

## Successful service design?

*Column of Dr. Roland Zegg*

While already its first scientific papers were published in the US in 1982, currently the "movement" appears all over the place: SERVICE DESIGN is the magic word that has landed in Continental Europe, too, with the usual delay. Behind this term something seemingly familiar might be concealed, which in some cases triggers a derogatory comment „long ago“.

Many training institutes, hospitality colleges and further education in service design compete for service-oriented personal in Swiss tourism: they all should become a committed, cosmopolitan specialist. As "Service Designers" they are dedicated to successfully develop the services in the tourism and service sector. True and strict customer orientation should strengthen the position in a globally competitive tourist world.

Indeed, the need for action is there. Declining numbers of guests in hotels and destinations, climate change, changing customer needs and difficult international markets are challenging. Even in the up to now technology-oriented mountain railway sector, a trend away from the pure transport company to a guest-oriented experience supplier can be observed.

But does service design really have the potential for a turnaround in the hotel, tourism and mountain railway sector and its approximately 200,000 full-time employees?

Starting just a quick google search, the astounded writer receives 248 million results in just 0.56 seconds for Service Design. And the answer to the question: yes, it has potential.

Service design approach can indeed serve for identifying and closing gaps in one's own service chain – might it be a hotel, destination or mountain railway. Service design fosters the thought-process beyond the company's horizon, it orientates itself externally to the needs of the guest. In addition, the abilities and expectations of the employees are considered, too. Altogether, this helps to optimize existing services and develop new product synergies.

Example « hotels ». They are, on the one hand, the embodiment of service and, on the other hand, those places where service design has long been used - although not always consciously. All touch points of customer-product-contact are constantly under scrutiny : Beginning with pre-stay-information, e.g. internet, about the check-in at the reception, the room service and the rooms themselves up to the post-service period, e.g. guest posts his reviews on an online platform or receives a birthday postcard.

Condensed, Service Design is thus the modern revised version of an everlasting authentic, customer-oriented, warm-hearted hospitality. It is the old-new discovery of putting the guest back at the center of the services offered by a hotel, restaurant, excursion, skiing area, adventure park, tourism destination. The experience then becomes quite self-evident and will cast a spell on the guest.