

Industry Leaders Share Thoughts on the Future of Attribute-Based Shopping in Reaction to Stayntouch-NYU Tisch Center of Hospitality Report

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BETHESDA, Md. - The hotel booking experience may never be the same. According to the 2022 report “*U.S. Traveler Sentiments on Attribute-Based Shopping (ABS)*,” released by [Stayntouch](#) in partnership with the NYU Tisch Center of Hospitality, 85 percent of travelers feel some level of uncertainty that their guestroom will contain all the features and attributes that are most important to them. In a world of continued uncertainty, from rising inflation to airline cancellations, travelers are seeking any means to dispel uncertainty whenever possible. One answer is Attribute-Based Shopping (ABS), a new booking process where guests are able to add or subtract room attributes from their booking in order to craft their stay.

The study’s findings were gathered from a survey of more than 1,000 U.S. travelers, and demonstrate how guests’ growing desire for more control over their hotel booking process and overall experience are driving the adoption of new technology in hotels across chain scales.

Key trends include:

- When asked about their general sentiments towards ABS, respondents responded positively with 56 percent indicating that it would be convenient, 59 percent indicating that it would be comprehensible, 51 percent claiming it would be practical and 58 percent saying it would be simple.
- Approximately half of all respondents with a booking window of more than one month would spend more during booking to have access to attribute-based pricing
- Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that ABS would improve personalization, with 78 percent saying it would “*provide features tailored to my preferences*,” and 75 percent indicating that their room would be “*designed specifically for my needs*.”
- Respondents felt that ABS would improve the price transparency (24 percent), clarity of room descriptions (21 percent) and guest room customization (20 percent).

Following the release of the report, tech experts across the industry provided additional insight into the findings, which have been approved for publication

“ABS will become a dominant method for booking hotels in the future for many reasons, but predominantly for these two reasons directly addressed in the survey: Because travelers will prefer it for booking hotels, and because it will improve revenues for hotels and drive more customers to the direct channels where ABS lives. When both sides win, adoption and

importance will grow quickly. Chains and brands stand to gain even more as ABS-ready central reservation systems can provide ABS not only to individual properties at scale, but also to city clusters where geography is important to the traveler. This doesn't even address the vastly more extensive customization and personalization capabilities that can be added to the guest experience. To really get the most out of ABS, including all of the customization, personalization, revenue/profit optimization, etc., hotel companies will have to integrate ABS into other systems such as Customer Relationship Management, loyalty, RMS, and others. This represents a substantial runway for ongoing optimization over a longer period of time, but it's important to note that a chain or brand can start with an ABS-ready CRS and receptive PMS, and go from there. ABS also does not require an all-or-nothing cutover; it can be done very gradually and deliberately. A brand could start with just one hotel offering ABS while the rest continue to use conventional booking strategies, adopting new technology over time," - **George Roukas, Partner at Hudson Crossing.**

"We believe that ABS is already having an impact on the booking experience as well as on the check-in and overall guest experience. Hotels, no different than airlines, are constantly seeking more effective ways of extracting revenue from their customer base. A hotel's revenue and customers are finite, limited by the number of rooms in a hotel or seats in a restaurant. Guests demand more, given their more varied travel experiences, and many are willing to pay for it. Recently, hotels began to charge guests an additional fee for a front row "regular" chair at their pool. This is not innovative, in fact, it is an outgrowth of charging a premium for items such as daybeds and cabanas. While many hotels have created different categories of guest room, often the only real difference between them today are the floor they are located on and the view the room provides. As we all know, a guest staying in a higher floor room does not have a higher cost than a guest staying on a lower floor. Expanding these choices will lead to greater guest satisfaction and higher return rates, which again lead to profits, as repeat guests have significantly lower customer acquisition costs," - **Evan Weiss, Chief Operating Officer at LW Hospitality Advisors.**

"Hotels using ABS will see a huge improvement in guest experience thanks to the benefits it provides, from increased transparency and a greater focus on a positive rather than negative element of surprise. For hoteliers, providing this service presents an opportunity to increase revenue based on the supply and demand of specific attributes. In order to get there, hotels will need to improve the booking experience on brand websites with better images and more specific descriptions of room types. Guests are tired of surprises these days, and they have no problem paying a little more for attributes they are guaranteed to get on arrival. ABS will also help hotels to quickly learn what their best selling attributes are, and more nimbly react to trends as they appear. Hotels will also need to discover how to list room attributes and room types on their website in a way that is most efficient, such as separating rooms by categories, by attribute, and even by their location within the hotel," - **Safet Dokara, Director of Operations at Valencia Hotel Group.**

“Hotels should explore how they can offer ABS today in a way that leverages existing technology and is easy for guests to digest. To begin, the structure should be simple: It shouldn’t overwhelm the guest with choices, defragment a hotel’s room inventory, or require multiple connected systems to get it up and running. This will allow a smooth transition, without disrupting operations, and allow for technology vendors to be aligned as we continue to build and scale the functionality needed to enhance layers of customization and support this new way of selling. Hotels should also emphasize the key selling points of their rooms and upselling opportunities so as to maximize the value to their customer base,” - **Nicole Dehler, VP of Product at Stayntouch.**

“It is interesting to observe that ABS is expected to increase transparency and confidence in hotel products during the booking process, which in turn should have a positive impact on conversion and guest satisfaction. Hotels have always struggled with optimally monetizing guestroom features and consistently or accurately confirming guest requests for high floors, specific views, balconies, and more. Using ABS, hotels will be able to provide greater transparency to guests, enable travelers to pay for the experience they value most, and “lock in” experiences and attributes they are willing to pay for. From a technology perspective, property Management systems, booking engines, distribution systems and revenue management systems have to be able to accommodate attribute-based shopping capabilities at scale. In order to fully deliver on the promise of ABS, a significant investment in new technology and ideas must be made by hoteliers and travel technology providers alike,” - **Klaus Kohlmayr, Chief Evangelist & Development Officer at IDEaS.**

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