Great Expectations

New Research on *What Modern Guests Want*

PHUNWARE

In today's hospitality landscape, guests expect the same *ease, personalization, and convenience* from resorts that they experience in other parts of their daily digital lives.

With hundreds of millions of travel app downloads each year, digital interactions have become core to how guests plan, book, and enjoy their stays.

This report looks at new data from U.S. resort travelers (n=780), highlighting what guests truly value in their on-premise digital experiences.

Who Today's Resort Guests Are

Guests aren't just buying accommodation. They're deliberately investing in *experiences* that feel meaningful, something worthy of both their time and their wallet.

Today's resort visitors aren't just travelers; they're experience seekers. They crave stories to tell, moments that feel personal, and comfort that feels earned rather than advertised. The modern guest values a blend of ease, exploration, and emotional connection.

Budgets

Money isn't the main concern for many of today's resort-goers. Roughly 40% spend between $200 and $300 per person per day, not counting where they sleep — that's purely for experiences, food, and activities. Another third happily spend more than $400 a day, and Millennials lead this charge. They're not just booking rooms; they're investing in memories.

Length of Stay & Travel Party Size

The sweet spot for most trips falls between four and seven nights — long enough to unwind, short enough to feel fresh. About 63% of guests stay within that window, often traveling in smaller, more intimate groups: 49% as couples, 35% with family in tow.

Destinations

The majority — a solid 81% — keep their vacations within the United States, with Hawai'i standing out as a favorite. Meanwhile, affluent travelers show a growing curiosity about Europe, perhaps seeking that mix of culture, history, and indulgence they can't quite find stateside.

KEY FINDING
Guests are not buying rooms; they're investing in **memorable experiences** that justify their time and spending.

Who Today's Resort Guests Are

What Guests Prioritize

Ease defines *satisfaction*. When every step feels effortless, the guest's confidence in the brand begins before check-in.

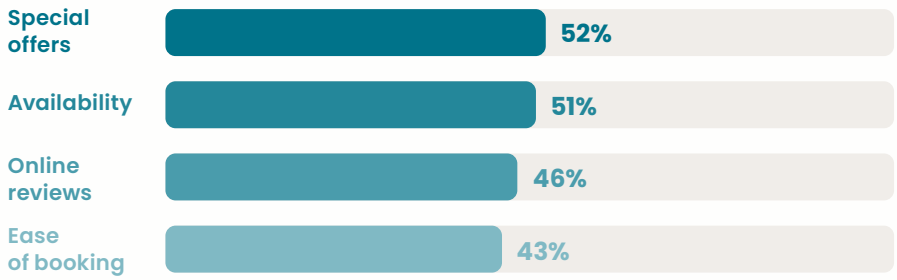
When guests make decisions, they often come down to simple, relatable things: food, comfort, and access to fun.

Dining options, fitness availability, and pool access rank at the top — with 77%, 75%, and 64% of guests respectively naming them as major factors in their decision-making. Excursions (47%) and spa treatments also carry weight, painting a clear picture: people want balance, indulgence paired with activity.

Ease and Convenience

Satisfaction, it turns out, lives in simplicity. The smoother the planning and booking process, the more at ease guests feel, even before they arrive. Convenience quietly builds trust. It's a reassurance that someone thought through the details so they don't have to.

Among those surveyed, these are the top key defining factors:



KEY FINDING
Convenience builds trust. When planning and booking are seamless, guests feel taken care of before they even arrive.

Personalization Matters

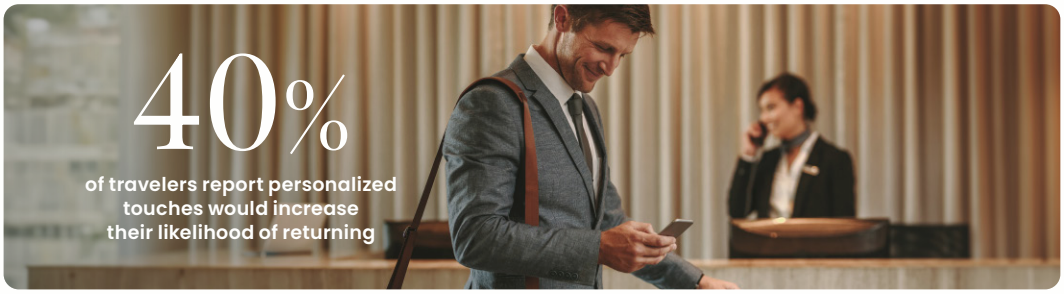
Thoughtful personalization bridges the gap between data and empathy, turning every tailored suggestion into proof that the guest experience was designed with them in mind.

It's one thing to serve guests well, it's another to make them feel known. Personalization transforms transactions into relationships. When resorts anticipate needs, they convert raw data into thoughtful service — and service, handled with care, becomes connection.

Guests welcome certain types of digital nudges more than others. The top favorites?

That's not noise — it's relevance done right.

In total, 63% of travelers said they want **personalized recommendations** before and during their stay, while more than 60% said those customized suggestions make them feel genuinely valued. Perhaps most telling of all, **40%** reported that such personalized touches would increase their likelihood of returning.



KEY FINDING
Relevance drives loyalty. Anticipating needs turns data into service, and service into connection.

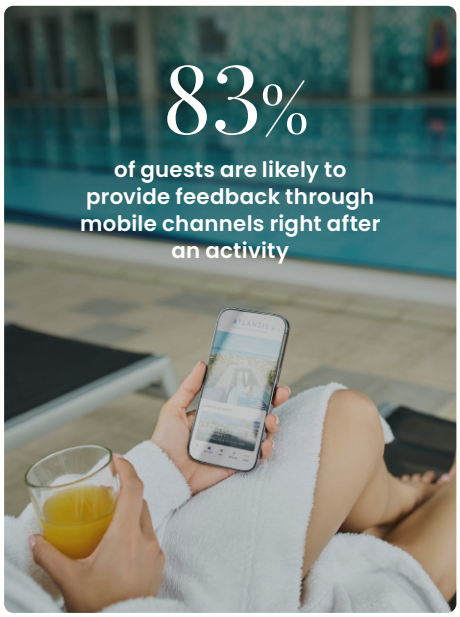
Feedback Expectations

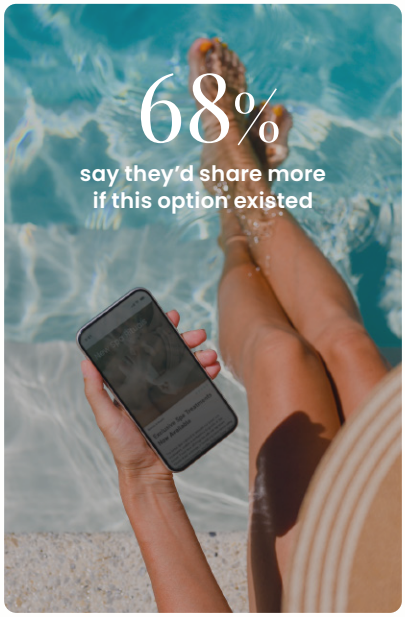
Quick digital feedback tools create meaningful opportunities for connection and improvement, transforming momentary frustrations into lasting trust.

Guests don't just want to be heard anymore, they expect to be heard **instantly**.

Real-time feedback isn't just a polite gesture. It's now the foundation of responsive hospitality. When feedback loops happen in real time, they allow for immediate course corrections and genuine service recovery. That can be the difference between a complaint and a compliment.

In this study, **83%** of guests said they'd likely share feedback through mobile channels right after an activity. Even more striking, **68%** said they would provide input more often if that option were available. The message is clear: people don't just want to share, they want to know it matters.





KEY FINDING
Real-time feedback isn't a formality; it's the foundation of responsive hospitality.

Brand Perceptions & Digital Experience

The quality of a resort's digital experience now defines *how guests perceive the brand itself.*

For travelers from abroad, the ability to navigate English-language digital tools significantly improves overall comfort — and perception of the brand itself.

In many ways, the resort app has become more than a feature; it's now a statement of reliability, accessibility, and care. A well-designed digital experience signals a brand's values more than any tagline ever could.

Among the respondents

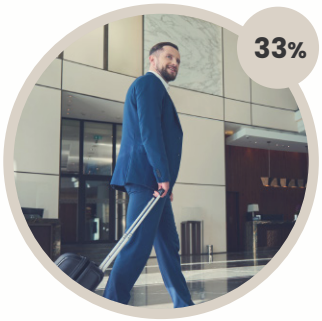
82%
said that using a resort's mobile app would enhance their stay

65%
believe that direct communication through a resort's own channels reflects a stronger commitment to service

When digital experiences are smooth, guests:

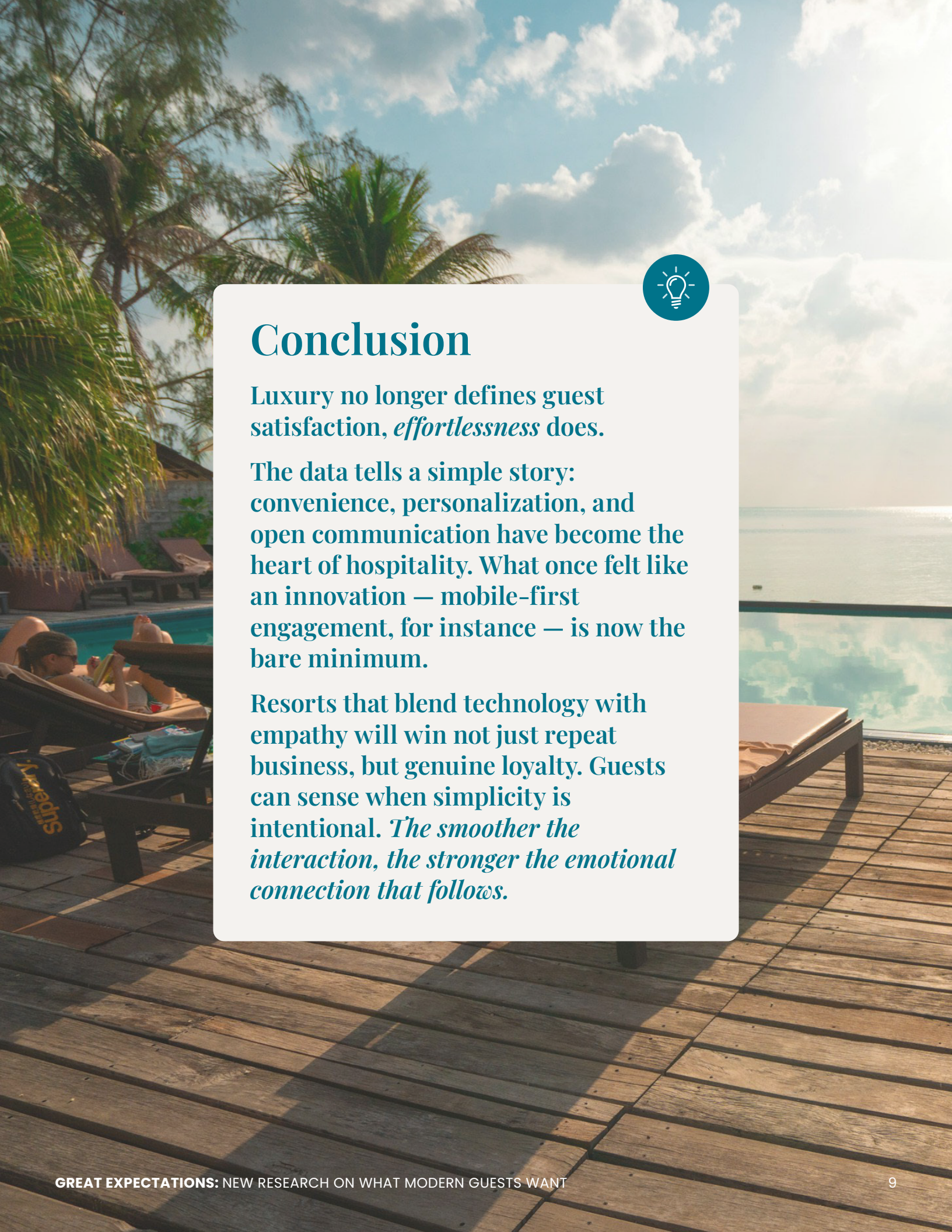
Feel more at ease

Feel more comfortable overall



Are more likely to return

KEY FINDING
The resort app is no longer optional. It's a statement of reliability, accessibility, and care.



Conclusion

Luxury no longer defines guest satisfaction, *effortlessness* does.

The data tells a simple story: convenience, personalization, and open communication have become the heart of hospitality. What once felt like an innovation — mobile-first engagement, for instance — is now the bare minimum.

Resorts that blend technology with empathy will win not just repeat business, but genuine loyalty. Guests can sense when simplicity is intentional. *The smoother the interaction, the stronger the emotional connection that follows.*

For practical strategies on how to apply these insights, connect with us.

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