

Four Vital Hotel Industry Trends to Watch

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Hospitality is always changing, and it's hard to know which trends have real staying power and those that will be obsolete in a few years. From opening a new hotel, to choosing design elements and selecting technology, the choices managers and hoteliers make now will have a big impact on revenue in the future.

Here are four trends that are already proving to have a lasting impact.

Keep an eye on...

Mixed-Use Properties: In the future, more and more urban hotels will be part of larger complexes, taking up floors or even full towers of office buildings, apartment developments and shopping centers. Hoteliers are seeing this as a great opportunity to not only develop a new-build property with all the latest technology and perks (much easier than retrofitting), but to also provide guests with easy access to other businesses.

Perhaps most notably, earlier this month, the west coast got its tallest hotel when the InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown opened in the Wilshire Grand building, occupying the 31st to the 68th floors of the 73-story tower. This 889-room hotel shares the building with restaurants, a rooftop bar and more than 350,000 square feet of office space.

In Mexico, the city of Cuernavaca is slated to get its first mixed-use real estate development this fall. The Averanda complex will include commercial, residential, office and retail spaces, as well as two hotels with a total of 250 rooms.

Dual-Brand Hotels: Hotel companies are doubling down (or is it up?) on the number of brands they'll have under one roof. In many cases, these projects include a midscale hotel and an extended stay property, catering to different audiences. Marriott already has combined Aloft/Element properties and SpringHill Suites/Residence Inns, while Hilton has joined together Hampton Inns and Homewood Suites under one roof. All of these hotels serve different demographics, but bring disparate guests together.

Depending on the layout of each property, these dual-branded hotels may share common lobbies and other front of the house facilities while having different types of guestrooms on separate sides of the building. Larger hotels might have separate lobbies for each brand, but share back of the house facilities. This not only helps cut down on the number of staff needed for each hotel, it also exposes guests to hotel brands they may not have otherwise considered.

Biophilic Design: "Biophilia" is a new concept referring to people's connection to nature and the study of environments on psychological well-being. Architects and designers are taking note and incorporating plants, fountains and nature-oriented artwork throughout the property.

While bringing the outdoors indoors is beneficial, there is nothing like a good view. A recent study examined prices on Hotels.com, and found that guestrooms in urban properties with views of water or a major landmark can charge 12 percent more than the same kind of room without the view. For resorts located away from cities, guestrooms that overlook water can charge nearly 20 percent more than non-view rooms.

Hotels are also taking advantage of the rooftops, opening the space up to guests to make the most of the views and improve ROI. The Kimpton Solamar Hotel in San Diego recently revamped its rooftop lounge, the Upper East Bar, which offers a pool, views of the city and grassy areas with seating to let guests connect with nature while they socialize.

Technology: No matter how high-tech a hotel is, managers and owners should definitely invest in upgrading its technology now. All hotels should provide the highest wifi speed possible, and no matter what the bandwidth is, guests will be demanding more and more. Rooms should be outfitted with TVs that allow guests to watch their own content on sites such as Netflix and Amazon.

Voice-activated "smart" devices are also gaining ground in hospitality. Marriott is testing Amazon Alexa-powered devices as well as Apple's Siri-powered options at some hotels. Going forward, guests at these properties will be able to turn on lights, close the drapes, adjust the room temperature, and even flip through TV channels with verbal commands.

Best Western, meanwhile, is testing Amazon Dot devices for guests and employees of its hotels.

Guests won't need to insert key-cards with a magnetic strip into a lock. Instead, hotels are using either RFID cards or apps that let guests open their doors with their phones. Hilton is already rolling out mobile check-in and using phones as keys, and other brands will be following suit.

Hotels that start incorporating some or all of these trends today will have an advantage in the future.

Chamberlin PR is a San Francisco-based boutique PR agency that specializes in the promotion of worldwide hospitality and travel clients. www.chamberlinpr.com