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Beyond the Hotel TV: Rethinking the Connected Guest Room

What hoteliers in the Middle East need to know about in-room entertainment, connectivity, and guest engagement

The hotel room is no longer simply a place where guests sleep, watch television, and leave. Guests arrive with smartphones, tablets, laptops, and streaming subscriptions. They bring with them digital habits they expect to continue throughout their stay. They also expect hotel technology to work without making them think about it.

That expectation matters in the Middle East hospitality industry. The region combines rapid digital adoption with a highly diverse guest population and ambitious hospitality development.

For hotels, this creates a new challenge. The goal isn't simply to add technology into the guest room, but to make the technology already there work together in a way that feels natural.

The connected guest room brings together connectivity, entertainment, guest services, personalisation, and hotel content. When these elements work together, technology can reduce friction and help guests get more from their stay.

However, when those elements don't work together seamlessly, even sophisticated technology can become another source of frustration.

The Middle East Is Raising the Bar for the Hotel Experience

The Middle East has become one of the world's most dynamic hospitality markets. New destinations, luxury properties, and major tourism investments are changing what guests expect from the region.

That evolution extends beyond the hotel lobby. Guests increasingly experience a destination through digital channels before they arrive. They use their phones to plan, communicate, navigate, and access entertainment. Once they reach the hotel, they expect that digital experience to continue.

Deloitte's 2025 Travel Insight Report describes the region as adopting innovation across the travel journey to make touchpoints more frictionless and exploration more effortless. It also highlights the growing role of technology in Saudi Arabia's tourism sector.

In this light, the guest room is therefore part of the overall brand experience.

A luxury hotel can offer exceptional service at every physical touchpoint. Nonetheless, a difficult Wi-Fi login or confusing television interface can still introduce unnecessary friction.

Thus, the question for hoteliers is no longer whether technology belongs in the guest experience. It is how naturally that technology fits into it.

Mansoor Ahmed Khan, VP & GM for MEA & Indian Ocean at WorldVue, sees this shift directly. "Guests now expect the same seamless digital experience they enjoy at home."

That does not mean hotels need to replicate every element of a guest's home technology environment. Instead, it means guests should not have to learn an entirely new way of interacting with technology simply because they are travelling.

The best connected-room experience should feel familiar, immediate, and intuitive.



The Guest Room Has Become a Digital Environment

The traditional hotel television was designed around a simple model: provide a selection of channels and give guests a remote control. However, that model no longer describes the full range of ways guests use technology in their rooms.

Guests bring their own content and devices. They may want to stream a favourite programme, cast from a smartphone, join a video call, play a game, or access information about the hotel.

Among consumers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia in 2025, Deloitte found that smartphones had the highest reported daily usage, at 96%, followed by smart TVs. Their research also points to strong adoption of connected devices across the two markets.

For hoteliers, the implication is straightforward: the guest room needs to accommodate a digital environment that already exists. The television is still important, but it is no longer necessarily the centre of that environment. It can instead become one connected interface among several.

The same principle applies to connectivity. A guest may connect a phone, laptop, tablet, and other devices during a single stay. They expect that process to be quick and secure.

As Khan puts it, “Mobile connectivity has become equally critical, with guests expecting instant, secure access across multiple devices without complicated login processes.”

For the best guest experience, the technology should support guest behaviour rather than dictate it.

One Room, Many Middle Eastern Travellers

There is no single “Middle Eastern guest.” Hotels across the region welcome families, couples, business travellers, bleisure guests, international tourists, religious travellers, and guests visiting for major events or destination experiences. They also serve guests with different languages, cultural expectations, ages, and levels of technical familiarity.

That diversity matters when hotels design the connected guest room.

For example, WorldVue is seeing demand in Saudi Arabia for languages beyond Arabic and English. Moataz El Razi, Sales Director- MEA at WorldVue, notes that properties in Makkah and Madinah may need to support guests using languages including Urdu, Farsi/Persian, Bahasa Indonesia, and Turkish.

However, localisation is more than a simple translation issue. A genuinely localised guest experience considers how guests discover content, navigate services, and interact with technology. In other words, it asks whether the interface makes sense to the people actually using it.

The same principle applies to entertainment. A business traveller may want to cast a presentation or stream a programme. A family may want children's content or a casual game. A leisure traveller may be more interested in destination information, dining, or hotel activities.

The connected room needs enough flexibility to accommodate these different use cases without becoming complicated. That is where localisation becomes a technology strategy rather than simply a language setting.



Beyond the TV: What Guests Actually Want to Do

“Hotel TV” can describe a device. It does not describe the full entertainment experience guests want.

Streaming and casting are important parts of that experience. However, they are only part of the picture. Guests may want to:

- Watch live television.
- Stream from their own subscriptions.
- Cast content from a personal device.
- Listen to music.
- Play games.
- Explore hotel facilities and activities.
- Find information about the destination.
- Request services.
- Discover dining and wellness options.

For family-oriented hotels and resorts, even simple casual games can add another option. El Razi points to family-friendly arcade or casual gaming as an opportunity that hotel teams may overlook when they discuss in-room entertainment only in terms of video.

The point is not that every hotel needs to install gaming technology. It is that hoteliers should start with the guest and ask a broader question: What do our guests want to do in this room?

The answer will vary by property and specifically by guest mix. A resort serving families may need a different entertainment mix from a city-centre business hotel. A luxury property may focus more heavily on personalisation and service access. A destination hotel may use the room to help guests discover everything happening beyond it.

Hotel teams should design the connected room around those differences.



One connected experience. Less friction. More discovery. Better guest engagement.

Designed for the diverse needs of today's Middle East hotel guest:
International guests | Arabic & English | Family travel | Luxury & leisure | Bleisure | Destination experiences



Beyond the TV: What Guests Actually Want to Do

The connected guest room is not defined by a particular television, Wi-Fi standard, application, or platform. Instead, it is characterised by how those pieces work together around the guest.

- **Connect.** Give guests reliable, secure, and simple access to the network and their devices.
- **Entertain.** Provide flexible access to television, streaming, casting, and other forms of in-room entertainment.
- **Engage.** Make hotel services, information, activities, and destination experiences easier to discover.
- **Personalise.** Adapt language, content, and recommendations to the guest without losing privacy or the human touch.

When these elements work together, technology can fade into the background. That is the goal; as Khan suggests, “The best technology is invisible.”

Also, as El Razi's experience in the Middle East demonstrates, achieving that simplicity requires more than installing technology. It requires understanding the guests, the property, and the market in which the hotel operates.

For Middle Eastern hoteliers, the opportunity is not simply to build a more technologically advanced guest room. It is to build a room that **feels more connected to the guest.**

Connectivity Is the Foundation

None of these experiences work without reliable connectivity. Wi-Fi is not simply another hotel amenity; it supports the guest's devices, entertainment, and digital interactions.

Saudi Arabia's hotel classification criteria reinforce the importance of connectivity. For all tiers, they call for free and fast Wi-Fi in indoor and outdoor public areas, with requirements tied to property size.

Hotels across the Middle East continue to invest heavily in connectivity. El Razi indicates that properties want high speeds, strong coverage, and sufficient capacity. However, performance alone is not enough.

Guests also expect connectivity to be easy to use. A fast network that requires a complicated authentication process still creates friction. The same is true when casting requires several steps or a guest cannot tell which device to connect.

The objective should be simple: Connect quickly. Stay connected. Get on with the stay.

That requires more than access points. Additionally, it requires infrastructure and management that can support the devices and services guests actually use. It also requires the network to work as part of the wider technology environment.

When connectivity, entertainment, and guest-facing systems operate independently, guests experience those divisions. When they work together, the technology becomes much less noticeable. This kind of seamless connectivity improves the guest experience.



Integration: Making the Connected Room Feel Simple

This may be the most important principle behind the connected guest room.

Hotels can invest in excellent Wi-Fi, sophisticated in-room entertainment, guest applications, digital concierge tools, and room controls. However, if those systems operate as disconnected experiences, guests still experience friction.

As Khan explains, “Guests do not judge the network, IPTV platform, app, or room controls separately. They judge whether the experience is effortless.”

That distinction is critical. Guests do not want to understand the technology architecture behind their stay. They do not care which system handles connectivity or which platform powers the television. They simply expect things to work.

The connected guest room therefore depends on integration between the systems that support it. That may include:

- Network and Wi-Fi infrastructure.
- In-room entertainment.
- Casting and streaming.
- Property management systems.
- Guest applications.
- Digital service platforms.
- Content management.
- Guest profiles and preferences.
- Hotel information and communications.

The issue is becoming even more important as hotels explore AI. PwC Middle East's 2025 research found that 91% of surveyed tourism and hospitality leaders were piloting or using AI.

AI can help create more personalised guest journeys, but it cannot create a seamless experience from disconnected data and systems.

The foundation must come first.

From Entertainment to Engagement

Once the technology works together, the guest-room screen can do more than provide entertainment. It can become a useful interface for the hotel itself.

Guests can use connected-room technology to discover:

- Restaurants and dining options.
- Spa and wellness services.
- Activities and events.
- Hotel facilities.
- Destination information.
- Transportation information.
- Service options.
- Property communications.



This creates an important shift. The television is no longer simply something guests watch; it can become a digital tool.

That distinction matters for hotels with large properties, extensive amenities, or destination experiences. The more a property offers, the harder it can be for guests to discover everything that's available to them. A connected interface can bring those options into the room.

The goal should not be to turn the television into an advertising screen. Instead, it should help guests find what they need when they need it. That might mean discovering a restaurant before dinner, finding information about an activity, or requesting a service without searching for a phone number.

Technology becomes valuable when it removes a step.

Personalisation Without Losing the Human Touch

Personalisation is becoming an increasingly important part of hospitality technology. Guests may expect a hotel to remember preferences, present relevant information, and make useful recommendations.

AI can also support that process. PwC's Middle East research identifies guest experience as a major area for AI applications, including more personalised and seamless guest journeys.

However, personalisation should not mean replacing hospitality with automation.

The strongest applications of technology can give staff more context while giving guests more control. They can also reduce unnecessary interactions without eliminating meaningful ones.

A guest should not have to call the front desk simply to find out what time the spa opens. On the other hand, technology should not prevent that guest from speaking to a person when they want help.

That balance matters in a region where hospitality and high-touch service are central to the guest experience.

Khan describes the opportunity clearly. "As AI becomes more embedded in the guest journey, leading hotels will differentiate themselves by using data and automation to create highly personalised experiences without sacrificing privacy, convenience, or the human touch."

The objective is not technology for its own sake, but rather technology that makes hospitality more personalised and easier to access.

Designing for Local Requirements and a Global Guest Mix

A global hotel technology platform cannot assume that every market works the same way. The Middle East illustrates why.

Guests may arrive from dozens of countries. Properties may serve local residents, international leisure travellers, families, business travellers, and guests visiting for religious or cultural reasons.



Local content considerations also matter. For example, El Razi notes that hotels in Makkah and Madinah can face specific considerations around the content available through in-room television.

Saudi Ministry of Tourism hotel classification criteria require a list of available television and radio channels in accordance with relevant laws and regulations. They also state that hotel management must control the centrally available channel list and that content must align with the Kingdom's culture and customs.

This highlights a useful distinction: the hotel's managed entertainment offering and the guest's personal entertainment experience do not necessarily have to be the same.

One possible approach is to make the guest's own device part of the experience. For example, a TV interface could provide a simple way for guests to connect to or access their own content on a smartphone or tablet. This could give guests greater control over personal entertainment while allowing the hotel to maintain its managed in-room offering.

Any implementation would need to account for applicable local requirements, content rights, and platform capabilities.

The broader lesson is important: **Localisation is not simply translating a global platform; it is adapting the guest experience to the market.**

That may mean different languages, content approaches, service expectations, or ways of connecting the hotel environment with the guest's own digital world.

New Hotel or Existing Property? Planning the Technology Investment

The connected guest room needs to work in both new-build and existing properties.

For a new hotel, teams can incorporate technology decisions into the property from the beginning. They should consider network infrastructure, cabling, room technology, and system integration together as a technology ecosystem rather than adding services piecemeal.

Existing properties face a different challenge. Hotels may need to modernise technology without disrupting guests, replacing systems that still serve a purpose, or making large investments all at once.

That makes planning especially important. Hoteliers should consider:

- What infrastructure is already in place?
- Which systems need to remain?
- Where are the biggest guest experience gaps?
- Which upgrades can the property complete in phases?
- Can new technology integrate with existing systems?
- What will the property need three or five years from now?
- How will future devices and services affect capacity?
- Will the property be able to manage the technology efficiently after deployment?



The objective is not to predict every future technology, but to create an environment that can adapt as guest expectations change.

That matters in a region where digital transformation continues to move quickly. Deloitte's 2025 regional research describes the Middle East as adopting innovation across travel touchpoints, while its 2026 Saudi research points to rising expectations around network performance and connected digital experiences.

What Middle East Hoteliers Should Ask Before They Invest

Before selecting a new in-room entertainment or connected-room platform, hoteliers should look beyond the feature list.

What does the guest actually need to do? Start with guest behaviour rather than technology specifications.

How easily can guests connect? Test the actual guest journey. How many steps does it take to connect a device, cast content, or access a service?

Does the experience work across languages and guest profiles? Consider international travellers, families, business guests, and different levels of technical familiarity.

How well do the systems integrate? A platform that looks impressive on its own may create friction if it cannot communicate effectively with the hotel's other systems.

Can the experience adapt to local requirements? Technology should support the property's market rather than force the property into a standard global model.

What happens after installation? Consider monitoring, management, support, updates, and future expansion from the beginning.

Can the platform evolve? Guest expectations will continue to change. The technology investment should not become obsolete every time a new device, service, or guest behaviour emerges.

The best question may be the simplest:

Will this make the guest's stay easier and more enjoyable? If the answer is unclear, more features may not solve the problem.

Build a Connected Guest Experience

A connected guest room brings together infrastructure, entertainment, engagement, and personalisation to create a simpler experience for guests and hotel teams.

WorldVue helps hotels connect the technology behind that experience, from network infrastructure and in-room entertainment to integrated platforms and guest-facing services.



When those technologies work together behind the scenes, guests can spend less time figuring out the room and more time enjoying their stay.

The future of the hotel room is not simply more technology. It is technology that works together and feels effortless to the guest.



Contact us today!

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