

# Food and beverage offerings: in-house vs outsource

When looking at Mega Trends that are affecting the hotel industry, attention is drawn to food and beverage offerings as well as what guests expect from a hotel regarding these departments. The 80s and 90s saw hotels outsourcing their food and beverages to major restaurant operators and franchises, but today more hotels are taking back ownership and management of their restaurant offerings.



Guy Stehlik

According to Guy Stehlik, CEO of BON Hotels, who own, operate and manage hotels throughout Africa, most hoteliers outsourced their restaurant service because they didn't have the food and beverage skills and it seemed a lot easier to sit back and collect the rent every month from a restaurant operator. The problem with this, however, is that you have little or no control over the service levels and standards; essentially you have abdicated all services and responsibilities to a third party.

## Debunking hotel catering myths

Stehlik added that hotel owners, managers and operators have realised the current need to be differentiated and recognised that hotel catering has historically been a poorly managed afterthought, mostly due to inherent myths that:

- a) "There's no money in hotel food and beverage (except breakfast)"
- b) "Hoteliers should focus on selling rooms"
- c) "Hotel guests don't eat in hotels"

Although there is an element of truth in the above, Stehlik prefers to debunk these myths, adding that hotels have the ability to create very exciting options for hotel guests, while creating a profit centre within their hotel. "There is truly a major opportunity in hotel food and beverage. Hoteliers should not give away these outstanding gateways so that they can focus on rooms - it is very possible to do both and do them well.

The industry is waking up to serving the markets that support them, so it's definitely a case of horses for courses. To illustrate this, a hotel that serves mostly airlines or international inbound groups would really only need to offer a breakfast service (which incidentally has been proven to be the most profitable hotel meal), whereas a corporate, business- focussed hotel with support from regulars will see guests wanting to eat and drink at the hotel and even in their rooms."

## Room service and the modern guest

This brings us to room service – this seems to be an endless challenge for hotel operators and one that is going to need particular attention as the trend for eating in-room grows.



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Guests are even wanting to SMS or digitally send an order through. With modern travellers' tight schedules, many people are working and eating at the same time. Single travellers are looking for inventive, healthy options as well as the classic old favourites. Those who are venturing out of their room for a meal are certainly looking for a great vibe and quick turnaround time. Ergonomically designed seating with plug points, Wi-Fi and work space is a win, giving guests the opportunity to work and take in the local crowd too.

## Creating a restaurant brand

Another trend that has lost favour within the four- and five-star bracket is the outsourcing of the restaurant offering to high-profile chefs and restaurateurs. A great idea, but often doomed to failure in a five-star environment where guests have extremely high expectations and are waiting for Gordon Ramsay himself to pop out from the kitchen.

Stehlik believes that in line with global trends there is an excellent opportunity for local operators to create their own restaurant brand. "There are many ways to skin a cat and if you look at international standards, there are so many great ideas out there. One has to research the local market, surroundings and guest profile and adjust one's offering according to the patrons needs. Create cool spaces with lounge areas, cubicles, and great bar areas that come alive during the evening. Tsogo Sun has been leading the renaissance of mid-market hotel and food and beverage offerings and the rest of us need to catch up and take note of the opportunity under our noses."

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