for guests. Onefinestay seems to share many characteristics with both Airbnb and upscale hotels and makes them its own comparative advantages as guests cannot enjoy both aspects in neither Airbnb nor high-end hotels. Onefinestay and Airbnb are both suitable for group travel and long holiday as they have good space with kitchen. Meanwhile, Onefinestay and upscale hotels both provide guests with luxury service and amenities.

Conclusion

The peer-to-peer accommodation sector has grown steadily in the past ten years with Airbnb as the leader of this sector valued at \$31 billion in 2017 (Guttentag and Smith 2017; Lin et al. 2017; Tech Crunch 2017). Nonetheless, recent researches shown that Airbnb mainly affects low budget to mid-range hotel, it does not seem to have any influence on upscale and luxury hotels (Zervas et al. 2016; Guttentag and Smith 2017). About Onefinestay (in 61 cities) is operating in a smaller size compared to Airbnb (65,000 cities) (Airbnb 2018; Onefinestay 2018). This study's findings show that some guest preferred Onefinestays over luxury hotels because they have an entire elegant apartment for themselves, not just a hotel room. However, professionalism is an aspect that Onefinestay needs to work on to create an overall positive experience for guests. The potential of Onefinestay upgrading their service as it has been acquired by Accor (Accor Hotel 2015) and Airbnb opening a new luxury tier (Gurman and Zaleski 2017) can pose a threat towards the upscale hotels market. This study of Onefinestay's guest experience will be helpful for high-end hotels to deal with their new player, for peer-to-peer accommodation providers to reflex on their service among the competition and it also benefits the academy.

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