

HOTEL INDUSTRY SURVEY



WHY TOWELS MATTER:

The Surprising Role that Towels
Play in a Hotel's Success

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, your competition was easy to spot. But today, your competition can come from anywhere. New non-hotel accommodation options including serviced apartments, new style hotels, shared spaces such as Airbnb and Flipkey, and even “glamping” are offering strong value propositions. These alternative options are challenging the traditional hotel industry for visitors.

A high quality guest experience has become a top priority in the competitive lodging sector, particularly in the five-star and boutique sectors. However, an upsurge in demand for budget options is driving a demand for quality in this sector too. According to Deloitte, one of the top four key challenges facing all segments of the travel and hospitality industry in 2016 is satisfying customers’ desire for an outstanding, personalized experience.

An online survey was conducted in February 2016 to learn how towels impact the overall quality of the hotel guest experience. The results were surprising.

Towels matter.



THE BIG TAKEAWAYS

1

Cleanliness is the #1 factor in determining towel quality. 31% believe that washing towels in-house will make them cleaner rather than sending them out to a third-party vendor.

2

Towels matter. Towel quality, such as the softness or fluffiness, influences customer satisfaction.

3

Towel quality influences brand perception as well as customer loyalty.

4

Customers love to read hotel reviews when making travel plans. 31% said they would write a negative review if they didn't like the towels.

5

Customers care about the environment. They reuse towels and want hotels to have eco-friendly laundry operations.

This eBook discusses how and why the quality of the towels is so paramount in the context of this very competitive hospitality market, and one that is increasingly having to operate within environmentally-conscious parameters.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

PURPOSE

To provide information on how towels impact the guest experience and if towel quality is a consideration when consumers choose a hotel.

SAMPLE

Consumers
1,160 Respondents

Audience
51% US 49% UK

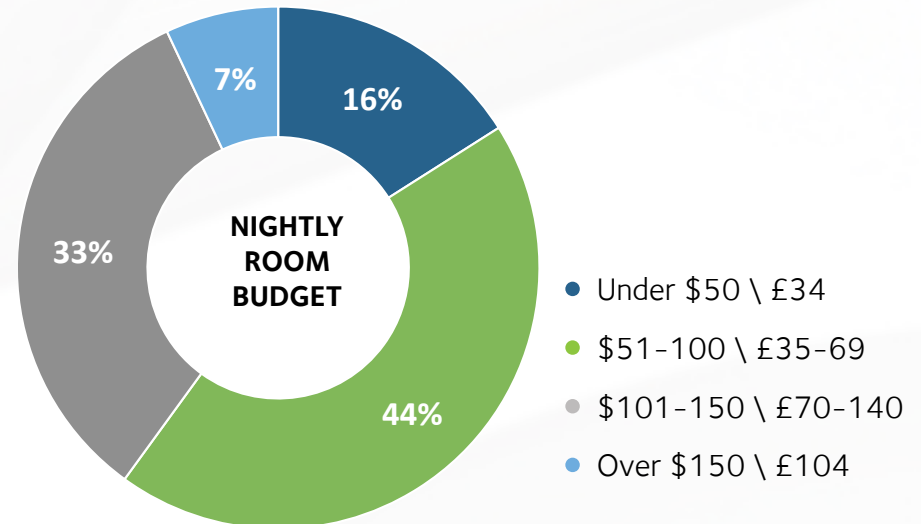
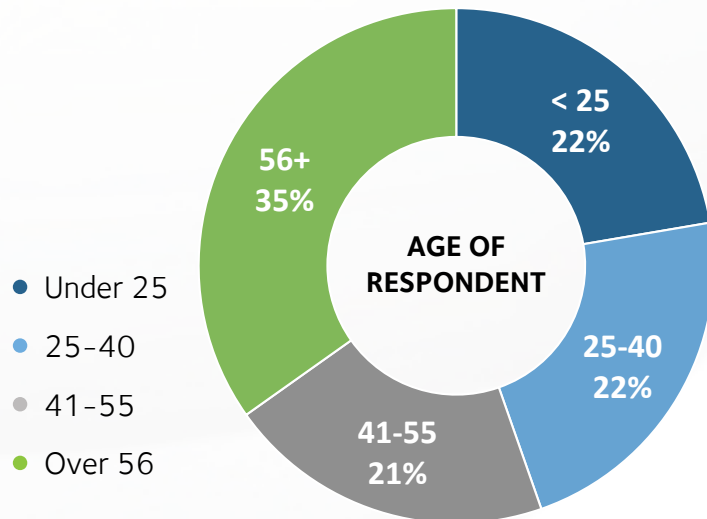
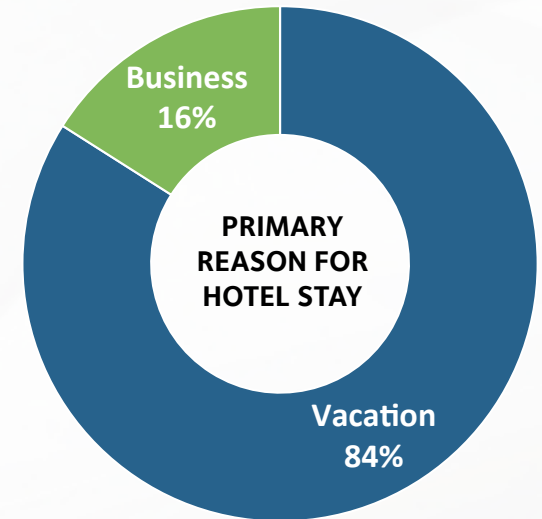
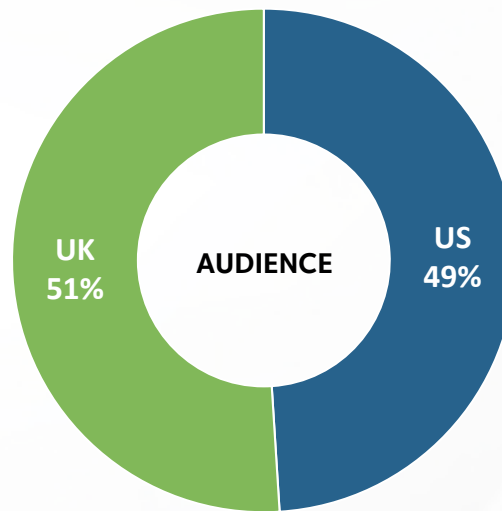
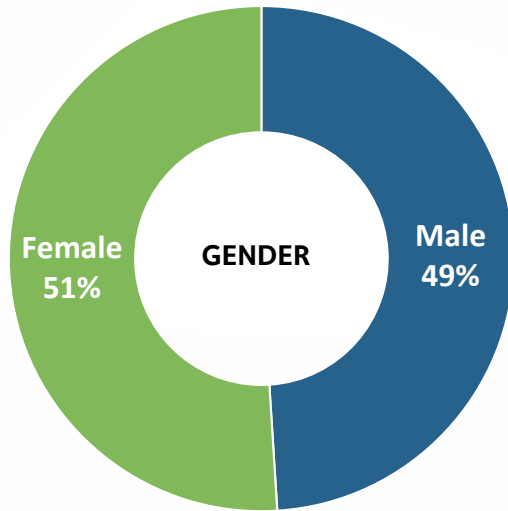
METHOD

Collection
Online Questionnaire

Number of Questions
27
including 5 demographic-related questions

RESPONDENT PROFILE

1,160
RESPONDENTS



CLEANLINESS

The Top Attribute for Quality

Among the many things that create an outstanding experience for hotel guests are the towels. People expect hotels to provide soft, fluffy towels that exude luxury. It's not an area where quality should be comprised. At the very least, guests expect a hotel towel to be the same quality as one they would use at home – clean, soft, and fresh-smelling.

We asked the survey respondents to rank the towel attributes from 1 - 5 and then we took a weighted average to come up with our results.

There was no surprise that cleanliness was identified as the most important attribute, followed by the softness of towels. Surprisingly, high thread counts, the attribute that is generally associated with expensive luxury towels, came in last.

Previous hygiene-related health scares that revolved around MRSA and E Coli have already helped to set people's hygiene standards for hotels at a certain level. But recent worries about the Zika virus have fueled people's concerns about hygiene further – especially when it comes to staying in unfamiliar places which they have not cleaned themselves.

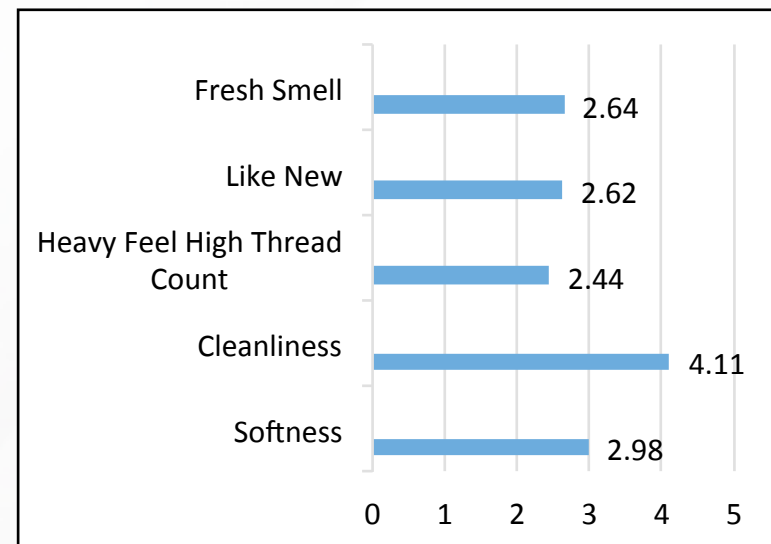
This survey found that 31% of respondents think washing laundry on premise versus sending it out to a third-party vendor results in cleaner towels.

As we've seen, hoteliers can ensure the very best processes are in place to attract and retain customers – and one way to guarantee clean and fluffy towels is to look into the benefits that can be delivered by on-premise laundry. By having this facility onsite, hotel managers can ensure that their laundry is clean and meets their customer's high expectations.



When thinking about the quality of a towel, how do you rank the following attributes (1 least important, 5 most important)?

Note: each attribute will have a unique number.



KEY TAKEAWAY:

Offering guests a clean, soft towel is more important than offering a more expensive, high thread count towel.

QUALITY OF TOWELS

Influence Overall Satisfaction

In the hotel industry, customer satisfaction is typically measured by these critical elements of the guest experience: ease of reservations, check-in process, room cleanliness and comfort, food services, in-room entertainment options, staff courtesy, amenities, in-room internet service, loyalty programs, call center interaction, and website experience.

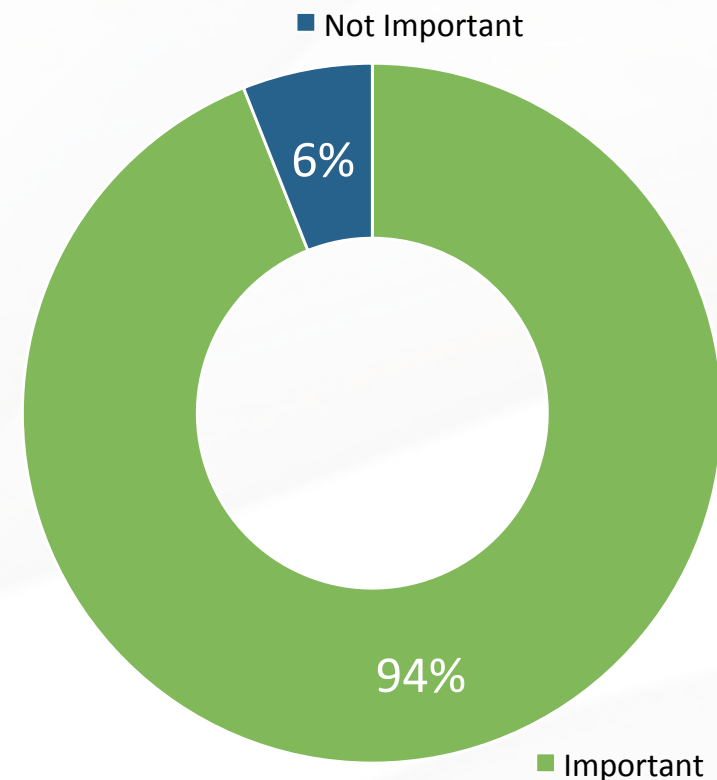
Towel quality is included in the categories of room cleanliness and comfort as well as amenities – e.g., pool and spa towels. In our survey, 94% of all respondents believe that the quality of towels is important for overall customer satisfaction with only 6% believing that the quality of towels has no impact in overall customer satisfaction.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Brands that don't emphasize the quality of their towels as part of their brand story are missing an opportunity to increase customer satisfaction.



How important is the quality of the towels to your overall satisfaction with your hotel stay?



QUALITY OF TOWELS

Influence Customer Loyalty and Brand Perception

There is a difference between a hotel customer who has enrolled in a loyalty program and a customer who makes regular repeat visits. To turn your customers into enthusiastic, even passionate brand devotees, you need to create a personalized customer experience, with multiple touch points, that are consistent and true to your brand.

Each touch point, and the way people react to it, is critical in creating loyalty and is an opportunity to reinforce your brand. Customers have come to expect the basics—cleanliness, comfort, and value for their money—but having a negative experience when it comes to the basics can have a significant impact on whether a customer will become loyal to your brand. Once you've captured your customers, one of the keys to turning them into brand ambassadors who will keep returning to your hotel is to maintain high quality standards.

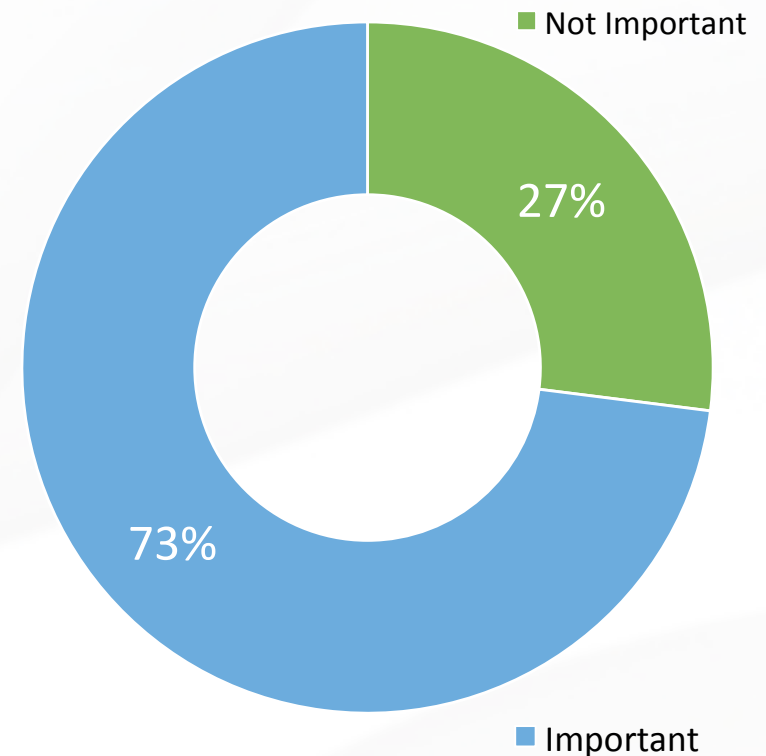
73% of the survey respondents believe that the quality of your towels will influence their decision to return to your hotel brand for future visits, while 84% believe towel quality influences brand perception.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Towels are touch point opportunities to reinforce your brand and are an emotional tipping point in the customer journey.



What influence does the quality of the towels have on your decision to return to a hotel brand for future visits?



ONLINE REVIEWS

According to Bright Local's 2015 Local Consumer Review Survey, 80% of the respondents said they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. Consumers are forming opinions about businesses faster than ever; 88% said they only need to read 1-10 reviews before they develop trust in a business.

This [study](#) found that 77% of travelers usually or always reference TripAdvisor reviews before selecting a hotel. When researching places to stay on TripAdvisor, 80% of respondents read at least 6-12 reviews before making their decision, and they're most interested in recent reviews that will give them the freshest feedback.

Reviews can remain online for a long time. It is very difficult to modify or remove a negative review once it has been made. It can be an uphill battle. "Understanding Customers" by Ruby Newell-Legner claims that it takes 12 positive experiences to make up for ONE unresolved negative experience. This article claims that one negative Yelp review could cost you up to 30 customers.

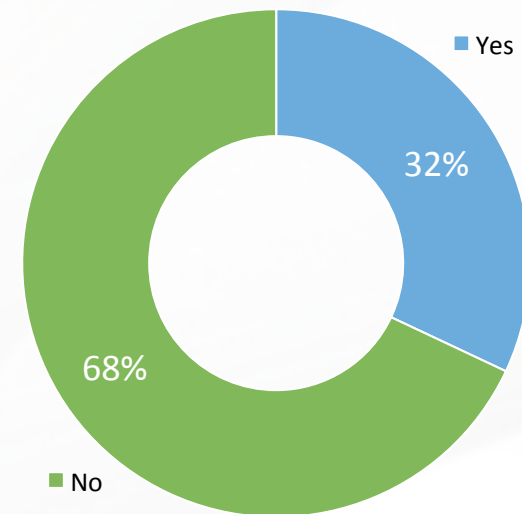
Typically the only recourse is for hotel management to proactively respond to the review. Readers will give the hotel a chance but once readers see three negative reviews, they move on to their next option.

In our survey, 52 of the respondents said that they have already written a negative review due to poor towel quality. One third of the respondents said that they would write a negative review on an online site if they were not satisfied with the towels.

We Pay Attention to Online Reviews



If you are unsatisfied with the towels during a hotel stay, would you write a negative review on online sites?



SAMPLE HOTEL REVIEW HEADLINES on TripAdvisor

"Friendliest staff and best towels ever!"

"Very dirty!! Bring your own towels!!"

"Story of the towels"

"Communication difficulties & dirty towels"

ENVIRONMENT

We Care About the Environment

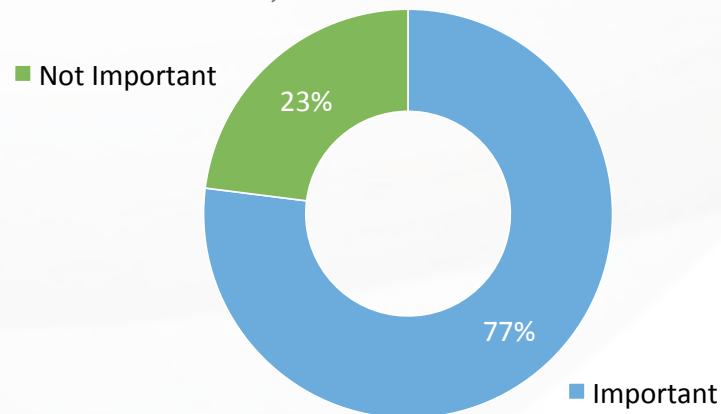
When it comes to understanding your core customer base, it's worth knowing that our survey found that 85% of respondents reuse towels because they are concerned about the environment. Many hotels throughout the US and the UK display signs stating that guests should consider reusing their towels in an effort to help the environment. This undoubtedly has an impact - but introducing eco-friendly laundry facilities will reduce water and energy usage further.

In our survey, 77% of people said that when choosing a hotel they actively search for places that have eco-friendly laundry facilities.

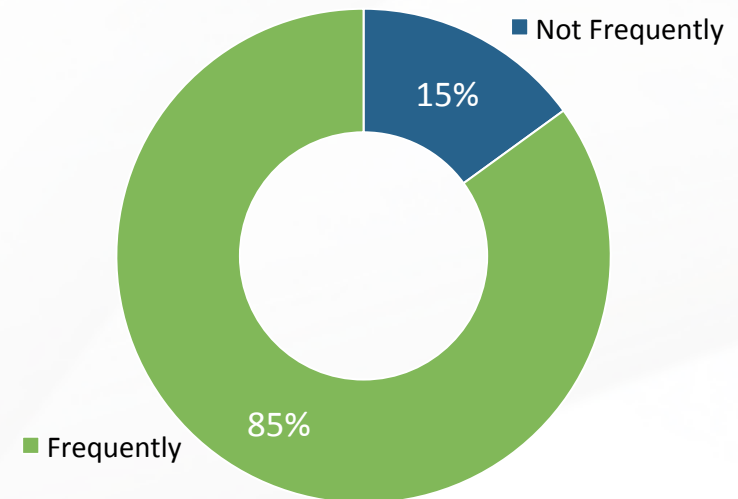


When choosing a hotel, how important to you is whether the hotel has an eco-friendly laundry room?

(One who washes their towels with the latest eco-friendly technology that uses less water and chemicals to preserve the environment.)



How often do you reuse your towels during a stay to save water and preserve the environment?



77%

Prefer hotels that have
ECO-FRIENDLY
Laundry Facilities

of the people in our survey said that when choosing a hotel, they actively search for places that have eco-friendly laundry facilities.

SUMMARY

The quality of the towels is paramount in the increasingly competitive hospitality industry, and one that is increasingly having to operate within environmentally-conscious parameters.

The results of this survey illustrate that travelers care quite a bit about the towels they use during hotel visits. Cleanliness, followed by softness, are top criteria for judging the quality of a towel. The quality of the towels impact customer satisfaction, brand perception, as well as customer loyalty.

Consumers listen to what other travelers have to say. We read online hotel reviews prior to booking a hotel and we are likely to write a negative review if we didn't like the towels in our hotel.

Savvy hoteliers should consider rethinking the role of towels in their overall brand story. Towels are a relatively unexplored branding touch point in the customer journey, which could be actually an emotional tipping point turning a visitor into a loyal customer.

Towels matter.



JOIN THE XEROS REVOLUTION

The Xeros laundry system is eco-friendly and replaces up to 80% of the water with polymer beads and provides superior cleaning results compared with conventional aqueous washing methods. By combining the beads' molecular structure with a proprietary detergent solution, dirt from soiled items is attracted and absorbed by the beads, producing cleaner results. The reusable beads have a lifespan of hundreds of washes before being collected and recycled for reintroduction into the polymer supply chain. Xeros offers:



Superior Cleaning – The award-winning Xeros polymer bead technology reduces the need to pre-treat stains, particularly greasy collars and cuffs. Xeros gets linen cleaner with a single wash, reducing the need to rewash clothes over and over again to keep them looking clean (and, in the process, causing increased wear).



Extended Linen Life – Abuse from heat stress combined with harsh chemical reactions and aggressive spin cycles can cause even the toughest fabrics to lose their color and become worn. Xeros beads get fabrics clean with lower water temperatures, less harsh chemicals, and a gentler cleaning action. This allows the fabrics that you wash to look like new for longer, reducing the need to constantly buy new fabrics.



Sustainability – The efficiency of the Xeros machine makes it the ideal washer for ecologically-minded companies. By minimizing water consumption and the amount of chemical detergents, the Xeros machine is an environment-friendly solution for your fabric washing needs. Plus, the Xeros beads are re-usable hundreds of times and are fully recyclable.



Absorbs Stray Colors – Xeros beads readily absorb stray dyes in the wash. This greatly reduces the risk of dye transfer when washing mixed colors. Lowered risk of color bleed means less time spent trying to separate different colored garments before loading the wash, improving the efficiency of your washing process and saving you time.



Save Money – By reducing the amount of water, energy, and detergents used in each laundry load, Xeros bead cleaning saves you money on every load. Not only do your water- and energy-use costs go down, but the fabrics that you clean will last longer, saving you money on the cost of replacement.

CONTACT XEROS



For more information on
Xeros, please contact us at:
www.xeroscleaning.com