

Title: Innovative customer care: personalisation plan.

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1)Executive Summary: The aim of this report is to introduce an implementation plan for personalised customer care within Rocco Forte Hotels. The plan is supported by relevant theories about the importance of personalisation and how this trend is affecting the hotel industry. Internal and external analysis were needed in order to determine what strengths and weaknesses the current personalisation plan has, as well as evaluate what are competitors offering in terms of personalised choices and potential threats.

2)Introduction: In order to produce this report several contents have been taken in consideration, as well as different internal and external analysis and competitors analysis within the luxury hotels industry. The aim was to propose an implementation plan in personalised customer care within the company. Firstly, it was important to offer a definition of what personalisation is and how it can be implemented in customer care. The Care of One article has been the support theory used to outline the importance of this trend, and how it has already affected the hotel industry. After the analysis of the article, internal and external analysis have been taken in consideration in order to evaluate: what is the company currently offering in terms of personalisation? What tools are needed? What are competitors currently doing in personalised customer care? Are they successful?

The internal analysis was based on the SWOT analysis of luxury hotels, in order to evaluate two contents: opportunities and threats. The analysis showed that the main opportunity for luxury hotels to grow is to tailor guests that are looking for an unique experience, which is the exact focal point of personalisation, while competition between luxury hotels is addressed as the main threat.

A PESTLE analysis with a focus on technological aspect has shown that the use of technological advanced tools has played a vital role in personalisation, as a consequence technology must be considered as the main tool to personalised guests experience, thanks to the use of AI. It was also important to consider what the potential issues might be hidden when using AI, so another research has been made in order to acknowledge how to correctly implement the use of technology.

Further analysis on competitors were needed to determine the level of threats of substitutes, as a result of the stick competition between luxury hotels. Having an in-depth knowledge of what are competitors doing to promote and implement personalisation might be a good point of start when considering what changes can be made and what need to be redress within a company. Competitors analysis might be a helpful tool in order to implement a plan, because whether competitors are

stronger and weaker than your offers, you can always learn something. The overall report aims to propose an implementation plan based on empower the current offers within the company as well as introduce further technology systems as chatbots.

3) In order to be able to implement personalisation and propose a valid and effective change in terms of personalised customer care, it is important to have a full knowledge of the topic as much as be aware of what changes are being seen within the industry. According to McKinsey 2020, personalization had become an integral part of unique customer experience; companies must meet a new standard which can be denied as ‘‘the care of one, an ethos that focus all the decision making on serving individual customers and their personalised needs’’ (McKinsey&Company,2020).

Thanks to technological innovation, companies are given the opportunity to implement hyper-personalization and the care of one approach. In fact, hyper-personalization is predicted to be a top goal in customer care by 2025. The same article lists what companies need to address in order to deliver personalised customer care as follows:

- Knowing your customers: those companies that gather all customers information such as behaviours, previous interactions across channels will be able to engage more effectively.
- Predict customers needs: thanks to data and analytics, centre agents are able to predict and identify opportunities to delight and preemptively solve problems based on personalised needs, before customers notify them to you. Furthermore, data and analytics reinforce the quality of interaction with customers, as by analysing information you will be able to predict the right times to reach out an interaction with your customers. All these insights will result in better-trained and more efficient workforce.
- Integrating technologies and contacts across all channels: seamless customer experience as a result of better alignment of customer care, marketing, operations and product development.
- Implementing real-time tools: providing real-time interactions with customers will reduce barriers in order to better address customers needs.

It is important for businesses to consider personalization as it is predicted that by 2025 customer care will be based on four key attributes:

- White-glove customer service: significant shift from reactive service centres to proactive control of customer relationship. By predicting customers' needs companies will minimise effort while completing tasks with precision: as a result, customers' feedback will flow from the contact centre directly to the rest of the enterprise functions.
- Omnichannel communication: it is predicted that companies will achieve full consistency and transparency across platforms. A detailed vision of customer journey supported by tailored CRM tools will empower companies to instantly react and choose personalised actions based on the customer's profile. As a final result, agents and customers will concurrently communicate via different channels.
- Digital enablement: Technology has been changing and improving business related operations so far, and has become so important that the overall idea of ‘‘the care of one’’ is based on technological progress. In fact, thanks to advanced analytics, AI and real-time tools companies can implement personalisation and avoid time consuming tasks by cooperating with AI and human collaboration.
- Contact centres: it will be evolved based on customer-first mindset; once again analytics will be used to better select candidates with the right skills in order to provide excellent service.

Training and career path must be well-defined for this step, and long-term career pathways will be offered so that companies will reduce costs and shorten the recruiting process.

Personalisation can be integrated into all stages of visiting:

- Pre-stay: by using segmented emails in order to target customers. This is a useful trick to use so that your business will attract customer's attention using personalisation and as a consequence that customer will be more motivated to choose you instead of a competitor. Once your business has attracted customer's attention, the next step is personalised reservations, by opting for apps that will make the overall process easier and quicker and promote targeted offers, so that each guest can find the preferred service or product based on specific needs. Further actions that might be taken in consideration in order to be consistent within personalisation are: reinforce engagement with customers by providing them a confirmation email that includes all the details they need regarding their booking, as customers are more likely to often look at their booking confirmation, using a pre-arrival questionnaire is a smart move in order to find out what are their expectations and might be worthy to implement a virtual concierge app that will provide guests information about local activities, events, transports.
- During stay: In this phase your business should take advantage of every service within the company in order to maximise personalisation. For example, since most of the check-in operations that are now done online, a company might send personalised welcome emails or texts to make guests feel welcomed, as well as implement a 24\7 online service so that customers can have their potential questions answered outside business hours: in fact, many companies are adopting a chatbots services in order to be able to do it. Keeping customers aware of any extra local activity is another way to create a deep engagement relationship as using social media to ask customers to share their experiences so that your marketers can then repost customer's stories or pictures into the company's official webpage: by doing this, it will be as guests themselves are advertising the company through their own experiences and points of view.
- Post-stay: This is the step in which customers have left and you as a company aim to keep them loyal and engaged: building up a follow-up communication with customers is vital in order to conquer their loyalty, and is helpful in order to improve offers and services thanks to feedback. By asking guests to share their opinions about their vacation you will be able to eventually readdress or improve services and use personal data such as special occasions as birthdays as a chance to empower customer engagement by sending them discounts available for that special date will be a chance to make customers valued, increasing loyalty (Criton eBook,2019).

Speaking about personalisation within Rocco Forte Hotels, the company is currently offering personalisation through recognition programs, gift experiences, spa experience, exclusive invitation to clubs and vouchers, differentiation of dining options and even provide curated tours experience offers for guests. As a matter of fact, personalisation can be introduced and implemented in different ways and functions within an organisation. A research based on what are the two UK-based Rocco Forte Hotels offering, showed that:

- Brown's Hotel London: a choice of two carefully curated tours. Mini Cooper Tour, aimed to explore the iconic sights of London's memorable sites, as well as lesser-known locations, all under the supervision of a knowledgeable guide. On the other hand, the Brown's History Walk is an historical tour that takes guests a step

back in time discovering important characters that have made history across the world and have walked through the doors of the hotel and influential streets that have fashioned the world. (Rocco Forte Hotels, n.d.) Furthermore, personalisation reaches out its apex with gifting options; in fact, a differentiation of gifting experiences is available: spa and wellness experience, dining experience, overnight stay, afternoon tea. Some features of spa experiences are special relaxing treatment for maternity, mindfulness beauty rituals, children soothing massage, and even skincare treatments, thanks to the advertising of Irene Forte Skincare products, aromatherapy and hot stone massages and nails care. Traditional dining experiences as Sunday roast are available, romantic dining experiences for couples, jazz Sundays dining experience, in addition, a choice of different options of accommodation, depending on customer's needs is available, whether guests are planning their long overnight stay for a family vacation, or romantic weekend for two or short stays as per business travellers, also including options for personalised room services. In addition, family activities are available so that guests with children can fully enjoy their experience. Overall, this is an excellent start in terms of personalisation, based on a deep knowledge of the target audience.

- Similarly does The Balmoral, based in Edinburgh. Guests can choose between three tours experiences once again depending on guests interests: Edinburgh Castle, for an historical tour of the iconic fortress, Edinburgh Sightseeing Experience, for those guests who are looking for leisure and want to visit city centre and main attractions, last option is about a tour of the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the official residence of Her Majesty, for those travellers that are passionate about the history of the Royals. Related offering options are similar to Brown's Hotel, with a change in terms of details of offerings: in fact, the overall experiences are the same, with a differentiation in terms of including typical products into the experience: an example is the Scotch whisky journey, or a different category of spa experience, offering Swedish massage for example (Rocco Forte Hotels, n.d.). Yet again, the company aims to offer plenty of choices for travellers to completely enjoy their stay, make memorable memories, and by personalising experiences increases its value.

Least but not last, Rocco Forte Friends exclusive recognition program (Rocco Forte Hotels, n.d.) unlocks a variety of benefits for guests, and inspires potential new guests. Features included into the program are:

- Late check-out and Early check-in.
- Welcome surprises.
- 15% off on drinking and dining experience.
- Exclusive invites to events and gourmet experiences in town.
- 15% off on selected wellness experiences.

4) An internal analysis of the luxury hotel industry aimed to highlight threats and opportunities identified targeting travellers that are looking for unique and highly personalised offerings as opportunities for the business to grow, while competition within similar luxury hotels brands is the main threat (Landam, 2010.). In fact, based on more in-depth research, personalising guests' experience will add more value to the company, as much as reinforce customers' loyalty. Due to high competition within the sector, having a full knowledge of customers needs and monitoring customer

journey will help business retain customers and improve offerings. Some benefits of implementing personalisation are:

- Increase guest satisfaction: if a business strategy is based on monitoring customers from the beginning of their journey within your company, by paying particular attention on special occasions, loyalty programs, or by simply promoting new services or products to customers, using personalised emails based on the knowledge of your specific customer target, the result will be that by collecting statistical data you'll be able to offer unique service and increase customer satisfaction (Trepanier,2021).
- Build customer loyalty: When customers feel like you as a business have succeeded in meeting their needs, obviously they will feel more encouraged to come back, as a consequence providing them a unique experience tailored to a specific need will strengthen loyalty (Trepanier,2021).
- Increase sales: How could personalisation affect sales? Easy explanation. By better knowing your customers you will be able to upsell them additional packages such as in-room breakfast, or propose to them a spa experience, increasing sales (Trepanier,2021).
- Targeted communication with customers: personalisation improves the quality of communication with guests, in fact, by analysing the information collected you can adapt your communication tools and increase your newsletter. For example, simply using your customer's first name when composing an email is a touch of personalisation that emphasises the relationship with customers (Trepanier,2021).
- Attract Millennials: this generation of travellers is portrayed as 'memorable experience seekers', so, by offering them personalised experience you will increase their loyalty (Trepanier,2021).

While implementing personalisation, companies must consider competitors as treats: what are they currently doing in terms of personalisation? Are there any weaknesses? What are their strengths?

Gather information and monitor competitors is a savvy strategy whether they are doing better than you or not: in both cases your company can take advantage of a competitors analysis.

In fact, by doing research on luxury hotels embracing personalisation in terms of customer care, results showed that not only competitors on a global scale are improving their personalisation plans, but there are already some that are opting for hyper personalisation. For example, at King's Mansion in India, guests can sign up for a Wellness Consultancy designed programmes and will be asked to submit a saliva sample previous their stay, and that sample will be sent to a local genomics lab in order to be analysed, finally the result will determine their programs schedule. In addition, the hotel has incorporated innovative therapies as LED infusions. This is one great example of what hyper personalisation might mean, and how it can be implemented via different points of view. The Grand Resort Bad Ragaz in Switzerland offers hyper personalisation in customer care based on wellbeing: in fact, the hotel has launched a new wellness concept named 'NewYou Method', which enables guests to focus on their personal wellbeing needs, such as weight loss or rehabilitation after injury, and offer them tailored programs. In this case, hyper personalisation is based on offering unique wellbeing opportunities for guests. Another example of hyper personalisation is the Fauchon l'Hotel in Paris, which is an example of implementing hyper personalisation in services: guests are offered the choice to notify what food they want instead of ordering form a menu, and check-ins functions and housekeeping services are also conducted based on guests needs. Similarly to King's Mansion, the Rakza Hotel in Bangkok offers hyper personalisation based on health and wellbeing: in fact, the hotel offers fully personalised wellness programs integrating 'advanced medical treatments with revered holistic therapies'(Jenny,2021.). The tailored packages included a diet plan and: immunity boosting,

facial solutions, gut health and de-stress. One last example is the Hotel Le Coucou, in Meribel, which empowers guests to personalised pillows, duvets in terms of materials, as well as personal picnics, private cooking classes and supply-off menu cocktails and mocktails.

These are perfect examples of how hyper personalisation is becoming a key in terms of excellent customer care, and are proof that this phenomenon must be considered from a competitors analysis, as it might result in luxury hotels to consider a new approach based on what competitors are already doing.

In conclusion, nowadays luxury and well-established businesses have to face a cruel competition in terms of targeting and offering unique experiences. As a consequence it is vital to take in consideration a strategic plan to implement personalisation as it would help your business stand out from the competition. As a well established luxury hotel company, Rocco Forte is currently taking in consideration personalisation and as stated above it is promoting recognition programs, gifting experiences, as well as unique special features depending on guests interest and needs, also considering families trips and wellness treatments. Personalisation can always be improved, and since competition is severe within the industry, companies should also consider and monitor competitors, in order to be aware of what are competitors doing about personalisation and maybe consider successful strategies that might then be implemented and shaped around your company. In a competitive industry environment where every company has a high level of luxury, strong value, unique offers, experiences, excellent personalisation might be that detail that makes your business stand out of the competition.

5) External analysis: A PESTLE analysis is one helpful tool that helps businesses have awareness of what external factors are affecting, or potentially might affect, your business. It is useful for a business to conduct a PESTLE analysis because by analysing external factors that are affecting your business, you'll be able to either take advantage of them in order to readdress a function within the industry, as per this report. In order to improve and implement personalisation in customer care, it is important to consider the technological aspect: how is technology helping the process of personalised customer care? Offering excellent customer care has always been the main purpose of the lodging industry, and as new technological techniques became available, the industry took advantage of them, and still use them to enhance guests' experience. During the years, thanks to technology hoteliers have introduced magnetic keys, online orders and check-in\out functions for customers so that they can easily manage bookings and correlated offerings. Nowadays, the reason why hoteliers have been using technology to gather better information about customers is because each customer has different needs and requests, for example a customer might prefer free gym offer while another might gives importance to a room upgrade, as a result, using AI will unlock data so that hoteliers will deliver meaningful experiences. The company is already taking advantages of technological tools in order to gather information about customers: as a matter of fact, based on new technologies the company is able to map how often guests visit, what services they use, how they prefer to communicate, and most important, thanks to technology the company is capable of offering guests the exact luxury experience they have imagined. By using apps customers are given the chance to personalise their experiences, for example by customising their mini-bars, or setting their preferences for lighting and temperature levels in the rooms as well as doing online check-ins and even using a function that automatically opens curtains. These are examples of how the business is currently using technology in order to improve personalisation and offer a tailored service, adding value and prestige. However, even if the use of technology has been a key tool in developing personalisation for customers enabling companies to gather personal information, the other side of the coin highlights potential issues. The topic of privacy

and data protection is the main concern even outside the hospitality sector and has been a frequently discussed subject. Hotel companies use technology to gather information from guests, in order to enhance engagement and loyalty, but they must ensure data protection and privacy of data. The GDPR, which stands for general data protection regulation, was released in 2018 with the aim to protect the processed personal data: every company that acts in a way of collecting information must cover the process under the GDPR regulation. As per the hotel industry, failure to provide data protection might result in facing strict fines, as a consequence it is worthy to implement small precautions.

- Explicit consent: in a scenario in which a potential guest is exploring a hotel company's website, asking visitors to opt into cookies instead of automatically installing them is a way of respecting data protection.
- Privacy policy: empower privacy policy including relevant GDPR compliance information.
- Front desk: make sure that when it comes to collecting data at the front desk are in compliance with GDPR, even if the process is face to face.
- Existing data: all personal data are subject to GDPR regulation, whether collected in person, online or via questionnaires. (Hotel Tech Report, 2020.)

Additional obstacles of using technology while respecting the GDPR are costs: in fact, the hotel industry is affected by GDPR in terms of costs, as retaining advice and implementing systems are expensive tasks, furthermore GDPR compliance requires a collaboration of vendors and employees in IT, cybersecurity, digital forensics and system design.

6) A second external analysis used in order to produce this report is the Porter's Five Forces, with a specific focus on threats of substitutes. Once again, this external analysis aimed to evaluate what are the external threats in terms of substitutes of competitors. In fact, apart from evaluating what are competitors currently offering to personalised customer care, it is important to evaluate the availability of products and services similar to what your company is offering, that a guest might be looking for from a competitor. In fact, it is surprising to notice how hard the competition is in terms of similar products. The Chewton Glen Hotel & Spa, based in the UK is a five star hotel that offers similar personalised experiences as Rocco Forte; in fact, guests can choose between different offer options based on their needs, including family activities, wellbeing, long or short stay options (www.chewtonglen.com.n.d). What would then make the difference? The Chewton Hotel offers a multitude of voucher options, divided in: spa experiences, wellness and beauty treatments, dining experience as afternoon tea or inclusive celebration dinner, as well as exclusive wine tasting experience, cookery school, stayover special options as treehouse escape, junior cookery school, privilege card membership (chewtonglen.wearegifted.co.uk.n.d).

All the previously cited options are differentiated in terms of specific time preference, for example, the spa experience option includes a midweek twilight spa experience. These are great examples of how substitutes affect a business strategy, as when a competitive business is offering the same products or services, with the same quality as well, it is harder for a business to succeed in terms of customer retention.

7) Implementation plan: The aim of this report is to offer a comprehensive knowledge of what personalisation in customer care means, as much as why it is important for the hotel industry to consider this trend, and eventually how to improve it. Both internal and external analysis within the organisation and based on competitors were needed in order to understand what is the current level of personalisation within Rocco Forte. As a result, based on what the company is currently proposing

and how it is using technology for personalised customer care, the strategic plan that needs to be addressed is about implementing technology by offering AI chatbots and enriching the variety of offers. Rocco Forte is already implementing personalisation in terms of offers and operations, enabling guests to arrange their stay in a way that they find closer to their needs. However, the company might take further advantages from AI by introducing a chatbot. Many luxury hotels have introduced this system, as per the case of Montcalm Luxury Hotels: the bot is described as ‘a fully conversational artificial intelligence service that offers an additional channel of communication to site visitors before, during and after their stay’ (Luxury Hospitality Magazine,n.d).

As a matter of fact, chatbots are smart system that use AI to identify open-ended queries, and by using these systems within a company, customers engagement is reinforced as they offer 24/7 and around-the-clock support, so that every potential doubts or queries can be sorted out at any time, in addition, chatbots systems alleviate the pressure on human customer service agents and reduce waiting time for customers. These systems gather information with customers, that nowadays prefer to communicate with a company via messages, as it is quicker and easier and by gathering information based on customer’s preferences, a company is enable to implement future personalised experiences: additional information showed that 64% of businesses place trust in chatbots systems in order to provide more personalised customer care (www.engagecustomer.com,n.d).

Chatbots are improved continuously, as technological progress is still ongoing, in order to enhance personalisation via messagings and enable customers attain almost everything they want to, instead of having to navigate a website or download an app as, according to in-depth researches, customers prefer to use a live service rather than use an app, mostly because chatbots are services available 24/7 and their questions are quickly answered. It is not surprising that companies are adopting chatbots systems into theri official webpages, instead of using live chat in order to optimise conversation. By having a look at Rocco Forte official webpage, there are limited options for customers to contact the company: in fact, only telephone numbers and email addresses are provided to customers. Suggestions on incorporating chatbots are supported by the fact that plenty of hotels have introduced these systems and had positive feedback: in fact, many hoteliers had noticed what are the benefits of using chatbots and live chats. In the hotel industry, the use of chatbots can be implemented in terms of answering guests' questions on the official website of a company, reminding guests about check-ins policies or booking a reservation. Additional benefit of using chatbots is that it increases revenue: in fact, chatbots can be used to share special offers for bookings or room upgrades into the final step of checkout process, or can be used to upsell a service during guests stay, by promoting additional services. The main strength of these systems is that they offer customers what they really want: immediate responses. Last but not least, chatbots offer multiple language support when it comes to hosting foreign guests, as one of the features of chatbots is the multilingual support.

Another suggestion for an implementation plan of personalised customer care is, as above cited, to enrich the variety of activities offered. By analysing what competitors are doing in terms of personalised choices for guests, results showed that even if the company is currently offering a range of choices, there might be useful upgrades to take in consideration. Considering to implement more children activities might attract more family-targeted guests, introducing for example a junior cookery school activity might be an additional feature of offers that will motivate guests with children to opt in for your offer, instead of going for a competitor.

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