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More hotels in Singapore sprucing up for Instagram



Financial products trader Albino Chua, 33, known on Instagram as "Bino Chua", in a hotel room at The St Regis Singapore in August 2015. He does not specifically look for an "Instagrammable" hotel, but places great emphasis on aesthetics. PHOTO: BINO CHUA

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Hotels, especially smaller players, are tapping new marketing tool - guests' social media photos



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Instagram is on the rise, and the visually focused social media platform with more than 800 million users worldwide is starting to affect the way hotels here are designed.

Boutique hotels are leading the way, and have arranged their furniture, painted their walls and even kitted out their facilities so that they look good on a phone screen.

Villa Samadhi, which opened in January last year in Labrador Villa Road, is a black and white colonial building surrounded by greenery. A spokesman said the building was kept in its original colours in view of how images of the hotel would appear on Instagram. "This juxtaposition of nature with the black and white structure plays out well in images... because a square image on a phone can only capture so much information," she said.

A spokesman for Hotel G, which officially opened in February last year in Middle Road, said it took care to design "Instagrammable spaces", such as a dreamcatcher chandelier in each room, and a boxing gym with a vintage sandbag and speedball. She said: "Traditionally, hotels have relied on neutral palettes that are calming and comforting. With Instagram, the images that 'pop' usually require colour and a strong focal point."

But Hotel Mono in Mosque Street has gone in the other direction, opting for a black and white facade and interiors, as well as long, clean lines. They were created for social media platforms such as Instagram, said general manager Glenn Quah.

And it is not just design features - the food served at hotels is also being influenced by Instagram.

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A spokesman for Courtyard by Marriott Singapore Novena said: "I have been advising our executive chef to try to add more colours to our dishes, or make it interesting, so guests are more inclined to snap a photo and post it on Instagram."

The large international luxury chains approached by The Straits Times said they did not specifically design their properties with Instagram in mind, but that aesthetics has always been important.

Said the cluster digital marketing team of the JW Marriott Singapore South Beach, The St Regis Singapore and W Singapore - Sentosa Cove: "While we did not specifically design our hotels to feature Instagrammable elements, a lot of thought has definitely been put into the design."

Still, all hotels told ST that Instagram has become an important part of their marketing, with many posting pictures on official accounts and creating their own hashtags.

Said Villa Samadhi's spokesman: "We have realised from perusing our guest images that many are here for a romantic getaway. To cater to that demographic, we are in the midst of developing a couple-room package."



FEAST FOR THE EYES

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Ngee Ann Polytechnic's senior tourism lecturer, Dr Michael Chiam, said boutique hotels are focusing on Instagram as they tend to offer a more unique experience that could be captured in guests' pictures.

People who stayed in larger luxury hotels, like businessmen, do not have time for Instagram, he said.

However, travel bloggers and social media influencers said what matters ultimately is how beautiful a hotel is in the first place.

Mr Albino Chua, 33, a trader of financial products who is known on Instagram as "Bino Chua", said: "I place great value on aesthetic quality, and if a hotel is well designed, by extension, it usually ends up being highly Instagrammable."

He knows of hotels where guests pay for staff to show them the most Instagram-worthy locations and take pictures for them.

But there are downsides to a place becoming too popular, he said. "Certain guests expect the hotel to be a private sanctuary... But because of how Instagrammable certain hotels have become, they are crowded."

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