



The Big 5 Amenity Dispenser Drivers



by [Ray Burger](#)

The acceptance of dispensed amenities in hotel guest rooms has been a long time in the making. When they were introduced in the 1980's, most of the interested hoteliers were independents or owner/operators of limited-service properties or national and state park lodging facilities. But in this case, good stuff has actually rolled *uphill* and amenity dispensers have since caught on like wildfire at midmarket and upscale properties across the globe.

Both Marriott International and IHG recently announced significant commitments to this environmental initiative. By December 2020, Marriott International will require most of the 7,000+ hotels around the world to make the switch. InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), with a portfolio that includes more than 5,600 hotels and nearly 843,000 rooms, announced it will start offering toiletries in dispensers at all its properties by 2021 in an effort to reduce plastic waste. The company expects that to amount to about 200 million little bottles a year.

Here's why amenity dispensers will soon become the norm:

1) **Waste Not** — When times are good, it's very easy to just keep doing things the way we've always done them. Since 1994, the lodging industry has been pretty robust — with the exception of two recessions (2001-2002 and 2008-2010). We've seen interest spike upward in [amenity dispensers](#) each time the economy trended downward. Lately, however, a lot of owner/operators are looking to save wherever and whenever possible — and this includes amenities. What our industry appears to have learned is that amenity dispenser savings make sense in any economy!

2) **Money Talks** — Most hotels save 30% to 70% by switching from individual bottled bathroom amenities to dispensed amenities. The savings depend on several factors, but any experienced supplier of amenity dispensers and products should be able to assist you with customized savings calculations for each of your properties. For example, the 17,000 amenity dispensers installed a few years ago in Drury Hotels were estimated to yield \$750,000 in *annual* savings — an average of \$44 per room annually. Multiply that average \$44 savings by the 4 million+ hotel rooms in the United States and one realizes the industry could save \$176 million annually. Sounds like real money.

3) **Guest Satisfaction** — Hoteliers can't afford to lose any guests due to the implementation and use of amenity dispensers or amenity fixtures. But thanks to sleek new dispensers, fixtures and quality amenity products, there are no more worries in this regard.

Drury Inns tested dispensers for 10 months prior to making the switch. Starwood (now Marriott International) tested amenity dispensers before determining to make them a brand standard in Element, Aloft and now Four Points. In both cases, guests were appreciative of the move. More and more people want to stay at hotels that are reducing waste and taking care of the environment.

I have been privy to results in both branded and independent hotels of similar trial programs. Each time, the amenity dispensers pass with flying colors with hotel guests.

4) **Sustainability** — Believe it or not, we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg regarding the greening of the lodging industry in America. Early adopters like the Saunders Hotel Group and the Hotel Triton in the early to mid-1990's really helped get the green hotel movement started, but the recent announcement of conversion to dispensed amenities by IHG and Marriott has built more momentum for sustainability in the hotel industry. It's a natural and logical step to eliminate the large carbon footprint of manufacturing small amenity packaging while eliminating or reducing any transportation and disposal of the same.

5) **Esthetic Appeal** — The first dispensers I encountered were "bag in the box". I became GM of the Holiday Inn Fresno (Calif.) Airport in 1980, shortly after the previous manager had installed amenity dispensers in 10 guestrooms. They were ugly and when we tried to order refills the supplier had gone out of business.

Interestingly, the Holiday Inn brand standard back at that time was only two bars of soap in each bathroom. No shampoo, conditioner, lotion, bath gel, etc., was required. The amenity norm and amenity dispenser savings certainly have expanded exponentially the past four decades!

Fast forward to 2019 and it's clear that stylish amenity dispensers/fixtures and luxurious dispensed amenities have arrived! Attractive amenity dispensers now are available in a wide variety of styles and finishes from a growing list of suppliers. An ever-increasing number of [greener hotels](#), resorts and inns are executing comprehensive environmental programs including the use of amenity dispensers/fixtures.

If you remain a "doubting Thomas," you owe it to yourself and your guests to (at the very least) give amenity dispensers a test drive.

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