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Research shows guests prefer to book Christmas parties by phone, restaurants most prepared: A survey by guest management experts HospitalityGEM has revealed almost half of guests (42%) would choose to book a Christmas party over the phone rather than online or walk-in. The research also showed that when calling to book a Christmas party, 92% of guests said they would book up to three months in advance, indicating September as the month to start taking control of managing guests' booking experiences. Data collected from HospitalityGEM's 2015 Christmas Call programme specified that the greatest areas for improvement included answering the phone in good time, building a rapport with the caller, and checking the guest's special requirements. The top reasons guests become disengaged when calling to make a Christmas booking are an unfriendly tone, hurried/abrupt responses, and a lack of knowledge/information. However, with the process often left for team members to manage themselves, answering the phone and taking bookings during this period is an essential aspect of seasonal preparation, HospitalityGEM said. The highest scoring sector in the 2015 Christmas Calls Report was restaurants, while three to five-star hotels require the most improvement, with staff missing out most frequently on offering overnight stays as part of a Christmas package. Ollie Navias, HospitalityGEM head of business development, said: "Phoning a venue to book a Christmas party may be a guest's first ever interaction with that brand. This is why the first impression a business portrays here is so crucial to whether they secure that booking, and potentially more in the future. During our trials, we called multiple venues throughout August, which were all part of larger restaurant and pub groups and advertised Christmas menus online. To our amazement, none were able to give detailed responses about menus. However, all talked about taking a deposit and none successfully followed up our enquiries. The feedback we provide has previously added to the service our clients have delivered so they can secure multiple bookings for an extremely successful Christmas!"