

How can African hospitality effectively adopt new hotel technology?

Africa's potential continues to grow as several countries experience a boom in tourism, development and investment, however, although hotel technology development is gaining traction across the globe, Africa's hospitality industry is still lagging somewhat in its uptake.



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Africa will have to speed up in order to satisfy global travellers who are used to digital accommodations, to meet guest demand and to provide competitive levels of guest service and engagement.

Cost

With most of the technology coming from outside Africa's borders, it makes it hard to constantly invest in this ever-changing technological landscape – not to mention fluctuating exchange rates - a major overhaul of a hotel's existing infrastructure is also often cost-prohibitive so you have to do your homework and be selective as to what you install in your hotels.

Ian Lumsden, sales and marketing director at Ankerdata, a hospitality solutions business provider says: "It's important that the systems you implement are easily upgradable, are interactive, can operate over many platforms and incorporate additional hotels seamlessly and inexpensively."

Guest demand

There is no doubt that technology is definitely becoming more of a determining factor when guests consider a hotel.

The empowering of the guest through mobility and seamless accessibility in and around the hotel is key.

With the use of agile digital interfaces, hotels will be able to attend to their guests earlier, from booking airport pick-ups, upgrading rooms, early check-ins and even arranging meetings for them.

The future

Hotels need to ensure that they are up to speed on their offering.

Lumsden says that companies need to continually look for ways to improve their products.

"For instance, new functionality on apps should include online check-in, express check-ins, room service and online shopping. These sorts of full-service apps will pave the way for improved customer satisfaction, and the data thus generated will enable hotels to offer a better service and pursue more sales opportunities."

"Africa needs to prioritise and embrace technological trends," says Eben Marais, managing director at Ankerdata.

He adds that hotels need to identify the appropriate innovation and adaptation tools that will meet their guests' ever-changing expectations and thus increase revenue. "Guests are demanding more digital technology solutions from hotels but in order to keep the guest experience personalised, hotels need also to be pro-active by understanding their needs and then providing the services automatically."

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