

The Subtle and Overlooked Benefits of Welcome Baskets



“Welcome to our hotel! Help yourself to some complimentary drinks and snacks.”

This is what’s being communicated on the surface whenever a guest arrives at his or her room and is delightfully surprised by a welcome bag or basket of food and beverages. But beneath the surface, it sounds a lot more like this:

“Your business is truly appreciated. We understand that you’re tired and perhaps mildly stressed from traveling, so relax and

recharge your system in the tranquility of your own room while you plan your next move.”

In this sense, free in-room welcome baskets go a long way to build rapport with guests. As shown by the under-the-surface inner monologue above, such snacks demonstrate that your hotel is highly empathetic to the plight of travelers. And the explanation for why a paltry-sized chocolate candy, granola bar or handful of potato chips works so well has to do with the principle of *decision fatigue*.

Yes, guests can be just straight-up fatigued when they arrive and the complimentary sugar hit will be much appreciated for that alone, but decision fatigue is a whole other outfit. In essence, assessing and choosing amongst multiple options requires the most brainpower of any operation your cranium can perform, thus depleting your energy stores the fastest. And low energy means depressed mood and the stirring of negative emotions – mindsets we definitely don’t want to be transferred to the property.

So, what’s one of the first actions a consumer takes when he or she first steps into the room and unpacks? They plan what they are going to do, and that means making decisions. If it’s business, then that step is simpler, but such a guest will still have to review the pre-established logistics of scheduled meetings, mentally prepare for new client pitches or unwind before the onslaught of rapid-fire networking chitchat at the upcoming tradeshow.

And if it’s leisure, there are obviously fewer monetary bones in the game, but deciding what to do in a limited amount of time (when there aren’t mandatory events already allocated) is also challenging. This is especially true nowadays with the internet opening our eyes to a multitude of previously underexposed tourist opportunities – the more choices, the harder the final verdict. Either way, a free snack helps reduce decision fatigue and elevate the mood.

Moreover, this is an opportunity to exhibit products from local vendors, be they fancy snacks, wine, beer, cheeses, other regional delicacies or indigenous fruits. On the other hand, you might also want to showcase your brand as forward thinking by offering a healthy array of organic snacks. As well, a welcome gift isn’t just food; feel free to include little mementos. Even though they won’t work to counteract fatigue, they have a good chance of becoming souvenirs that will be remembered for much longer than the intended trip.

In terms of the actual costs for such an amuse bouche and a positivity generator, you'd be hard-pressed to get more bang for your buck anywhere else. It's cheaper than upgrading the bathrooms or hiring more staff members, that's for sure. I highly doubt that a reasonably adequate welcome bag would cost you a penny over \$10, even with fancy local goods. If it's a real concern, find a way to hide it in the room rate as most customers won't notice an increase of \$6 or \$8.

Oh, and did I mention that most consumers hate being price-gouged with these \$5 bottles of tepid water left by the television? Fix this annoyance by simply giving guests a bottle or two for free upon arrival. After all, bottled water is palpably softer on the tongue than that from a tap, so complimentary fluid in this regard will boost the mood, even if subtly.

With all these benefits to a seemingly low cost line item, I'm still perplexed that more hotels aren't employing this tactic to drum up brand advocates. Why aren't you?

(Article by Larry Mogelonsky, published in [eHotelier](#) on May 18, 2015)