



Free Newsletter

Your e-mail address

SUBSCRIBE



NEWS

SECTORS

ADVICE

INTERVIEWS

HOT TOPICS

FEATURES

INTELLIGENCE

JOBS

TRAINING

Search



How to choose the right toiletries for your hotel

By Emma Eversham+ , 02-Feb-2016

Last updated on 02-Feb-2016 at 12:14 GMT



Related tags: Hotel amenities, Toiletries, Fragrance, Pebble&co, Gilchrist & Soames, Eatdrinksleep, Firmdale Hotels

They may only be a small component within the full guest experience, but as many hotel companies are realising, the choice of amenities put in a hotel's bathroom can say a lot about a business and can determine how guests will view their stay.

"It doesn't matter where you are staying, the first thing everyone does when they arrive at their hotel room is go into the bathroom to see what products are on offer, assessing whether to stash them in the suitcase and hope that housekeeping replenish generously or pull out what they have brought with them," says Sarah McCubbin, founder and managing director of Pebble&co, a boutique consultancy that works with luxury brands.

McCubbin's statement may not be true of every hotel guest, but I'll hazard a guess that it's ringing true with many and if not the first thing you do when you survey your room, it will probably follow a review of the tea tray and the in-room entertainment.

Whether checking out the toiletries in the bathroom is immediate or not, it's inevitable that guests will see them at some point during their stay and, in the majority of cases - consciously or not - the toiletries will be used in forming an opinion of your business and their stay.

"In room products and amenities say so much about the hotel and give guests a great insight into the experience they can expect to have not only in the bathroom but throughout the hotel as a whole," says McCubbin.

If you're not yet convinced, bear in mind that today's guest - whether staying for a night on a business trip or on a weekend mini-break - expects more than they've ever done and if it's not to their liking they'll soon turn to sites like TripAdvisor and social media to let everyone know they're not happy with any aspect of their stay.

"Travellers are much different now than they were 10 years ago," adds Natalia Brightmore of amenities supplier Gilchrist & Soames. "Amenities have become extremely important - they aren't just a soap, shampoo and conditioner, they are looking for an experience, something they can relate to. Whether it's an environmentally-conscious traveller, business traveller, or luxury traveller, they all demand more out of their stay.

"This change in the mindset and motivation of the modern traveller is driving a trend towards choosing thoughtful and luxurious amenities."

Not sure if you're delivering what your guests expect? Follow our three top tips to choosing the right toiletries for your hotel:

1. Ensure the range fits the company's ethos:



One of the key priorities for an amenities range says Pebble&co's McCubbin, whose company recently worked with Firmdale Hotels to create a bespoke line RIKRAK, is 'to provide a strong marketing and branding presentation, telling the hotel's story and providing guests with an authentic reflection of the hotel's identity'.

This may seem obvious, but if you pick a range from a company or brand with similar values as your own it can go a long way to reinforcing your business's message and positioning.

Edmund Inkin, joint owner of Eatdrinksleep, which runs The Old Coastguard in Mousehole and The Gurnard's Head near Zennor in Cornwall, as well as The Felin Fach Griffin, near Brecon, is currently in the middle of changing the company's amenities range from The White Company, which it has used for the last eight years, to Bramley, producer of a range of bath and body products handmade in the South West of England.

"We decided to change as we wanted to find a British producer with a similar ethos to us as well as a great product," explains Inkin whose family-owned inns are all situated within the English countryside. "Bramley are family owned, not omnipresent and manufacture here in the South West of the UK from natural ingredients. Their branding is strong and confident and matches up well to our key markets.

"We're taking a bit of a hit on cost but feel this kind of decision underpins the strengthening of the relationship with our guests that every hotel needs to keep driving good occupancy and spend."

Gilchrist & Soames took a similar approach when asked to find the right amenities brand for US-based 'ultra-luxury' hotel company Montage.

"When we understand the overall experience a property wishes to deliver guests our sales team is great at recommending the bathroom amenities that best support the hotel's vision, whether it's colour and package design elements, fragrance, or a collection that reinforces an overall lifestyle trend," says Brightmore whose company suggested the equally luxurious fragrance brand Antica Farmacista as an ideal partner for Montage.

"The aesthetic and specialty luxury market position of Antica Farmacista aligns perfectly with that of Montage," says Brightmore. "As well, Antica Farmacista has developed a signature fragrance specific to each Montage property to reflect a true sense of place. A guest who travels to Deer Valley experiences the same brand as a guest in Beverly Hills, however the fragrance evokes a feeling specific to the property locale."

2. Remember, size does matter



The majority of hotel amenities are available in 30ml and 40ml bottles or tubes. However, if the length of stay for your guests is longer than the average or you're finding that housekeeping are being asked to replenish supplies before they go in to clean the room the next day, you may need to review your offering.

London hotel operator Amba Hotels increased the size of its bottles and made them flip-top last year, following guest feedback although the company has not yet been able to say how this change has been received.

If sustainability is important to your business, ensure your products have environmentally-friendly formulations and have recyclable packaging too. Consumers also like to see unisex products - shampoo, conditioner, body wash, body lotion and soaps - in hotels claims Gilchrist & Soames who has worked with the likes of Marriott, Radisson Edwardian May Fair and Mandarin Oriental as 'they lend themselves to getting the job done while still being able to activate that memorable experience'.

Choosing an amenities partner able to produce the same product for retail is also worth considering if you are looking to add an additional revenue stream. This wasn't the key motivation for Firmdale Hotels when it worked with Pebble&co to design its RIKRAK range, but as Craig Markham, director – marketing & public relations, Firmdale Hotels, says, having free reign over product choice has meant the hotel is able to add new products when it wants.

As well as the body wash, body lotion, shampoo, conditioner, bath and body oil, hand wash, hand lotion, hand cream and orange peel lip balm which are supplied to guest in bathrooms, there's a RIKRAK range of fragranced candles, a pillow, linen and a room mist available for guests to buy to take away. Sales have been so successful that further product development has already happened, says Markham.

"A highly successful hotel amenities range provides a strong marketing and branding presentation as well as delivering an additional revenue stream and guest touch point through the sale of products that are so great, that taking home the in-room amenities is not enough – they need to buy the full size, and the candles, and the whatever," adds McCubbin.

Consider the long-term impact



There are obvious immediate benefits from choosing amenities from an established brand name, particularly if (as in point 1) the brand has a similar ethos to yours. As Gilchrist & Soames' Brightmore says 'they're not only providing the reassurance that a known brand provides, but also a sense of privilege and pampering, strengthening brand loyalty for both the hotel and the product brand.'

However, opting for a lesser-known fragrance brand could also work in your hotel's favour, particularly if it's important that your business is seen as a trend-setter who 'discovered' it first.

"Although the trend towards niche brands is still new, many luxury brands such as Oscar de la Renta, Ormonde Jayne, Fresh, and diptyque have added hospitality to their roster of product offerings in recent years, and are now enjoying a significant increase in consumer awareness as a result," says Brightmore of Gilchrist & Soames. "As well, hotels such as the Viceroy, WestHouse New York, The Surrey, Meritage and Envoy all credit an increase in guest satisfaction to their affiliation with a luxury brand partner for their bathroom amenities."

The other option is to create your very own brand, which can not only be used within your own properties, but for which you will own the rights to distribute as you wish.

"We were finding it increasingly difficult to find the right bathroom amenities that accurately reflected our niche brand. So we decided to create our own," explains Markham. "We felt we would have greater control and be able to create something that we felt our guests would like with packaging that reflected our brand."

As McCubbin notes, the move not only gives Firmdale greater control over what they have in their hotel, but also offers unlimited options for the future, such as the creation of a retail brand, which in turn is another marketing option for the hotel group.

"Firmdale Hotels' are masters of creating exciting and unique interiors, offering spaces with a carefree and colourful spirit and this sentiment is expressed through the RIKRAK collection available to guests as visitors and offers exciting opportunities to expand the brand into the international retail arena also," she adds.