

Alexander Owens – 3MT® Presentation
Convenience vs Hospitality: What's More Important for Upscale Hotels? A Management Perspective

When you think of a hotel check-in, which of the two photos behind me do you most connect with? Is it the front desk, or is it your mobile phone? This question of how mobile technology is shaping the check-in process in upscale hotels is an under-researched area that I am looking to grapple with.

The rise of the millennial traveller has called for changes in hotel operations. With up to 75% of millennials claiming their smartphones are key tools they require for everyday life, the importance of technological integration for travellers has grown significantly. Adding to this, the number of cellphone subscriptions is projected to hit just over 7 billion by 2024. Hotel owners and management must embrace these technological demands to remain relevant and satisfy their consumers who are expecting a lot more out of hotels than ever before.

As a response, large hotel brands such as Marriott and Hilton have implemented mobile technology such as mobile check-in, mobile check-out, mobile key, and mobile chat. These mobile services allow for more guest comfort, convenience, and can save every guest at least 3 minutes during check-in all from the palm of their hand. This has influenced the upscale hotel market in being 18.2% more likely to implement mobile technology than the other hotel segments.

But what about hospitality? This new shift towards mobile technology takes away from the personalized service that guests come to expect in upscale hotels. Consumers still value human based services over self-service technology, and this has a lot to do with the hospitality that service associates can deliver. With these benefits and drawbacks to such a new technology, this study looks to fill a gap in the Canadian upscale hotel market to determine what role mobile technology will play in the future check-in process.

This study will use a qualitative approach by interviewing 20 Canadian GM's and Executives of upscale hotels, and the transcripts of each interview will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This research will shed light on the future of mobile tech in upscale hotels, and how we can maximize guest satisfaction with a hotel's service delivery method. As every 1 star increase in a hotel's rating translates to a 2.2-3% revenue increase, it is imperative that guests receive the service they want and come to expect. So, in the upscale hotel market, will mobile services extend their stay, or is it time for them to check-out?