What Do Hotel Guests Really *Want?*

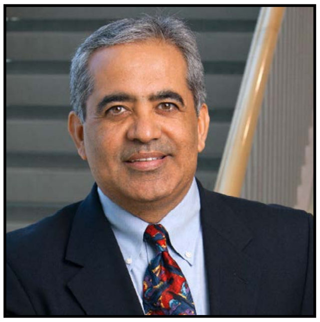
Anticipated Versus Actual Use of Amenities

by Chekitan S. Dev, Rebecca W. Hamilton, Roland T. Rust, and Matthew V. Valenti

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hotels provide a lengthy menu of amenities based on the (largely accurate) perception that guests want those amenities and claim they will use them. While many guests do exactly that, a substantial percentage will "overpredict" which amenities they will use. This study of fifty hotel-wide and in-room amenities details both the overpredictions and, in some cases, underpredictions of amenity use by 724 guests in thirty-three hotels operated by six hotel brands—one upscale, two upper upscale, and three luxury—belonging to one hotel company. This study is intended to assist brand managers and hotel owners in determining which amenities make the most sense for their particular brand. Among the amenities that were highly overpredicted were an alarm clock, a spa, and in-room dining for dinner and late night. That is, a much larger percentage of guests expected to use these amenities than actually did so (although they still were used by some guests). Unexpected underpredictions included lobby seating, valet parking, and concierge service, for which the percentage of guests expecting to use the service was noticeably smaller than the percentage who did use them.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Hotel amenities are a multi-billion dollar business worldwide. Carefully curating hotel amenities into a compelling value proposition to attract guests is a key responsibility of brand managers, hotel owners, and operators. Knowing which amenities will be most valued by guests is an ongoing challenge for hotel business professionals as guests' needs are constantly evolving.

The Importance of Hotel Amenities

What, when, and how many amenities to provide has long been a point of discussion between hotel owners and brand managers. A key issue is to determine what amenities should be offered as elements of a brand's identity. This is critical because amenities clearly figure into a guest's initial decision to book a hotel room, and (perhaps even more consequentially) whether to return to that hotel. As part of that analysis, hoteliers need to determine which amenities guests actually use during their stay, in part because of the cost of providing unused amenities.

The matter of which amenities guests say they want, as compared to those they actually use, is an important issue, because once an amenity is added to a hotel's product offering that amenity can soon become part of the "definition" of a hotel room. For example, 80 years ago, air conditioning was a novel selling point.[1] In the 1960s, the availability of in-room television was a fresh idea. Today, it would be rare to find rooms without both.

The industry's amenities contest continues to the present day. In 1983, for instance, high-end hotels experimented with importing the idea of concierge service from Europe. This was a hit.[2] More recently, hoteliers' attention has returned to bathroom and in-room amenities, an area that has long held management's attention.[3]

Two issues surround the question of which amenities hotels should consider offering. The first issue is the question of what amenities guests say that they want. However, more to the point is the issue of which of those amenities they actually use, a matter that is examined in this study. Distinguishing answers to these questions is important, because hoteliers need to know which amenities play a role in guests' purchase and repurchase decisions.

Our Study

Given the clear importance of amenities, we worked with a global multi-brand hotel firm to investigate guests' expectations for and use of amenities. We wanted to answer two questions: **(1)** Which amenities do guests expect to use?, and **(2)** Which amenities do guests actually use? We also wanted to distinguish between different types of travelers (e.g., business versus leisure, male versus female) in their amenity use, as well as anticipation and use of amenities at different brand types (using the well known designations applied by STR Global, namely, upscale, upper upscale, and luxury).

Most studies of hotel amenities are simply "wish lists" of what guests want in a hotel,[4] or reports of what hotels offer, assuming, of course, that available amenities are what guests actually want or use.[5] In contrast, the study presented here examines guests' anticipated use—and actual use—of fifty hotel amenities. This paper builds on our previously published analysis of data from the cooperating hotel firm. In an earlier research brief we reported on a study in which we developed a mathematical method that enables hotel brand managers and property owners to calculate the return on investment (ROI) for individual amenities.[6] That study focused primarily on three amenities: free in-room internet access, free bottled water, and a fitness center. We noted that these amenities can be the topic of involved discussions between brand managers, who might try to establish them as brand standards, and property owners, who might resist incurring the costs and labor expense involved in offering them.[7]

For both the original study and the one presented here, we worked with a major global hotel company that operates a portfolio of upscale, upper upscale, and luxury brands that was willing to provide us with guest and revenue data on those brands. We obtained data on 33 hotels that the company operates in the United States. The resulting dataset covered fifty common amenities, including both free amenities (e.g., a fitness center) and amenities available for purchase (e.g., a gift shop). For the original study the company

1 See: Terence E. Brown and Michael M. LeFever, "A 50-Year Renaissance: The Hotel industry From 1939 to 1989," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (May 1990), pp. 18-25. In 1939, air conditioning was a new and innovative amenity.

2 See: Glenn Withiam, "Keepers of the Keys: Concierges in American Hotels," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (November 1983), pp. 40-48.

3 www.vogue.com/article/evolution-hotel-amenities; viewed May 30, 2018

4 www.statista.com/statistics/297920/most-important-accommodation-amenities-for-travelers-worldwide/

5 www.economist.com/gulliver/2017/11/15/hotels-are-finding-out-what-amenities-guests-really-want

6 See: Chekitan S. Dev, Rebecca W. Hamilton, and Roland T. Rust, "Hotel Brand Standards: How to Pick the Right Amenities for Your Property," *Cornell Hospitality Research Brief*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2017); based on: Rebecca W. Hamilton, Roland T. Rust, Michel Wedel, and Chekitan S. Dev, "Return on Service Amenities," *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (2017): pp. 96–110. See also: Rohit Verma, Gerhard Plaschka, Chekitan S. Dev, and Amita Verma, "What Today's Travelers Want When They Select a Hotel," *HSMAI Marketing Review* (Fall 2002): 20–23; and Rebecca W. Hamilton, Roland T. Rust, and Chekitan S. Dev, "Which Features Increase Customer Retention?" *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (2017): 79–84.

7 Hamilton *et al*. (Return), p. 97.

requested that we focus only on the three free amenities that we mentioned above—in-room internet access, in-room bottled water, and a fitness center. We applied our model to calculate the ROI for these amenities and used a discrete choice experiment based on a survey to gauge their effects on initial choice and repeat visits.[8] We also conducted a field experiment on bottled water to validate the results of the discrete choice experiment and the use of our model to measure its effects on ROI and repeat visits.[9] That study is the first to offer a means of calculating ROI for individual amenities and to report findings pertaining to initial choice and repeat visits.

The other part of our study is contained in this paper. This involves a survey in which guests who had booked rooms at one of the hotel company's properties predicted which of the fifty amenities they would use during their stays and then, after their stays, further reported which ones they had actually used. We started the survey of prospective guests approximately one week before their stay, asking them which of the fifty amenities they expected to use, and then we followed up with the guests approximately one week after their stay to determine which of these amenities they had actually used. Seven hundred twenty-four guests responded to both surveys.

In sum, we were struck by the extent to which guests overestimated, or "overpredicted," their use of amenities. Across all of the hotel company's brands, guests *under*predicted their use of only seven amenities. (One other was correctly predicted, and a handful were reasonably close.) With the hotel company's permission we are now able to present the results of this survey of expected versus actual use for all fifty of the amenities. Using these data we examine the guests' actual intent of amenity use, and the remarkable chasm between guests' expectations of which amenities they expected to use and their reports of which ones they did use. In the remainder of this report we present and discuss guests' expectations and the differences between prediction and use. We keep in mind the goal of assisting hoteliers to provide amenities that help attract and retain guests, and we further note the realities that offering amenities does increase operating expenses and that optimizing these expenses is a key objective for all hotel owners.

Needless to say, amenities are only one element of a potential guest's hotel booking decision. During the initial choice process a prospective guest may consider available amenities only after considering the overarching factors of price and location. If those other factors are essentially equal, however, availability of amenities becomes a salient issue. As just one example, our earlier study found that anticipated use of in-room wi-fi had a positive effect on initial choice.[10] By the same token, we believe that the dynamic involved in the relationship between predicted use and actual use can influence the decision to return to a property, although again this is one of several factors involved, including, for example, loyalty program membership and past visits. In our earlier study, we noted the positive effect of providing in-room bottled water on repeat visits.[11] Thus, of the three amenities we discussed in our previous research brief, free in-room wi-fi was found to be a positive factor in initial choice, while free bottled water influenced repeat-visit decisions. It is therefore possible that high overprediction and underprediction rates might very well identify amenities that influence initial choice or repeat visits. Note that the fitness center had no noticeable effect on choice either before or after the stay, an issue we discuss below in greater detail, in the context of our examination of all fifty amenities.

In what follows, we first discuss the overall results of the survey and then the results we found when amenity-use predictions were sorted by purpose of stay, gender, and brand type. We then discuss a subset of the total set of amenities in light of the distinction between hedonic and utilitarian attributes.[12] Next, we consider those among the fifty amenities for which the widest gaps between expected and actual use were reported by respondents to the survey, discussing both overpredicted use of amenities and underpredicted use of amenities.

Results

The amenities we discuss here can be divided into various categories, the most straightforward of which distinguishes in-room amenities (e.g., bottled water, internet access, a safe) from hotel-service amenities (e.g., valet parking, bellhops, a concierge desk). Another scheme, which perhaps carries stronger theoretical implications, distinguishes in-room amenities with

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8 See: *Ibid*., pp. 101–106.

9 *Ibid*., pp. 106–107.

10 *Ibid*., p. 102.

11 *Ibid*.

12 A useful discussion of the distinction can be found in: Uzma Khan, Ravi Dhar, and Klaus Wertenbroch, "A Behavioral Decision Theoretic Perspective on Hedonic and Utilitarian Choice," in *Inside Consumption: Consumer Motives, Goals and Desires*, ed. S. Ratneshwar and David Glen Mick (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 144–165.

Exhibit 1a

Expected and actual amenity use (in order of prediction discrepancy)

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Video games on demand	0.02	0	0.02	100%
In-room fitness	0.14	0.01	0.13	93%
Auto check-in	0.1	0.01	0.09	90%
Alarm	0.64	0.15	0.49	77%
In-room dining late night	0.22	0.06	0.16	73%
In-room dining lunch	0.1	0.03	0.07	70%
Fitness center	0.46	0.19	0.27	59%
Boarding pass printing	0.51	0.28	0.23	45%
MP3 dock	0.35	0.15	.20	57%
In-room dining dinner	0.19	0.09	0.10	53%
Spa	0.19	0.09	0.1	53%
Movies on demand	0.17	0.08	0.09	53%
Radio	0.38	0.2	0.18	47%
Phone for outside calls	0.25	0.14	0.11	44%
In-room internet access	0.68	0.39	0.29	43%
Dispenser soap/shampoo	0.42	0.24	0.18	43%
Late checkout	0.41	0.24	0.17	41%
Restaurant dinner	0.43	0.26	0.17	40%
Laundry service	0.05	0.03	0.02	40%
Restaurant lunch	0.26	0.16	0.10	39%
Electronic checkout	0.48	0.3	0.18	38%
Wake-up call	0.38	0.24	0.14	37%

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primarily utilitarian attributes (such as a safe and a work desk) from in-room amenities with primarily hedonic attributes (for example, TV sets and MP3 docks) and likewise discriminates between hedonic hotel amenities (e.g., a spa and a bar) as against those that are primarily utilitarian (such as automatic check-in and business centers).[13]

To report the results of the survey of guests regarding expected and actual use of amenities, we first focus on noteworthy overall results for the full sample of 724 respondents, which we display for all fifty amenities in Exhibit 1. The hotel company's agreement allows us to consider certain other dimensions in our analysis. These include purpose of stay (for business, leisure, or a mixture of business and leisure, termed "bleisure";[14] see Exhibit 2), gender (see Exhibit 3**),** and brand type (upscale, upper upscale, and luxury; see Exhibit 4). We would not expect to see dramatic differences in the results for expected versus actual use across these categories because the data are based on almost the same sample of survey respondents (with a few guest responses discarded for technical reasons).

[13] For an interesting take on the utilitarian versus hedonic distinction in the context of internet searches for hotel deals, see: Chih-Chien Chen and Zvi Schwartz, "The Impact of Hedonic and Utilitarian Motivations on the Hotel Customers' Risk Perception," Caesars Hospitality Research Summit, Paper 5 (June 8, 2010) http://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/hhrc/2010/june2010/5.

[14] The neologism "bleisure" has been used in some places to mean a combination of business and leisure travel. For example, see: "Unpacking Bleisure Traveler Trends," Expedia Group Media Solutions (2018); advertising.expedia.com.

Exhibit 1b

Expected and actual amenity use (in order of prediction discrepancy), concluded

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Robe	0.42	0.27	0.15	36%
Lobby internet access	0.36	0.23	0.13	36%
Restaurant breakfast	0.46	0.31	0.15	33%
In-room dining breakfast	0.24	0.16	0.08	33%
Refrigerator in room	0.53	0.36	0.17	32%
Pool	0.41	0.28	0.13	32%
Safe	0.63	0.46	0.17	27%
Minibar	0.11	0.08	0.03	27%
Iron	0.56	0.42	0.14	25%
Early check-in	0.37	0.28	0.09	24%
Coffeemaker in room	0.59	0.45	0.14	24%
Bottled water	0.51	0.41	0.10	20%
Hotel bar	0.51	0.42	0.09	18%
Gift shop	0.29	0.25	0.04	14%
Desk	0.8	0.71	0.09	11%
Task lighting	0.79	0.72	0.07	9%
Hair dryer	0.66	0.61	0.05	8%
TV	0.91	0.85	0.06	7%
Closet	0.92	0.86	0.06	7%
Phone for inside calls	0.36	0.34	0.02	6%
Lobby food	0.28	0.28	0	0%
Packaged soap/shampoo/ conditioner/lotion	0.83	0.86	-0.03	-4%
Folio under door	0.62	0.65	-0.03	-5%
Business center	0.13	0.14	-0.01	-8%
Concierge	0.31	0.42	-0.11	-35%
Bellhop	0.18	0.27	-0.09	-50%
Seating in lobby	0.27	0.42	-0.15	-56%
Valet parking	0.14	0.23	-0.09	-64%

The key questions here pertain to whether amenity use by business travelers differs from that of leisure travelers, whether female guests differ from male guests in their predicted and actual use of amenities, and how amenity anticipation and use varies by brand type. We include some discussion of expected and actual use of amenities sorted by hedonic and utilitarian attributes, and further analysis of those amenities exhibiting the widest gaps between expected and actual use.

Overall Analysis

Overall, the most striking insight from the survey of guests predicting expected and reporting actual use of amenities is that guests anticipating hotel stays overpredict their use of amenities across a wide range

Exhibit 2a

Expected and actual use of amenities by purpose of stay

Amenity	Purpose of Stay	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Valet parking	Business	.08	.16	-.08	-100%
	Leisure	.17	.28	-.11	-65%
	Combo B/L	.13	.23	-.10	-77%
Early check-in	Business	.24	.21	.03	13%
	Leisure	.45	.31	.14	31%
	Combo B/L	.37	.35	.02	5%
Auto check-in	Business	.09	.01	.08	89%
	Leisure	.09	.02	.07	78%
	Combo B/L	.12	.00	.12	100%
Bellhop	Business	.10	.15	-.05	-50%
	Leisure	.21	.33	-.12	-57%
	Combo B/L	.23	.29	-.06	-26%
Seating in lobby	Business	.25	.40	-.15	-60%
	Leisure	.29	.42	-.13	-45%
	Combo B/L	.25	.46	-.21	-84%
Lobby internet access	Business	.34	.23	.11	32%
	Leisure	.38	.22	.16	42%
	Combo B/L	.31	.26	.05	16%
Concierge	Business	.20	.29	-.09	-45%
	Leisure	.35	.48	-.13	-37%
	Combo B/L	.35	.44	-.09	-26%
Business center	Business	.21	.16	.05	24%
	Leisure	.09	.12	-.03	-33%
	Combo B/L	.12	.14	-.02	-17%
Wake-up call	Business	.42	.28	.14	33%
	Leisure	.34	.18	.16	47%
	Combo B/L	.46	.33	.13	28%
Refrigerator in room	Business	.41	.22	.19	46%
	Leisure	.58	.43	.15	26%
	Combo B/L	.56	.39	.17	30%
Bottled water	Business	.44	.31	.13	30%
	Leisure	.54	.47	.07	13%
	Combo B/L	.56	.44	.08	14%

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Exhibit 2b

Expected and actual use of amenities by purpose of stay (continued)

Amenity	Purpose of Stay	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Coffeemaker in room	Business	.51	.40	.09	18%
	Leisure	.61	.45	.16	26%
	Combo B/L	.69	.56	.13	19%
In-room internet access	Business	.80	.51	.29	36%
	Leisure	.59	.32	.27	46%
	Combo B/L	.73	.42	.31	42%
TV	Business	.90	.86	.04	4%
	Leisure	.91	.86	.05	5%
	Combo B/L	.93	.81	.12	13%
Radio	Business	.33	.16	.17	52%
	Leisure	.41	.21	.20	49%
	Combo B/L	.39	.22	.17	44%
MP3 dock	Business	.26	.10	.16	62%
	Leisure	.38	.17	.21	55%
	Combo B/L	.4	.16	.24	60%
Alarm	Business	.66	.10	.56	85%
	Leisure	.60	.17	.47	78%
	Combo B/L	.72	.16	.56	78%
Desk	Business	.91	.79	.12	13%
	Leisure	.72	.64	.08	11%
	Combo B/L	.91	.79	.12	13%
Task lighting	Business	.76	.66	.10	13%
	Leisure	.87	.82	.05	6%
	Combo B/L	.35	.29	.06	17%
Phone for inside calls	Business	.36	.37	-.01	-3%
	Leisure	.41	.32	.09	22%
	Combo B/L	.48	.46	.02	4%
Hair dryer	Business	.75	.67	.08	11%
	Leisure	.70	.67	.03	4%
	Combo B/L	.56	.43	.13	23%
Iron	Business	.56	.41	.15	27%
	Leisure	.58	.47	.11	19%
	Combo B/L	.58	.47	.11	19%

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Exhibit 2c

Expected and actual use of amenities by purpose of stay (concluded)

Amenity	Purpose of Stay	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Closet	Business	.92	.88	.04	4%
	Leisure	.91	.85	.06	7%
	Combo B/L	.93	.85	.08	9%
Packaged soap, shampoo, conditioner, or lotion	Business	.81	.84	-.03	-4%
	Leisure	.84	.87	-.03	-4%
	Combo B/L	.84	.84	.00	0%
Dispenser soap/shampoo	Business	.39	.19	.20	51%
	Leisure	.43	.26	.17	40%
	Combo B/L	.43	.30	.13	30%
Robe	Business	.35	.18	.17	49%
	Leisure	.47	.32	.15	32%
	Combo B/L	.38	.26	.12	32%
Safe	Business	.53	.34	.19	36%
	Leisure	.69	.51	.18	26%
	Combo B/L	.61	.50	.11	18%
Pool	Business	.21	.06	.15	71%
	Leisure	.50	.39	.11	22%
	Combo B/L	.47	.33	.14	30%
In-room fitness	Business	.18	.02	.16	89%
	Leisure	.12	.01	.11	92%
	Combo B/L	.12	.03	.09	75%
Fitness center	Business	.48	.17	.31	65%
	Leisure	.45	.20	.25	56%
	Combo B/L	.46	.23	.23	50%
Electronic checkout	Business	.53	.34	.19	36%
	Leisure	.45	.26	.19	42%
	Combo B/L	.48	.36	.12	25%
Late checkout	Business	.37	.21	.16	43%
	Leisure	.44	.26	.18	41%
	Combo B/L	.36	.21	.15	42%
Folio under door	Business	.65	.75	-.10	-15%
	Leisure	.60	.59	.01	2%
	Combo B/L	.62	.68	-.06	-10%
Boarding pass printing	Business	.59	.31	.28	47%
	Leisure	.45	.25	.20	44%
	Combo B/L	.57	.34	.17	30%

of these features (in our study, by about 20 percent, on average, including amenities that were both over-predicted and underpredicted). Overprediction was widespread for most amenities, no matter how we carve up the data, whether by purpose of stay, gender, or brand type.[15] As we will explain below, this was also true of both primarily utilitarian and primarily hedonic amenities.

Having said that, it's important to note that the guests used a host of in-room amenities, and their predictions were reasonably accurate in many cases. While the data reported in Exhibit 1 make the overprediction trend clear, we will mention some examples where the guests returning our survey were quite accurate in their predictions regarding the most frequently used amenities: namely, having a closet in the room, packaged toiletries in the bathroom, a television, task lighting, a desk, a folio under the door at check-out, and a hair dryer (as well as picking up food in the lobby). In fact, for all the amenities in the study that more than 50 percent of guests predicted using, their predictions were within 10 percent of the actual usage rates.

Hotel amenities. We found several interesting results pertaining to hotel amenities, particularly those that guests encounter both outside of and inside a property as they complete the check-in process. Some of these were underpredicted, as we discuss below, but guests strongly overpredicted their use of several other hotel amenities they encounter during check-in, including early check-in (overpredicted by 24%), auto check-in (overpredicted by 90%), and free wi-fi in the lobby (overpredicted by 36%). Another hotel amenity that guests overpredicted using was a wake-up call, by a rather wide margin of nearly 40 percent. Guests also greatly miscalculated their anticipated use of the spa, as 19 percent expected to visit the spa, but only 9 percent did so (over a 50-percent discrepancy).

In-room overpredictions. Guests overpredicted their use of a wide range of room amenities, with the widest disparities applying to free internet access, an alarm, an iron, soap and shampoo from a dispenser, robes, and a safe. In an interesting comparison of competing hotel and in-room amenities, guests vastly overpredicted the use of in-room fitness equipment versus going out to a fitness center. While 14 percent of guests thought they would use in-room equipment, just 1 percent said they did so (a 93-percent miss), while they overpredicted the use of the fitness center by about 59 percent (46 percent predicted they'd go to the fitness center, but just 19 percent reported doing so).

Guests also broadly overpredicted the use of check-out related amenities, with electronic check-out (a 38% difference), late check-out (41% difference), and boarding pass printing (a 45% miss) exhibiting wide differences. The exception in this regard was the use of folios detailing charges delivered under the door, with slightly more guests using this amenity than predicting they would use it.

Amenity Use by Trip Purpose

Leisure guests predicted that they would make greater use of many more free amenities than the expectations recorded for business travelers. The two groups' predictions came out close on the following hotel amenities: auto check-in, seating in the lobby, internet access in the lobby, the fitness center, and having a folio under the door. The in-room amenities for which both groups had similar predictions were the coffee maker, a television, an alarm, task lighting, a phone for inside calls, an iron, a closet, packaged bathroom toiletries, and a soap or shampoo dispenser (Exhibit 2). As expected, more business guests than leisure guests predicted they would use the business center, in-room wi-fi, electronic checkout, and boarding pass printing.

One noteworthy result pertains to the wide differences in both expected and actual use of a pool by business guests, as compared to leisure guests. While half of the leisure guests predicted they would use a pool, only 21 percent of business guests said they would do so. In the end, a mere 6 percent of business guests reported actually using the pool, while nearly 40 percent of leisure travelers took a swim.

Results for "bleisure" guests were generally closer to those of leisure guests, but there were exceptions. For example, there was a wide difference in expected use between business and leisure travelers regarding in-room wi-fi (80% for business, as compared with 59% for leisure), while 73 percent of "bleisure" guests predicted they would use this amenity. Those proportionate differences were found in actual use as well. We found similar results for the use of a robe and a safe as well as boarding pass printing, where combined guests used the amenities more at the rate of business guests than of leisure guests. We did not ask the "primary" purpose of the "bleisure" visit which, if we had done so, might explain some of the patterns here.

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15 Other categories for which we have data include price tier, location, and length of stay. The data were also sorted by brand in all categories.

Exhibit 3a

Expected and actual use of amenities by gender

Amenity	Gender	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Valet parking	Female	.14	.23	-.09	-64%
	Male	.13	.24	-.11	-85%
Early check-in	Female	.39	.29	.10	26%
	Male	.35	.27	.08	23%
Auto check-in	Female	.09	.02	.07	78%
	Male	.10	.01	.09	90%
Bellhop	Female	.18	.26	-.08	-44%
	Male	.16	.27	-.11	-69%
Seating in lobby	Female	.31	.41	-.10	-32%
	Male	.22	.42	-.20	-91%
Lobby internet access	Female	.37	.22	.15	41%
	Male	.35	.25	.10	29%
Concierge	Female	.31	.44	-.13	-42%
	Male	.29	.39	-.10	-35%
Business center	Female	.13	.13	.00	0%
	Male	.13	.15	.02	15%
Wake-up call	Female	.39	.24	.15	38%
	Male	.39	.24	.15	38%
Refrigerator in room	Female	.58	.38	.20	34%
	Male	.45	.34	.11	24%
Bottled water	Female	.54	.41	.13	24%
	Male	.47	.43	.04	9%
Coffeemaker in room	Female	.63	.45	.08	13%
	Male	.54	.43	.11	20%

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Amenity Use by Gender

Although our model suggests that gender is a factor in repeat visits,[16] we found few significant differences between women and men in predicted and actual use of the amenities we covered in our study (Exhibit 3). Women predicted they would use lobby seating at a higher rate than men (31% to 22%), but men reported actually using lobby seating at about the same rate as women (42% for men and 41% for women). Along the same line, the 22-percent gap in predicted use of a refrigerator between women and men shrank to 11 percent in actual use. Similar attenuations in gender effects were also found for the television, iron, closet, safe, swimming pool, and in-room fitness equipment.

The differences between men and women regarding the expected use of amenities were not that great for most of the fifty amenities we studied. The single item with the greatest percentage difference in expect-

[16] Hamilton *et al.*, "Return," pp.102–103.

Exhibit 3b

Expected and actual use of amenities by gender (continued)

Amenity	Gender	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
In-room internet access	Female	.62	.32	.30	48%
	Male	.74	.47	.27	36%
TV	Female	.91	.83	.08	9%
	Male	.90	.87	.03	3%
Radio	Female	.43	.20	.23	53%
	Male	.32	.19	.13	41%
MP3 dock	Female	.37	.13	.24	65%
	Male	.32	.15	.17	53%
Alarm	Female	.69	.36	.33	48%
	Male	.59	.34	.25	42%
Desk	Female	.80	.66	.14	18%
	Male	.81	.75	.06	7%
Task lighting	Female	.83	.74	.09	11%
	Male	.74	.70	.04	5%
Phone for inside calls	Female	.41	.38	.03	7%
	Male	.30	.30	.00	0%
Hair dryer	Female	.79	.73	.06	8%
	Male	.51	.47	.04	8%
Iron	Female	.63	.42	.21	33%
	Male	.48	.43	.05	10%
Closet	Female	.93	.85	.08	9%
	Male	.90	.87	.03	3%

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ed use was perhaps not a surprise: the hair dryer (79% of females, 51% of males; a 35% difference). Other substantial variances were found for inside phones (41% of females, 30% of males; a 27% difference), the radio (a 26% difference), irons (63% of females, 48% of males; 24% difference), refrigerators (22% difference), safes (67% of females, 57% of males; a 15% difference), coffeemakers (63% of females, 54% of males; a 14% difference), and bottled water (13% difference). Wide gender differences in actual use were, however, much rarer, starting, of course, with the hair dryer (73% of females, 47% of males; 36% difference), followed by a robe (31% of females, 22% of males; 29% difference), and use of a desk (66% of females, 75% of males; 12% difference).

Use of Utilitarian and Hedonic Amenities

In the earlier portion of our study, we suggested that amenities with primarily utilitarian attributes have a more positive effect on initial choice than amenities with primarily hedonic attributes, while primarily hedonic amenities have a more positive effect on repeat visits than utilitarian-oriented amenities.[17] Indeed, as we have noted, our original study found a positive effect on initial choice of in-room wi-fi (which seems primarily utilitarian) and a positive effect on

[17] See: Jackie Swift, "Much to Say about Hotels Brands, Customers," Cornell Research featured story [web page], 2017. https://research.cornell.edu/news-features/much-say-about-hotel-brands-customers

Exhibit 3c

Expected and actual use of amenities by gender (concluded)

Amenity	Gender	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Packaged soap, shampoo, conditioner, or lotion	Female	.82	.85	-.03	-4%
	Male	.84	.86	-.02	-2%
Dispenser soap/shampoo	Female	.39	23	.16	41%
	Male	.46	.26	.20	43%
Robe	Female	.46	.31	.15	33%
	Male	.38	.22	.16	42%
Safe	Female	.67	.45	.22	33%
	Male	.57	.46	.11	19%
Pool	Female	.42	.27	.15	36%
	Male	.40	.30	.10	25%
In-room fitness	Female	.16	.01	.15	94%
	Male	.10	.02	.08	80%
Fitness center	Female	.44	.16	..28	64%
	Male	.49	.24	.25	51%
Electronic checkout	Female	.49	.31	.18	37%
	Male	.48	.28	.20	42%
Late checkout	Female	.40	.23	.17	43%
	Male	.41	.25	.16	39%
Folio under door	Female	.62	.67	-.05	-8%
	Male	.62	.63	-.01	-2%
Boarding pass printing	Female	.54	.30	.24	44%
	Male	.50	.27	.23	46%

repeat visits of in-room bottled water (which seems primarily hedonic). The data we report here do not, of course, permit us to draw similar conclusions about other amenities in our study because only bottled water, in-room wi-fi, and a fitness center were included in the discrete choice experiment, and only bottled water was used for the field experiment. We nevertheless report some results pertaining to the predicted and actual use of amenities based on utilitarian and hedonic attributes. We choose to discuss only the few amenities—in this case including some purchased amenities—that feature either primarily hedonic or primarily utilitarian attributes. Many of the amenities in the full dataset combine hedonic and utilitarian attributes, and we will not attempt to parse the relative contributions of those attributes to their predicted and actual use.

Overall, the amenities that guests underpredicted using were almost all primarily utilitarian, including both hotel amenities and in-room amenities. Otherwise, overprediction was widespread among both primarily hedonic and primarily utilitarian amenities.

To consider the full range of primarily hedonic amenities we must expand our discussion to include purchased amenities, including (among hotel amenities) a gift shop, a bar, and a spa. Hotel dining services,

Exhibit 4a

Expected and actual amenity use by brand type

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Valet parking	.14	.23	-.09	-64%
Upscale	.02	.00		100%
Upper Upscale	.11	.21		-91%
Luxury	.22	.35		-59%
Early check-in	.37	.28	.09	24%
Upscale	.39	.25		36%
Upper Upscale	.35	.29		17%
Luxury	.42	.26		38%
Auto check-in	.10	.01	.09	90%
Upscale	.14	.02		86%
Upper Upscale	.08	.01		88%
Luxury	.12	.00		100%
Bellhop	.18	.27	-.09	-50%
Upscale	.07	.00		100%
Upper Upscale	.15	.25		-67%
Luxury	.26	.38		-46%
Seating in lobby	.28	.42	-.14	-50%
Upscale	.23	.18		22%
Upper Upscale	.26	.41		-58%
Luxury	.32	.48		-50%
Lobby internet access	.36	.23	.13	36%
Upscale	.41	.23		44%
Upper Upscale	.36	.23		36%
Luxury	.35	.24		31%

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whether for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, are difficult to classify as either primarily hedonic or primarily utilitarian. Guests overpredicted their use of all such amenities, except for food in the lobby.

Purchased room amenities that are primarily hedonic include a minibar, movies on demand, and video games on demand, as well as room service dining. (Room-service dining seems more likely to be considered a luxury to be enjoyed than a necessity.)

Apart from the question of under- or overprediction of the use of primarily hedonic and primarily utilitarian amenities, we note that among primarily hedonic amenities several were used by a considerable portion of guests, including a hotel bar (42%, which was far greater than the 8% of guests who used in-room minibars), bottled water (41%), televisions (85%), and, although its use was overpredicted, a pool (28%). Many primarily utilitarian amenities were used to a far greater extent than primarily hedonic amenities, including lobby seating (42%), a concierge (42%), a coffeemaker (45%), a desk (71%), a hair dryer (61%), a closet (86%), packaged toiletries (86%), a safe (46%), and a folio of charges delivered under the door (65%).

Brand Effects

Most of the analysis presented thus far has averaged guests' predictions and use of amenities in all six hotel

Exhibit 4b

Expected and actual amenity use by brand type (continued)

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Lobby food	.29	.28	.01	3%
Upscale	.41	.39		5%
Upper Upscale	.27	.29		-7%
Luxury	.30	.24		20%
Concierge	.31	.42	-.11	-35%
Upscale	.07	.07		0%
Upper Upscale	.28	.41		-46%
Luxury	.41	.53		-29%
Business center	.13	.14	-.01	-8%
Upscale	.09	.02		78%
Upper Upscale	.14	.14		0%
Luxury	.12	.17		-42%
Laundry service	.05	.02	.03	60%
Upscale	.05	.00		100%
Upper Upscale	.05	.02		60%
Luxury	.06	.04		33%
Wake-up call	.38	.24	.14	37%
Upscale	.41	.23		44%
Upper Upscale	.39	.24		38%
Luxury	.37	.24		35%
Gift shop	.29	.25	.04	14%
Upscale	.18	.09		50%
Upper Upscale	.29	.30		-3%
Luxury	.31	.17		45%
Restaurant breakfast	.46	.31	.15	33%
Upscale	.45	.30		33%
Upper Upscale	.47	.32		32%
Luxury	.45	.31		31%
In-room dining breakfast	.24	.13	.11	46%
Upscale	.11	.05		55%
Upper Upscale	.21	.09		57%
Luxury	.34	.24		29%
Restaurant lunch	.26	.16	.10	38%
Upscale	.14	.00		100%
Upper Upscale	.27	.18		33%
Luxury	.27	.18		33%

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Exhibit 4c

Expected and actual amenity use by brand type (continued)

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
In-room dining lunch	.10	.03	.07	70%
Upscale	.07	.00		100%
Upper Upscale	.10	.03		70%
Luxury	.12	.03		75%
Restaurant dinner	.43	.26	.17	40%
Upscale	.30	.09		70%
Upper Upscale	.43	.25		42%
Luxury	.46	.31		33%
In-room dining dinner	.19	.09	.10	53%
Upscale	.11	.02		82%
Upper Upscale	.19	.08		58%
Luxury	.20	.12		40%
In-room dining late night	.22	.06	.16	73%
Upscale	.18	.05		72%
Upper Upscale	.20	.04		80%
Luxury	.27	.12		56%
Hotel bar	.51	.42	.09	18%
Upscale	.32	.34		-6%
Upper Upscale	.45	.36		20%
Luxury	.66	.57		14%
Minibar	.11	.08	.03	27%
Upscale	.05	.00		100%
Upper Upscale	.08	.06		25%
Luxury	.21	.14		33%

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brands. However, our data include analysis of guests' predictions and actual use of amenities for the six hotel brands individually, an upscale brand, two upper upscale brands, and three luxury brands. We have combined the results for the two upper upscale brands and for the three luxury brands, to give us three brand types: luxury, upper upscale, and upscale, as shown in Exhibit 4. Let's take a moment to examine amenity use among guests in these relatively high end hotels.

Guests of the upper upscale brands were fairly accurate in their predicted use of the hotel gift shop, but luxury and upscale brand guests consistently overpredicted their use of that amenity. Guests of all three brand levels also overpredicted their use of the in-room lunch. The fading popularity of another in-room amenity, the minibar, was clearly evident in the survey. Not only was use of this feature predicted by a relatively small percentage of guests, but even fewer guests opened that door. A similar fate applies to availability of a phone for outside calls, which was overpredicted and lightly used (fewer than one guest in five at most brands). Even less used were in-room movies and video games. Guests' expectations that they would use the spa were heavily overpredicted in general, although few upper upscale brand guests expected to use the spa and even fewer did so.

Exhibit 4d

Expected and actual amenity use by brand type (continued)

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Refrigerator in room	.52	.36	.16	31%
Upscale	.52	.32		38%
Upper Upscale	.50	.33		34%
Luxury	.57	.44		23%
Bottled water	.51	.41	.10	20%
Upscale	.52	.68		-31%
Upper Upscale	.47	.32		32%
Luxury	.60	.56		7%
Coffeemaker in room	.59	.45	.14	24%
Upscale	.57	.59		-4%
Upper Upscale	.59	.52		12%
Luxury	.58	.24		59%
In-room internet access	.67	.39	.28	42%
Upscale	.73	.50		32%
Upper Upscale	.68	.37		46%
Luxury	.64	.41		36%
TV	.91	.85	.06	7%
Upscale	.93	.84		10%
Upper Upscale	.90	.85		6%
Luxury	.93	.85		9%
Radio	.39	.20	.19	49%
Upscale	.41	.20		51%
Upper Upscale	.35	.18		49%
Luxury	.45	.25		44%
MP3 dock	.35	.14	.21	60%
Upscale	.39	.09		77%
Upper Upscale	.29	.09		69%
Luxury	.46	.27		41%

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Guests generally used the in-room coffeemaker, but their overprediction regarding this amenity was much higher among the upper upscale and luxury brand guests. Those staying at the upscale brands expected to make their own morning coffee and mostly did so.

The Most Overpredicted Use of Amenities

As we analyzed the survey data for this phase of our original three-item study, we were particularly interested in identifying amenities for which the gap between expected use and actual use was widest, whether due to overprediction or underprediction. Hotel managers might reconsider offering some amenities for which usage was widely overpredicted, but, on the other hand, they might add or enhance amenities that many guests used after predicting they would not do so. In this section we discuss the most overpredicted amenities, those features that many guests predicted they would use during their stays but did not.

Exhibit 4e

Expected and actual amenity use by brand type (continued)

Alarm	.64	.35	.29	45%
Upscale	.61	.39		36%
Upper Upscale	.66	.37		44%
Luxury	.60	.32		47%
Desk	.80	.70	.10	13%
Upscale	.73	.55		25%
Upper Upscale	.83	.71		14%
Luxury	.77	.74		4%
Task lighting	.79	.72	.07	9%
Upscale	.89	.66		26%
Upper Upscale	.79	.72		9%
Luxury	.76	.72		5%
Phone for inside calls	.36	.34	.02	6%
Upscale	.34	.25		26%
Upper Upscale	.35	.31		11%
Luxury	.40	.45		-13%
Phone for outside calls	.25	.14	.11	44%
Upscale	.23	.11		52%
Upper Upscale	.25	.13		48%
Luxury	.25	.15		40%
Movies on demand	.17	.08	.09	53%
Upscale	.18	.02		89%
Upper Upscale	.15	.08		47%
Luxury	.22	.09		59%
Video games on demand	.02	.00	.02	100%
Upscale	.02	.00		100%
Upper Upscale	.02	.00		100%
Luxury	.03	.00		100%

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Several of the most overpredicted amenities involve technology (see Exhibit 5). Survey respondents overpredicted their use of internet access both in the room (over by 43%) and in the lobby (over by 36%), wake-up services (over by 38%), and such in-room amenities as a radio (47% too high) and electronic checkout (over by 38%). More than a third of the respondents expected to use free wi-fi service in a hotel lobby, but fewer than a fourth actually did (a 36% difference). More than two thirds predicted they would use in-room internet access, but barely 40 percent did so. This likely reflects trends in consumer electronics, as consumers increasingly use their smart phones and tablet computer networks for internet access, equipment which can also double as wi-fi hotspots that many guests will perceive as a more secure option for online activity than a hotel's network. Similarly, there was considerable overprediction of the use of both

Exhibit 4f

Expected and actual amenity use by brand type (continued)

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Hair dryer	.66	.61	.05	8%
Upscale	.66	.45		32%
Upper Upscale	.65	.61		6%
Luxury	.68	.64		6%
Iron	.56	.43	.13	23%
Upscale	.48	.27		44%
Upper Upscale	.56	.45		20%
Luxury	.57	.40		30%
Closet	.92	.86	.06	7%
Upscale	.86	.57		34%
Upper Upscale	.92	.88		4%
Luxury	.93	.87		6%
Packaged soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion	.83	.86	-.03	-4%
Upscale	.86	.77		10%
Upper Upscale	.82	.87		-6%
Luxury	.84	.85		-1%
Dispenser soap or shampoo	.42	.24	.18	43%
Upscale	.57	.45		21%
Upper Upscale	.41	.22		46%
Luxury	.40	.25		38%
Robe	.42	.27	.15	36%
Upscale	.30	.05		83%
Upper Upscale	.36	.17		53%
Luxury	.58	.54		7%

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hotel-initiated wake-up calls (37%) and in-room alarm clocks (over by 77%). This again may reflect the use of smart phones or other personal devices, or perhaps many guests simply find that their plans and expectations for their stays change after arrival. Among the widest overprediction gaps were expectations regarding in-room fitness equipment, which we have mentioned above and discuss at greater length below.

We also observed relatively wide gaps between expected and actual use of several food and beverage-related amenities, including both breakfast and dinner service in hotel restaurants (both overpredicted by more than 30 percent) and late-night room-service dining (overpredicted by an astonishing 73 percent). Also, about 30 percent of guests who expected to use an in-room refrigerator did not use one. However, more than a third of the respondents did take advantage of this amenity, so it cannot be dismissed as broadly unpopular. The results pertaining to hotel restaurants might suggest that many survey respondents had not made firm dining plans and, in view of the convenience of hotel restaurants, did not want to rule them

Exhibit 4g

Expected and actual amenity use by brand type (concluded)

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use	Percentage Difference
Safe	.63	.46	.17	27%
Upscale	.52	.20		62%
Upper Upscale	.58	.42		28%
Luxury	.77	.59		23%
Pool	.41	.28	.13	32%
Upscale	.52	.23		56%
Upper Upscale	.35	.26		26%
Luxury	.53	.35		34%
Spa	.19	.09	.10	53%
Upscale	.00	.00		0%
Upper Upscale	.15	.07		53%
Luxury	.31	.16		48%
In-room fitness	.14	.01	.13	93%
Upscale	.11	.00		100%
Upper Upscale	.13	.01		92%
Luxury	.15	.02		87%
Fitness center	.46	.20	.26	57%
Upscale	.50	.20		60%
Upper Upscale	.42	.17		60%
Luxury	.54	.26		52%
Electronic checkout	.48	.30	.18	38%
Upscale	.50	.32		36%
Upper Upscale	.48	.34		29%
Luxury	.48	.20		58%
Late checkout	.41	.24	.17	41%
Upscale	.41	.18		56%
Upper Upscale	.35	.21		40%
Luxury	.53	.32		40%
Folio under door	.62	.65	-.03	-5%
Upscale	.52	.61		-17%
Upper Upscale	.62	.72		-16%
Luxury	.64	.52		19%
Boarding pass printing	.51	.28	.23	45%
Upscale	.48	.16		67%
Upper Upscale	.52	.30		42%
Luxury	.51	.25		51%

Exhibit 5

Most overpredicted use of amenities

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use (Percentage difference)
Lobby internet access	.36	.23	.13 (36%)
Wake-up call	.38	.24	.14 (37%)
Restaurant breakfast	.46	.31	.15 (32%)
Restaurant dinner	.43	.26	.17 (40%)
In-room dining late night	.22	.06	.16 (73%)
Refrigerator in room	.53	.36	.17 (32%)
In-room internet access	.68	.39	.29 (43%)
Radio	.38	.20	.18 (47%)
Alarm	.64	.15	.49 (77%)
Iron	.56	.42	.14 (25%)
Dispenser soap and shampoo	.42	.24	.18 (43%)
Robe	.42	.27	.15 (36%)
Safe	.63	.46	.17 (27%)
Pool	.41	.28	.13 (32%)
In-room fitness	.14	.01	.13 (93%)
Fitness center	.46	.19	.27 (59%)
Electronic checkout	.48	.30	.18 (38%)
Late checkout	.41	.24	.17 (40%)
In-room dining lunch	.10	.03	.07 (70%)
Boarding pass printing	.51	.28	.23 (45%)

out. Perhaps after arrival they discovered attractive nearby dining options that drew them out of the hotel for meals.

Finally, we were somewhat surprised that the actual use of such checkout amenities as electronic checkout, late checkout, and boarding pass printing fell short of expected use by fairly wide margins. Still, between one-fourth and one-third of the survey respondents reported using them, representing reasonably substantial portions of guests.

The Most Underpredicted Use of Amenities

As we have noted, only seven of the fifty amenities in our study were subject to underprediction. Exhibit 6 presents the underpredicted amenities, including those for which the gap was narrow. As we noted above several of those that were underpredicted are offered during the check-in process and in the hotel lobby. For example, guests underpredicted their use of valet parking by 64 percent, and they underpredicted the use of a bellhop also by a substantial proportion, 50 percent, which was also similar to the percentage of guests who underpredicted their use of lobby seating. That is, 56-percent more guests used lobby seating than predicted they would. Additionally, over 35-percent more guests used concierge service than expected to do so. The use of a business center was also underpredicted, but only slightly.

The largest gap between expected and actual use was the 64-percent miss regarding the use of valet parking. Only 14 percent of the survey respondents expected to engage valet parking, but nearly 23 percent did so.

Implications

In sum, our study found that most guests overpredicted their use of many types of amenities. However, this overprediction does not imply that hotel brands or operators should consider dropping those overpredicted amenities, since many guests still used most of those

Exhibit 6

Most underpredicted use of amenities

Amenity	Proportion of Expected Use	Proportion of Actual Use	Point Difference between Expected and Actual Use (Percentage difference)
Valet parking	.14	.23	-.09 (64%)
Seating in lobby	.27	.42	-.15 (56%)
Bellhop	.18	.27	-.09 (50%)
Concierge	.31	.42	-.11 (35%)
Business center	.13	.14	-.01 (7%)
Folio under door	.62	.65	-.03 (5%)
Packaged soap/shampoo/conditioner/lotion	.83	.86	-.03 (4%)

features. Beyond that, potential guests underpredicted their use of several hotel amenities that they encounter in lobbies, notably, bellhops, lobby seating, and concierge service. The underprediction of lobby seating might also reflect the use of other hotel amenities that guests did not expect to use before occupying their rooms, such as a concierge or activities desks (which, like bellhops, are amenities associated primarily with upper upscale and luxury properties, such as those in our survey). As more hotels redesign their lobbies to become increasingly inviting social spaces and incorporate enhanced service experiences into them, we would expect greater use of lobby seating. While some of these lobby amenities are relatively expensive to offer, guests are likely to use them repeatedly.

In contrast to hotel- or lobby-based amenities, participants in our study overpredicted their use of most in-room amenities. That said, participants nevertheless reported heavy use of in-room amenities, and it seems likely that most of them—television sets, desks, closets, hair dryers, toiletries, alarm clocks, and perhaps even wi-fi—are taken for granted and have become part of the definition of a hotel room. Since most are relatively inexpensive to install and maintain, it seems that hotels are wise to continue offering them, even if guests do not use them to the extent they expect to do so.

The various checkout options available to guests in their rooms are also popular and, it would seem, well worth offering. Although the use of these amenities was generally overpredicted, once again, use was relatively high, and there was even a small degree of underprediction regarding the billing folios that hotels slip under guests' doors on the day of checkout, even though electronic folios sent to a guest via text or email have almost totally replaced paper folios slipped under the door.

Fitness equipment in flux. Two other amenities merit further attention. Guests' views of fitness centers may be in flux, given that a substantial percentage of guests predicted that they would use in-room equipment. Our data on expected and actual use of amenities showed that the use of a fitness center is overpredicted, and guests vastly overpredicted their use of in-room fitness equipment. This finding suggests that further study to gauge the effects of in-room fitness equipment on initial choice or repeat visit decisions might be warranted. Guests' actual use of in-room equipment may grow as this amenity becomes more common (or, perhaps, easier to arrange). Should this become a trend, some hotels might be able to eliminate their fitness centers while continuing to meet the needs of guests by making in-room fitness equipment available.

The pool conundrum. Swimming pools also present a dilemma for hotel owners. This amenity, which is expensive to install and maintain, does not appeal to all travelers. We found that relatively few business guests expect to use a pool (just 21 percent in this survey) and, in fact, even fewer actually do use one (a mere 6 percent, a 71-percent prediction difference). While leisure travelers also overpredicted their pool use (by 22 percent), nearly two out of five did use the pool. It might in some rare cases make sense to replace a pool with a conference room if most guests are expected to be business travelers, but it's clear that a substantial group of leisure travelers do use a pool.

Generally, sorting the survey data by purpose of visit or gender did not generate startling results. There was some minor confounding of natural intuitions regarding gender, but on a small scale. Natural intuitions about differences between business and leisure travelers were generally borne out, not only for swimming pool use but for other amenities such as a business center, wi-fi, and desks and task lighting. These effects might not be huge, but they are present in the data.

The seven amenities in our study for which usage was underpredicted are free and primarily utilitarian—namely, valet parking, bellhops, lobby seating, a concierge, a business center, packaged bathroom supplies, and a folio under the door. The data also show that most of the amenities that are involved with a guest's arrival or use of the lobby are primarily utilitarian. On the other hand, the free in-room amenities include nineteen primarily utilitarian amenities but only five primarily hedonic amenities. As noted, in almost all cases guests overpredicted their use of primarily hedonic amenities. Regardless of overprediction or underprediction status, however, actual usage of most amenities is likely high enough to warrant continued investment in many of the particularly popular features. On this point we would expect the pricing scale of a hotel to matter, with guests at upper upscale and luxury hotels being more inclined to spend money on purchased amenities.

Attracting and Retaining Guests

If there were to be any correlations between expected or actual use of amenities and initial choice or repeat visits, it seems reasonable that offering amenities that guests tend to predict they will use at a high rate will have a positive effect on initial purchase, while those that guests find themselves using at a higher rate than predicted will have a positive effect on repeat visits. If these are reasonable propositions, then our findings might point the way for hotel managers (and researchers) to use our method for assessing the effects of amenities on these two stages of the choice process. This suggests that amenities offered during check-in and adjacent to the lobby might induce repeat visits. Regarding in-room amenities that guests overpredicted using but seem to take for granted as familiar features, we suggest that removing most of these would be unwise, since a substantial proportion of guests do use them.

Conclusions

We note again our earlier study, which proposes and demonstrates the use of a model for calculating the ROI on individual amenities and describes a method for assessing the effects of amenities on initial choice and repeat visits. We suggest that, in combination with our findings regarding expected and actual use of amenities, these findings will assist managers when deciding whether to offer a given amenity. We also hope to spawn a new stream of research on the use of amenities.

Indeed, we believe that the method for calculating ROI which we developed for the earlier research brief can be utilized in a hotel brand's marketing analysis, the potential benefits of which are considerable. Clearly, a hotel owner or brand manager contemplating offering a specific amenity should consider the cost and revenue implications of doing so. In this report, we add an important distinction regarding amenities, demonstrating that predicted and actual use of amenities often differs—sometimes by a substantial amount. This makes it possible to calculate the potential for a given amenity to attract new guests through initial choice or retain existing guests who will purchase repeat visits. With such information in hand, managers can project the value of offering a range of amenities and configure their amenity offerings accordingly. A brand that operates in a market where most customers are first timers, such as a newly opened destination, might consider skewing its amenity offerings to those that their analysis shows tend to attract customers, while another brand that operates in a mature market in which success depends on generating repeat visits through customer loyalty would do well to focus on amenities that analyses show encourage such loyalty.[18]

We expect that our analysis of amenity use will have a significant impact on the critical decisions made by hotel owners, investors, designers, consultants, brand managers and operators to determine which amenities to offer and to whom. ■

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18 Hamilton, Rust, and Dev, "Features," p. 5.

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