



GHA DISCOVERY

GLOBAL HOTEL ALLIANCE RESEARCH REVEALS INDEPENDENT LOYALTY PROGRAMMES ARE GAINING GROUND AS TRAVELLERS FAVOUR TANGIBLE TRANSPARENT REWARDS OVER COMPLEX POINTS SYSTEMS

Independent hotel loyalty programmes are outpacing larger chains as travellers prioritise simplicity, hotel quality, and meaningful benefits over complex points accumulation systems

Dubai, UAE, 28th April 2025: New research from [Global Hotel Alliance \(GHA\)](#) has unveiled three defining trends shaping the future of hotel loyalty – simplicity, personalisation, and experiences over discounts.

Independent hotel loyalty programmes that deliver on these fronts are gaining ground on their larger counterparts, preferred for their clarity, flexibility, and meaningful travel experiences over traditional models built around rigid points systems.

GHA's newly released report, ***What Travellers Want Most From Loyalty Programmes*** – based on recent research with members of its global [GHA DISCOVERY](#) loyalty programme – highlights a clear shift in traveller expectations and rising demand for loyalty schemes that are intuitive, deliver genuine value, are easy to use, and elevate the overall stay experience.

With hotel guests overwhelmed by a proliferation of loyalty options – many of which are laden with constantly shifting rules, point valuations, and redemption restrictions – simplicity is emerging as a key differentiator. Programmes that are easy to understand and engage with are winning favour.

GHA DISCOVERY, operated by GHA – the world's largest alliance of independent hotel brands – is at the forefront of this trend, delivering personalised, high-value experiences at more than 850 hotels, across 45 brands in 100 countries.

Kristi Gole, Executive Vice President of Strategy at Global Hotel Alliance, commented: "Travellers are telling us loud and clear – they want loyalty programmes that are simple, transparent, and actually make their stays better. They're looking for benefits that feel personal, immediate, and valuable. GHA DISCOVERY is responding to that call."

The top three trends redefining hotel loyalty

1. Simple and seamless

Loyalty is no longer about accumulating points over time – it's about ease and immediacy. GHA DISCOVERY continues to outperform legacy schemes with its flexible, transparent rewards currency: **DISCOVERY Dollars (D\$)**. With D\$1 equal to US\$1, members enjoy clarity and control over their rewards, which can be earned and spent globally like cash.

Ease of **earning and redeeming D\$** – including online redemptions, bonus promotions, D\$ bids for prizes, and the option to transfer or donate D\$ – was identified as a **top programme feature by members** surveyed, in line with growing traveller demand for flexibility and choice.

Crucially, the **D\$ rewards currency is valued three times more than the traditional points** systems of competing hotel loyalty programmes, the research revealed.

“Transparent and simple reward redemption is essential in today’s loyalty environment,” said Gole. “Travellers want to enjoy their rewards without unnecessary rules or restrictions – and we make that increasingly possible.”

2. Make it personal, please

Travellers today expect loyalty to go beyond transactional benefits. They are seeking programmes that recognise them as individuals – offering relevant perks, curated experiences, and tailored communications that reflect their preferences and travel patterns.

This desire for personalisation spans the entire journey – from pre-stay recommendations to in-stay recognition and post-stay engagement. It’s about adapting to their lifestyle and delivering experiences that feel designed just for them.

“Loyalty should feel like a relationship – not a one-size-fits-all solution,” said Gole. “When travellers feel seen and understood, they are more likely to stay loyal and engage meaningfully with the brand.”

3. It’s all about experiences

Experience-enhancing perks are driving stronger engagement than traditional discounts. **73% of travellers** surveyed by GHA value tangible benefits like room upgrades, complimentary breakfast, and late check-out over monetary savings.

Diving deeper into the research, a more nuanced picture of what drives satisfaction and loyalty emerges:

- **41%** value on-property perks the most – such as upgrades, breakfast, late checkout, and member rates.
- **25%** prioritise earning and spending D\$, appreciating the ability to use them globally, access exclusive promotions, and even buy or bid on rewards.
- **19%** highlight member privileges – including Member Rates, status sharing, concierge access, and benefits with partners.
- **15%** appreciate *Live Local* benefits – dining and spa discounts, no-stay-required access to hotel amenities, curated local experiences, community events, and more.

A strong desire for an enhanced experience is influencing behaviour, with **more than 80%** of respondents saying they would join a loyalty programme if it guaranteed a room upgrade and included breakfast.

“Our members want to feel the value of loyalty from the moment they arrive,” Gole added. “Upgrades, breakfast, and other meaningful benefits go a long way in making guests feel appreciated and more likely to return.”

The rise of independent loyalty programmes

The broader message of the *What Travellers Want Most From Loyalty Programmes* report is clear: independent hotel loyalty programmes are gaining momentum, outpacing the growth of larger chain-based schemes by responding faster and more intuitively to traveller needs, with GHA DISCOVERY leading the way.

Its approach to loyalty resonates with travellers, with **53% of those surveyed preferring GHA DISCOVERY over other loyalty schemes** – up 15% on last year. Engagement levels are rising too, reflected in an improved Net Promoter Score, up 29% year on year, as well as increased usage of DISCOVERY Dollars (+7%).

GHA DISCOVERY is increasingly perceived as a **luxury loyalty programme** too, valued for its broad choice of upscale and luxury brands. This aligns with report findings showing that quality hotels are the top priority for members (47%), surpassing both the number of hotels (43%) and the ease of earning and redeeming rewards (43%).

“Today’s loyalty customer is more often than not a leisure traveller and they are looking for upscale and luxury hotels. GHA DISCOVERY is leading the shift with its huge choice of brands, offering a simple rewards currency and the type of tangible benefits and tailored experiences that align with how today’s travellers want to explore the world,” said Gole.

Please find the direct link to the full report [here](#)

For more information visit [Global Hotel Alliance](#) and [GHA DISCOVERY](#)

GHA DISCOVERY is complimentary to join, and travellers can [sign up online](#) or download the GHA DISCOVERY app and register on their mobile phones. Travellers can also connect with GHA DISCOVERY on Instagram and Facebook.

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About GHA and GHA DISCOVERY:

Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) is the world’s largest alliance of independent hotel brands with 45 brands and 850 properties in 100 countries. Its award-winning loyalty programme—GHA DISCOVERY—provides 30 million members with recognition, D\$ rewards and exclusive experiences across its hotels and partners, both with and without a stay. GHA DISCOVERY generated US\$2.7 billion in revenue and 11 million room nights in 2024. Through GHA membership, brands significantly expand their global reach, generating incremental revenue and reducing dependence on third-party channels, all while maintaining management independence and individual positioning. For more information, visit globalhotelalliance.com or ghadiscovery.com.