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AI-DRIVEN PERSONALIZATION AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF HOTELS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

This paper empirically investigated the relationship between AI-Driven Personalization and Business Performance of Hotels in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to determine how experience customization guest and smart room technology relates with customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt. The research design adopted for this paper was the descriptive research design and the chosen population for this study comprised of all the seventy-three (73) registered hotels operating in Port Harcourt. This study adopted the census approach in which 3 managers were selected from each of the hotel, this brought about a total of two hundred and nineteen (219) managers. However, only 184 managers properly filled and returned their questionnaire for the study that was designed in the Likert 5-point scale of strongly disagree to strongly disagree. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test all two null hypotheses developed for this study. From results of the analysis it was revealed that guest experience customization and smart room technologies have positively and significant relationships with customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt. Based on these findings, it was concluded that AI-driven personalization significantly enhances the business performance of hotels in Port Harcourt, particularly through improvements in customer retention. Therefore, the study recommended amongst others that hotels should prioritize the adoption of smart room technologies such as voice-controlled systems, automated lighting, and personalized entertainment options to enhance guest comfort and encourage repeat visits.

Keyword(s): AI-Driven Personalization; Business Performance; Guest Experience; Smart Room Technology; Customer Retention

INTRODUCTION

The global hospitality industry is experiencing a radical transformation, driven largely by the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that support personalized customer experiences. This shift is especially significant in developing economies like Nigeria, where the tourism and hotel sectors are becoming increasingly competitive and tech-driven. AI-driven personalization refers to the utilization of intelligent algorithms and data analytics to tailor services to individual customer preferences in real-time. For the hotel industry in Port Harcourt, a vibrant urban hub with growing commercial and leisure tourism, this technological advancement offers both opportunities and challenges. Hotels are no longer competing solely on traditional service metrics such as room comfort or price but increasingly on how well they understand and respond to customer preferences. As Adaobi, Nyangu, and Fook (2022) highlight, AI applications such as smart concierge services, facial recognition for check-in, and predictive service offerings significantly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, contributing positively to business performance.

The Nigerian hospitality landscape presents a unique context where the convergence of digital transformation and rising customer expectations is catalyzing innovation. With Port Harcourt serving as a strategic economic zone in the Niger Delta, the demand for hotel services has soared, prompting operators to explore AI solutions as tools for differentiation and efficiency. Nigerian scholars such as Mgbame, Akpe, Abayomi, and Ogbuefi (2023) have demonstrated that AI-powered business intelligence systems can streamline decision-making processes, reduce operational costs, and deliver customized service experiences that lead to enhanced brand loyalty and financial outcomes.

Furthermore, in the post-pandemic context, customer expectations around hygiene, convenience, and contactless services have pushed hotels to adopt AI tools more aggressively. As observed by Yusuf and Nzei (2023), digital innovation has become not only a competitive advantage but a necessity for survival in the hospitality sector, reinforcing the strategic value of AI-driven personalization in business performance.

However, the effective implementation of AI technologies in hotels is shaped by several contextual variables, including digital literacy, infrastructure, and management orientation. In Port Harcourt, where infrastructural challenges and talent gaps persist, the successful integration of AI into service delivery depends heavily on management commitment, regulatory support, and continuous staff training. Nigerian researchers such as Raimi, Amaegberi, and Jonathan (2022) note that hotels with higher levels of digital maturity and data utilization capacity report better performance metrics, including increased occupancy rates, revenue per available room (RevPAR), and improved online reputation. These findings are supported by empirical evidence from similar urban hotel markets in Nigeria, where AI-driven strategies have been linked to improved customer retention and upselling opportunities. As such, the nuanced relationship between AI personalization and hotel performance warrants deeper academic inquiry, particularly in understudied markets like Port Harcourt, where localized insights can inform policy and managerial practice.

Moreover, while the benefits of AI-driven personalization are increasingly documented, critical concerns around data privacy, ethical use, and customer trust remain underexplored in the Nigerian hotel context. According to Ezeife, Eyeregba, and Olorunyomi (2021), the deployment of AI in Nigerian SMEs often lacks robust governance frameworks, which can undermine customer confidence and reduce the efficacy of personalization strategies. For hotels in Port Harcourt, balancing technological innovation with ethical data use is crucial to achieving sustainable performance outcomes. Additionally, as Idemudia and Agu (2023) argue, the personalization effect is amplified when AI is integrated with customer relationship management (CRM) systems, suggesting a holistic approach to AI adoption is essential. Ultimately, the investigation into how AI-driven personalization impacts business performance in Port Harcourt hotels holds profound implications not just for hotel operators, but also for technology policymakers and local economic development agencies seeking to foster innovation-led growth in the service sector.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the global proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) in the hospitality sector, there remains a significant gap in empirical research regarding its application and business impact within the Nigerian context, particularly in Port Harcourt. While AI-driven personalization has been recognized as a transformative tool for enhancing customer experiences and driving operational efficiency in developed markets, its strategic integration in Nigerian hotels is still evolving. Many hotels in Port Harcourt continue to rely on conventional service delivery approaches, often lacking the technical capacity, infrastructure, and strategic foresight to adopt and sustain AI technologies. The absence of robust data analytics frameworks, coupled with limited investment in digital transformation, hinders the ability of hotel operators to fully leverage AI for customer segmentation, personalized marketing, and real-time service enhancements. As a result, the potential of AI to significantly improve customer satisfaction, repeat patronage, and ultimately business performance remains largely untapped in the region.

Furthermore, there is insufficient academic evidence linking AI-driven personalization to measurable performance outcomes such as customer retention growth in Port Harcourt's hospitality industry. Existing studies, including those by Adaobi et al. (2022) and Mgbame et al. (2023), offer generalized insights into AI use in service industries but fall short of providing localized, data-driven conclusions for hotel businesses in urban Nigerian settings. Without such contextualized understanding, hoteliers may either underinvest in or misapply AI strategies, leading to resource waste or implementation failures. Moreover, customer perspectives on AI-mediated services especially concerning trust, data privacy, and perceived service quality remain underexplored in the literature. These gaps underscore

the need for a focused inquiry into how AI-driven personalization influences the business performance of hotels in Port Harcourt, with a view to offering actionable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and scholars.

Conceptual Framework

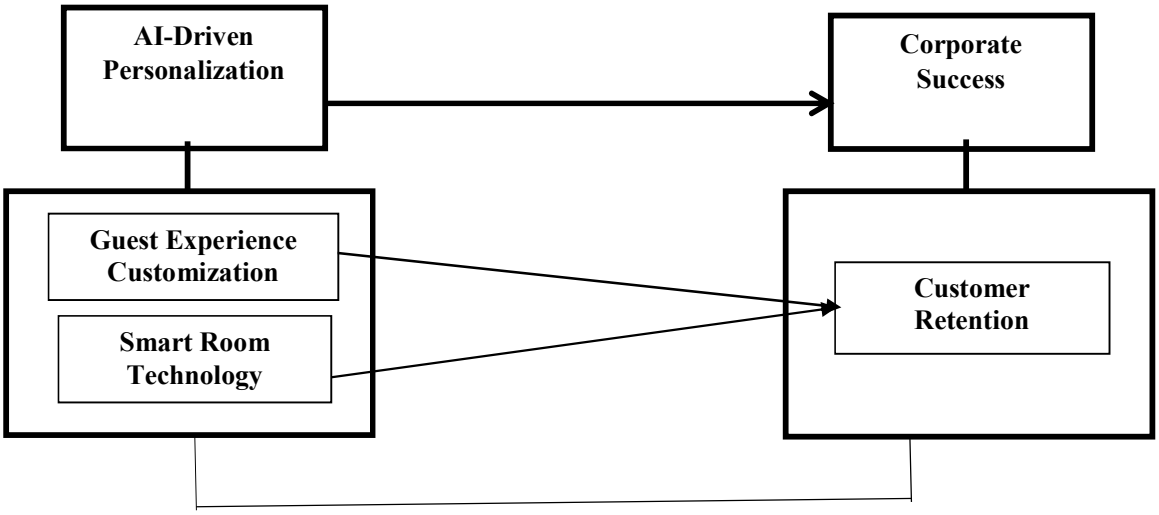

Figure 1:1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between AI-driven personalization and business performance of hotels in Port Harcourt.
Sources: Safaeimanesh (2024); Sarode & Lukose (2024)

Objectives of the Study

The objective is to determine the relationship between AI-driven personalization and business performance of hotels in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the objectives of this paper were to:

1. ascertain the relationship between guest experience customization and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt.
2. determine the relationship between smart room technology and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this paper:

1. What is the relationship between guest experience customization and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt?
2. What is the relationship between smart room technology and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested using 0.05 level of significance as a threshold:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between guest experience customization and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between smart room technology and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt.

Concept of AI-Driven Personalization

AI-driven personalization refers to the strategic use of artificial intelligence technologies such as machine learning algorithms, natural language processing, and data analytics to tailor services and offerings to individual customer preferences and behaviors. In the hospitality industry, this involves

analyzing vast datasets from customer interactions, purchase histories, preferences, and feedback to deliver targeted services and communications. AI systems can automate personalized email marketing, recommend room upgrades based on past behavior, and even predict service needs before the guest articulates them. According to Adaobi, Nyangu, and Fook (2022), such personalization not only enhances the efficiency of service delivery but also deepens customer satisfaction by making guests feel recognized and valued. AI-driven personalization is thus not just a technological innovation but a business strategy that aligns service delivery with consumer expectations in real-time.

The relevance of AI-driven personalization in the hotel industry, particularly in emerging markets like Nigeria, is increasingly significant as businesses seek competitive differentiation. Nigerian scholars like Mgbame et al. (2023) argue that personalization powered by AI offers a scalable way for hotels to manage increasing volumes of guest data while maintaining individualized service experiences. In Port Harcourt, where hotel competition is rising, the adoption of AI personalization tools can be the difference between brand success and stagnation. However, challenges such as data quality, limited technological infrastructure, and digital skill gaps must be addressed to realize the full potential of AI personalization. Nonetheless, when properly deployed, AI-driven personalization becomes a catalyst for operational efficiency, enhanced guest engagement, and superior business performance.

Guest Experience Customization

Guest experience customization in the hospitality industry involves tailoring services and interactions to align with individual guest preferences, expectations, and behavior patterns. This concept goes beyond generic customer service by integrating guest data such as room temperature preferences, dining choices, and recreational habits into personalized service delivery. According to Ezeife, Eyeregba, and Olorunyomi (2021), customized experiences result in increased satisfaction levels, stronger emotional connections with brands, and a higher likelihood of repeat visits. In today's digitally connected era, hotels use technology platforms to collect and analyze customer data, enabling staff to anticipate needs and create memorable guest journeys. Personalized greetings, customized minibar contents, or even suggesting spa treatments based on previous bookings are examples of how customization enhances the guest experience.

The adoption of guest experience customization in Port Harcourt hotels is gaining traction as the industry becomes more customer-centric and technologically sophisticated. Nigerian studies like those by Idemudia and Agu (2023) emphasize that customization not only enhances immediate guest satisfaction but also positively influences online reviews and word-of-mouth referrals, which are critical to sustaining competitive advantage. Moreover, customized guest experiences align with global hospitality trends that prioritize emotional engagement over transactional service. As a result, hotels that leverage customization strategies particularly through AI and CRM systems can better understand and fulfill guest expectations, leading to long-term brand loyalty and improved business performance.

Smart Room Technology

Smart room technology refers to the integration of Internet of Things (IoT) devices, AI algorithms, and automation systems into hotel rooms to enhance comfort, convenience, and energy efficiency. These technologies allow guests to control room features such as lighting, temperature, curtains, and entertainment systems through voice commands, mobile apps, or smart hubs. In addition to environmental controls, smart rooms often include AI-driven service interfaces like virtual concierges and predictive maintenance alerts. According to Yusuf and Nzei (2023), smart room technology significantly enhances guest satisfaction by offering seamless control over their environment, creating a futuristic and luxurious stay experience that aligns with modern digital lifestyles.

In the Nigerian context, smart room adoption is still emerging, but interest is growing, especially among high-end hotels and business-class accommodations in cities like Port Harcourt. The push

towards digitalization, energy efficiency, and operational cost reduction makes smart rooms an attractive investment. Mgbame et al. (2023) assert that smart technologies can reduce labor costs, optimize energy usage, and provide data insights for continuous improvement. Moreover, guests are increasingly expecting tech-enhanced environments, and failing to meet these expectations may result in lower satisfaction scores and competitive disadvantage. Thus, integrating smart room technology represents not only an enhancement in guest experience but also a strategic move towards improved business sustainability and service differentiation.

Concept of Business Performance

Business performance in the hospitality industry refers to a hotel's ability to achieve its financial, operational, and customer-related goals. It encompasses metrics such as revenue per available room (RevPAR), occupancy rates, profit margins, customer satisfaction scores, and brand loyalty. AI-driven tools and customized services can significantly influence these indicators by enhancing operational efficiency, minimizing waste, and maximizing customer engagement. According to Raimi, Amaegberi, and Jonathan (2022), hotels that implement data-driven decision-making tend to outperform their peers in customer acquisition and retention, owing to their ability to deliver superior, personalized services consistently.

For hotels in Port Harcourt, improving business performance through technological innovation is critical in a market marked by economic fluctuations, rising customer expectations, and intense competition. Adaobi et al. (2022) emphasize that AI and related digital tools enable real-time monitoring of performance metrics, empowering managers to make proactive decisions. Personalized guest experiences lead to better online ratings and repeat bookings, which in turn influence revenue and profitability. Furthermore, investment in smart services often yields long-term cost savings and operational resilience. Therefore, understanding the impact of AI-driven personalization on business performance provides a blueprint for strategic innovation and sustained growth in the local hospitality sector.

Customer Retention

Customer retention refers to a business's ability to keep customers returning over time, thereby reducing churn and enhancing lifetime value. In the hotel industry, retention is influenced by factors such as service quality, guest experience, emotional connection, and loyalty programs. Personalized services play a crucial role in fostering retention, as they make guests feel valued and understood. According to Ezeife et al. (2021), retaining an existing customer is far more cost-effective than acquiring a new one, and AI-enabled tools allow hotels to anticipate and address customer needs proactively, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty.

In Nigeria, particularly in urban centers like Port Harcourt, customer retention is vital for hotel businesses aiming to sustain profitability in a competitive market. Idemudia and Agu (2023) explain that personalized guest experiences driven by AI and CRM systems are key to building trust and emotional engagement, both of which are essential for long-term loyalty. The use of retention strategies such as tailored loyalty programs, personalized communication, and seamless check-in experiences has shown measurable impact on repeat patronage. As such, exploring how AI-driven personalization influences customer retention is critical for understanding how hotels in Port Harcourt can build lasting customer relationships that underpin consistent business performance.

Theoretical Review

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), originally developed by Davis (1989), is a theoretical framework used to explain and predict user behavior toward new technologies. At its core, TAM posits that two main factors (perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU)) influence an individual's decision to accept and use a technology. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which a user believes that using a particular system will enhance their job performance, while perceived ease of use denotes the degree to which a person believes that using the system will be

free of effort. Over time, TAM has been adapted and extended to various fields including e-commerce, healthcare, education, and hospitality, as it provides a parsimonious yet robust lens for understanding technology adoption dynamics (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008).

In the context of AI-driven personalization in the hotel industry of Port Harcourt, TAM serves as a highly relevant framework to assess both managerial and customer receptivity to these technologies. For hotel managers and staff, perceived usefulness could relate to the belief that AI tools improve efficiency, customer retention, and financial performance. For customers, ease of use and usefulness might be linked to the convenience of automated check-ins, personalized service offerings, or AI-powered concierge services. Nigerian studies such as those by Raimi et al. (2022) and Yusuf & Nzei (2023) highlight that one of the major barriers to effective AI integration is user hesitation stemming from unfamiliarity or perceived complexity. Applying TAM in this study can therefore illuminate the behavioral and attitudinal factors that determine the success of AI implementations in hospitality, providing insights into how technology-driven personalization can be optimized for better business performance in Port Harcourt.

Empirical Reviews

Abiodun (2025) carried out a study on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on business operations: a study of abeebi food processing, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. The study explores how AI adoption enhances operational productivity and business outcomes in Nigeria's food processing sector. The objective of the study was to evaluate whether AI tools contribute significantly to operational effectiveness, cost reduction, and overall organizational performance. The study employed a quantitative approach, utilizing structured questionnaires distributed to 80 employees and analyzed via STATA software. The author identified that AI tools—particularly machine vision systems and predictive analytics—reduced manual workload, minimized defects in product packaging, and optimized inventory control systems. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between AI integration and improvements in key performance metrics such as production speed, customer response time, and net profitability. However, the study also highlighted challenges, including limited digital literacy among staff and high implementation costs. This study is relevant to the Port Harcourt hotel context, as it underscores the importance of aligning AI systems with business objectives and operational readiness to improve performance outcomes.

Achiole et al. (2025), in their research titled impact of machine learning on business predictive analytics in telecommunication firms in South-South, Nigeria, provide a compelling examination of how machine learning, a subset of AI, supports strategic decision-making in business. Using a descriptive research design, the study sampled 120 mid-level managers from three telecom firms operating in South-South Nigeria. The researchers employed regression analysis to test the impact of AI-powered predictive models on key business outcomes such as churn rate, revenue forecasting accuracy, and customer satisfaction levels. The results demonstrated a strong positive correlation between the use of predictive analytics and business performance indicators. Notably, firms that deployed AI models to predict customer churn were able to implement proactive retention strategies, thus improving long-term profitability. The study contributes to literature by empirically validating the benefits of AI in data-rich service industries and suggests that similar frameworks can be adapted for hotel service delivery optimization. A key limitation noted was the high dependency on structured data, which could limit adaptability in less digitized sectors.

In the article Management of Artificial Intelligence and Performance of Micro Businesses in Enugu Metropolis, Ezema, Oluka, and Okafor (2025) investigate the integration of AI into micro-scale business operations within southeastern Nigeria. The study's aim was to determine how AI applications—specifically digital assistants, customer analytics, and automated accounting systems—affect business productivity, sales growth, and decision-making quality. Using a mixed-methods approach that combined surveys with focus group discussions, the study gathered data from 150 micro-business owners. Results showed that even modest AI integration led to measurable improvements in efficiency and customer engagement. Businesses that adopted automated chatbots

and digital invoicing systems reported a 20–30% increase in customer satisfaction and administrative speed. This research is particularly insightful for small to mid-size hotels in Port Harcourt, as it demonstrates the scalable advantages of AI tools for firms with limited capital. Nonetheless, the authors caution that poor infrastructure and internet connectivity remain critical barriers to full-scale adoption in Enugu and similar cities.

Ebuka et al. (2025), in their study titled artificial intelligence adoption and business performance: evidence from small and medium enterprises in emerging markets, examine how AI technologies influence business growth metrics in SMEs across southeastern Nigeria. The researchers adopted a cross-sectional survey research design with a sample size of 310 SME owners. Using multiple regression analysis, the study assessed the relationship between AI adoption—measured through automation, personalized marketing, and smart inventory systems—and performance indicators such as market share, revenue growth, and cost efficiency. Findings revealed a positive and statistically significant impact of AI adoption on business performance, with personalized customer engagement technologies contributing the most to revenue increase. The study highlights the necessity of policy frameworks that support AI training and infrastructure development in Nigeria. For the hospitality industry in Port Harcourt, the study provides empirical support for investing in AI-driven personalization and backend automation as levers for business growth. A limitation of the research was its reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias in performance estimation.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design, which is considered appropriate for systematically examining the relationship between artificial intelligence (AI)-driven personalization and business performance of hotels in Port Harcourt.

The population for the study comprised of all seventy-three (73) registered hotels currently operating within the metropolitan area of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of data, two hundred and nineteen (219) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the managers chosen as respondents, however, only 184 respondents properly filled their questionnaire. This means that the analysis for this study was done based on the information provided by the 184 respondents.

Testing of Hypotheses

Research Question One: What is the relationship between guest experience customization and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt?

Research Question Two: There is no significant relationship between guest experience customization and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt.

Table 41: Computation of relationship between guest experience customization and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt

Correlations

		Guest Experience Customization	Customer Retention
Guest Experience Customization	Pearson Correlation	1	.485**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	184	184
Customer Retention	Pearson Correlation	.485**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

N	184	184

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output, 2025.

The SPSS output in Table 1 presents the results of a Pearson's Correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship between guest experience customization and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt, based on a sample of 184 managers. The correlation coefficient (r-value) is 0.485, indicating a moderately strong and positive relationship between guest experience customization and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt. This suggests that an increase in guest experience customization is associated with an increase in customer retention. The significance of this relationship is reinforced by a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold, confirming that the correlation is statistically significant and not likely due to random chance. From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that hotels in Port Harcourt should invest in personalized services to enhance their customer retention. By developing unique and innovative services, hotels can not only attract more customers but also justify higher price points, leading to increased revenue.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between smart room technology and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between smart room technology and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt.

Table 2: Computation of relationship between smart room technology and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt

Correlations

		Smart Room Technology	Customer Retention
Smart Room Technology	Pearson Correlation	1	.667**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	184	184
Customer Retention	Pearson Correlation	.667**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	184	184

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output, 2025.

The SPSS output in Table 2 reports the results of a Pearson's Correlation analysis conducted to evaluate the relationship between smart room technology and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt, based on a sample of 184 managers. The correlation coefficient (r-value) is 0.667, indicating a strong and positive relationship between smart room technology and customer retention of hotels in Port Harcourt. This implies that as firms implement effective smart room technology, their customer retention is likely to increase. The significance of this correlation is highlighted by a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold, confirming that the relationship is statistically significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance. From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that hotels in Port Harcourt should prioritize smart room technologies to drive customer retention.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that AI-driven personalization significantly enhances the business performance of hotels in Port Harcourt, particularly through improvements in customer retention. The findings reveal that guest experience customization has a moderate yet statistically significant positive relationship with customer retention ($r = 0.485$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that tailoring services

to individual guest preferences contributes to repeat patronage. Additionally, smart room technology shows a strong and significant positive relationship with customer retention ($r = 0.667$, $p = 0.000$), highlighting the effectiveness of advanced in-room technologies in boosting guest satisfaction and loyalty. These results affirm the value of AI-based innovations in creating personalized and memorable hotel experiences that drive long-term business success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hotels should prioritize the adoption of smart room technologies—such as voice-controlled systems, automated lighting, and personalized entertainment options—to enhance guest comfort and encourage repeat visits.
2. Hotels should implement AI systems capable of analyzing guest data to personalize services, such as room preferences, dietary needs, and concierge suggestions, to improve overall guest satisfaction and retention.

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