

The background of the entire page is a photograph of an airport terminal. It features silhouettes of people walking through the terminal, some carrying luggage. The scene is captured from behind a person in the foreground, looking towards a large window that looks out onto an airport tarmac with planes and a sunset sky. The overall color palette is dominated by deep blues and purples, with a warm orange glow from the setting sun visible through the window.

OSF | DIGITAL

Trends in Hospitality: Navigating the Future of Guest Experience

PART 1

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Introduction

The hospitality sector transforms at a dynamic pace, driven by technological innovation, sustainability imperatives, and shifting consumer preferences. Under pressure to redefine revenue sources and elevate the guest experience, especially amid staffing shortages, the hospitality industry must be reinvented.

This white paper explores major trends shaping the hospitality industry, offering strategic insights for businesses seeking to enhance guest experiences, optimize operations, and increase profitability. We will provide an in-depth analysis of these trends, equipping businesses with effective strategies to remain competitive in this constantly evolving industry. Our white paper investigates the dynamic relationship among technology, sustainability, guest experience, and workforce development, serving as a guide for navigating this rapidly transforming landscape.



Overview of Hospitality Trends

The hospitality sector continues to evolve as travelers seek seamless interactions and [personalized experiences](#) that align with their values. Guests expect comfort, control, and convenience. They want an intuitive and consistent journey. Sustainability and technology work hand in hand, forming the foundation for the next era of guest engagement.

I. Trends in Hospitality: A Split on Business Models

Hospitality business models are adapting as global travel patterns shift and visitor expectations diversify. Hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, and experience providers are rethinking their approaches to growth, distribution, and guest value.

1 Redefining Accommodation

Consolidation has long influenced the accommodation sector. Many hospitality brands are expanding their global presence through strategic acquisitions and [operational efficiency](#). While large-scale acquisition activity may fluctuate, targeted expansion, particularly in luxury and youth-focused segments, continues to shape the industry.

► **Luxury Chains versus Small Brands**

Large hotel brands expand through franchising and management agreements. However, not all segments of the hospitality industry have embraced this model. Luxury hotels are maintaining in-house ownership to ensure quality control. At the same time, smaller brands focus on delivering unique experiences due to their inability to achieve the necessary economies of scale for franchising.

► **Encouraging Direct Booking to the Detriment of Traveling Agencies**

Direct booking gains terrain. Hotels aim to reduce reliance on online travel agencies to lower intermediary fees and gain better insights into their guests. To encourage direct bookings, hotels are offering incentives such as best-rate guarantees, higher reward-earning rates, and enhanced mobile applications.

► **Home Sharing Goes Beyond a Mere Alternative to Traditional Hotels**

Home sharing has solidified its presence in the hospitality industry, continuously growing despite fluctuations in profitability. Home-sharing platforms like Airbnb have become vital distribution channels for smaller hotels, offering better inventory control and lower fees.



2 Finding New Revenue Streams

Millennials are reshaping cruising demographics. Cruises have also enhanced profitability through economies of scale and diversified revenue streams. When it comes to theme parks, attendance continues to grow, driven by new demographics and enhanced revenue management strategies.

► Reshaping the Cruise Experience

Cruise operators are expanding into new categories of travelers by offering more specialized and luxurious experiences. Luxury hotels are launching yacht brands, offering a distinct alternative to traditional cruises. Intimate yachts and large ships are offering entertainment and curated activities. Cruise brands are designing journeys that blend discovery, comfort, and exclusivity. Ancillary experiences, such as onshore adventures, specialty dining, and leisure activities, continue to strengthen profitability and guest engagement.

► Rising Attendance in Theme Parks and Traveling

Theme parks and activity providers are adopting advanced revenue strategies, including personalized packages, dynamic pricing, and exclusive experiences. Travelers increasingly gravitate toward experiences that immerse them in stories, destinations, and cultural touchpoints. Even niche, passion-based activities—from filming location tours to culinary or wellness-focused explorations—are gaining momentum as travelers seek richer, more meaningful ways to explore the world.

As experiences become increasingly important to travelers, tech-forward companies that employ destination marketing campaigns are an essential segment to mention. Who wouldn't want to experience the world of their favorite movie characters, attending filming locations and discovering local beauties? Or maybe explore a Coffee Tour, Tea Tasting, or Matcha Experience?

Increasingly, more travelers are planning to visit a destination near a popular hotspot: Hello, Eiffel Tower, or maybe a Lord of the Rings film set!

3 Staying Ahead of the Trends

As stakeholders prepare for the coming decade, businesses in the tourism and hospitality sectors can implement strategies to maintain profitability.

► Unbundle Offerings

Hotels and experience providers can enhance customer satisfaction and revenue by offering customizable packages, similar to airlines. By allowing guests to select specific features, such as room location or additional amenities, businesses can cater to individual preferences, leading to increased spending and satisfaction.

► Cross-Sell Exclusive Experiences

Accommodation and transport companies can collaborate with experience providers to offer comprehensive travel packages. This approach not only taps into growing traveler spending but also strengthens customer relationships.

► Embrace Data-Driven Strategies

The tourism and hospitality sector can leverage untapped data to find new revenue streams and boost guest experiences. By analyzing booking trends, popular activities, and social media insights, businesses can develop targeted offerings. Integrating various data sources can guide strategies for unbundling and cross-selling, making travel experiences more personalized and relevant. Technology comes to the aid when it comes to hyper-personalized experiences based on [connected data](#).





II. Sustainability Focus

More and more travelers are seeking sustainable travel options. It's become such a potent approach that it's got its own name: "green hospitality." Hotels are adopting renewable energy sources and eco-friendly practices, shifting from reducing environmental impact to achieving net-positive outcomes through initiatives like regenerative tourism.

1 Sustainability and Wellness

Authenticity of the senses, tailored experiences, attention to the environment, and a focus on wellness. Hospitality can be viewed and approached from different angles. Emerging trends reflect a holistic approach, moving beyond sustainability to net-positive impacts and offering enhanced wellness amenities catering to diverse dietary preferences and even tailored portion sizes. Hotels focus on wellness tourism, offering services like spas and wellness retreats to attract health-conscious travelers.

The hospitality industry is increasingly focused on using local ingredients, delivering multi-sensory dining experiences, and enriching vegan, plant-based, and healthy offerings. It's all about making your guest return, and customization goes beyond the online persona:

► **Net-Positive Environmental Impact**

Hotels are striving to achieve a net-positive environmental impact by implementing sustainable practices that go beyond reducing carbon emissions. This includes initiatives such as reforestation projects, wildlife conservation, and community development programs that benefit the environment and local communities.

► **Renewable Energy Adoption**

Hotels are investing in renewable energy to reduce their carbon footprint, appeal to environmentally conscious travelers, and lower energy costs. Solar panels, wind turbines, and geothermal systems are installed to power sustainable hotels. These initiatives not only reduce energy costs but also appeal to environmentally conscious travelers.

► **Eco-Friendly Practices**

Hotels are minimizing waste and conserving resources by using sustainable materials, implementing water-saving technologies, and reducing plastic usage by offering reusable alternatives. A not-so-hidden benefit for the brand: these environmentally conscious practices enhance their public image.

► **Regenerative Tourism**

This emerging trend positively impacts communities, appeals to eco-conscious travelers, and enhances the well-being of destinations. Hotels are engaging in initiatives such as reforestation projects, wildlife conservation, and community development programs.

2 Guest Experience Trends

The rise of experiential travel underscores guests' desire to go beyond traditional offerings.

“Driven by data analytics and AI, personalization is key, offering tailored experiences that enhance satisfaction and loyalty. Hotels are using guest data to create tailored experiences, from personalized room settings to customized dining options. By understanding guest preferences and behaviors, hotels can offer unique and memorable experiences that enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty.”

Garry Larner

UK/I Managing Director at OSF Digital

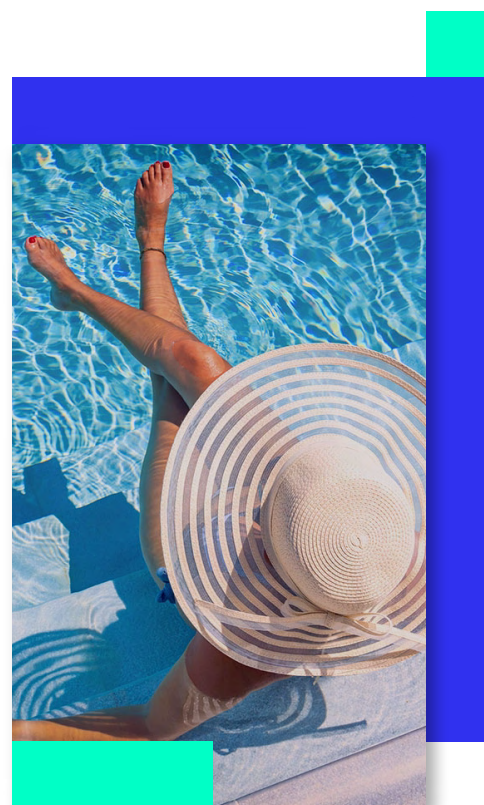
There are a few directions to go when it comes to gathering data for experiential hospitality:

► Slow Travel

Immersive, authentic experiences are the new thing! Instead of rushing through tourist hotspots, slow travelers prefer to explore local cultures, traditions, and cuisines. Guided tours, cooking classes, and cultural workshops connect the traveler with the destination on a deeper level.

► Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism is rising, with hotels expanding their offerings to include spa treatments, yoga, and healthy, all-encompassing dietary options. This attracts health-conscious travelers who seek holistic well-being experiences and differentiates them in a competitive market.



► Dietary Preferences

Due to a growing demand for healthy food choices and dietary restrictions, hotels are catering to diverse needs by offering vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options on their menus to appeal to health-conscious guests.

► Culinary Experiences

Hospitality businesses offer a variety of dining options and unique culinary adventures, with experiential dining and multi-sensory environments on the rise. We can also mention a keen eye for preparing healthier children's menus and innovative off-premise options like ghost kitchens.

► Fine Dining and Fine Wine-ing

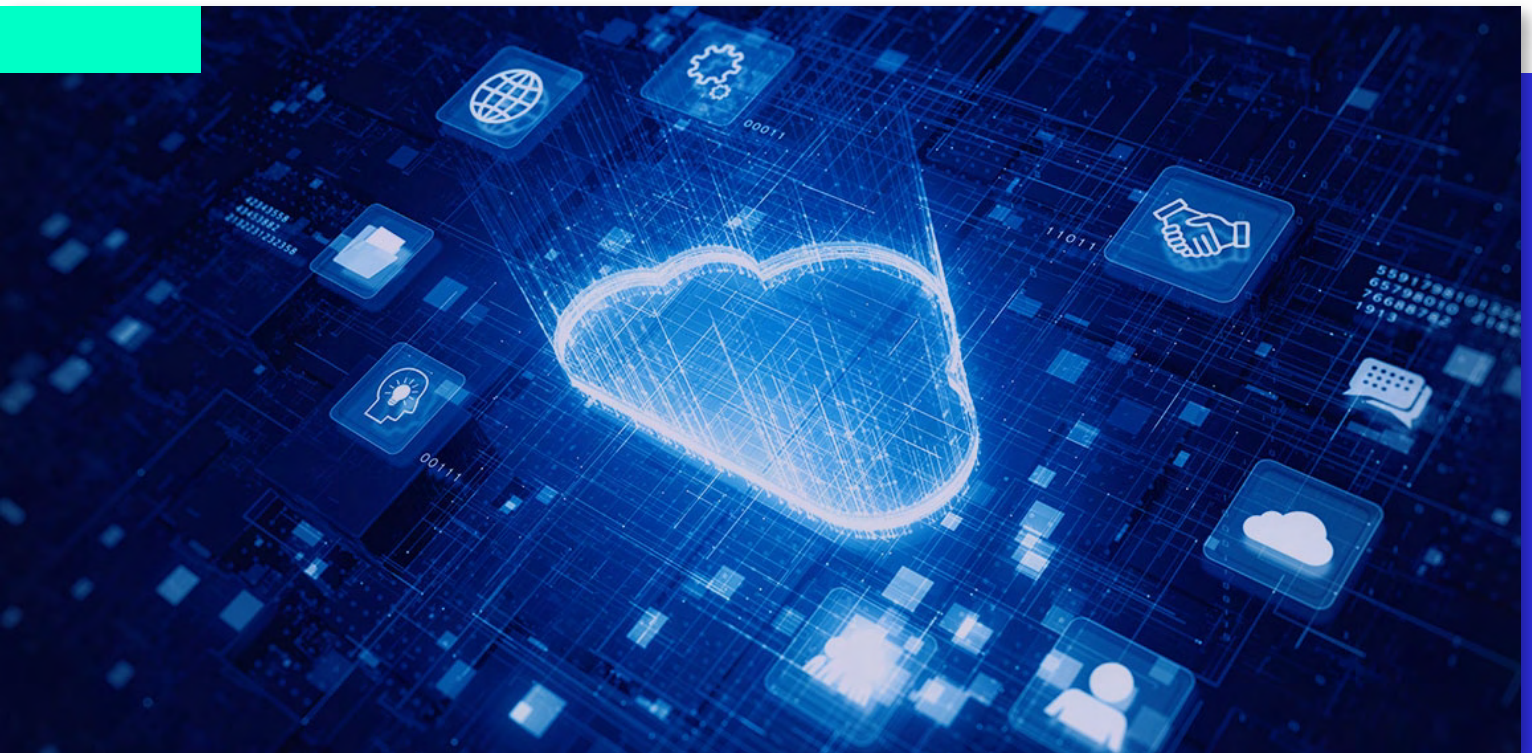
Bars are redefining the drinking experience by creating immersive atmospheres with unique beverages and Instagrammable settings, while the popularity of mocktails and non-alcoholic pairings caters to non-alcohol drinking patrons. Mixology classes further enhance the interactive experience. Despite issues such as no-shows and economic pressures, fine dining and fine wine-ing are gaining ground through innovative concepts and business-oriented management, focusing on unique experiences and synergies to attract customers and generate profits.

3 Workforce Trends

The popularity of remote work and “workation” accommodations is influencing hospitality dynamics. Here's how hotels are adapting to digital nomads' needs:

► Workforce Management and Automation

By prioritizing employee satisfaction and well-being, hotels can attract and retain top talent. Hotels are implementing innovative workforce management strategies, such as flexible scheduling, remote work options, and employee wellness programs.



How Technology Is Transforming Hospitality

Advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, virtual reality, and the potential use of the metaverse, are no longer distant possibilities. Cloud-tech and data security are being integrated across the industry. Hotels are expected to implement on-demand entertainment, voice controls, guest device-based room access, and automated comfort controls, balancing technological innovation with human connection to enhance guest satisfaction and operational efficiency.

Technology is not diminishing the human aspect of hospitality by enabling hotels to offer more personalized experiences throughout the travel journey. It's not about replacing staff but providing them with time to focus on less menial tasks and allowing guests more choices.

“Tech in hospitality involves tailoring guest interactions, adapting labor models to attract and retain employees by providing tools that match their skills and interests, and moving away from a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. Travelers can select experiences that best suit their preferences.”

Garry Larner

UK/I Managing Director at OSF Digital

I. Technology and Digital Innovation

The hospitality industry is at the forefront of technological adoption.

1 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI-driven virtual assistants and chatbots enhance customer service, providing instant responses and effortless bookings. By analyzing guest preferences, AI allows hotels to offer tailored recommendations, boosting [satisfaction and loyalty](#). For instance, AI can analyze guests' previous stays and preferences to provide personalized room settings, dining options, and activity recommendations.

2 Smart Hotel Technologies

Innovative technologies are transforming hotel operations and guest experiences. Features like voice controls, mobile check-in, and contactless payments are becoming standard, enhancing convenience and efficiency. Smart technologies also optimize energy usage, reducing costs and environmental impact. For instance, smart thermostats can regulate room temperatures, and intelligent lighting systems can switch off lights automatically when rooms are vacant.

Both guests and hotels concur that contactless technology is paramount. Hospitality executives globally anticipate that a fully contactless experience for essential hotel transactions—such as check-in/out, food and beverage services, and room keys—will become widely adopted, with a self-service model and hotel staff available only upon request.

More and more travelers want contactless check-in/out and contactless payments to be standard hotel features. We can notice a cultural shift towards technology that enhances guest experiences. The most popular technologies among travelers are those offering [personalized service](#). Notably, on-demand entertainment access, allowing seamless use of personal streaming or gaming accounts, was identified as the top “must-have” for an exceptional hotel stay.



3 Virtual and Augmented Reality

Virtual reality is still in the warm-up phase. However, an increasing number of travelers want to explore the hotel virtually before booking, and half of the executives are already developing maps to accommodate these needs. And it goes deeper than this! Frequent business travelers are interested in attending conferences remotely through a metaverse experience.

Immersive guest experiences, virtual tours, and interactive in-room information serve as powerful marketing tools, attracting tech-savvy travelers and differentiating hotels in a competitive market. Augmented reality is being used to enhance in-room experiences, providing guests with interactive information about local attractions and services.

II. Key Technological Predictions

The hospitality industry is at the forefront of technological adoption.

1 On-Demand Entertainment Access

Hotels offer personalized entertainment options driven by demand for convenient experiences. Guests can access movies, TV shows, and music through their in-room devices.

2 Voice Controls

Voice-activated technologies are becoming standard features in hotel rooms, enabling guests to use voice commands for lighting, temperature control, and entertainment systems. Through voice controls, hoteliers can improve convenience and accessibility, particularly for guests with mobility challenges.

Hotels are likely to implement on-demand entertainment access, voice controls, guest device-based room access, and automated comfort controls. The idea is to give guests the closest-to-home experience and feel. Even more comfortable!

3 Guest Device-Based Room Access

Mobile key technology is gaining popularity, enabling guests to rely on their smartphones for room access. This contactless solution enhances security and convenience, reducing the need for physical key cards.

Guests would like voice-activated controls for all room amenities (lights, showers, TVs, etc.) and would even like to use their own devices for access. An increasing number of travelers would appreciate pre-shared preferences being applied to room controls (temperature, lighting, and even art). Hotelier executives align and aim to implement on-demand entertainment access, voice controls, and the ability for guests to use their own devices instead of keys, finding themselves at different stages of turning guests' mobile phones into hubs.

4 Automated Comfort Controls

Hotels are implementing [automated systems](#) to enhance guest comfort and staff efficiency, including smart thermostats, lighting controls, and air-quality sensors. Travelers strongly agree that they are more inclined to choose hotels with self-service technology to reduce human interaction. Overcrowding, long check-in lines, or perceived staff availability can slowly disappear through self-serve functionalities. Guests would rather follow instructions via text and chat than track down staff for services.

Using chatbots empowers guests to bypass manual documentation and avoid direct interaction when it might be embarrassing, while helping them engage with the correct department within an accommodation. Why go to the desk agent when you can address housekeeping directly?

This highlights the growing demand for contactless solutions, automated messaging, and familiar digital amenities, and yet the need for a middle ground: both chatbots for some guests and direct interaction for others.



III. The Hospitality Industry: A Paradigm Shift for the Ages

The industry focuses on curating memorable guest moments, resolving nuanced service challenges, and tailoring wellness experiences. The goal: guest loyalty and brand differentiation. Hospitality employees can concentrate on data-driven decision-making, strategic planning, and improving operational models. Rather than performing manual audits or inventory tracking, teams can analyze insights generated by autonomous systems to optimize staffing, forecast demand, and elevate service delivery.

By leveraging technology, hospitality businesses can delve deeper into customer insights, [aggregating large volumes of data](#) to create comprehensive profiles. The next frontier in personalization involves a deep understanding of guest preferences, operationalized through bespoke offers and experiences.

“Harnessing technology to deliver personalized service throughout the traveler’s journey is a game-changer for the hospitality industry. Travelers are eager for tailored advertising, offers, amenities, and room controls that create a seamless experience.”

Garry Larner

UK/I Managing Director at OSF Digital





Conclusion

The hospitality sector stands at a pivotal moment. Digital innovation is enhancing the guest experience and transforming the workforce behind it. While guests seek the thrill of a perfectly tailored experience, comfort, and smart interactions, hospitality executives are offloading repetitive responsibilities to autonomous systems. Hospitality brands can redefine workforce roles to emphasize empathy, creativity, and problem-solving. While the industry is permanently transforming, driven by shifts in consumer behavior and technological demands, we are witnessing paradigm shifts rather than mere passing trends.

How OSF Digital Helps

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