

Trending traveller preferences in hotel bookings

 By [Josephine Wawira](#)

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Travel industry market requirements are changing at a significantly high rate due to the shift in traveller preferences especially for a fulfilling hotel booking experience. Industry players seem to have taken the initiative to meet these high customer demands in an effort to drive forward the global hotel sector whose revenue is focused on reaching approximately \$550 billion by the end of 2016.



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Whether booking a hotel directly or through an online travel agent (OTA), there are trends that have undeniably dominated the process including the use of mobile devices and applications which enable seamless and personalised services, adding a plus to hotels that offer these options.

Online reviews

The increase of millennial travellers has also largely contributed to the rise of preferences such as the use of online hotel reviews to decide on the hotel they wish to book, as compared to the traditional method of word of mouth. It is important to note, however, that a lot of people still trust a word of mouth review from people who have previously been to the hotel. According to Yared Kifle, the head of revenue management for Jumia Travel East Africa, approximately 50% of potential guests will go through online reviews before booking a hotel.

Hotels that appreciate this trend and its importance to customer retention go a step further in following up with the reviews, providing timely feedback to queries, commending good ones and correcting areas that have been badly reviewed, to ensure better service delivery. Facilities on online platforms such as Jumia Travel also have an upper hand in offering potential customers a chance to compare information, images and amenities with other options in order to make informed decisions. This further gives them more online visibility, increasing their chances of getting bookings.

Hotel amenities for the modern traveller

Whatever the type of travel, be it business or leisure, it is patent that there are common hotel amenities most preferred by guests such as free Wi-Fi, in-room chargers for their devices for either business or leisure undertakings, airport pickup services to avoid transport hassles and provision of breakfast as most of the guests will be out and about during the day.

Travellers prefer 3-star

Interesting to note is that despite the notion that a higher percentage of travellers would prefer staying in 5-star hotels, statistics from Jumia Travel show that 36% of travellers prefer 3-star hotels, as compared to 20% who would go for the 4-stars and only 3% for the 5-star hotels. The average price per room in a 5-star spent by customers dropped from 191 Euros in 2015 to 183 Euros this year, while the average price per room in a 3-star spent by customers increased from 60 Euros in 2015 to 61 Euros this year.

Payment options

Payment option is also a key factor for guests looking to book any hotel. It is vital for hotels to provide for both prepaid and postpaid facilities to cater for the diverse markets. For instance, 60% of hotels on Jumia Travel offer guests the flexibility to either pay at the time of their booking or pay at the hotel. This enables customers to enjoy a seamless service through booking, payments, and post-stay review.

Another major factor to consider is the model of payment and accepted channels. Mobile money is quite popular across the region with the advent of M-Pesa and Tigo Pesa, presented by 60% of customers who prefer to pay via mobile money platforms. It's worth of note that card payments still command favor from travellers beyond the region, possibly due to their unrivaled global penetration.

The customer is boss

In every aspect, the most important guest preference of all time is treatment, from loyalty programmes to customer discounts and above all the respect accorded to him/her. Always remember, there is only one boss - the customer.

ABOUT JOSEPHINE WAWIRA

Josephine Wawira is a consultant in communication and public relations with over six years of progressive writing and broadcast experience. She is currently a writer for Africa's online hotel booking portal, Jumia Travel, focusing in the areas of travel, tourism and hospitality as it relates to Africa.

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