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# HOTELIER TECHNOLOGY SENTIMENT REPORT

**Pulse Report on Tech Use  
Related to Operations and  
Guest Experience**

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In partnership with Stayntouch



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SCHOOL OF  
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Jonathan M. Tisch Center of Hospitality

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# ABOUT THE REPORT.

This report is the result of a collaboration between graduate students at the NYU Jonathan M. Tisch Center of Hospitality and Stayntouch. Graduate students acted as consultants for Stayntouch as part of a capstone project. During the course of this project, the students were invited to conduct surveys and interviews on behalf of Stayntouch. Stayntouch, a leading hospitality technology company, requested the creation of this report in order to provide the industry with a better understanding of trends surrounding technology use in hospitality and its effect on operations and the guest experience.

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## INTRODUCTION

The pandemic had a profound impact on the hospitality industry. Given the recent changes in the industry, it is important to take a pulse of the industry in regard to technology usage in operations and the guest experience.

## OBJECTIVES

The objective of this project is to gather and analyze hotelier sentiments about technology use in hotel operations. The purpose of the report is to provide hoteliers, technology vendors, and hospitality industry professionals with an understanding of hotelier sentiments regarding:

- The evolution of digital technology
- The use of technology to combat challenges relating to staff shortages
- The role of technology in personalizing service and streamlining processes
- The differences in personalization using a high-touch vs high-tech model
- Whether self-service guest experiences are a moment-in-time or long-term trend

## METHODS

**A survey of 525 hoteliers** was conducted in October-November 2021. The survey consisted of 21 questions, including:

- 7 background questions
- 4 questions about technology use over time
- 2 questions about operating with a smaller staff
- 5 questions on guest experience
- 2 questions about the pain points or challenges of using technology
- 1 question for additional comments

In the second part of the project, we conducted **5 interviews with hoteliers** to gain further insights on the findings of the survey. Interviewees were selected using a purposive sampling technique, following the criteria of each hotelier being from different hotel segments. Segments included location, brand affiliation, and portfolio size. This sampling method ensured we heard from a range of participants.

We also conducted **4 interviews with vendors**. These interviews were arranged by Stayntouch. We spoke to a representative from a revenue management system provider, a digital key provider, a reputation management provider, and a mobile PMS provider.

# KEY FINDINGS

**The number of popular hospitality tech used by hotels increased by 31% between the start of the pandemic and the end of 2021. This number is projected to increase by an additional 19% in 2022.**

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- 81.7% of all respondents reported implementing at least one technology during the pandemic and/or planning to implement a technology during 2022.
- Technologies surrounding "contactless" experiences, such as self-service check-in, in-room technology, mobile keys, and digital payments increased significantly during the pandemic and are projected to increase further during 2022.
- Technologies surrounding automation and optimization of processes, such as automation tools, guest messaging, and chatbots also saw significant increases during the pandemic, likely due to smaller staffs. These technologies are expected to increase during 2022, likely because the industry is facing a labor shortage.

**While 60% of respondents reported using traditional front desk check-in, self-service check-in is on the rise.**

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- The pandemic amplified labor shortage in the hotel industry. To help relieve workforce shortages, many hotels began to offer contactless check-in/out (i.e. mobile check-in and/or self-service kiosks). These technologies increased by 66% during the pandemic.
- Similarly, hoteliers were asked which departments can operate with a smaller staff. The most selected option was the front desk, with 43.6% of respondents choosing this option.
- Guests still expect hotels to have contactless check-in as an option, even when they don't plan to use them. Hoteliers must ask themselves: "what do customers want?"

# KEY FINDINGS

**During the pandemic, the contactless guest experience was more accepted by guests. An increase in contactless experiences is a long-term trend that is expected to continue beyond the pandemic.**

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- Respondents were asked to describe their guests' behaviors and expectations of contactless technology. Nearly 92% of respondents indicated that their guests have increased acceptance of technology and expect contactless options.
- With the rise of technology in contactless guest experiences, nearly 75% of respondents believe that contactless will become a long-term trend.
- Hoteliers believe that technology helps them enhance guest experiences and hotels should provide contactless experiences as an option for guests, so guests can choose what is appropriate for them.

**The most commonly described issues with technology were the high upfront investment and cost, difficult integration and lack of scalability, and losing the essence of hospitality.**

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- Because of its relatively high upfront investment costs, independent hotels are more reluctant to implement new technology than branded hotels. This creates a gap in the ability to deliver guest experiences and meet guest expectations.
- Hoteliers find that most of the technology available on the market is too complex and difficult to integrate with their existing systems.
- Many hoteliers are concerned that technology will steer them away from their main purpose of providing guests with a warm, memorable experience with a personal touch of their business/brand identity

# KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INDUSTRY

**Hospitality technology is not one-size-fits-all.**

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**Hotels should work to strike a balance between using technology and providing in-person service that works for their property, staff, and guests.**

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**Hoteliers are more willing to invest in technologies that are easily scalable and provide seamless integration with their current tech use and existing operations.**

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**Hospitality technology can provide time-saving assistance for administrative tasks and repetitive processes. Increased efficiency enables employees to spend more time on service-related tasks.**

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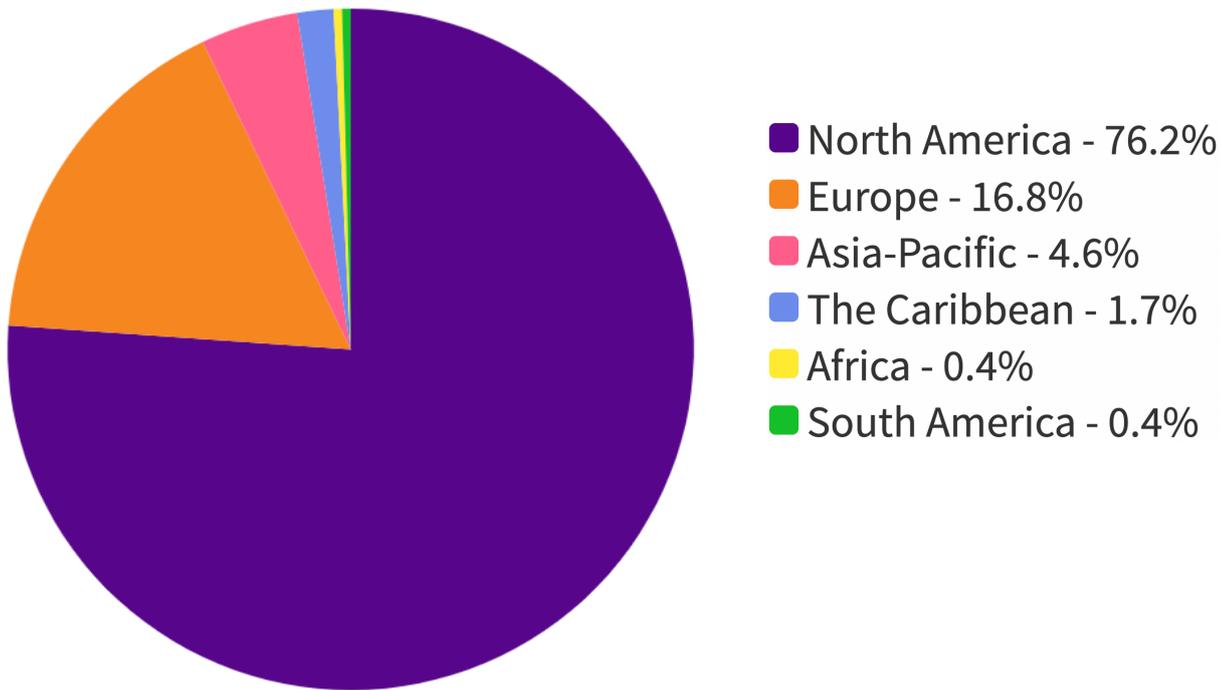
# **PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN**

**525 SURVEY RESPONSES WERE COLLECTED FROM HOTELIERS THAT OWN, MANAGE, OR WORK AT HOTELS. THE SAMPLE INCLUDES HOTELIERS AT INDEPENDENT AND BRANDED HOTELS AND SERVE PRIMARILY BUSINESS OR LEISURE CLIENTELE OR A MIX OF BOTH.**

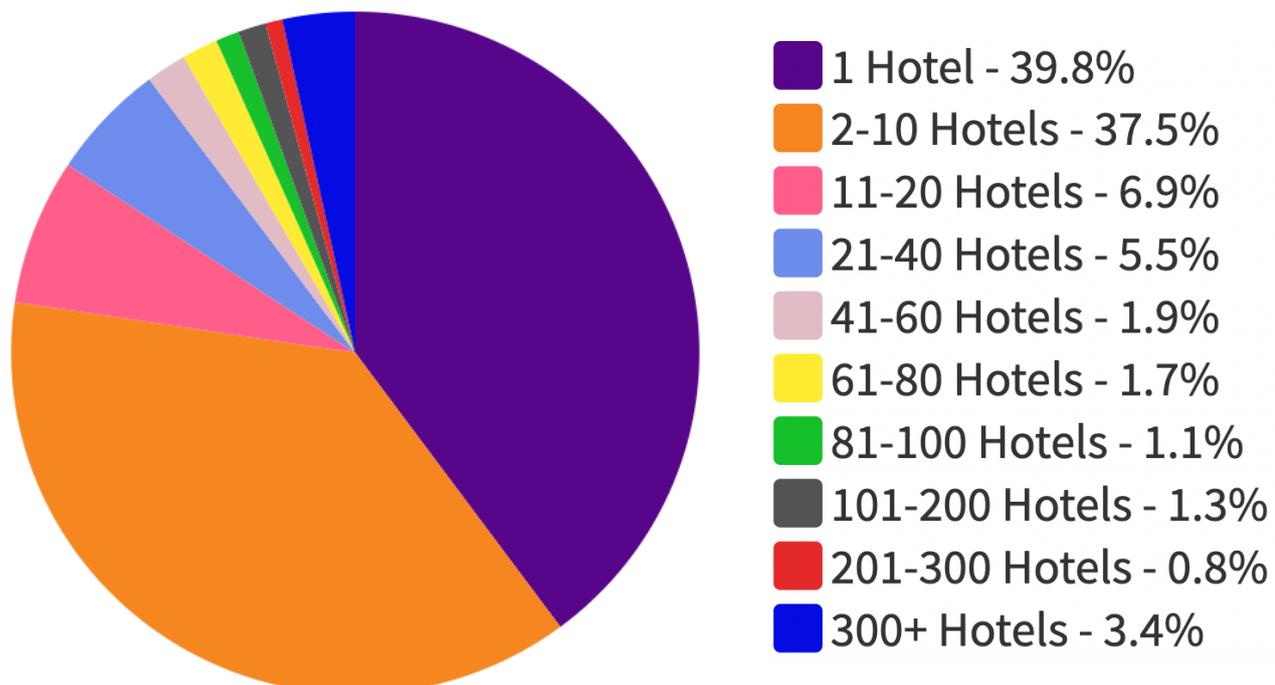
# LOCATION & PORTFOLIO

Of the 525 hoteliers surveyed, 76% manage or own properties in North America. 78% manage or own a portfolio of 10 or fewer properties.

Where Is Your Hotel Located?



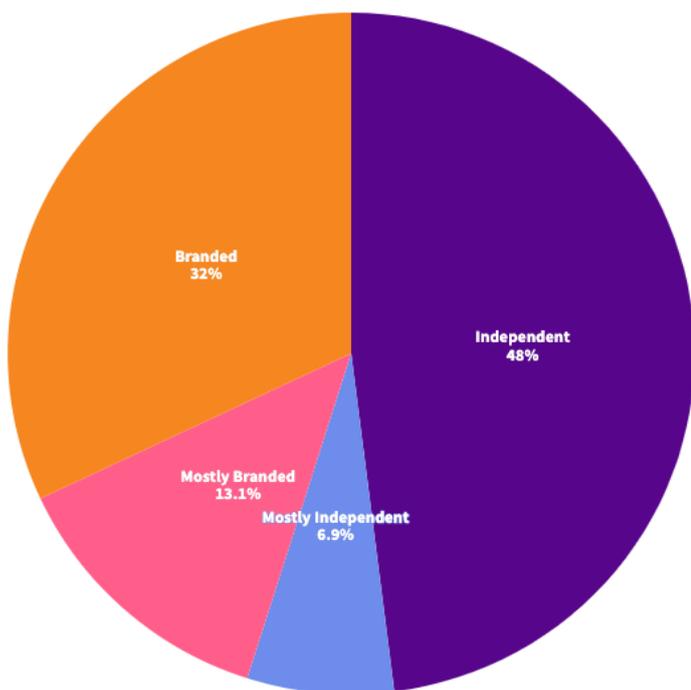
How Many Properties Do You Manage?



# AFFILIATION & CLIENTELE

A little over half the hoteliers surveyed are from independent properties. Majority of hoteliers report serving an equal mix of business and leisure guests.

## Is Your Hotel(s) Branded or Independent?

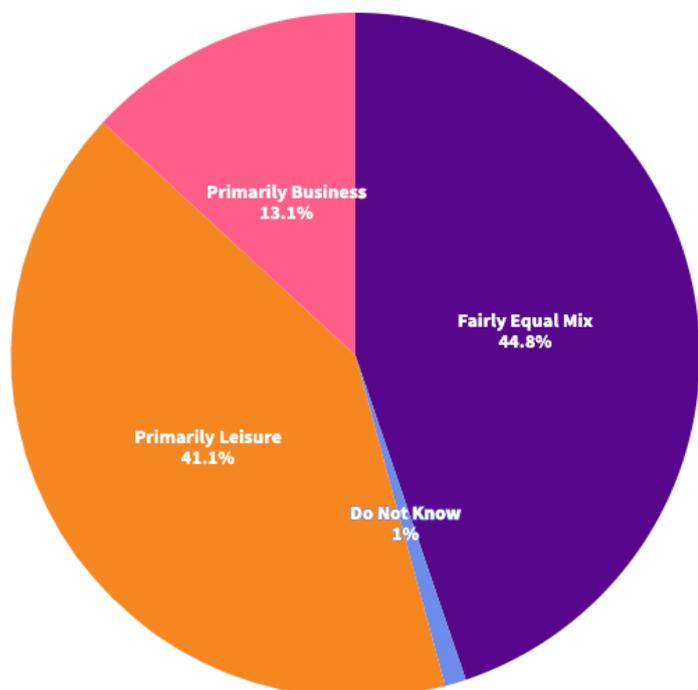


## OF THE 525 HOTELIERS SURVEYED,

- 54.9% of respondents are from independent and mostly independent properties
- 45.1% are from branded and mostly branded properties

For the remainder of the report, branded and mostly branded hotels will be referred to as branded hotels and independent and mostly independent hotels will be referred to as independent hotels.

## Does Your Hotel Serve Primarily Business or Leisure Travelers?



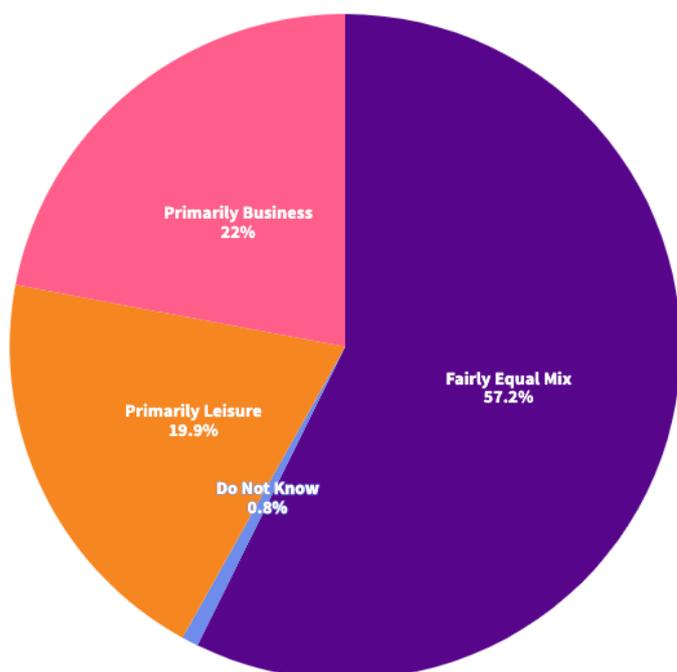
## OF THE 525 HOTELIERS SURVEYED,

- 44.8% are from hotels that serve an equal mix of business and leisure travelers
- More respondents served leisure travelers than business travelers

# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRANDED & INDEPENDENT HOTELS

Majority of branded hotels surveyed serve an equal mix of business and leisure guests, while majority of independent properties serve leisure guests.

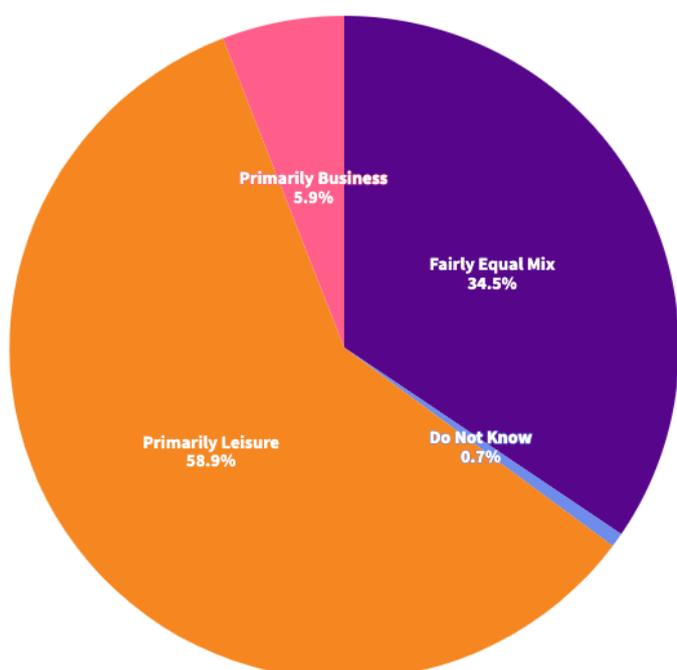
Branded Hotels Breakdown By Clientele



## OF THE 237 HOTELIERS SURVEYED FROM BRANDED PROPERTIES,

- 57.2% reported serving a fairly equal mix of business and leisure clientele
- 22% reported serving primarily business clientele
- 19.9% reported serving primarily leisure clientele

Independent Hotels Breakdown By Clientele



## OF THE 288 HOTELIERS SURVEYED FROM INDEPENDENT PROPERTIES,

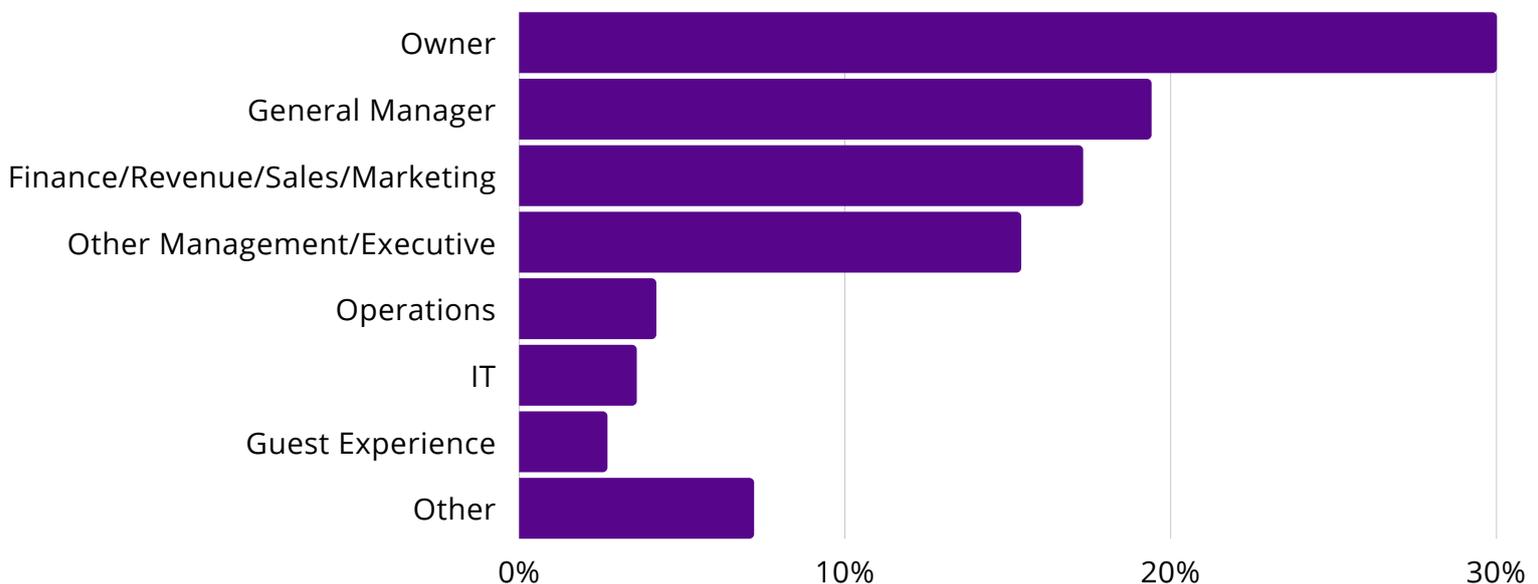
- 59.8% reported serving primarily leisure clientele
- 34.5% serve a fairly equal mix of business and leisure clientele
- 5.9% serve primarily business travelers

For the remainder of the report, we refer to Branded & Mostly Branded Hotels as one group and Independent & Mostly Independent as one group.

# JOB FUNCTION

About 65% of hoteliers surveyed are owners, general managers, or work in another management executive role.

## WHAT IS YOUR JOB FUNCTION?



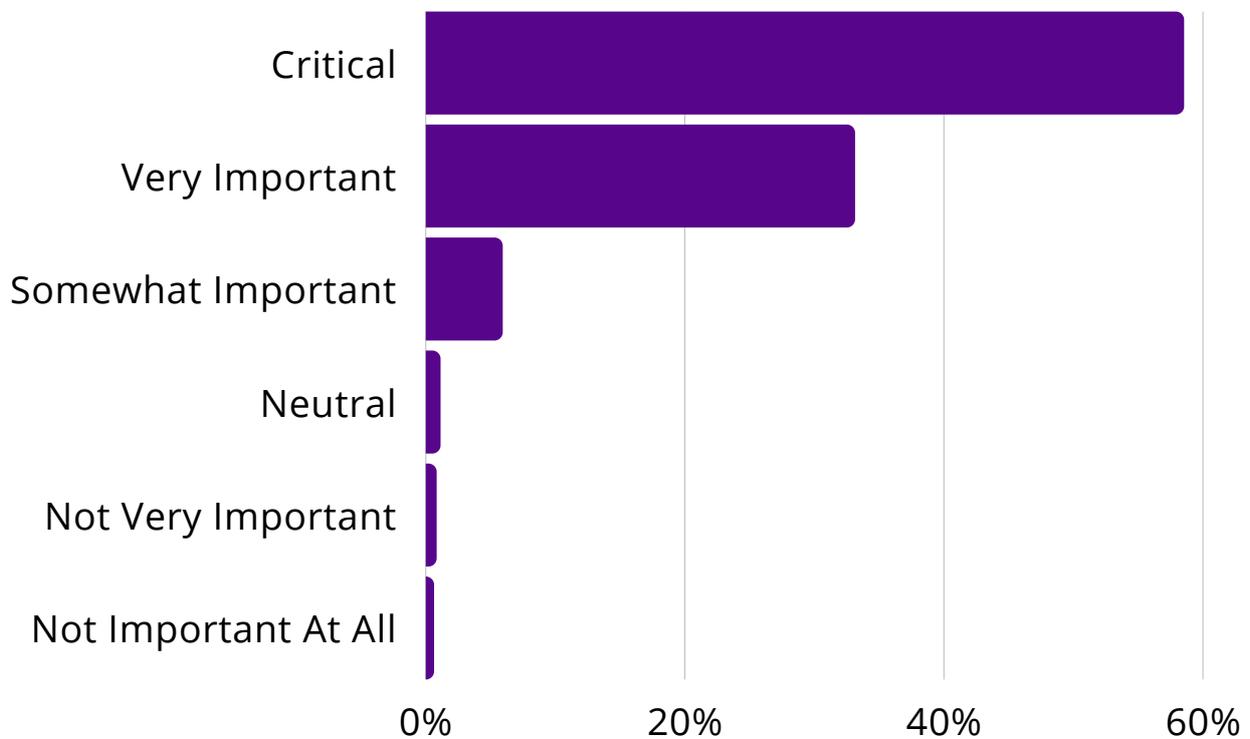
### OF THE 525 HOTELIERS SURVEYED,

- About 30% of respondents are the owners of their property or brand, while an additional 19.5% were the general managers and a little over 15% were in other managerial positions or on the executive levels.
- Slightly more than 17% are involved in finance, revenue, sales, or marketing. Approximately 4% of respondents are in the operations department and 3.6% are in the information technology (IT) department.
- The remaining 2.6% work in guest services/experiences, while roughly 7% of respondents identified as others (consultants, advisors, asset managers, and more).

# IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY

Over 90% of hoteliers reported technology is either very important or critical to their operations.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS TECHNOLOGY TO YOUR OPERATIONS?



### OF THE 525 HOTELIERS SURVEYED,

- Roughly 59% of respondents believe that technology is critical to their operations, while 33% believe technology is very important to their operations
- Almost 6% of respondents believe technology is somewhat important
- 6 participants are neutral regarding the importance of technology
- 7 participants rated technology either not very important or not important at all

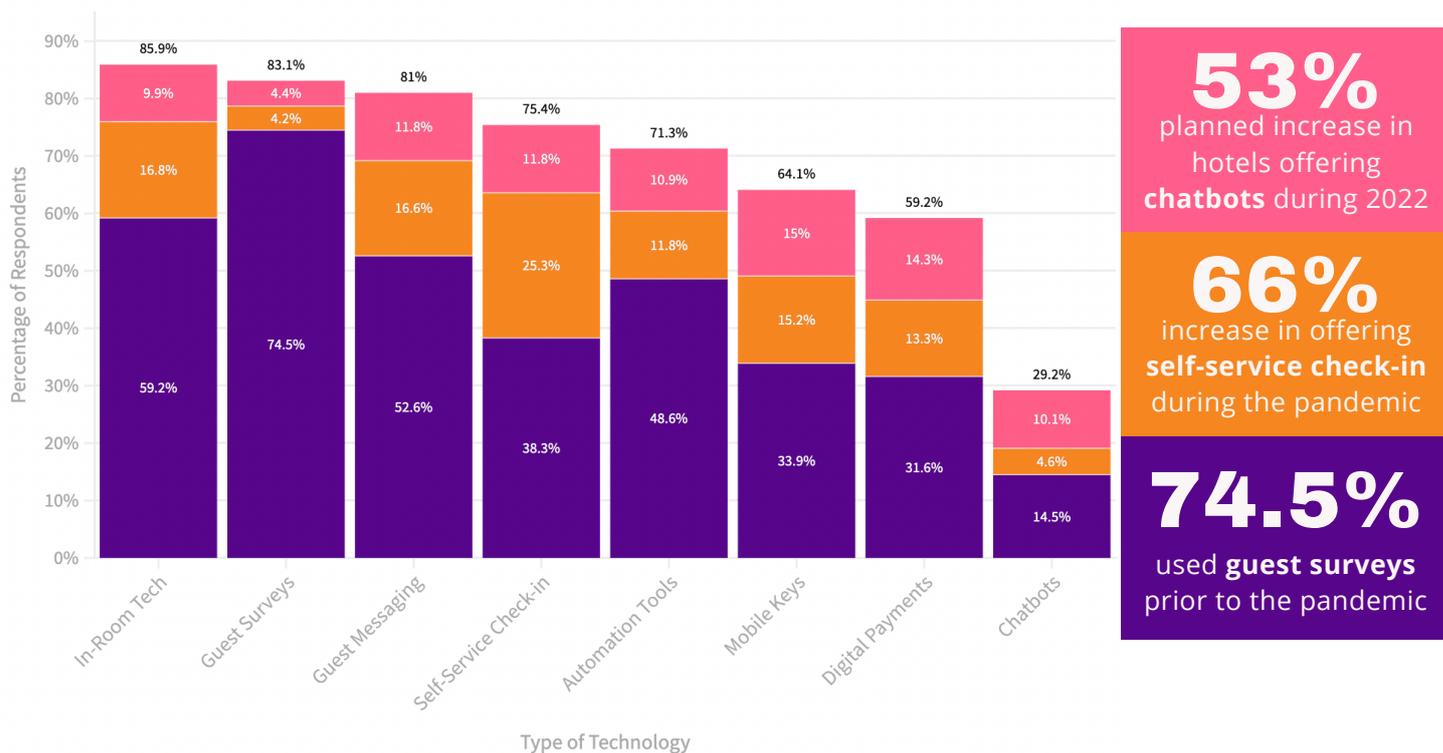
# CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY USE

THE AMOUNT OF TECH HOTELS USED IN OPERATIONS AND OFFERED TO GUESTS INCREASED BY 30% BETWEEN THE START OF THE PANDEMIC AND THE END OF 2021. LOOKING AHEAD, IT IS PROJECTED THERE WILL BE A FURTHER 19% INCREASE DURING 2022.

# CURRENT & PLANNED TECH USE

Use of popular hospitality technology increased by 31% during the pandemic. In 2022, it is projected to increase by 19%.

- Implemented Prior to the Pandemic
- Implemented During the Pandemic
- Plan to Implement in 2022



Hoteliers were asked which of the technologies they used prior to the pandemic, implemented during the pandemic, or plan to implement during 2022, and to select all that apply. Key takeaways are below. The technologies are explained in detail in the following pages.

- Guest surveys were the most offered technology prior to and during the pandemic.
- Based on the projected implementation, in-room tech is expected to become the most offered technology by the end of 2022.
- The technology that grew the most during the pandemic was self-service check-in.
- McKinsey's Global Survey of executives indicates the adoption of technologies during the first seven months of the pandemic increased at a rate that would have otherwise taken three to four years to accomplish. The hotelier technology sentiment survey found significant increases in technology adoption during the pandemic. The findings also suggest that, for the hospitality industry, this increased pace of adoption will continue through at least 2022.

Predicted  
Usage by  
End of 2022

Current  
Usage as  
of 12/21

# TECHNOLOGIES

The technologies detailed below are utilized in hotel operations and/or various elements of the customer journey. The number with the orange background is the current percentage of participants using the technology as of December 2021. The number with the purple background is the projected total number of participants using the technology by the end of 2022.

85.9%

## IN-ROOM TECH

76%

In-room technology is any type of technology that allows guests to control their experience from their room. This includes voice-controlled or touch screen TVs, thermostats, or lights. Other examples are in-room tablets, room service apps, service robots, smart bathrooms.

Prior to the pandemic, in-room technology was the second most commonly used tech. It was used 15.3% less than guest surveys. Today, however, an additional 16.8% of participants implemented it during the pandemic, and 9.9% plan to adopt it in 2022. Because of this, in-room tech is projected to soon be the leading hospitality technology. This technology enables guests to customize their in-room experience, and exert greater control over their stay.

83.1%

## GUEST SURVEYS

78.7%

Guest surveys are questionnaires digitally sent to guests at any time during the customer journey. They are a key aspect of reputation management. Gathering feedback from guests provides a hotel with an opportunity to enhance its services. Tracking responses and setting KPIs related to guest satisfaction helps a hotel remain competitive.

Prior to the pandemic, the use of guest surveys was over 20% higher than any other tech. 4.2% of respondents reported added guest survey technology during the pandemic, and a projected 1.9% will adopt this tech in 2022. Guest surveys saw the smallest change during the pandemic and have the lowest number of hotels planning to implement it in 2022.

This technology may not have been as popular to implement during the pandemic because it is not directly related to providing a contactless experience, which is what most hotels were investing in over the last two years. However, if a hotel has implemented new technologies or change aspects of its service, investing in a guest survey technology can provide valuable insight to understand the impact of different changes the property has made on its guests and their satisfaction.

Predicted  
Usage by  
End of 2022

Current  
Usage as  
of 12/21

# TECHNOLOGIES CONT'D

81%

## GUEST MESSAGING

69.2%

Guest messaging technology allows hotels to communicate with guests prior to or during their stay via text message. Given the widespread use of mobile phones, guests are comfortable communicating via text. This tech provides hotels an opportunity to drive revenue. Hotels can text guests to upsell a higher room category or cross-sell experiences. Similarly, guests can utilize this tech to request services. This tech can also be used to provide guests with information such as check-in details or housekeeping status updates.

During the pandemic, hotels could utilize guest messaging to send guests important information regarding COVID-19 protocols and cleaning standards. Perhaps this is why 16.6% of respondents implemented this tech during the pandemic and 11.8% report planning to implement it in 2022, which is a 32% increase and 17% increase in use, respectively.

75.4%

## SELF-SERVICE CHECK-IN

63.6%

Self-service check-in is any technology that allows guests to check themselves in. This includes mobile check-in, in which guests check-in prior to arrival using their mobile device, and self-service kiosks, which were often referred to as "contactless check-in" during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, over a quarter of hoteliers surveyed implemented mobile check-in. Although this technology ranked fifth prior to the pandemic, it surpassed automation tools and in-room technology to become the third most utilized technology. Many hotels felt eliminating or providing an alternative to the traditional front-desk model by offering self-service check-in would help guests feel more comfortable during the pandemic.

Looking ahead, it is also the most reported selection for implementation during 2022. The availability of this technology in hotels has grown at a very fast pace over the last few years, undoubtedly in response to the challenges of traveling during the pandemic.

Predicted  
Usage by  
End of 2022

Current  
Usage as  
of 12/21

# TECHNOLOGIES CONT'D

71.3%

## AUTOMATION TOOLS

60.4%

Automation tools help hoteliers control their operations by streamlining and optimizing processes. Almost all departments in a hotel can use automation tools. Automated housekeeping task management can increase the efficiency of housekeepers. Automated revenue management can increase revenue.

Automated CRM can increase customer loyalty. Many hotels downsized their staff during the pandemic. Using automation tools can provide assistance when a hotel is understaffed by enabling employees to increase efficiency. The increase in automation tools was not as great as expected. There was a 24% increase in the use of automation tools during the pandemic and a projected 18% increase in 2022.

64.1%

## MOBILE KEYS

49.1%

Mobile key technology was created many years ago, but the pandemic helped popularize this tech. Many customers were unwilling to download an app in order to use their phone as a key or simply did not see a benefit in doing so.

However, during the pandemic, people started to see mobile keys as a helpful technology that enabled them to minimize in-person interaction. As a result, this technology saw the second-largest increase during the pandemic after mobile check-in. It increased by almost 45% during the pandemic and is projected to increase 31% in 2022.

This technology can require a large upfront cost in order to implement the mobile tech into every guest room door. As this report explores in greater detail later, this can be a high barrier to entry.

Predicted  
Usage by  
End of 2022

Current  
Usage as  
of 12/21

# TECHNOLOGIES CONT'D

59.2%

44.9%

## DIGITAL PAYMENTS

Digital payments and digital wallets are another technology that saw tremendous growth during the pandemic. Cashless payments have been on the rise for many years, but the hospitality industry was often lagging in terms of the adoption of this technology.

The traditional check-in model requires guests to show their ID and use a physical credit card for a deposit. However, this tech is on the rise. It increased by 42% during the pandemic and is projected to increase by 32% in 2022.

While some are worried about the data safety and liability issues surrounding digital payments, there is no doubt they are on the rise.

29.2%

19.1%

## CHATBOTS

Chatbots are messaging interface robots that can be programmed to provide customers with answers to frequently asked questions or connect the customer with the appropriate person to help solve their issue. Several studies have shown that chatbots can increase direct bookings and reduce costs related to customer service.

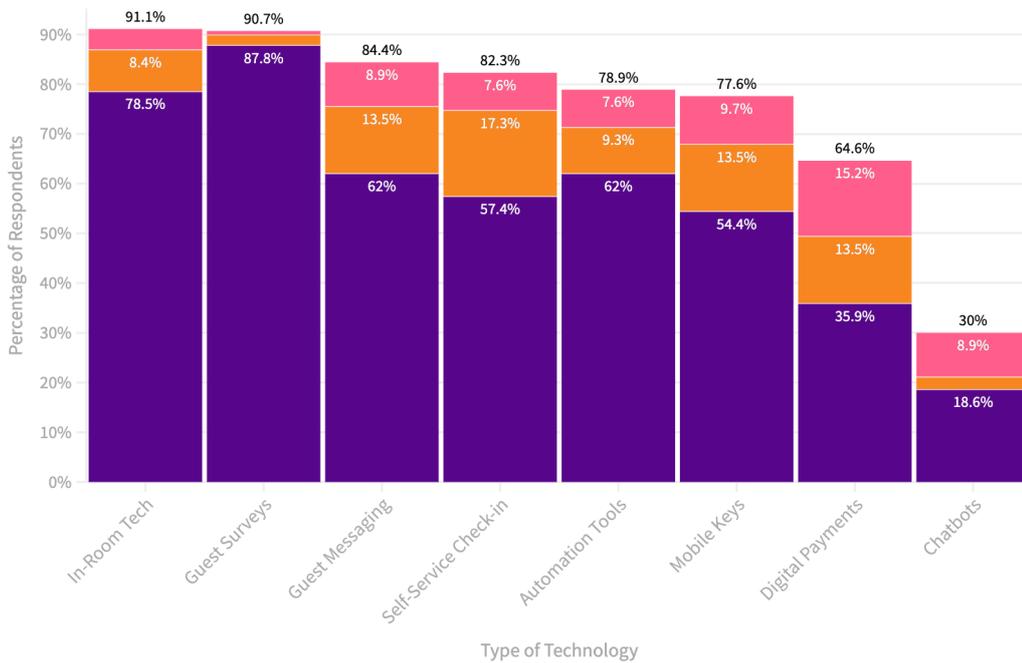
The pandemic caused many hotels to search for ways to reduce costs, which is likely why there was a 32% increase in the use of chatbots. Looking ahead, participants indicated that chatbots would increase by 53% in 2022. While this technology remains one of the least used, there appears to be increased interest in chatbots in the coming year.

# COMPARISON OF TECH USE IN BRANDED & INDEPENDENT HOTELS

Branded hotels offer and plan to implement more tech than independent hotels, but the gap is narrowing.

## Branded Hotels

- Using Pre-Pandemic
- Implemented During the Pandemic
- Plan to Implement in 2022



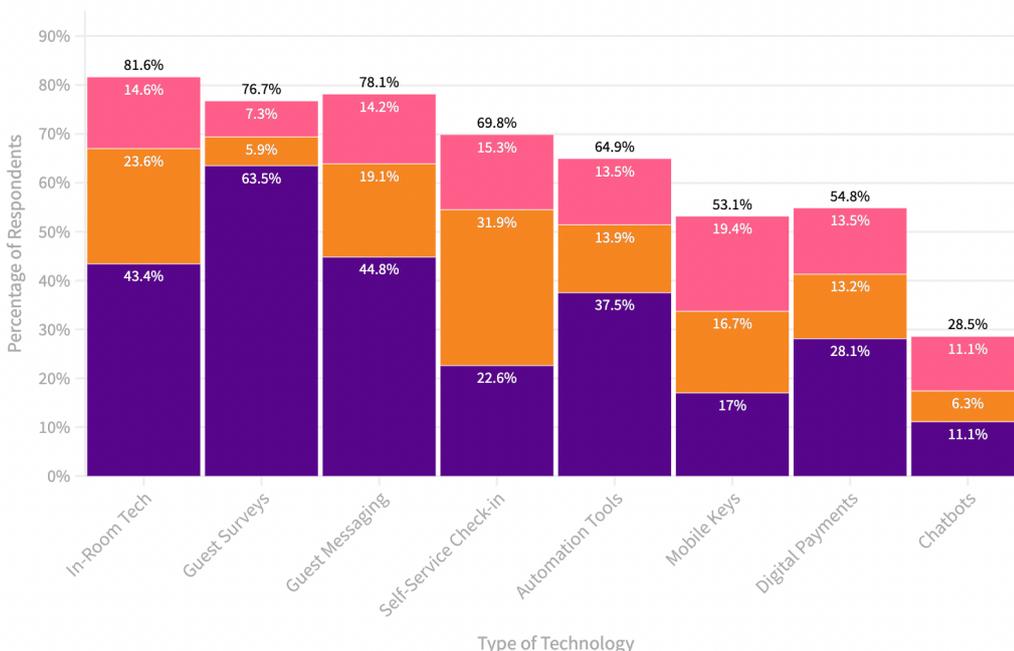
**42%** planned increase in hotels offering chatbots during 2022

**38%** increase in offering digital payments during the pandemic

**87.8%** used guest surveys prior to the pandemic

## Independent Hotels

- Using Pre-Pandemic
- Implemented During the Pandemic
- Plan to Implement in 2022



**64%** planned increase in hotels offering chatbots during 2022

**142%** increase in offering self-service check-in during the pandemic

**63.5%** used guest surveys prior to the pandemic

## COMPARISON OF TECH USE IN BRANDED & INDEPENDENT HOTELS CONT'D

Branded hotels offer and plan to implement more tech than independent hotels, but the gap is narrowing.

### Prior to the Pandemic

Branded hotels reported significantly greater use of technology prior to the pandemic. Twice as many branded hotels reported using mobile keys and self-service check-in than independent hotels.

### During the Pandemic

Independent hotels reported implementing significantly more technologies than branded hotels during the pandemic. One key reason for this is that independent hotels have a much more flexible organizational structure. For a branded hotel to decide it wants to implement new technology, the idea would need to be passed by several departments before action is taken. On the other hand, independent hotels are more agile and require fewer people to sign off on implementation. Another reason is that many of the technologies we asked about helped hotels provide a more socially distanced experience for guests. As independent hotels worked to keep their doors open, implementing these technologies enabled them to provide a safer experience for guests, thereby becoming a more attractive option for customers.

### In 2022

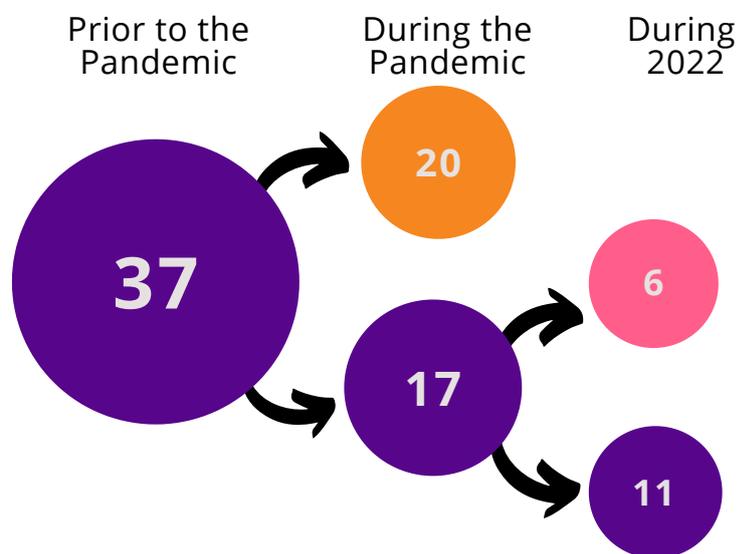
In the coming year, both branded hotels and independent hotels are planning to increase their use of technology. It is projected that both segments will increase their use of chatbots the most in 2022. Digital payments are also predicted to have significant growth for both segments, with 31% growth for branded hotels and 33% growth for independent hotels.

# SIGNIFICANT DECREASE IN NO REPORTED TECH USE

Thirty-seven hoteliers reported no technology use prior to the pandemic. This group consists of thirty-two hoteliers from an independent property, and five hoteliers from a branded property. Although this is a very small subset of the hoteliers surveyed, their shift in technology usage is significant and noteworthy. The decision to start using technology can be difficult for some, but based on our sample, the pandemic caused a drastic decrease in the number of hotels not using any technology.

## DECREASING REPORTS OF NO TECHNOLOGY USE

Of hoteliers that reported no tech use prior to the pandemic, 70% implemented or plan to by the end of 2022



- Hoteliers not using and/or planning to implement technology
- Hoteliers that implemented their first technology during the pandemic
- Hoteliers that plan to implement their first technology during 2022

Twenty of the thirty-seven hoteliers that reported no technology use prior to the pandemic implemented technology during the pandemic. About half of this group implemented guest messaging and mobile check-in. Automation tools were also popular during the pandemic. Interestingly, eight of the twenty reported they have plans to implement additional technologies during 2022.

Of the seventeen hoteliers who did not use technology prior to or during the pandemic, six reported planning to implement technology during 2022. Four of these hoteliers plan to adopt guest surveys. The next most popular technologies were guest messaging and in-room tech, followed by digital payments.

Implementing or planning to implement guest messaging, mobile check-in, automation tools, guest surveys, and in-room technology can all be linked to pandemic recovery strategies.

# DECREASED NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

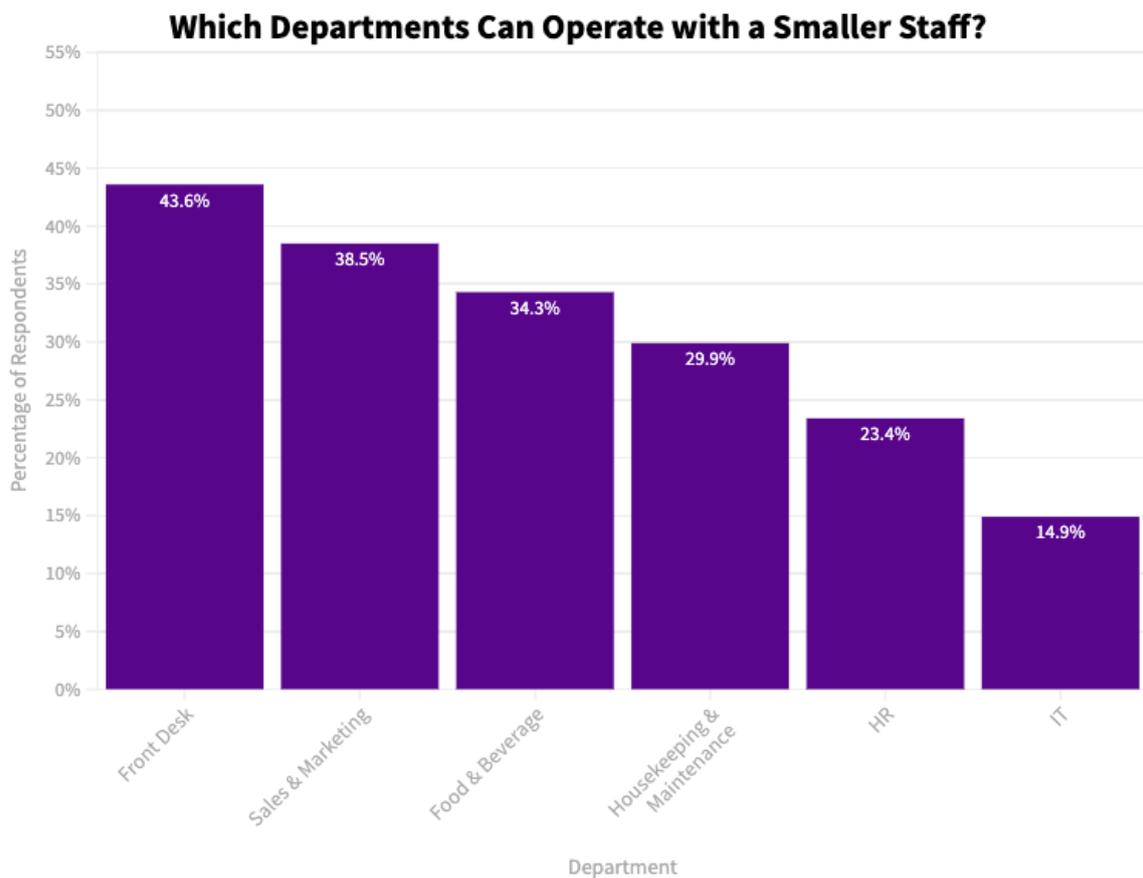
WHETHER DUE TO FURLOUGHS DURING THE PANDEMIC OR THE LABOR SHORTAGE FACING THE INDUSTRY TODAY, MANY HOTELS ARE OPERATING WITH FEWER EMPLOYEES TODAY IN COMPARISON TO PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC. HOW CAN TECHNOLOGY HELP?

# DEPARTMENTS THAT CAN OPERATE WITH A SMALLER STAFF

The pandemic created a shift in the labor market, resulting in the current labor shortage facing the industry. When employees were furloughed, most sought employment elsewhere, which shed light on the unfavorable working conditions and vulnerability of working in hotel operations. While guests have started to return to hotels, many former employees have not.

Hotels that are suffering from a labor shortage are at risk of being unable to recover from the pandemic. Given the pent-up demand for travel, hotels must be ready to provide quality guest service in order to win market share. There are two fundamental options: The first is to create better working conditions to become an employer of choice. The second is to learn to adapt to working with a smaller staff.

For those looking to downsize certain departments, the graph below shows sentiments regarding which departments can function with fewer people. Participants were asked to select departments they felt could operate with a smaller staff, and select all that apply.

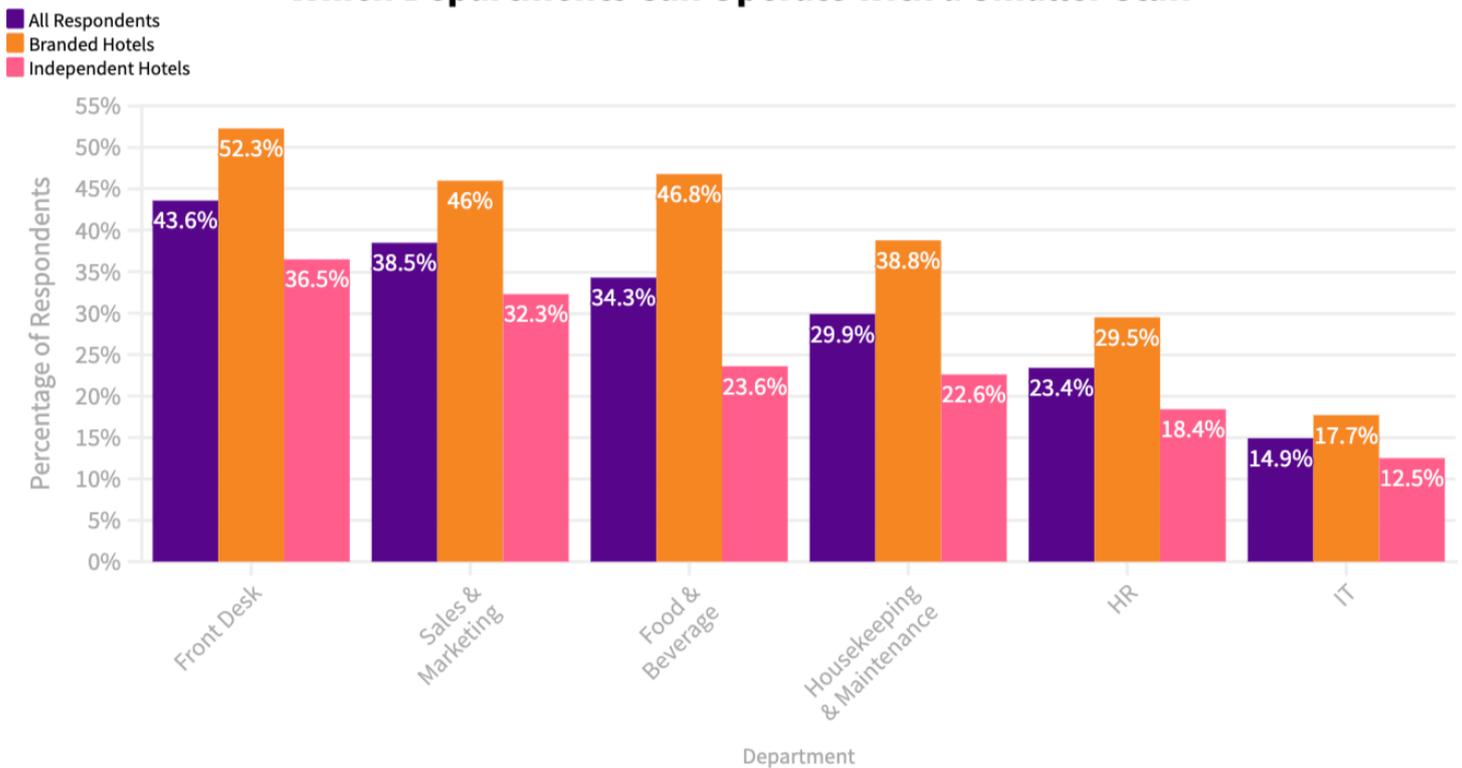


The most selected department was the front desk. This is unsurprising given the rise in implementation of self-service check-in during the pandemic. This was followed by sales & marketing, food & beverage, housekeeping & maintenance, HR, and IT.

# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRANDED & INDEPENDENT HOTELS

Branded hotels are more likely than independent hotels to report a department can operate with a smaller staff.

### Which Departments Can Operate with a Smaller Staff



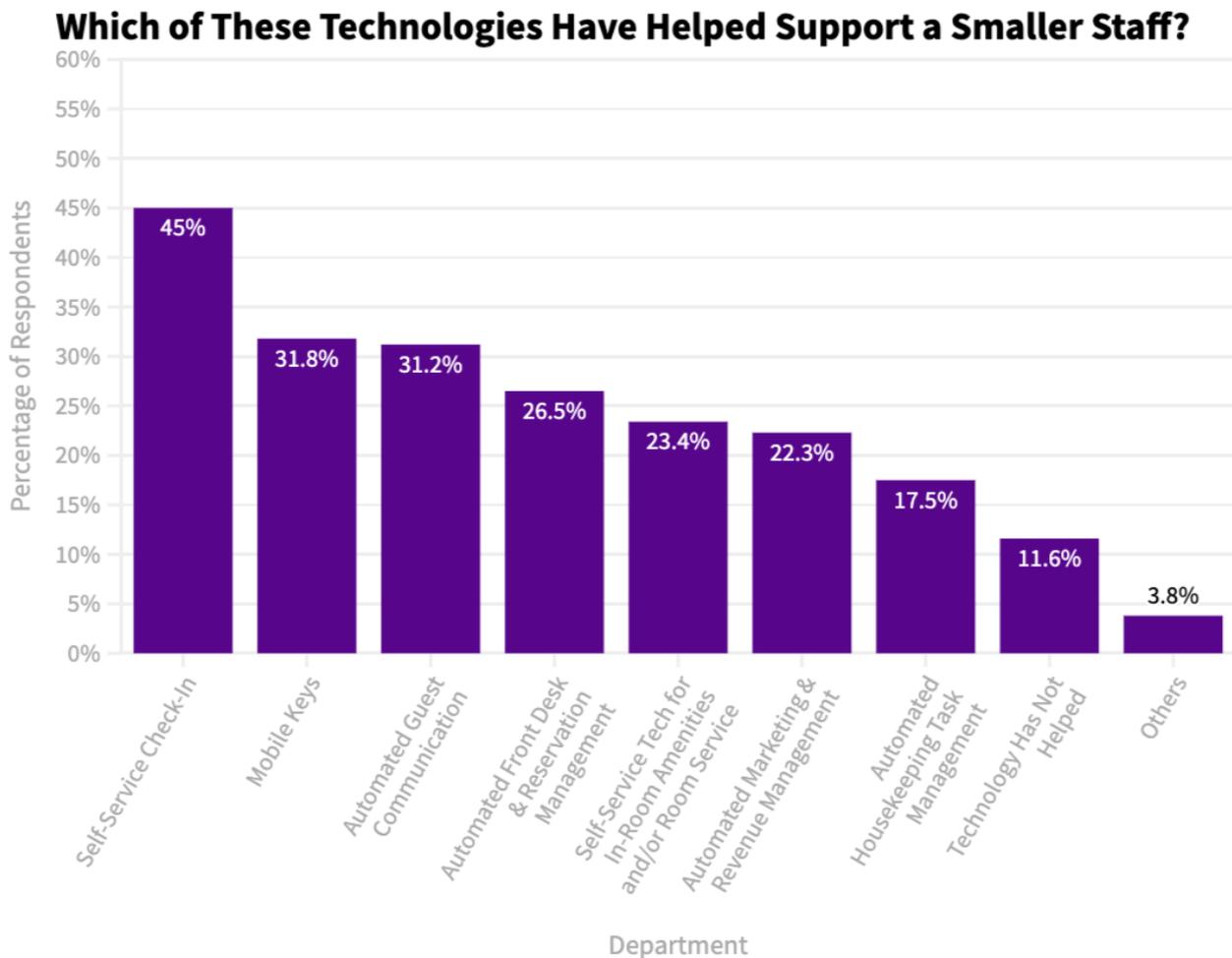
The ranking of departments that can operate with a smaller staff was fairly consistent across branded and independent hotels, although more respondents from branded hotels felt food & beverage could operate with fewer staff than sales & marketing. Where these two segments differed was the percentage of respondents who felt each department could operate with a smaller staff. A larger majority of participants from branded hotels reported being able to operate with a smaller staff. There are two reasons for this discrepancy.

The first is that branded hotels reported higher-tech use, which has enabled them to streamline processes and work more efficiently. Therefore, it is likely a larger majority of participants from branded hotels felt they could run their hotel with fewer staff members.

The second is that perhaps branded hotels employ more staff, so it is easier for them to conceptualize operating with a slightly smaller staff. On the other hand, if independent hotels are operating with fewer employees initially, it is hard to imagine operating with an even smaller staff.

# USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO HELP SUPPORT A SMALLER STAFF

While there are many technologies that can be leveraged to help support a smaller staff, self-service check-in ranks highest.



Given the front desk was ranked highest for the department that can operate with a smaller staff, it follows that self-service check-in ranks highest for technologies that can help support a smaller staff. This data point helps further contextualize the drastic increase in the adoption of self-service check-in technology.

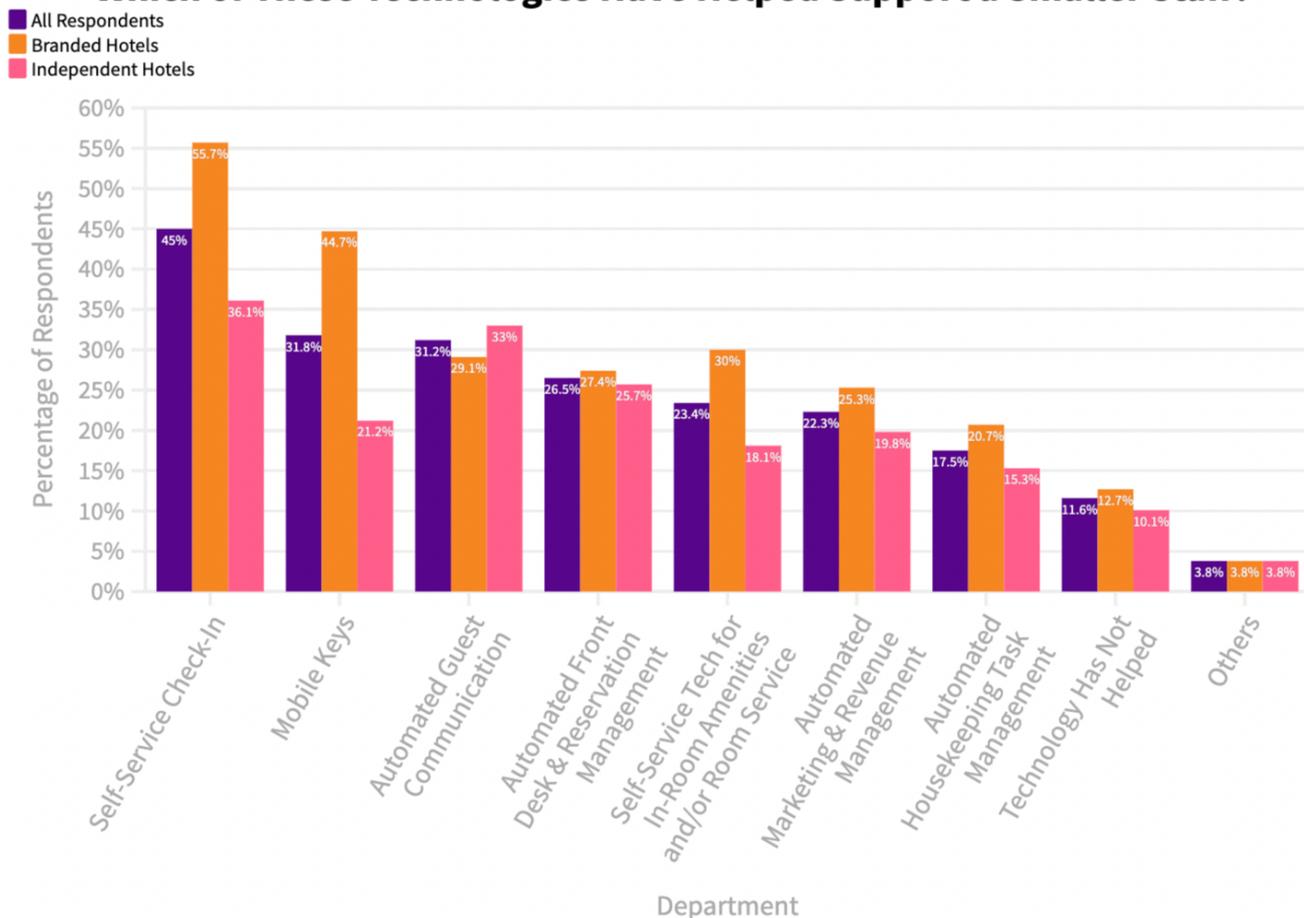
It was surprising to see that 11.6% of participants responded that technology has not helped. There is a wide range of automation tools and other technologies that are designed to lighten the workloads of hotel personnel by automating or streamlining processes. When a hotel is fully staffed, these technologies can be utilized to enable employees to have more time for hospitality and service-related tasks. When a hotel is understaffed, these technologies can assist by making it easier for employees to manage larger workloads. Perhaps these participants did not implement technology that would allow them to do so. This is something that could be researched further in the future.

Regarding those who selected others, the overwhelming majority said they used was QR codes for food and beverage or other hotel offerings.

# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRANDED & INDEPENDENT HOTELS

Branded hotels and independent hotels did not agree in terms of which technologies are most or least useful to support a leverage a smaller staff.

## Which of These Technologies Have Helped Support a Smaller Staff?



Branded hotels indicated that guest-facing technologies, like self-service check-in, mobile keys, and self-service tech for in-room amenities, are the most helpful technologies to support a smaller staff. Automation tools were ranked lower for branded hotels.

Independent hotels also indicated the most helpful technology was self-service check-in. However, automated guest communication and automated front desk and reservation management tools were the second and third most helpful, with mobile keys ranking fourth.

The contrast in the ranking of mobile keys likely comes from the differences in the usage and adoption rates of this tech by branded hotels and independent hotels. While 67.9% of branded hotels currently offer guests the ability to use mobile keys, only 33.7% of independent hotels offer this tech. Therefore, as a group, independent hotels did not rank this tech as one of the top three technologies that help support a smaller staff.

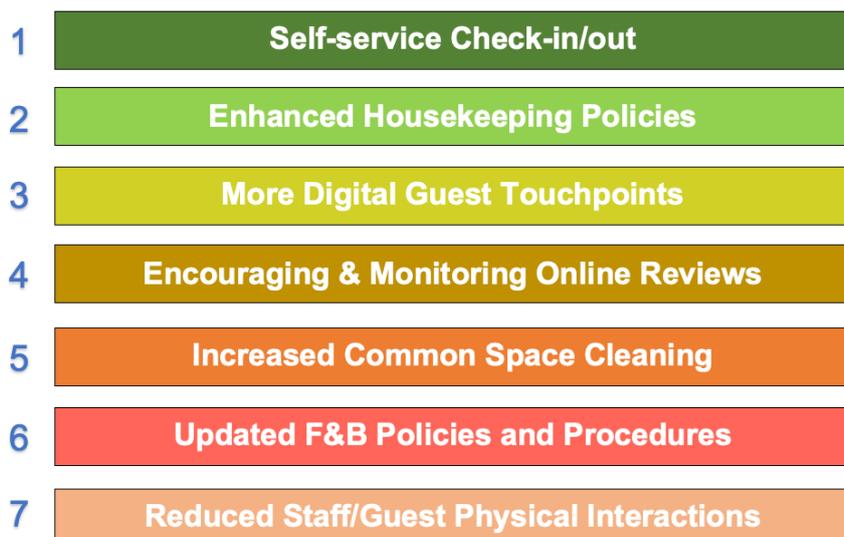
# **GUEST EXPERIENCE**

**CONTACTLESS AND SELF-SERVICE TECHNOLOGY HAS BECOME DOMINANT DURING THE PANDEMIC. NEARLY 75% OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVE THAT SELF SERVICE IS A LONG-TERM TREND.**

# GUEST-FACING PRACTICES IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

Contactless check-in technology is the most important guest-facing practice in hotels operations for recovery from the pandemic.

## ALL RESPONDENTS



Contactless and self-service check-in was ranked the most important guest-facing practice for pandemic recovery. This technology allows guests to feel more comfortable and in control. It also helps hotels serve guests effectively if they are understaffed.

The discrepancy between the importance placed on housekeeping policies and increased common space cleaning was noteworthy. This is likely a result of new, enhanced housekeeping policies that have been enacted during the pandemic. During the pandemic, the AHLA introduced "enhanced industry-wide hotel cleaning & safety guidelines" for hotels, including:

- Increasing deep cleaning efforts
- Cleaning & disinfecting products and protocols
- Indoor air quality checks
- Implementing cleaning or housekeeping opt-out programs
- Effective communication

"Reduced staff/guest physical interaction was ranked last. Although there has been increased adoption of technology during the pandemic, many hoteliers are hesitant to reduce or limit interactions between guests and staff as a method for recovery. They want to strike a balance that allows guests to feel safe and personally cared for. A personal, human touch is seen as the essence of providing hospitality. Hotels have invested in various technology solutions such as self-service technology and communication systems not to limit interactions, but rather to give guests an ability to choose what type of service they want.

# BRANDED VS. INDEPENDENT HOTELS

Branded hotels and independent hotels are relatively in agreement in terms of the most important guest facing practices for recovery.

## BRANDED & MOSTLY BRANDED HOTELS

- 1 Self-service Check-in/out
- 2 Enhanced Housekeeping Policies
- 3 Encouraging & Monitoring Online Reviews
- 4 More Digital Guest Touchpoints
- 5 Increased Common Space Cleaning
- 6 Updated F&B Policies and Procedures
- 7 Reduced Staff/Guest Physical Interactions

## INDEPENDENT & MOSTLY INDEPENDENT HOTELS

- 1 Self-service Check-in/out
- 2 More Digital Guest Touchpoints
- 3 Encouraging & Monitoring Online Reviews
- 4 Enhanced Housekeeping Policies
- 5 Increased Common Space Cleaning
- 6 Updated F&B Policies and Procedures
- 7 Reduced Staff/Guest Physical Interactions

Branded and independent hoteliers differed in regard to the importance placed on enhanced housekeeping policies and more digital guest touchpoints. It is likely that hoteliers from branded hotels ranked "enhanced housekeeping policies" as the second most important practice because there have been new housekeeping protocols enacted by their brand in response to the AHLA guidelines. If corporate leadership places an increased focus on housekeeping would likely influence owners and managers to follow suit.

On the other hand, hoteliers from independent hotels have increased their technology offerings to provide guests with more digital touchpoints. While many branded hotels already utilized these technologies, independent hotels have greatly increased their tech usage over the last two years. As a result, independent hoteliers ranked "more digital guest touchpoints" as the second most important guest-facing practice.

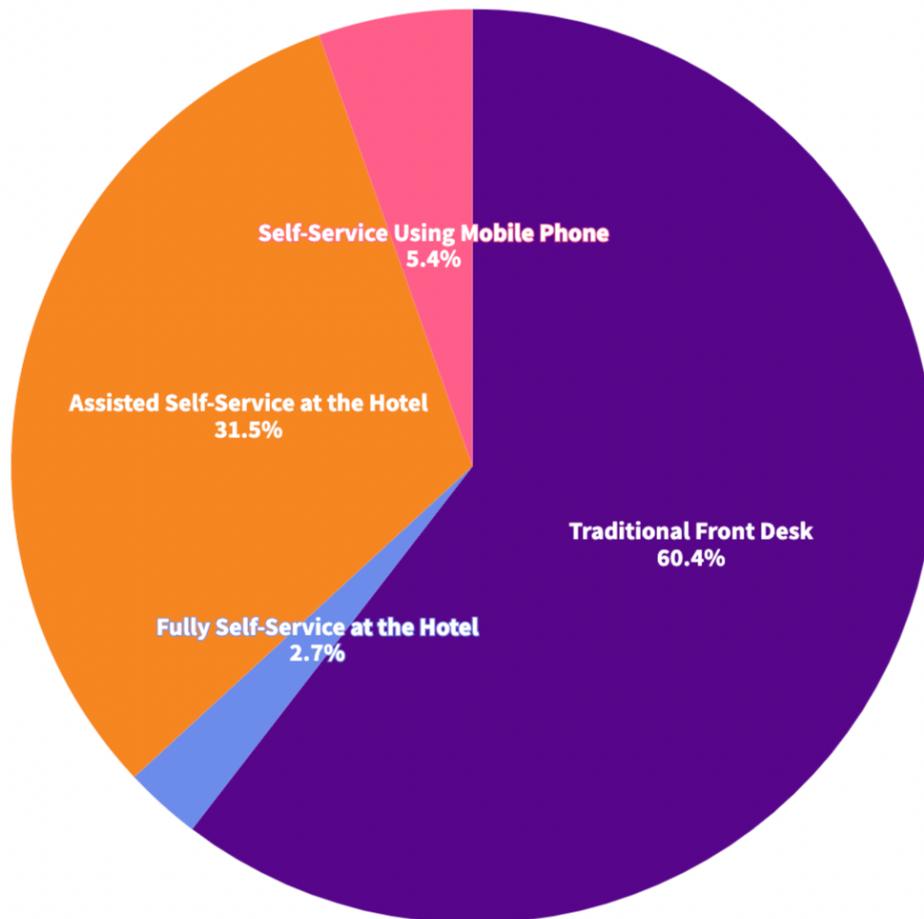
Both branded and independent hotels ranked "encouraging and monitoring online reviews" as the third most important practice. Hotels rely on recent guest reviews to showcase their enhanced cleaning policies and unique guest experience. Reviews that are from 2019 or older are largely irrelevant to travelers today.

"Updated F&B Policies and Procedures" ranked low in terms of priority. This is likely because many of these policies and procedures are already in place and have become commonplace for guests. Today, guests are now accustomed to QR codes and other policies. While these will likely continue, they are not the primary focus of hoteliers.

# CONTACTLESS TECHNOLOGY

Hoteliers must ask: “What do my customers want?”

## How Do Your Guests Check-In?



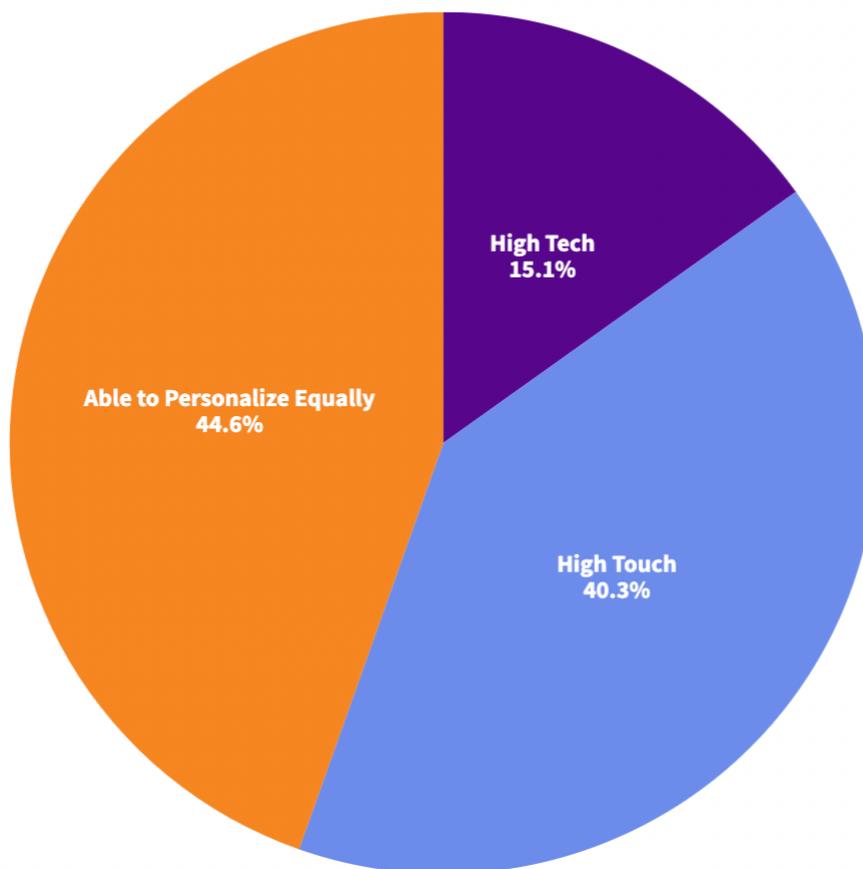
**Roughly 60% of hoteliers use traditional check-in with front desk agents, while 40% utilize an assisted or fully self-service model**

- As a majority of respondents are from independent hotels that serve the leisure market, they believe guests want to interact with an agent rather than utilize self-serve technology. While contactless experiences can provide more personalized experiences, losing the human touch may not be worth it to some.
- Nearly 92% of respondents indicated that their guests have increased acceptance of technology and expect contactless options.
- However, almost 53% expressed that their guests are resistant to using technology, but they still expect hotels to have contactless check-in as an option. Travelers want the options to choose from, even when they don't plan to use them.

# PERSONALIZED GUEST EXPERIENCE

There should be a balance between both technology and in-person interactions.

## Can You Offer More Personalization Via High-Touch or High-Tech Operations?



### **A personalized guest experience has become increasingly important.**

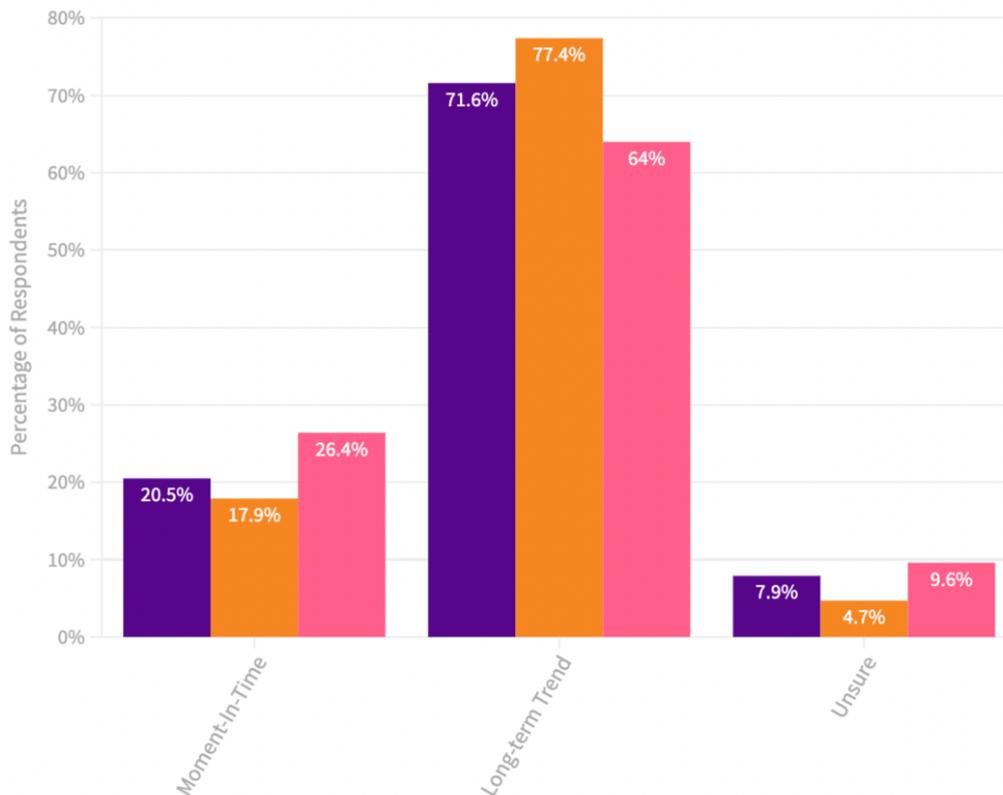
Hoteliers expressed in the additional comment that technology enables them to provide a more personalized experience for their guests via automation, AI learning of guest preference, etc. Technology can help with trivial tasks and provides operations staff more time to tend to guests' needs. However, they also expressed that technology can be unreliable or error-prone, especially when gauging guest preferences or processing requests. Hoteliers revealed that even though they have increased the use of technology to help with guest personalization, they still utilize human resources to ensure that everything is correct so they can meet and exceed their guests' expectations.

# CONTACTLESS TRENDS

Nearly 75% of respondents believe self-service will become a long-term trend.

**Are Self-Service Guest Experiences a Moment-In-Time or Long-Term Trend?**

■ All Respondents  
■ Branded Hotels  
■ Independent Hotels



**With the rise of technology in contactless guest experiences, hoteliers must look at the industry trends and determine which technology investments are the most appropriate for their operations.**

Roughly one-fifth of respondents see contactless technology as more of a "moment-in-time" than a "long-term trend," and that in-person interaction will become more important than contactless technology once the pandemic ends. In addition, another 8% of respondents are unsure of the future of contactless technology. There is a strong response and indication that contactless technology will continue to grow, however, many hoteliers expressed that they will not eliminate human engagements from their operations. Hoteliers believe that technology helps them enhance guest experiences; some hotels will benefit more or less from technology based on their scale. However, they added that hotels should provide contactless experiences as an option for guests, so guests can choose what is appropriate for them.

# CHALLENGES & PAIN POINTS

THE MOST COMMONLY DESCRIBED ISSUES WITH TECHNOLOGY WERE THE HIGH UPFRONT INVESTMENT AND COST, COMPLEXITY, DIFFICULT INTEGRATION, AND LOSING THE ESSENCE OF HOSPITALITY.



# HIGH UPFRONT COST & INVESTMENT

**ONE OF THE MAIN CHALLENGES WITH TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION IS THE HIGH UPFRONT COST AND INVESTMENT.**

Hoteliers at branded hotels are typically told by the brand what technologies they need to use. For independent hotels, the decision to adopt new technology may come as a suggestion from a general manager or a management company, but it is often the owner that makes the final choice to invest in new technology. This difference creates distinct technology investment strategies for branded hotels and independent hotels.

Hoteliers from branded hotels and independent hotels both indicated that one of the most significant barriers to using new technologies is the high upfront investment required to implement the new tech. In terms of independent hotels, many general managers and employees of management companies remarked that cost is a hindrance for getting an owner to agree to invest in a certain technology. The owner must be convinced the technology will provide a return on investment. Often new technologies provide a substantial return on investment in the long run, but decision-makers like independent hotel owners need to believe the long-term return is worth the upfront investment.

# DIFFICULT INTEGRATION & LACK OF SCALABILITY

**ANOTHER CHALLENGE IS THAT TECHNOLOGY CAN BE POORLY INTEGRATED WITH OTHER PLATFORMS IN THE HOTEL'S EXISTING OPERATIONS AND IS NOT SCALABLE.**

Hoteliers at branded and independent hotels worry that new technology might not fully integrate into their existing tech ecosystem. However, many branded companies have proprietary technology that focuses on integration with existing systems. Brands prioritize technology that can be seamlessly integrated and easily scale for larger workloads as the hotel and brand grow.

On the other hand, independent hotels worry about choosing the right technologies that will integrate with their existing systems. Unintegrated platforms can be a serious burden on independent hotels, creating data silos that can hinder hotel operations, and undermine a seamless and unified guest experience.

# FEAR OF LOSING THE ESSENCE OF HOSPITALITY

**HOTELIERS FEAR THAT TECHNOLOGY CAN INTERFERE WITH THE ESSENCE OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY, WHICH IS THE PERSONAL TOUCH AND SERVICE QUALITY.**

Throughout the study, one of the most common responses from hoteliers was that technology cannot and should not replace the human and personal touch that is synonymous with the service industry. Many hoteliers are frightened that technology will steer them away from the industry purpose, which is to provide guests with a warm, memorable experience with a personal touch. They feel a personal touch is an important aspect of their brand identity. In particular, smaller independent hotels and luxury hotels added that human and personal touch helps them build stronger relationships with their guests and reassures guests that the hotel cares about their comfort and experience.

The important thing for hoteliers to remember is that technology can be an important tool that enables them to provide a more personalized, high-touch experience. For example, with technology and automation working in the background, front desk employees have more time to move from behind the front desk to provide more personalized service.

# LOOKING AHEAD

THIS PULSE REPORT PROVIDES INSIGHT INTO HOTELIER SENTIMENTS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY. IN THIS SECTION, WE SUGGEST AREAS FOR FUTHER RESEARCH.



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

We suggest further research in the following areas to build upon the findings of this report:

## 1. Guest Sentiment

How do guests feel about different technologies in the hospitality industry? How have they responded to changes in the customer journey brought on by the pandemic?

## 2. Guest Usage

How often are guests using self-service technologies when provided with an option of in-person or self-service?

## 3. Comparing Sentiment & Use

While some travelers may say they want the option to have self-service, how often do they actually use it when given the choice? Moreover, what might cause the differences in reported and actual use?

## 4. Employee Sentiment

Participants for this report consisted primarily of owners, managers, and executives. How do employees feel about the use of technology during their day-to-day operations? How might technology be better utilized or integrated by different roles within hotel operations?

## 5. Hotel Classification

This report considered differences between branded and independent hotels. Developing an understanding of how different classifications or types of hotels use technology could provide valuable insight.

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

We hope this report provided you with valuable insight into hotelier sentiments about technology use in operations and within the guest experience.

We'd like to thank NYU Professors John Moser and Dr. Vanja Bogicevic for their guidance throughout this project.

If you have any questions regarding the report, please do not hesitate to reach out to Chloe Carver and Cara Kun. [cc3275@nyu.edu](mailto:cc3275@nyu.edu) and [sk5321@nyu.edu](mailto:sk5321@nyu.edu)