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The future of hotels depends less on novelty and more on practical choices about technology, data, operations, work, and sustainability. The *Future of Hotels*, edited by Hanneke Assen, Elena Cavagnaro, Erwin Losekoot and Ian Yeoman, is a multi-author volume with 18 chapters and it reads most clearly when organised around three technological strands: (1) automation and robotics in hotels, (2) datafication – personalisation, pricing, and data-driven marketing, and (3) technologies linked to design, immersion, and the hotel as a “smart” system, including sustainability. This approach helps keep the focus on what matters: how technology can reshape the sector in concrete, operational ways, without getting bogged down in a chapter-by-chapter walkthrough.

In the first strand, the chapters on automation are generally among the most grounded. Chapter 13 on robotics and automation, authored by Klaas Koerten, is a good example. Its core point is straightforward: hospitality is a difficult setting for “generalist” robots because tasks vary widely and service quality depends on small details that are hard to standardise. For that reason, the chapter argues it is more effective to deploy robots designed for specific tasks than to chase the idea of a humanoid that can do everything. Another important theme is infrastructure. In many cases, adjusting the physical space and the workflows (access routes, layout, minor obstacles, routines) achieves more than trying to compensate for everything with more advanced technology. The chapter also suggests a sensible adoption path: start with back-of-house tasks, where the gains are clearer and the impact on guests is easier to manage.

Chapter 16 by Anu Harju-Myllyaho and Heli Väättäjä stays within this automation strand but shifts the angle and broadens the discussion. Instead of asking only “what can the technology do?”, it asks “what kind of hotel, and what kind of work, does this technology create?”. Using scenarios, the chapter shows that similar automation solutions can produce very different outcomes depending on the sector’s priorities: pursuing cost savings, protecting job quality, or trying to balance efficiency with responsibility. The most useful reminder is that adoption is not only about technology and capital. It also depends on acceptance, regulation, organisational culture, and the impact on work. Taken together, Chapters 13 and 16 make a clear point: automation in hospitality is not merely a technical choice; it is a decision with operational and human consequences.

The second strand is datafication, where the book comes closest to what many hotels are already trying to do: using data to personalise, price more effectively, and communicate more precisely. Chapter 14 by Ricardo Mahshi and Sonja Kobinger is the most technical and operational contribution in this section. It focuses on Attribute-Based Pricing (ABP), a pricing and selling approach that stops treating the room as a single “package” and instead values individual attributes and components (for example, the view, size, quietness, flexibility, add-ons). The idea is that, with data and systems integration, hotels can personalise the offer and refine prices in a more granular way. The chapter is particularly useful because it spells out what this requires in practice: integration across systems (PMS/CRS/RMS), consistent data, reliable models, and teams with the right capabilities. It also acknowledges the main barriers: legacy systems, operational complexity, and the risk of turning a good concept into a confusing process for staff and guests. In short, Attribute-Based Pricing is presented as a realistic opportunity, but one that depends on both technological and organisational maturity.

Chapter 12 by David Proctor covers the same strand from a marketing perspective. Its message is that data-driven personalisation will continue to grow, but it brings risks that cannot be ignored – privacy, intrusive data use, lack of transparency, and potential bias. The chapter is less operational than Chapter 14 and more forward-looking, but it is still valuable because it frames a very practical dilemma: the more personalisation you want, the more data you need, and the greater the hotel’s responsibility to explain, protect, and limit that use. Together, Chapters 14 and 12 help clarify why pricing and marketing increasingly converge: as guest management becomes more data- and prediction-driven, pricing and communication start to operate as parts of the same system.

Chapter 5, authored by Keshia Groenendaal, acts as a bridge within this strand by bringing the discussion back to the business model. The idea of “hybrid hospitality” describes hotels that combine accommodation with co-working, co-living, wellness, events, retail, and community-facing functions. Here, technology appears in more practical, day-to-day forms: online check-in, apps, digital communication, and operational software. The key argument is that when a hotel offers more services and creates more touchpoints, it also generates more data and more opportunities for personalisation. That makes data-driven decision-making more viable, but also more demanding: it requires well-integrated systems and an operation capable of handling increased complexity without sacrificing consistency and service quality.

The third strand links technology to design, immersion, and the hotel as a “smart” system, including sustainability. Chapter 9 by Dai-In Danny Han, Pasi Tuominen, Henri Kuokkanen and Malu Boerwinkel follows a different path, focusing on hospitality education, but it remains technologically relevant because it shows how immersive multisensory learning environments can be used to build competencies in an increasingly complex sector. The chapter offers a clear model for designing learning experiences (design, immersion, evaluation), supported by reflection and continuous improvement. Even though it is not about hotel operations, it points to a plausible future in which simulation and immersive training become more common, especially where tasks demand decision-making in dynamic situations.

Chapter 15 by Vanessa Borkmann, Constanze Heydkamp and Carina Pardek places sustainability at the centre and proposes a circular ecosystem model, positioning the hotel as an actor that not only consumes resources but also shapes decisions and behaviours across its wider network. It introduces concepts such as the circular economy, the bioeconomy, and the circular bioeconomy, and argues for a shift from “reducing impact” to “creating positive impact” (net zero to net positive). The chapter also outlines practical avenues for action – ranging from sustainable materials and packaging to education initiatives, social support, local sourcing, and on-site food production – framing sustainability as an integrated part of the hotel system rather than a standalone marketing element.

What stays with the reader is not futuristic language, but operational detail: task-specific automation, the infrastructure and workflow adjustments it assumes, and the data and integration work behind more granular pricing and personalisation. Taken together, the technology chapters offer a solid, practical basis for thinking about implementation – how these ideas can be built, integrated, and managed inside real hotel operations.