



# 10 HOSPITALITY TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

YOU NEED  
TO KNOW ABOUT

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As consumers become more sophisticated about technology in their professional and personal lives, they expect more from hotels when they travel. A hotel's technology offerings are an important factor when choosing a hotel, according to a majority of respondents to a SmartBrief poll. Savvy hotels are responding by adapting their guest rooms, meeting spaces, lobbies and front desks to today's technology advances. The changes are improving the guest experience as well as making hotels more inviting to younger travelers – the market every hotelier is trying to accommodate and attract – who see technology as an essential part of their lives. Read on to learn about the most important trends in hospitality technology.

**Trend #1**

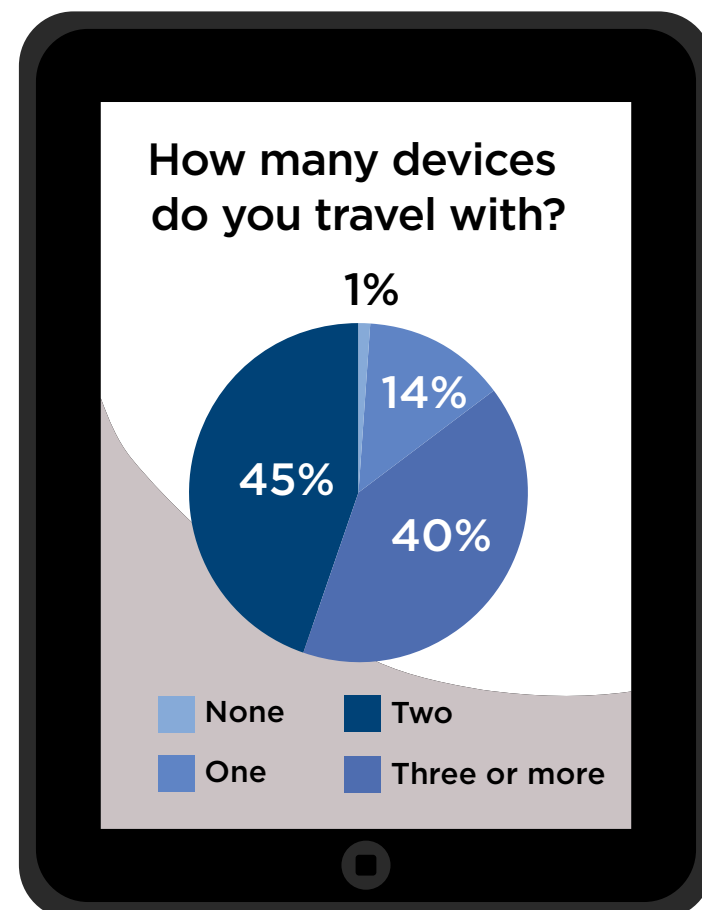
# Device - and Entertainment - Autonomy

*Guests are traveling with more devices, which means they also are bringing their own entertainment options.*

Whether traveling for business or leisure, who can live without their smartphone or tablet these days? Nearly half of SmartBrief poll respondents travel with two devices, and another third travel with three or more devices. Technology is essential to guests, and they expect hotels to accommodate their tech needs. One company helping guests connect their technology with a hotel's offerings is Shodogg. The service allows guests to sync their mobile device with a hotel television, allowing them to access their own library of movies, music, photos and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

"The Shodogg technology removes the emphasis on hardware, which has become a drain on the hospitality market because of how quickly new products are being launched," Shodogg C.E.O. Herb Mitschele said. "Our technology enables guests to access and control content—photos, videos, music—from any mobile device to any hotel TV enabled with our technology. Our technology is evolutionary, so it will work on devices in the market today or devices that have not yet launched, allowing hotels to always have the latest media options in their guest rooms."

One decision facing hoteliers is where to invest their technology spending. When polled, more than half said their focus their technology purchasing in the coming year on the guest room. Hotels also are accommodating guests' devices by redesigning aspects of the guest room. Hampton Hotels now requires its properties to have connectivity panels in each guest room that have two USB ports and three electrical outlets. The units are mounted deskside or on the nightstand. Having these resources available—without having to move furniture or seek them out on your hands and knees—allows guests to have a better user experience while enjoying content on their devices.



**Trend #2**

# Service Automation

*Guests prefer to order room service, make a housekeeping request or contact the valet indirectly rather than by phone.*

Now at more than 500 hotels worldwide, Intelity is helping hotels do this through its ICE application. Guests can contact the hotel with a variety of requests, and the system sends the request directly to the staff person who can fulfill it. More than 85 percent of hotel guests use the system during their stay, according to C.E.O. David Adelson, who said the top requests are for room service, wake-up calls and housekeeping. In May, the company debuted a new platform, ICE Sapphire, designed to replace the alarm clock in the guest room. A tablet device on a dock would offer an alarm clock, more than 300 world radio stations and a variety of guest services.

"This type of technology is where migration is happening," Adelson said. "This is what the guest expects. It's no longer what the hotel wants us to supply as a differentiator, it's what the guest expects to see when they are in your hotel."

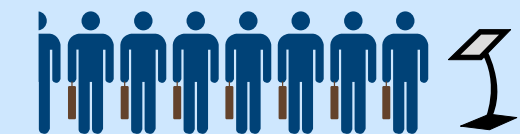
Hotels are moving forward with other automated systems. The just-opened Hyatt Union Square in New York targets guests who have business in the city's "Silicon Alley," which means it needs to offer technology that serves those travelers. Guests get a sense of the technology focus as soon as they enter the hotel with the three check-in options: an iPad check-in with staff called "gallery hosts," a check-in kiosk and a traditional front desk. About 40 percent of guests choose the iPad option, said General Manager Chris Holbrook, a veteran of InterContinental and Kimpton properties. Staff even can make a room key on the iPad. "It's nice to have options for the guest," Holbrook said. "We want to make sure it's quick, seamless and memorable."

Guests are quickly adapting to this trend. Asked in a SmartBrief poll if they would check in using an automated kiosk, more than 91 percent said they had tried it or planned to try it, another indication that they are ready now to start using technology during every step of their travel.

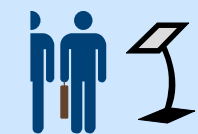
The Andaz Fifth Avenue also offers mobile check-in as a friendlier option to a traditional front desk. "It doesn't need to be a transactional interaction," said Kelly Overstreet, the hotel's director of marketing and events.

## Would you check in using an automated kiosk?

**76.16%** Yes, and I already have



**14.86%** Yes, it sounds convenient



**5.65%** No, it's too impersonal



**3.33%** I'm not familiar with this technology







# Trend #3

## The "New" Perks

*Hotels are making it easier for guests who travel without devices by providing iPads, iPods and Nooks with custom content, as well as treats like magazine and newspaper subscriptions and more robust entertainment on guest room televisions.*

**Should hotels offer guests in-room iPads, iPods, or desktop computers?**

**13%**

Yes, they can be used to sell hotel services to guests.

**22%**

It's a nice touch but not essential.

**54%**

No, guests travel with their own technology.

**11%**

No, they would need to be replaced with new models too often.

The Muse New York, a Kimpton Hotel, offers guests Nook e-readers to use during their stay. The devices are pre-programmed with books, magazines and other content and guests can take them off property. "We wanted to create something for guest(s) that was personal," General Manager Ericka Nelson said. "They can relax and enjoy themselves." Another Kimpton property in New York, Eventi, offers a "business bar" stocked with iPads and iPad Minis instead of a traditional business center and wireless printing is available throughout the hotel.

These technology perks set Kimpton apart from the competition, although not all hoteliers see them as a good investment. When SmartBrief asked hotel professionals whether hotels

should offer guests in-room iPads, iPods or desktop computers, more than half said no. This seems to indicate that hoteliers are not prioritizing access to technology as highly as hotel guests. They need to be more concerned with providing their guests access to technology and meaningful digital content.

One company trying to help hotels bridge that gap is Roomlinx. Using the guest room television, it provides provides media, entertainment and business solutions such as access to a guest's own Netflix account and the Microsoft Office suite. Guests can travel with fewer devices while still accessing the digital content they want. Andaz Fifth Avenue offers Roomlinx. "It really is almost like a home computer on the TV," said Kelly Overstreet, director of marketing and events.



# Trend #4

## The Lobby as a Tech Hub

*From offering oversize touch screens to Wii tournaments to communal tables with power jacks, the lobby is no longer just a waystation for guests.*

Hotels are trying to encourage guests to spend time in lobbies by offering programming, residential-style furniture and plentiful electrical outlets. Even when guests want to work independently, they often want to do so around other people. The prototype for Hilton's new extended-stay brand Home2 Suites includes an open lobby concept called the Oasis that includes a 52-inch television and a communal table with outlets where guests can work on laptops. At the ultra-hip Ace Hotel in Manhattan, the lobby is consistently filled with laptop- or tablet-toting guests at the wooden communal tables and plush sectionals.

All of Starwood's Aloft properties include an Intelity ICE application on touch screens in their lobbies. Dubbed the

"Cool Concierge," guests can look up local attractions, print boarding passes and access hotel information.

And here's one unusual tech perk that's bound to take off at hotels: At Andaz Fifth Avenue, the hotel has a free GE Brightbox charging station in the lobby where guests can quickly and safely charge their smartphones. (It also offers spare iPad and iPhone chargers on loan to guests.)

**Where will you focus most of your technology purchasing next year?**

**51%**

Guest rooms

**12%**

Lobby

**23%**

Front Desk

**14%**

Meeting and event space



# Trend #5

## Free Wi-Fi

*Fewer hotels are charging for Wi-Fi use to appeal to younger travelers.*

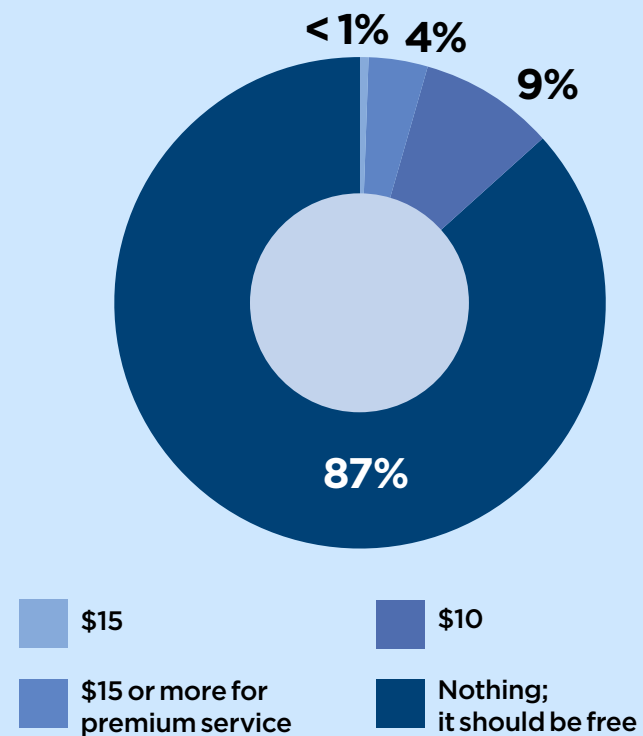
Consumers expect free access to high-speed Internet. A poll of SmartBrief readers backs this up. When asked how much they would be willing to pay for Wi-Fi, 85 percent said that it should be free. Today's hotel guests want quick, easy access to online resources.

The 366-room Pod39 Hotel in Manhattan—so named for its smallish rooms and lower price point—was designed to appeal to younger travelers. General Manager Scott Yo said his guests do not want to feel nickel-and-dimed by Wi-Fi charges. They travel with multiple devices, and free wireless access doesn't feel like a perk so much as a right. "In our mind's eye we are very conscious of who comes and stays here," Yo said. "Most of our guests are millennials and very tech savvy. Right now you've got to have free Wi-Fi. We spent a ton of money having fiber optic cable because we wanted to have reliable Wi-Fi."

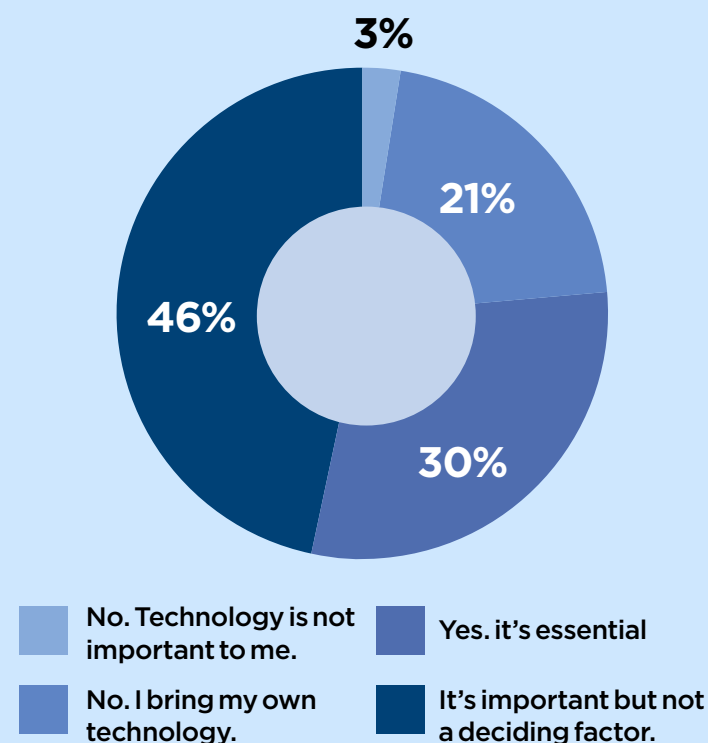
Kimpton Hotels also offer free Wi-Fi access, but only to members of its loyalty program. There is no charge to enroll, so guests have an incentive to sign up, and Kimpton gains new marketing targets. Andaz Fifth Avenue also offers free Wi-Fi. "It's a call to action on the part of customers," Overstreet said.



How much are you willing to pay for Wi-Fi?



Would a hotel's technology offerings make a difference in whether you stayed there?



# Trend #6

## The Office Away From the Office

*Hotels are creating second-space offices for business travelers and workers in their own city.*

Marriott's new Workspace on Demand program allows business travelers to book meeting space like a hotel room. The hotel chain, working with shared-office company LiquidSpace, offers the services for full-and-half days at Marriott, Renaissance and Courtyard hotels.

For slightly larger groups, the "Workspring at Marriott" concept offers a new type of meeting space complete with audiovisual equipment and Wi-Fi included in the rate. Now being tested in 5,000-square-feet of meeting space in a Redmond, Wash., property, the concept features five meeting rooms and a shared social space with more

natural light, new color schemes and residential-style furniture designed to improve productivity. "Corporations have blended the notion of meeting and social," said Peggy Fang Roe, vice president of global operations services at Marriott International. "It's about connecting and networking."

# Trend #7

## Social Media *Hotels must have a presence on new forms of social media.*

While hotels were quick to jump onto Facebook and Twitter, once-niche sites such as Pinterest and Instagram—and soon Twitter’s social video sharing app Vine—are growing and used by more guests, especially younger guests. These more visual mediums provide important marketing vehicles, and some hotels have already started taking advantage of them.

When the W New York-Times Square debuted its new Extreme WOW suite this spring, it held a blogger party in the penthouse space and created a hashtag. Because the high-concept suite has plenty of visual eye candy—a light fixture resembling a flattened New Year’s Eve mirror ball, custom wallpaper of Broadway ticket stubs, a graffiti mural from Brooklyn artists—the bloggers quickly took to Instagram and shared photos of the suite using the hashtag #extremewow. The hotel, which is marketing the suite for private events, got instant exposure.

# Trend #8

## Technology as Luxury *Some technologies have become a luxury perk.*

High-end hotels are finding that technology can become a luxury comfort. One increasingly popular perk is high-definition televisions embedded in bathroom mirrors. Companies such as Electric Mirror provides high-definition televisions in mirrors in sizes ranging from 15 inches to 55 inches at hotels including Mandarin Oriental, CityCenter Las Vegas; the Ritz-Carlton, Los Angeles at LA Live; and the Four Seasons London, Park Lane.

At Hard Rock Hotels, the hotel stays on-brand by offering guests a curated setlist of music downloads. The Sound of Your Stay program enlists celebrities and Djs to create 15-track themed playlists that guests can download using a code they receive at check-in. Complementing the digital amenity, Hard Rock also lets guests check out Fender guitar, Fender amp and Nixon headphones to use during their stay. In-room televisions offer guitar lessons from music publishing company Hal Leonard.

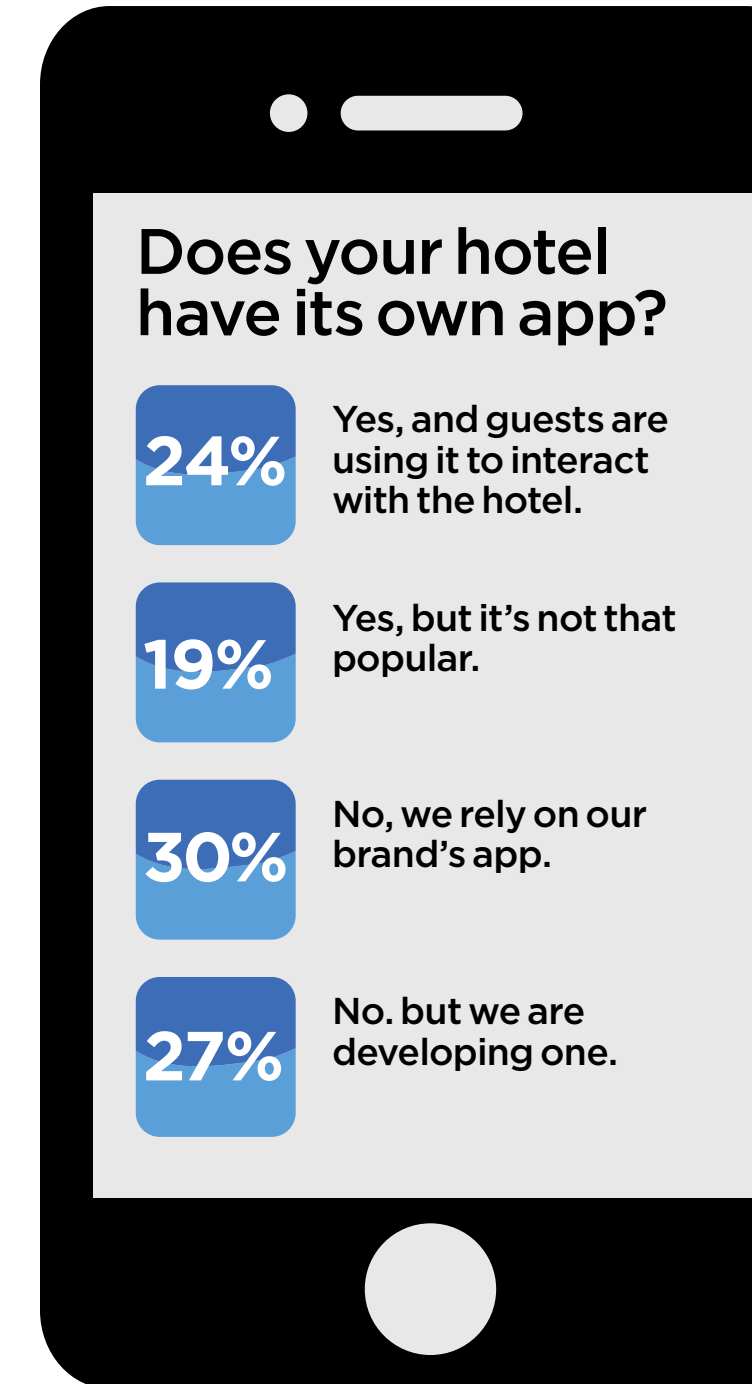
# Trend #9

## Event Spaces Go High-Tech *Tech tools for meeting planners are becoming more sophisticated, with apps to take care of common issues during meeting and ultra high-tech boardrooms and videoconferencing suites.*



Marriott’s new Red Coat Direct mobile app connects meeting planners with hotel staff as events are happening to address any needs that arise, from adjusting the room temperature to ordering more coffee. The app is a digital version of Marriott’s 50-year-old Redcoat meetings concierge service and tracks response time and other metrics so hotels can adapt to better serve meeting attendees. The service debuted at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis in 2012, and is planned for a system-wide rollout, Roe said.

Another tech solution hotels are offering meeting planners comes from La Costa Resort and Spa in San Diego. The resort’s new La Costa Coastal Events Center includes meeting planner suites, live-work spaces with electronic white boards and other focused tech perks. For virtual meetings, Starwood offers Cisco TelePresence Suite at several properties including the Sheraton Times Square and W Chicago City Center. Offered at an hourly rate, the suites offer high-definition conferencing facilities where in-person participants appear to be sitting around the same table as off-site participants and sound sensors cue cameras to show speakers, allowing a “face-to-face” meeting.





# Trend #10

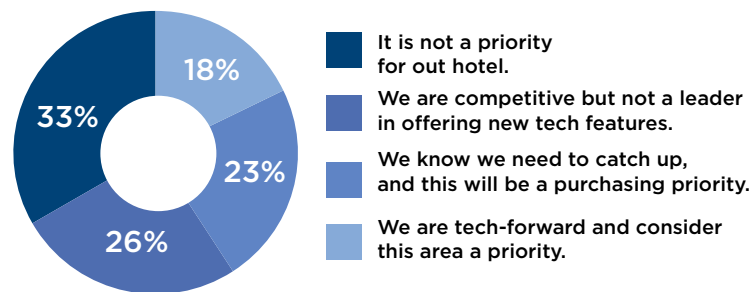
## Print Goes By the Wayside

*Digital signage is replacing printed signs.*

Courtyard by Marriott’s GoBoard set the standard for branded digital signage. The large LCD touch-screen in the lobby invites guests to interact with it for property information and concierge-like services. Four Winds Interactive provided the screens and works with hotels on other digital signage solutions for directional signage, meeting and conference signage and restaurant menus. Having digital signs allows hotels to quickly update information as well as instill technology into yet another aspect of their hotels, providing a unified high-tech appearance that meets or exceeds guests expectations.

“Today, guests are looking to screens, whether a digital sign, interactive kiosk, guest room TV or a mobile device, to get the information that is important to them. With guests becoming more and more tech-savvy, an integrated visual communications solution that can provide on-demand information is becoming a must-have for any type of hotel property,” said David Levin, president of Four Winds Interactive. “Hospitality organizations continue to adopt visual communications solutions to increase visual impact and guest engagement throughout their spaces. From pure content-focused solutions, like digital art, to more interactive applications, like property mapping, hotels are blending function with style to increase the overall guest experience,” Levin said.

### Is guest-facing technology a priority for your hotel?



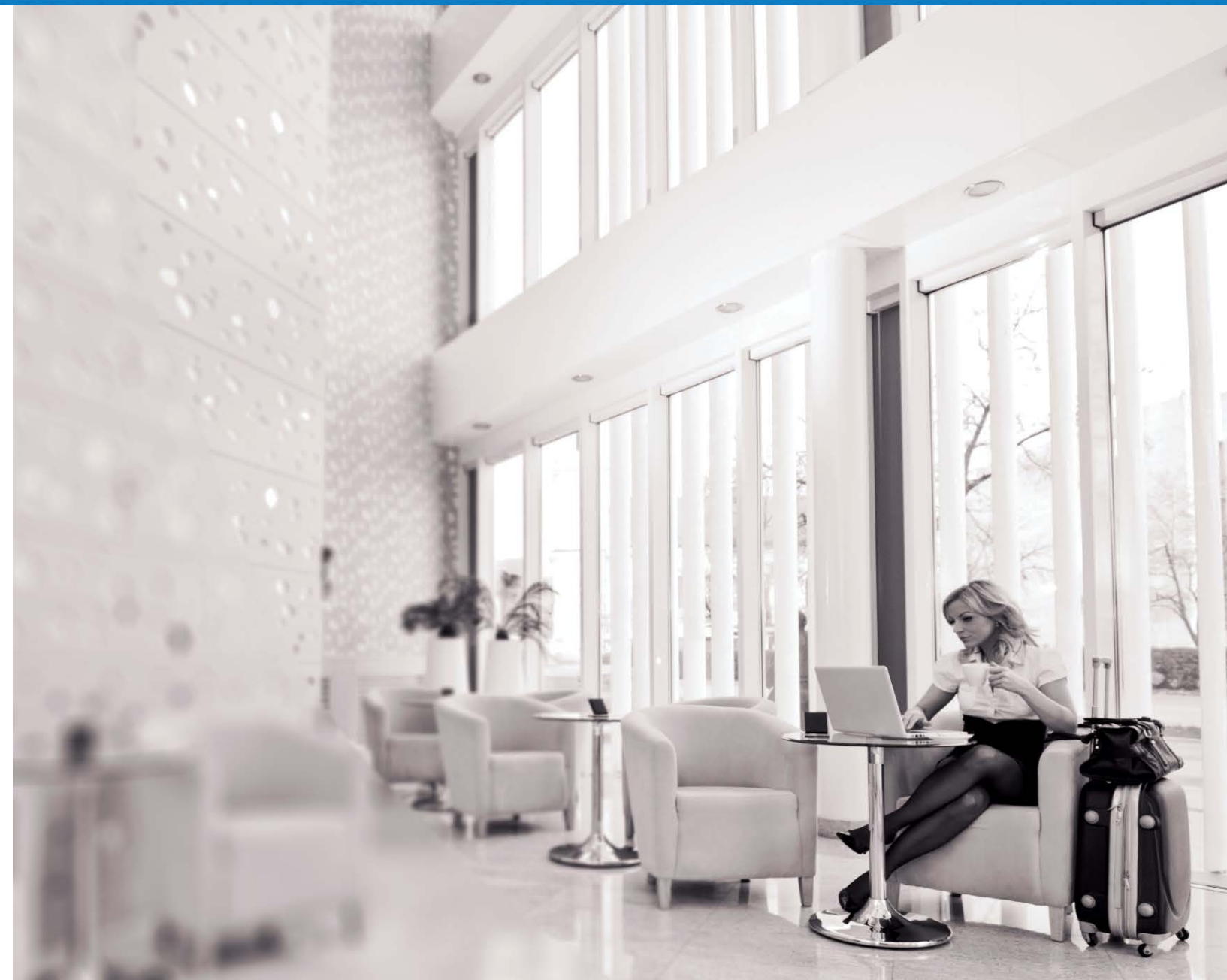
## Conclusion

Hotel technology no longer is simply a perk, it’s a necessity for hotel guests. Guests are expecting more from their travel, from free Wi-Fi to the ability to check in using an automated kiosk, and hotels that can embrace the new technology trends will have a leg up on the competition. In addition, hotels that can offer more in the way of sophisticated technology for meeting and events spaces are meeting the demand for a separate, but growing, line of business.

By offering intuitive technology that helps guests access digital content, use their own devices and work efficiently on the road, forward-thinking hotels are meeting rising expectations and creating memorable experiences for guests.

*“This is what the guest expects. It’s no longer what the hotel wants us to supply as a differentiator, it’s what the guest expects to see when they are in your hotel.”*

-David Adelson, CEO, Intelity



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