

Super 8 plans product improvements

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LAS VEGAS—Now is not the time for resting on success, according to John Valletta. Valletta, president of Super 8 Motels, a brand of Wyndham Worldwide Corp., shared positive accomplishments with attendees at the Super 8 convention in February.



Super 8 unveiled a retromodern prototype guestroom design by Back Lot Productions, the design firm that worked on IHG's Hotel Indigo brand.

For starters, the brand moved from No. 5 to No. 3 in its competitive set in the 2006 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study by J.D. Power and Associates.

The brand also saw \$100 million in increased revenue for fiscal year 2006.

"We have made some changes, and it's been paying off from your hard work and investment," Valletta said. But changes must continue because expectations are changing.

Directly addressing areas that affect customer satisfaction (as demonstrated by Linda Hirneise of J.D. Power & Associates, who presented survey results) Super 8 announced the following standards: in-room coffee makers; new uniforms; name badges; a new bathroom program with curved shower rod; Hookless shower curtain and multispray shower head; upgraded SuperStart breakfast, adding cereal and milk to the menu; and mattress replacement if older than seven years or if the quality score on the mattress is lower than "moderate."

Valletta said by creating standards around product warranties, there hasn't been franchisee pushback.

Hirneise said breakfast was the most important hotel service to Super 8 guests.

Rosanne Zusman, v.p. of brand marketing, emphasized the importance of the improvements.

"If we don't change, Super 8 as a brand will no longer be relevant," she said.

The marketing department set forth a multimedia plan.

The brand will spend more than \$5 million on a TV ad campaign and more than \$2 million for online marketing, particularly on paid search, according to Zusman.

"We will buy more than 100,000 keywords in 2007," she told attendees.

Super 8 also introduced a new Web site, www.Super8.com. Since its launch in September 2006, year-over-year revenue lift was 45 percent.

Super 8 unveiled a prototype guestroom design that was described as "retro modern," by the design firm Back Lot Productions, which worked on Hotel Indigo, IHG's lifestyle brand.

According to Partner Tracey Barker, the company's mission was to "delight the core customer and entice 'Generation Next.'"

With robin's egg blue on the walls, regional headboard wall art and wood laminate underfoot, the Super 8 "retro-modern" prototype steps away from the typical look of limited-service.

Valletta and Zusman said in an interview that an aspect easily brought into any guestroom would be the paint color.

They planned to establish a short list of requirements.

The bed has a striped, two-sided stain-resistant cover and a platform construction.

The bath features a simple, yet unique two-tiered vanity, and an "8" themed tub surround.

Pamela Amante, owner of the Super 8 Motel in McCall, Idaho, said it's nice to see the brand get on track with improvements. Her property is making a 30-room addition with a pool.

"We sit between ski areas in an area that is the playground of wealthy Boise," she said. "Our Super 8 is busy and has a lodge feel. We will interpret the prototype design into our new addition if they allow us."

Victor Solia, who owns and operates two properties with his wife, Rose, in Crystal Lake and Elgin, Ill., said improvements are good, but return on investment is a must.

"I'd put in a gold faucet as long as there was payback," he said.