

A tropical resort scene with palm trees, a wooden walkway, and a thatched roof in the foreground. The background shows a beach, turquoise water, and a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Crafting Unforgettable Moments

Lessons learned from hotels at the forefront of
experiential hospitality

turneo

The future of hospitality is about providing unforgettable experiences

Your guests deserve to experience something exceptional when they travel

Booking travel once followed a straightforward script. Guests would first decide where they want to go, and only once they arrive at the destination, they would go to the reception or tours desk and ask what they can do at the destination.

Those days are gone.

Today's consumers are placing much greater value on experiences over things. We live in an experience economy. This shift can be attributed to generational transitions from Baby Boomers to Millennials and Gen Z, combined with the pervasive influence of social media. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok not only encourage people to seek exciting experiences but also to share them, changing the dynamics of the travel industry.

To keep up, hotels need to change.

Historically it was enough to focus on providing quality accommodation. But to stay relevant today, hotels need to go beyond selling rooms and sell the experience of the destination.

Hotel brands that embrace experiential hospitality achieve higher guest satisfaction, increase their revenue per room, and have longer lengths of stay, all of which contribute to greater growth and profitability.

Hotel owners and managers have a big decision to make: will they adapt to the changing needs of the modern traveler by embracing and joining the experiential hospitality movement, or risk becoming just another faceless listing on online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Booking.com?

The trouble is, becoming an experience seller is hard.

At Turneo, we've helped hundreds of hotels successfully take on that challenge and we wanted to share the lessons we learned along the way. Why? Because your guests deserve to experience something exceptional when they travel.

In this paper you'll find examples, tips and in-depth research into what makes experiential hospitality a successful strategy, how to implement it effectively, and which pitfalls to avoid along the way.

Happy reading!

Matija Marijan
Turneo CEO and Co-founder

Lessons learned from hotels at the forefront of experiential hospitality

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Travelers plan their trips around experiences

The way travel is researched, organized and booked is changing - hotels that don't keep up, risk being left behind

In the past planning a holiday looked a bit like this:

First, you would research and decide on your specific destination to visit. Next, you would google, visit an online travel agency, or visit a local travel agent in order to find and book travel and accommodation. Only then would you think about your itinerary and the specific experiences you would like to include as part of your trip.

Now, travel planning increasingly looks more like this:

Online, on social media, or talking to friends and family you get inspired by specific experiences - hiking Machu Picchu, swimming with sharks, trying sushi in Tokyo. When the time comes to plan your trip, you'll learn more about the specific experience, and plan around it - where to stay, how long to stay for, what time of year to go. Only then do you consider accommodation and travel, ... and ideally you'll book all of these in as few places as possible.

Sound familiar?



INSIGHTS

80%

of travelers research experiences before they arrive in a destination

50%

research experiences before booking other travel components

61%

research and book experiences online, via a website or app

Source: PhocusWire Global Survey

LESSON 1

Because for today's traveller, experiences come first, hotels and accommodation providers need to play a different role to the one they had in the past.

It is no longer enough to advertise on search engines and OTAs as a top place to stay. Instead, standing out to the traveller requires you to hook them on the thing they truly care about - the experience they will have with you.

Take the example of social media: what gets more attention, images of rooms or visuals of the activities guests do during their stay?

Top hotels around the world are changing their marketing, loyalty programs and growth strategies to focus on experiences. Those that don't, risk being left behind.

By showcasing and offering experiences online, you:



Appeal to a wider range of travelers around the world



Attract more travelers to discover your hotel



Encourage more guests to plan to their trip around staying with you



Reduce cancellation rates with more reasons for guests to stay



Increase guest satisfaction, loyalty, recommendations and return trips



LEARN FROM THE BEST

Marriott Bonvoy has been voted the Americas Hotel Program of the Year - thanks in part to Marriott Bonvoy Moments.

These moments provide access to once-in-a-lifetime unique and exclusive travel experiences across 1,000 destinations globally.

Source: Marriot Bonvoy Moments, Renaissance Wind Creek Aruba Resort

Your guests don't think about experiences the way you do

What matters is the quality and convenience of experiences, regardless of how they are organized, or by whom

As a hotel providing experiences, it's up to you to translate a wide range of things to do, into something easily navigable and digestible for your guests.

That's not easy. You have to play the role of curator: simplifying everything from tickets, to tours, to transfer rides, into a single, simple offer.

One of the most common mistakes is to divide your experiences into:

- **In-house** - those experiences that your hotel runs like spa and dining
- **Third-party** - those activities provided by someone else - be it the local dive shop or tour guide

However, in the eyes of your guests, there should be no distinction between them.

When planning out their stay, your guests are not thinking specifically if the massage is provided by the hotel, and the guided excursion by your local partner - they just think about what they want to do on a given day, at a given time.

This is in conflict with how most hotels present experiences on their website, or even at physical premises where they might have a dedicated tour desk for local excursions, that has no ability to book anything except a handful of tours from that single company.

If you want to satisfy today's guest, you need to organise yourself around their preferences.



TOP TIP

Sending guests an email featuring both in-house & external experiences 1-2 weeks before stay is a great way to drive engagement before guests arrive and cement your hotel as the focal point of their trip.

LESSON 2

But it's not just your guests that want things simple - it's your staff as well.

By consolidating in-house and third-party experiences into a single, unified view you can streamline your operations while simultaneously offering better service: eliminate staff from different departments having to call one another to confirm prices, bookings, and availability.

If this is sounding like nirvana it's not - there is specialist software that takes on the simplification process, removing the weight from you, your staff and your guests alike.

As a result, you're left with reduced staff training, fewer mistakes with bookings, and a front-desk that's freed up to focus on providing value-adding service.



LEARN FROM THE BEST

The Nest resort offers everything from their in-house kite-surfing and signature VIP tasting menu, through to local transfers, tours, and attractions, all in one place and bookable without leaving their website.

Source: The Nest professional photoshoot

Establishing credibility means offering enough choice

It's human nature to want to make sure we've seen enough, to know we're making an informed decision

Because experiences can be so complex to organise, the temptation can be to limit your focus to just one or two areas. How many hotels have you seen that will help you book a taxi but can't recommend a tour guide for the local landmark?

When you only offer a very limited range of experiences, you're inviting your guests to start looking elsewhere.

Instead, you want to ensure that you have a single, simple solution that gives them the answer they need, regardless of what they are looking for.

So, a question we get a lot is - when it comes to experiences, what is enough?

While the exact selection needs to vary depending on your guest profile, there are certain categories that we see come up across most of the hotels we work with.

On the next page, we've shortlisted the critical categories that make up "enough" choice to meet core guest needs, and show yourself to be a credible provider of experiences.

While you might decide not to cover everything in the same depth, bear in mind that for each category you're not offering, that's a guest you're not answering the needs of, and therefore you risk them looking elsewhere to stay.



LEARN FROM THE BEST

Jumeirah One offers its Platinum members a complete range of unforgettable experiences from a luxury photoshoot at the Burj Al Arab Jumeirah Helipad, through to spa treatments, dining, and entry to the Wild Wadi Waterpark.

Source: Jumeirah, Inside The Louvre, Abu Dhabi

LESSON 3

★ KEY EXPERIENCE CATEGORIES



Activities and Excursions



**Spa and
Wellness**



**Health and
Fitness**



**Food and
Drink**



**Transfers and
Rentals**



**Adventure and
Watersports**



TOP TIP

Partnering with guides available for on request or private bookings provides an easy way to offer more options to your guests, and helps level up your offering to make the most of the luxury travel trend. Even better - by automating the process of alerting these guides it's no extra work for you to manage.

Careful curation is the key to establishing trust

The paradox of choice (or “the Netflix dilemma”) tells us that the more options we have to choose from, the longer it takes us to make a choice, the more stressful it becomes, and the less likely we are to choose anything at all

While you want to ensure you have enough choice in your experience offering, it's important to not fall down the other extreme either.

Too many options leave guests overwhelmed and unlikely to book.



TOP TIP

Use videos to capture attention and showcase experiences at their best. Eyes are attracted to movement, so videos naturally draw attention and are proven to increase clicks, shares, and conversion.

So while it may seem tempting to simply plug in to a global experience provider and get a long, unfiltered list of experiences, the way you really build loyalty with your guests is by using your local expertise to showcase the best providers.

Think of it this way: offering ten different variations of an excursion weighs guests down with the task of working out which one is best.

As a hotelier, you already know which is best!

Your years of experience and interactions with guests and local providers have put you in a truly unique and valuable position.

You know your local area, the most trusted organisers and also which tours and providers your guests enjoy the most.

This added value not only increases your bookings but also fosters a sense of trust among guests who recognise your commitment to enhancing their overall experience.

It's just a matter of organising these into a single place that showcases your insight.

This solution removes the variability of guests relying on catching the right staff member, at the right time, and removes the risk of turnover for you when key members leave the team and take their expertise with them.

LESSON 4

As you integrate these curated experience collections into a single place, you're doing more than just enhancing the guest journey.

Your hotel's ability to curate experiences is also a powerful marketing tool.

It communicates to potential guests that you are not just another place to stay but a knowledgeable guide to the very essence of your destination.

When travellers search for the distinctive activities that your region has to offer, your website becomes a go-to destination for inspiration, information, and booking. This, in turn, drives more organic traffic to your site, expanding your online presence and putting you at the forefront of potential guests' minds.

As a result, you're also boosting your online visibility through improved SEO.

Search engines love content that's unique and relevant, and by presenting these carefully curated experiences, you're effectively positioning your website as a valuable resource for travellers seeking local adventures.

Moreover, this virtuous cycle of unique content and enhanced SEO doesn't just bring you more guests; it also helps in delivering the right guests—those who resonate with your story, values, and the experiences you offer. These are the travellers who are most likely to book with you, stay longer, and become your brand advocates.



LEARN FROM THE BEST

At Orli La Jolla, every partnership was handpicked and the owners have personally experienced all of the tours and activities offered. Special attention has been given to supporting local businesses as a means of building community and encouraging the guests to feel connected - all brought to guests via a single app.

Source: Orli La Jolla sun-bathing seals experience

Stand out experiences attract and retain guests

The future of hospitality will be won by those that have something unique, and different to offer

For travellers, experiences are the most exciting aspect of their trip.

But for a hotel, experiences have historically come with an operational headache attached.

That's why, where we see experience offers work best, is when there is full buy-in from the hotel.

Unlike other aspects of your offer, experiences are not constrained by your number of rooms, physical capacity, or existing amenities.

Experiences thrive on creativity.

"Stand out" experiences leverage something that is unique to you, in order to set you apart from your competitors, and draw mass attention from travellers craving something once-in-a-lifetime.

In fact, often the best way to get creative is simply to talk to your guests.

It will help you see the world from their perspective, and ensure you're not overlooking moments of magic simply because you see them every day.



INSIGHTS

78%

of millennials prefer to spend money on experiences rather than things

77%

say some of their best memories are from an event or live experience

69%

experience Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) thanks to experiences broadcast across social media

Source: Eventbrite Survey

LESSON 5

The impact of stand-out experiences on a hotel's online visibility cannot be overstated. In an industry that often seems like a race to the bottom on price, these unique offerings provide a pivotal difference.

It transforms the decision-making process from a matter of price into one of value, making it less likely for guests to search for a cheaper alternative elsewhere.

As guests share their extraordinary experiences on social media and travel forums, you turn satisfied customers into brand advocates and creating a virtuous cycle of word-of-mouth marketing

Moreover, the true beauty of these experiences lies in their ability to lower cancellation rates.

When guests are genuinely excited about a specific activity or offering, they are more likely to commit to their reservation.

The anticipation of something extraordinary waiting for them at your hotel acts as a powerful incentive to keep their plans intact.

In the end, the hotel that invests in these stand-out experiences not only elevates its online presence but also enriches the lives of its guests, leaving them with cherished memories that will last a lifetime.



LEARN FROM THE BEST

Maistra Hospitality Group offers their guests the unique opportunity to have a private dinner in the Pula Arena, one of only six largest surviving Roman arenas in the world.

Source: Maistra private dinner at Pula Arena

Experiences aren't just an ancillary or marketing tool

A common misconception is that you should only offer experiences as a means to boost ancillary revenue

However, while experiences do offer a unique opportunity to upsell and increase spend per room, when done right the benefits actually extend far beyond that. What does “done right” actually entail?

By making experiences an integral part of your strategy, you create a consistent and immersive guest journey.

From the moment a potential guest discovers your hotel online, your unique offerings should be front and center.

This means experiences should not be just a marketing tool, a tours desk, or a page on your website.

Instead, they should all be singing in harmony and talking to the core value proposition of your hotel.

They should resonate with your brand, your mission, and the story you want to tell. When experiences are thoughtfully woven into your hotel's DNA, they become more than just activities; they become an extension of your identity, something that sets you apart in a meaningful way.

On the next page, we demonstrate the positive flywheel associated with experiences.



LEARN FROM THE BEST

Paradisus by Meliá introduced Destination Inclusive, a new program that captures each destination with activities that fully immerse guests in the local culture.

This new program touches nearly every aspect of each resort, spanning design and amenities, food and beverage, entertainment, and guest activities, both on and off-property.

Source: Paradisus by Meliá personalised yoga classes

LESSON 6

☆ THE EXPERIENCE FLYWHEEL



TOP TIP

When possible, have your employees try out some of the experiences you offer. It's a great perk to add to a job description, whilst also giving you insider knowledge on the quality, organization, and experience of the activity. They'll also be so much better at explaining the experience to the guest or advising them about it, in case of questions.

Owning guest satisfaction means taking control of experiences

When talking to hoteliers the single most common response when it comes to experiences is that it was a “wild, wild west”

Have you ever had a guest give you a bad review for something that wasn't your fault? Of course you have. By providing a guest's accommodation, you become their key port of call for their holiday. And the review you'll get will depend on how much they enjoyed that entire holiday... not just the specifics that are in your control.

With the overwhelming shift in traveller preferences, local experiences are becoming a key driver of overall guest satisfaction with their holiday.



TOP TIP

Ensure that you have a robust means of seeing guest reviews as they come in - you'll get an immediate sense of how your experiences are performing, which can help bring the numbers to life.

Online vs Offline

One of the biggest misconceptions is that technological solutions harm the concierge and front desk.

In fact, when done right, the opposite is true. You're giving these individuals the tools they need to spend less time on mundane tasks, and instead focus more on helping guests with value-add services and recommendations.

In fact, in a TUI Group customer survey, it was found that vacations which include excursions, activities and tickets have an 18% higher net promoter score (NPS), a common measure of guest satisfaction.

But the reality is that hotels often don't have the tools to know what exactly was being sold when, to whom, by whom, and so on.

And because it has historically been so difficult to see or control for quality, the temptation can be to outsource management of experiences to an external agency.

However, this is very dangerous, as you as a hotel are then completely out of control of the key element of your guests' satisfaction with their overall stay.

LESSON 7

So how do you “take control”?

While you don’t need to deliver all experiences yourself, you will want to ensure that all bookings happen through you, that you are linking your data into your CRM, and that you are monitoring the quality of experiences delivered.

In the past, to achieve that you would need to build a bespoke solution, requiring an eye-watering amount of investment, time and resources.

But that’s no longer the case. In much the same way Shopify provides the tools to the rest of the retail sector that lets any entrepreneur run a top tier business with simple-to-use technology, those solutions are now also hitting the travel industry, and the business of selling experiences.

These solutions have benefits across four key areas:



Your guests - who get a seamless booking experience, however and whenever they want



Your staff - who are freed up to focus on value-adding service and not waste time on back-and-forth



Your organizers - who don’t have to learn new ways of working, or change their set-up with you



And you - with the insights and control to regularly evaluate and grow your experience offer



LEARN FROM THE BEST

The Four Seasons is already a leader in providing exclusive access to once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

Next year, they are set to double down on the opportunity with Four Seasons Yachts, and Private Jet Tours reinforced by their Based on a True Stay marketing campaign.

Source: The Four Seasons Charter a Heli-Surfing Day Trip

About Turneo

Turneo is the number one experience booking platform for hotels. Simple yet effective technology makes it easy to offer and manage all activities and experiences at your hotel. Trusted by hundreds of leading hotels and resorts globally, Turneo's expert team offer consultative projects alongside plug-and-play technology that puts you in complete control over your experience.

Turneo prides itself on building best-in-class tools that are accessible to everyone. Whether you are a family-owned boutique resort with 20 beautiful rooms or an international chain with 15,000 units, you can implement Turneo and revolutionize how you offer experiences to your guests.

Check out the demo site

<https://www.jadebeachresort.com/>

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