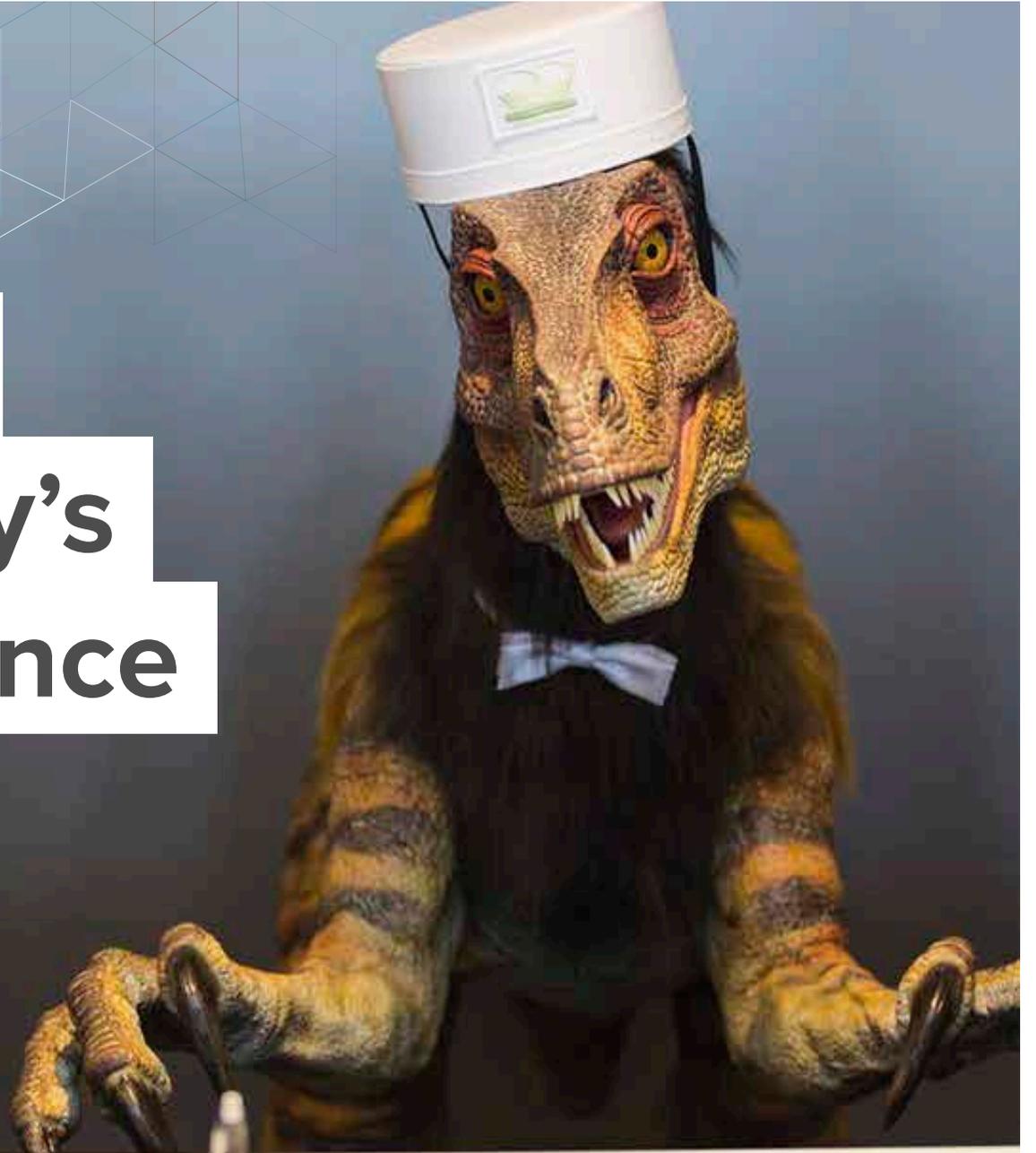


eBook

Technologies Shaping Today's Guest Experience



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Introduction

Every year presents new technology trends and forecasts for the hotel industry. Some gather attention without being very substantive, while others offer hotels something truly new, solving the specific problems hoteliers face.

From a customer perspective, the hotel experience has become increasingly fragmented, with a multitude of touchpoints that don't necessarily contribute to the overall experience. The result is customers who feel increasingly disconnected with the hotel brand, reducing brand affinity and loyalty. Hotels that respond by trying to offer more value face the problem of perks quickly becoming standardised. Free Wi-Fi, complimentary breakfast and discounted dining are relatively easy to put a dollar figure to and are easily compared across hotels.

An alternative way to build loyalty involves offering a truly personalised experience, which can't be replicated because each visit presents a unique opportunity to create a one-of-a-kind experience based on what you know about your guest. In the past, personalising guest experience has been a manual process for hotels. Now, major technological advances have transformed the concept of 'personalisation-at-scale' from a pipe dream into a reality.

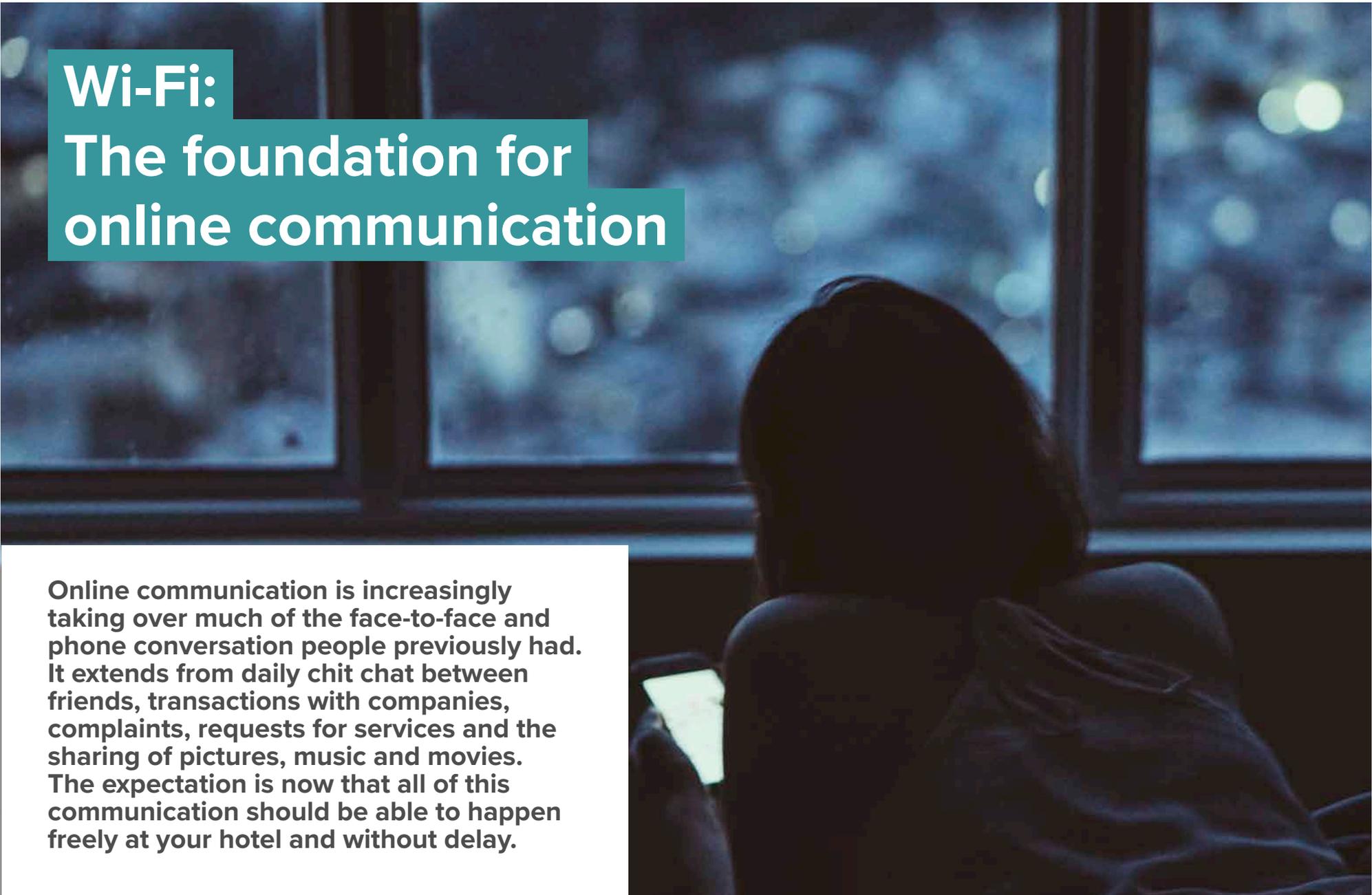
Today's customers are more educated and have more choice than ever before. Their customer journey with your brand happens online, on social media, through word of mouth, and in-person. Your guests retain context of their experiences across every interaction they've had with your brand; but does your brand retain context across every touchpoint you have with them?

The winners in this new era will be the brands who are cutting-edge enough to take risks, and visionary enough to leverage the right technologies in the right ways and integrate them together, to create a seamless omnichannel experience. We know that guests are wired and ready to go. They have the devices and the platforms that allow you to connect with them directly. Their tastes and preferences are broadcasted for everyone to see. The ball is now in your court to create a unique connection.

Part 1:

Technologies that can transform customer service

The principles of customer service have not changed. Anticipating the needs of guests, seeking to understand them and catering to their needs have always been fundamental. New technologies and how people use them force us to readdress how we deliver our service. Wi-Fi, Messaging, Artificial Intelligence and Location Services are not simply add-ons to the guest experience – they allow us to completely redesign it, for each individual guest.

A person is seen from behind, sitting on a bed or couch in a dimly lit room. They are looking out a window at night, where city lights are visible as bokeh. The person is holding a smartphone in their hands, and the screen is illuminated. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

Wi-Fi: The foundation for online communication

Online communication is increasingly taking over much of the face-to-face and phone conversation people previously had. It extends from daily chit chat between friends, transactions with companies, complaints, requests for services and the sharing of pictures, music and movies. The expectation is now that all of this communication should be able to happen freely at your hotel and without delay.

The growing demand for data

Demand for data has been a challenge for hotels and particularly large hotels where that demand requires a huge amount of bandwidth. Guests have an expectation to be able to consume rich media content at high speeds from multiple devices, requiring hotels to continually invest in upgrading their network infrastructure or risk providing a poor guest experience with patchy connections in room and time-capped usage or charges for usage. In-room network connectivity is used for:

- VoIP calls (Voice over IP)
- Direct messaging
- Streaming video and music
- Video conferencing/chat
- Gaming
- Online shopping

When it comes to global travellers, 87% use mobile devices while travelling.¹ A Cisco report projects that the average number of devices and connections per capita will grow globally to 3.2 by 2020.² These devices are being used to access richer and richer content as well. Millennials spend nearly 50% of their time watching movies and TV shows on devices other than a TV, primarily laptops/desktops, followed by smartphones and tablets.

It's worth bearing in mind that good technology gets out of the way of what people want to do. When there are blockages or an excessive number of steps required before people can get online, it can feel like the hotel is simply getting in the way.

¹ TripAdvisor (2013). TripBarometer - APAC: Social and Mobile, 22 October 2013. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/TripAdvisorInsights/n2006/tripbarometer-apac-social-and-mobile>

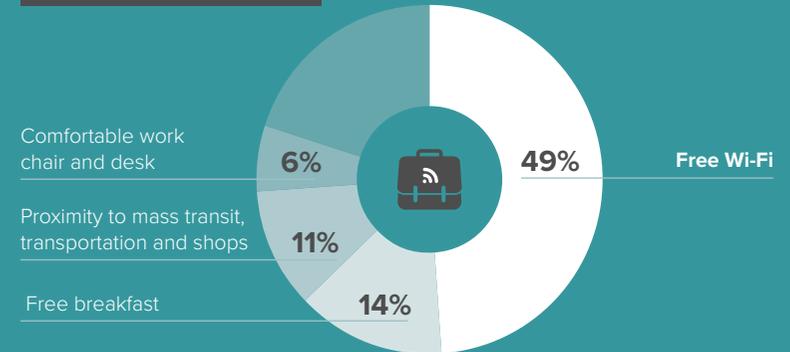
² Condon, Stephanie 2016, 'IoT will account for nearly half of connected devices by 2020, Cisco says', Zdnet, 7 June. Retrieved February 2017 from <http://www.zdnet.com/article/iot-will-account-for-nearly-half-of-connected-devices-by-2020-cisco-says/>

Chart recreated from Forbes chart based on research from Hotels.com
McCarthy, Niall, 2015, 'Most Travelers Consider Free Wi-Fi The Most Important Factor In Choosing A Hotel', Forbes, 3 August. Retrieved February 2017 from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2015/08/03/most-travelers-consider-free-wi-fi-the-most-important-factor-in-choosing-a-hotel-infographic/#25c2a6a060b2>

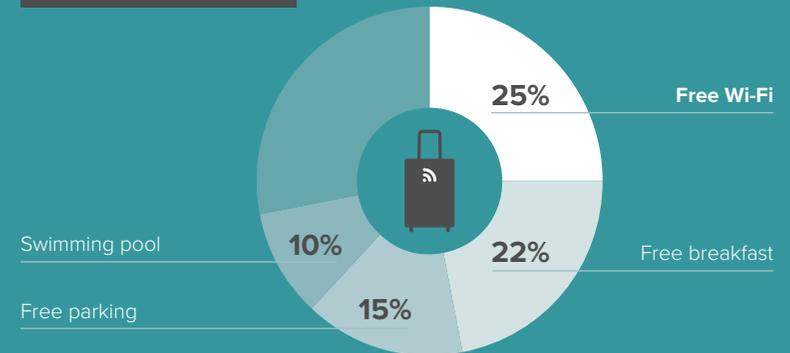
Free Wi-Fi plays a big role in choosing a hotel

Hotel amenities considered the most important by business/leisure travellers worldwide in 2015

Business travellers



Leisure travellers



4 ways guest Wi-Fi pays off for hotels



Efficiency in operations

Some Wi-Fi controllers can enable location services using beacons. Location based services can tell you where guests are spending their time and allow you to optimise operations.



Free marketing

75% of millennials³ post to their social media networks at least once a day while travelling, offering essentially free marketing. Wi-Fi enables them to post freely and frequently.



Guest engagement

Hotel Wi-Fi allows you to reach guests at anytime with personalised communications, wherever they are on property.

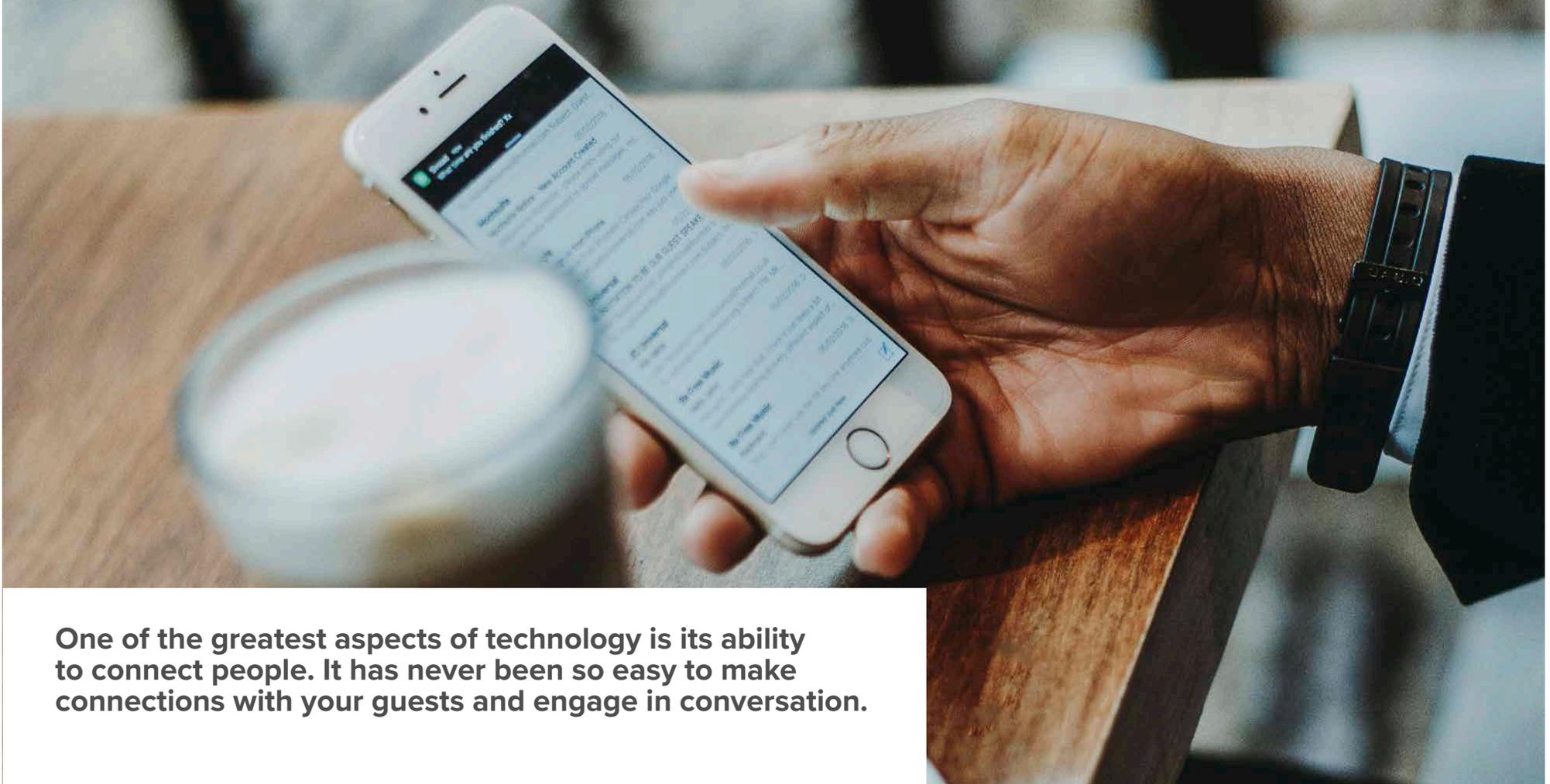


Mobile POS

Mobile POS systems mean that sales can literally happen anywhere. Push out spa promotions while guests are at the pool or send drink vouchers while they sit at the hotel bar.

³ Urbanner Creative 2016, 'Millennial Expectations Are Reshaping Travel Industry', 19 February, The G Brief. Retrieved February 2017 from <http://thebrief.com/articles/millennial-expectations-are-reshaping-travel-industry-602>

Messaging: Connecting with guests



One of the greatest aspects of technology is its ability to connect people. It has never been so easy to make connections with your guests and engage in conversation.

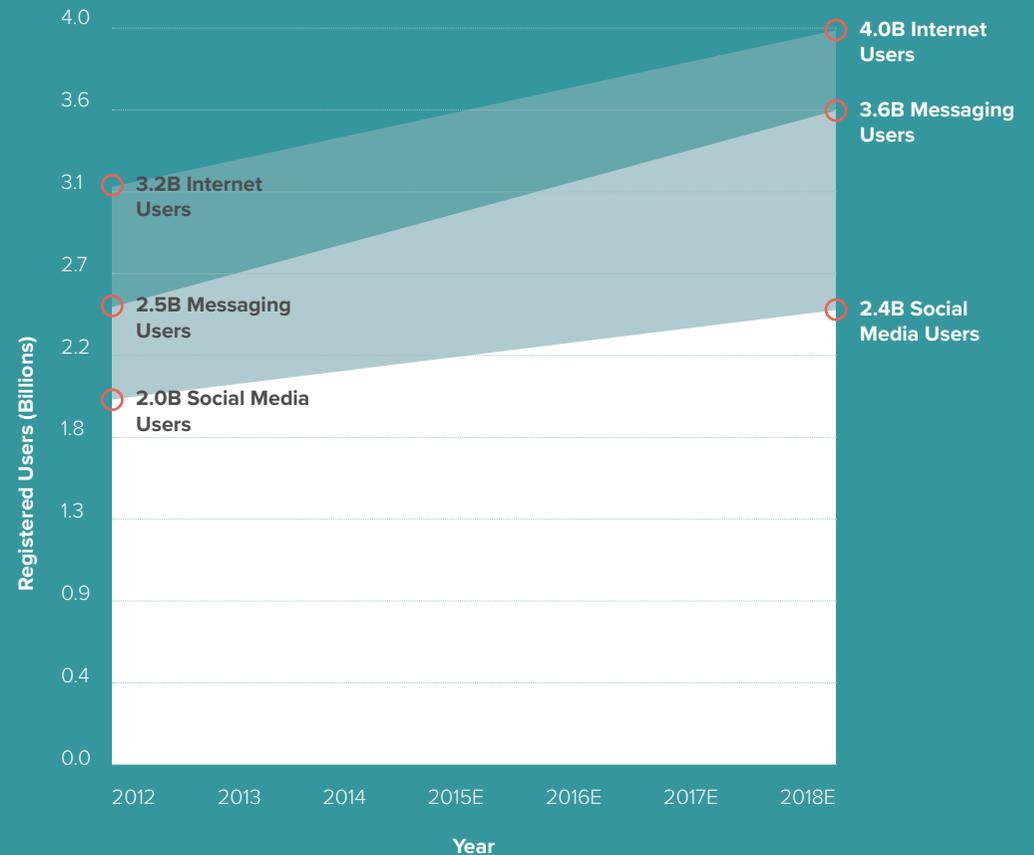
The rise of messaging

We now know that travellers use their smartphones more when they are away than while they're at home.⁴ The rise of messaging technology over the last couple of years has caught the attention of just about every major hotel chain. Messaging is the fastest growing user behaviour within all social media.⁵ It is also one of the easiest, and most personal forms of digital communication. For Guest Experience Managers, a key benefit is that it allows staff to be proactive in their communication, rather than wait by a phone for guest requests and complaints to come through, opening up more of a two-way dialogue.

TV messaging

Aside from guests using their own mobile devices, the in-room TV is another device that allows hotels to communicate directly with guests. Specifically designed platforms, like vuTyme, allow staff to send a message to a guest individually, to a group of guests, or even guests staying at 20 different properties within the same enterprise. While it represents a one-way means of communication, it enables guests to see on-screen updates that are relevant to them, whenever they want.

Projected use of messaging apps by 2018



⁴ Bujarski, L. and Montali, D. and Skift Team (2017). The 2017 Digital Transformation Report, Skift. Retrieved February 2017 from www.skift.com

⁵ Ali, Rafat and Peltier, Dan 2016, 'Skift Travel Megatrend for 2016: Messaging Is the New Language of the Globe', Skift, 8 February. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://skift.com/2016/02/08/skift-megatrend-for-2016-messaging-is-the-new-language-of-the-globe/>

Ali, Rafat and Peltier, Dan 2016, 'Skift Travel Megatrend for 2016: Messaging Is the New Language of the Globe', Skift, 8 February. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://skift.com/2016/02/08/skift-megatrend-for-2016-messaging-is-the-new-language-of-the-globe/>



In-app messaging

Hotel chains have begun experimenting with different forms of chat, from text messaging, to Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp, and WeChat. Larger hotels that have already invested in a proprietary app, are more likely to use in-app messaging. One of the biggest advantages to in-app messaging is the ability to deliver rich content to the guest. Another is the ability to marry the information provided through the app with the guest's loyalty profile. A global hotel chain might also not want the task of managing communications through multiple third party apps across different regions. Some hotels, such as Virgin, have developed messaging platforms to allow guests to chat with each other.

Third-party apps and SMS

Third-party apps Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger alone see 60 billion messages sent daily. This is three times more than for SMS.⁶ Some hotels have found that guests prefer to be contacted through the channels that they are already using. Twitter has become more functional as a channel for direct messaging with the expansion of its character cap to 10,000 for direct messages. As an example of complete inclusivity, Starwood Hotels are running a program to allow hotel staff to respond to guests 24/7 on various platforms, with a target response time of 60 seconds. Starwood VP, Daniel Kerzner said that staff members at participating hotels carry mobile phones synced to the specific numbers that work for various platforms, such as iPhones to respond to iMessages.⁷ This approach is really about taking a customer-centric view. While clarification will sometimes be needed when a number is unknown and unmatched to a hotel room, it is a near frictionless experience for the hotel guest.

⁶ Ting, Deanna, 2016, 'How Smart Hotels Use Messaging to Connect With Guests', Skift, 26 August. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://skift.com/2016/08/26/how-smart-hotels-use-messaging-to-connect-with-guests/>

⁷ Ibid

Automating the conversation with bots

Bots could be the answer to a hotel's need for automation, with their ability to act like a virtual assistant for guests. Facebook Messenger has incorporated bots to allow businesses to deliver automated customer support, e-commerce guidance, content and interactive experiences.

InterContinental has been quick to make use of bots. They developed a bot for Facebook Messenger and can send guests an invitation to their bot after that person books a stay.⁸ The bot then acts as the guest's virtual assistant during their stay, allowing them to speak directly to the hotel's social care team and see neighbourhood guides. The hotel group has also tested providing concierge service through live video chat on Skype and Apple's Facetime.

Managing messaging workflow

Hotels adopting messaging technology tend to experience a significant increase in the number of issues brought forward, from burnt out light bulbs, to jets in the spa bath not working. Guests will feel comfortable texting these sort of issues where otherwise they might have not mentioned them until checkout or through a TripAdvisor rating. In other words, time and effort is put in upfront in order to recover from service issues, resulting in a higher overall guest satisfaction rating.

Hotels need to consider the different departments using the messaging service. While housekeeping may need to see the most recent messages in real-time, concierge might need to look at a longer time frame if they are making restaurant bookings in advance. A funneling or a routing system may be required in order to optimise operations.

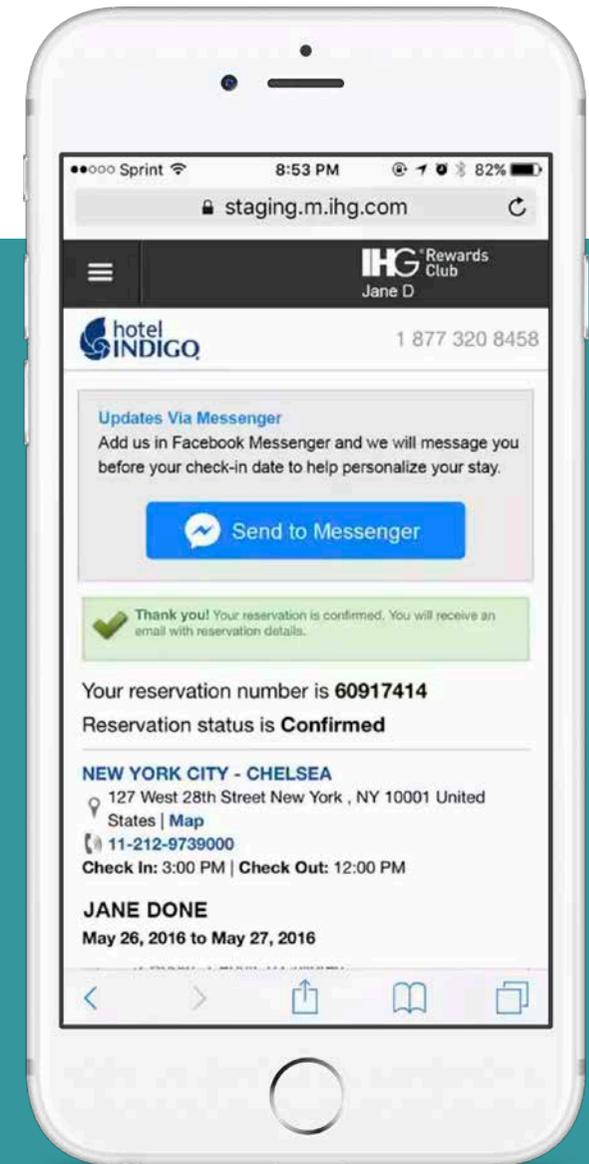
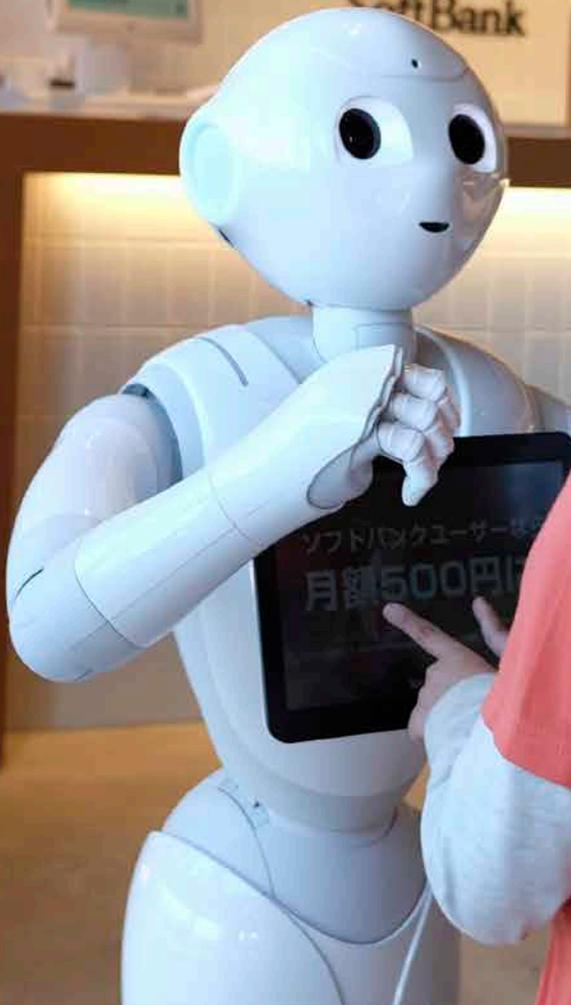


Image Source: USA Today, 1 July. Retrieved February 2017 from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/roadwarriorvoices/2016/07/01/ihg-start-communicating-guests-through-facebook-messenger/86610710/>

⁸ Trejos, Nancy, 2016, 'IHG to start communicating with guests through Facebook Messenger', USA Today, 1 July. Retrieved February 2017 from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/roadwarriorvoices/2016/07/01/ihg-start-communicating-guests-through-facebook-messenger/86610710/>

Artificial Intelligence: Understanding your guests

Hear what your guests have to say, see what their needs are and then respond – even when no one is around.



Artificial Intelligence (AI)

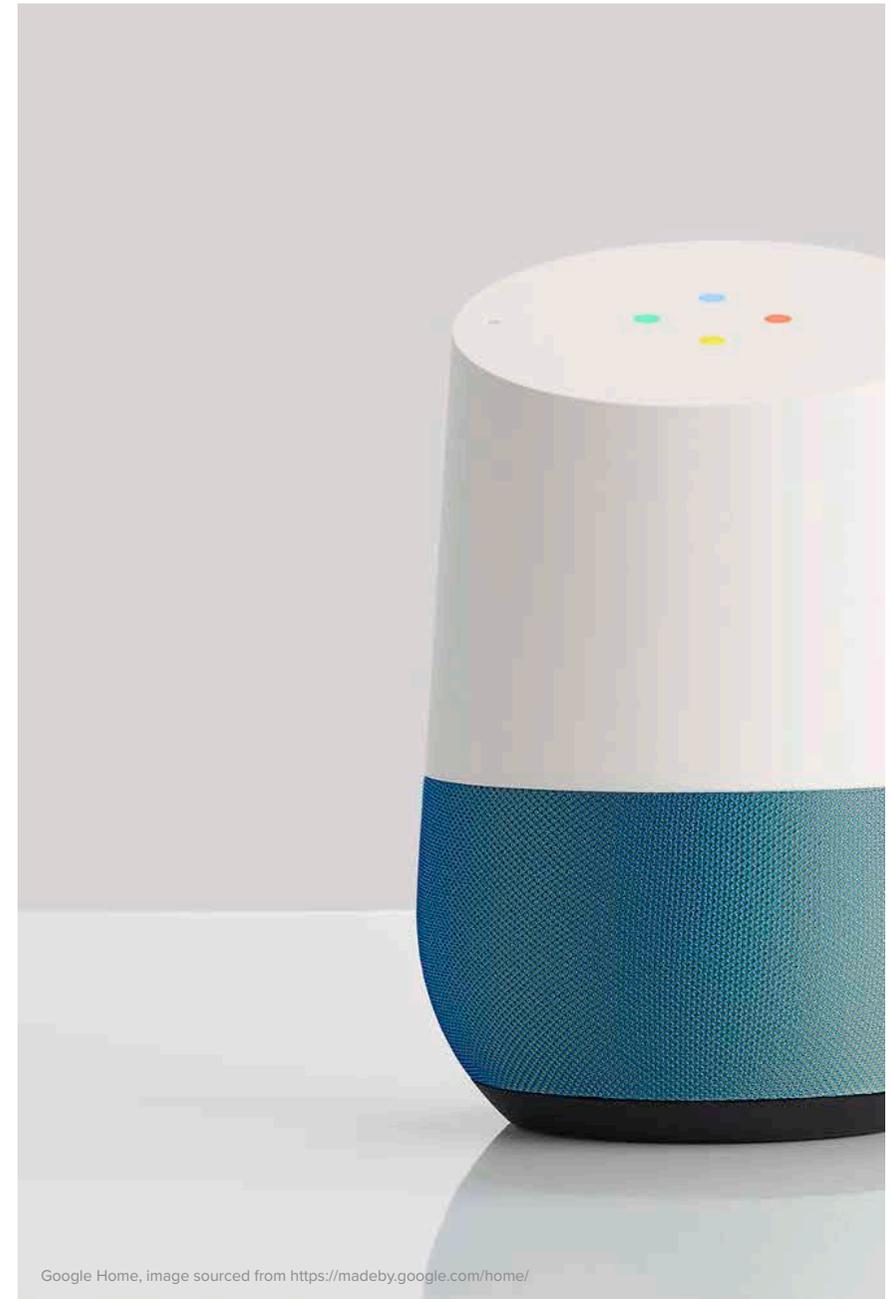
AI allows us to create personalised experiences and predict behaviour by interpreting large quantities of data. AI differs from traditional programming in that it centres around machine learning. Where before we had to know the information in order to make inputs, AI allows machines to continuously develop and improve knowledge across vast and varied data sets. The ability to create feedback loops that allow the systems to improve on their own is central to AI.

Most people are already comfortable with computers attempting to predict their behaviour. (Who doesn't appreciate Netflix's movie suggestions, and who hasn't noticed the tailored ads in their Gmail?) In the case of hotels, data can be collected across each stage from planning through to booking and throughout the guest's stay, to provide personalised recommendations to improve their experiences.

Voice-controlled technology

Gartner predicts that by 2018, "30% of our interactions with technology will be through 'conversations' with smart machines."⁹ Amazon's Echo speaker has been on the market since 2014 and people who have purchased it report using it for everything from playing music, to looking up information and controlling other connected devices.¹⁰ Google Home was released in November 2016 and both Microsoft and Apple are reportedly working on competing systems.

These systems have skills, the way smartphones have apps, and the number of skills they have keeps expanding. Some of the most practical skills include paying bills, managing to-do lists, controlling lights and music, ordering Ubers, making food and wine suggestions, and planning travel.



Google Home, image sourced from <https://madeby.google.com/home/>

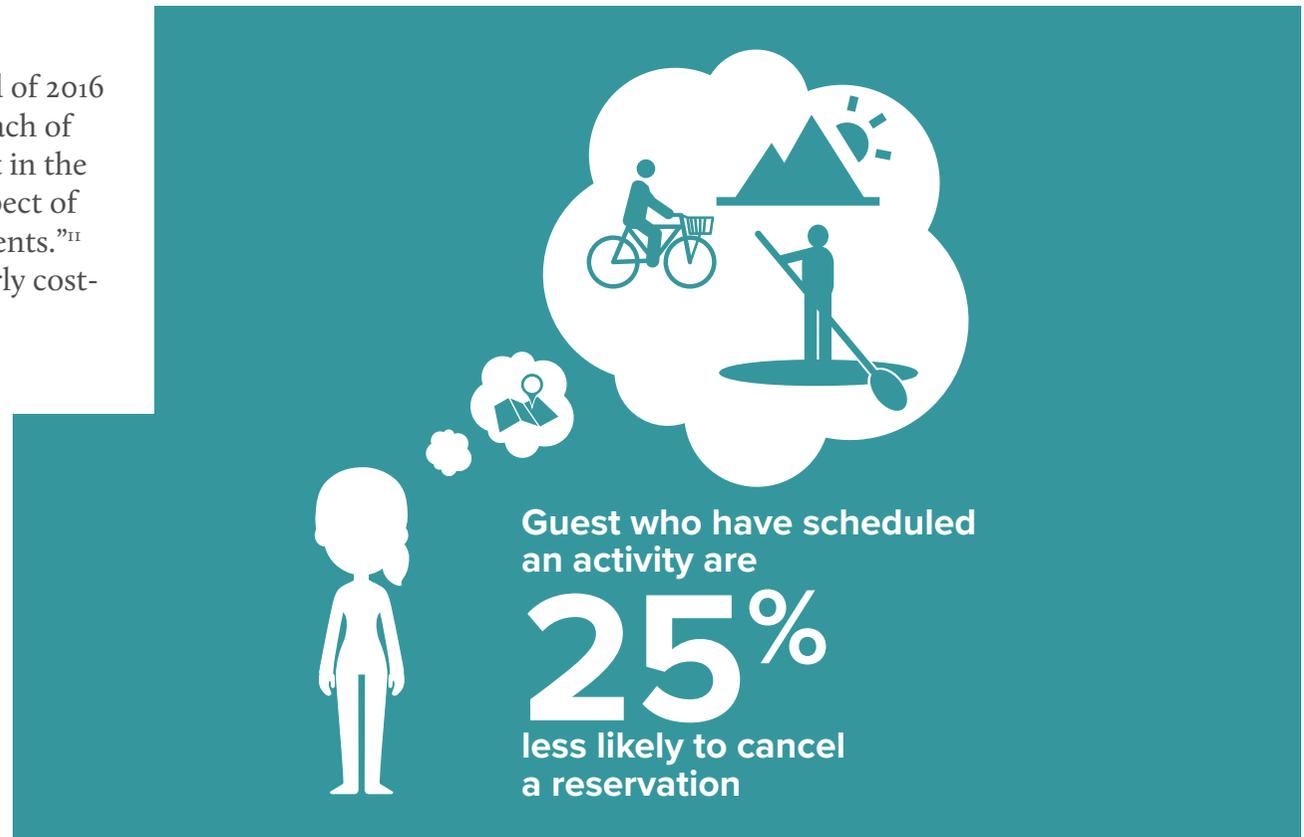
Bringing AI to life for guests

When used in conjunction with speaker systems like Amazon Echo or Google Home, we could create skills aimed at specific guests, depending on the information we have about them. The speaker could inform the guest of these skills when they arrive in their room, much like how a butler might inform a guest of the personal services they offer. From restaurant bookings, to suggesting cultural events, to setting room temperature and lighting, AI allows the hotel to perform actions that are informed and specific to the individual guest.

The Wynn Hotel in Las Vegas announced at the end of 2016 that it is working on installing Amazon Echo into each of its 4,748 rooms and plans to become “the first resort in the world in which guests can verbally control every aspect of lighting, temperature and the audio-visual components.”¹¹ While these speaker devices themselves are not overly cost-prohibitive, they do require reliable Wi-Fi networks – a feature that many hotels are still catching up on.

Automating communications

The integration of systems is critical for AI to function – without data there is nothing to build upon. Once you know a guest’s interests and online habits, it is easy to send tailored communications. A well-timed offer can even help reduce cancellations. A joint report by Skift and Cendyn found that a guest who schedules an activity before arriving is 25% less likely to cancel a reservation. Knowing this, a hotel might send out an offer for an activity relevant to the specific guest before they arrive.



⁹ Escherich, Meike & Goertz, Werner (2016). 'Market Trends: Voice as a UI on Consumer Devices – What Do Users Want?', Gartner, 14 September. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://www.gartner.com/doc/3021226/market-trends-voice-ui-consumer>

¹⁰ Consumer Intelligence Research Partners Llc. (2016). Amazon Echo – What We Know Now [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://files.ctctcdn.com/150f9af2201/f4d466bb-0ef8-4568-9918-b8648e6375e1.pdf>

¹¹ PR Newswire. (2016). Wynn Las Vegas Announces the Addition of Amazon Echo to All Hotel Rooms [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/wynn-las-vegas-announces-the-addition-of-amazon-echo-to-all-hotel-rooms-300377995.html>

A woman with long brown hair, wearing dark sunglasses and a dark swimsuit, is sitting on a lounge chair by a swimming pool. She is holding a tablet computer in her hands and looking at the screen. The background shows a clear blue pool and some trees in the distance. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Location: Contextual Intelligence

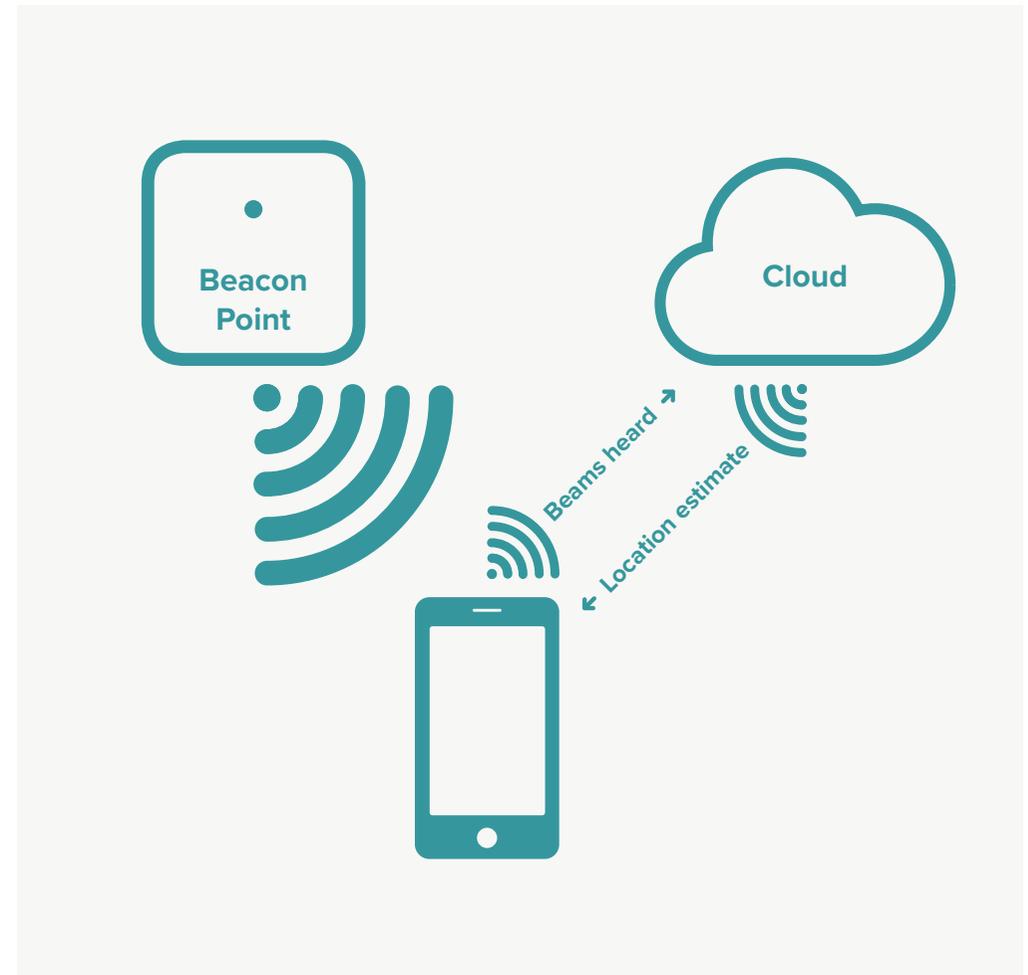
Contextual intelligence allows you to respond to guests more precisely and with a greater understanding of their needs. From an operational perspective, it also allows you to predict and automate interactions.

Location services: GPS and Beacons

GPS is one of the most fundamental features of smartphones and is what provides the contextual information related to activity performed on a mobile device. While GPS works well in pinpointing locations across broad geographical areas, it cannot adequately inform us of a guest's micro location – such as where they are within your hotel.

Beacons, which came into popularity a few years back, are devices that can be positioned around a property and transmit an individual's specific location. Virtual beacons rely on a Wi-Fi network to transmit, rather than using a Bluetooth signal. The benefit of these is that you only need one piece of hardware for your Wi-Fi and beacons. They are also easier to maintain because they don't need to be physically installed or have their batteries replaced. The beacon points have IP addresses and can easily be managed by a network team. By knowing the micro-location of people on-premises hotels can:

- identify guests versus staff in different areas of the hotel
- send personalised notifications to guests depending on where they are, such as providing information about art for guests looking at an exhibit in the hotel, or informing them of dinner specials when they are near the restaurant
- incentivise guests at key moments, such as offering a discount on a spa service or two-for-one drinks at the bar
- help staff understand the way your guests are utilising the space, such as the average amount of time spent at breakfast, length of time spent waiting to check in, and other facilities they've visited during their stay. On the customer-facing side, analytics can notify guests when the gym is reasonably free, or when the hotel bar is buzzing.



Social listening

In a 2016 traveller behaviour survey, 70% of travellers reported that they were very likely to share their holiday pictures on social media.¹² Listening to social media posts related to your hotel can reveal qualitative, contextual insights into the experiences and preferences of your customers. Hashtags and @mentions are the traditional way to do this, but often lack the important context of location.

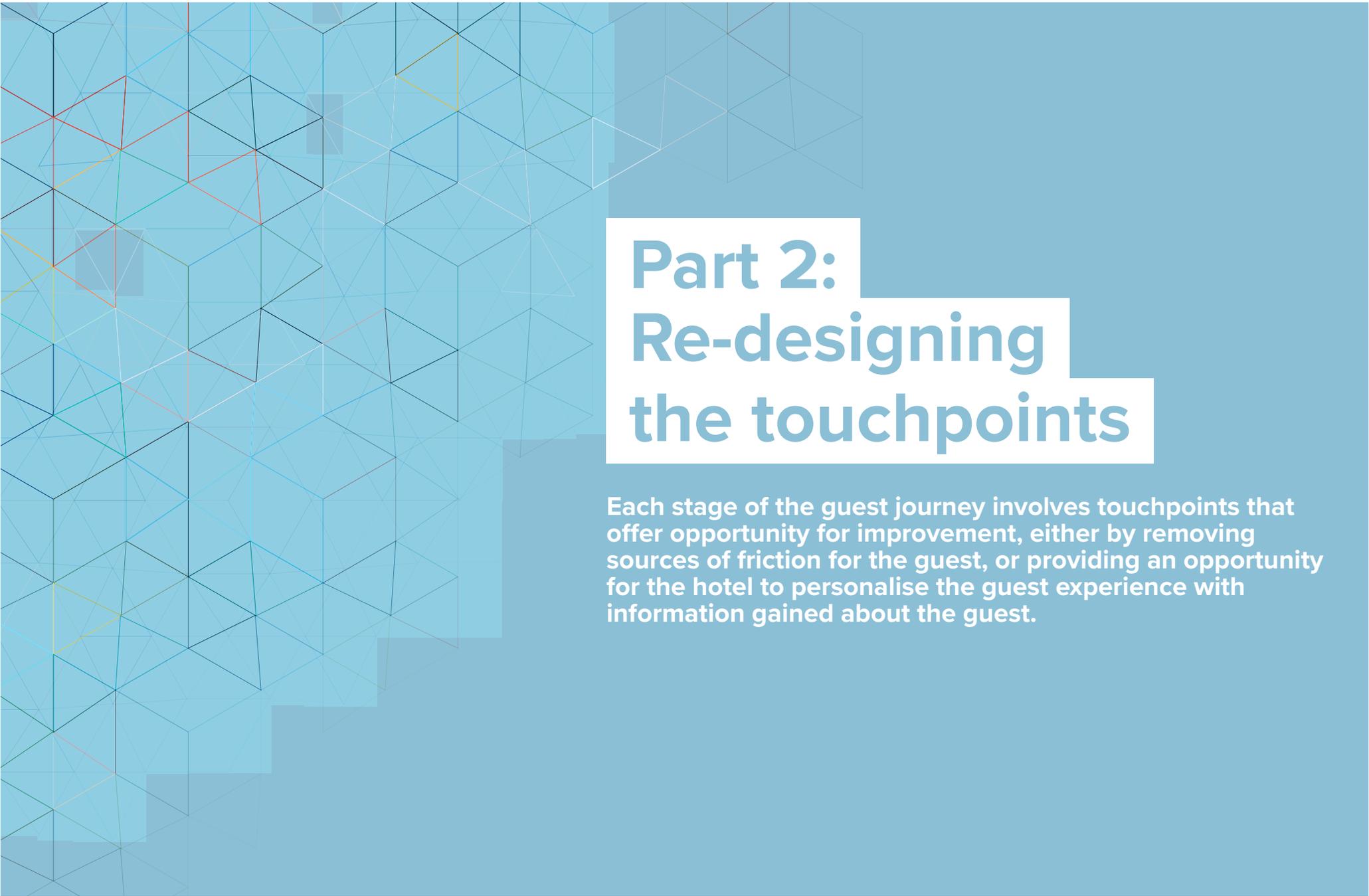
Location based social listening has all the benefits of traditional social listening, with the added benefit of mapping all publicly posted social content to the specific hotel property where it was shared. A geo-fence allows you to target your hotel by defining the perimeter of an area you wish to monitor. In addition to setting a geo-fence, some social listening tools also allow you to add in whatever specific geo-tagged areas are relevant (these might sit outside of the circle or are not otherwise distinguished). For instance, individuals might have geo-tagged your spa as its own location on Instagram, and geo-tagged your tennis courts as another, while your hotel restaurant is a third.



Social media goes beyond just monitoring and listening; it provides a context-driven opportunity for a hotels to create meaningful interactions with guests. Local Measure has found that, of those guests who post on social media during their stay, those whose social posts are engaged by the hotel are 40% more likely to return.¹³ This statistic highlights that personal connections matter and contribute to the overall experience guests are seeking when they travel. Doing this well is an opportunity for hotel brands to set themselves apart.

¹² Bujarski, L. and Montali, D. and Skift Team (2017), The 2017 Digital Transformation Report, Skift. Retrieved February 2017 from www.skift.com

¹³ Local Measure (2016), Engaged guests are 40% more likely to return. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://www.localmeasure.com/resources/research/engaged-guests-are-40-more-likely-to-return>



Part 2: Re-designing the touchpoints

Each stage of the guest journey involves touchpoints that offer opportunity for improvement, either by removing sources of friction for the guest, or providing an opportunity for the hotel to personalise the guest experience with information gained about the guest.

Check-in



When you consider everything that's involved in a check-in: the greeting, a financial transaction, ID verification, orientation, information exchange – it's likely that the guest experience of this touchpoint could be improved if not completely redesigned. For example, much of what happens during a check-in could actually take place before the guests arrive, simplifying what's required when a guest enters the hotel, weary from travel. A truly personalised check-in process is one that meets the individual's own preferences - whether that's to be greeted and guided in person, or an automatic process that requires no staff interaction.

Hotels can better prepare for guests' arrival by finding out more about their guests and the context of their trip prior to check-in. A welcome email is an ideal time to ask guests what time they expect to arrive, what breakfast or mini bar preferences they have, whether the trip is for work or pleasure, or whether they would like to book transport from the airport. An email before the guest arrives is also an ideal time to introduce them to local activities and make upsells. Google found that one of the most searched for travel questions is 'what to do in [destination]'.¹⁴ Hotels are a natural authority on tours and activities and by offering this sort of content, you can gain information about your guest that will allow you to personalise their experience.

¹⁴ Think with Google. (2016). Travel Dashboard – A Look Back at Recent Trends, Google Data, Apr 2014–Mar 2016, United States. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/category-trends/travel-hotel-q2-2016.html>



Informal Check-in:

Andaz is an example of a hotel chain that have reception staff circulate in the lobby rather than stand behind a desk. The staff invite newly arriving guests to sit down in the lobby and enjoy a complimentary drink. The staff member sits with them and completes the check-in process on a tablet. After a potentially long period of travel and waiting in lines, guests can take immediate relief by sitting down and taking in their environment. One benefit to this style is that it allows the staff member to gauge how the guest is feeling and opens the door for more informal conversation, translating into knowledge about your guest.



Self Serve Check-in:

Many hotel chains, such as Accor, offer an online check-in process. This begins with an email that is sent out a day or two prior to arrival. Guests who have checked-in online simply need to pick up their key once they arrive. At certain Starwood properties, such as Aloft hotel, the check-in process can be carried out through the guest's mobile. Once the guest has registered their phone through the app, they receive a push notification prompting them to opt-in for keyless entry. When the room is ready, they receive another notification to view the room number and unlock the door. While this process certainly isn't for everyone, business travellers and tech-savvy guests might appreciate the efficiency and seamlessness.



Futuristic Check-in:

There is a novelty factor in using a robot or a holograph, but the main benefit lies in the automation of processes. At Japan's Henn-na Hotel, robots that look like dinosaurs stand behind check-in desks and ask you to enter information through a touch panel before directing your gaze towards a facial recognition tower that enables keyless entry.¹⁵ Softbank's 'Pepper' is the first humanoid robot capable of recognising human emotions and adapting its behaviour to mood. At Oakland's airport in California, Pepper soothes frazzled travellers, helps lost kids find their way, and offers updates on flights.¹⁶ As the application of robot technology still needs refining, it's best presented as an alternative experience and backed up by the presence of service staff.

¹⁵ Lewis-Kraus, Gideon (2016), 'Check In With the Velociraptor at the World's First Robot Hotel', *Wired*, 2 March. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://www.wired.com/2016/03/robot-henn-na-hotel-japan/>

¹⁶ Fuller, Daniel (2017), 'SoftBank's Pepper Robot Spotted At Oakland Airport', *Android Headlines*, 27 January. Retrieved February 2017 from <http://www.androidheadlines.com/2017/01/softbanks-pepper-robot-spotted-at-oakland-airport.html>

In-room



The hotel room is a veritable menu of ‘things’ waiting to be connected. From the thermostat, to lighting, to the bed, the TV, coffee maker, music, minibar and phone, each of these items has the potential to be personalised. The hotel industry now leads all other industries in its investment of ‘the internet of things’.¹⁷

¹⁷ Adobe, Epsilon & Skift (2016), ‘How the Internet of Things Will Impact Travel in 2017 and Beyond’, Skift, 19 December. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://skift.com/2016/12/19/how-the-internet-of-things-will-impact-travel-in-2017-and-beyond/>



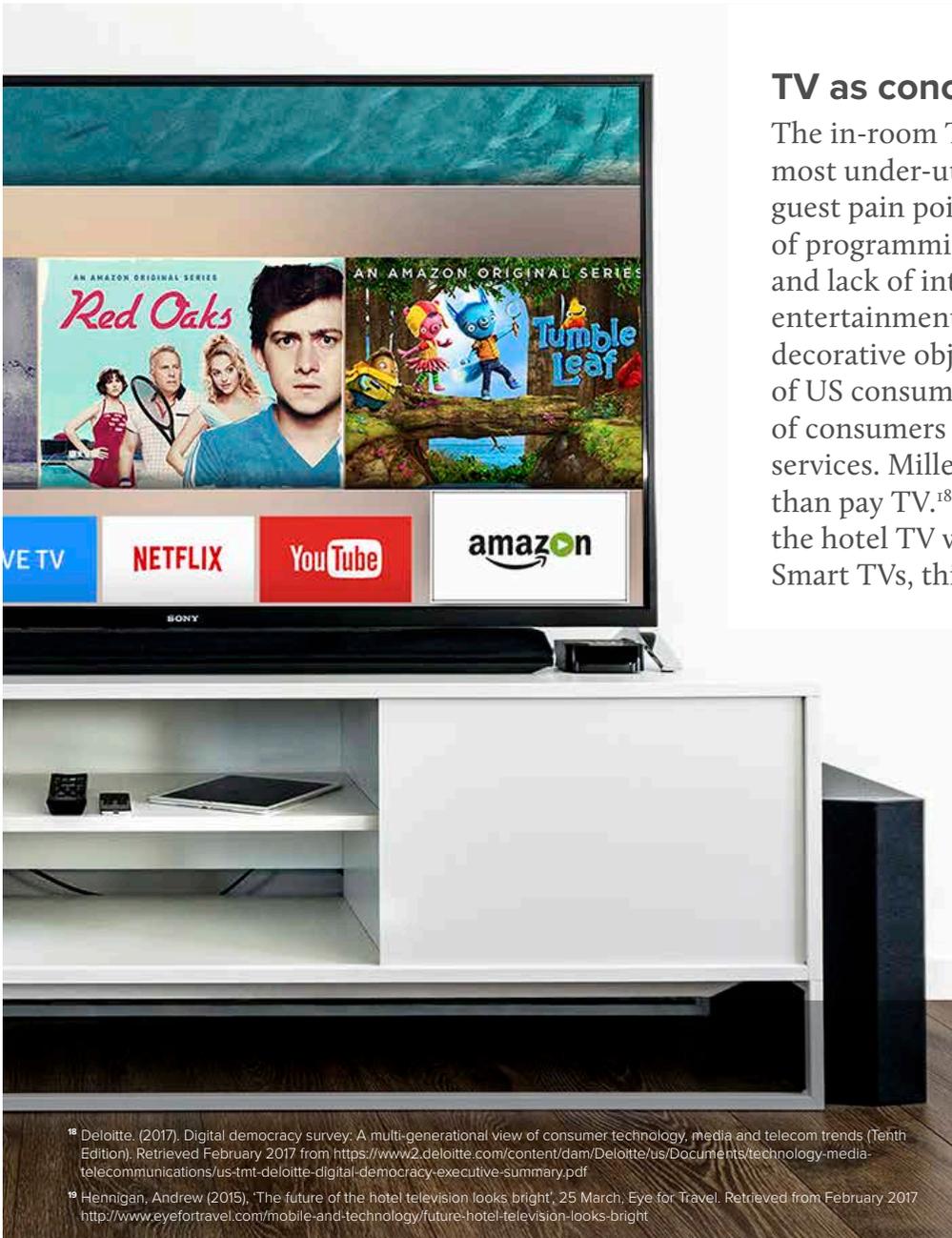
Keyless entry

With a hotel app and Near Field Communication (NFC) technology or beacons, having a key to your hotel room becomes redundant. Remembering that the best technology removes friction points so that people can focus on having a good time, consider the experience of simply arriving in the hotel lobby, getting in the lift and then walking straight into your room – all without having to pause or put your bags down. When you want to leave your room, there is no need to search for the key and you can wander between the gym, the pool and other spaces without having to carry anything other than your mobile. A beacon or NFC technology will simply pick up a signal from the guest's mobile phone whenever they are within proximity of their room or communal guest areas.

Lighting, temperature and decor, just the way you like it

Converged LAN networks enable hotels to bring together various building services and pre-program them for different rooms. Whether triggered on check-in or when the guest unlocks the room door, the right lighting and temperature can be set for any preference. If you are expecting guests from a hot climate to arrive at night, you could set the room a couple of degrees warmer with the lights dimmed to 60% before they arrive. The connection, enabled through an app, can also let hotel staff monitor the electricity usage of that room. Additionally, heat detecting sensors can sense when guests are in rooms so that housekeeping need not knock on doors, disturbing sleeping guests.

When it comes to decor, guests could choose what artwork they want to have displayed using in-room screens. By offering a selection of local art, guests can get a taste of the local culture and be tempted to further explore.



TV as concierge

The in-room TV is the focal point of most hotel rooms and yet is probably one of the most under-utilised devices when it comes to delivering guest experience. Frequent guest pain points include: lack of content in guests' native language, poor selection of programming, automatic resetting to information screens when turned on/off, and lack of interactive channel guides. With the internet now our main source for entertainment, those high definition, flat screen TVs might become nothing more than decorative objects unless they are made to deliver the services guests want. Nearly half of US consumers now subscribe to a streaming video service. Of those subscribers, 61% of consumers value their streaming video service among their top three subscription services. Millennials age 14-25 value their streaming video service subscriptions more than pay TV.¹⁸ The ability to stream movies, music and TV programs from a tablet to the hotel TV will soon become an expectation of hotels. If your rooms don't include Smart TVs, this will almost certainly be noticed by younger generations.

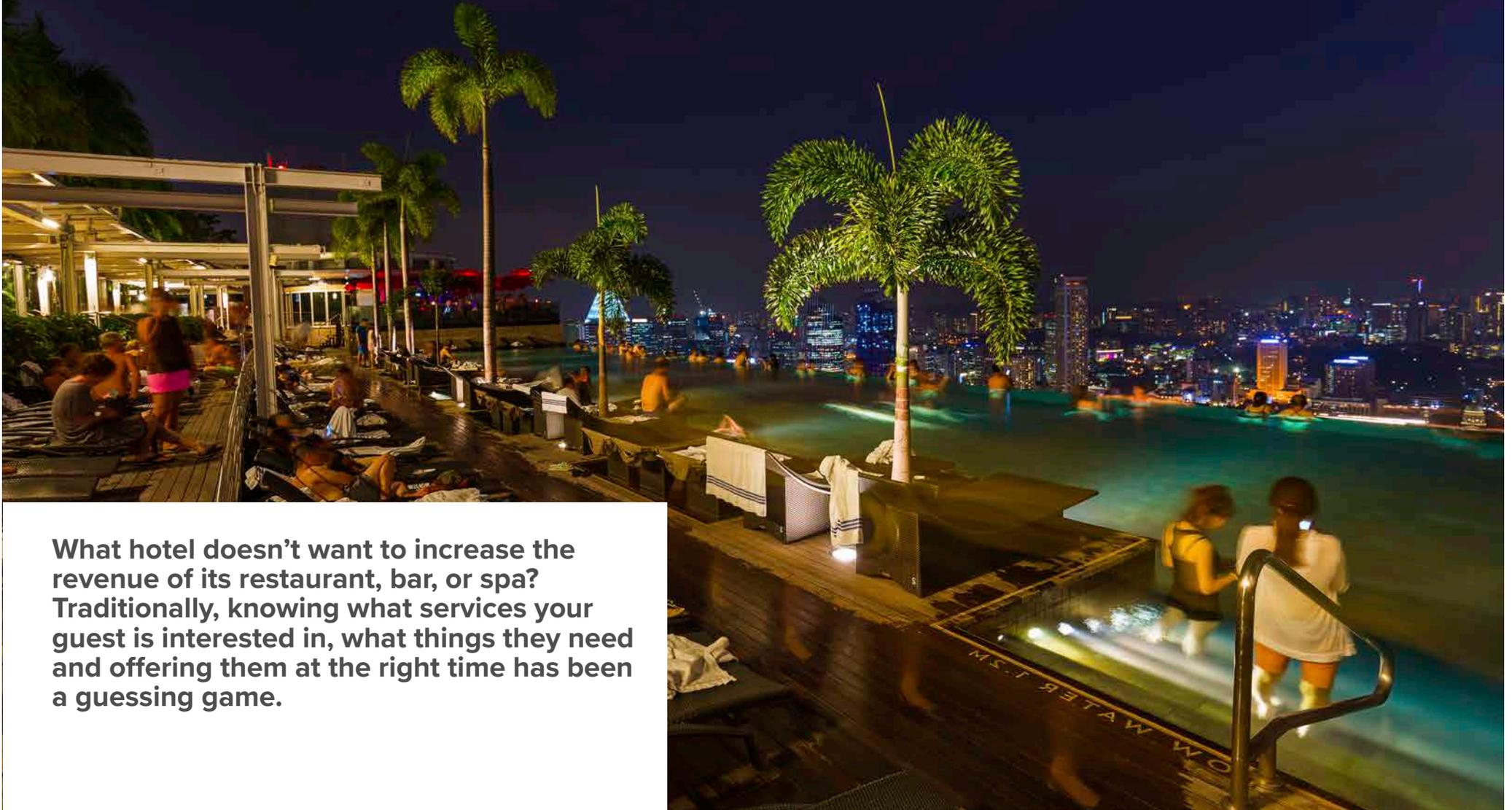
Since mobile plans often don't include enough data for frequent streaming of movies, guests may be willing to pay hotels for a higher tier of broadband during their stay.¹⁹ Smart TVs can also regain their usefulness by providing capabilities for:

- a personalised hotel message board for guests that guests can check for real-time information such as restaurant availability, delivered parcels, etc.
- internet browsing
- restaurant booking and menus
- connecting to online apps
- browsing hotel services and menus with rich content to showcase services, such as tours of the spa, or videos of different dishes being prepared by the chef.

¹⁸ Deloitte. (2017). Digital democracy survey: A multi-generational view of consumer technology, media and telecom trends (Tenth Edition). Retrieved February 2017 from <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/us-tmt-deloitte-digital-democracy-executive-summary.pdf>

¹⁹ Hennigan, Andrew (2015), 'The future of the hotel television looks bright', 25 March, Eye for Travel. Retrieved from February 2017 <http://www.eyefortravel.com/mobile-and-technology/future-hotel-television-looks-bright>

Around the hotel



What hotel doesn't want to increase the revenue of its restaurant, bar, or spa? Traditionally, knowing what services your guest is interested in, what things they need and offering them at the right time has been a guessing game.

Contextual content

Miami's iconic Fontainebleau hotel uses a phone's GPS to present a different mobile website to guests once they come within a certain radius of the hotel. Josh Herman, Director of Marketing and PR explained: "We're flipping the funnel process so you only get what you need on-property ... We had deep internal discussions to find out what it was that guests needed onsite—amenities, promotions, tickets to our nightclubs, what's on the menu."²⁰ By displaying only content that's relevant at the time, guests can find what they're looking for faster.

Way-finding

International guests for whom language is a barrier, might struggle finding their way around a large hotel. Often, asking for help is more difficult than receiving written directions where and when you need them. If someone is looking for the gym and, thanks to Wi-Fi, you know they are at the east end of level eight, you can simplify directions to "Turn right and take the lift down to level 2, the entrance to the gym will be on your left."

²⁰ Sabre (2017), Emerging Technology in Travel, Sabre Labs. Retrieved February 2017 from <https://www.sabre.com/labs/emergingtech/>

Service response

Knowing where guests are in the hotel and what the traffic flow is like in different areas allows hotels to optimise resources more effectively. Patterns and trends are more easily detected once the micro-location of guests is known. Data can be visually mapped out across floor plans, giving you a birds-eye view of where people are spending their time. You may for instance notice that Tuesday afternoons are an especially busy time at the bar and that you need to have more staff available there. If a large number of people suddenly show up at the restaurant, management could receive an alert that additional staff are required.

Hotel employees can also receive mobile alerts notifying them of guests posting comments on social media. The location-based alerts allow employees to respond to any negative situation that has occurred or find occasions to surprise and delight special guests or guests who are celebrating.

Targeted notifications

Using guest data points, Artificial Intelligence can help predict the services and activities that will be of interest to guests, and determine the best time to send notifications – either through email, direct messaging, or a mobile app. For instance, news about a dinner special could be sent to a guest at 6pm, or be triggered when the guest is within vicinity of the restaurant, or displayed on a SmartTV in the room.

"We're flipping the funnel process so you only get what you need on-property ... We had deep internal discussions to find out what it was that guests needed onsite—amenities, promotions, tickets to our nightclubs, what's on the menu."

Josh Herman
Fontainebleau Miami Beach
Director of Marketing and PR

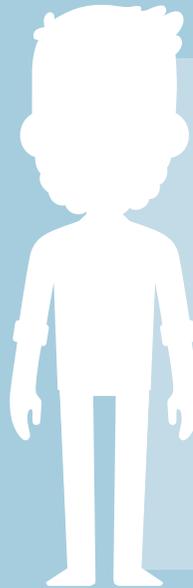
How AI can help you personalise guest communications

Guest Profile



Joanne

Foodie, domestic traveller, meeting friends in city



Michael

Travelling with kids, international traveller, long-haul flight



Ling

Frequent business traveller, repeat guest, uses gym

Service Action

- Mention specials at restaurant
- Offer voucher for hotel bar

- Offer specials on early bird meals
- Suggest kid-friendly activities close to hotel

- 'Welcome back' greeting
- Offer driver services
- Update on new gym equipment

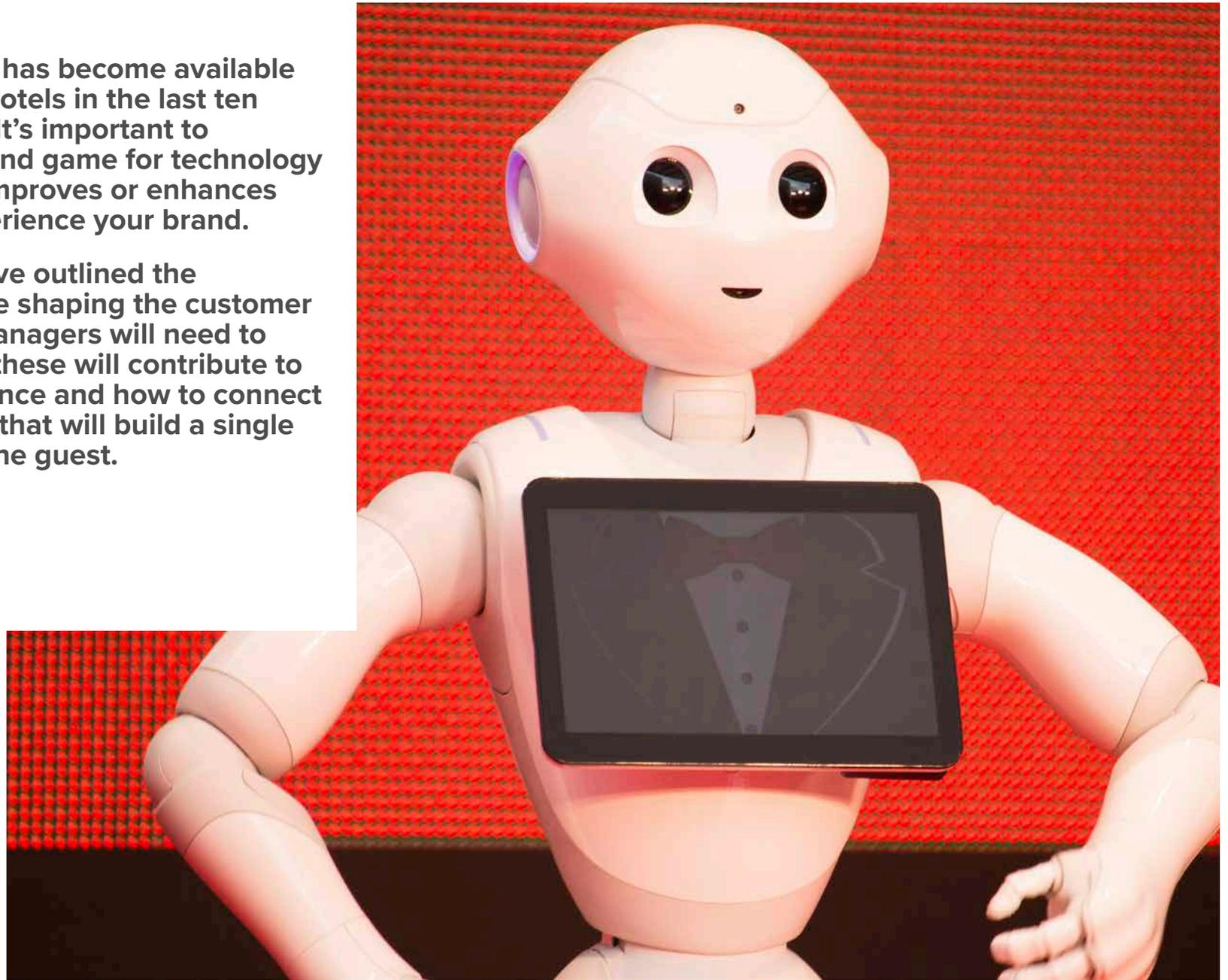


Part 3: Connecting the (data) points

What does all this new technology mean
for guest satisfaction and loyalty?

The technology that has become available for consumers and hotels in the last ten years is staggering. It's important to remember that the end game for technology is that it somehow improves or enhances the way people experience your brand.

In this ebook, we have outlined the technologies that are shaping the customer experience. Hotel managers will need to determine which of these will contribute to their guests' experience and how to connect the new data points that will build a single version of truth for the guest.



Creating a single view of the customer

Your guest probably remembers most if not every interaction they've had with your hotel's brand - from pre-stay discovery online, to word-of-mouth mentions through friends, to the time spent viewing the property's Instagram, to the online booking, and through to arrival. In other words, when they walk through the front door, they already feel like they know you. Hotels have the opportunity to reciprocate by providing an experience that joins together the many fragmented data points informed by each of the customer interactions. The question is, how?

Most businesses will agree that data is an asset, but few have figured out the optimal way to manage it. Peter Lee, Customer Experience Consultant at Cisco, encourages businesses to begin by asking, "How valuable is the information to the customer's actual experience in context?"²¹ Historically, businesses have collected a lot of information that told them little about who a person actually was or what their preferences were.

Businesses need to first determine whether the data is actually adding to the customer experience. From there, the next questions become how do your CRM data, hotel app, and PMS data interact? Who is responsible for maintaining the data set, and how available is it to hotel employees? The availability of data is central to having a single view of the guest.

In Skift's 2017 Digital Transformation Report, 87% of respondents said that fragmentation is a concern to their organisation and less than 1 in 5 said they were very confident about their ability to deliver personalised experiences.²² A heavily siloed business that builds internal walls around their data set is one cause of fragmentation that will prevent the business from obtaining a single view of their customer. In other cases, the data can be held at a dead-end because of the integration limitations of the technology itself.

Lee has found the biggest challenge in obtaining a single view of the customer is often the legacy data baggage that businesses try to carry across. "There's a point in time where you have to look at legacy systems and realise that maybe the better exercise is to port [the data] into a new technology that will enable different types of real-time and ad hoc queries."

Once a centralised data management system has been obtained, the next challenges are finding people with analytical skills to interpret the data, drilling into it to find meaningful insights, and the ongoing monitoring of data accuracy.

"There's a point in time where you have to look at legacy systems and realise that maybe the better exercise is to port [the data] into a new technology that will enable different types of real-time and ad hoc queries."

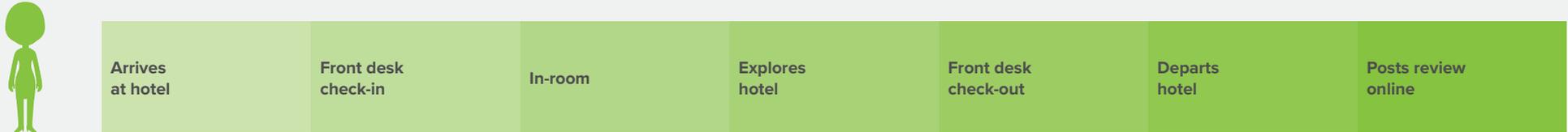
Peter Lee
Customer Experience Consultant, Cisco

²¹ Lee, Peter. Interview by Anne Benoit. Local Measure. 3 February 2017.

²² Bujarski, L. and Montali, D. and Skift Team (2017). The 2017 Digital Transformation Report, Skift. Retrieved February 2017 from www.skift.com

Moving from a static view to a dynamic view

Static view of customer journey



Dynamic view of customer journeys

Guest 1



Guest 2



Guest 3



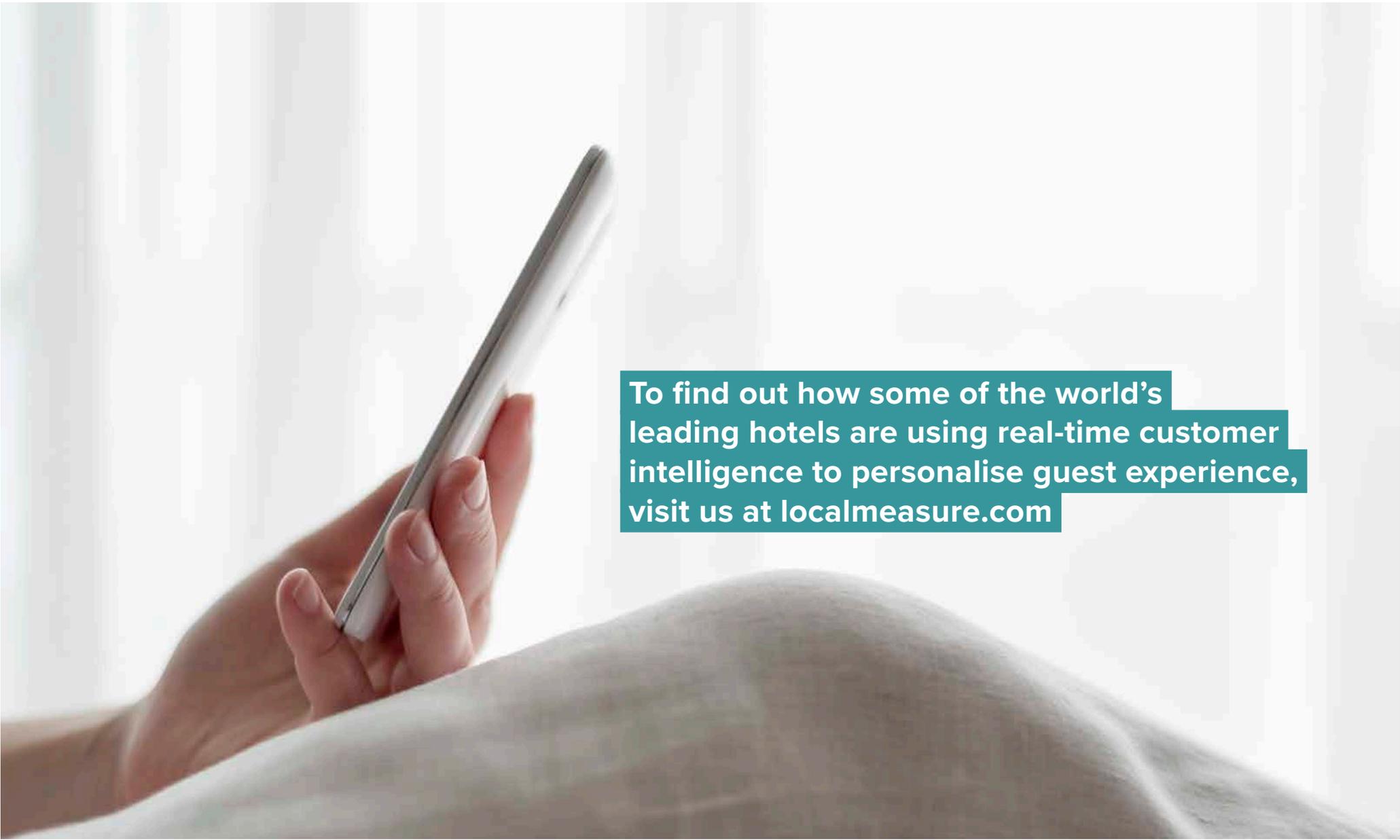


Where to from here?

The end game hasn't changed, that is, delivering the best experience possible for guests. What has changed are the expectations of guests, and the types of competitors who are vying for their spend. Fortunately, hoteliers are better positioned now more than ever to develop a deep understanding of guest needs, thoughts and emotions. Lee outlines that opportunity, "Given the right tools hotels can create very different experiences for customers. The tools would take advantage of the fact that the investment that's already been made [such as in room network connectivity] is in place but what changes is the customer experience – in other words, the interpretation of the outcome of the technology – it doesn't mean that you have to have a billion different customer experiences, but what it does mean is that you have to have more than one."²³

Without a deep understanding of your guests, there is no way to know what new features or services will best serve them. If traditional approaches to loyalty don't seem to be working as well as they used to, you have to ask, what are you not offering guests that has them seeking elsewhere? Coordinate efforts with your cross-functional teams to develop and maintain integrated sources of customer intelligence, and you will always be in good stead.

²³ Lee, Peter. Interview
by Anne Benoit. Local Measure.
3 February 2017.



To find out how some of the world's leading hotels are using real-time customer intelligence to personalise guest experience, visit us at localmeasure.com

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Re-designing the Customer Experience – An implementation strategy

The customer experience should always be the focus when considering the implementation of new technology. In the end, technology is simply a tool to implement your business outcome.

1.
What is the business outcome we're trying to achieve?

Focus on developing a well formulated and believable business model that's worth investing in, then consider how you can approach it in an agile way, breaking it down into definable pieces that you can deliver on.

2.
What is the ideal context of customer experiences that we want to create?

More than thinking about technology, think about the customer experiences that you want to create for different individuals. Then look at the technologies that will allow you to do that better, faster, cheaper.

3.
What do we know and what don't we know about our customers to be able to deliver on the business outcome?

Look at the data you currently have about your customers and assess how well it informs you about their preferences, tastes – the things that will allow you to create their ideal customer experience.

4.
How can we gather this information statically, dynamically, in real-time, and non real-time?

Different sources require you to gather data in different ways, for example the information on someone's Facebook is dynamic because it changes. An example of real-time data would be their location within your hotel.

5.
How will the business outcome and customer journey be likely to evolve in future?

We can help prepare for the future by thinking about the trends in customer behaviour. What services will resonate with your customers? What will the context of travel look like?

6.
How can we protect the future of our customer experience?

Businesses fall behind when they focus on protecting old investments. Businesses that focus on where the customer is going are more likely to thrive.