Ace Your Reviews
The 7 Things Guests Care About Most

A 5-MINUTE READ
Driving Business Success Through Online & Social Reviews

As hotels in every category look to attract guests and build loyalty, there’s no longer any question about where they should look first: social media and online reviews are now the most influential factor in consumers’ booking decisions. Nearly all consumers (97.7%) read reviews before booking a hotel1, and online reviews are twice as important as search engine optimization (SEO) in influencing booking decisions.2 In fact, a hotel’s social media review rating is now a better predictor of its performance than traditional customer satisfaction metrics.3

The Key: Give Your Guests What They Want Most
Winning the review game means understanding what your guests want: their basic needs and their expectations for a positive experience. This short tipbook shows you seven key areas of your guest experience that play the biggest roles in ensuring consistently outstanding guest reviews.

1. Hospitality Net
2. https://www.siteminder.com/r/marketing/hotel-online-reviews/manage-hotels-reviews-reputation/
What Guests Want Most: CLEAN & COMFORTABLE

Highly informed and empowered by online reviews and ratings, today’s hotel guests have higher expectations than ever before: free Wi-Fi, cool in-room technology, added amenities like spas and fitness centers, high-quality dining options. But what do they want most of all?

86% of consumers say CLEANLINESS IS A TOP CRITERIA in reading online hotel reviews.

Sources:
The Rising Standard of “Clean”

By 2025, millennials will represent more than half of U.S. travelers. The younger generation of travelers are bringing new expectations for cleanliness. Consumers know that “clean” is much more than an aesthetic quality. They have a greater understanding of the public health risks in hotel rooms, and surveys show they expect—and are even willing to pay more for—enhanced disinfection in their rooms.9 Fail to meet their expectations, and they will post about it.

KEY FOCUS: A WELCOMING SCENT

Smells are the single most-common cleaning-related complaint from U.S. hotel guests, accounting for more than half of all cleaning-related complaints. Guests are highly sensitive to smells, posting negative reviews about everything from foul odors or cigarette smoke, to fragrances (good or bad) attributed to the previous room occupant, to cleaning products that are too strongly scented.


THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:

“The room looked fine, but the air freshener scent was much too strong. After about an hour in the room, we realized the chairs, couch and headboard all smelled like cigarette smoke. They’d clearly tried to cover up the smoke smell by using way too much air freshener. It grossed us out and gave us headaches.”

BEST PRACTICES:

• Clean all hard surfaces with a multi-purpose cleaner/disinfector.
• Properly launder all linens with commercial-grade laundry solutions.
• Clean out sink and bath tub drains regularly.
• Use the right odor control product for the smell. There are specific odor control products that address certain odors such as smoke, pet and food.
KEY FOCUS:
THE BRAND-NEW LOOK & FEEL

Guests want everything in their rooms to look and feel brand new—from crisp, white bed sheets and fluffy towels to tidy furniture and shining fixtures. But guests’ eyes are naturally drawn to anything that “breaks the pattern”—this is what makes it so hard to stop looking at a stain. Anything that reminds guests that they are far from the first to stay in a room can send their imagination running wild. Perhaps most problematic, guests can easily snap a smartphone photo of a stain to add to their review—visual evidence that sticks in the minds of potential guests.

THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:
“I pulled the side-table chair out and found this. What is this? Do I even want to know?”

BEST PRACTICES

- Choose commercial-grade cleaning products for intensive stain removal on carpets and upholstery.
- Ensure laundry staff follow best practices for separating and pre-treating stained linens.
- Consult with your cleaning chemical provider to ensure you’re using the right mix of laundry detergents and stain removers.
Most guests think: “If the toilet is this clean, they probably do a good job on the rest of the room, too;” making the bathroom the first thing guests check when they arrive to their room. In fact, one survey found that guests believe the cleanliness of the toilet seat is the most important element of cleanliness in the entire hotel room. But cleaning the bathroom is also the most time-consuming part of room turns for housekeeping, and sometimes important details can be missed.

THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:
“We walked in the room and right back out. The bathroom was disgusting: fingerprints on the mirror, hair in the bathtub and the toilet hadn’t even been flushed.”

BEST PRACTICES
• Ensure housekeeping staff use the right cleaning products for cleaning bathroom finishes—not just disinfecting, but leaving chrome, granite and other bathroom finishes shining.
• Review proper dilution protocol for disinfecting solutions; consider installing automatic dispensers for optimal dilution control.
• Give housekeeping staff specialized bathroom cleaning tools—toilet brushes, bath tub scrubbers and dusters for reaching corners and crevices—to make cleaning easy.

Peace of mind is a critical component of comfort. Perhaps above all else, guests should never have reason to question the health and safety of hotel spaces. But surveys show that Millennial travelers are more informed and concerned about the risk of infectious diseases in public places.15 With health concerns more likely to be top-of-mind for guests, hotels must go the extra mile to create healthy environments that inspire guest confidence.


**KEY FOCUS:**

**A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**

**THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:**

“I swear I got athlete’s foot from showering at this hotel.”

“Whatsoever they used to wash the towels gave me hives.”

**BEST PRACTICES**

- Review cleaning procedures to ensure housekeeping staff are using the right products on the right surfaces (i.e. using disinfectants that have claims against common viruses on high touch surfaces).
- Review proper dilution protocol for disinfecting solutions; consider installing automatic dispensers for optimal dilution control.
- Choose a cleaning chemical provider with a complete portfolio to meet guests’ demands for human health and environmental cleaning.
- Actively engage with a pest management partner—pests can spread infections.
Anyone who has worked in the hotel business knows that even the most meticulously maintained hotels frequently deal with pest issues. But nothing is as instantly devastating to the guest experience as a pest sighting. And because pests are the most photogenic of all the guest complaints, a guest who spots a cockroach or rodent is likely to post a picture of that pest along with their scathing review. Potential guests have a particularly visceral reaction to pest photos. Moreover, even a single pest sighting can lead to a hard-to-shake reputation as a hotel with pest problems—and one in four U.S. travelers say they now proactively look for pests when they first check into a hotel room. 16


KEY FOCUS: ZERO PEST TOLERANCE

- Train hotel staff to recognize all pests and signs of pest activity—and provide incentives to report pest issues instead of just killing the pest and moving on.
- Create an external barrier by keeping exterior doors closed, placing screens on all windows, inspecting doors and walls for holes and gaps, and eliminating pest attractants.
- Partner with a pest management professional that provides proactive solutions and consultative advice on your unique pest risks.

THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:

“There was a cockroach in my bed. Need I say more?”

BEST PRACTICES
Bed bugs are pests that deserve special attention, because they’re wreaking havoc in the hotel industry. Bed bug infestations are on the rise, and about 80 percent of U.S. travelers say they’re concerned about bed bugs in hotels. The impact can devastate a hotel: Research shows a single bed bug sighting lowers room value by an average of $38 per night—and that doesn’t include labor, treatment and furniture replacement costs to deal with an infested room. Even more concerning, bed bug infestations are moving out of the guest room and into lobby lounges and other shared spaces.

KEY FOCUS:
BEAT BED BUGS

THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:
“BED BUGS! I had to literally throw out half my clothes and get all new luggage. AVOID THIS HOTEL!”

BEST PRACTICES

• Train all staff to regularly examine furniture—in both guest rooms and shared spaces—for signs of bed bug activity.
• Choose furniture and décor that minimizes cracks & crevices where bed bugs can hide and upholstery that can easily be inspected and cleaned thoroughly, not only in guest rooms but also shared spaces.
• Partner with a proven pest management provider with experience in bed bug elimination with minimal room downtime. Look for a multifaceted protocol that uses a combination of products and equipment to reduce room downtime and protect your furniture.
What’s the biggest source of social media buzz about hotels? Food and drinks. The hotel restaurant/bar are the most common thing guests mention on social media.19 More hotels are moving into food service—adding full-service restaurants, lobby bars, cafes and grab-and-go counters. But even as hotel guests today want higher-quality food and beverage options, their most basic expectations are a clean space and safe food. And because food and drinks generate so much social media buzz, anything that causes guests to question cleanliness can quickly go viral—and a food safety incident can be truly disastrous.


**THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:**

“I ate lunch at the hotel bar and spent the whole night on the toilet. Won’t ever be staying here again.”

**BEST PRACTICES**

- Create a dedicated food safety program—the cleaning and sanitation requirements for food service are much different than hotel housekeeping, and unique demands and risks require specialized cleaning products and training.
- Prioritize food safety and health code compliance—and lean on cleaning vendors for help keeping up with evolving requirements. Getting fined hurts, a temporary shut-down is worse and a bad inspection score can drive people away for good.
- Consider proactive food safety audits from a third party, such as your cleaning chemical partner, to identify gaps and issues before an inspector does.
Take Control of your Digital Reputation

The rising influence of online review sites and social media leaves many hotel owners and operators feeling out of control of their businesses' reputations—helpless to stop a single nasty review from wreaking havoc. But the reality is much more empowering: Hotels have tremendous power to shape guest experiences and steer the conversations happening on review sites and social media. By creating a consistently clean environment—and focusing on key areas most likely to generate bad reviews—hotels can build the solid foundation for a sterling digital reputation that draws guests in and keeps them coming back.
A trusted partner at nearly 3 million customer locations, Ecolab is the global leader in water, hygiene and energy technologies and services that protect people and vital resources. When you partner with Ecolab you can be confident you are getting comprehensive solutions, data-driven insights and on-site service to promote safe food, maintain clean environments, optimize water and energy use, and improve operational efficiencies for customers in the food and hospitality markets in more than 170 countries around the world.

**Helping protect your business and reputation**

- From the basement to the rooftop and everywhere in between, we partner with you to offer services and solutions designed to help your property improve guest satisfaction and operational efficiency.
- We understand the importance of keeping pests out of your hotel. Our HotelProtect<sup>TM</sup> program gives you comprehensive protection against your most common pests and provides proactive options for bed bugs. Additionally, we have products that meet your needs — providing a superior clean for your guests that ensure the best reputation for your business. Our products help improve employee/guest hygiene practices, sanitize equipment used to prepare or serve food, and clean a variety of surfaces with a spot free shine.
- It’s about making an impact everywhere it counts. Drive guest satisfaction, safeguard your brand, and achieve your sustainability goals with our programs that keep your property clean, sanitized and pest-free.

When you partner with Ecolab you can be confident you are getting innovative, science-based solutions delivered by rigorously trained associates who deliver consistent and precise service; actionable insights to proactively prevent risks; customer support 24/7/365; and a strong commitment to customer partnership. Together, we protect success.

For more information about how Ecolab can help your property, visit: www.ecolab.com/solutions/pest-solutions-for-hospitality