The Future of the In-Stay Experience
The Future of the In-Stay Experience
About EyeforTravel

We bring together everyone in the travel industry, from small tech start-ups to international hotel brands, to form a community working towards a smarter and more connected travel industry.

Our mission is to be the place our industry goes to share knowledge and data so that travel and tech brands can work collaboratively to create the perfect experience for the modern traveler.

We do this through our network of global events, our digital content, and our knowledge hub - EyeforTravel On Demand.

Our Values

We believe the industry must focus on a business and distribution model that always puts the customer at the center and produces great products. However, to deliver an outstanding travel experience, the strength, skills, and resources of all partners in the value chain must be respected and understood.

At EyeforTravel we believe the industry can achieve this goal by focusing on a business model that combines customer insight with great product and, most importantly, places the traveler experience at its core.

At our core we aim to enable the above by valuing impartiality, independent thought, openness and cooperation. We hope that these qualities allow us to foster dialogue, guide business decisions, build partnerships and conduct thorough research directly with the industry.

These principles have guided us since 1997 and will continue to keep us at the forefront of the industry as a vibrant travel community for many more years to come.

Our Services

Our events are at the heart of EyeforTravel. These draw in experts from every part of the travel industry to give thought-provoking presentations and engage in discussions. It is our aim that every attendee takes back something new that can help their business to improve. This might be in the fields of consumer research, data insights, technological trends, or marketing and revenue management techniques.

Alongside this we provide our community with commentary, reports, white papers, webinars and other valuable expert-driven content. All of this can be accessed through one place - the On Demand subscription service.

We are always expanding the content we create, so please get in touch if you want to write an article for us, create a white paper or webinar, or feature in our podcast.

EyeforTravel in Numbers

- 70,000+ database contacts
- 2,500+ annual event attendees
- 100,000+ monthly online reach
- 1,000+ online conference presentations
Contents

About EyeforTravel .......................................................... 3
Acknowledgements .......................................................... 5
Introduction ...................................................................... 6
1. Perfecting Pre-Stay .......................................................... 7
    1.1 Building a Guest Profile .................................................. 7
    1.2 Using Data to Track Guest Intent ....................................... 8
    1.3 Marketing to the Guest .................................................. 8
    1.4 Growing Guest Loyalty and Hotel Revenue ....................... 9
2 The Next Evolution of Guest Interaction ................................. 11
    2.1 How Hotels Can Use New Technology Tools .................... 11
    2.2 Using Voice Technology, Chatbots and RFID .................... 12
    2.3 Technologies for Improving Guest Interaction .................. 12
        2.3.1 ALICE ................................................................. 13
        2.3.2 Cendyn .............................................................. 13
        2.3.3 Dazzle .............................................................. 14
        2.3.4 handy .............................................................. 14
        2.3.5 iRiS Guest Experience Platform ................................ 14
        2.3.6 STAY ............................................................... 15
        2.3.7 Stay Planner ......................................................... 15
3 Improving Staff Performance ............................................... 16
    3.1 Using Technology to Be Guest-Centric ............................ 16
    3.2 Streamlining Hotel Operations ......................................... 17
    3.3 PMS Developments and Efficiencies ............................... 17
        3.3.1 Property Management Systems ................................. 18
4 Are You Not Entertained? The Horizons of In-Stay Entertainment ................................. 20
    4.1 Providing Hotel In-stay Entertainment .............................. 20
    4.2 What Does the Guest Want? ............................................ 21
    4.3 Technology Solutions for the Connected Guest ................ 21
    4.4 Where’s the Profit? ...................................................... 22
5 Analyzing the Guest’s Stay .................................................. 23
    5.1 Technologies that Gather Data .......................................... 23
    5.2 How to Use Your Guest Data .......................................... 24
    5.3 GDPR and the Ethical Collection of Guest Data ................... 25
Conclusion ......................................................................... 26
References ........................................................................ 28
Acknowledgements

The development of this white paper was made possible due to the input and support of industry leaders in the hotel industry and hospitality technology field. EyeforTravel acknowledges and thanks the following for their time and support to this project:

Alex Shashou | President & Co-Founder | ALICE

Robert Holland | Managing Director UK & Ireland, HotelPartner Yield Management & Chief Technology Adviser | British Hospitality Association (BHA)

Tim Sullivan | Chief Sales and Marketing Officer | Cendyn

Charles Cadbury | Co-Founder | Dazzle Technology

Armand Rabinowitz | Senior Director of Strategy and Workgroups | Hospitality Technology Next Generation (HTNG)

Florian Kriechbaumer | Director of Operations & Development | INTEREL

Darren Panto | Business Development Director | iRIS Software Systems

Roger El Khoury | Managing Partner | NEORCHA

Jeffrey Parker | Vice President of Hospitality Systems | Red Lion Hotels Corporation

Pablo Rodríguez | Marketing Manager | STAY

Kasia Pankowska | Founder and CEO | Stay Planner

Abhi Bose | Business Head | TechMTE

Hammad Hussain | Managing Director of UK and Ireland | Tink Labs
Hospitality businesses live and die by their reputations but are accommodation brands really focusing enough on the one moment where they have the guest’s complete and undivided attention: The stay itself? It is these crucial moments when they interact to request a service, such as check-in, a spa treatment or for local recommendations, that will last longest in the guest’s memory.

Now, there are new possibilities to improve the guest experience as technologies open up and fall in cost. The future of the stay will be one where the guest can use their own device to interact directly with the hotel’s staff or even the hotel itself through AI-powered interfaces. Customers will be able to call on far more services, and staff will be more connected and effective.

Hospitality companies’ key objectives currently are to drive loyalty and improve the customer experience in the hope that this will drive down acquisition costs by creating repeat guests. Although the pre-stay digital area is important and has received a lot of focus recently, it is the quality of the experience when they are in the property itself that will truly generate long-term loyalty and strong review performances.

From a marketing perspective, it’s the one time that they have the guests’ complete attention. Potentially it represents a key competitive advantage for accommodation suppliers, as they compete against themselves and against the online travel agents (OTAs) to grab and maintain the guest’s attention.

This paper will demonstrate the solutions that allow hotels to facilitate better guest-focused services and communications.

We talk to the leading tech firms in the field, break down the changes happening already and what hospitality brands should be looking to implement to secure their guests’ loyalty in the years to come.

Read on to learn:

■ What possibilities currently exist?
■ What the future of the guest stay will look like?
■ What are the real-world results of implementing technological solutions?
Perfecting Pre-Stay

From the moment the guest books to when they actually check in for their stay is a golden time for hotels to build a relationship and market ancillary goods. Hotels have already captured the business by getting the booking. Now they have the opportunity to create a rapport with the guest and use personalization to maximize loyalty, upsell and add on additional services.

In this chapter we look at:

- What kind of data can hotels use to build a profile of the guest?
- How should they use this data to figure out guest interests?
- What kind of service suggestions should they send to the guest, through what medium and how should this be displayed?
- What effect can this kind of marketing have on hotel bottom lines and guest loyalty?

1.1 Building a Guest Profile

According to hospitality trade association Hospitality Technology Next Generation (HTNG), any source of data about a guest should be used to build a profile. “Hotels often focus on historical reservation data to identify when, where and how much customers spent on their last stay in hopes to quantify Total Lifetime Value (TLTV). This type of historical data is OK if you want to predict rather than improve TLTV. The best way to build a picture of the guest is to leverage the hotel’s greatest assets, their people, to capture every seemingly relevant detail humans need to build personal relationships,” says Senior Director of Strategy and Workgroups, Armand Rabinowitz.

However, he also admits that there are more efficient ways to build profiles using technology, and by letting customers build their own profiles.

The British Hospitality Association (BHA) shares the views of HTNG that every bit of data, every guest habit, is of value when building out a guest profile.

“Traditionally, we have used the PMS to store profiles of our hotel guests. This is often birthdays, family names, room preferences, preferred newspaper, type of pillow etc., as well as any previous complaints or problems that the guest may have experienced at our hotel,” explains Robert Holland, Managing Director UK & Ireland, HotelPartner Yield Management & Chief Technology Adviser, BHA.

Today, the rapid development of social media and sharing sites means that there is a whole plethora of guest information out there, waiting for hotels to gather it.

According to Roger El Khoury, Managing Partner of NEORCHA, a France-based company that specialises in customized mobile apps for hotels, restaurants and schools, the type of data hotels can collect to build guest profiles depends on the property’s digital strategy and the capability of its digital platforms.

He outlines three main types of data sources:

1. Gathering customer data from social media plug-ins such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+ and third-party distribution channels.
2. Gathering customers’ shopping behaviours and interests on a hotel’s brand website and online distribution channels. Tracking and collecting data from direct marketing campaigns, special offers and promotions.
3. Collecting customers’ spending preferences and sentiments through hotel systems, mobile applications and reputation management system.

The use of mobile apps can take guest preference gathering a step further, as Abhi Bose, Business Head,
TechMTE, explains: “Now that almost everything is automated and digital, guest profiles can save guest preferences. For example, if I check in to a Starwood hotel in LA and authenticate my mobile device via their WiFi, I do not need to re-authenticate it again when I check-in to the next Starwood property in Chicago. The device automatically connects. Similarly, with the advent of hotel mobile apps, guests are able to place room service orders and chat with the concierge via their smartphones. These preferences, once stored, can be used to increase the level of service for future stays.”

Following on from app data and WiFi usage preferences, the Internet of Things (IoT) is expected to allow new types of data to be collected that can further drive personalization of the hotel experience.

“As more and more everyday objects are able to collect and exchange data through sensor and other devices, this presents new opportunities to gain insight into guest behaviour,” says Florian Kriechbaumer, Director of Operations & Development, INTEREL, a company offering IoT services to the hospitality industry.

**1.2 Using Data to Track Guest Intent**

Hotels can only benefit from collected customer data by having the right analytics and predictive tools in place. Analyzing customer data enables companies to provide customers with relevant and personalized content. Now customer search data and social media behaviours provide a new layer of information and engaging with customers prior to arrival gives hotels the possibility to further categorize customer interests.

“The move to digital interaction in the social media and guest communication domain will allow the collection of more unstructured data that can be utilized to build information about guest interests and preferences to tailor the experience for each individual guest,” says Kriechbaumer of INTEREL.

“Collection of data is only the first part of the chain. An analytics strategy for interpreting the information is required and the right processes must be in place to subsequently take action – or proactively predict behaviour and anticipate what guests will do or want. This is the promise of big data,” he adds.

According to the BHA, your guest data should be used to better prepare for the guest’s next arrival. Hotels should use it to understand their likes and dislikes, flag and resolve previous issues, etc. The aim is to use the personal information to form a relationship that will encourage the guest to book direct.

HTNG also stresses the importance of using the data to better serve the guest. Rabinowitz points out that a guest who makes the effort to provide a hotel with their personal data wants them to use that information to serve them better. “The danger is asking for that data but never acting on it or using it incorrectly,” he remarks.

However, as Jeffrey Parker, Vice President of Hospitality Systems, Red Lion Hotels Corporation, points out, predicting guest behaviour can be tricky. He explains that the same guest can have different wants, needs and behaviours depending on the context of their travel, for example, a traveller’s behaviour is different when they are:

- On business travel and the company is picking up the bill.
- With their spouse or significant other.
- With spouse and children.
- With ‘buddies’ sharing a room or a group of rooms.
- On a weekend versus a weekday.

Then there are differences created by external factors, such as weather, disaster or terror attack. In these scenarios it is near impossible to predict guest intent or interests.

**1.3 Marketing to the Guest**

Once hotels have gathered their data and analysed it to build out a picture of their guest, how can they then use this to market to the guest during the pre-stay period? What messages should they be communicating and via what medium? This will, and should, differ on a guest-by-guest basis. Generally, destination relevant content, local attractions, events and happenings, and a hotel’s own related services, such as transportation,
possible. It is about improving guest satisfaction and loyalty. And it is also about boosting profits.

“If optimizing guest spend is not one of the top priorities, hotels will miss out on massive opportunity to grow revenue quickly and easily and profitably,” says Jos Schaap, CEO of StayNTouch. “Your current guests already know your brand and trusts your services, so don’t leave money on the table by letting them go elsewhere. Focusing your time and energy on them as opposed to always trying to find new guests can be a powerful way to supercharge your bottom line.”

This is especially so as this is a relatively low-cost way of boosting revenue, especially when compared to marketing at the top of the funnel. Hotels are also capitalizing on guest excitement during this period, heightening the effectiveness of personalized marketing when it is tied to time-limited offers and prompts for local attractions for leisure travellers, or convenient options for business travellers.

Alex Shashou, President & Co-Founder of the ALICE operations system (see Chapter 2 for more), in-stay technology such as guest concierge apps can increase guest loyalty by delivering better service, which results in happier guests who not only return as repeat guests but also promote the hotel to their friends.

Amalgamating technology also requires the use of fewer other systems, saving money on software, training and management.

Tim Sullivan, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Cendyn (see Chapter 2 for more), claims that his company’s Hotel CRM Suite drives true results in terms of repeat stay, higher room rates and higher ancillary spend.

“As part of our Hotel CRM Suite we offer a Loyalty module that allows hotels to configure a guest loyalty or recognition program that can be a traditional points or stays based rewards program, or a value based ‘surprise and delight’ recognition program. Based on the results of the programs we manage we see that loyal guest book at a 47% higher ADR, stay 81% more often, and spend 164% more than guest who are not active members of the loyalty program.”

“Learning what a customer orders, be it craft beer or double-shot espresso, is a benefit. Offering specials that walk that line are okay, but to cross it needs to get consent from the client. If Joe Smith tells us he wants Jack Daniels and a double cheeseburger in his room with every stay, we need to act on that. If he always orders a cheeseburger, we should suggest that,” he further explains (for more on the ethical use of data, turn to Chapter 5).

1.4 Growing Guest Loyalty and Hotel Revenue

Pre-stay marketing is about laying the groundwork for the guest to have the perfect stay with you. It is about presenting them with the services and recommendations that will enable them to have the best experience.
The Next Evolution of Guest Interaction

Today, there is a plethora of new technology entering the hospitality arena. For hotel management, knowing what new technological innovations to bring into property is a challenge.

From automated check-in to using a smartphone as a room key, or controlling room functions such as air conditioning via an app, the technology options are proliferating and becoming more sophisticated.

2.1 How Hotels Can Use New Technology Tools

New technologies, such as apps, can now perform a number of functions in a hotel, from check-in and being used as a digital room key, to ordering room service and making bookings for third party services, such as tours and activities.

With innovations in other travel verticals setting high standards, the onus is on the hotels industry to at least maintain pace, if not lead the way in areas of guest personalization and loyalty.

Armand Rabinowitz, Senior Director of Strategy and Workgroups, Hospitality Technology Next Generation (HTNG) says: “Our other travel and entertainment friends have certainly set expectations with mobile boarding passes, mobile ticketing, and mobile ordering. Unless part of a hotel brand’s message is steeped in tradition, the mobile app, which is such a reflection of brands today, should enable as many growth capabilities as possible.”

So where should hotels be focusing their tech efforts?

- **Check-in.** Many app solutions now offer a mobile check in service, in line with that already offered by the airline industry.
- **Room keys.** Some smartphone applications can enable devices to act as room keys, but hotels must be aware of encryption, tracking and local regulations on identifying guests.
- **Guest services.** Guests now want, and often expect, a digital version of the guest services book. They want an interactive solution that enables them to communicate with all areas of the hotel. What’s more, this should also offer secure payment options, as well as charge to room.
- **Ancillary services.** Guests are no longer booking a hotel stay; they are booking an experience. They want local knowledge and access to local attractions, preferably with an inside track on where to go, what to do, where to eat, etc. Smartphone apps can provide this. What’s more, via API integration they can link to third-party service providers, such as tours and activities, enabling the guest to book direct. Hotels can factor in a service charge and make this a revenue line (see EyeforTravel’s free report into tours and activities here for more).
- **Room controls.** Hotels need to keep these native to the device, as guests often don’t have the time or inclination to learn another operating system. However, in-room controls for television, air conditioning, lights and music systems can all be integrated into an easy to navigate in-room smart device or free downloadable app.

All of the above solutions provide an added level of service for the guest. For the hotel, they provide access to valuable data on guest habits and preferences. Used effectively, this data can help hotels streamline operations and optimize on revenue-generating services.
2.2 Using Voice Technology, Chatbots and RFID

New technological innovations, such as the use of voice technology, chatbots and the use of radio-frequency identification (RFID), will further change the hotel tech sphere.

Jeffrey Parker, Vice President of Hospitality Systems, Red Lion Hotels Corporation, says that, according to experts, between 50-75% of guest questions can be responded to by a Bot. “This can relieve questions to the desk staff and other departments. The appropriate way to do it is to also link to your service app infrastructure and have a warm hand-off to a real person.”

However, Parker has a warning: “Don’t ever let your app pretend to be a real person. Be transparent with your guests.” (For more on chatbots click here for our free report).

RFID has long been used in hotel key cards. However, tech innovators are finding new ways to put RFID to use in hotels. For example, if a smartphone offers an RFID component to act as a key card, then it can also locate the guest and push forward notifications, such as happy hour when a guest walks past the hotel bar.

From an operations point of view, RFID can also be used to tag room items, helping hotels track the innumerable number of towels, bathrobes and pillows that go missing each year.

Marriott is one of the hotel groups that has been experimenting with RFID. “We’ve had a couple of pilot programmes out in the market ... in at least a hundred...”
properties right now,” said Brooks Martin, Senior Director Mobile and Digital Guest Experience, Marriott, whilst speaking at EyeforTravel North America 2017. They “are running some initial analytics to understand what the guest value might be [through] understanding where they might be on the property and working with the hotels to understand as well what they might want to get out of it.” With these experiments, Marriott wants to find out “how do we help with wayfinding? How do we help with providing offer on-property?” In the meantime, the app offers personalization to guests: “Right now, if you are using the Marriott Android device you get a personalized welcome message depending on your loyalty level, etc.”

**2.3 Technologies for Improving Guest Interaction**

New technologies are constantly coming to market. Here are seven guest experience solutions to consider from among the many that are already established or appearing constantly on the market:

**2.3.1 ALICE**

The ALICE operations platform enables hotels to manage staff work and guest communications across all departments. The entire ALICE suite comprises ALICE Staff, ALICE Concierge and ALICE Guest.

ALICE Concierge enables front of house teams to log all guest requests with one system, including transportation, wake-up calls, reservations and more. A smart vendor database automatically imports vendor details to enable the team to curate vendor relationships and provide insider information. The ALICE Concierge also creates confirmation letters, itineraries and vendor suggestions personalized to every guest.

ALICE Guest enables hotels to connect with guests on their terms – via an app, website, phone or by text. It provides direct communication between the guest and all appropriate hotel departments. The solution also provides automated messages that notify the guest when each of their requests is received, in progress and complete. ALICE Guest provides the hotel with data and actionable insights into guest activities.

**Integrations:** Integrates with almost all Property Management systems (PMS).

**How it enhances the guest experience?** “The concierge is responsible for providing an authentic, local experience as well as the heavy lifting of travel planning, and so a more able concierge equates to a better guest experience,” says Alex Shashou, ALICE President & Co-Founder.

With ALICE, guests can text message their hotels, asking for whatever they need through SMS (no app download required). This improves the guest experience through convenience.

**Adoption:** Viceroy Hotel Group, One&Only Resorts, 60 Hotels, Triumph Hotels, Davidson Hotels & Resorts, Two Roads Hospitality, and more.

**2.3.2 Cendyn**

The Cendyn Hospitality Cloud is an integrated technology platform for driving sales and marketing performance. The Cendyn Hotel CRM Suite centralizes data across a wide range of hotel systems providing enhanced guest profiles, including guest history, value, status, preference, social connections, lifestyle, behaviour, and intent. This data is then leveraged to deliver timely, relevant, and personalized communications across any digital marketing channel, or to provide hotel staff with the guest intelligence they need to have deeper, more meaningful guest interactions. All this activity is tracked and measured via an analytics platform providing insights and optimizations that drive revenue, loyalty and guest satisfaction.

**Integrations:** More than 175 integrations, spanning PMS, Central Reservation Systems (CRS), Point-of-Sale systems (POS), spa software, food and beverage vendors, maintenance, security and many more.

**How it enhances the guest experience?** “Our solution enables a personalized guest experience during every interaction with the hotel, via electronic communication or in-person conversation with hotel staff,” says Tim Sullivan, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Cendyn.

*Regrettably, upon arrival at the hotel the current norm is for every guest to be asked if they have stayed before. For someone who has stayed at the hotel or with the brand dozens of times, this question sets the wrong tone for the stay. What if that guest could be welcomed back and offered a room upgrade based on past*
Developed by Tink Labs, handy also provides destination-specific content, exclusive promotions in the hotel, and an on-the-go concierge service.

**Adoption:** Red Lion Hotels Corporations, IHG, Frasers Hospitality, Rosewood, Starwood, Marriott, Hyatt, Hilton and more.

### 2.3.3 Dazzle

Dazzle is a voice-activated in-room personal assistant designed to replace the telephone and guest directory. Guests can use it in-room via Amazon Alexa. They can ask ‘Dazzle, how do I use the Wi-Fi?’, or ‘Dazzle, please send me a new pair of slippers’, or ‘Dazzle, when does the swimming pool open?’, for example.

When the guest is out of the hotel Dazzle can deliver the same conversational experience through Facebook Messenger; guests can ask if their room has been cleaned, ask for a restaurant recommendation, call a taxi, etc.

**Integrations:** Amazon Alexa, Facebook Messenger.

**How does it enhance the guest experience?** “We created a conversation concierge so that people can get all of their informational experience through channels they are more used to operating. It delivers specific responses very quickly. It positions the hotel as a trusted advisor,” says Charles Cadbury, Co-Founder at Dazzle Technology.

“Hotels are able to listen to what the guests want and get real time data of who is asking for what and when. Then they can make real time adjustments to their product or services to cater to those requests.”

**Adoption:** Marriott County Hall, London.

### 2.3.4 handy

handy is a smartphone-based platform that travellers can take with them inside or outside the property during their stay to make free calls, use internet, or to simply be connected to the hotel at all times via quick dials or chat.

Integrations: Amazon Echo, Amazon Alexa, Facebook Messenger.

**How does it enhance the guest experience?** “In addition, messaging functionality allows guests to communicate with the hotel as and when they want to. Additional enhancements include offering services such as newspapers and magazines digitally via the guest’s own device or in-room Tablet. The hotel can select which publications it offers and which languages - a behaviour or a bespoke menu of activities based on their preferences? Our solution enables this elevation of the guest experience.”

**Adoption:** Sofitel Hotels & Resorts, Hyatt, Millennium Hotels & Resorts, InterContinental, Movenpick, Gran Melia Hotels & Resorts, Anantara, and more.

### 2.3.5 iRiS Guest Experience Platform

iRiS Guest Experience Platform enables hotels to connect all the pieces of in-room technology together via a single platform. It is available in any language.

The iRiS Guest Valet, provided via a hotel tablet, offers the guest a full range of interactive services as well as room controls, such as lights, temperature, curtains, the TV and more. Guests can use the Guest Valet to make concierge requests, book housekeeping, taxi requests, dinner reservations, and much more.

**Integrations:** Multiple PMS, including Opera, Springer Miller, Infor, and OnQ. There is an open API enabling other PMS providers to integrate to iRiS.

**How does it enhance the guest experience?** “Hotels services and facilities are brought to life, in the guest’s own language. Food and beverage in particular are displayed digitally, allowing easy ordering, with upselling opportunities and orders going straight onto the guest’s folio,” explains Darren Panto, Business Development Director for iRiS Software Systems.

“Hotels are able to listen to what the guests want and get real time data of who is asking for what and when. Then they can make real time adjustments to their product or services to cater to those requests.”

**Adoption:** Red Lion Hotels Corporations, IHG, Frasers Hospitality, Rosewood, Starwood, Marriott, Hyatt, Hilton and more.
considerable cost saving and enhancement to the guest experience.”

**Adoption:** Swissotel, IHG, Westin Hotels & Resorts, Hilton, Raffles Hotels & Resorts, Kempinski, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Marriott, and more.

### 2.3.6 STAY

STAY provides guest experience solutions via a smartphone app and a chatbot. Services include: information on hotel facilities and services; making restaurant and spa bookings, ordering room service, or requesting amenities or housekeeping; booking third party services such as tours, shows and tickets to local attractions; customer surveys for the whole stay or specific services in the hotel; push to app personalized messages and promotions; and reporting room issues so the hotel can manage them.

The app will send messages in whatever language the smartphone is set to.

**Integrations:** Facebook Messenger.

**How does it enhance the guest experience?** “From the guest perspective they are able to use this to browse additional services. For hotels, they can see and track everything that the guest does using the platform. If a hotel can see that their guests are interested in spa services and diving they can tailor the offer in line with that. They can take decisions around scrapping some activities they are offering which never get views or bookings,” says Kasia Pankowska, Founder and CEO, Stay Planner.

“By offering hotels intelligence on what the guest is looking for and what they are booking, we enable them to create special offers, deals and promotions to use services they know the guest is interested in,” she says.

**Adoption:** Anantara, Premier Best Western, Comfort Villa, Destination Blue, Worldwide Dream Villas & Holidays, and more.

### 2.3.7 Stay Planner

Stay Planner is an omni-channel digital concierge platform that can operate as a download to the guest’s own device, and be accessed via the web, or via the in-room tablet in hotels that provide this service.

The Stay Planner platform consists of a cloud-based administration console with a built-in CMS, integration API and a set of guest-facing apps.

The digital concierge provides guests with information on hotel services and facilities as well as services from third party providers, such as tours and activities. This enables the guest to build their own itinerary, which they can access in any language, and which they can book direct from their device, without having to call the concierge.

**Integrations:** Stay Planner is integrated with Opera. It also has an API that can integrate with any other PMS.

**How does it enhance the guest experience?** “From the guest perspective they are able to use this to browse additional services. For hotels, they can see and track everything that the guest does using the platform. If a hotel can see that their guests are interested in spa services and diving they can tailor the offer in line with that. They can take decisions around scrapping some activities they are offering which never get views or bookings,” says Kasia Pankowska, Founder and CEO, Stay Planner.

“By offering hotels intelligence on what the guest is looking for and what they are booking, we enable them to create special offers, deals and promotions to use services they know the guest is interested in,” she says.

**Adoption:** Anantara, Premier Best Western, Comfort Villa, Destination Blue, Worldwide Dream Villas & Holidays, and more.
Improving Staff Performance

Charles Cadbury, Co-Founder at Dazzle Technology, explains how voice search can also help hotels provide a guest-centric service while also streamlining operations. He says: “Dazzle identifies FAQs, such as ‘can I get more towels?’, allowing those questions to be answered automatically in real time. This is more efficient than having someone in the back office taking notes and then asking someone else to deliver to your room. There are major inefficiencies there.

“From the guest perspective it allows them to quickly get to specific answers. For example, if you want to know if a meal has nuts in it; that information is hard to get through the website or guest directory. Conversation allows you to ask very specific answers in a type of communication you are most comfortable with. And because it’s not a live conversation, you’re not tying up staff on the phone.”

3.2 Streamlining Hotel Operations

One of the biggest developments in hotels is the adoption of the Internet of Things (IoT). By developing a connected room, hotels can have access to real time information on that room’s use as well as constant monitoring of equipment in the room. For example, housekeeping can see when a room is vacant and schedule clean times accordingly. This is beneficial to the team and the guest, as they are not disturbed. Some apps will even send a push to notification to let the guest know that their room has been serviced.

IoT can also help maintenance teams understand when in-room items may need fixing. The television, radio and personal assistant unit can all communicate their own faults. The room can even communicate when a light bulb needs changing. Each of these eliminates the need for regular checking by staff, and ensures that...
items are fixed in a timely manner. A guest is never left in a dark room.

From a property-wide perspective, IoT can help with scheduling the regular maintenance of HVAC items and other engineering works.

iRiS provides a good example of a connected room. The system connects all integrations via one platform. The guest can control all the room through their own device or in-room tablet, while iRiS integrations with the PMS, POS, IPTV, door entry and VOIP ensures a seamless interaction for the guest and operational efficiency for the hotel staff.

Other technology that helps hotels streamline operations is the chatbot. According to Pablo Rodríguez, Marketing Manager at Stay (see Chapter 2), a chatbot: “Eliminates mundane tasks, allowing the staff members to focus on valuable actions that cannot be automated.”

Similarly, the handy concierge chat aims to increase the efficiency of front house staff. “These days everyone is so familiar with messaging as a means to communicate. Hotels are finding it easier to deal with five customers directly in their rooms via chat channels, instead of having five customers standing behind a reception counter,” explains Hammad Hussain, Managing Director of UK and Ireland, Tink Labs.

3.3 PMS Developments and Efficiencies

Modern hotel management needs a technology stack that can connect and seamlessly share data. As such, there have been huge developments in PMS technology in recent years, as hotels move to a next-generation system.

Legacy systems, which were once seen as the cutting edge of hotel technology, are no longer cutting mustard. Inflexible, and costly to upgrade or replace, many hotels are now looking at third party, cloud-based solutions. This will allow them more flexibility and resilience but more importantly finally make the goal of unified data stored achievable. Given that data silos continue to be a repeated concern across the industry, but particularly for franchises and chains, there is a store of value waiting to be unlocked.

Different hotel types have different requirements from a PMS. A full-service hotel will require a robust and comprehensive system that can handle complex reservation, scheduling and inventory requirements.

A small, limited-service hotel may only need to automate basing functions, such as guest bookings, housekeeping, guest charges and maintenance management.

Regardless of size or property type, all hotels need to manage front office and reservations, and these have long been the two main pillars of the PMS system.

However, with new technologies, such as the ones outlined in this white paper, constantly coming to the table, a hotel now needs a new breed of PMS.

According to a report by Starfleet Research, there are five factors hoteliers should look for in their PMS functionality:

- Technology and data integration.
- A centralized guest data repository.
- Guest Experience Management.
- Revenue management integration.
- Performance metrics.

The report makes a few recommendations to those looking to change their PMS:

**Upgrade to cloud deployment.** Most PMS have moved to the cloud. This enables global scale, access to interfaces and information, easy deployment and cost benefits. Cloud solutions generally offer better security and more seamless integration with third-party applications and modules but brands should still consider cost and speed.

**Focus on technology integration.** There is limited point to integrating with the cloud if you can’t then make full use of the ecosystem. Your PMS should facilitate easy integration with integrate third-party software and add-on modules.

3.3.1 Property Management Systems

The most widely used PMS is Opera by Oracle Hospitality. Opera, the successor of the popular Fidelio PMS, is used by many large hotel chains, including Travelodge Hotels UK, Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, Marriott Hotels and Starwood Hotels and Resorts.
According to Oracle, Opera offers a vast number of connection options and enables hotels to personalize services, as well as streamline operations, improve business performance and maximize revenues.

However, cloud-based PMS solutions are taking on more market share. Innovators in the field seeing success at present include:

**Hetras**

Hetras claims to make your last room available with its cloud-based PMS offering multi-property management and integrated channel manager. The PMS is also mobile- and tablet-ready.

Hetras also offers an online booking engine, a mobile app and a public API, so other solutions can easily integrate with this PMS. The Hetras suite also includes online check-in functionality that delivers a QR code straight to the guest’s device to be used as a room key.

**StayNTouch**

StayNTouch offers a SaaS, cloud-based, mobile PMS with an intuitive interface that reduces staff training time by up to 80%.

The Rover PMS can boost hotel connectivity through its web booking APIs and channel management software.

This device-agnostic PMS gives the guest the option to go through a mobile check-in and not download an app.

**Hotelogix**

Hotelogix is a cloud-based PMS that says it offers next-gen capabilities to simplify reservations, improve operational efficiency, enhance guest experience and maximize revenue.

It offers a ‘centralized guest history’, which means that multi-property hotels can easily access guest data captured at the time of reservation at any of their properties. They can then use this data to know their guests better and focus on improving the experience when the guest returns to one of their hotels at another location.

**Mews**

Mews is a cloud-based PMS that allows access anytime, from any device, letting staff manage operations from any location, as long as they are connected to the Internet.

The solution is fully mobile. Housekeepers can manage their departments from a mobile device via an integrated housekeeping app, ensuring reception has the latest room status and enabling early check-in where possible.

Mews offers built-in online check in, integrated and automated payments, smart channel management and CRS integrations, and flexible reporting tools.

**RoomKey**

RoomKey was the first PMS to connect to Expedia. It now offers a direct connection with Booking.com as well, automating changes to inventory, rates and restrictions. It also connects to channel managers such as Siteminder and syncs to GDS/CRS platforms such as TravelClick, Synxis, and Windsurfer.

RoomKey also has a fully integrated mobile-ready internet booking engine that enables hotels to promote upgrades as the guest books.
Are You Not Entertained? The Horizons of In-Stay Entertainment

In an age where customers often bring their own devices with them on their hotel stay, and can access their own entertainment accounts, such as Netflix, while on the move, what is the future for in-stay entertainment? Should hotels continue to invest or is now the time to step back and leave the guest, quite literally, to their own devices?

What else can hotels bring to their entertainment offering? What effect will this have on the guest experience?

4.1 Providing Hotel In-stay Entertainment

Guest behaviour is changing at a breakneck speed, as technology alters the way people communicate, seek information, are entertained and enjoy their leisure time.

The evolution of social media, YouTube, Netflix, Spotify, and many more platforms and applications means that some guests may never turn on the television in their room. Does this mean in-stay technology is redundant? No, it is just evolving.

A recent study by Bouncepad found that the vast majority of US travellers actually want more technology in hotels. Whether this goes as far as the Henn-na hotel in Chiba, Japan is a matter of debate. There, the hotel employs 140 robots and just seven humans to manage a 100-room hotel. More likely the guest is ready to accept other technology largely if it will ease their experience said Karthik Namasivayam, Professor and Chair of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Rochester Institute of Technology. This should begin at simple potential pain points for the customer, such as around check-in and ordering services.

Some are calling this trend ‘techspitality’, but what does it mean for in-room entertainment? Has the smartphone overtaken the smart TV as the guest entertainment technology of choice?

Often the in-room technology offering will depend on the customer segment the hotel is targeting.

For upscale and luxury properties there are often pre-set expectations for an in-room experience that includes entertainment. For the millennial guest or the road warrior, enabling Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) entertainment options is key.

4.2 What Does the Guest Want?

At the end of 2016, Zebra, a provider of hospitality solutions, released its latest Global Hospitality Study detailing what guests actually want, both in terms of
Brands are responding, and taking on many of the technology innovations we have already discussed in Chapter 2.

Voice-activated technology is one area where big name brands are hoping to differentiate their service. Marriott is testing the Amazon Alexa in a number of its hotel properties with the hope of improving guest personalization, reducing friction in the guest experience and increasing room service transactions.

Marriott has already been experimenting with the use of beacons and tablets, and the introduction of Alexa will further drive the guest experience.

Marriott is also working closely with Amazon on the trial to ensure privacy in the hotel room.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) is also making strides with new technology. Personalization is a major trend for the hotel group, as it looks to transform how consumers view and engage with the business.

As with Marriott, IHG is also working with Amazon to create a 'connected room' that uses the Alexa-powered Echo. The in-room personal assistant will be able to provide guests with everything from the news and weather to specific hotel details, like area attractions, restaurant menus and hours.

Among its other technological innovations is the IHG translator app for the Apple watch, which provides real time translations.

Zebra also surveyed hoteliers to better understand their technology plans for 2017. According to the report, 77% of properties were expanding WiFi coverage, while 74% were implementing location-based technologies to improve guest recognition and analytics, offer geo-targeted mobile offers and special promotions and upgrades.

With 92% of hotel guests carrying a smartphone, hoteliers are now realising that entertainment and information lies firmly in the hand of the guest, hotels need to facilitate this by providing the connectivity.

4.3 Technology Solutions for the Connected Guest

As guests become more reliant on technology in their daily lives their expectation is to have the same services (or better) available during their hotel stay. Consumer trends such as voice control, TV streaming services, digital ordering and other disruptive concepts should seamlessly transition into the room for guests to be able to use the same services they are used to in their home in the hotel.

The guest wants technology they can control, preferably in the comfort of their own room, and preferably without the need of human interaction – unless it’s for a spa treatment.
entertainment. Hotels need to look beyond the hotel room and consider the whole hotel as they work on monetizing their in-stay experience.

Hammad Hussain, Managing Director of UK and Ireland for Tink Labs, explains how handy helps hotels increase revenue: “Using handy, the hotel has access to guest at all times whether the guest is inside or outside the property. Push messages can be received by guests giving the hotel a unique opportunity to advertise services such as spa offerings.” He claims that handy push messages have a 20% click through rate when used in this manner.

“Other features, such as hotel banners and in-room dining are also used by many hotels to direct guests to specific services or enable them to order food in their room at a touch of a button, respectively. All these features are a great source of incremental revenue for the hotel.”

The value of in-stay technology is in the data it provides; enabling hotels to better understand their guests and their touch points, and in turn better market to them to increase their on-property and ancillary spend.
Analyzing the Guest’s Stay

One of the big advantages of implementing technology solutions in a hotel is that they can deliver a host of information and increasingly they can constantly automatically monitor and report on that data. That data is then a potential treasure trove to be mined for guest behaviours and preferences. Once you know your guest better you can serve them better.

However, how should hotels collect this data? What should they be monitoring and what are the limits before guests find it intrusive? Regulation, in the form of the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into effect in May 2018, will tighten guest data collection.

New technologies mean greater access to guest data. This starts when they first start to search for a hotel booking, as the website booking engine begins the process of gathering basic data. Further information and behaviours can be learned every time a guest logs into your WiFi, downloads and then uses your app, or surfs the internet using a provided in-room tablet.

Innovations, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), are widening this data pool.

IBM Watson Internet of Things has been developing products for the hospitality industry that are geared
towards the guest experience and gathering a wealth of data on guest behaviours. These include a Panasonic digital mirror that offers a personal assistant and a Harman intelligent speaker that can control in-room functions, such as lighting and entertainment. IBM claims these can be retrofitted relatively easily to properties, which can be key as refitting hotels has the potential to be an expensive business and allows improvement to a hotel’s tech stack without the need for enterprise-level investment.

"IoT is expected to allow new types of data to be collected that can further drive personalization of the hotel experience. As everyday objects are able to collect and exchange data through sensors and other devices, this presents new opportunities to gain insight into guest behaviour. For example, smart thermostats in guest rooms may enable hotels to set the preferred temperature of a guest prior to arrival, or a beacon indoor locationing network will allow hotel design to be optimized based on guest movement patterns,” explains Florian Kriechbaumer, Director of Operations & Development, INTEREL.

Further developments in AI include Allora by Avvio, a booking engine that uses AI to gather information from the guest and launched in October 2017.

Allora uses machine learning that they claim constantly improves the booking experience and increase conversions by amalgamating and crunching data from all of the partners on Avvio’s hotel network. This gives hotels the ability to learn from similar properties to identify patterns in guest behaviour and can be used to make recommendations for add-ons to the guest’s stay.

Allora tracks and analyses this data based on:

- Geography.
- Guest history.
- Booking preferences.
- Interactions on the website.
- Conversions.

Another valuable repository of guest information is social media. The move to digital interaction in the social media and guest communication domain allows for the collection of more unstructured data that can be used to build information about guest interests and preferences. Hotels can relatively easily search reviews for its most valuable amenities and associated key words and use this to push those products more effectively to guests.

5.2 How to Use Your Guest Data

There is no point gathering guest data if you have no intention of using it.

Using your guest data can be as simple as welcoming back a returning guest or as complex as a predictive analytics algorithm that can map out patterns in booking intent and guest behaviour.

At the simplest level, knowing a guest has stayed with you before, having prior knowledge of any preferences they have or any previous complaints they may have filed, will help you deliver a better guest experience.

Hotels need to disseminate this information to all team members that may deal with that guest to make their experience as seamless and enjoyable as possible.

While regulations are set to change on the collection and use of data, in general most hotel guests are looking for a personalized experience and want hotels to know and use their preferences. In Chapter 4 we learnt that 75% of guests are willing to share personal information in order to receive a tailored experience. This may include a special discount at the spa; requests for hypoallergenic pillows, a morning newspaper or extra clothes hangers; or a dietary requirement based on health issues.

Taking guest data use to the next level are big data and predictive analytics. The sheer wealth of data out there provides hotels with the ability to predict behaviours to help them better serve the guest and boost revenues. Using big data hotels can get closer to offering a true one-to-one service totally bespoke to each and every guest.

"Collection of data is only the first part of the chain. An analytics strategy for interpreting the information is required and the right processes must be in place to subsequently take action accordingly – or ideally proactively predict behaviour and anticipate what guests will do or want. This is the promise of big data,” says INTEREL’s Kriechbaumer.
5.3 GDPR and the Ethical Collection of Guest Data

GDPR is an EU regulation that will come into effect on 25 May 2018. It is the biggest change in data protection in the EU since 1995. It aims to provide uniformity to the way data is collected, stored and processed.

Once GDPR comes into effect, hotels must explain to the customer:

- What data they are capturing.
- Why they are capturing that data.
- Who is requesting that data.
- Who else will have access to this data.

According to Wayne Jasek, Director of APAC Operations for Kentico - a CMS, E-commerce and online marketing platform, while GDPR will make marketing to EU residents more challenging it could actually lead to more engaged guests.

Writing in eHotelier, he explained: “The tricky part for hoteliers is that the consent someone gives you only applies to the purpose you have explicitly declared. In the past, hotel marketers could source the email address once and then reuse it across campaigns and newsletters alike. However, with the new GDPR laws coming into place, this is no longer the case. If you have captured the email for a newsletter, then you have to ask for explicit consent again for the email campaign, and so on. All of which makes marketing to EU residents, or people in the EU more challenging, which could restrict the number of guests you get through the door. However, on the positive side, those who do give consent are likely to be more engaged guests.”

While this is an EU regulation, hotel companies operating outside of Europe will still need to comply with some aspects of GDPR.

If you are an international chain and you are monitoring booking trends out of a European country then you will have to comply with GDPR requirements. If you are tracking website visits from users that are in the EU, regardless of whether they are EU citizens or not, then GDPR will apply.

GDPR will change the way hotels collect and manage guest data. However, it is really just an extension of ethical data collection. Most companies should already be respecting their customer data. From May 2018, they will need to be more transparent and get explicit consent for all use of guest data.

Further issues of the ethical collection of guest data surround listening devices, such as Amazon Alexa, in guest rooms. Hotels need to offer guests the choice and respect their decision if they ask for these units to be removed. Chains such as Marriott and IHG are working closely with Amazon to develop solutions that provide the guests with a seamless experience while also protecting their privacy.
Conclusion

The biggest evolution to take place in the hotel industry is the connected guest.

There has been a shift in guest expectations in recent years. Today’s traveller is more demanding and savvier. They travel more and are looking for something unique. Guests can explore and build a unique experience for themselves, but if a hotel can help them curate an even more outstanding experience, they will reap the rewards.

The smartphone has become the modern traveller’s must-have accessory. Travellers often use mobile apps as their primary point of engagement for information and to make bookings. For hotels, the benefits here are to integrate an app with a total digital strategy that allows the hotel to meet the guest’s requirements (service requests, room control etc) and to collect data on the guest from multiple sources. This enables the hotel to not only engage but also plan their activities and communications to further improve the guest experience.

Mobile devices now account for between 50% and 60% of all internet searches (Search Engine Land, 2016). It is therefore essential for hotels to at least provide guests with easy access to information and reservations wherever they are, delivering a more enriched in-stay experience through their phone or tablet.

The Hotel as the Local Expert

In-stay technology, through apps and voice search, provides hotels with the opportunity to establish themselves as an authority on what to see, do, eat and experience in their destination.

Since the arrival of TripAdvisor, Yelp, Local Table, Google and other online travel resources, the role of the hotel as the expert in the local area has been disintermediated. People used to ask the concierge where to eat or what to do – now they ask their mobile phone. The development of digital concierges, chatbots and voice search puts the hotel back in the conversation, via a medium that guests are growing increasingly accustomed to using and that will grow in the future.

Driving Revenue

Digital guest services platforms and apps provide guests with an ‘at their fingertips’ hotel and local area directory. For the hotel, this can prove to be another revenue stream, as properties use the platforms to market timely and relevant offers, such as ‘10% at the spa today’, as well as linking to third-party service providers to market and sell on commission tours and activities, theatre tickets, and more (click here to find out more about the opportunities tours and activities provide).

Guest Feedback

The best time to receive guest feedback is while the guest is still on property. Hotel platforms and apps make it easier for guests to instantly message any issues to the property. Being able to fix an issue before it escalates into a complaint is vital in today’s world of online review sites and digital endorsements. Hotels often feel held hostage by TripAdvisor reviews, but property apps and digital concierges can help hotels address issues before they are too late. Following up with a bottle of champagne delivered to the room or a free dinner, can make a guest less likely to vent on TripAdvisor, or even better, turn the complaint into a compliment with a post about the fantastic service provided by the hotel. This has a demonstrable effect on the bottom line, with increased review scored tied to better performing hotels with higher revenues according to more than one study (Anderson and Han, 2016; Medallia Institute, 2017).
The guest will dictate the future of the in-stay experience. Hotels need to keep their finger on the technology pulse if they are to keep up.

Challenges

Hotels also need to be aware of the limitations of new technology. While there are now a wide variety of app-based services available, the main challenge hotels face is driving guest adoption of these applications. Guests who only stay in a brand’s hotel once or twice a year may find little incentive to install an application and register a profile.

Additionally, devices like the Amazon Echo are limited in the languages and accents they can understand, further complicating use in a multi-national hotel environment.

Hotels need to be able to reduce barriers to entry and provide value-adds through their in-stay technology. This may be offering mobile check-in and digital room key, enabling guests to bypass the front desk, or the ability to control functions in the room, such as air conditioning and lighting.

Success will lie in combining your app with hotel infrastructure such as Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) devices and beacons, WiFi spots and customers’ own devices.

Moving Forward

New technologies often find early adoption in the consumer market. The hotel industry needs to monitor these trends and find ways to implement them into an enterprise environment, while also fulfilling security, privacy and device management needs.

Whatever the technology platform though, data analysis and predictive algorithms are going to be key differentiators of hotels’ future success and existence. Increased competition, rising operating cost and changes in customer buying and shopping behaviours are creating major industry challenges that hotels can only overcome through innovation, integration, data gathering and analysis to provide a truly customer-centric service.

Hotels need to provide for an enterprise level infrastructure that can support new technology concepts through software upgrades and easy to retrofit products. The fast pace of technology development means it is unrealistic to wait for 10-year refurbishment cycles to react to new consumer trends and expectations. A strong IoT infrastructure, data warehouse and upgradable devices in the hotel are therefore a must.
References


Interview with Abhi Bose, Business Head, TechMTE. October 30, 2017

Interview with Alex Shashou, President & Co-Founder, ALICE. October 18, 2017

Interview with Armand Rabinowitz, Senior Director of Strategy and Workgroups, Hospitality Technology Next Generation (HTNG). October 18, 2017

Interview with Charles Cadbury, Co-Founder at Dazzle Technology. October 9, 2017

Interview with Darren Panto, Business Development Director for IRIS Software Systems. October 11, 2017

Interview with Florian Kriechbaumer, Director of Operations & Development, INTEREL. October 13, 2017

Interview with Hammad Hussain, Managing Director of UK and Ireland, Tink Labs. October 30, 2017

Interview with Jeffrey Parker, Vice President of Hospitality Systems, Red Lion Hotels Corporation. October 24, 2017

Interview with Kasia Pankowska, Founder and CEO, Stay Planner. October 12, 2017
Interview with Pablo Rodríguez, Marketing Manager, STAY. October 19, 2017

Interview with Robert Holland, Managing Director UK & Ireland, HotelPartner Yield Management & Chief Technology Adviser, British Hospitality Association (BHA). October 24, 2017

Interview with Roger El Khoury, Managing Partner, NEORCHA. October 20, 2017

Interview with Tim Sullivan, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Cendyn. October 17, 2017


