

Creating your own trends is key to providing the ultimate guest experience

By [Clinton Thom](#)

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In any sector where you're working with consumers, you need to anticipate what they are going to want and need before they even know they want it. In the hotel space, we are always looking out for what the next travel and tourism trends are. Of course, at the start of last year, we basically had to throw out all the trends we thought we knew and start from scratch.



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As difficult as it was, it provided us with an opportunity to relook what we thought we knew about hotels and travel, and to reinvent ourselves in some way.

Trends are an exciting way to connect with our visitors and while we need to keep on top of them, we shouldn't let them shape us. We have come to realise that not every trend is for us and the ones that we do latch onto, won't always be successful. But I always tell my team that there is no risk without reward. We're always looking to enhance the guest experience, so we have been working on developing our own trends in recent weeks and months.

We don't have crystal balls, but these are five trends we are starting to see emerge in our hotel and across the industry in general.

1. Guests want more from a hotel experience than just a room

This is especially true when it comes to luxury hotels like ours. Hotels have had to start thinking more out-of-the-box when it comes to the full guest experience. What are you offering above and beyond the room? Do guests have access to other amenities in the hotel? Are there fun things to do while they stay with you?

Our guests, for example, are able to use certain areas of the spa during their stay, and we can arrange cycling and

kayaking from the hotel at an additional cost. These are the nice-to-haves that many hotel guests want. Now that more locals are staying with us, we are doing our utmost to ensure that they are able to experience something that they might not have tried in Cape Town before.

2. The chef and chef team are becoming more guest-facing

We can thank the likes of MasterChef for this. More and more, guests are wanting to know more about who works behind-the-scenes in the kitchen. They want to see who's handiwork they are enjoying and they want to know more about our chef and his team.

Our menu is stronger than it's ever been because Chef Norman has really ramped up the exciting flavours or combinations. People want to know these stories and how certain dishes came to be. As a result, we've shoved Chef and his team into the limelight (sometimes to their dismay), in order to put some faces to names and dishes and make meals feel more personal.

3. The dining experience needs to be special

Hotel dining rooms and areas have a reputation for lacking personality and vibe. This is not what people want anymore. We are fortunate in that our restaurant, Tobago's, sits on the water's edge and offers up amazing views to all diners. But we can't rely on that alone. Hotels have really had to step up when it comes to the overall dining experience.

This includes making our breakfasts stand out from the regular hotel breakfast. We've placed an emphasis on serving truly South African dishes as part of our breakfast menu so that our local guests feel like they are at home with us, and our international guests experience some South African flavours.

We're also introducing Flaming Fridays on certain Fridays every month (weather dependent). The idea is that Friday nights are special occasions, too and at our hotel, you can enjoy a buffet of flame-grilled foods and live entertainment. These are just small changes that make meals feel special and which make a big difference to guests.

4. The bar offerings can't be mediocre

Guests love to wind down in the bar after a long day or enjoy a sundowner or two. If your bar offerings are acceptable at best, they won't stay for long. Around the world, we have seen how bars and cocktails have become so much more inspired and guests are demanding more of hotel bars.

For us, this has meant investing in our bar team and encouraging them to step out of their comfort zone to explore exciting flavours and combinations. We've seen them come up with delicious cocktails and drinks that keep people coming back for more. Make the bar itself a destination for those who live and work in the area and you will find returning guests enjoying their downtime with you.

5. Hotels are becoming more popular for celebrations

We have been noticing a trend of guests staying with us more often for celebrations. Because celebrations are smaller right now, people are splurging on their special occasions. So, everything from birthdays to anniversaries and more are being celebrated through hotel stays. For us, it means assisting the guest with celebratory extras for their loved one. We've previously filled a room with balloons, set up "will you marry me?" signs and so much more. Even special occasion dining is becoming more popular.

We saw this with our infamous Dubai-styled brunches. People wanted something unique to mark an occasion and our luxurious culinary experience turned out to be just what they needed.

We comply with capacity limitations and Covid-19 regulations at all times, whilst ensuring that our guests get the best experience. These are tough times and when people choose to head out of the house, they want to have an experience to remember.

These are the kinds of trends that we want to set at Radisson Blu Hotel Waterfront - ones that delight new guests and surprise our regulars. Ultimately, it is by setting new trends and adapting to others, that we have been able to weather the storms of the past year, and will allow us to grow in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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