

HYB25

Annual Edition

Navigating New Dynamics in the
New Year



The Hotel Yearbook

Foresight and innovation in the global hotel industry

HY8



Is Simone Puerto the John Titor of Hospitality? 10 Predictions That Might Prove It

AI-Driven Transformation

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The hospitality and tech industries are navigating a liminal space where the boundaries between human and artificial are increasingly blurred. Generative AI, hyper-personalization, and digital workers are not merely disrupting established norms but challenging the foundational frameworks that define them. This is not just the era of automation; it represents an ontological shift, compelling us to rethink the essence of hospitality.

GENERATIVE SEARCH (GEO): FROM QUERIES TO CONTEXT

TEXT: The next generation of travelers won't even know the concept of search engines. Generative search doesn't just answer questions—it anticipates them. GEO flips SEO and digital presence paradigms by synthesizing information instead of aggregating results. Rather than curating a list of blue links, these algorithms derive meaning from scattered data points.

TIP: Forget about writing for Google. Rewrite your copy around deeply valuable, context-driven insights these algorithms can harness. Also, forget about minimalistic web design. For GEO, the more text, the better (welcome back to the '90s!).

THE END OF CLICKS? SEARCH ADVERTISING EVOLVES

TEXT: Traditional cost-per-click advertising may soon be eclipsed by generative AI platforms that sidestep clickable links in favor of direct, conversational answers. Platforms like Perplexity and Google are already experimenting with cost-per-impression models, suggesting a future where user queries are resolved within the interface. **TIP:** Rethink how to capture attention and deliver value in a landscape where clicks will no longer be the main currency.

HUMANS-AS-LUXURY: THE NEW FIVE STARS

TEXT: When AI covers all the basics of service, authentic human interactions become scarce and, therefore, premium. It's what I call the "Humans-as-Luxury" paradigm. Guests seeking bespoke attention and genuine connection will pay for (human) staff who can deliver it. **TIP:** Elevate staff training to foster empathy, problem-solving, and storytelling. Let humans shine where AI cannot (yet).

DIGITAL WORKERS: AUTOMATION BEYOND EFFICIENCY

TEXT: Forget "tech replacing humans," at least for now. Think "tech amplifying humans." **TIP:** Identify redundancies and train your staff to work symbiotically with digital colleagues for seamless operations. In an era where one-third of Amazon's workforce is non-biological, ensure your (human) staff is prepared to thrive in this new synergy.

GOODBYE AGENCIES, HELLO ADBOTS

TEXT: AI-driven chatbots are moving into the role of advertising agencies. They can design, test, and optimize campaigns autonomously. **TIP:** Explore tools like the Gemini-powered Google Ads platform and evaluate how it stacks up against your (costly) advertising agency.

FROM "SEARCH ENGINES" TO "DO ENGINES": THE RISE OF AGENTIC AI

TEXT: Want to book a trip to Paris? Tools like OpenAI's Operator can now autonomously sift through hotel rates, compare reviews, and complete payment steps in a single seamless action. These "do engines" eliminate friction, transforming travel planning from a series of clicks into an AI-driven, end-to-end experience. **TIP:** Conduct an "AI Audit" of your booking engine and website to identify barriers (CAPTCHAs, excessive form fields, or fragmented data) that could derail autonomous agents. Focus on "agent experience" rather than on "user experience." If you build it (for AI), they (the guests) will come...

THE RISE OF CUSTOMGPTS IN HOSPITALITY

TEXT: Bespoke AI for hotels will transform FAQs, check-ins, and guest services into seamless, always-on experiences. CustomGPTs scale the brand promise in ways standard chatbots cannot. **TIP:** Start small: train an AI model with your brand's voice and gradually expand its capabilities. Then, upload semantic data, staff surveys, analytics, and revenue metrics to create a digital assistant. Shift your focus from chatbot-to-guest interactions to chatbot-to-staff, capable of delivering value for just a few cents per query.

HARD SKILLS? OUT. SOFT SKILLS? IN.

TEXT: In an automation-driven world, empathy and creativity will be the new technical proficiencies. As AI handles operational tasks, human workers who excel in creativity, cross-cultural communication, and critical thinking will become indispensable. **TIP:** Rewrite hiring practices to emphasize adaptability and emotional intelligence. Knowing how a particular PMS works will hold zero value in five years, as that role will be better suited for digital workers/AI agents anyway.

GOODBYE SPREADSHEETS; HELLO CONVERSATIONS

TEXT: AI-driven reporting moves beyond rows and columns. Conversational reporting interprets complex data sets in natural language, accelerating decision-making and fostering a culture of curiosity. Want to know how many more martinis guests from Texas, aged 35 to 55, with kids, drank at your bar compared to two years ago? That's just an LLM query away. **TIP:** Start by uploading data into CustomGPTs asynchronously, then move to real-time integration with your existing tech stack.

PLUG-AND-PLAY AI

TEXT: It's tempting to sign a contract with companies offering bespoke AI solutions for hotels. While these solutions are effective, they're often built on existing models. Nothing inherently wrong with that, but consider the long run: these intermediaries may soon become unnecessary when you can directly integrate AI widgets into your PMS. **TIP:** Focus on the existing stack: pick vendors offering open APIs and seamless integration—you'll need your stack connected to multiple LLMs and agents sooner than you think.

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