

The New Hotel Experience

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Service Innovation in Hospitality

Millennials prefer their hotel rooms with closets that don't have doors, big beds with a big TV so they can work on their laptops and watch TV at the same time. Small rooms are OK, but public hotel spaces should be bigger, with lots of room to lounge, socialize, and drink cocktails. That is what Marriott's NextM co-creation lab found, working with 200 participants. They also prefer ordering room-service online and having take-out delivered to their room. Oh, and loyalty programs should provide more immediate gratification: "We don't want to stay twenty times before we get something." Marriott is redesigning hotels, starting with a pilot in Brooklyn. Next up, the hotel kitchen wants to strengthen ties to the neighborhood by serving locally sourced foods.

In May, Marriott launched Mobile Request, an app for guests to get in touch with their hotel 72 hours before their stay and make common requests for services and amenities like extra towels, a wake-up call or a late checkout. The "Anything Else?" option allows them to have a real-time conversation with hotel staff for e.g. restaurant reservations or an airport pickup.

On the topic of apps and instant gratification, the Standard hotel group recently introduced its tongue-in-cheekily named "One Night Standard" app, allowing guests to make same day reservations. "We wanted to apply the seamless Uber experience to hotels," the group explains.

And hotels should rethink how they do business. Airbnb already has over one million rooms, more than any hotel chain in the world, and in 2014, they entered the corporate market, teaming with an expense management company to allow Airbnb charges to appear directly on a traveler's expense form. Travelers working for themselves or small companies were the most likely professionals to use Airbnb. "They don't need the concierge and room service. They just want to save money." Already 10% of Airbnb guests are travelling on business.

More changes are on the horizon. 24% of leisure travel is solo, up from 15% in 2013. Some hotels, like Westin, are catching up and offering specific getaway packages to solo travelers.

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Sources: Fortune, New York Times, Pew Research Center