



## Daily News Feed

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### Better is Better

Where bathrooms are concerned, the basic amenities just won't do.

By Lou Cook

Hotel guests check into a bathroom as well as a bedroom. In fact, a *Travel & Leisure* survey found that 50 percent of hotel guests inspect their bathrooms first. If you compare this figure to the 10 percent who bounce on the bed and the 14 percent who scan the view, you realize that "the necessary" is more than just nice bathroom fixtures—it's a major amenity hub.

#### Toiletries

"With the upper-end segment getting larger, many mid-price properties are looking for ways to improve their share," says Tim Kersley, president of Gilchrist & Soames, a manufacturer of high-end toiletries. "A couple of extra dollars invested in the bathroom usually pays more dividends than a fancy chandelier for the front reception area.

An increasing amount of properties are realizing that quality products will go a long way with their guests, says Kate Greenwood, a principal with Brennan Beer Gorman Monk Interiors, which works with several international luxury properties. There's definitely a trend towards better quality amenities, natural products, and spa labels, she says. And placing the latter brands in guestrooms promotes the product as well as the property's onsite or nearby spa tie-ins.

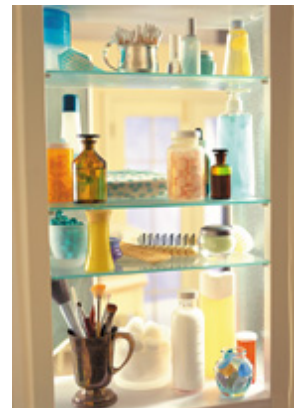
As hotel guests become accustomed to better quality amenities, they expect to find certain basics. Shampoo, for instance, ranked number-one on a "Top 10 Bathroom Necessities" list compiled by *Lodging Hospitality* last year. Eighty-six percent of guests expect a shampoo bottle on the counter, 82 percent want it accompanied by deodorant soap, 71 percent look for face soap, and 62 percent seek conditioner. Hand lotion and mouthwash also made the top 10 list at seven and nine, respectively.

The image at the Monarch Hotel, an aaa Four Star property in Washington, D.C., is enhanced with imported, triple-milled soaps, vitamin-enriched shower and bath gel, Italian mouthwash, and Molton Brown toiletries from London, which retail at stores such as Neiman Marcus.

While most upper-level properties are sticking with high-end name brands, economy and mid-priced properties remain cost-consCIOUS. Michaud, a company that caters to independent and small properties, offers a basic toiletry collection

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that includes soap, a mending kit, shoe polisher, presentation basket, shower cap, shampoo, and lotion. The company produces seven different bottles with a choice of two fragrances (rain or fantasy almond), and two colors (green or pale yellow).

Michaud, among others, also prints property names directly onto amenity packaging—a distinct departure from the name-brand amenity trend at larger chains and luxury hotels. "Dual branding doesn't always lend itself to the product," argues Gilchrist & Soames's Kersley. Francie Schulwolf, Holiday Inn's director of communications for the mid-scale division, agrees and says that Holiday Inn's guests are sensitive to hotel branding.



Instead, the company is aiming for what it thinks is a residential feel by offering its guests the recognizable names of Dial and Jergens. "We wanted something to hold a curved shape—something with a pretty wrap," Schulwolf says.

Marietta Corporation, another bathroom amenity provider, creates custom programs including color schemes and scents branded with the property's name. "If the sky is the limit, we'll make a new bottle shape," says Kim Gage, marketing manager of Marietta. "People are looking for unique amenity packages." Gage sees designs moving towards clear bottles and creamy-colored shampoos and lotions. Minimalism prevails in text and color, she says, and lines are unisex. Aroma therapy and botanical scents

roll naturally into this theme and are becoming increasingly popular, as well.

Marietta's national accounts want recognizable brand names such as Pantene, Vaseline, and Jergens, Gage says. And, in general, properties are looking for exclusivity and a way to differentiate themselves. "It's part of the image," Gage says.

Mid- and economy-level properties have a different challenge and are generally avoiding this toiletry trend. "Many people at this level are traveling with what they need, and the expectation to load it on isn't there," says Greg Miller, coo of pm Hospitality Strategies, which owns three Choice franchises with a fourth pending. "My guests don't find value in it," he says. Miller uses a triple dispenser system for bath gel, shampoo, and conditioner and provides deodorant, facial soap, and hand lotion, but believes that adding more in amenities will not deliver more clients to his doors. Instead, he would rather put money toward breakfast items, makeup mirrors, or bigger towels.



#### A Dry Idea

Hairdryers are a bathroom item Miller considers important, however. "To be competitive, you need a hairdryer in-room," says Marc Tarquinio, Marketing Manager for Sunbeam Hospitality. "It's almost like having soap."

Although the hairdryer trend didn't start in the budget/economy sector, it has taken off there as well, Tarquinio says. Another item that has taken flight is the combination hairdryer/night-light, which helps travelers in dark, unfamiliar rooms and avoid stubbing their toes on the way to the bathroom.

"Many people leave bathroom lights on all night," Tarquinio says, "and it saves \$7 to \$15 per room, per year, in energy costs." Sunbeam produces two models with night-lights, both using 1500 watts.

Mid-range properties tend to choose wall-mounted hairdryer units, while many upscale properties prefer hand-held models, says Michael DeGutis, regional vice president of Courtesy Products. Luxury guests like to wander around a room with

hand-helds, and some decorators think that wall-mounted dryers stick out and don't look as nice.

Gary Stanczyk, vice president of retail sales for Andis Company, produces hardwired units either directly wired to an outlet, or mounted to wall and plugged into regular outlet. He sells hand-held as well but says he gets more inquiries from hotel guests about Andis's hang-up dryer.

#### Mirror Image

Another big amenity for guests are magnified, lighted mirrors. "About 16 companies are making mirrors," says Peter Schor of Dynamic Results. "It's a booming business." Schor, also known as the "Doctor of the Bathroom," has been following industry trends for 36 years and cites Miroir Brot, TomJohn, and Kimball & Young as mirror leaders in the hotel market. In his view, guests prefer models with lights all the way around, and anything less than 3x magnification distorts people's vision.

"For us business is exploding," says Curtis Young of Kimball & Young. Wall-mounted mirrors are the most functional kind you can have in a hotel room, Young says, because they are generally adjustable "and you don't have to worry about guests dropping them."

Decor concerns are solved by having a mirror designed and finished to match the bathroom, Young says. Kimball & Young offer lighted models from 25 to 90 watts as well as unlighted models in finishes such as 18-karat gold, chrome, and brushed nickel. For those who need glasses to see up close, the company offers an 8x optic lens.

Allen Eberts, president of TonJon Company, says he has installed 20,000 mirrors in several Las Vegas properties. His products are fairly expensive, ranging from \$350 to \$700, but TonJon uses uniform and relatively soft light for a fairly true indication of appearance and supplies both vanity and wall-mounted styles.



Clearing up distortion and hazy vision is the goal for NewHome Bath & Mirror, makers of ClearMirror, a thin, silicon/rubber layer that adheres to the back of a mirror and is wired into a junction box behind, using the same power supply as a bath fan or overhead light. The product heats up the mirror back and prevents condensation from forming on the front. The company installs these bathroom defoggers primarily in new and remodeled properties but can produce any size or shape, including a round, seven-inch heater for wall-mounted mirrors, says Vice President Reid Sellgren. At the moment, he's working on a Mickey Mouse head shape, hoping to land a Disney contract. "Our industry is really new," Sellgren says. "Mirror defoggers are an esthetic feature, a wow feature."

toto Frontier u.s.a. also produces a defogger of a different sort. Bill Ludwico, director of sales and marketing for the company, has a film in two sizes (6x8 inches and 9x13 inches), that is applied to the mirror surface and gives a fog-free view for months. toto's product is inexpensive, easily removed, and easily replaced, he says.

Steve Burroughs, general manager of the Holiday Inn Select near Hartsfield Airport in Atlanta, has dealt with defogging yet another way. Sixty percent of his rooms have stall showers with no curtain or door. "The wall angles and deflects water," he says. "We've never had a complaint, and defogging is not an issue."

Further south in Sebastian, Florida, the Key West Inn features NewHome defoggers in its bathrooms. "We put the mirrors in five suites and the Jacuzzi room," says Kirby Payne, president of American Hospitality Management. "Guests measure the quality of amenities in a bathroom by how many things you put out, and how they are displayed. They remember that our hotel is a little nicer and a

little better."

*Lou Cook is a contributing editor of Lodging.*

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