

NEW SURVEY ON BUSINESS TRAVELLERS PROVIDES INTERESTING DATA



Keeping up with travellers needs and expectations and understanding trends is important for hoteliers and that is why Newlio's recent survey of 529 business travellers is so important. Within the data there are just as many surprising statistics to take note of regarding wi-fi and technology as predictable ones.

Technological needs rank highly, and are often being met, but they can also be underestimated and misunderstood.

While the overall quality of the suites in the hotel rated quite highly in this Newlio leaderboard, with 61% naming it as their main concern, the presence of free wi-fi was not far behind at 55%. The importance of complimentary internet access is appreciated by many hotels and is increasingly available; the problem is that despite the efforts of some hotels to improve their business centres and common areas to provide this ideal work environment for businesses travellers, most actually prefer to work in their rooms. The data shows that just 10% prefer a business centre, 4% would rather work in the lobby and an overwhelming 84% wish to stay in their room and this suggests that hoteliers' money is being put into the wrong improvements. These common areas can be a great place to socialise afterwards, to grab a drink and discuss the conference perhaps, but they are not often viewed as places to work.

One area where hotels are working with technological needs in a positive way in the understanding of the prevalence of mobile technology and the applications that are being developed. 76% of those asked booked their rooms online and an impressive 60% even checked in with a smartphone or tablet. Some companies are working to simplify these process even further and make the most of this trend such as Choice hotels, who are streamlining the booking process to remove the need to input card details or an address, and Starwood, who allow guests to use phones as room keys. This doesn't mean that hoteliers should be thinking too far into the future towards a full, technological modernisation of facilities and systems though because a large portion of those asked still have a soft spot for the home comforts we have grown used to: 51% look for a simple microwave to heat up their food, 53% still use the refrigerator and 61% use the coffee-maker.

In the end it is all a matter of priorities and perspective.

The desire to make improvements and modernise hotels for business travellers is great, especially when technological needs and abilities are increasing; however, there is the danger of putting money into the wrong ventures and making unwise preconceptions about guests needs and their priorities when choosing a hotel. All these statistics make for interesting reading for hoteliers, but there is one final percentage that cannot be ignored – the fact that location was still the most important aspect for those surveyed, with 73% citing the establishment's placement as their top priority when making a choice. A hotel can have all the best facilities for refreshments and great work spaces in their suites – and this data on the views towards business centres, common areas and tea-making facilities really does need to be taken on-board – but the location of the building will still be the deciding factor the majority of the time.

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