

Improving guest experience: Managing cost and driving revenue

When it comes to better hotel service; complimentary bottled water and a continental breakfast are a good start, but the hoteliers who will stand out in 2019 and beyond will be those who use a combination of modern technologies to increase guest satisfaction, improve staff efficiency, and optimise service delivery.



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"Technology is hugely important in determining guest satisfaction. Traveller expectations are higher than ever, meaning that even smaller hotels must deliver the 'high-tech, high-touch' approach that guests are looking for," says Hannes van der Merwe, product manager for Itec South Africa.

For local hotels, the sweet spot seems to lie in a combination of three different areas of technology: an integrated hotel management system, high-end communications, and world-class security and surveillance.

Hotel management: staying on top of operations

The days of using manual systems to manage a property are long gone. Smart hoteliers are using intuitive hotel management systems that are specially designed to meet the needs of small-medium hotels, that are simple, reliable, and customisable – and don't cost an arm and a leg, says van der Merwe.

These web-based systems allow operations to be managed from any number of locations and devices, so hotel managers can be on top of their operations at all times.

Key features include managing the full check-in, check-out and reservation process for hotel guests; the ability to create master, building, door and other employee cards; a comprehensive overview of room status, with room usage reports sent automatically from the system; and full integration with access control systems.

Communications as a revenue generator

Your hotel's communications system is more than just the ability to offer Wi-Fi, wake-up calls and long-distance billing, says van der Merwe. It's a way to directly improve the guest experience, boost employee productivity and increase the bottom line.

"Reliable communications help streamline your operations, while allowing you to provide a better customer experience. Guests want to bring their own devices, and have them work instantly and seamlessly; while staff benefit from better workflow optimization and management and high-touch solutions for smaller hotels," says van der Merwe.

Security and safety

The cornerstone of any smart hotel security system is a complete IP surveillance system to ensure round-the-clock safety for guests and staff and improve vehicle access management and customer experience.

At the same time, it needs to be discreet, says van der Merwe: **guests want to know they're safe, without overly intrusive CCTV installations.**

"Popular solutions provide features like automated vehicle access control with automatic number plate recognition, and automatic event alerts with smart detection. The solution would include integrated IP products such as IP cameras, NVRs, and video management software, helping to create a reliable, flexible security platform for hotels."

Smaller operations are often wary of technology being expensive and complex, but often the opposite is true: the systems actually simplify the running of the hotel, while offering greater business insights and the ability to add even more value to guests.

"Today, the use of technology in a hotel is a no-brainer. It adds to numerous aspects of the guest experience, frees up your people to increase customer satisfaction by providing value, convenience and comfort, and helps to increase that all-important bottom line," concludes van der Merwe.

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