

# DESIGNING DESTINATIONS FOR DIGITAL NATIVES

A HOTEL EXPERIENCE FOR THE NEXT  
GENERATION TRAVELER

Hotels serve as the welcome mat to the city, anchoring the visitor experience and shaping first impressions. With the rise of a new generation of digital natives entering the economic landscape, hotels are being challenged to deliver experiences that resonate—on-screen and in person.

Though young, Generation Z (born roughly between 1997 and 2012) is a rising economic force with a reported \$950 billion in spending power—and projections suggest they'll be the wealthiest generation within the decade. We know they're also avid travelers, averaging three leisure trips per year, with 63% of the age group having made travel purchases in the past 12 months. Much of this decision making is influenced by discovery through mobile web browsing and social media.

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We design hospitality experiences that respond to this shift—blending digital fluency, cultural relevance, and immersive storytelling to meet modern traveler expectations. From the first moment of discovery to the final in-room interaction, we partner with clients to craft every touchpoint to feel intentional, authentic, and tailored to how this generation experiences the world.

Here are the notable trends we're seeing in guest experience and hotel design with digital natives in mind:

## **Making First Impressions in a Mobile, Digital-First Environment**

Knowing that mobile phones play a central role in how Gen Z travelers discover and select accommodations, we approach hotel design with this behavior in mind. The guest experience often begins long before arrival—often within the confines of a 2×2-inch thumbnail image. From architecture to amenity, we design with the understanding that the first impression must be visually compelling and attention grabbing.

Visual detail counts more than it ever has before. Bold architectural gestures, photogenic spaces, and storytelling through imagery are vital to converting interest into bookings. A distinctive façade, a rooftop pool with panoramic views, a unique dining experience or a lobby art installation can serve as signature elements that create an instant emotional connection.



Our design team anticipates this micro-screen-first discovery, considering thoughtful design elements that translate into visually compelling stories that stand out on mobile platforms.

More than two thirds of digital traffic to hospitality websites occurs on a mobile device, where the selection and booking process is swift and heavily influenced by the perceived aesthetic and experiential value of the property. As such, our design team emphasizes interior and exterior architectural elements that story-tell and spark intrigue among visitors.

**Mobile-Friendly Guest Experience: From Check-In to Check-Out**

Gen Z values autonomy and efficiency. In response, we partner with clients to accommodate mobile check-ins, digital room keys, and app-based services as essential features. Our integrated design teams collaborate in 3D across disciplines to integrate high-speed connectivity and innovative room technologies to enhance the guest experience at every touchpoint. More than just enabling booking, these systems connect guests to amenities and services through seamless, mobile-first interactions that deliver comfort and control from the palm of their hand.



Further, our approach reimagines the hotel lobby as a dynamic, multi-use environment. Rather than a space to pass through, we create destinations with sweeping corridors and quiet nooks—places that feel “discovered,” personalized, and worth returning to. Charging ports, flexible seating, local artwork, and sustainable materials are not amenities; they’re integral to how we define comfort and connection. Digital signage plays an active role, communicating the hotel’s sustainability efforts and promoting real-time experiences.

Additionally, sustainability is now a core part of the guest experience. We incorporate features like refillable water stations, biodegradable key cards, and recycled materials to meet rising expectations. Behind the

scenes, we specify GPON (Gigabit Passive Optical Network) technologies to reduce energy use and save space—freeing square footage for more rooms or enhanced amenities. Our teams also integrate advanced Building Management Systems that actively optimize energy use, lighting, maintenance, and security through real-time analytics.

**Designing for Spaces That Are Private, Personalized, and Intuitive**

Beyond a place to rest and recharge, we design hotel rooms to appeal to modern travelers by being private, personalized, and intuitive. Our teams integrate technology in ways that feel natural and seamless, supporting both relaxation and productivity.

We specify design features like smart thermostats that adjust automatically throughout the day, voice-responsive lighting, and mirrors that double as interactive screens displaying itineraries or news, all thoughtfully selected to elevate comfort without complication. We also craft flexible work zones with optimized lighting for video calls and ergonomic furniture to support the blended lifestyles of Gen Z travelers, who often merge business and leisure into a single trip.

Understanding the importance of safety and operational ease, our integrated design team collaborates to integrate infrastructure for smart locks, motion-sensor lighting, and discreet monitoring systems that protect guests without feeling intrusive. Behind the scenes, these can serve AI-driven tools on behalf of the hotel that anticipate maintenance needs, adjust energy use in real time, and adapt to guest behaviors—delivering an experience that feels personal, fluid, and effortless.

**Harnessing the Digital-First Generation of Travelers**



With today’s travelers discovering, booking, and sharing hotel experiences through their phones, we design with digital visibility and storytelling in mind. While standardized, “copy and paste” hotels once communicated comfort and reliability to travelers, today’s guests are seeking places that reflect the character and culture of their destination. That means drawing inspiration from regional architecture, incorporating work by local artists, sourcing materials thoughtfully, and curating moments that invite connection—from discovery to check out.

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We understand that designing for the next generation traveler means balancing digital fluency with an elevated guest experience, rooted in meaningful connection. By embracing thoughtful infrastructure, robust technological systems, and bold, story-rich design, hotels can meet the expectations of a generation that is not just visiting the world but shaping how we experience it.



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