

HOSPITALITY TRENDS IN 2015

What are the factors that will dominate the hospitality industry in 2015 and what can hotels do to keep up with the changing times? **Tarun Gulati**, co-Founder of **Djubo.com**, India's first cloud based 360° Hotels Sales Platform, and MD & CEO of **Himalayan Hotels** gives an assessment of the trends that are going to dominate the Indian traveller's mindset in 2015.



Tarun Gulati
Co-Founder, Djubo.com

The Indian population has been evolving steadily making more room for leisure travel in their disposable incomes. The Millennials are dictating the spending habits in the market and are not weary of splurging a little extra on comfort. That being the domestic scenario, the travel and tourism sector is roping in foreign tourists as well as investments.

Everything Online

The most significant development in 2015 is going to be the increased use of Internet, particularly social media and technology by consumers while taking decisions pertaining to their travel itinerary. The fascination of the millennial with their digital devices is not a mystery. 2014 marked the e-commerce boom in India. More and more Indians are looking up to the Internet to find new experiences to enjoy. Presence on social media platforms can be a great way to stay in touch and inform guests about upcoming events, offers and packages.

Digital Transparency

With competitively priced rooms in every market segment, the choice of a hotel boils down to the service. And how does one learn about the level of service without visiting the establishment even once? By simply experiencing it vicariously through other's reviews.

The Internet has left no dearth of platforms, from social media to blogs, for consumers to voice their opinions. Reviews from meta search engines are a decisive factor while making hotel purchases. In a research study by SAS, it was revealed that a negative review, more often than not, removes the hotel from a consumer's consideration set.

Rise of the Meta Search

The desire of the Millennials for instant gratification has spawned a new breed of web properties that cater to their need for instant and efficient ways to access information. These digital properties are meta search engines which offer users the ability to take informed decisions on booking hotel rooms. Hotels need to upgrade their pages with the latest information and make their page visually appealing.

Search of an Experience

The modern day consumers are all about instant gratification. And once again aiding this obsession is the power of online information. The year should see a significant rise in the number of people who spontaneously decide to vacation and select destinations on the go. The availability of choice in the travel market has resulted in travellers, even business travellers, wanting an experience rather than accommodation. As more and more purchase decisions become

instantaneous, it is important to have your product in the center of a consumer's choice.

Offline Means Off

According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IMRB, the air tickets booked online in April 2014 were 1.78 million compared to 0.78 million in the corresponding month last year registering 110 per cent growth. The travel agents had their moment in the pre-Internet days. Hotels now need to focus on improving their position and ranking on OTAs. Revenue Managers must learn to leverage technology to build an online presence and use sophisticated tools to counter the rate parity observed on OTAs in order to maximize revenues.

Going Mobile

With just a few taps on a smartphone, the modern day traveller can compare rates and amenities offered by hundreds of properties. One can locate rooms as per their needs, compare them for lowest rates and book one for themselves. Mobile

bookings also facilitate the urge of the modern day consumers for instant access to information and unplanned travel. Mobile bookings will see a jump in the year and may even surpass online bookings from other devices.

Healthy Holidays

There is a marked rise in concern regarding health in India. From guests who need their morning yogurt to travellers wanting to get away from the unhealthy lifestyle. The health-mania is sure to affect the hotels and they need to be ready to cater to them. Hotels must think in more holistic terms about their guests. They must understand that enjoyment means different things for different people. In the war for market share, every guest's loyalty earned is a battle won.

About the author

Tarun Gulati is a new age hotelier and hotel technology entrepreneur. Armed with an MBA from IIM Bangalore and BBS degree from Delhi University, Tarun held a high executive position of Vice President- D.E. Shaw & Co's Private Equity Team when he quit his corporate career to pursue something more fulfilling personally.