

7 ways hospitality businesses can contribute to the spirit of Heritage Day

Etresia Booysen, a senior lecturer at The IIE School of Hospitality & Service Management (IIEHSM), says that the role of hospitality and business in creating inclusive environments for Heritage Day involves education, celebration and active engagement with diverse communities.



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“By embracing cultural diversity and promoting inclusivity, businesses can contribute to the spirit of Heritage Day and create a welcoming atmosphere for all guests, regardless of their background,” she says.

According to Booysen there are at least seven principles which should be adopted:

1. Promoting cultural awareness

Hospitality businesses should educate their staff about the diverse cultures and heritages celebrated on Heritage Day. This includes understanding the significance of different traditions, foods and customs. When employees are culturally aware, they can provide better service to guests from various backgrounds.

2. Cultural competency training

Providing training for employees on cultural competency can help them better understand and respect the customs and traditions of guests, which in turn can lead to a more welcoming and inclusive environment.

3. Collaboration with local communities

Businesses can collaborate with local cultural organisations or community groups to organise Heritage Day celebrations. This not only helps in creating an inclusive environment but also strengthens ties with the local community.

4. Inclusive employment practices

Hospitality businesses must consider hiring a diverse staff to reflect the multiculturalism of its clientele. An inclusive workforce can help guests feel more comfortable and valued.

5. Celebration of employee heritages

Encourage employees to share their own cultural heritages and traditions. This can be done through events, decorations or special activities, fostering a sense of inclusion among the staff.

6. Customer feedback and engagement

Actively seek feedback from guests on how your business can better celebrate Heritage Day and create a more inclusive environment. Engage with customers to understand their needs and preferences.

7. Community outreach

Participate in community events related to Heritage Day and support local initiatives that promote cultural diversity and inclusivity.



Mr Price Home celebrates local artists this Heritage Day

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So what should the hospitality industry consider when dealing with guests from diverse backgrounds?

Says Booysen, “The hospitality industry must consider several key factors when dealing with guests from diverse backgrounds to provide a welcoming and inclusive experience.”

These key factors include:

- **Cultural awareness and sensitivity:** Staff should be trained to be culturally aware and sensitive to the customs, traditions and needs of guests from different backgrounds, and understand cultural norms regarding greetings, communication styles and personal space.
- **Language support:** Having multilingual staff or access to translation services can greatly enhance communication with guests who may not speak the local language fluently. Offering multilingual signage and written materials can also be helpful.
- **Respect for dietary preferences:** Be prepared to accommodate various dietary preferences and restrictions, such as vegetarian, vegan, halal, kosher, or food allergies. Clearly label menu items and provide detailed information on ingredients.
- **Religious practice consideration:** This may include providing prayer rooms, following dietary restrictions during religious holidays or offering special arrangements for guests observing fasting periods.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure facilities are accessible to people with disabilities such as providing ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms and accommodations for guests with mobility, hearing, or vision impairments.
- **Inclusive policies:** Have policies in place that promote inclusivity and prohibit discrimination based on factors such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Train staff to enforce these policies consistently.
- **Cultural celebrations:** Recognise and celebrate cultural holidays and events that are important to various guest groups. This can be done through decorations, special menus or cultural activities.

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