



EXPERT ROUNDUP:

**THE
EVOLUTION
OF THE
GUEST
EXPERIENCE**



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Foreword

from Torten Sabel,
COO of Customer Alliance

The Guest Experience has certainly become the trendiest and main focus of the different actors of the Hotel Industry. Evolution of consumers' habits, complexity of the guest journey and multiplication of the innovations have brought the Guest Experience to everyone's mind.

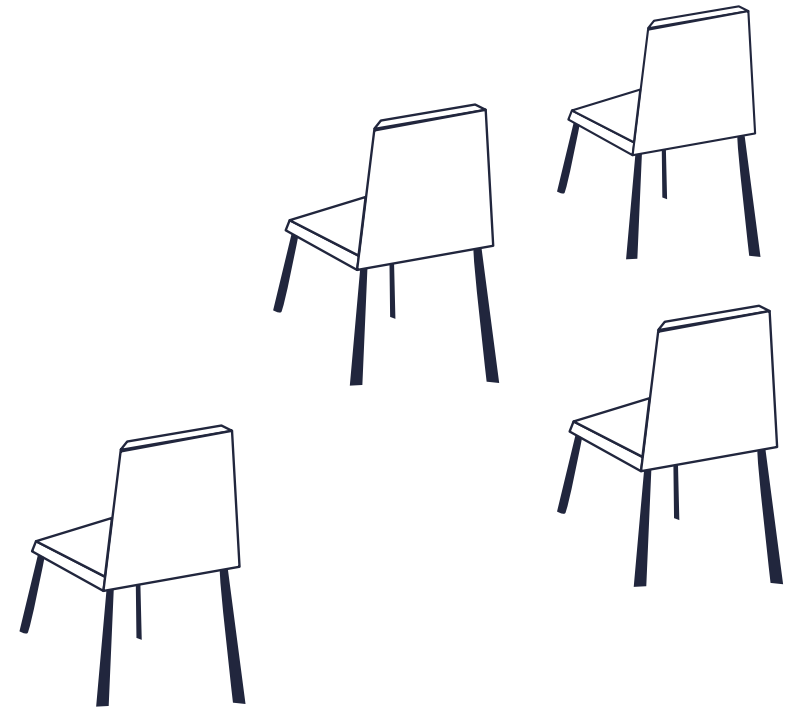
Although some guests and hoteliers will argue that the experience has to go back to more human interactions, the facts are here, both guests and hoteliers can empower the overall experience by using the right technology. The one that will improve the operations flow or from the other side, the one that will enable the guest to get the most of his/her stay in a property.

This is also part of Customer Alliance vision, being able to provide the right technology to hotels, so they can give personalized experiences to their guests through a smart collect of feedback at every stage of the journey. In the end, what matters is to find the balance between innovation and human interaction in order to follow the evolution of the guest experience.



Introduction

Because Guest Experience can be seen under different angles and perspectives, *Expert Roundup: The evolution of the Guest Experience* aims to provide a pertinent overview of this topic. The fast pace of innovation in Guest Experience management makes it hard to tell where effort should be invested. We have assembled experts from various fields to give their opinion about the challenges of Guest Experience 2.0.





Eddy Mimoun / Hotel Direct Booster



Eddy Mimoun is a Digital Marketing expert and a former Revenue Manager for hotels in US and France. He noticed that the key factor between two hotels was the service. He created Hotel Direct Booster to assist and convert visitors on hotels official websites through guest messaging platform managed by 24/7 sales force.

Arne Goudeseune / Stardekk



Throughout his career Arne Goudeseune has built a solid experience in Digital Marketing. Following the success of Stardekk in helping hotels to better manage their bookings and guest experience, he has brought his expertise to enhance the visibility of the leading Belgian hotel tech provider and its several solutions.

Thibault Gence / HotelHero



Graduated from the prestigious Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne, Thibault Gence has gained experience and expertise in the Hotel Industry for many years before starting (together with Florian Montag and Julien Schmit) the ambitious project of a software review and recommendation platform dedicated to independent hotels and small chains.

Benjamin Daumas / Posadas Hotels



Passionate about hospitality and Marketing, Benjamin Daumas has built a strong expertise in Brand Marketing within the hotel industry. He has had the opportunity to bring his strong knowledge in several key projects for well-known hotel brands within Accor and Posadas portfolio.

1

How do you see the evolution of Guest Experience as of today and what impact can the digitalization of communication have on it?

Eddy Mimoun / Hotel Direct Booster

Guest experience has dramatically changed in the past 10 years. Historically, travelers were booking holidays using traditional agencies. Today bookings have been split with individual booking for airline tickets, accommodation & activities. Travelers are reviewing more offers than before according to a british research complexifying the booking process. Volatility & fear of making a poor choice has emerged and travelers feels the need to be assisted. Digital communications such as Live-chat is not only reducing efforts from travelers to connect with brands but as well making it more instant. Livechats connected to booking engine make conversation more personalized using data recovered from the online cart multiplying the conversion rate by 9. (18% conversion rate after a chat Vs 2% without)

Arne Goudeseune / Stardekk

The evolution of guest experience and digitization of communication go hand in hand in my opinion. By digitizing a lot of communication processes, guests simply get used to the fact that communication should be interactive, personalised and seamless. Forms of communication processes that don't live up to the guests expectations, can provoke annoyance. Hoteliers can respond to this, using (other) technology in a better, faster and more efficient way. These effects therefore reinforce each other. It is a positive thing that more and more hotels are investing in technology and digitization. A thoughtful investment in technology is good for the hotel, the technology sector and certainly also for the guests.

Benjamin Daumas / Posadas Hotels

Now travelers are more demanding, they are becoming experts and they are interested in controlling their entire experience... Personalization is key. They are digital natives, technology is essential to them making service always more immediate and seamless. They also love making a positive impact to the community and environment.

Thibault Gence / HotelHero

With today's technology, hoteliers can automate most of the tedious tasks, enabling them to have more qualitative time and interactions with their guests. Still, most independent hotels are not taking advantage of its potential. The digitalisation of communication will allow hoteliers to cater the new generation of travellers who are used to automated messaging and self-service, while enhancing the personal touch for guests who still wish to be served by a human. Moving forward artificial intelligence and structured guest data (through implementing a chatbot and CRM), will allow for increased personalisation and effectiveness.

"Now travelers are more demanding, they are becoming experts and they are interested in controlling their entire experience..."

Benjamin Daumas / Posadas Hotels

2

With travelers demands and expectations ever increasing, how can independent hotels (or small) continue to satisfy guests, especially with their bigger counterparts investing heavily in technologies?

"Hotels should only invest in technology that truly improve the service or that can enhance the service quality offered."

Eddy Mimoun / Hotel Direct Booster

OTA DNA is technology but independent hotels isn't (same for large hotel chains).

By focusing on our core values and what makes a hotel memorable, every hotel should benefit from the digital era. Those unique selling points are loud and clear if you look at guest reviews across all channels: Kindness, availability, reactivity.

Hotels should only invest in technology that truly improve the service or that can enhance the service quality offered (like a human Chat or guest reviews widgets) to differentiate an hotel from the others.

Arne Goudeseune / Stardekk

Small or Independent Hotels obviously do not have huge budgets. They have to make choices. Speed and efficiency are key concepts here, especially when it comes to demands and expectations of their guests. However, smaller hotels can now easily analyze in which processes they can gain efficiency or save time. Searching for the most suitable technology is therefore needed and then balance the costs and benefits.

Benjamin Daumas / Posadas Hotels

Technology can bring a seamless aspect to an experience but human service will never completely disappear. In Mexico, Posadas will be the first hotel operator to launch the digital check in with kiosks at the reception of some hotels. This digitalization will not remove receptionists from hotels. On the contrary, this new digital check in can be an opportunity for us to know better our guests offering them a welcome drink for instance.

Thibault Gence / HotelHero

Competing on guest acquisition will become increasingly hard for independent operators. Having a good channel mix and a high converting website is probably the best you can do. Also, leveraging new social media channels and user-generated content like Instagram is key. The bigger potential lies in the guest experience from pre-arrival to post-stay (satisfied customers, are more likely to book direct on their next stay). With the new generation of travellers, independent hotels must switch to a more, if not exclusive, digital experience. The new wave of providers entering the market, offers hotels an abundance of (cheap) tools to help them improve their business while being more agile. As a quick example, many countries, like Austria or France, have now made it legal for accommodation providers to check-in their guests through an on-line registration form. Many tools are now available for that instead of an old piece of paper that hinders the first interactions at the reception.

"The bigger potential lies in the guest experience from pre-arrival to post-stay (satisfied customers, are more likely to book direct on their next stay)."

Thibault Gence / HotelHero



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