

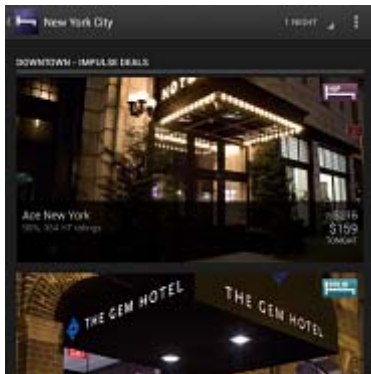
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HotelTonight's NFC integration opens door to fully mobile hotel booking

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# HotelTonight's NFC integration opens door to fully mobile hotel booking

By [Michelle Saettler](#)

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Room key, meet  
smartphone

Same-day hotel booking application HotelTonight is reinventing the hospitality check-in process with keyless room entry, an innovation raised from predictive marketing to meet mobile needs as 64 percent of total travelers showed interest in this feature, according to a recent [report](#) by Magnani Caruso Dutton.

Leveraging near field communication allows for data to be exchanged wirelessly over short distances. While smartphone users can already check-in and out via app at many hoteliers, activating a door lock without a tactile key would expedite time spent in the lobby and decrease the likelihood of losing a room card.

“The physical key is the core roadblock disallowing a truly mobile hotel booking experience,” said [Yankee Group](#) analyst Jordan McKee.

“Keyless entry makes the end-to-end mobile experience come to life. It’s a particularly useful as a means of reducing queues during busy check-in times, and generally speaking, increasing customer satisfaction.”

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“Keyless entry is a great example of NFC’s potential to prosper beyond payments. News of non-payment applications of NFC often fall to the wayside in favor of mobile wallets, but this is where real action is taking place.”

“As NFC’s non-payment applications increase, it benefits the NFC ecosystem as a whole, including payments. The result of which is increased consumer awareness, increased NFC infrastructure and increased utility,” he said.

### **Electronic automation**

Users who book exclusively through an Android enabled device will be able to unlock their hotel rooms with the app using NFC capabilities and Brivo Labs’ SAM API.



A wireless receiver on the door is activated via the Bluetooth on the guest’s phone, and the lock is released through holding the device up to the handle.

While this feature alone probably will not do much to drive consumer preference in hospitality, the cumulative effect of hotels’ ongoing efforts to provide better service, added convenience and value through mobile experiences certainly will have an impact over time.

At the same time, [HotelTonight](#) also announced an express check-in feature that will allow users to essentially bypass traditional counter visits by establishing arrival with two taps on the app. Users are notified when their room is ready, and can subsequently pick up their keys and go to their room.

Booking a room may only take a few seconds in-app, but the check-in process could be time-consuming and arduous. The conceptualized new options make travel more seamless and activate positive first impressions of stay.

### **Suite features**

While aggregate hotelier HotelTonight is the first online service to offer keyless, the idea is not new.

In 2006 Marriott began beta testing proprietary software that would enable travelers to check-in from their phones. Four years later, InterContinental Hotels Group and Holiday Inn chains took it one step further to develop keyless software into a mobile functionality that eliminated the need for a keycard completely via Open Ways technology.

Though never implemented mainstream, keyless has become more prevalent in Europe, as the Clarion Hotel in Stockholm is synonymous for replacing hard plastic for hardware. Using identical NFC properties which likely inspired HotelTonight, guests may check-in before arriving at the hotel and check-out remotely, with the signature wave of a device to activate room entry.



If a mobile phone is lost, the access credentials can be revoked remotely and then reissued. This makes it impossible for unauthorized people to use a lost or stolen NFC mobile phone.

Two hotels run by luxury provider Starwood Hotels & Resorts are also trying a lock system that connects via Bluetooth to an iOS or Android app.



It seems that many hotels have barely changed despite a recent boom in technology. The hospitality industry is no longer a space where the modern day traveler feels at home, as he craves connectivity and wants to be part of an experience.

At last month's Mcommerce Summit: State of Mobile Commerce 2014 Marriot said that the international hotel brand is making changes to its approach to customer experience by

accounting for a predicted 76 percent increase in consumers' ages 18 to 40 within six years.

Marriott expressed plans to reposition its loyalty with Gen X and Y during the "The Mobility Revolution Leading the Way for Brilliant Travel" presentation, which differ from traditional travelers characterized by their use of mobile devices which is three times greater than any other segment. Marriott questioned how it can make itself pertinent, and pivot the experiences in its hotels to be relevant to the experiences savvy travelers are used to.

HotelTonight is responding to this tendency with its all-in-one app, letting prospective guests explore a property beforehand with 360-degree immersive application integration with Google Street View and harboring upcoming booking details such as directions, hotel contact informational and digital receipt in Google Now. Booking and payments can also be made in-app and create a symbiotic relationship between last-minute and mobile.

"It terms of mobile device penetration, it's still early days for NFC," Yankee Group's Mr. McKee said.

"Yankee Group's June 2014 US Consumer Survey shows just over 1 in 5 mobile phone owners have an NFC-enabled device."

"For NFC applications to add value to the mass market, device penetration must increase. The elephant in the room is of course Apple's iPhone. Without an NFC-enabled iPhone the technology will continue to fight an uphill battle," he said.

### **Final Take**

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