SURVEY REPORT

How the Pandemic Gave a Boost to Guests' Hotel Technology Usage, Satisfaction and Spending

By

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HITEC 2023 in Toronto is in the books. Attendees from all over the world descended to this amazing city; and for a few days, feasted their eyes on new lines of technologies and gadgets for the hospitality industry. In 2020, when the lockdown just began, HFTP published a white paper entitled, "**Will Guests Say 'I Do' Again?**" summarizing how hotel guests rated guest-facing technology in hotels, and how such experience impacted their overall stay satisfaction and re-booking intentions with our hotels. Indeed, technology swept through the hotel industry during the COVID-19 (hereafter COVID) pandemic. To ensure guest and employee safety, hotels accelerated the adoption and acceptance of various technologies. And guests went along, using the new technology, so as to have a safer hotel stay.

During the last few years, hotels have implemented many new guest-facing technologies including contactless check-in and check-out where guests can easily bypass the front desk and use their smartphones to complete such tasks, reducing physical contact. Instead of sanitizing and recycling key cards, mobile key access via smartphones has also become more prominent, at all classes of hotels, reducing touchpoints. Inside the guestrooms, technology has also been upgraded such as voice-controlled assistants and smart devices for guests to control lighting, temperature and entertainment, without touching surfaces, and some are connected to the guests' smartphones. Contactless payments have also gained popularity, minimizing the need for physical cash handling and again reducing touchpoints during the payment process. Social distancing became an everyday phrase, and QR codes replaced menus, flyers and even in-room guest information.

The U.S. government finally opened its borders to international visitors on November 8, 2021 *(Spagat and Thompson, 2021)*. On May 11, 2023, the U.S. Federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency officially ended *(Whitmore, 2023)*. The pandemic has had an impact on the perception of technology usage among hotel guests. Yet, are guests more positive about hotel technology now than before? And do guests like hotel technology now better than before? How did hotel technology affect their overall stay satisfaction? And more importantly, did technology affect their spending patterns at our hotels? In 2020, 1,002 participants answered a survey, while in 2023, another 1,211 participants shared their opinions. Are their viewpoints the same, or different? And what can hotels do with this information? Let's find out.

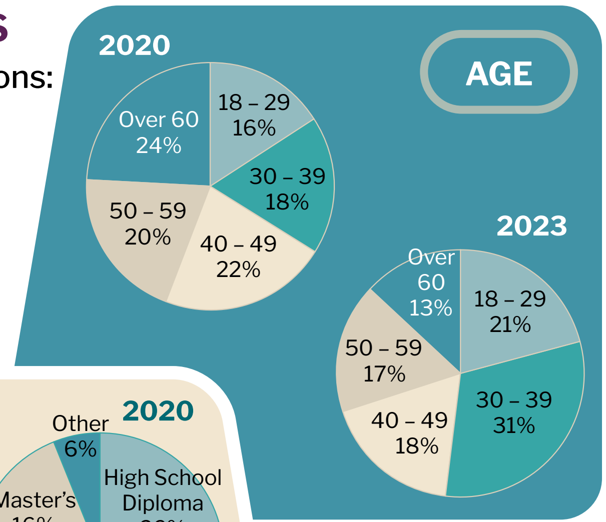
A Tale of Two Samples

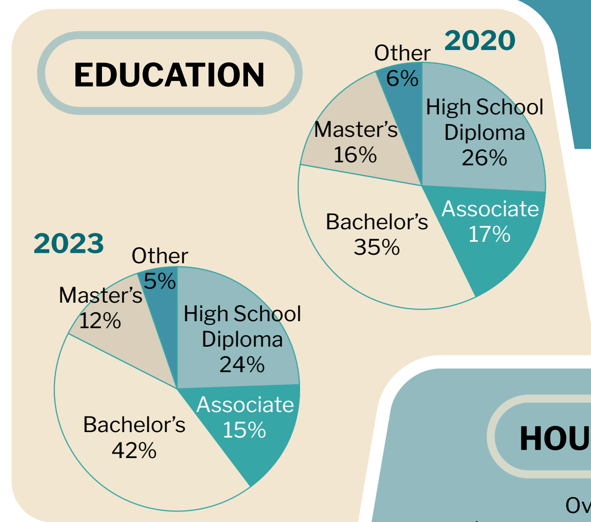
In terms of demographics, the 2023 sample is at a slightly younger age overall. The 18–29 age group was only at 16 percent in 2020 and increased to 21 percent in 2023. The same was also noted for the 30–39 age group, reported at 18 percent in 2020 and grew to 31 percent. All three other older age groups reported decreases. It is a positive sign that household income saw an increase, with the lower bracket of $50,001–$100,000 dropping from 41 to 38 percent, while the higher bracket of $100,001–$150,000 increased from 16 to 18 percent. Regarding education level, 42 percent of the 2023 group has earned a bachelor's degree as opposed to the 35 percent in 2020.

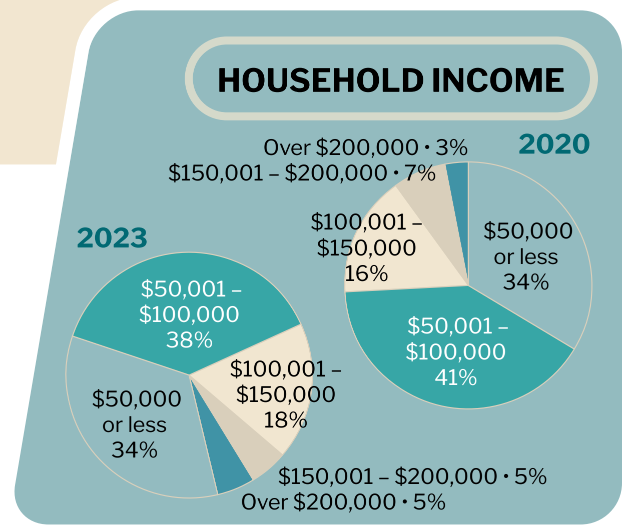
Understandably, since travel restrictions have not been lifted for long, 58 percent of the 2023 group took their most recent trip six months ago or less, while the timing of the trips was more evenly distributed in the 2020 group. Both samples traveled mostly within the U.S. *(90 percent in 2020, 91 percent in 2023)*. Although 73 percent of the 2023 group previously stayed at the same hotel brand, only 37 percent stated that they were members of the loyalty program. This is an interesting statistic and more will be shared on loyalty programs later, including some implications. Both groups reported their most often hotel stay frequency as one to two times a year, while two to three nights were the typical length of stay *(58 percent in 2020, 62 percent in 2023)*. The Upper Upscale *(23 to 24 percent)* and Upscale *(22 to 28 percent)* classes are the only classes that saw an increase, with the Upscale class as the clear winner, garnering an additional 6 percent. Finally, for the purpose of travel, while the percentages of "mostly business" and "exclusively business" remained unchanged, "exclusively leisure" dropped drastically from 56 percent to only 40 percent. This 16 percent difference was evenly split between the mostly leisure group *(from 23 to 31 percent)*, and the combining leisure and business group *(13 to 21 percent)*, confirming this new "bleisure" trend seen in our hotels. See page 5 for full details on travel behavior.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Response Comparisons: Pre-Covid (2020) to Post-Covid (2023)



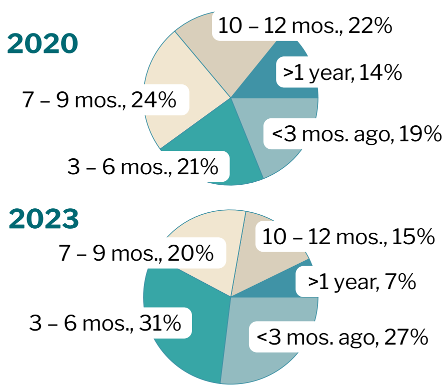




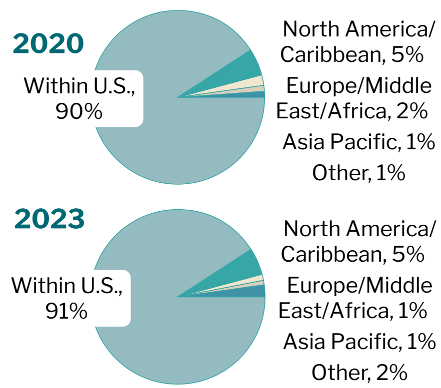
TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

Response Comparisons: Pre-Covid (2020) to Post-Covid (2023)

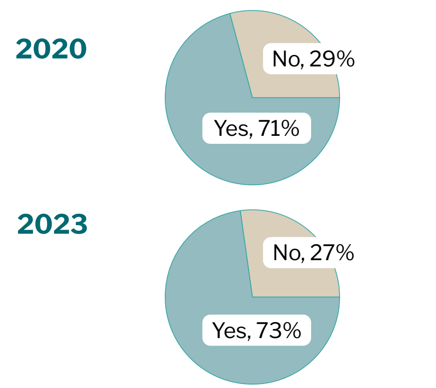
RECENT TRIP



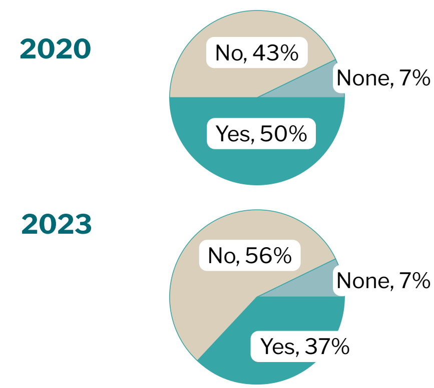
DESTINATION



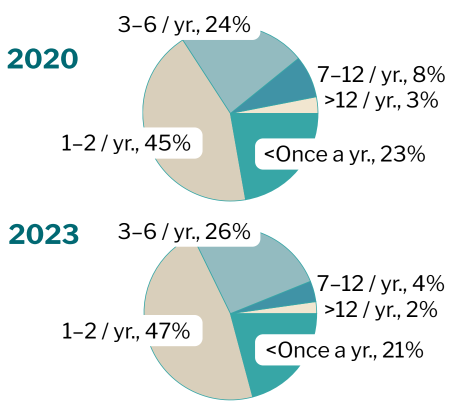
SAME HOTEL BRAND



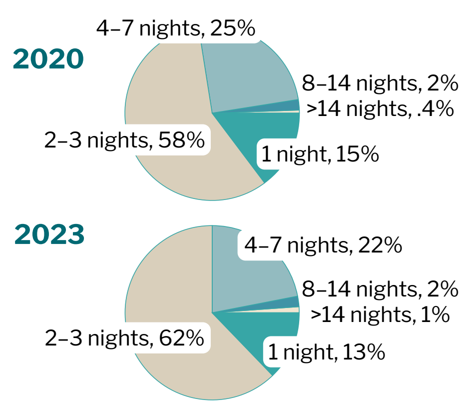
LOYALTY PROGRAM



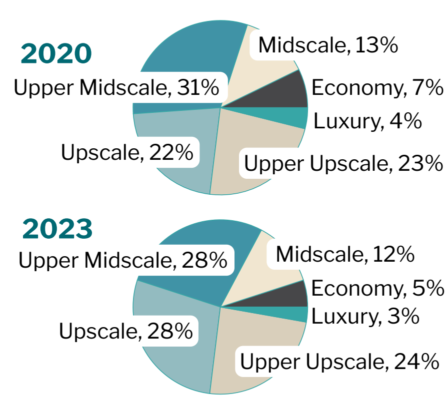
STAY FREQUENCY



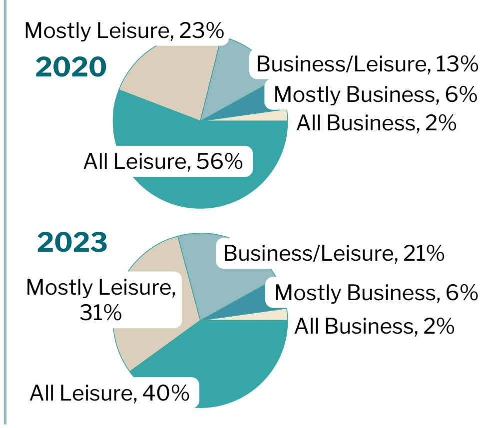
STAY DURATION



HOTEL CLASS



PURPOSE OF TRAVEL



Hotel Technology Rocks

There is no doubt that COVID changed many aspects of the hotel industry. As the phoenix rises from the ashes, the hotel industry is coming back stronger and better. Although COVID forced some hotels to close down and/or adopt a totally different business model, it accelerated the implementation of technology, which would otherwise be at a slower pace. This quick technology adoption also forced both hotel employees and guests to embrace technology. So, how do our guests feel about the technology in our hotels? For this survey, a scale of "1 = Strongly Disagree" to "7 = Strongly Agree" is used unless otherwise noted. Thus, a higher score is preferred for the positive statements, while a lower score is preferred for the negative statements.

RATING SCALE

As seen in the table at right, guests were more confident that they could learn technology-related skills, reporting a marked increase to 6.39 (out of 7.00) instead of the 5.96 (out of 7.00) pre-COVID score. While keeping up with technological advances was positive at 5.10 pre-COVID, that score also improved significantly to 5.67 post-COVID.

For the negative statements, the low scores ranging from 2.77 to 3.47 indicated good news in the pre-pandemic era. Continuing this trend, the scores for all six negative statements dropped to 2.00–2.54! Our guests reported they were less apprehensive about using technology, had less difficulty understanding technological matters, were not as fearful that they might damage the technology in some way or use the technology incorrectly, did not avoid technology because of unfamiliarity, and were also less confused by technological jargon. More importantly, the differences between the pre- and post-COVID scores are all statistically significant, indicating that these changes in sentiments are real and not likely due to chance.

COMFORT WITH TECHNOLOGY

POSITIVE STATEMENTS	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
I am confident I can learn technology-related skills.***	5.96	6.39
I am able to keep up with important technological advances. ***	5.10	5.67

NEGATIVE STATEMENTS	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
I have difficulty understanding most technological matters. ***	2.77	2.11
When given the opportunity to use technology in hotels, I fear I might damage it in some ways. ***	2.80	2.54
I have avoided technology because it is unfamiliar to me.***	2.84	2.15
I hesitate to use hotel technology for fear of making mistakes I cannot correct. ***	2.98	2.17
Technological terminology sounds like confusing jargon to me.***	3.03	2.00
I feel apprehensive about using technology. ***	3.47	2.12

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p<0.00$

TECHNOLOGY AND LAST HOTEL STAY

VOLUNTARY VS. MANDATORY	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
My use of hotel technology is voluntary.	5.76	5.75
My hotel stay does not require me to use hotel technology.***	5.67	5.28
Although it might be helpful, using hotel technology is certainly not compulsory during my hotel stay.*	5.57	5.42

DEPLOYMENT OF TECHNOLOGY	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
The hotel has guidance available for me to use hotel technology and its applications. ***	5.12	5.30
The hotel has a person available for assistance for hotel technology.*	5.04	5.18
The hotel has specialized instruction available for using hotel technology and its applications.*	4.90	5.03

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p<0.00$

While our guests are more positive about hotel technology, they also noted that the use of such technology was less voluntary and more in a mandatory manner for post-COVID as they rated all three "voluntary versus mandatory" statements with lower scores. However, our guests did appreciate how hotels deployed technology. They gave higher scores for post-COVID, affirming that hotels guided for them in using the technology and their applications, provided personnel to assist and offered specialized instruction.

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree

GUEST SATISFACTION: TECH AND STAY

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall for all satisfaction of guest-facing technologies after usage. ***	5.42	5.72
GUEST EXPERIENCE WITH GUEST FACING TECHNOLOGIES		
Bad <–> Good ***	5.72	5.92
Unpleasant <–> Pleasant ***	5.64	5.81
Unfavorable <–> Favorable ***	5.59	5.81
Beneficial <–> Harmful ***	2.89	2.83
GUEST EXPERIENCE WITH HOTEL STAY		
I am happy with the experience I have had at my hotel stay.	5.97	6.01
I have been satisfied with my experiences at my hotel stay.	5.96	6.04
I truly enjoy my hotel stay.	5.83	5.87
Staying at the hotel has been delightful.	5.51	5.54
I am elated with experiences I have had at my hotel stay.	5.13	5.20

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p<0.00$

Technology Rated Better than Overall Stay

When guests were asked about their experience using guest-facing technology during their hotel stay, the overall score increased from 5.42 to 5.72. And when this was further delineated from bad to good, unpleasant to pleasant, unfavorable to favorable, and beneficial to harmful (reverse coded), the scores were all higher for post-COVID and statistically significant. This is great news! When it comes to the stay itself, although the scores were high, ranging from 5.13 to 5.97 for pre-COVID and 5.20 to 6.04 for post-COVID, the score increases were very slight and not statistically significant, which could be due to chance.

Will Guests Spend More? Will Guests Rebook?

Now, the million-dollar questions — as the ultimate goal of any business is to be profitable — will our guests spend more because of all these technologies they can now access and order products and services simply by using their smartphones? And, will they stay in our hotels again? Well, the verdict is split!

For unplanned purchases of technology items, the scores were mixed. All three options of technology purchases had low scores during pre-COVID (2.82 to 2.99) and the scores were even lower for post-COVID (2.57 to 2.85). For unplanned purchases of hotel services, very slight increases were seen for purchasing products and services (3.28 to 3.36) and spa treatments and on-demand movies (2.70 to 2.72). Still, these scores were on the lower end of the scale, signifying a high level of disagreement or non-purchase. So, even if there is an increase, the decision is still not to have any unplanned purchases.

The good news is that when it comes to saying positive things about the hotel or recommending the property and encouraging family and friends to stay, the scores for these sentiments were higher for post-

View table “Unplanned Purchases and Return Stay” on the following page.

Scale: “1”=Strongly Disagree to “7”=Strongly Agree

UNPLANNED PURCHASES AND RETURN STAY

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
UNPLANNED PURCHASES OF TECHNOLOGY ITEMS		
On this trip, I saw a number of guest-facing technologies I wanted to buy even though they were not on my shopping list.	2.99	2.85
During this hotel stay, I saw a number of guest-facing technologies I want to buy even though they were not on planned lists.	2.94	2.84
I experienced a number of sudden urges to buy guest-facing technologies that I had not planned to purchase on this trip.**	2.82	2.57

UNPLANNED PURCHASES OF HOTEL SERVICES		
I experienced a number of sudden urges to purchase items such as food, beverages, in-room dining, souvenirs that I had not planned to purchase during this hotel stay.	3.64	3.63
During this hotel stay, I saw a number of goods or services I wanted to buy even though they were not on my planned list.	3.28	3.36
I experienced a number of sudden urges to purchase hotel services such as spa treatments, on-demand movies, that I had not planned to purchase in this hotel stay.	2.70	2.72

COVID, all in the 5.26 to 5.79 range, indicating a high level of agreement. Yet, our guests are very price-sensitive, as evidenced by the score drop from 4.81 for pre-COVID to only 4.53 for post-COVID when the price was increased slightly. And again a significant decrease from 4.27 for pre-COVID to only 3.94 for post-COVID was observed when they had to pay a higher price to stay with the same hotel brand. Now, this is where the loyalty program can come into play!

WHAT WILL GUESTS DO?		
I will say positive things about this hotel brand.	5.70	5.79
I will recommend others to stay at this hotel brand if someone seeks my advice.	5.69	5.72
I will encourage friends and relatives to stay at this hotel brand.	5.55	5.54
I will consider this hotel brand my first choice for my future trip.**	5.44	5.26
I will stay at this hotel brand in my next trip.**	5.40	5.25
I will continue to stay with this hotel brand if the price is increased slightly.***	4.81	4.53
I will pay a higher price to stay with this hotel brand than staying at other hotel brands.***	4.27	3.94

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p<0.00$

Scale: “1”=Strongly Disagree to “7”=Strongly Agree

Travel Behaviors Shift Unplanned Purchase Decisions

Most travelers, if not all, have a budget. However, this does not mean all purchases are planned. Thus, one of the aspects of this study is to assess unplanned purchase behaviors, especially regarding guest-facing technologies guests encounter and use during their trip or stay, as well as to see if guests experienced sudden urges to make such purchases. Unequivocally, in all three instances, the scores reported were quite low. With a "1" to "7" scale and 4 being average, for both pre- and post-COVID, all scores were below 4.00, except for guests who stayed in luxury properties. One interesting trend is that the scores of all these unplanned technology purchases decreased in the post-COVID era except for guests who stay longer (over eight nights) and travel more (over 12 times a year). Thus, if hotels are trying to sell technology as another revenue stream, these long-stay and frequent guests are the prime target market. This can very well be due to their extended time away from home more than other guests, which exposes them to guest-facing technology adding value to their stays.

UNPLANNED TECHNOLOGY PURCHASES

On this trip, I saw a number of **guest-facing technologies** I wanted to buy even though they were not on my shopping list.

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**2.99**	**2.85**
MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	3.02	2.78
3– 6 months	3.47	2.93
7– 9 months	3.02	3.07
10 – 12 months	2.76	2.79
> 1 year ago	2.51	2.35
HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	4.33	4.41
Upper Upscale	3.71	3.09
Upscale	2.92	3.03
Upper Midscale	2.62	2.44
Midscale	2.67	2.71
Economy	2.25	2.53

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	3.18	2.88
No	2.52	2.79
STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	2.25	2.59
1 – 2 times per year	3.06	2.80
3 – 6 times per year	3.44	3.08
7 – 12 times per year	3.57	3.21
> 12 times per year	2.84	3.23
LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	2.22	2.15
2 – 3 nights	3.10	2.85
4 – 7 nights	3.21	3.17
8 – 14 nights	2.75	3.96
> 14 nights	2.75	3.20

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

UNPLANNED TECHNOLOGY PURCHASES

During this hotel stay, I saw a number of **guest-facing technologies** I want to buy even though they were not on my planned lists.

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**2.94**	**2.84**
MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	2.88	2.70
3– 6 months	3.49	2.96
7– 9 months	3.05	3.08
10 – 12 months	2.67	2.78
> 1 year ago	2.44	2.38

HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	4.33	4.06
Upper Upscale	3.67	3.04
Upscale	2.89	3.05
Upper Midscale	2.58	2.42
Midscale	2.58	2.71
Economy	2.17	2.65

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	3.13	2.88
No	2.49	2.73

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	2.19	2.55
1 – 2 times per year	3.05	2.80
3 – 6 times per year	3.43	3.07
7 – 12 times per year	3.28	3.15
> 12 times per year	2.52	3.41

LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	2.11	2.22
2 – 3 nights	3.05	2.82
4 – 7 nights	3.20	3.12
8 – 14 nights	2.80	4.00
> 14 nights	2.50	3.80

Scale: “1”=Strongly Disagree to “7”=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

UNPLANNED TECHNOLOGY PURCHASES

I experienced a number of **sudden urges to buy guest-facing technologies** that I had not planned to purchase on this trip.

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**2.82**	**2.57**
MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	2.89	2.45
3– 6 months	3.32	2.67
7– 9 months	2.84	2.84
10 – 12 months	2.55	2.47
> 1 year ago	2.36	2.09

HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	3.83	4.16
Upper Upscale	3.47	2.74
Upscale	2.73	2.74
Upper Midscale	2.50	2.26
Midscale	2.75	2.38
Economy	2.26	2.06

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	2.99	2.60
No	2.40	2.49

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	2.16	2.24
1 – 2 times per year	2.85	2.50
3 – 6 times per year	3.32	2.82
7 – 12 times per year	3.38	3.23
> 12 times per year	2.36	3.23

LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	2.17	1.90
2 – 3 nights	2.93	2.56
4 – 7 nights	2.95	2.91
8 – 14 nights	2.75	3.30
> 14 nights	3.50	3.60

Scale: “1”=Strongly Disagree to “7”=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

However, when guests were asked about their unplanned purchases of non-technology items — food and beverage, in-room dining and souvenirs; general goods and services; and hotel services such as spa treatments and on-demand movies — the scores were quite different. While the scores were still mostly below the average of 4.00 for all three categories, some scores increased significantly for post-COVID. For food and beverage, in-room dining and souvenirs, guests whose most recent trip was less than three months ago were more apt to make such purchases (2.53 to 3.38, 33.6 percent increase). This behavior was also noted among frequent travelers (2.52 to 4.05, 60.7 percent increase), and guests with longer lengths of stay. In particular, for guests who stayed over two weeks, the scores increased from 4.25 to 4.80 (12.9 percent increase). Increases were also noted among guests in the economy class (3.14 to 3.55, 13.1 percent), as well as among those who traveled exclusively for business (3.10 to 3.55, 14.5 percent).

For general goods and services, frequent travelers who made over 12 trips a year only recorded a pre-COVID rating of 2.36, but for post-COVID, it increased to 4.09 (over a 73 percent increase). The scores for guests who stayed for 8–14 nights also increased from 3.00 to 3.67 (22.3 percent), while the group staying over 14 nights had an even greater increase, going from 3.00 to 3.80 (26.7 percent). The luxury class guests also reported a jump in their scores for purchasing general goods and services, rising from 4.33 to 4.97 (14.8 percent); and there was a significant difference in the economy class, where the score increased from 2.52 to 3.43, indicating a 36.1 percent increase.

In the post-COVID era, many of us are also more in-tune with the concepts of self-care and personal wellness. Consequently, in terms of unplanned purchases of spa treatments and on-demand movies, remarkable increases were seen among guests who traveled for more than 12 times a year (1.92 to 3.27, a 70.3 percent increase), those who had longer stays (8–14 nights: 2.50 to 3.38, 35.2 percent, and more than 14 nights: 2.25 to 3.00, 33.3 percent), and guests who traveled mostly for leisure (2.88 to 3.49, 21.2 percent). Although increased at a lower rate, guests in the luxury class still displayed the highest likelihood of spending at a score of 4.00, which increased to 4.75, by 18.8 percent.

View charts for “Unplanned Purchase of Non-technology Items” on the following three pages.

UNPLANNED HOTEL SERVICE PURCHASES

I experienced a number of sudden urges to purchase items such as **food, beverages, in-room dining, and souvenirs** that I had not planned to purchase during this hotel stay.

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**3.64**	**3.63**
MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	2.53	3.38
3– 6 months	3.98	3.66
7– 9 months	3.79	3.96
10 – 12 months	3.39	3.69
> 1 year ago	3.42	3.45
STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	3.74	1.91
No	3.41	2.08
STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	3.00	3.24
1 – 2 times per year	3.85	3.71
3 – 6 times per year	3.92	3.73
7 – 12 times per year	3.96	3.98
> 12 times per year	2.52	4.05
LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	2.91	2.98
2 – 3 nights	3.66	3.61
4 – 7 nights	4.00	4.02
8 – 14 nights	4.00	3.92
> 14 nights	4.25	4.80
HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	4.65	4.88
Upper Upscale	4.23	3.92
Upscale	3.67	3.73
Upper Midscale	3.32	3.32
Midscale	3.29	3.31
Economy	3.14	3.55
PURPOSE OF TRAVEL		
Exclusively leisure	3.37	3.45
Mostly leisure	3.70	3.61
Combined leisure / business	4.49	3.87
Mostly business	3.98	3.59
Exclusively business	3.10	3.55

Scale: “1”=Strongly Disagree to “7”=Strongly Agree

Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

UNPLANNED HOTEL SERVICE PURCHASES

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**3.28**	**3.36**

MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	3.13	3.11
3– 6 months	3.62	3.46
7– 9 months	3.38	3.61
10 – 12 months	3.20	3.41
> 1 year ago	2.96	3.02

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	2.83	3.40
No	2.39	3.24

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	2.64	3.03
1 – 2 times per year	3.42	3.41
3 – 6 times per year	3.66	3.45
7 – 12 times per year	3.68	3.56
> 12 times per year	2.36	4.09

During this hotel stay, I saw a number of **goods or services** I wanted to buy even though they were not on my planned list.

LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	2.47	2.69
2 – 3 nights	3.30	3.31
4 – 7 nights	3.75	3.83
8 – 14 nights	3.00	3.67
> 14 nights	3.00	3.80

HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	4.33	4.97
Upper Upscale	4.01	3.60
Upscale	3.16	3.45
Upper Midscale	3.00	3.00
Midscale	2.95	3.07
Economy	2.52	3.43

PURPOSE OF TRAVEL		
Exclusively leisure	2.96	3.10
Mostly leisure	3.45	3.69
Combined leisure / business	4.18	3.81
Mostly business	3.65	3.41
Exclusively business	2.96	3.04

Scale: “1”=Strongly Disagree to “7”=Strongly Agree

Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

UNPLANNED HOTEL SERVICE PURCHASES

I experienced a number of sudden urges to purchase **hotel services such as spa treatments, on-demand movies**, that I had not planned to purchase in this hotel stay.

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**2.70**	**2.72**

MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	2.66	2.51
3– 6 months	3.09	2.84
7– 9 months	2.81	2.94
10 – 12 months	2.44	2.74
> 1 year ago	2.41	2.32

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	3.42	2.79
No	2.96	2.53

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	2.16	2.48
1 – 2 times per year	2.76	2.66
3 – 6 times per year	3.11	2.90
7 – 12 times per year	3.06	3.10
> 12 times per year	1.92	3.27

LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	2.03	2.22
2 – 3 nights	2.72	2.61
4 – 7 nights	3.08	3.22
8 – 14 nights	2.50	3.38
> 14 nights	2.25	3.00

HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	4.00	4.75
Upper Upscale	3.38	3.00
Upscale	2.73	2.84
Upper Midscale	2.30	2.26
Midscale	2.34	2.56
Economy	2.08	2.47

PURPOSE OF TRAVEL		
Exclusively leisure	2.31	2.50
Mostly leisure	2.88	3.49
Combined leisure / business	3.82	3.22
Mostly business	3.12	2.75
Exclusively business	2.83	2.32

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

Different Travelers' Behaviors Affect Rebooking

A total of seven sentiments were asked to our guests to gauge if they would say positive things about the brand, recommend others to stay at this brand, encourage friends and relatives to stay at this brand, consider this brand their first choice for their future trip, stay at this brand in their next trip, continue to stay with this brand if the price is increased slightly, and finally pay a higher price to stay with this brand than staying at other hotel brands.

For the first three sentiments, most reported small increases in post-COVID scores, except for guests with loyalty programs. The scores were all in the mid 5.00s to low 6.00s, indicating that the guests were generally positive when commenting about the hotel, recommending the brand to others, and encouraging friends and relatives to stay at the brand. However, regarding whether the brand would be their first choice, the changes were minor, except for one category — guests who stayed over 14 nights reporting a dramatic decrease for the post-COVID period (5.75 to 3.60, 37.4 percent decrease). Thus, hotels may want to pay more attention to those long-staying guests.

In general, most guests are inclined to seek and enjoy new experiences. Thus, when a guest has stayed in a hotel for more than two weeks, perhaps many services and products may be taken for granted. Therefore, ensuring long-stay guests are happy with our products and services is of utmost importance. The same group also reported a significant score drop from 5.50 to 4.20 (23.6 percent decrease) when asked if they would stay at the same hotel brand on their next trip. Finally, the guests were price-sensitive. For the last two questions regarding a slight increase in room rates or paying more to stay with the same brand, all categories of travel behavior showed decreased scores. This was consistent across different lengths of stay, trips taken per year, or class of hotels. In today's economy where inflation is high and recession looms, hotels may want to be mindful of the price sensitivity issue.

View charts for "Guests Behavioral Intentions in the Future" on the following seven pages.

GUESTS’ BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**5.70**	**5.79**

MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	5.76	5.85
3– 6 months	5.77	5.76
7– 9 months	5.73	5.87
10 – 12 months	5.75	5.77
> 1 year ago	5.38	5.52

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	5.87	5.87
No	5.30	5.56

LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBER		
Yes	6.00	5.61
No	5.45	6.04
This hotel does not have one	5.62	5.85

I will **say positive things** about this hotel brand.

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	5.36	5.52
1 – 2 times per year	5.74	5.82
3 – 6 times per year	5.86	5.94
7 – 12 times per year	6.09	5.81
> 12 times per year	5.84	5.82

LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	5.19	5.59
2 – 3 nights	5.76	5.77
4 – 7 nights	5.84	5.94
8 – 14 nights	6.15	6.00
> 14 nights	5.00	5.20

HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	6.25	6.16
Upper Upscale	6.03	6.01
Upscale	5.68	5.95
Upper Midscale	5.62	5.63
Midscale	5.53	5.46
Economy	4.98	5.22

Scale: “1”=Strongly Disagree to “7”=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

GUESTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**5.69**	**5.72**

MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	5.70	5.76
3– 6 months	5.77	5.71
7– 9 months	5.78	5.79
10 – 12 months	5.74	5.69
> 1 year ago	5.34	5.51

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	5.85	5.80
No	5.31	5.50

LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBER		
Yes	5.96	5.55
No	5.50	5.99
This hotel does not have one	5.42	5.67

I will **recommend others to stay** at this hotel brand if someone seeks my advice.

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	5.36	5.42
1 – 2 times per year	5.74	5.77
3 – 6 times per year	5.82	5.88
7 – 12 times per year	6.06	5.73
> 12 times per year	5.84	5.64

LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	5.23	5.50
2 – 3 nights	5.76	5.72
4 – 7 nights	5.78	5.84
8 – 14 nights	5.85	6.08
> 14 nights	5.75	5.20

HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	5.98	6.25
Upper Upscale	5.97	5.96
Upscale	5.71	5.82
Upper Midscale	5.63	5.58
Midscale	5.56	5.40
Economy	5.00	5.22

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

GUESTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**5.55**	**5.54**
MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	5.54	5.56
3– 6 months	5.70	5.53
7– 9 months	5.67	5.59
10 – 12 months	5.51	5.54
> 1 year ago	5.19	5.32
STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	5.72	5.61
No	5.17	5.34
LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBER		
Yes	5.81	5.34
No	5.36	5.84
This hotel does not have one	5.36	5.59

I will **encourage friends and relatives** to stay at this hotel brand.

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	5.16	5.24
1 – 2 times per year	5.63	5.57
3 – 6 times per year	5.70	5.74
7 – 12 times per year	5.89	5.52
> 12 times per year	5.64	5.32
LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	5.03	5.34
2 – 3 nights	5.64	5.52
4 – 7 nights	5.63	5.69
8 – 14 nights	5.90	5.75
> 14 nights	4.75	5.20
HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	6.20	6.06
Upper Upscale	5.89	5.84
Upscale	5.57	5.71
Upper Midscale	5.46	5.33
Midscale	5.41	5.14
Economy	4.65	4.88

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

GUESTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**5.44**	**5.26**
MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	5.44	5.25
3– 6 months	5.65	5.24
7– 9 months	5.50	5.44
10 – 12 months	5.40	5.27
> 1 year ago	5.07	4.84
STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	5.66	5.36
No	4.89	4.98
LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBER		
Yes	5.82	5.00
No	5.13	5.68
This hotel does not have one	5.36	5.09

I will consider this hotel brand my first choice for my future trip.

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	4.98	4.88
1 – 2 times per year	5.51	5.32
3 – 6 times per year	5.64	5.43
7 – 12 times per year	5.94	5.38
> 12 times per year	5.52	5.32
LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	4.89	5.01
2 – 3 nights	5.52	5.22
4 – 7 nights	5.51	5.51
8 – 14 nights	6.15	5.63
> 14 nights	5.75	3.60
HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	6.03	5.91
Upper Upscale	5.88	5.58
Upscale	5.36	5.46
Upper Midscale	5.31	5.00
Midscale	5.31	4.94
Economy	4.66	4.31

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

GUESTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**5.40**	**5.25**
MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	5.47	5.25
3– 6 months	5.70	5.23
7– 9 months	5.35	5.38
10 – 12 months	5.37	5.30
> 1 year ago	4.96	4.90
STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	5.63	5.34
No	4.85	5.01
LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBER		
Yes	5.79	5.01
No	5.07	5.65
This hotel does not have one	5.38	5.04

I **will stay** at this hotel brand in my **next trip**.

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	4.94	4.89
1 – 2 times per year	5.44	5.32
3 – 6 times per year	5.63	5.36
7 – 12 times per year	5.85	5.50
> 12 times per year	5.80	5.55
LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	4.89	5.00
2 – 3 nights	5.45	5.23
4 – 7 nights	5.53	5.42
8 – 14 nights	6.25	5.75
> 14 nights	5.50	4.20
HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	6.13	5.88
Upper Upscale	5.78	5.57
Upscale	5.39	5.38
Upper Midscale	5.30	5.04
Midscale	5.18	4.86
Economy	4.57	4.71

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

GUESTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

I will continue to stay with this hotel brand if the **price is increased slightly**.

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**4.81**	**4.53**

MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	4.76	4.50
3– 6 months	5.05	4.56
7– 9 months	4.93	4.71
10 – 12 months	4.74	4.51
> 1 year ago	4.44	4.06

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	5.06	4.66
No	4.20	4.17

LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBER		
Yes	5.25	4.28
No	4.46	4.92
This hotel does not have one	4.72	4.44

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	4.32	4.09
1 – 2 times per year	4.86	4.60
3 – 6 times per year	5.08	4.68
7 – 12 times per year	5.17	4.77
> 12 times per year	5.16	4.86

LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	4.20	4.16
2 – 3 nights	4.87	4.49
4 – 7 nights	4.93	4.81
8 – 14 nights	6.10	5.08
> 14 nights	4.75	4.00

HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	5.45	5.47
Upper Upscale	5.24	4.94
Upscale	4.78	4.67
Upper Midscale	4.72	4.22
Midscale	4.62	4.11
Economy	3.83	3.84

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

GUESTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

I will **pay a higher price** to stay with this hotel brand than staying at other hotel brands.

	Average Pre-Covid	Average Post-Covid
Overall score	**4.27**	**3.94**

MOST RECENT TRIP		
< 3 months ago	4.36	3.90
3– 6 months	4.60	3.98
7– 9 months	4.31	4.10
10 – 12 months	4.14	3.95
> 1 year ago	3.75	3.41

STAYED AT HOTEL PREVIOUSLY		
Yes	4.50	4.09
No	3.70	3.54

LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBER		
Yes	4.67	3.92
No	3.92	4.36
This hotel does not have one	4.29	3.66

STAYS PER YEAR		
< Once a year	3.68	3.48
1 – 2 times per year	4.28	4.00
3 – 6 times per year	4.65	4.11
7 – 12 times per year	4.89	4.15
> 12 times per year	4.40	4.36

LENGTH OF STAY		
1 night	3.57	3.41
2 – 3 nights	4.35	3.91
4 – 7 nights	4.42	4.28
8 – 14 nights	5.15	4.46
> 14 nights	4.00	2.80

HOTEL CLASS		
Luxury	5.30	5.16
Upper Upscale	4.92	4.39
Upscale	4.17	4.14
Upper Midscale	4.16	3.60
Midscale	3.86	3.49
Economy	2.97	2.78

Scale: "1"=Strongly Disagree to "7"=Strongly Agree
Highlighted cells indicate the biggest score ranges between survey years.

The Bottom Line

After pages of numbers and scores, what is the bottom line? What are the takeaways? We suggest a three-prong strategy to establish connections among all key stakeholders in this technology: our guests, associates and vendors. While these surveys are sentiments from our guests, there are also tactics we can adopt from the standpoint of our associates and vendors to increase our guests' satisfaction, spending and rebooking intentions.

Technology and Our Guests: ECR = Enroll, Cultivate and Reward

All major hotel brands and even many independent hotels have some level of loyalty program. Yet, with all the loyalty programs hotel companies offer, only 50 percent of the participants were loyalty program members during pre-COVID, and this dropped to a mere 37 percent during post-COVID. It is not due to the hotels not having one, as only 7 percent reported that the hotels they stayed at did not have a loyalty program, and this percentage was the same for both pre- and post-COVID. So, why are hotels spending all these monetary and human resources on loyalty programs, and guests are not part of it? More importantly, what actions can we take in response?

It is a well-known fact that it is more effective to retain an existing guest than to acquire a new one. The cost of gaining a new customer for a brand includes a variety of sales and marketing expenses, from digital marketing to actual sales calls and meetings, and of course, maintaining and upgrading hotels as desirable products, among others. Thus, hotels should capitalize on using technology to ENROLL, CULTIVATE and REWARD our guests, especially those who are loyal to our brand. If we have loyalty programs, why are guests not enrolled? Are we making the enrollment process too complicated? With technology, it should be very easy to check a guest's name against the loyalty program database when a reservation is made. If the guests are not currently enrolled in our loyalty programs, reach out to them via email or text, share with them the benefits of being members of your hotel brand, and offer complimentary enrollment to them, and of course — with one click. Some hotels enroll new loyalty members at check-ins, as all the guests' information can already be found in the reservation. Make this simple for the guests.

After enrollment, let's cultivate. Before the guests even step foot in our lobby, start that loyalty effort to cultivate them. For example, message your guests that your hotel is looking forward to welcoming them again to the brand and let them know of the perks they can expect when they check-in and during their stay. Greet them by their name at check-in and check-out, if they do not bypass the in-person check-in and check-out processes. Even if they bypass the front desk, have a welcome message waiting for them, displaying that on the TV screen in their room. Personalization is the key. We have to let our guests know they are important to us at every step of the way. That's cultivation. Once guests stay with us, if we do not utilize every opportunity throughout the stay to "wow" our guests, they have many options to select another hotel brand.

Obviously, being loyal guests deserve rewards. From a free bottle of water to options to earn points, remind the guests of all the rewards they will receive throughout their stay. After check-out, the relationship with your loyalty members does not stop. The cultivate and reward steps continue. Start with a "Thank you for staying with us" message, and then continue with periodic and purposeful messages that contain loyalty benefits including special rates, upgrades or whatever awards your hotel brand offers. Include amazing photos of any new or renovated hotels and invite your loyalty guests to experience your new properties. Incorporate images of all the different services your hotels offer — this will also turn unplanned spending into planned purchases. The results show that as guests stay longer with us, their propensity to purchase technologies, services and products gets higher. So, let's capture that!

Technology and Our Associates: ACT = Acknowledge, Celebrate and Train

Working with our guests is only one-third of this strategy to technology success. All our associates, from the hourly staff to the general manager, experienced the technology acceleration during COVID. We need to continue this trend to ensure our associates are not only comfortable with using technology but also be able to assist our guests to do so. When it comes to our associates, ACT is the key. ACT stands for Acknowledge, Celebrate and Train.

Management should acknowledge the good work our staff has accomplished over the past few years. Technology does not come easy to all. So, when our associates are taking the time to learn new technology to do their jobs well and assist our guests when needed, we need to acknowledge their good work, and with a bit of a celebration as well. We all can use a pat on the back. At the same time, technology does not stop, so when a new version or update is out, or if new technology is adopted, we need to keep up with the training of our employees as well. From the surveys, our guests are giving us a nod that we are deploying technology with good guidance, special instructions and personnel available for assistance. We need to sustain this positive effort through the good work of each and every of our associates — acknowledge them, celebrate their success, big and small, and keep up with focused technology training.

Technology and Our Vendors: PAL = Partner, Anticipate and Learn

Vendors really are our PALs. It is their job to look out for us to see if there is a new technology that we can benefit from. PAL, in this instance, stands for Partner, Anticipate and Learn. Vendors are our partners, so we should treat each other as such, and vendors should also treat hotels as their partners, not just customers. To have a good partnership, clear communication is a must. We, as hotels, need to let our vendors know our needs. Sometimes, we may not know what our needs are or we may not know what is new out there that we can benefit from. This is where vendors can be our good partners, and they alert us as to when an upgrade or a new piece of technology is about to be launched, so hotels can plan for installation and implementation accordingly.

Anticipation is another must. Vendors need to anticipate the needs of hotels to design technology that is guest- and employee-friendly, while simultaneously accomplishing the needed tasks. This anticipation can only come to fruition with the two parties — hotels and vendors — working together, and more importantly, learning from each other. By the way, that learning never ends, as vendors can develop and design new and better technologies by learning the needs of both guests and hotels.

Many of us recently returned from HITEC. Let's keep that PAL relationship going strong with our vendors, extend that to boost the acknowledgment, celebrate and train (ACT) our associates so that we can keep on enrolling, cultivating and growing (ECG) our loyal guests. ●

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