

Hotels Turn App Friendly

All hotels from luxury such as The Taj and The Marriott to budget properties like The Ginger are introducing mobile apps to lure patrons.

In the age of technology mobiles are proving smart companions. And to be in the race luxury and budget hotels are coming up with different apps to help their guests. The Gateway Hotel Fatehabad Road Agra has launched a mobile app called iTajGateway in association with iTravelApps to help guests in hotel bookings. It combines details about the hotel along with the destination such as audio tours of three monuments in Agra including the Taj Mahal and navigation maps for assistance such as the Delhi to Agra map as well as offline maps of Agra city. **Siddharth Verma**, founder of iTravelApps says, "The new age traveller is looking for ways to engage with brands and destinations. This app helps travelers create their own experience with all the information needed at fingertips."

A while back Marriott launched its check-in and checkout apps for its hotels – JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity, Jaipur Marriott, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield and Goa Marriott Resort & Spa. This app allows its users to check-in and collect the key card from a designated mobile. Meanwhile, Courtyard by Marriott hotels have come up with a virtual concierge, GoBoard that serves as the digital information centre providing news, weather, travel details and local area mapping. It also replaces traditional printed signage and information boards across CBM hotels. This shift optimises the need for traditional clerical roles and acts as a one-time investment in technology. It also reduces operational costs.

"Not far behind in the tech race budget hotels like Ginger had also launched a mobile app in October 2013 across all its 30 hotels in India. The app enables its guests to "search Ginger hotel by destination, check room availability, book stay, access current and past hotel bookings, use multiple payment options and make a safe transaction," says **PK Mohankumar**, MD & CEO, Roots Corporation Ltd.

The introduction of mobile applications helps "build an interactive relationship with the patrons and lets them engage with the hotel before arrival," says **Pulkesin Mohan**, General Manager, The Gateway Hotel Fatehabad Road, Agra. Most of these apps such as the Ginger app are designed for Android, iOS and Windows mobiles. Few of them such as the iTajGateway can be accessed without the Internet and the iTajGateway for example can be downloaded for free from Google Play and iTunes.

