

# 6 ways hotels can show customers love

By  Eugene Yiga

1 Sep 2020

The English word 'love' means different things to different people. For Rob Collins, chief operating officer of Sun International, hotels need to embrace six types of love, inspired by the Ancient Greeks.



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## 1. Eros ("getting love")

Named after the Greek god of fertility, this love relates to intimacy and desire. But for Collins, it's about building a reputation and brand.

"Never before have we been in a position where we have to be guarded against this more than we are now," he says. "Small wonder that the biggest companies in the world today – Apple, Google, etc. – are brand companies. And our industry is dependent on that. We don't own the brand; we may try and formulate it, but the customer owns it."

Indeed, with the likes of online review sites and social media, it can feel as though your brand is out of your control. This is a problem given that first-time hotel guests are more likely to choose a property based on its reputation than on its price.

So, how can hotels build stronger brands? Collins believes the answer is food. "A lot of these development issues with brick-and-mortar have become commodities," he says. "The things that make a place great, and make an industry great, are going to be the things that are 'de-commoditisers', and food is right up in that neck of the woods. Nothing ever can be more compelling than when you celebrate around food."

## 2. Storge ("caring love")

This love is often used to describe the love parents feel for their children. When it comes to hotels, your family is your staff.

"You'll never find a great hospitality institution if there isn't a great element of teamwork; a wonderful culture that exists,"

Collins says. "The vision, the mission, the values, the culture, and the way you do things – that's going to be important."

### **3. Philia ("sharing love")**

Philia is considered a love between equals, like friends who become comrades on the battlefield. For Collins, this kind of loyalty is something hotels can embrace too. Again, it comes down to food.

"Maya Angelou said eating is so intimate that when you invite someone to sit at your table and you want to cook for them, you're inviting a person into your life," he says. "There's nothing more sincere than the love of food. The hospitality industry is going to have to embrace food in a big way; I believe it's the most important driver of change."

### **4. Ludus ("playful love")**

For the Greeks, this love referred to the affection between children or young lovers. For Collins, the playful and flirtatious love is about creating an experience guests enjoy.

"There's a lot of competition coming from all different sectors but the differentiator is going to be in food and beverage," he says. "It's all centred on the experience. We need to love the industry we're in and love what we do. If you're going to love this industry, it's all about mind and mood."

### **5. Pragma ("lasting love")**

While ludus might be valuable in the early stages of a relationship, pragma is what gives it power in the long term. It's about staying in love once you've fallen in love. And for Collins, longstanding love comes from a deep understanding of guests.

"I think loyalty programmes are going to become the order of the day," he says. "There are massive databases, especially with social media, and we're going to have to work in conjunction with a whole lot of other people. That's going to be a critical element going forward."

### **6. Agape ("giving love")**

Winston Churchill said that we make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give. The final love is about selflessly giving to others, whether or not they respond and without expecting anything in return. Indeed, with guests now expecting hotels to have strong sustainability and environmental practices, this love will be even more important.

"For the industry to flourish, you need to have all six loves present," Collins says. "But agape is the glue that pulls it all together. It's the one that will prevent the others from self-destructing, which they can. If you can inform and enrich the agape love, I believe we'll have the most wonderful industry going forward."

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## ABOUT EUGENE YIGA

Eugene graduated from the University of Cape Town with distinctions in financial accounting and classical piano. He then spent over two-and-a-half years working in branding and communications at two of South Africa's top market research companies. Eugene also spent over three-and-a-half years at an eLearning start-up, all while building his business as an award-winning writer. Visit [www.eugeneyiga.com](http://www.eugeneyiga.com), follow @eugeneyiga on Twitter, or email [hello@eugeneyiga.com](mailto:hello@eugeneyiga.com) to say, um, hello.

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