



# Guest Room Technology Trends

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Connectivity, it sounds simple, the ability to make and maintain a connection. We are now living in a society obsessed and reliant on its gadgets and being connected. Do you feel a tightening in the chest if your battery power is low and there is no charger in sight? Does your blood pressure rise when an internet connection is not available or the internet is extremely slow? But what does it mean to the provision of In-Room Technology in Hotels.

**G**uests are arriving at hotels armed with their gadgets, including smart phones, PC's, iPads, portable gaming consoles, cameras and more. These devices become their own entertainment providers. Essentially guests are now bringing their own entertainment with them.

These days the separation between work and personal time has become very blurred and we often do a combination of both at the same time, particularly when we travel. So whether your guests are

business or leisure travellers, the hotel room needs to cater for this need. Guests want to work as they do in the office but at the same time be entertained as they are when at home. It is important to note that guests expect a hotel to provide them with at least a similar entertainment experience as they have at home, if not better.

Last year we undertook a survey of business travellers staying in Australian hotels. We wanted to understand their expectation from their hotels when it comes to In-Room Technology. We also asked them how they respond if the In-Room Technology is not up to scratch.

The survey revealed the 3 Key Reasons why In-Room Technology matters;

1. More than half the business guests consider the In-Room Technology offered when making a hotel booking
2. 7 out of 10 guests would be stressed out, annoyed or furious if they could not use the In-Room Technology
3. Almost half the guests who had problems using the In-Room Technology would never stay at that property again

The habits and expectations of the hotel guest have changed. Take a quick look around you where ever you go; the attachment

“With guests bringing their own gadgets the job of in room technology has changed”

we have to our devices is plain to see (if you are not looking down at your own that is! and if you have this problem there is an App to help<sup>1</sup>). This attachment does not end when they enter a hotel room. With homes boasting state-of-the-art

## Keeping your Guests Connected



### Connectivity Panels

Allow your guests to connect their laptops, iPods/iPhones, video cameras and even gaming consoles to the in-room TV and have a great stay. iPads can connect too!



### iPod/iPhone Connectivity

Guests can dock to charge their iPhones and iPods and enjoy their music. Only unit on the market with Hotel Features.



### Wired and Wireless

Some guests like wireless, some guests need wired; Make them all happy with a simple out of the box solution that can do both. Great at eliminating 'dead spots'.



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entertainment and Wi-Fi systems, there is an expectation that hotels should meet this standard if not better it. Investing in the right technology will save time and money and make the difference between guest satisfaction and guest annoyance. To embrace the changing needs of guests and remain competitive below are some key areas for serious thought.

Above all other technology is the need for fast reliable internet. It is as simple as that and it is not negotiable. A wired connection has been the preferred option but Wi-Fi is now catching up and fast becoming a required minimum standard in guest rooms. This need is being driven by devices such as the iPads and Smartphones that don't have an ethernet port.

With guests bringing their own gadgets the job of in room technology has changed. It's now about allowing guests to integrate or connect their devices. They have spent time and money loading their 'life' onto their devices and they know how they work. Your VOD cannot compete with their own library of media so give guests the ability to play their own movies, music or games as they would at home. A media hub or connectivity panel is going to be of greater value than a Blue-ray player (unless you are willing and able to supply your guests an extensive library of movies). Is there a need to spend money on fancy expensive phones? Your guests already have their own. These days' in-room phones are generally only used to phone reception and order room service.

All these gadgets are arriving at your hotel which is creating a greater need for power points. Make them plentiful, make them transformer friendly and please do not make your guests crawl all over the floor to find them. A well thought out plan would include power points placed at desk height near the desk (minimum of 4 is suggested) or entertainment devices and by the bed. Some hotels are now also installing a ChargeHub which is a universal multi-device charger compatible with over 2000 devices from more than 50

brands. These units charge up to four devices simultaneously. They can be built into the joinery in the guest room. They can also be used at reception, concierge, business centre or in banqueting to handle any guest charging requirements.

With the growing number of iPhones (Apple now has just under 1/3 on the mobile phone market in Australia<sup>2</sup>), iPod/iPhone docking stations are widely being installed by hotels of all sizes. These docking stations are being well received by guests with positive comments coming back on guest comment cards. The docking stations are also saving staff considerable time that was previously spent assisting guests charge their devices.

Another important part of the guest experience is having a comfortable functional place for them to work and to use their technology. The desk is no longer a 'writing desk' it needs to cater for the working traveller. They need a desk with good lighting a comfortable chair and as we have said before ample power points.

Once you have all this wonderful technology in place, with a good desk space and power sockets and chargers in abundance it is critical that operation is simple. Consider the amount of time a guest has between eating, sleeping, catching up on email, connecting with family or relaxing with their music or movies. How much of this precious time are they going to want to spend reading complicated instructions and battling cables, plugs and remotes trying to figure how to make the technology work? Less than five minutes is a good guess. Enlist some technophobes to test your system to ensure it is easy to understand and easy to operate.

Fast reliable internet, connectivity for guest devices and the ability to use and charge these devices easily these are the basics you must get right to ensure your guests are satisfied and loyal.

A recent article I read suggested that giving a guest food poisoning would be viewed more favourably by them these days than sub standard technology.

1. Type While Walking – This is an app that lets you walk and text accident free. . You can SMS and send emails while your device camera keeps an eye on what is coming up.
2. The Australian – June 27 2011 Chris Griffith – "IDC said Apple had become the top mobile device vendor in Australia for the first time, with nearly one third market share." ■