

A REIMAGINED GUEST EXPERIENCE: A GUIDE FOR HOTELIERS



*Exploring the case for a contactless guest journey
and implementation resources*



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BUILDING A CONTACTLESS GUEST JOURNEY

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically affected the hospitality industry, but will a post-pandemic recovery require radical changes? Let's reimagine the guest journey to create a more personalized, less sterile approach.

By implementing contactless technologies, hoteliers can offer a personalized touch that goes one step beyond impressive cleaning efforts and safety protocols. From pre-arrival to checkout, there are opportunities to serve guests at critical touch points using methods that enhance both efficiency and comfort, while also limiting face-to-face interactions.

“Contactless” can be achieved through technology, common communication changes and through physical distancing, depending on guest preferences, all while maintaining a personal connection.



CHAPTER 1

THE TRANSITION TO DIGITAL

1

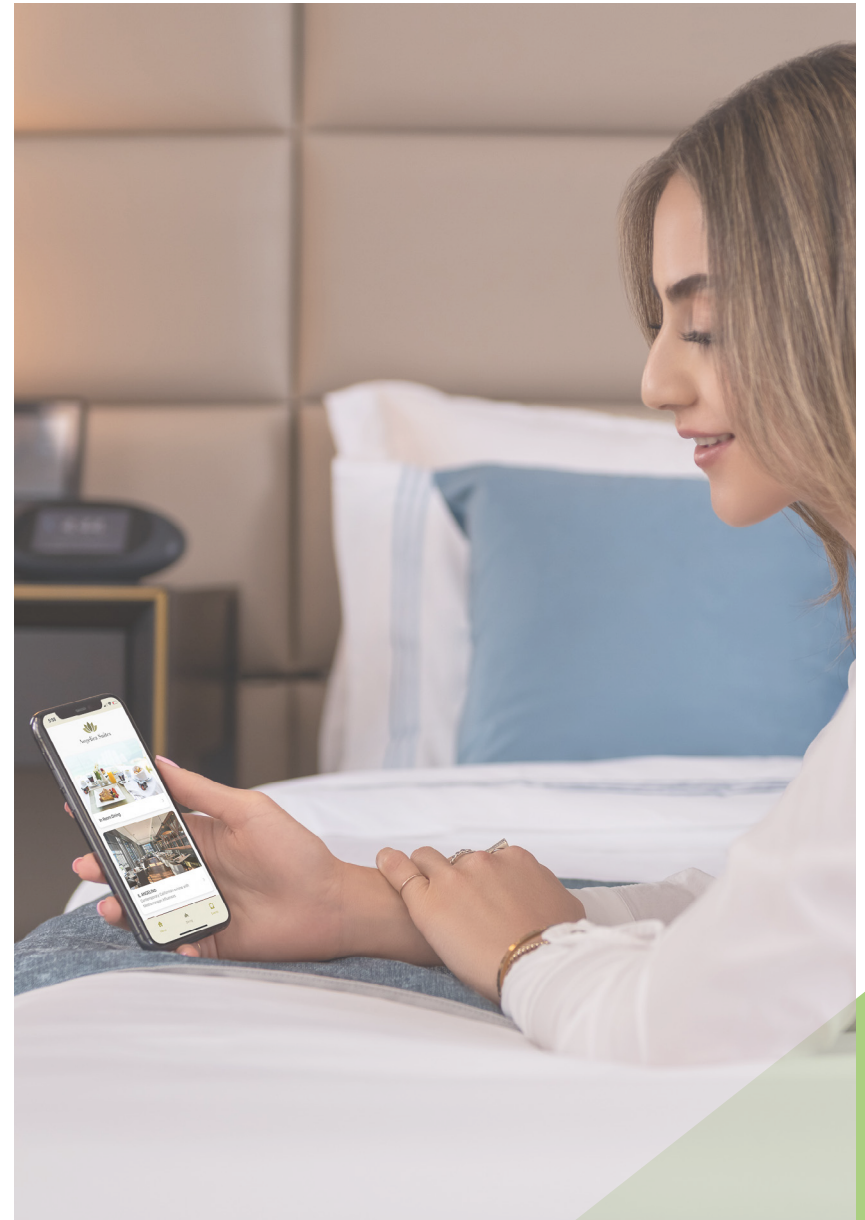


[700 million people](#) will book their hotel rooms online by 2023. Considering that 82% of all travel bookings in 2018 were made online and because the pandemic has accelerated everything digital, hoteliers shouldn't assume guests will prefer offline engagement when they arrive.

With the backdrop of the majority of travelers booking rooms online (and most likely airline tickets, upgrades, etc.), it makes sense that guests feel comfortable extending that digital journey throughout their hotel stay: choosing when and how they interact with their surroundings.

Similar to mobile check-ins and self-serve baggage drops at airports, contactless tech streamlines operations that save on staff expense and increase guest satisfaction. Using voice-activated, contactless technology to replace face-to-face touchpoints like check-in and ordering room service is convenient and puts the guests in control. Because using mobile phones is familiar technology, it's no wonder that a [recent Metova survey](#) found that 90% of guests prefer a mobile app to in-person interactions.

A return to travel brings new and different expectations, and this shift to a mobile-first, digital approach is what guests expect.





THE CONTACTLESS TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS CASE

90%

prefer a hotel with a mobile app to avoid interaction with other people ¹

86%

prefer a hotel with a fully contactless mobile check-in, concierge, check-out and facility reservation app, over one without ¹

81%

business travellers have now used voice assistants during a trip ³

71%

consumers are more likely to stay in a hotel offering a self-service tech reservation app, over one without ²

66%

want to use digital room keys ⁴

35%

say contactless payments would make them comfortable in a hotel again ²

¹ Metova Fall Survey

² Oracle Hospitality & Skift Research Report

³ Travelport, Mobile Travel Trends Report 2019

⁴ cdn2.hubspot.net

THE TRANSITION TO DIGITAL



700M

people will book their hotel rooms online by 2023. ¹

App conversion rates are **5x** higher than mobile website booking ³

- ¹ condorferries.co.uk
- ² stratosjets.com
- ³ jerseyislandholidays.com

82%

of all travel bookings in 2018 were made online ³

48%

of US smartphone users are happy to plan, research and book their trip to a new destination just using their mobile phone

60%

rise of mobile travel bookings is expected by 2021. ¹

82%

of travelers have said they will be downloading more travel apps than they have done before. ³

HOTELS' HEIGHTENED FOCUS ON CONTACTLESS TECHNOLOGY

67%

are considering or are already using self-service check-in ²

70% +

are considering or are already using contactless payment and digital messaging services ²

60%

are considering/already using room keys activated by smartphone ²

73%

of hoteliers agree that self-service tech will become increasingly more important to their business ²

70%

hotel executives agreed that self-service technology will be important to assisting guests while minimizing unnecessary contact ²

70%

hotels already or plan to adopt contactless technology for check-in, food ordering, concierge services and more ²

¹ Travelport, Mobile Travel Trends Report 2019

² Oracle Hospitality & Skift Research Report

CHAPTER 2

PRE-ARRIVAL & CHECK-IN

2



Let guests know ahead of time what interactions to expect on hotel websites and in confirmation emails. Transparency at each touch point is key: 67% of guests want to hear from their hotel about measures they are taking to ensure guest safety according to a [recent study by AHLA](#). This continuous engagement and information sharing will reduce visitors' anxiety over their hotel stay.

Guests want and expect to have mobile options for check-in and room keys, without going to the front desk. According to a [guest engagement survey](#), two-thirds of guests want to use their mobile phones as their digital room key, and 41% consider it an important feature for hotels to offer. The contactless, digital journey they started when booking their travel now appears seamless and natural, empowering the guest to decide when, and if, to engage with the hotel staff.



CHAPTER 3

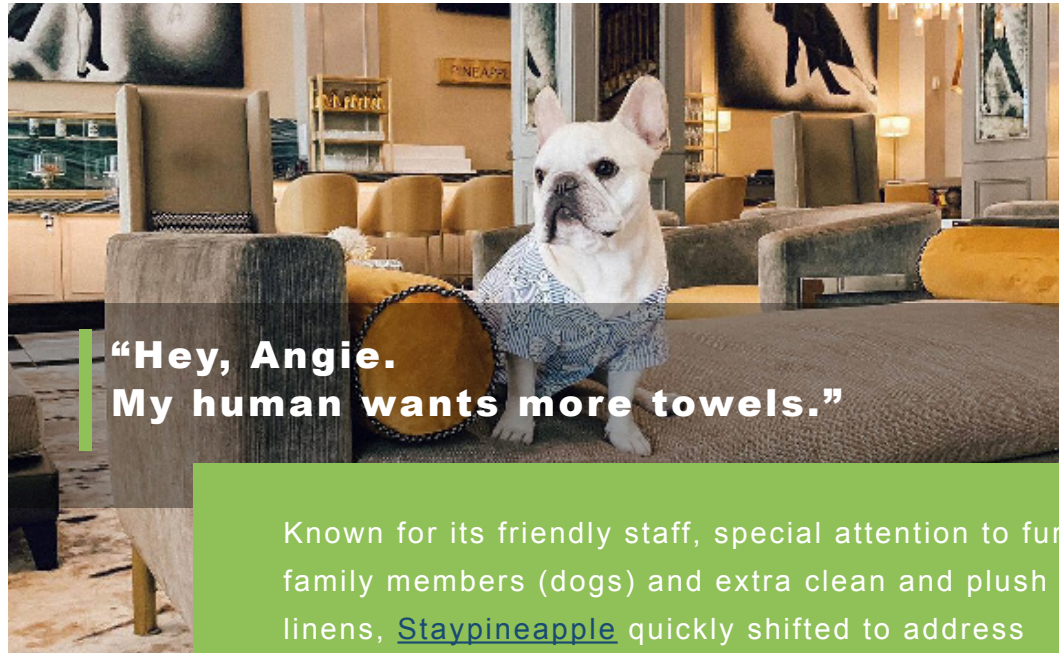
IN-ROOM & AMENITIES

3



Hoteliers can enable guests to control their in-room environment and surrounding amenities, just like they do at home. In the consumer world, it has become second nature to give voice commands to a smart speaker to turn equipment on, off, up or down.

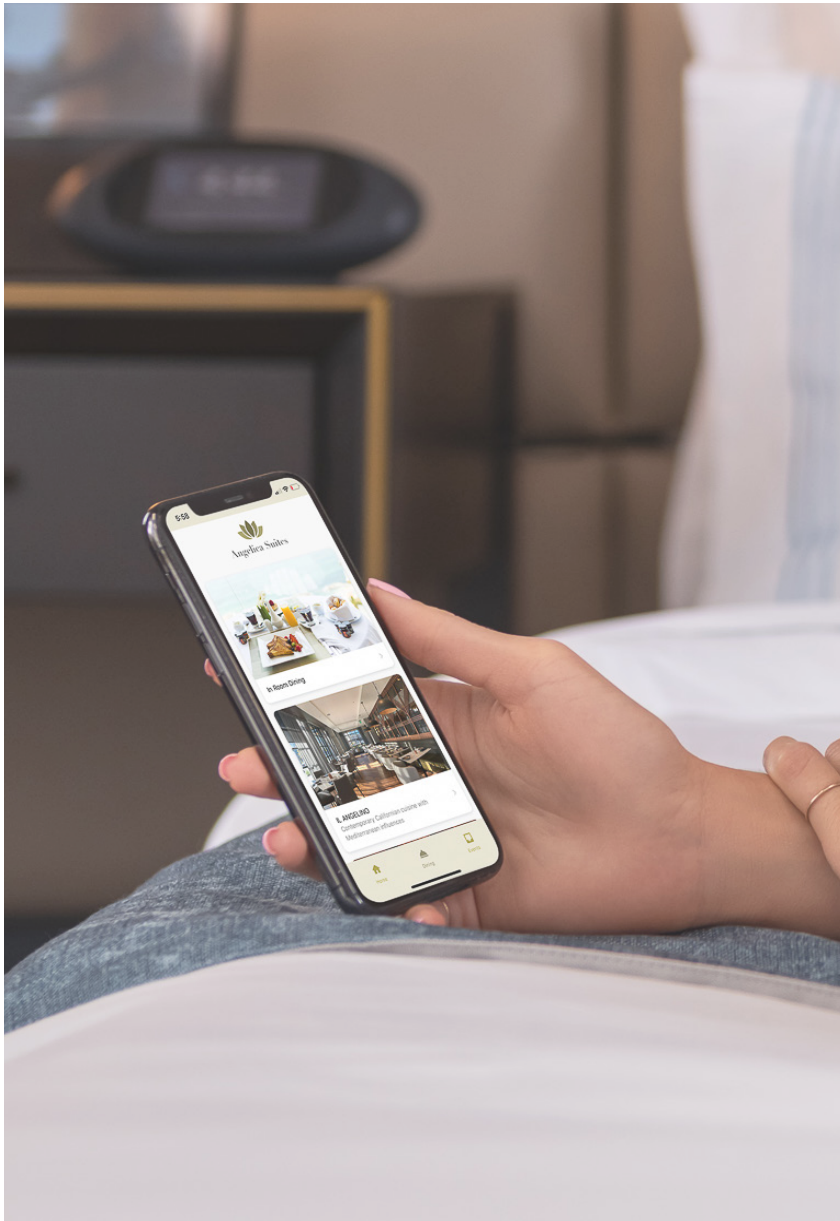
AI and voice technology via virtual assistants can give voice capabilities to many in-room features like lighting, thermostats and entertainment. By making requests and adjusting room preferences, guests can avoid touching remotes and thermostats. This tech can also work 24/7 to process requests and track fulfillment, allowing busy staff to keep their focus where it's needed most.



**“Hey, Angie.
My human wants more towels.”**

Known for its friendly staff, special attention to furry family members (dogs) and extra clean and plush linens, [Staypineapple](#) quickly shifted to address guests' pandemic concerns by implementing new safety protocols without disrupting its personalized, friendly service. Its Stayclean initiative creates a physically distanced, contactless experience with the help of technology including in-room voice assistants. Guests can request toiletries, order room service, book amenities and virtually check out - all without contact.





The good news for hotels is that this “contactless” engagement drives guest satisfaction and operational efficiencies. And now, one step further, contactless technologies provide an extra layer of safety. Offering this alongside a personal touch that uses data and a mobile-first philosophy caters to guests how, when, where and with the information they want.

Guests are individuals with unique profiles, and hotels are in a unique position to get to know them on a digitally personal level. Providing a tailored mobile experience, for example, where users can access digital menus, spa reservations or amenity bookings, all help guests be in charge of their own stay and preferences. 80% of consumers are more likely to purchase when brands offer experiences personalized to them, so why not offer the personalization they are looking for? Allowing them to be in charge of how they access amenities provides the real-time, efficient experience that guests actually want.

CHAPTER 4

HIGH TOUCH WITHOUT THE “TOUCH”

4



“Contactless” does not need to be robotic or sterile. It can mean personalized and full of meaningful contact, but through the eyes of the guests, not through the traditional hospitality point of view.

For hoteliers looking for a new way to add a human connection, look to digital assets that already exist. Marriott Hotels & Resorts, for example, uses a social media “command center” to monitor and engage as updates related to their guests happen and then respond accordingly. When a newly-engaged couple arrives at the hotel and checks in on social media, the team sends a bottle of champagne to their door. Even a personalized welcome or thank you note dropped off at the guest’s door creates a connection and adds that human touch.

87%

of consumers are open to brands monitoring details of their activity if it leads to more customized rewards

Think about loyalty members or other data collected in the PMS system. A [Forbes article](#) shared that only 22% of loyalty program members say they are very satisfied with the level of personalization they receive in the

programs, but 87% of consumers are open to brands monitoring details of their activity if it leads to more customized rewards.

Send a “welcome back” text or email that says it’s great to have them stay again since their trip. Beyond water or pillow preferences for loyalty members, technology can take it even further. Set the room to their preferred 68 degrees with curtains wide open for their view on the 8th floor. Additionally, set music to play their favorite jazz station. Technology brings extra comforts through data already given to hotels through mobile profiles and other touch points.

Contactless technologies add efficiencies, time-savings and convenience, all resulting in higher satisfaction. Guests know that the hotel has put a lot of thought into how to limit wait times to get what they need. It’s not a loss of human connection. It’s just shifting responsibilities and rethinking roles for hotel staff.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT'S NEXT?

5



Hoteliers around the world can embrace contactless to drive better and more meaningful engagement without diminishing the art of hospitality. But, the reimagined guest journey can be taken to the next level when a mobile-first, personalized and guest-driven approach is paired with solid safety programs. Rethinking how guests interact at various touch points throughout their journeys allows them to fully enjoy their digital red-carpet experience and feel comfortable in their return to travel.

It's time to move forward so tapping into technologies now will build confidence for guests to return and prepare for the new expectations and requirements from guests moving into the future. If some of these seem out of reach, look for subscription-based pricing options instead of the up-front, per-room charges typically offered by technology providers.

Ready to get started or looking for new ways to boost safety and efficiency? Check out the following best practices checklist and industry resources.



SAFETY PROGRAM EDUCATION CHECKLIST



PRINT (2 Pages)

As hotels rethink the guest journey and the safety requirements at each touch point, it's important to communicate new cleaning procedures and technology enhancements through the different avenues in which they prefer to connect. Below is a checklist that highlights best practices for creating a clean, social-distanced experience while keeping the high touch service without the physical touch.



PRE-ARRIVAL:

- ☐ Create a COVID/pandemic response plan, including any contactless technologies available
- ☐ Update website with this plan and key features
- ☐ Update booking engine to highlight safety standards
- ☐ Add the safety program to your guest booking confirmation, welcome or reminder emails
- ☐ Train staff taking calls or booking team members to point guests to information about contactless updates



CHECK-IN AND LOBBY:

- ☐ Train staff to point out contactless technology for each guest when they check in
- ☐ Include safety technology on the key card, holder or in an insert with the keys
- ☐ Feature new safety protocols and featured tech on front desk/lobby digital signage
- ☐ Print a welcome packet that highlights changes to standard hotel offerings and how to book amenities due to COVID processes
- ☐ If your hotel offers mobile check-in or digital key cards, add a reminder about contactless amenities on the check-in platform
- ☐ Add a callout screen to any digital advertising signs that may be in shared spaces throughout the hotel (i.e., elevators, lobby)

SAFETY PROGRAM EDUCATION CHECKLIST



IN THE ROOM:

- ☐ Update marketing materials that highlight safety standards by including a mention of touchless technologies
- ☐ Include QR codes on any collateral or signage to link to amenity books, hotel menus, or safety guideline pages
- ☐ If your hotel features events or other marketing assets on the TV welcome screen, feature safety programs
- ☐ Include visual cleaning clues (e.g., seal over door, sign in restroom, plastic cover over remote)
- ☐ For ordering more towels, humidifiers, razors or room service, drop off items at the door for contactless delivery
- ☐ Offer digital checkout options via technology or phone to remove an additional touch point



AROUND THE HOTEL:

- ☐ Offer clearly marked distancing guidelines and easy-to-digest visual cues for cleaning protocols and COVID prevention plans
- ☐ Add discrete clear barriers at the front desk and concierge to protect both guests and staff
- ☐ Repurpose shared spaces to enable booking an hour at the pool or gym with cleanings in between each use and add visual cues on process and distancing
- ☐ Rearrange outside seating and use plants or screens to encourage social distancing and create a more private experience



PERSONAL TOUCH:

- ☐ Leave guests a personalized welcome note upon arriving to their room
- ☐ Offer COVID “safety kits” with masks, hand sanitizer and water bottles
- ☐ Display a photo of who is working the front desk or have staff wear badges with their picture attached so guests can still see their smiling faces
- ☐ Pay extra attention to loyalty members and give personalized greetings and offers when possible
- ☐ Manage social channels and look for guests who have checked in online or tagged the hotel that may be celebrating a milestone or event

ADDITIONAL INDUSTRY RESOURCES

The AH&LA Safe Stay Initiative offers training, resources, checklists and guidelines for enhanced hotel cleaning practices in response to COVID-19. Guidelines are developed and approved in line with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's best practices and cover protocols surrounding guest and employee health, employee training and responsibilities, cleaning and sanitation, and physical distancing.

AH&LA regularly updates guidelines based on the latest research and requirements. Download them [here](#).



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