



**Combining Brand Auditing And Mystery Shopping Provides A More Complete Service Delivery Picture**

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**F&B and Lodging Franchisors find that profit goals are consistently met when franchisees follow branding rules.**

Newly appointed franchisees usually have little difficulty meeting the franchisors' quality assurance and brand compliance requirements. However, as time passes, some franchise operators grow lax and their standards begin to drop. This frequently leads to customer dissatisfaction as well as an erosion of the company's brand.

According to Paul Bol Raap, Managing Director of Dubai-based International Hospitality Check (IHC), "Franchisors invest a great deal of money developing and maintaining their brand and the required systems to support it. This investment is intended to pay off by attracting customers who seek the quality and value that the brand promises to deliver. When franchisees fail to follow branding support systems, the franchisor's investment is at risk."

Former Chairman and CEO of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. Barry S. Sternlicht says, "brand is nothing if it is not consistent in its product and service."

Only by enforcing system standards can a franchisor maintain product and service consistency and ensure the continued ROI on the company's branding investment. But how can franchisors consistently enforce those standards while also measuring each franchised unit's service quality delivery? "The best way to do this is to combine an in-depth undercover mystery shop with a follow-up brand compliance audit," according to Mr. Bol Raap.

For example, unknown to the franchisee's management team, a mystery shopper might spend one or two nights at a property measuring service delivery from a customer's viewpoint. Then, after those measurements have been completed, the mystery shopper identifies themselves to management and commences the brand compliance and audit portion of the assignment.

Typical audits measure compliance with corporate standards, procedures, rules and policies including the enforcement of brand identity through the use of approved graphics, signage, employee dress codes, etc.

When this type of audit is combined with the customer service measurements gathered during the mystery shopping phase of the assignment, the franchisor gains a complete understanding of how their franchisees are meeting corporate branding expectations. And that can mean the difference between profit and loss.

Paul Bol Raap invites anyone who is interested in conducting brand audits to visit <http://www.internationalhospitalitycheck.com> or contact him directly.

#### About International Hospitality Check

With offices located in Brussels, Buenos Aires, Dubai and Shanghai, International Hospitality Check is dedicated to setting new standards of service for Mystery Customer Research and Auditing in the Hospitality and Leisure industries.