



The shape of the hotel experience is morphing and this is certainly aligned with the diverse ways in which guests want and need to use the hotel environment during their stay. As business continues to blur with mini-breaks and rooms double up as a conference call on the go, the need for hotel brands to provide a broad range of tailored services is increasingly becoming the quest, as opposed to offering the generic based on what kind of trip, room type required, and the duration of stay.

Professional standards of personal service

Michelle Du-Prât, Insights director at Household

As we continue to make the most of having less time, we as guests or customers no longer fit into a pre-determined neat consumer segmentation, and as a result, we increasingly expect to be treated as individuals whose personal choices really matter, and will actually define the type of experience we will ultimately have.

If the traditional definition of hospitality is to welcome and show kindness in a generous, liberal kind of way, then this is exactly the direction that hotel design is headed and it's all about the individual guest and their requirements. The more guests are asked about their preferences, the more we see the trend for them to expect to be involved in personalising almost all the details of their stay.

We are calling this emerging trend for experiential customisation between customer and brand, Shared Space. This more open approach to the overall guest experience in a hotel environment will determine how a brand delivers three key signature touch-points: the guest journey experience; personalised services; and tactile technology.

Guest journey experience

Creating linking and communal spaces that demonstrate their core purpose yet offer a clear enough invitation for guests to make themselves comfortable and relaxed is critical to the enjoyment of their stay and sense of ease. At Watergate Bay Hotel in Cornwall, a project currently under way, our design brief was to consider a hotel and spa that's actually the opposite of a spa, the not-spa as it was coined.

This would be a defining brand signature for the hotel set to share more in common with a ski lodge's

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sociable yet active outlook than a typical holiday hotel by the sea.

The idea behind the guest journey was to create extra intuitive spaces that trigger the type of thing a guest would most prefer to do, that most meets their mood. This meant that the linking spaces between the core areas such as restaurants were just as important, as they would offer the opportunity for guests to make them their own – and feel free to create their own space.

We called these spaces hideaways, look-outs, feet-up spaces, snooze spots and sun spots and will ensure that these areas carve a sense of individualism and choice for guests.

Personalised service touch-points

Often the very nature of personalising services means that offering an off-the-peg solution just won't do. That's why W Hotel's luxury concierge Whatever Whenever was really designed to demonstrate that its bespoke service responds to this desire for difference by positioning itself as the ultimate W Insider in a global city location – making things happen way beyond the hotel's physical boundaries.

Within a hotel, creating and defining a sense of personalised service that guests can respond to easily is as much defined by the environment itself as the people who service it. Shoreditch Rooms, part of the Shoreditch House private members club based in East London was a collaboration project between Household and Soho House Group.

Creating multiple touch-points where it matters most – the room – was key to creating not just personalisation but personality, fun and surprises through food, drink, pamper products, a borrow-me wall, games to play with, cable, wi-fi, luxurious dressing gowns and so on.

Wallpaper magazine voted Shoreditch Rooms Best Business Hotel last year, proving business and pleasure can mix very nicely. Here the big opportunity was to design personalised touch-points into the environment as central to, not an add-on, to create an authentic sense of feeling looked after, personally.

Tactile technology

How technology is used to engage guests will play an important role going forwards particularly when considering

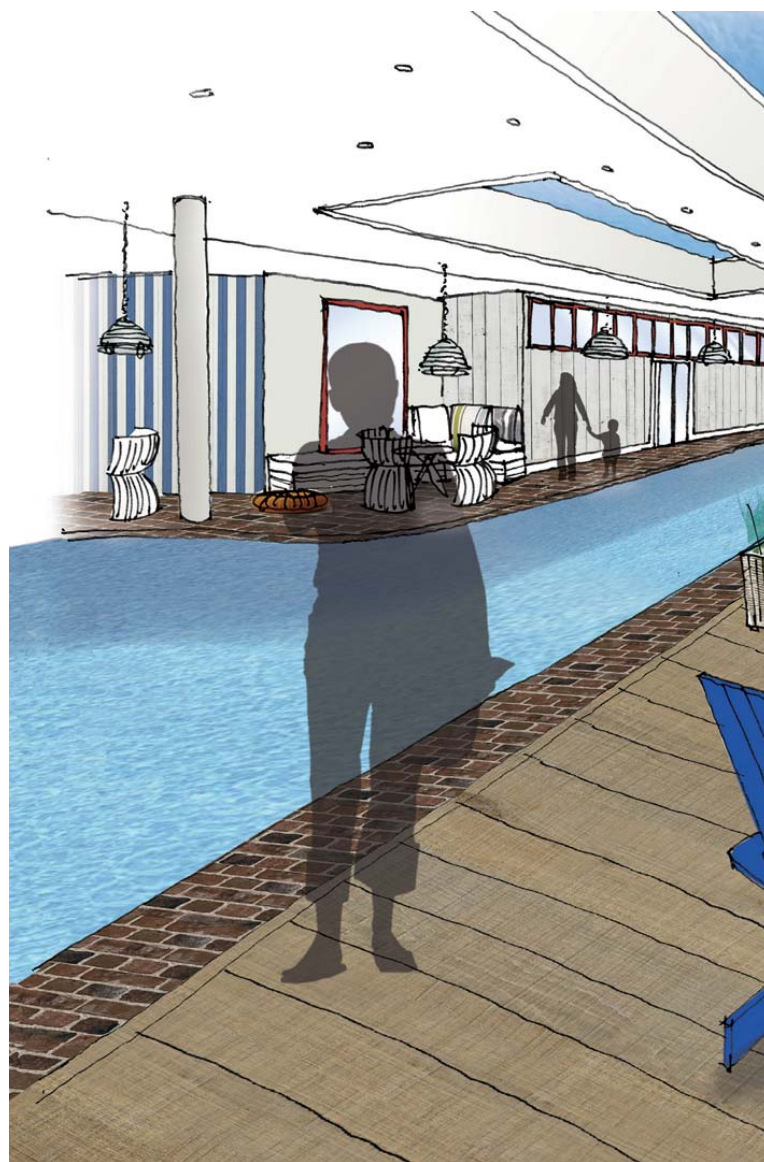
the potential of a Shared Space environment and the loyalty inspired by engagement. Crowne Plaza hotels have piloted a scheme in Copenhagen whereby guests who use the bicycles in the gym to generate electricity can earn a meal voucher worth nearly \$40.

Whilst this may not power the hotel in its entirety, using technology to drive a deeper engagement with guests is the way forward. Smart technology that allows guests to share their experiences

more easily, programme their rooms to exact specification from lighting to decor, to layout and so on, needs to be delivered in a way that offers the human touch too, and not just the touch of a button.

Shared Space environments are designed to enable guests to better own their experience, the services available and how they engage with the brand hosting their stay.

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