

Hoteliers Faced With Food Dilemma as Customers Demand Deliveries

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The demand from hotel guests to be able to order in takeaway food from outside sources could eat into the profits of hotels who fail to listen to customers, it has been warned.

Industry thought-leader, EP Business in Hospitality, along with guest experience management firm HGEM, has jointly hosted a thought-provoking business forum made up of world class hoteliers, to question how external food delivery services such as Deliveroo and Just Eat are impacting hotels and food service today.

The debate was triggered by new consumer research conducted by HGEM, which revealed that 67 percent of millennials are more likely to make room reservations with hotels that are prepared to accept third party food deliveries 'in-room'.

In addition, although a further 80 percent of consumers expect hotels to have an on-site restaurant only 72 percent will use it, and only for breakfast. Even though many hotels offer a room service menu, which also spans 'out of hours' a resounding 81 percent of hotel guests say they would never use room service. Yet the appearance of external pizza delivery drivers turning up at luxury hotels to deliver food ordered by guests directly from their rooms is becoming far more commonplace today. In fact, external in-room deliveries are predicted to rise by 83 percent in the future.

Many are questioning if there is a business opportunity for hotels to allow delivered-in services from external providers or if it is simply case of if you can't beat them, join them? The debate is forcing many operators to re-evaluate their guest service options to decide whether the 'delivered-in' model should become a natural extension to those services already on offer, or perhaps a natural extension to a more luxurious service.

Chris Sheppardson, CEO at EP Business in Hospitality, said "It's a fascinating topic for our industry, interestingly the initial thinking was that hoteliers would be resistant to third-party food services delivering food to their guests, but that wasn't the case. Many believe it is now a guest expectation to be able to have food delivered in from outside providers and that refusal could alienate future generations of customers. Boutique hotels in particular, believe that this can actually work to their advantage in terms of add-on sales for beverages to accompany the deliveries and also building relationships with local restaurants, which can be effective and authentic."