GHA DISCOVERY

What Travellers Want Most From Loyalty Programmes

The perceptions, preferences and priorities of today's travellers and how the GHA DISCOVERY loyalty programme stacks up

November 2023

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The hotel loyalty landscape in 2023

Introduction

The hotel loyalty landscape continues to evolve, driven by changing traveller preferences and emerging trends. Today's travellers have new priorities; they want to make the most of each trip and seek more personalised and distinct experiences, high-quality accommodation, and sustainable options.

However, with economic factors impacting prices and spending power, travellers are demanding more in return for their spend and look to loyalty programmes for added value. They seek simplicity, transparency, and flexibility in the way they earn and spend their rewards, and favour programmes and hotel choices aligned with their values.

GHA DISCOVERY is the loyalty programme shared by the 40-plus independent hotel brands of Global Hotel Alliance (GHA), offering more than 800 hotels in 100 countries to 25 million members. Earlier this year, we conducted in-depth research to take the pulse on what travellers expect from hotel loyalty programmes and to ascertain how well GHA DISCOVERY is meeting their needs and expectations versus the competition.

A barometer of consumer sentiment, the research spanned 94 markets and was conducted in four languages, not only surveying GHA DISCOVERY members but also including in-depth interviews with members of competing hotel loyalty programmes, as well as best-in-class loyalty schemes outside of the hospitality sector. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative research, we considered competitive reviews and travel trends analysis to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current landscape.

Crucially, we drilled down to give GHA DISCOVERY a health check, gauging consumer perception of the programme versus its competitors and their response to new features introduced, primarily its three core concepts: 1) the innovative rewards currency, DISCOVERY Dollars (D$); 2) recognition, with more way to progress to elite tiers and enhanced hotel benefits; and 3) Live Local, inviting members into our hotels even without a stay through dining, spa and golf offers, as well as complimentary access to the pool or gym.

With the research giving the steer on what customers value most from GHA DISCOVERY and other loyalty schemes, it also provides a roadmap for future enhancements to the value proposition.

In this report — What Travellers Want Most From Loyalty Programmes — we round-up the key research findings, revealing what customers value most from hotel loyalty programmes. We identify the perceptions, preferences and priorities of today's travellers and how GHA DISCOVERY and competing loyalty programmes stack up.

Kristi Gole
Executive Vice President Strategy
Global Hotel Alliance

Executive Summary

Upgrades prioritised

Almost three-quarters (70%) of elite GHA DISCOVERY members say room upgrades are the programme benefit most important to them. Looking forward, members want more consistency and access to this benefit, moving away from room upgrades being availability based at time of check-in to being confirmed

Simplicity rules

With travellers identifying a preference for programmes that are simple to understand, there is a strong awareness of DISCOVERY DOLLARS (D$), with the rewards currency deemed more intuitive, transparent and generous than traditional points systems.

Quality is king

GHA DISCOVERY hotels are deemed high quality, with the programme owning a perception of luxury in the hospitality loyalty space, identified by 46% of respondents as best in this category, with the nearest competitor selected by only 29% of respondents.

Keen for green

Green Collection is the most favoured new addition to GHA DISCOVERY, appreciated most by new joiners (Silver) members and tapping into global demand for responsible travel solutions. GHA DISCOVERY is also perceived as the leading programme for matching the values and ethos of members, which encompasses making conscious accommodation choices.

Trust is a must

When it comes to delivering on its promise, GHA DISCOVERY is perceived as the leader in its field. It also owns the perception of making members feel special and part of a club.

What loyalty members want

A balance of functional and emotional

Members seek a programme that meets their functional travel needs, with access to perks and benefits identified as the most important hotel loyalty requirements (55% of respondents) and relevant discounts considered the second most important (45%). However, this must be balanced with their emotional needs, with feeling like a valued customer deemed the third most important need (44%).
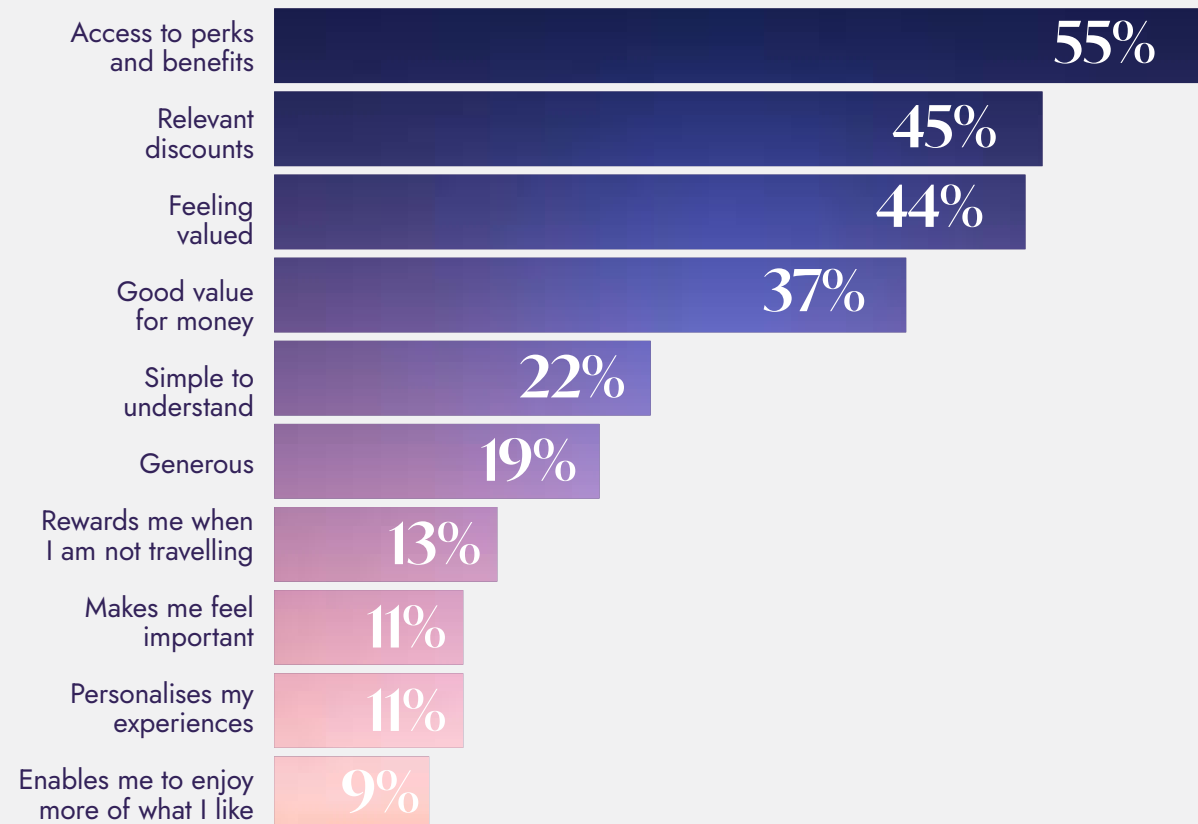
Trends by market

Members in the **UK and US** are looking for a programme that is simple to understand and generous, while **Australia and China** are the markets most interested in benefits when they are not travelling, reflecting the size of their respective domestic travel markets.

In Singapore, discounts are not considered important, but perks and benefits are, indicating a preference for value-oriented over a discount-oriented offering.

Thailand and the UAE are the markets most interested in discounts, as well as good value for money, and consumers in **Germany and China** most appreciate feeling like a valued customer.

The global top 10

Access to perks and benefits	**55%**
Relevant discounts	**45%**
Feeling valued	**44%**
Good value for money	**37%**
Simple to understand	**22%**
Generous	**19%**
Rewards me when I am not travelling	**13%**
Makes me feel important	**11%**
Personalises my experiences	**11%**
Enables me to enjoy more of what I like	**9%**

Market performance *key findings*

Members are loyal to several programmes

GHA DISCOVERY members are loyal to several programmes and surprisingly, the higher their tier, the more programmes they are likely to be active in, with 33% of Titanium members loyal to four-plus programmes versus 26% of Platinum members, 19% of Gold members and 16% of Silver members. Around half of all GHA DISCOVERY members are active in two to three programmes and those in the UAE, China and Germany are most likely to be active members of more than four.

But they prefer GHA DISCOVERY

Members of every tier prefer GHA DISCOVERY to the other programmes they are active in ranging from 58% of Silver members preferring the programme to 89% of Titanium members. The more frequently members travel, the more GHA DISCOVERY becomes their preferred loyalty programme due to its benefits, rewards and the quality of hotels in the collection. By market, GHA DISCOVERY awareness and participation is the highest in Germany (89%) and Singapore (80%).

And it owns perceptions of luxury

GHA DISCOVERY owns perceptions of luxury in the hotel loyalty space, with 46% of respondents selecting it as a luxury programme. With the nearest competitor considered luxury by just 29% of respondents, followed by 17% for another well-known programme, GHA DISCOVERY has a significant margin.

Best in class across eight more touchpoints

In addition to being considered a luxury hotel loyalty programme, above all others, GHA DISCOVERY also owns positive perceptions across eight more criteria. Survey respondents selected GHA DISCOVERY as being the 'best at' the following, scoring higher than all other competitors:

Delivering on its promise	Being simple to understand	Matching the values & ethos of members
37%	36%	36%
Helping members discover unique parts of a destination	Making members feel special	Personalising their experiences
34%	34%	34%
Making them feel part of a club	Being a generous programme	
32%	26%	

The quality of hotels matters

Members are most motivated to stay and earn due to the customer experience

GHA DISCOVERY hotels are deemed high quality in terms of product and service, which contributes strongly to the programme owning a perception of luxury in the hospitality loyalty space.

When members were asked what motivated them to stay at a GHA DISCOVERY hotel, the highest ranking reason was reassurance the hotel will be of good quality (37% of respondents) followed by the guarantee of the good service they will receive (33%) and getting the best value for money (31%). There is no differentiation by tier, with Platinum and Titanium members motivated by the same drivers as Silver and Gold members.

By Market

Reassurance of good quality hotels is particularly important in India, the UK and Germany, but less so in Asian markets Singapore, China and Thailand where redeeming perks/benefits is a more dominant motivator. Good service is particularly valued in India, Thailand and Germany and value for money is also important in India and Thailand, but less so in the US.

WHAT MOTIVATED MEMBERS TO STAY AT A GHA DISCOVERY HOTEL?	37% Reassurance of good quality	33% Guarantee of a good service	31% To get the best value for money

Members prefer D$ to points

Strong awareness

There is strong awareness of DISCOVERY DOLLARS (D$) among GHA DISCOVERY members, with the rewards currency deemed more intuitive, transparent and generous than traditional loyalty points systems, particularly given that D$1 is equal to USD 1. Awareness is highest in China and among Titanium members, who are also more likely to have spent D$ than members of other tiers. By market, members in Thailand are more likely to have already spent D$, while those in China, Germany and Singapore are more likely to be aware of the rewards currency, but haven't spent any D$ yet.

Simple to understand

Respondents said D$ are more straightforward compared to competitor points systems where the value is not obvious. Higher tier members and respondents in Thailand, China and India best understand the currency's simplicity.

D$ are also perceived as:

Unique and **different**	**More generous** than points in other programmes	**Easier to spend** than points in other programmes

The higher their tier, the more strongly members agree that D$ is a superior system to points, reflecting how more frequent travellers and higher spenders have familiarised themselves with all the benefits of D$ and are reaping the rewards.

How D$ are being spent

What's the occasion?

D$ are a form of payment that members use towards their bill at check-out. The most common occasion for using D$ is being on holiday/vacation, with 73% of members spending their rewards this way. Although emotional factors are less common, "treating myself" and "wanting to splurge/indulge" are the second and third most common occasions when D$ are spent. However, it does vary by market, with "treating myself" a more important occasion in Singapore and China. Interestingly, to "splurge/indulge" is especially strong in the US and Singapore, but less important in China, where enjoying a close moment with loved ones is more important, as it is in India.

By tier

All tiers value D$ being put toward the room cost, with Titanium most appreciating D$ redemption toward hotel restaurant or hotel bar purchases.

Money talks

The top three drivers to redeem D$ are financial, including to get money off the room cost. In Singapore, although members are most interested in GHA DISCOVERY's perks/hotel benefits, when it comes to using their D$ rewards, it is the market most driven by money saving. Spending D$ before they expire is the motivator in Germany, Singapore and Thailand, while India and China are those most likely to redeem D$ on treating friends and family.

Big spenders

Redemption rankings

When asked what D$ redemption options they value most, more than two-thirds of members (76%) said the ability to use it to pay for their hotel stay. They also appreciated being able to use D$ toward purchases at hotel restaurants (42%), hotel bars (29%), in-room dining (25%) and spa facilities (25%).

By market

- The US and UK most value the option to use D$ toward the room cost on the bill

- Singapore, Thailand and China most value the option to use D$ toward restaurant purchases

- The US and Germany most value the option to use D$ toward bar purchases

- India most values the option to use D$ toward spa treatments and in-room dining, and also has the strongest interest in the broader range of D$ redemption options

- Thailand and Singapore have the most interest in using D$ toward GHA DISCOVERY's Local Offers
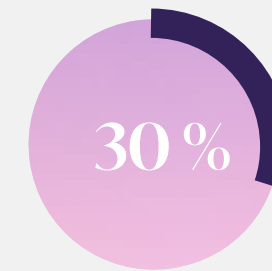
The benefit rankings

Almost three-quarters (70%) of all GHA DISCOVERY members say room upgrades are the programme benefit most important to them. Member Rates with a 10%+ discount ranks second (47%) and the ability to earn D$ at facilities across the hotel is the third most important benefit (22%). However, in reality, how members use their benefits differs from how much they value them, as the figures below reveal.
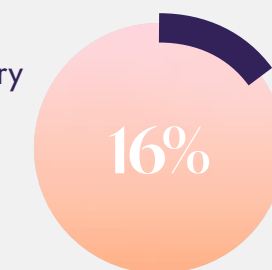
All members are most likely to use:

Member Rates with 10%+ discount — **48 %**
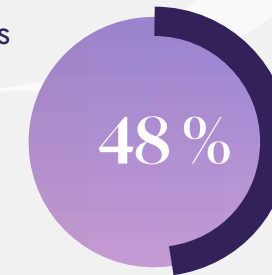
Earn D$ across the hotel — **30 %**

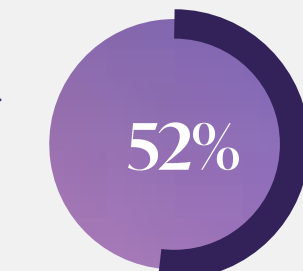Local Offers (complimentary access to facilities) — **16%**

Platinum and Titanium members are most likely to use:

Room upgrades — **58 %**
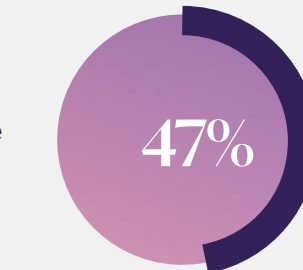
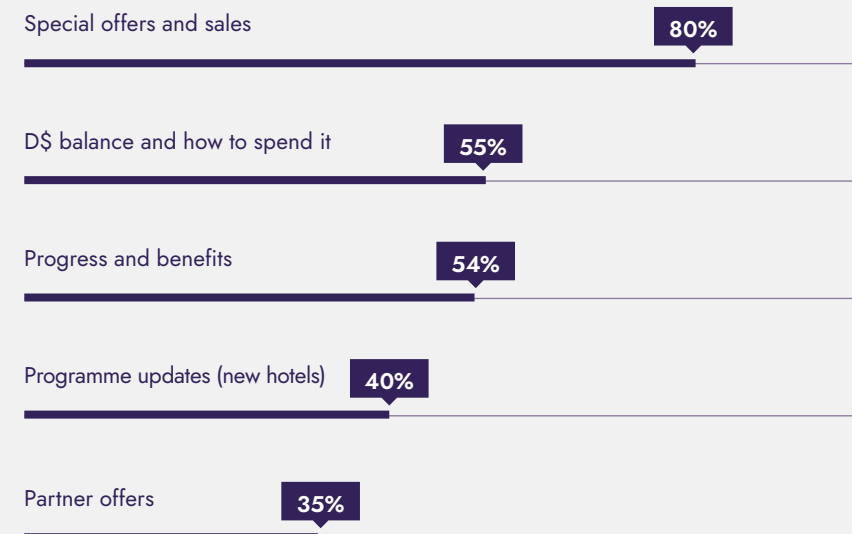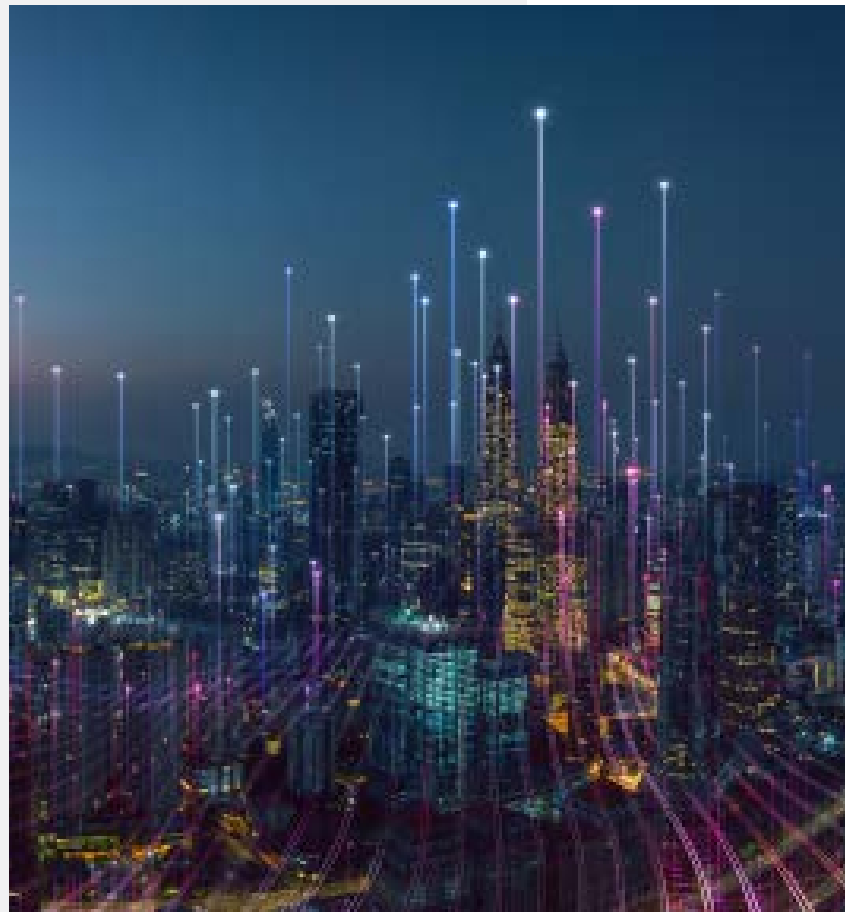Late check-out — **52%**

Welcome amenity — **47%**

70% of all GHA DISCOVERY members say room upgrades are the programme benefit most important to them.

Communication is key

GHA DISCOVERY is getting engagement right, with 9 in 10 members satisfied or neutral with communications and email serving as their preferred channel (83%). They prefer to hear from GHA DISCOVERY directly (70% of members), rather than individual hotels, and appreciate updates on their membership, as well as rewards and deals.

Special offers and sales are the primary messaging that members want to see, with 80% saying this was their preferred content. Updates on their D$ balance and how to spend it came in second (55%) and in close third, information on their progress and programme benefits (54%). Qualitative research found communications inspired future travel plans and that members appreciate global offers and hearing about new brands and destinations to try.

Special offers and sales	**80%**
D$ balance and how to spend it	**55%**
Progress and benefits	**54%**
Programme updates (new hotels)	**40%**
Partner offers	**35%**

Members are less interested in local events (14%) and meeting up with other members (10%), though this has appeal in certain markets like UAE, India and Thailand.
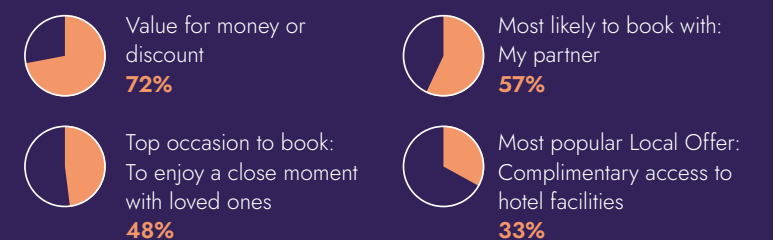
Live Local
The Opportunity

Live Local is one of the pillars of the reimagined GHA DISCOVERY loyalty programme. Designed to meet the everyday lifestyle needs of members, Live Local covers three key components: Stay Offers for short and weekend breaks; exclusive Local Offers on hotel offerings such as complimentary access to the pool or beach club without a stay required, or spa and dining discounts and value-adds; and member-only curated and tailored Experiences in the hotel or destination. The research found members valued the Live Local concept, but many were yet to use Local Offers and Experiences, highlighting an opportunity for GHA DISCOVERY to promote and enhance this aspect of the programme.

One in five have used a Local Offer

The research found that one in five members (20%) have used a Local Offer, primarily when travelling and staying in a GHA hotel (76%), and higher-tier members are more likely to have used one — 35% of Titanium members versus 17% of Silver members.

Most common driver to book a Local Offer

Value for money or discount
72%

Most likely to book with:
My partner
57%

Top occasion to book:
To enjoy a close moment with loved ones
48%

Most popular Local Offer:
Complimentary access to hotel facilities
33%

Strong appetite for foodie experiences

Experiences are gaining traction, particularly in Thailand and China, and among members of the higher tiers (Platinum and Titanium). Local food tours are the most used Experience, led by Singapore, followed by local culture and history tours. The third most used Experience is nature tours, which have the greatest appeal in India and the UAE.

Drivers to book

Value for money
62%

Once-in-a-lifetime experience
51%

I can bring family and friends
46%

Where to next?

GHA DISCOVERY asked members for their views on recent and upcoming enhancements to the programme, and to indicate what they would like added. The research found they are excited about the expansion of the programme through earning D$ without a stay, as well as benefits through new collaborations (such as access to restaurants or clubs) and partnerships (with companies such as airlines), but the game changer is improved access to room upgrades.

#1

Room upgrades
members want more consistency and access to this benefit, moving away from room upgrades being availability based at time of check-in to being confirmed in advance.

What members now desire

#2

More D$ flexibility
members would like to spend their D$ at hotel outlets with or without an overnight stay.

#3

More opportunities to earn with partners
members would like to earn more D$ with GHA partners and collaborations.

One to watch — Green Collection

Green Collection's ranking as the fifth most valued GHA DISCOVERY opportunity is noteworthy given the initiative was launched during the research period and was new to members. Green Collection brings together more than 200 hotels, resorts and palaces that are demonstrating their commitment to protecting people and the planet, as confirmed by globally recognised certifications. Its instant popularity reflects members' desire to make more informed travel decisions based on their values and priorities, including hotel sustainability credentials and treading as lightly as possible in the destinations they visit. In 2022, 49% of GHA DISCOVERY revenue was generated from hotels that today are part of the Green Collection. These hotels contributed to 32% in stays and 39% in nights. Green Collection accounts for almost one-quarter (24%) of the GHA DISCOVERY hotel portfolio and represents half of its brands, from mid-scale to high-end.

Green Collection in numbers

The lower the tier, the more members value this proposition, with 62% of Silver members saying it was a GHA DISCOVERY feature that appealed to them, followed by 57% of Gold members, 53% of Platinum members and 46% of Titanium members. Sustainability is thought of and appreciated most by members when taking a vacation (72% of members) and when travelling with a partner (59%) or family (53%).

Top 5 programme opportunities valued:

Room upgrades confirmed in advance	GHA collaborations	No stay required to earn	D$ earned with partners	Green Collection
95%	78%	73%	69%	56%

Market analysis

1. Thailand
#1 hotel brand recall: PARKROYAL
What loyalty members want most: access to perks and benefits

Top trends:
- Quality hotel service highly valued
- Most likely to have spent their D$
- Values using D$ against restaurant bill
- High usage of Local Offers

2. Singapore
#1 hotel brand recall: PARKROYAL
What loyalty members want most: access to perks and benefits

Top trends:
- Second-highest GHA DISCOVERY awareness and participation
- Values using D$ against restaurant bill
- The market most driven to redeem D$

3. India
#1 hotel brand recall: The Leela
What loyalty members want most: access to perks and benefits

Top trends:
- Good quality hotels and service highly valued
- Values using D$ against the spa and in-room dining bill
- Most likely to redeem D$ to treat family

4. UAE
#1 hotel brand recall: Anantara
What loyalty members want most: discounts, value for money

Top trends:
- Likely to be active members of more than four hotel loyalty programmes
- Most likely to visit Green Collection hotels with their family

5. UK
#1 hotel brand recall: Anantara
What loyalty members want most: simple to understand and generous

Top trends:
- Good quality hotels highly valued
- Values using D$ against room bill
- High usage of programme's Member Rates benefit

6. US
#1 hotel brand recall: Outrigger
What loyalty members want most: simple to understand and generous

Top trends:
- Values using D$ against the hotel room bill or bar bill
- Values the opportunity to earn and burn D$ without a stay — as a chance to 'splash out'

7. Australia
#1 hotel brand recall: PARKROYAL
What loyalty members want most: rewards when they are not travelling

Top trends:
- One-quarter (25%) of respondents said GHA DISCOVERY was their favourite hotel loyalty programme
- The highest satisfaction rate (by country) with GHA DISCOVERY

8. China
#1 hotel brand recall: Kempinski
What loyalty members want most: rewards when they are not travelling and to feel like a valued customer

Top trends:
- Likely to be active members of more than four hotel loyalty programmes
- Values using D$ against restaurant bill

9. Germany
#1 hotel brand recall: PARKROYAL
What loyalty members want most: rewards when they are not travelling

Top trends:
- One-quarter (25%) of respondents said GHA DISCOVERY was their favourite hotel loyalty programme
- The highest satisfaction rate (by country) with GHA DISCOVERY

Methodology

The Trends Shaping the Hotel Loyalty Landscape report is based on GHA DISCOVERY's Health Check & Future Development survey conducted in partnership with global research firm, C Space, in H1 2023. The research assessed how the new version of the programme is perceived and what hotel loyalty customers value most. It also considered the trends shaping travel needs and how well GHA DISCOVERY is catering to these and serving its members. Research included:

Trends analysis: assessing the latest trends through leveraging Q™ Cultural Intelligence and Stylus Trends Forecasting as well as desk research.

Competitor reviews: investigating competing hotel loyalty programmes and best-in-class loyalty outside of the hotel industry to ascertain what consumers seek from programmes.

Qualitative research: in-depth interviews with GHA DISCOVERY members ranging from new joiners to Titanium tier, and traveller triad interviews with elite members of competing programmes, including those operated by the world's largest hotel groups and Online Travel Agencies (OTAs). Triad interview samples focused on members of at least two hotel loyalty programmes, including elite status in one, plus a member of another high-profile loyalty scheme. All had frequently travelled to luxury hotels in the last 12 months, with many staying more than four times.

Quantitative research: an online survey sent to two million members on the GHA DISCOVERY database, covering all markets and tiers to gather representative data. The emailable database refers to those members opted in to receive communications who had opened an email within the 180 days prior to the survey.

Total respondents surveyed:

4,307

Survey languages:

English, Spanish, German, and Chinese

94 markets covered including:

US 17%	UK 11%	UAE 6%	Thailand 5%
Australia 13%	Germany 11%	India 5%	Other countries 19%
	China 9%	Singapore 5%	

Member tier split:

Silver **31%**

Gold **40%**

Platinum **15%**

Titanium **14%**

With the Trends Shaping the Hotel Loyalty Landscape report offering the first comprehensive overview of member perceptions of GHA DISCOVERY versus its competitors, the intention is to repeat the research and report on an annual basis to monitor changing perceptions of the programme and the sector as they evolve.

About Global Hotel Alliance (GHA)

Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) brings together a unique collection of independent hospitality brands with GHA DISCOVERY, a multi-brand loyalty programme leveraging a shared technology platform. Through membership in GHA, brands expand their global reach, drive incremental revenue, and reduce dependence on third-party channels, all while maintaining management independence and

individual positioning. GHA represents a collection of 40 brands with more than 800 hotels in 100 countries serving 25 million members. The award-winning GHA DISCOVERY programme generated more than $1.4 billion in revenue and surpassed six million room nights in 2022. In 2023, it is on track to exceed $2.4 billion in revenue by year end. GHA's brands currently include Anantara, Araiya, Avani, Campbell Gray, Capella,

Corinthia, Discovery Destinations, Divani, Doyle, Elewana, Fauchon, GLO, JA Resorts, Kempinski, Leela, Lungarno, Marco Polo, Mysk, NH Hotels, NH Collection, nhow, Niccolo, Nikki Beach, NUO, Oaks, Outrigger, Pan Pacific, PARKROYAL COLLECTION, PARKROYAL, Patina, The Residence by Cenizaro, The Set Collection, Shaza, Sukhothai, Sun International, Tivoli, Ultratravel Collection and Viceroy. For more information, visit www.globalhotelalliance.com.

Tiers explained

With GHA DISCOVERY, the more members stay or spend across the portfolio of properties and brands annually, the faster they move up the four-tier system:

Silver
Joining status

Gold
after **staying two times** or spending US$1,000

Platinum
after **staying 10 nights,** spending US$5,000 or staying at two brands

Titanium
after **staying 30 nights,** spending US$15,000 or staying at three brands

Membership Tier	SILVER Upon joining	GOLD Stay 2 times or Spend USD 1,000	PLATINUM Stay 10 nights or Spend USD 5,000 or Stay at 2 brands	TITANIUM Stay 30 nights or Spend USD 15,000 or Stay at 3 brands
Rewards & Instant Savings				
Earn D$ on Eligible Purchases*	4%	5%	6%	7%
Spend D$ on Eligible Purchases*	●	●	●	●
Member Rates — Save 10% or more**	●	●	●	●
Exclusive Offers	●	●	●	●
Stay Benefits				
Complimentary Wi-Fi	●	●	●	●
Room Upgrade***			●	Double
Welcome Amenity			●	●
Early Check-in***				11am
Late Check-out***			3pm	4pm
Guaranteed Room Availability 48hrs prior***				●
Additional Brand Benefits				●
Member Access				
Experiences	●	●	●	●
Local Offers	●	●	●	●
Transfer, Buy or Donate D$	●	●	●	●
Status Sharing				●

*Terms & Conditions apply   **At participating hotels   ***Subject to availability   ghadiscovery.com

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