

Whitepaper

Why Feeling Safe Is Now A Hotel Brand Essential

www.cristalstandards.com



Contents

Introduction	3
Guests notice more than hotels think	3
The compounding brand impact of safety	4
Staff culture is a safety issue too	4
The guest journey does not stop at the hotel door	4
6 common blind spots GMs underestimate	4
What hoteliers should focus on now	4
A competitive edge many hotels still underestimate	4
How Intertek Cristal supports safer, more trusted hotel environments	5
◦ Operational assessments	
◦ Structured risk and quality frameworks	
◦ Culture and capability building	
◦ Extended oversight beyond the property	
◦ Data-driven performance management	
◦ Independent credibility	
Contact us	6



For a long time, safety in hospitality was treated as a back-of-house issue. It sat with compliance, maintenance and risk management. Important, of course, but rarely discussed as part of the guest experience.

But that has changed...

Today, guests are not only judging the room, the breakfast and the service style. They are judging whether a property feels calm, competently run and well controlled. They notice lighting, access, cleanliness, staff presence, wayfinding, maintenance standards and how teams respond when something goes wrong. They may not call it "safety strategy," but they know when a place feels well run.

And that feeling matters. In a business built on trust, people do not just buy a bed for the night. They buy peace of mind. They want to feel comfortable arriving late, walking the corridors, using public spaces, asking for help and leaving their family or belongings in the property's care. In that sense, safety is no longer just an operational requirement. It has become part of the brand promise.

Guests notice more than hotels think

Most hoteliers understand the importance of security systems, emergency procedures and duty of care. But guests do not experience safety through policy manuals. They experience it through signals.

A well-lit entrance feels different from a poorly lit one. A tidy, well-maintained lobby feels different from a cluttered or chaotic one. Clear signage, attentive staff and confident handling of small issues all send the same message: this hotel knows what it is doing. That matters before a guest even arrives.

When travellers choose where to stay, they are making a judgment with limited information. They look at the website, photos, reviews and location. They want to know whether the hotel feels reliable. In many cases, safety is wrapped into that wider question. Guests may not say, "I chose this property because of its safety positioning." They are more likely to say, "It looked well managed," or "It felt like a place I could trust."

That is why safety has become a commercial issue as much as an operational one. A hotel that feels safe reduces uncertainty. And in hospitality, reducing uncertainty is a powerful part of winning bookings.

The compounding brand impact of safety

Guests may never mention safety directly in a review, but it often sits behind the language they use. Words such as "comfortable," "well managed," "secure," "chaotic," "poorly lit" or "unhelpful staff" all tell a story about whether the property felt dependable.

When a hotel feels unsettled, guests do not fully relax. They spend less, engage less and are less likely to return. However, when a hotel feels calm and dependable, everything else improves. The stay feels easier and trust builds quickly.

This is again why safety should not be treated as separate from the commercial conversation.





Staff culture is a safety issue too

There is another part of the conversation that deserves much more attention: the internal culture of the hotel.

A safe operation depends on staff noticing issues early and acting on them. That only works when employees feel comfortable speaking up.

If a room attendant spots a faulty lock or a receptionist notices a suspicious pattern, or a duty manager sees crowding building in a public space, that information needs to move quickly. When staff hesitate to raise concerns, small issues stay hidden longer than they should.

The strongest operators create an environment where speaking up is normal. Staff are encouraged to ask questions, flag problems and report mistakes early. Managers listen, problems are fixed and lessons are shared. The result is not only a safer operation, but a more resilient one.

This does more than reduce risk. It strengthens service. Teams that communicate openly respond faster, recover better and handle pressure with more confidence.

The guest journey does not stop at the hotel door

One of the biggest blind spots in hospitality is the space beyond the property boundary.

Guests do not separate the hotel from the rest of the trip. For them, the airport transfer, the recommended taxi, the excursion partner matters and the surrounding area contribute to the entire experience.

Ultimately, perception of safety at a destination level is an ecosystem outcome. It depends on collaboration between hotels and resorts, transport providers, destination management companies, local authorities, and security partners. GMs who invest in those relationships help lift the safety reputation of the whole area – and benefit from it when guests choose where to book.

A competitive edge many hotels still underestimate

Hospitality has spent years talking about experience, personalisation and storytelling, but none of it works particularly well if the guest does not feel at ease.

Feeling safe is what allows people to relax, trust the environment and leave with a good impression of the brand. The hotels that understand this will not necessarily be the loudest about safety. They simply create environments that feel well run, well supported and easy to trust.

And in today's market, that may be one of the most valuable brand signals a hotel can send.



Ultimately, perception of safety at a destination level is an ecosystem outcome.

It depends on collaboration between hotels and resorts, transport providers, destination management companies, local authorities, and security partners.



6 common blind spots GMs underestimate

Recognizing that safety is part of the guest experience is one thing; embedding it across every touchpoint is another. These six blind spots highlight the areas that deserve closer attention:

- Overreliance on technology (e.g. CCTV) instead of visible human presence
- No structured approach to staff harassment or guest-on-staff aggression
- A gap between daytime and night-time safety experience
- Contractors and outsourced teams operating outside your safety culture and standards
- Limited oversight of third-party transport and excursion providers
- Inconsistent communication about local risks

Each of these blind spots erodes trust disproportionately to the effort required to fix them.

What hoteliers should focus on now

For operators, the good news is that improving the feeling of safety does not always require major capital spend. Often, it starts with sharper attention and better discipline.

1. Look at the property through the guest's eyes. Walk the arrival route at night. Check public areas during quieter hours. Review signage, lighting and access points. Notice what feels confusing, neglected or unsupported.
2. Measure more than incidents. Guest comments, review patterns and staff feedback often reveal concerns long before they show up in a serious event.
3. Make visible competence part of service training. Guests take confidence from how teams communicate, respond and stay composed. A calm, clear response to a small problem can build trust quickly.
4. Make it easy for staff to speak up. This is one of the simplest and most valuable ways to strengthen operations. When employees raise concerns early, hotels can solve problems before they turn into guest issues.
5. Review the wider journey, not just what happens on property. Audit transport partners, excursion providers and local recommendations with the same seriousness applied to the property itself.



How Intertek Cristal supports safer, more trusted hotel environments

Turning safety into a consistent and visible part of the guest experience requires more than procedures. It requires alignment across operations, people and the wider guest journey.

Intertek Cristal supports hotels in strengthening both safety performance and perception through:



Operational assessments

Evaluating hygiene, maintenance, facilities and front-of-house conditions to ensure the signals guests rely on consistently reflect a well-managed environment.



Extended oversight beyond the property

Assessing suppliers, contractors and third-party partners to strengthen control over the wider guest experience.



Structured risk and quality frameworks

Providing clear standards and independent verification to support consistent execution across all areas of the property.



Data-driven performance management

Using digital platforms to track performance, identify gaps and enable timely corrective action.



Culture and capability building

Training teams to recognise risks early, respond confidently and operate in an environment where speaking up is encouraged.



Independent credibility

Offering certification and verification that reinforce trust with guests, partners and stakeholders.





Intertek Cristal

FOR MORE INFORMATION

✉ cristalenquiries@intertek.com

📄 www.cristalstandards.com

This publication is copyrighted by Intertek and may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form in whole or in part without the prior written permission of Intertek. While due care has been taken during the preparation of this document, Intertek cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the information herein or for any consequence arising from it. Clients are encouraged to seek Intertek's current advice before acting upon any of the content