

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Emotional crisis response can boost hospitality recovery: study

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Several members of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World network are offering entire hotel buyouts for guests who want the whole property to themselves. Image credit: Small Luxury Hotels of the World

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Hospitality groups hoping to welcome back guests should create emotional, rather than cognitive, connections with travelers.

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Guests are more likely to humanize hotels that center emotion in their crisis communications, according to a new study from the United Kingdom. However as the COVID-19 pandemic has rattled the luxury travel industry, many brands are emphasizing the more clinical aspects of their response.

"During COVID-19, fear and anxiety are the most common emotions among both tourists and the hotel sector," said Dr. Haiming Hang of the University of Bath's School of Management in a statement. "Tourists experience fear and anxiety towards the health risks of COVID-19, while the hotel sector feels fear and anxiety about the uncertainty it faces."

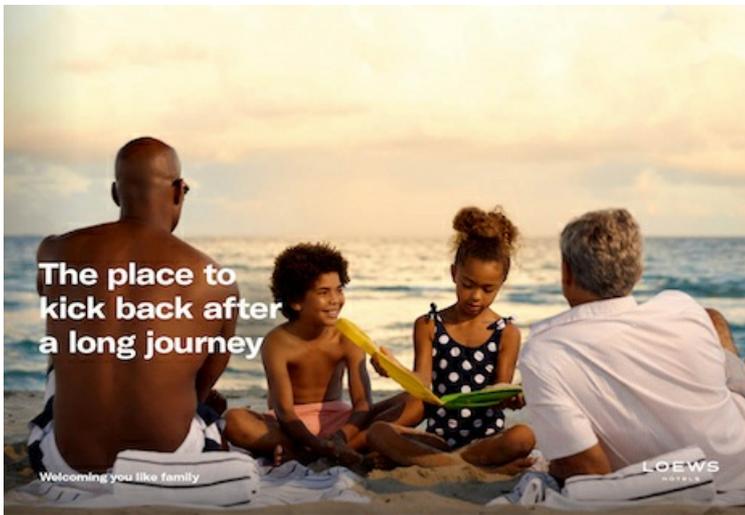
Researchers from the Universities of East Anglia, Bath and West of England worked on the study. The study involved more than 400 American consumers whose travel plans were disrupted because of the current health crisis.

Emotional hospitality

Researchers argue that emotional attachment is essential for the hospitality industry to recover since it can increase travelers' desires to visit specific sites after the pandemic ends.

Many hospitality groups, including Four Seasons and Hilton, have publicized plans focusing on logistical aspects like cleanliness and cancellation policies. While safety is of utmost importance, these plans do not always address more emotional concerns such as anxiety and fear.

High-end hospitality brands are attempting to achieve this balance.



"Welcoming You Like Family" highlights multigenerational travel. Image credit: Loews Hotels & Co.

Small Luxury Hotels of the World debuted its "Stay Small, Stay Safe" effort as its members prepare to welcome guests back to their hotels and resorts.

The initiative offers health and safety guidelines against COVID-19 for all 520 member hotels in 90 countries. More than 330 properties within the network have already reopened, with the new measures acknowledging a new customer desire to have intimate hotel experiences with fewer crowds ([see story](#)).

Rosewood Hotels & Resorts has new promotions geared to guests whose travel patterns have shifted to more local and domestic locations in the COVID-19 era.

The Hong Kong-based chain has developed five packages to acknowledge the evolution of staycations. Coming on top of phased hotel reopenings with enhanced safety precautions, the effort is also a nod to traveler concerns over catching the COVID-19 coronavirus that is still active worldwide ([see story](#)).

Meanwhile, hospitality group Loews Hotels & Co. launched a new multichannel brand campaign emphasizing care and community.

"Welcoming You Like Family" aims to give the group's 26 properties a stronger visual identity, with relaxing images featuring intimate moments. The campaign name is also used for Loews' new and enhanced protocols and standards amid the pandemic ([see story](#)).

"Understandably hotels wish to reassure customers about the practical precautions they are taking," said Dr. Lukman Arena of UEA's Norwich Business School in a statement. "However, we argue that crisis communication focusing on shared emotions during the current coronavirus pandemic is very important, as it can establish emotional attachment with tourists better than rational statements can."

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