



Clockwork Marketing®

HOTEL TRENDS

7 Marketing Insights For 2024



For some hoteliers and hospitality providers, just surviving year-to-year is a challenge. Trying to predict trends in customer behaviour and new demands is an added headache. But understanding these trends can help you get ahead of your competition in 2024 and beyond.

Different types of people with more diverse needs alongside the continued exponential growth of technology and its impact on the sector, is affecting the hospitality industry in new ways.

Tourism businesses need to be aware of:

- Growing customer demand for accessibility and inclusion
- Sustainable and purpose-led travel
- The impact of AI (Artificial Intelligence) on the booking process, marketing and in-room experience

While providing accessible rooms has been a legal requirement for new accommodation, how do hotels cater for an increasingly neurodiverse population with different needs and wants?

The drive to create a more sustainable and regenerative tourism sector is also growing, largely driven by new customer demand from younger people with larger disposable income. Those that don't act more responsibly and consider their impact on their local environment will be dropped for more purpose-led businesses.

And it's estimated that AI will reduce the global workforce by a third. Are you ready for its impact on the hospitality sector and your business? Read on to find out how you can get ahead of these trends and future-proof your business.

Clare Bushby MIH
Managing Director

TREND ONE

BECOMING BARRIER-FREE

Inclusion isn't optional. Hotels are recognising the importance of making their properties and facilities more physically accessible, but there is an increasing need to go further, beyond what is seen. Only 20% of disabilities are visible to others.

Neurodiversity awareness is rising, with conditions such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia and Tourette's syndrome are being diagnosed more than ever before with an estimated 15% of the population having neurodiverse traits¹.

This means that hotels have the opportunity, and purpose, to offer a very personal experience that meets the rising trend of neurodiverse guests. Breaking down stigma and promoting acceptance.

The "Purple Pound" or spending power of the disability market, also highlights the commercial impact to businesses, worth an estimated £274 billion². Legally hotels need to meet the needs of those with

disabilities but as well as being the right thing to do, offering barrier-free services can benefit the bottom-line too.

So what can hotels do? Guests' experience starts from the first touch point with your business, which is most likely your website. Research and consider accessible web design and clearly display your accessible policy and offerings within your main navigation – don't bury this at the very bottom of your website, tell guest what you have, not what you cannot accommodate, they know what will and won't work for their needs. Consider things like sensory overload in your website and property which can be too much for some people: garish lights, loud noises and busy colours, for example.

Staff training also goes a long way in making neurodiverse guests feel comfortable, so your team can communicate and meet your customer needs.

¹ ADHD Aware 2023 <https://adhdaware.org.uk/what-is-adhd/neurodiversity-and-other-conditions/>

² The Purple Pound 2015 <https://wearepurple.org.uk/the-purple-pound-infographic/>



TREND TWO FOR THE FOODIES

People desire culinary experiences and the exploration of local cuisine on their travels. Modern travellers increasingly seek to immerse themselves in the authentic flavours of their destination, fostering a desire to connect with local cultures through food. This trend presents a significant opportunity for hotels to elevate their guest experience by curating distinctive and regionally-inspired, food offerings and packages.

Trying local food and drink remains the top activity for people enjoying UK holidays and short breaks, as shown in VisitEngland's Domestic Sentiment Tracker¹. Beyond providing a unique gastronomic journey, emphasising

local food supports nearby businesses, contributing to the economic sustainability of the community. Moreover, the conscious choice to embrace local cuisine aligns with environmentally-friendly practices, as it reduces food miles and supports a more regenerative approach to tourism.

Hotels that embrace this culinary trend not only cater to the evolving preferences of their guests but also position themselves as champions of hyper-local, sustainable tourism, fostering a sense of connection and authenticity that resonates with the contemporary traveller.

¹ VisitEngland Nov 2023/



TREND THREE

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The emphasis on sustainable practices has become a prominent concern for many individuals. With the recent focus on environmental issues at Cop28 in Dubai, numerous reports highlight the increasing significance of sustainable travel among consumers.

According to Booking.com's 2023 Sustainable Travel report, a remarkable 76% of travellers express a desire to travel more sustainably, and 74% believe people need to act now and make more sustainable choices to save the planet for future generations, an increase from 66% in 2022¹.

American Express's Global Travel Trends Report reinforces this trend, revealing that 83% of travellers aim to support small, local businesses while on their journeys². Crafting marketing messages centred around the virtues of staying local, minimising carbon footprints, showcasing your hotel's eco-friendly philosophy, and highlighting sustainable practices is not merely a matter of ethical responsibility; it is also a strategic move that aligns with the evolving preferences of the conscious traveller. authenticity that resonates with the contemporary traveller.

TREND FOUR

PURPOSE MATTERS

People connect to purpose because it has meaning. So many hotels talk about *'what'* they do and *'how'* advanced their services are, and they may have appeal, but they don't necessarily represent something guests want to belong to or believe in.

Nielsen found that 66% of consumers are willing to pay more for products and services from companies that are committed to making a positive social and environmental impact¹. When a hotel can clearly communicate *'why'* they do what they do, and if guests believe in this too, then guests will sometimes go to extraordinary lengths to include those businesses in their lives.

These hotels are not better at what they do than their competitors. But because they have purpose, they become markers and a symbol of their guests' same value-systems – they make

guests feel like they belong to something bigger than just a hotel.

This is rooted in biology, especially in the limbic system, a part of the human brain responsible for emotions, feelings and most importantly, decision-making. After price, people make their decision to buy based on feeling and sometimes price doesn't even come into the decision. Guests can have all the rational reasons to book – a swimming pool, air conditioning, free parking but if the hotel or hospitality provider doesn't feel right, they won't click to buy.

Putting purpose at the core of your business, gives guests something to believe in, that instinctively feels right. It also makes you stand out against your competitors who market features over benefits, or what they offer not why they offer it.

¹ Nielsen 2015



TREND FIVE

THE TECHNOLOGY RENAISSANCE

As the adoption of AI (Artificial Intelligence) accelerates, the hospitality sector is destined for significant changes in 2024 and beyond, presenting exciting opportunities and challenges for hoteliers.

The surge in AI language tools aligns with broader trends, where AI is increasingly trusted by individuals to plan their holidays, as revealed in Booking.com's 2023 report – 48% would now trust AI to plan a trip for them¹.

Furthermore, this increased trust in AI is reflected in the rise of AI-powered virtual concierge platforms for hotels, creating a modern guest-facing experience, enhancing interactions, and elevating overall service quality. People are seeking immersive 'phygital' experiences, where technology helps bridge the gap between the digital world and the physical world. In this technological age, the hospitality

industry is witnessing the integration of Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR) into the fabric of travel experiences. More hotels are employing VR to provide potential guests with immersive previews of their accommodations, allowing individuals to virtually experience a night in one of their rooms. Expect to see more 360 room tours, 3D TVs in every room, VR headsets and the use of LIDAR technology to augment reality, creating new and unique experiences.

As the hotel industry continues to embrace the tech revolution, these innovations not only address current needs but also position hotels at the forefront of delivering enhanced and memorable guest experiences in the future. Technology will help with smart automations, delivering targeted promotions and increasingly seamless operations.

¹ Booking.com's Travel Predictions for 2024



TREND SIX

SLEEP TOURISM

The daily grind and busyness of modern living is catching up with people, resulting in more stress and difficulty switching off.

The knock-on has resulted in 46% of UK travellers saying they don't get the recommended seven to eight hours of sleep each night¹. It's no wonder why sleep is at the top of the agenda for their next holiday, influencing 20% of travellers to consider a sleep retreat in 2024¹.

Health, wellbeing, and wellness are increasingly becoming important

in people's lives with a heightened awareness of mental health and sleep deficits impacting physical health too. Travellers are taking sleep wellness holidays to write off their sleep debt and catch up with some "me time".

The market size of the Health and Wellness industry increased 30% in 2022 and is set to continue growing². Hotels that offer spa experiences or relaxing treatments, have a prime opportunity to craft sleep-focussed offerings, or even still, there's time to diversify your offering to meet this new demand.

¹ Skyscanner 2023 <https://www.countryliving.com/uk/travel-ideas/abroad/a45831190/sleep-tourism-travel-trend/>

² IBIS World 2023 <https://www.ibisworld.com/united-kingdom/market-size/health-wellness-spas/#:-:text=The%20market%20size%2C%20measured%20by,industry%20increased%2030%25%20in%202022.>



TREND SEVEN

A PERSONAL TOUCH

In response to a heightened awareness of consumerism and a growing desire to move beyond material acquisitions, savvy hotels in 2024 will capitalise on the flourishing experience economy.

Numerous reports consistently highlight a significant shift, with approximately 70–80% of consumers expressing a preference for investing in enriching travel experiences over tangible possessions.

Successful hotels will pivot towards showcasing a holistic guest journey. From personalised marketing messages and communications to thoughtfully curated packages, services and amenities with individuals in mind, as well as personal post-checkout communications.

This is the time for hotels to increasingly focus on delivering tailored experiences at every touchpoint, as customers are already getting accustomed to, and expect personalisation.

The integration of technology such as machine learning, plays a pivotal role in this transformation by enabling the creation of detailed guest profiles and their personal preferences.

Consequently, hotels evolve from being mere providers of products to becoming immersive spaces where guests forge lasting memories, experiencing personalised excellence at every stage of their stay, developing fierce customer loyalty and increasing customer lifetime value.



TOP MARKETING TIPS

Curate packages with personalisation and customer preferences in mind, ensuring you use high intent search engine language and evoke feeling for an experience that guests want.



Invest in innovation and explore new technologies to enhance guest experience and operational automation.



Create customer journeys that are simple and clear, starting with your website and making it barrier-free to all guests by implementing accessible design.



Identify your purpose. Get to the root of why you exist and what you want to see from your hotel, then thread this throughout all your brand messages and services to appeal to guests who align with your brand values.



Use email marketing and automation for pre-stay, stay and post-stay communication to deliver an exceptional experience and build loyalty.



Invest in great photography. Show your potential guests through stunning visuals what they can expect and use technology to bridge the gap between a travel fantasy and reality.



Look after your staff and community, promoting hyper-local and sustainable activities to boost the economy in your area and create a regenerative tourism experience.

MARKETING | WEBSITES | BRAND & DESIGN | GIFT VOUCHERS

A SPECIALIST HOTEL MARKETING AGENCY

Clockwork Marketing specialises in hospitality and hotel marketing. Our services are specific to the hospitality industry, our strategies have been maximising results for over 30 years.

As hospitality-insiders we get how busy you are, and how intense marketing is. So much to think about. Where do you start? By contacting us. We're full service and will take away the stress and weight of marketing from your shoulders and enable confidence in the direction you're headed.

Our mission is to give you presence, through original creativity, positioning your hotel as part of a travel fantasy.

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Let's talk

If you need help marketing your hotel to take advantage of emerging trends, we'd love to hear from you.

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