



Research Highlights

h2c's Global Study

The Direct Booking Acceleration

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The Direct Booking Acceleration

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INTRODUCTION

While direct bookings are not accelerating at the pace that h2c expected based on the 2023 survey results*, the trend is clearly on the upswing. With the enhanced AI capabilities available today, hotel chains' technology priorities have also shifted in recent years. Political tensions aside, the quest for more efficient energy management has diminished, while the need for even more personalized guest services has increased, especially in the area of providing local offers.

This study takes a multi-faceted approach to identifying key trends and pain points in the global hospitality landscape. In particular, we also highlight where the differences lie by hotel chain size and region.

Hotels are benefiting from more mobile bookings, combined with a growing base of different types of rewards programs, which should lead to some reduced reliance on OTAs in the future. Much potential remains in ancillary and item sales, where individual products and services can be booked without the need to book a room.

Looking ahead, we see much more AI-powered automation in marketing, sales, and operations in the coming years, driven by cost reduction efforts and the demand for timely and relevant content to support customer needs at a much higher quality level in the near future.

*h2c's Digital Hotel Operations Study, 2023

1

Online-direct sales normalize

After the surge in online direct hotel bookings in 2022, driven by the post-pandemic travel rebound, sales have now stabilized. IBE revenue growth has returned to its pre-COVID trajectory, reflecting a healthy and sustainable increase.

2

Strong mobile growth ahead

Mobile bookings are rapidly displacing desktop sales and could account for half of all IBE sales in 2-3 years. Mobile websites are driving growth, while app revenue is more likely to be generated by large chains with loyalty programs.

3

AI-powered IBEs in demand

AI usage in the IBE has been increasing since 2020. The greatest potential is in personalized offers and bookings (yield management, content creation and AI-powered chatbots), with half of the chains planning to use these features.

4

Member rates drive direct sales

Nearly half of hotel chains offer a loyalty/rewards program, but they generate less than one-third of total revenue, although the number is much higher for large U.S. chains. The most common benefit for loyalty members is access to lower member rates.

5

Shifts in IBE pain points

Although personalization, customization, and multi-property functionalities have been enhanced, the current limitations of upselling, unsupported rate strategies, and reporting functionalities require greater attention than in 2020.

6

Ancillary & Item sales on the rise

Estimated ancillary revenue potential continues to be higher than actual revenue. Breakfast is the most profitable ancillary sale. Item sales are available in a quarter of the IBEs used, while three quarters of hotel chains are interested in implementing them.

7

Untapped automation opportunities

35% of chains have a dedicated team or person to review manual tasks that could be automated. 22% plan to create such a team, while 43% have no plans for automation teams, leaving four in 10 chains with untapped automation opportunities.

8

Top innovations are AI-centric

In terms of innovation expectations, AI for process optimization and recommendation engines topped the list for the second year in a row, followed by direct booking capabilities for local activities and AI-powered chatbots and (web) content generators.

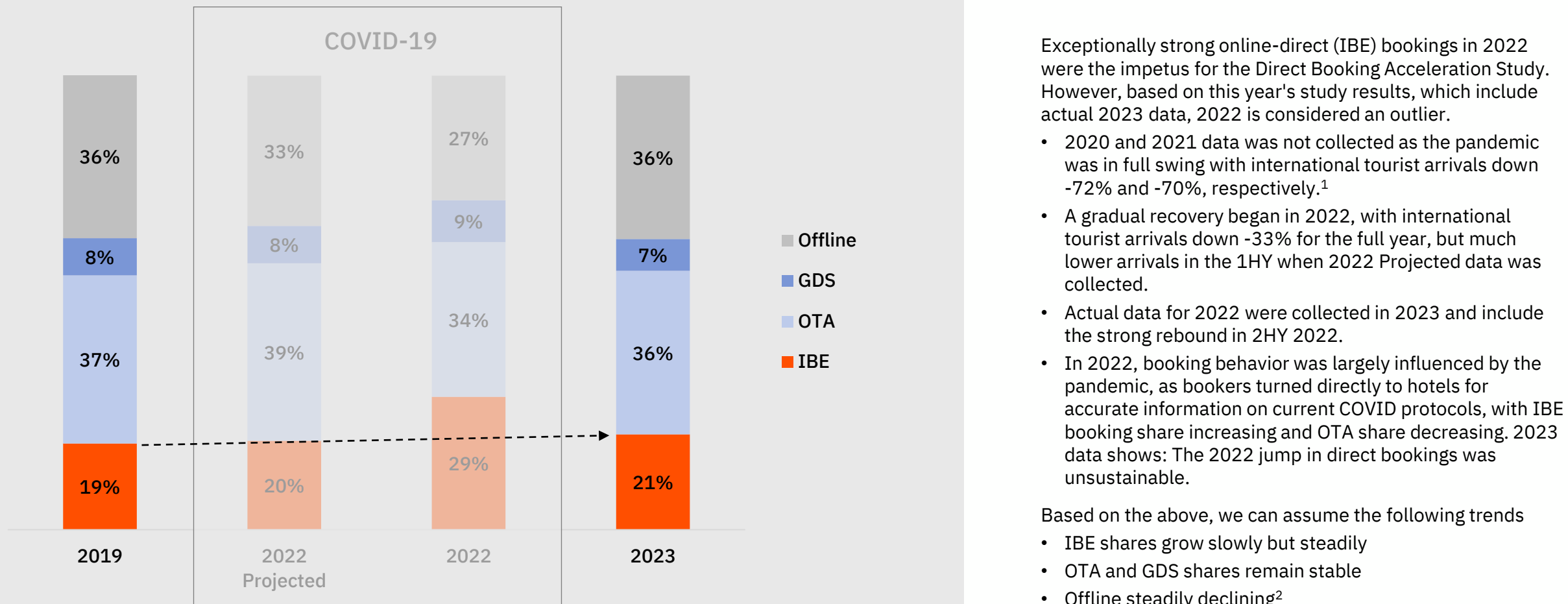
9

Data cleansing is still challenging

PMSs are well integrated, but there are still gaps with loyalty systems, POS, chatbots, and other on-site systems. Data cleansing issues remain a top concern, impacting nearly a third of respondents – mostly smaller chains in APAC and Europe.

Online-Direct Shares Are Increasing

But 2022 was a pandemic-related outlier



Trend from recent h2c studies. Data was collected each subsequent year except for 2022 Projected, which was collected in the same year.

Exceptionally strong online-direct (IBE) bookings in 2022 were the impetus for the Direct Booking Acceleration Study. However, based on this year's study results, which include actual 2023 data, 2022 is considered an outlier.

- 2020 and 2021 data was not collected as the pandemic was in full swing with international tourist arrivals down -72% and -70%, respectively.¹
- A gradual recovery began in 2022, with international tourist arrivals down -33% for the full year, but much lower arrivals in the 1HY when 2022 Projected data was collected.
- Actual data for 2022 were collected in 2023 and include the strong rebound in 2HY 2022.
- In 2022, booking behavior was largely influenced by the pandemic, as bookers turned directly to hotels for accurate information on current COVID protocols, with IBE booking share increasing and OTA share decreasing. 2023 data shows: The 2022 jump in direct bookings was unsustainable.

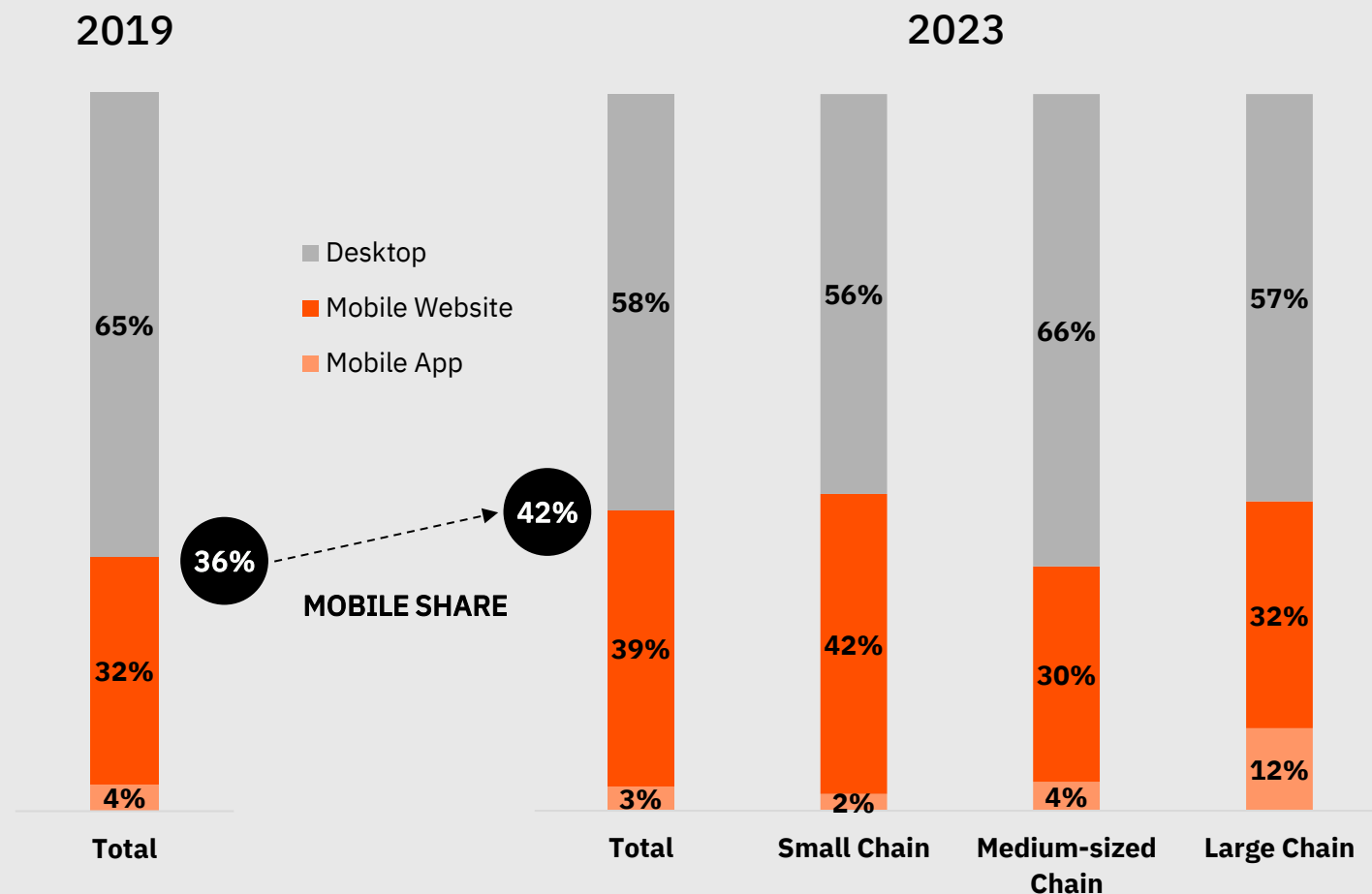
Based on the above, we can assume the following trends

- IBE shares grow slowly but steadily
- OTA and GDS shares remain stable
- Offline steadily declining²

¹Source: UNWTO. ²The 2019 dataset includes more large chains, so the offline share is lower. On a comparable basis, the offline share would be higher.

IBE Revenue Share by Application/Device

2019 vs 2023



Mobile share has grown substantially: In 2019, mobile accounted for 36% of the total IBE revenue share. In 2023, this figure has increased to 42%.

Desktop is still dominant but declining: While desktop remains the dominant booking channel, its share has dropped.

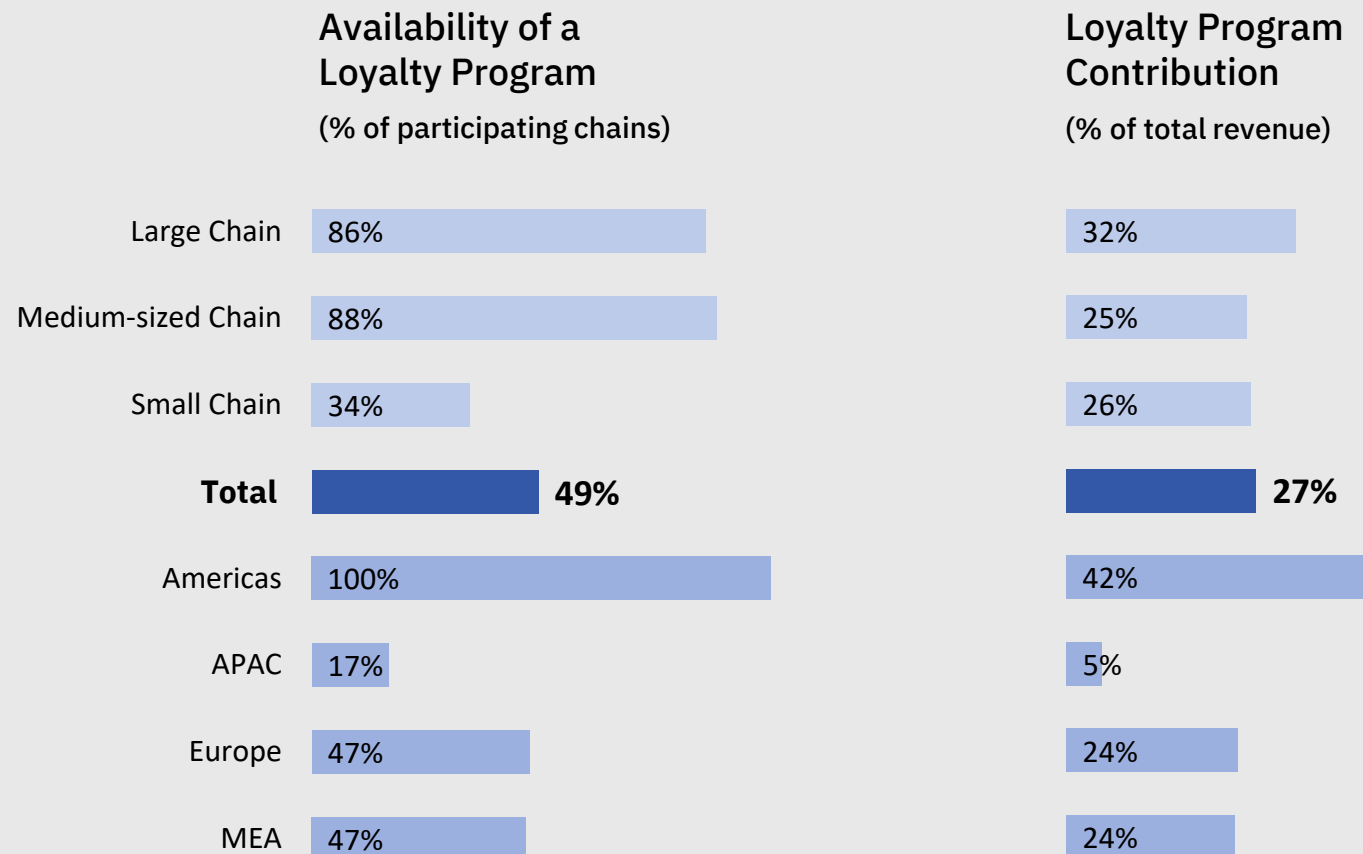
Mobile app usage has not seen significant overall growth. Large hotel chains are leading in app adoption due to their scale and loyalty programs, with the mobile app share for large chains reaching 12% in 2023. In total, 21 Chains indicated that they have an app, and the average revenue share is 13%.

Medium sized chains seem to lag in terms of their mobile booking share, only achieving 34% compared to 44% of the large hotel chains. By region, the Middle East and Africa clearly leads with 53% mobile bookings compared to the other three regions.

What is the IBE share by application of total IBE revenue in 2023? N = 81.
Figures may not add up due to rounding.

Loyalty/Rewards Program Availability & Loyalty Contribution

By Hotel Chain Size and Region



About half (49%) of all participating hotel chains offer a loyalty or rewards program. Large and mid-size chains have a high level of program adoption with nearly nine in 10 offering a program, while small chains lag with only about a third offering rewards.

Regionally, the Americas lead with 100% of hotel chains offering a loyalty or rewards program, while APAC is much lower at 17%, with only one in six chains offering a program.

Loyalty/rewards programs contribute 27% of total revenue on average, with the Americas clearly leading the way regionally with 42% of revenue generated by these programs. For reference, US mega-chains achieve up to 60%.¹

In Europe, the contribution of loyalty is below average at 24%. A European mega-chain reference is Accor, with 37% of room nights coming from its loyalty program.²

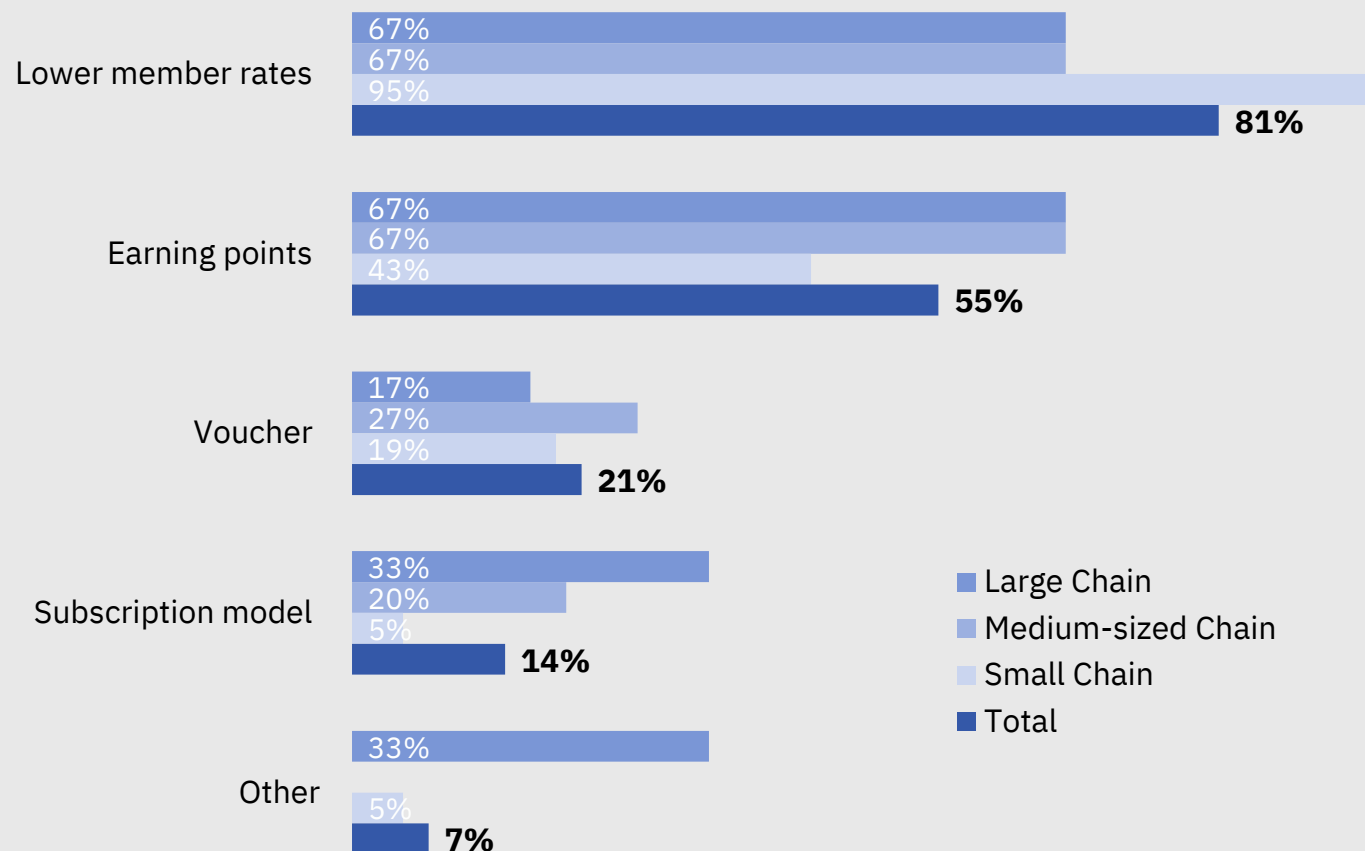
Note: U.S. and European mega-chains such as Marriott and Accor did not participate in this year's study.

Is a Loyalty/Rewards program available? N = 85. What is the loyalty contribution as a percentage of total revenue? N = 41.
Note: U.S. and European mega-chains such as Marriott and Accor did not participate in this year's study.

¹According to Franchise Disclosure Documents (FDDs), which are based solely on U.S. market data. ²Accor E-Commerce & Loyalty

Loyalty Program Members Benefits

By Hotel Chain Size



How do members benefit from your Loyalty program? (Check all that apply). N = 42.

What benefits do chains offer their members to encourage bookings?

Lower member rates are the most common benefit, especially among small chains.

Earning points is offered by 55% of loyalty programs, with large and medium chains more likely to offer this than small chains.

Smaller chains often offer a "member rate program" as opposed to a fully-fledged loyalty program, i.e., a points-based rewards program is less likely to be offered by small chains.

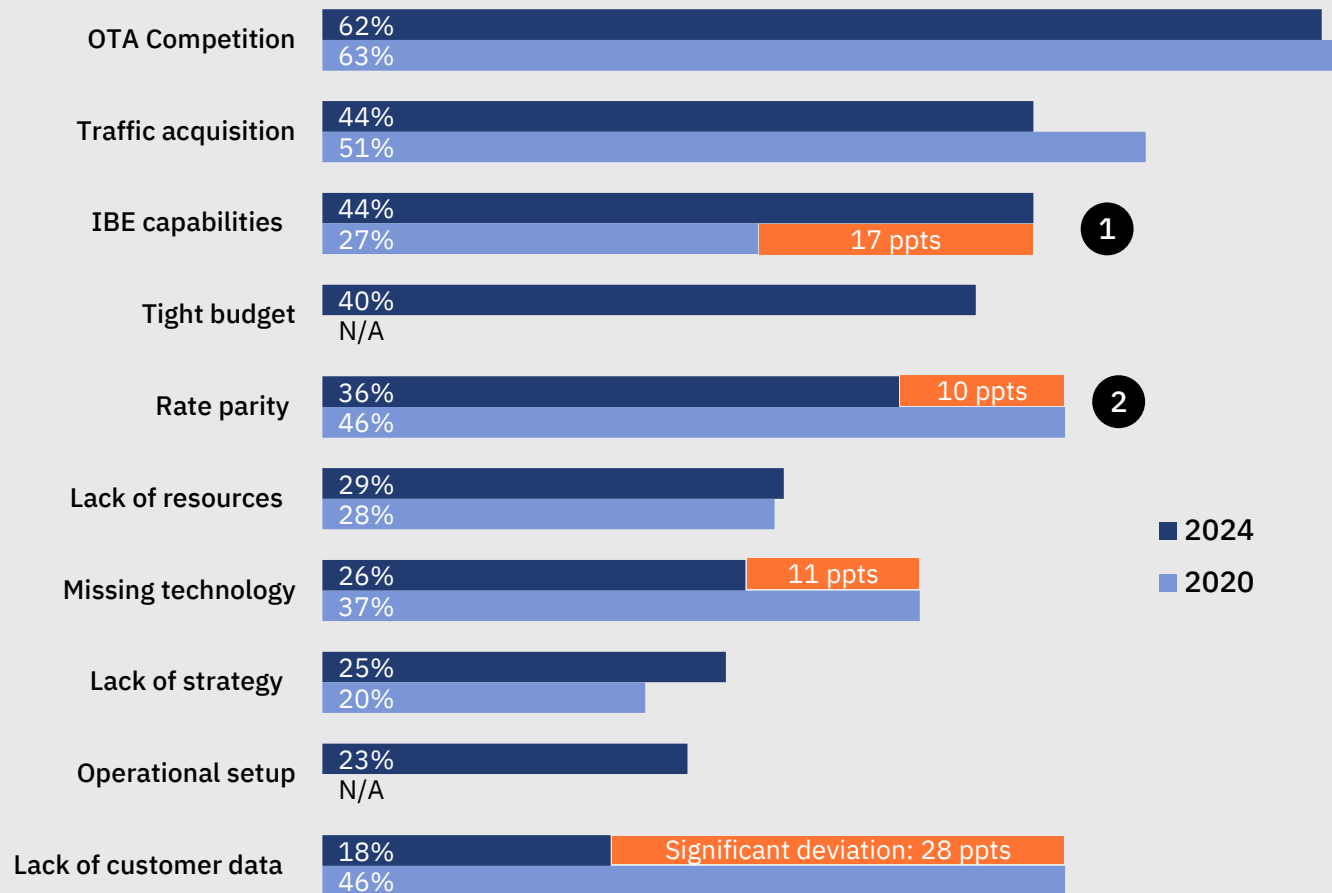
Vouchers and subscription models are less common and are mostly offered by larger chains.

Voucher: Can refer to freebies such as a free drink upon arrival or a % discount on a service (e.g., spa treatment).

Subscription model: Upfront (annual) payment to receive discounts on room rates and/or F&B, for example. Other mentions include late checkout on Sundays, free bottle of champagne after 20 nights, and member events.

Biggest Challenges Impacting Online-direct Sales Goals

2024 vs 2020



What are the biggest challenges preventing you from achieving your online-direct sales goals?
 N = 84 (2024) and 71 (h2c's Global IBE Study, 2020). N/A: Not asked in 2020.

We asked hotel chains about the biggest challenges that have impacted their online direct sales goals. Here you can see the results compared to our 2020 study.

OTA competition remains the top barrier to direct sales, with little change since 2020.

Traffic acquisition has improved slightly but remains a significant hurdle for driving direct bookings.

However, there is a need for more IBE capabilities: An increase of 17 percentage points from 2020 shows that many hotels still require more advanced booking engine functionality. Interesting to note here is the large gap between large chains vs. small chains that raised this point. This can also be due to the higher usage of fully customized IBEs by large chains.

Rate parity issues have improved, but are still a challenge, especially for large chains.

Technology gaps and lack of customer data have decreased significantly, indicating progress in tech adoption and data collection over the last four years.

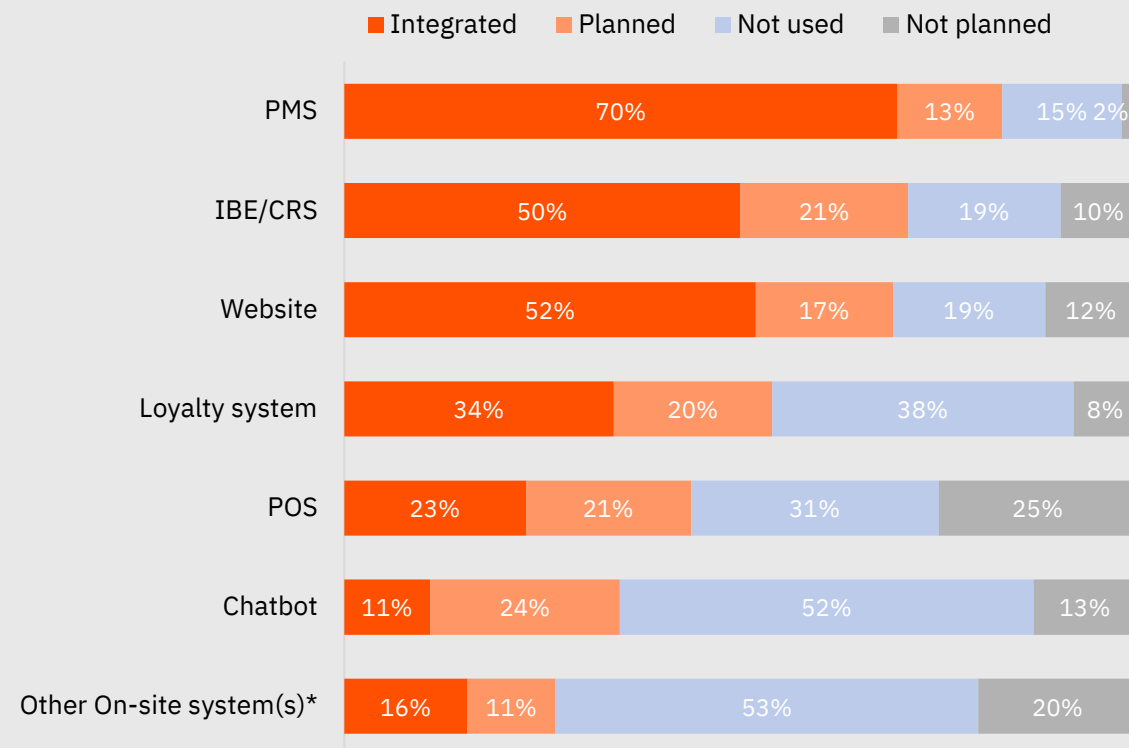
Not all chains face the same challenges:

- 1 Only 14% of large chains lack IBE functionality compared to 63% of small chains.
- 2 31% of small chains have rate parity problems compared to 57% of large chains.

CRM Guest Data Cleansing Process

Still low level of integration

Systems Feeding Into CRM Guest Data Cleansing Process



Are these systems/databases integrated for feeding into your CRM guest data cleansing process?

N = 53. *For example, Spa and Golf management systems.

Direct bookings are obviously affected by the level of system integration. In particular, the CRM guest data cleansing process is relevant.

System integrations to feed the guest data cleansing process are still at a low level. 70% of PMSs are integrated, while other systems such as IBE/CRS and website show moderate levels of integration.

Loyalty systems and POS lag behind, with chatbots and onsite systems being the least integrated.

When asked in interviews with hotel chains if there are any missing system integrations for a seamless CRM guest data cleansing process, these are the top issues:

40% cited data cleansing integration issues, such as data quality issues, poor configuration and standardization, formatting errors, and manual work required,

20% cited general (CRS, PMS, RMS) interface issues including depth of interfaces, and

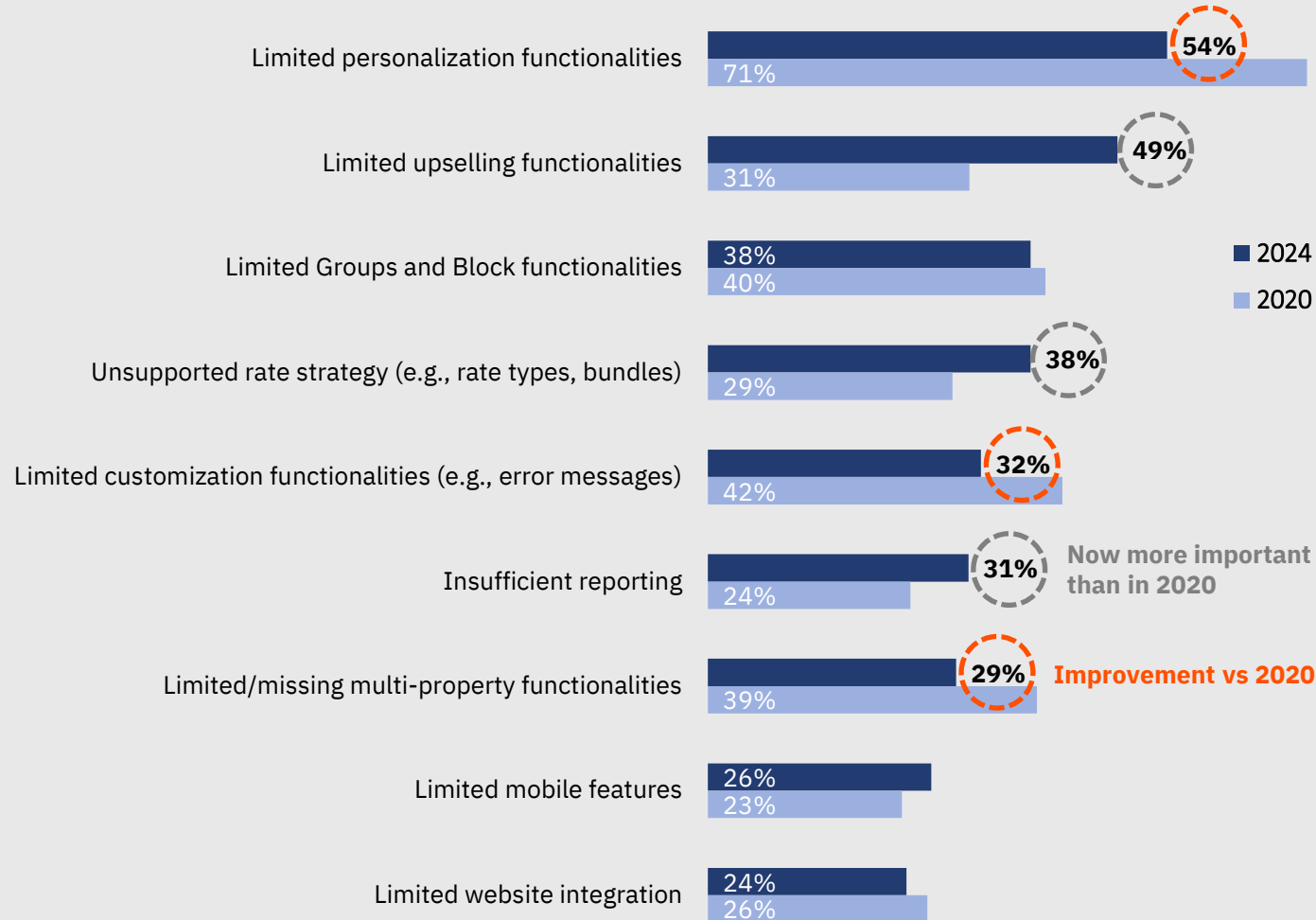
10% cited missing integrations e.g., missing spa system API.

Despite this, 40% reported no problems with the CRM data cleansing process.

Hotel chain interview: Are there any missing system integrations for a seamless CRM guest data cleansing process? (Multiple answers possible). N = 13 (10 use a CRM system).

Pain Points Experienced With IBE Solution

2024 vs 2020



This year's study reflects the ongoing challenges hotel chains face with their Internet Booking Engine (IBE) solutions, despite some improvements since 2020.

IBE Pain Points (2024 vs. 2020):

- 54% of respondents in 2024 cited issues with limited personalization capabilities, down from 71% in 2020, indicating some improvement but still a significant concern.
- The percentage of respondents experiencing limited upselling functionalities increased from 31% in 2020 to 49% in 2024, reflecting growing concerns in this area.
- Groups and block functionalities remained a consistent pain point in both years.
- Additional concerns include unsupported rate strategy, inadequate reporting, and limited mobile capabilities, particularly for large hotel chains.

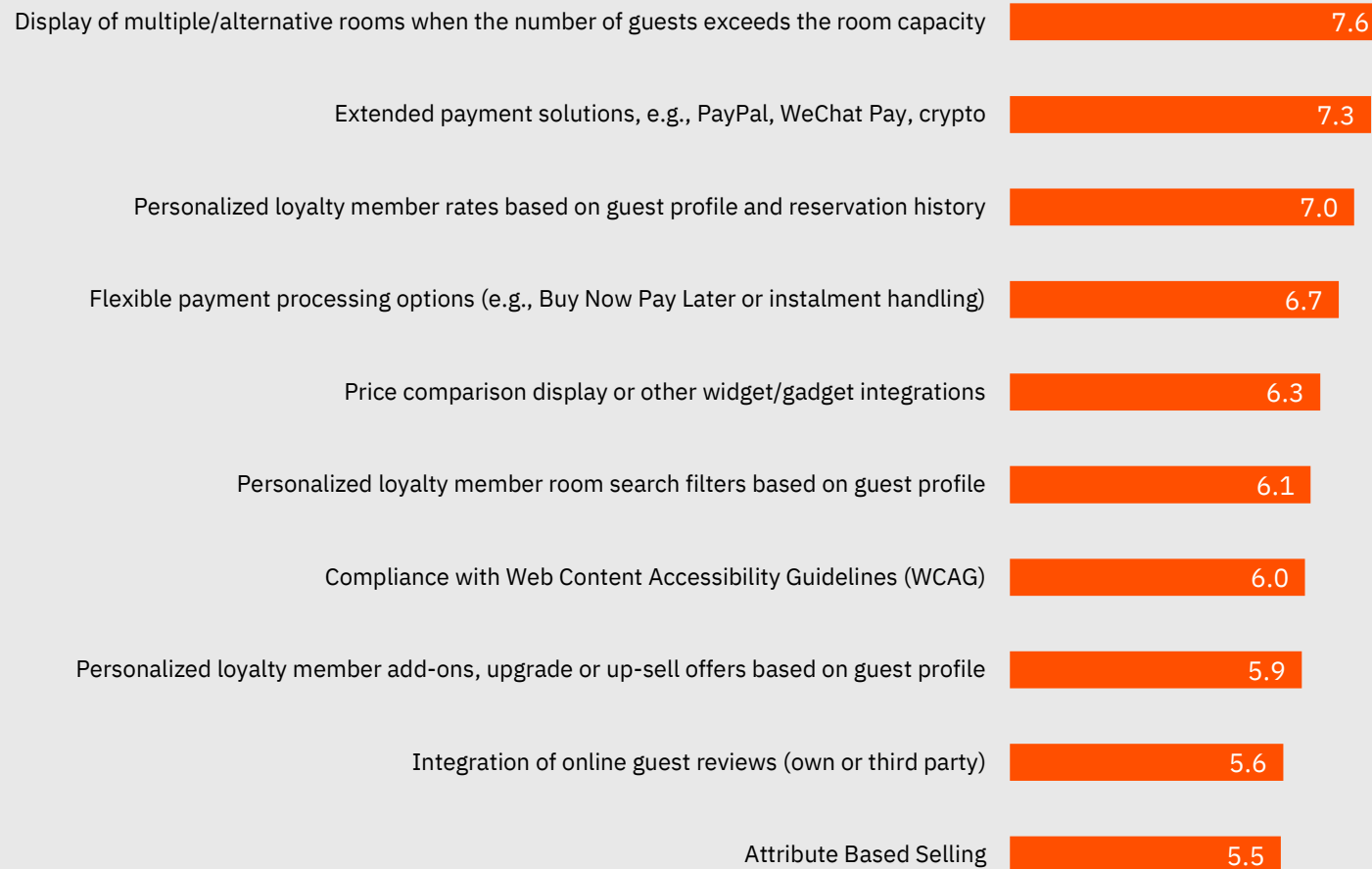
While some issues such as personalization and customization have improved since 2020, other areas such as upselling, rate strategy, and reporting have become more prominent challenges in 2024.

Hotel chains will continue to focus on overcoming the limited functionality of some IBE solutions to support complex distribution needs.

What pain points are you currently experiencing with your IBE solution? N = 68 (2024) and N = 62 (h2c's Global IBE Study, 2020).

Importance of IBE Features for Direct Sales

Large chain priorities differ from smaller chains



We asked chains how they prioritize IBE features to increase direct sales.

The top 3 priorities are multiple/alternative room display, advanced payment solutions and personalized loyalty member rates.

Other notable features include flexible payment processing, which is more important in MEA and the Americas, but less so for large chains.

Price comparison tools are rated 6.3 overall, but are less important to large chains and more important to the MEA region.

WCAG compliance is highly rated by large chains and in the Americas.

Attribute-based selling (ABS), which allows rooms to be configured by attributes such as floor, view, etc., is more important for mid-sized chains and in MEA and the Americas. Notably, ABS also ranks low in h2c's Global Distribution Study, 2022, largely due to the difficulty of managing item inventories and distribution systems that cannot handle ABS.

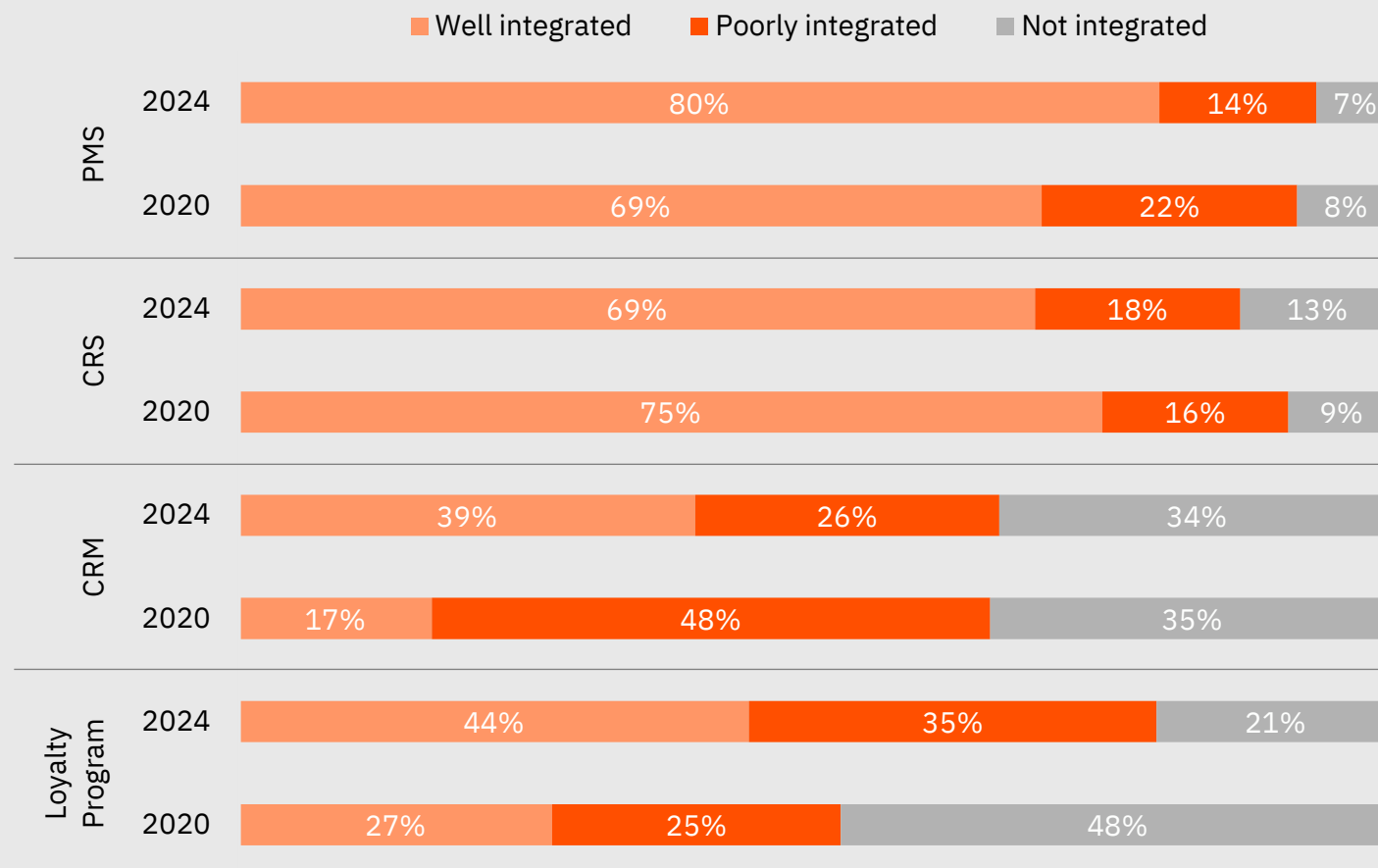
Large chains prioritize some features differently, with more emphasis on web accessibility compliance and less emphasis on price comparison and flexible payment options.

How important are the following IBE features to your direct sales? Please rate on a scale of 0-10, with 10 being the most important.

N = 61

Level of IBE Integration

2024 vs 2020



How well is the IBE integrated with key systems in 2024 compared to 2020?

The quality of PMS integration has improved significantly. Poor integration is only 14% today, showing good progress.

The quality of CRS integration has slightly declined with well-integrated systems dropping from 75% in 2020 to 69% in 2024.

CRM integration has improved, but the share of non-integrated CRM systems remains high at 34%.

Loyalty programs are expected to be well integrated, but the combined share of poorly integrated and non-integrated systems remains remarkably high at 56%.

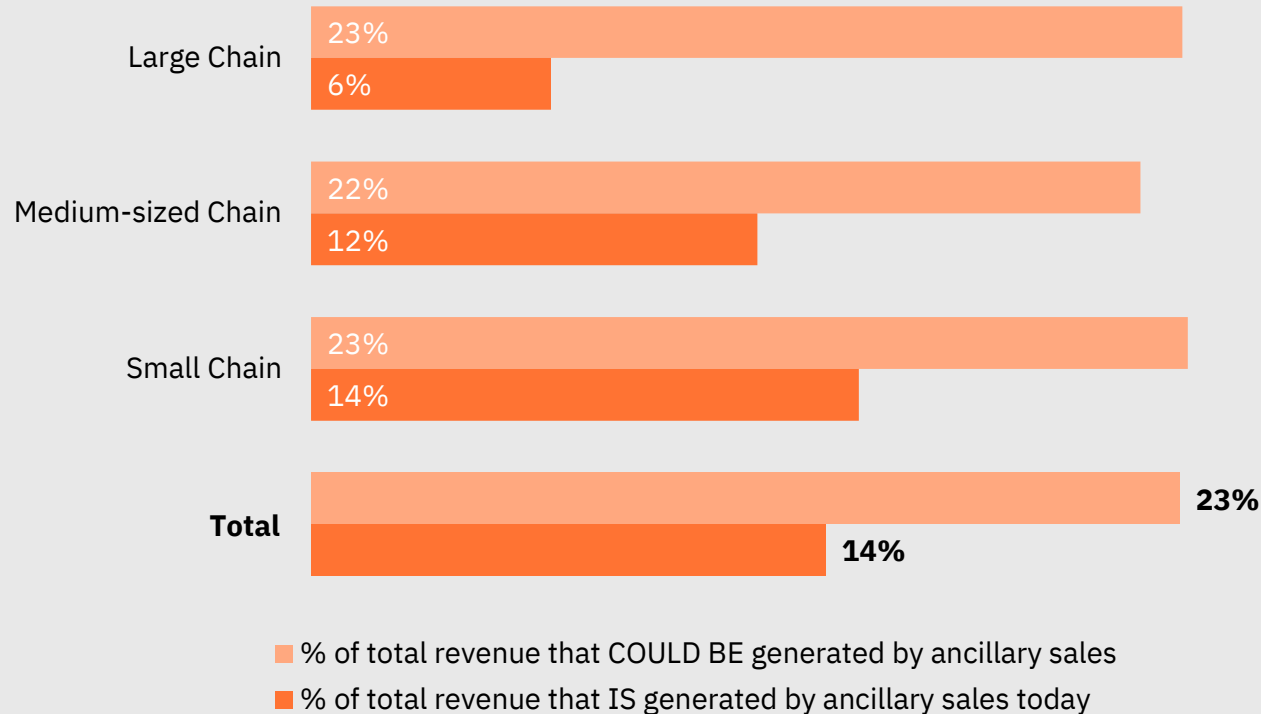
While there has been significant progress in PMS, CRM and loyalty program integration, CRS integration has declined.

How good is the IBE integrated with the following systems today? N = 60 (2024) and N = 62 (h2c's Global IBE Study, 2020).

Ancillary Sales

Sales Potential & Sales Items

Ancillary Sales Potential vs. Actual Sales



From your perspective, what percentage of total revenue is being generated today versus what you believe could be generated from ancillary sales? N = 56.

When we asked hotel chains about the percentage of total revenue generated from ancillary sales* today versus potential future revenue, a significant gap emerged across all chain sizes. Currently, 14% of total revenue comes from ancillary sales, while the potential is estimated at 23%. This is similar to last year's figures, where the gap was 15% versus 29%.

Large chains report a particularly large gap. Medium and small chains fare better, generating 12% and 14% of their revenue from ancillary sales today.

The most profitable ancillary sales are breakfast (24%), late check-in/check-out (12%), transportation (12%), room upgrades (12%), spa services (8%) and other services (32%).

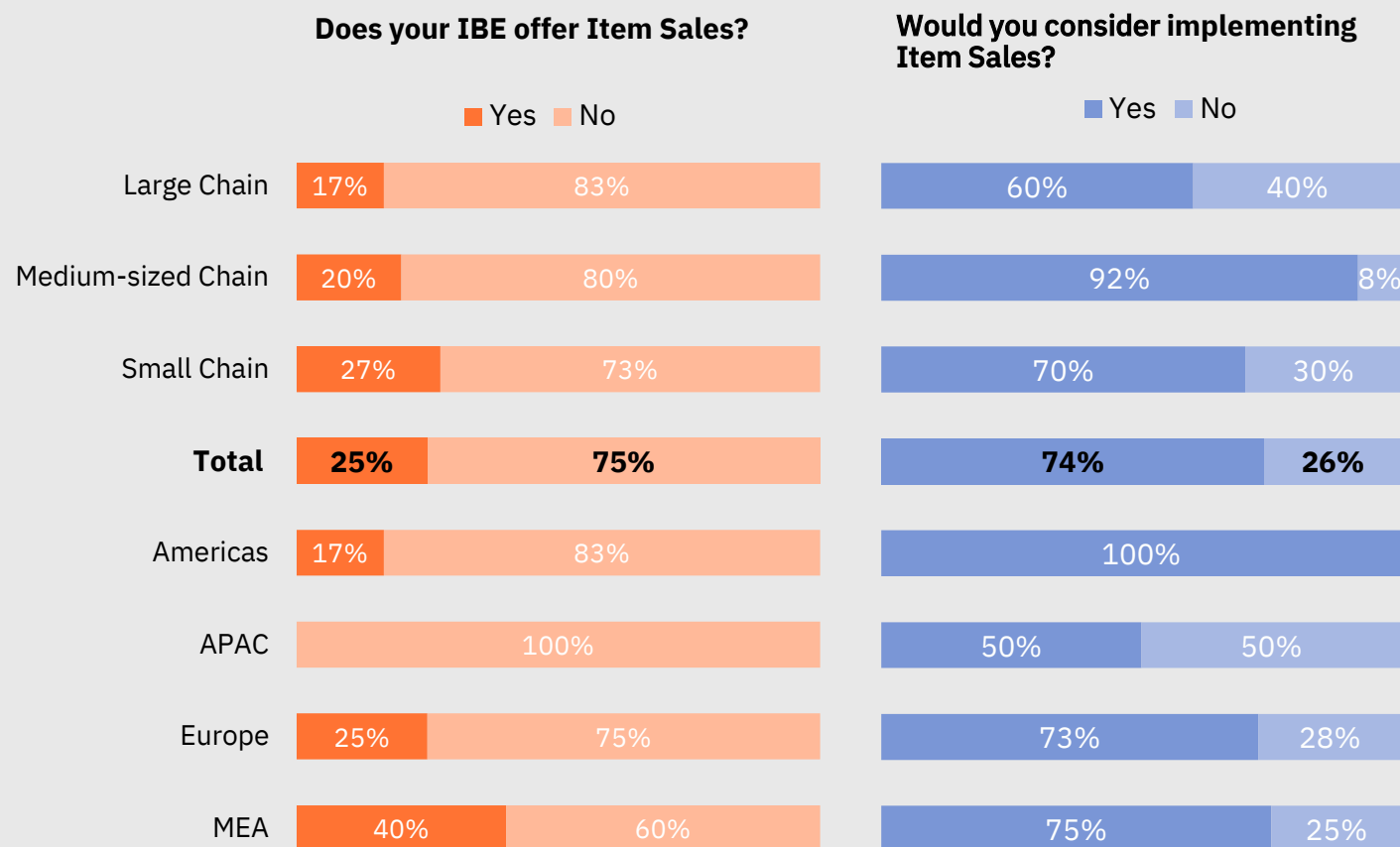
In h2c's 2022 Global Distribution study, 57% of responding chains used ancillary sales as part of their sales strategy and 32% planned to implement it. Ancillary sales and personalization ranked as the top two sales and marketing initiatives. However, there is still significant untapped potential in ancillary sales.

*Ancillary (add-on) sales are tied to the sale of a room, as opposed to Item sales, which are independent of the sale of a room.

Hotel chain interview: What is your most profitable revenue stream when it comes to upselling? N = 11.

Status of Item (Retail) Sales

Three out of four chains consider implementing Item Sales



The visual presents key insights into the current status of item (retail) sales* functionality in Internet Booking Engines (IBEs) for hotel chains.

Key findings:

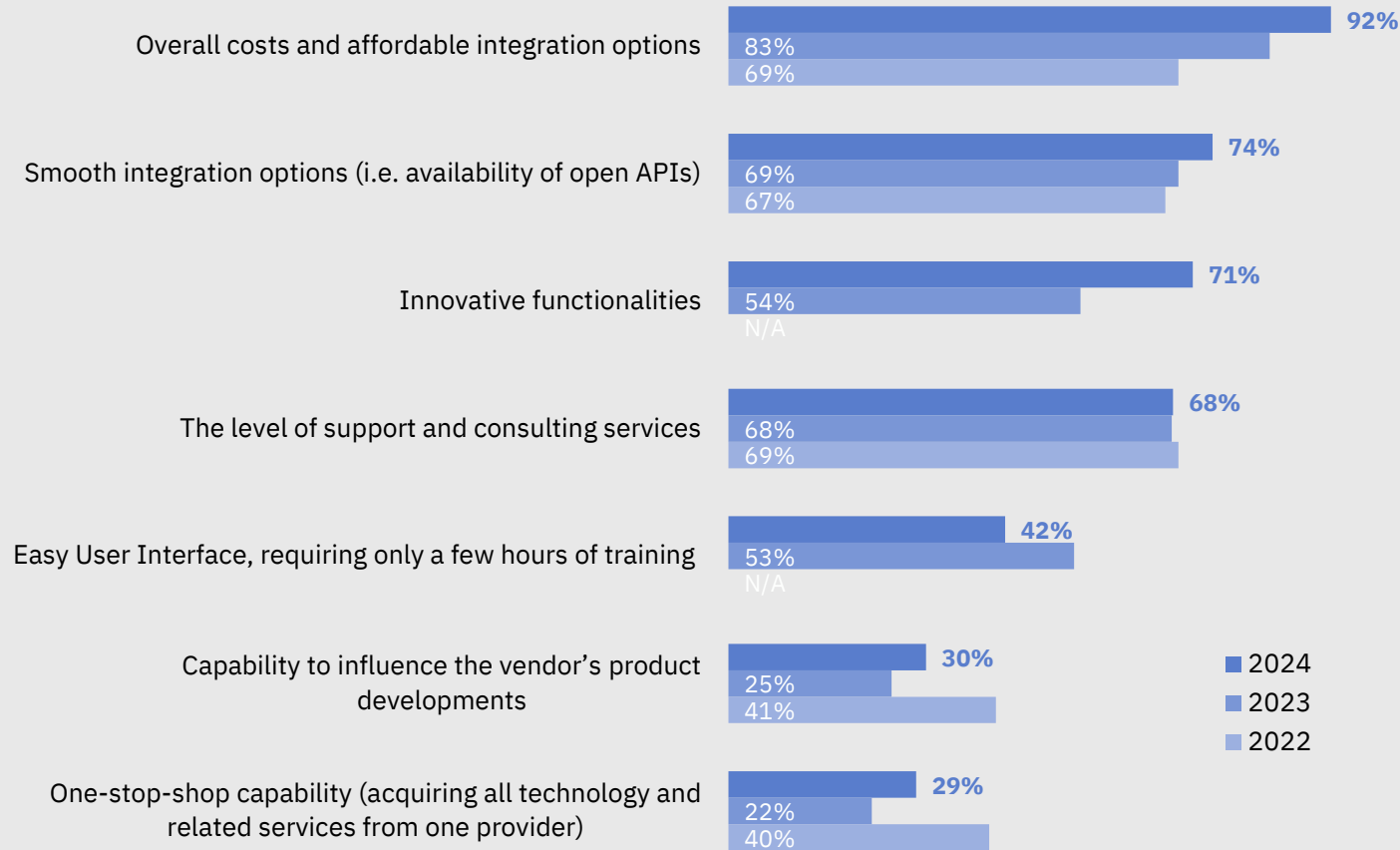
- Only 25% of IBEs used by the study participants currently offer item sales, with small chains leading at 27% adoption.
- Regionally, Middle East and Africa (MEA) shows the highest adoption at 40%, while Asia-Pacific (APAC) stands at 0%.
- There is a strong future interest in implementing item sales, with 74% of respondents expressing consideration. Notably, 100% of respondents in the Americas and 92% of medium-sized chains are open to this functionality.
- Europe and MEA also show high interest, with 73% and 75% respectively, signaling a broader trend towards enhancing retail capabilities in hotel booking systems.

The overall trend highlights a growing shift in the hospitality industry toward offering more flexible sales options, enabling guests to purchase products or services independently of room bookings.

Can your IBE sell products & services (items) individually, completely independent of a room booking, i.e. does it have retail capabilities, such as facilitating a breakfast-only booking? N = 72. Would you consider the implementation of retail functionality? N = 57.

*Item sales are not tied to the sale of a room, unlike ancillary sales, which are.

Decision-driving Factors for Acquiring New Tech Solutions



When you are acquiring a new tech solution, which factors drive your decision? (check all that apply). N = 67.

These findings highlight the growing focus on cost-effective, integrated technology solutions in the hotel industry, alongside a consistent demand for innovation and support.

Cost Sensitivity: In 2024, 92% of hotel chains identified overall costs and affordable integration options as the most critical factor when acquiring new technology solutions. This marks an increase of 23 percentage points since 2022.

Smooth Integration: 74% of hotel chains value smooth integration options (e.g., open APIs), compared to only 50% of vendors, signaling a gap in priorities.

Innovative Functionalities: Hotel chains show strong interest in innovative functionality, which has increased in importance by 17 percentage points since last year.

Support & Consulting: Support and consulting services are critical for 68% of hotel chains and have remained a stable requirement across the industry since 2020.

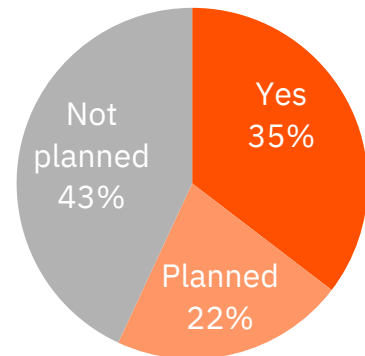
User Interface and Customization: The importance of an easy-to-use interface has decreased, with only 42% of hotel chains emphasizing this in 2024, down from 53% the previous year.

Both the **ability to influence vendor product developments** and **one-stop-shop capability** are required by three in 10 chains, up slightly from last year.

Dedicated Team for Potential Automation & Automatable Tasks

Four in 10 leave automation opportunities untapped

Do you have a dedicated team that reviews manual tasks across departments that could be automated?



Average No. of Automatable Tasks
per chain identified in the past 12 months:

6.6

From an organizational and technological efficiency perspective, we sought to determine whether hotel chains have dedicated teams responsible for identifying potential tasks for automation to reduce manual workload.

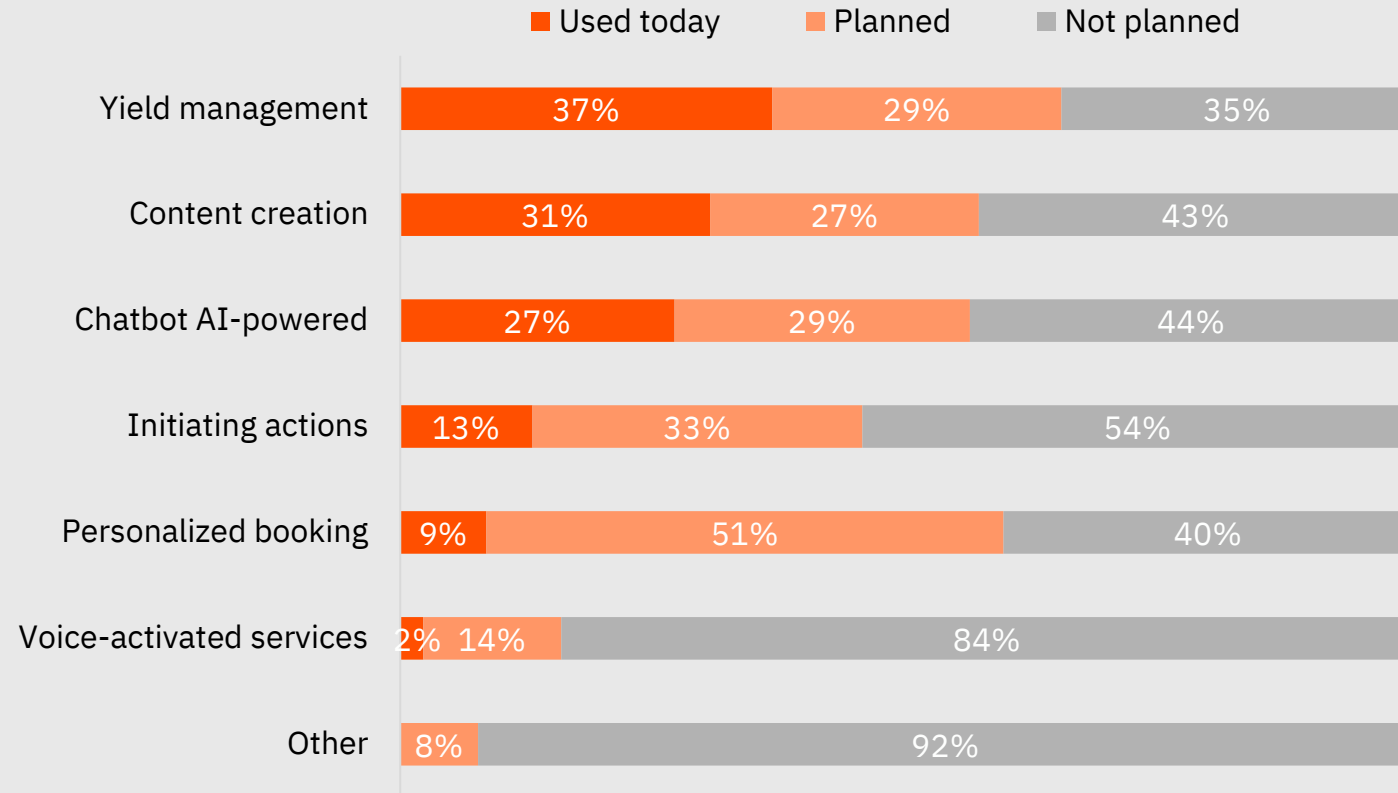
- 35% of chains have a dedicated team or individual to review manual tasks that could be automated.
- 22% plan to establish such a team, while 43% have no plans for creating automation teams.
- On average, hotel chains have identified 6.6 automatable tasks in the past 12 months, with medium-sized and small chains leading in identifying these opportunities.

The key takeaway is that four in 10 chains are leaving automation opportunities untapped, highlighting significant potential for operational improvements through automation.

Do you have a dedicated team/person that regularly reviews manual tasks across interdependent departments that could be automated? N = 65. In the direct booking environment, how many tasks have you identified that could be automated but are performed manually today? N = 42.

What is AI / ML used for in the IBE and hotel website today?

Planned AI deployments will soon double AI usage



This figure shows current and planned uses of AI/ML in hotel IBEs and websites, with a focus on future expansion.

Today's use of AI has increased significantly compared to 2020, when only 10% of hotel chains were using AI for IBE and website*.

37% of chains are using AI for yield management, the highest current usage. Nearly 1/3 of chains use AI for content creation, and slightly fewer use AI-powered chatbots. At the lower end of practical use today, 13% use AI to initiate actions. Only 9% use AI for personalized bookings and 2% for voice-activated services.

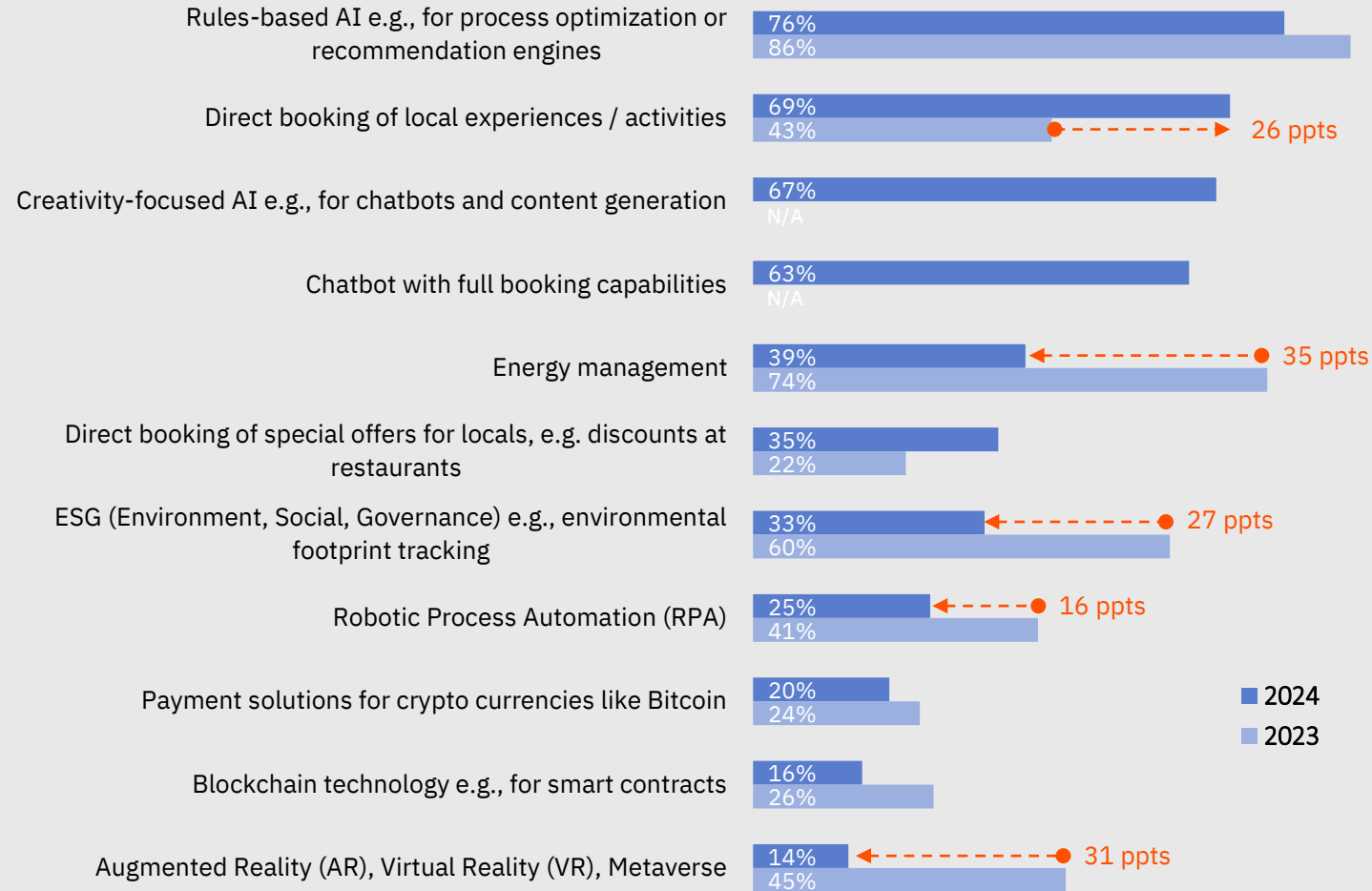
AI for personalized bookings has the highest planned growth, with a potential 5x increase. 33% plan to use AI to initiate actions, and nearly three in 10 chains plan to expand into chatbots and yield management.

The use of AI in hotel IBEs is expected to roughly double over the next few years, with the highest growth potential clearly in the area of personalized bookings.

What is AI / ML used for in the IBE and hotel website today? If not, will it be used in the future? N = 52.
 Other mention is AI phone assistant. *Source: h2c's Global IBE Study. Is Artificial Intelligence used via the employed (IBE/website) technology? N = 58.

Emerging Innovation Areas over the next 2 years

2024 vs. 2023



Significant deviations with higher (→) and lower (←) need to innovate today.

In which areas do you see innovation arising in the next 2 years? (check all that apply). N = 51, N = 58 (2023).

Last year's surveys also explored emerging areas of innovation within the next two years. This allowed us to compare this year's results with the 2023 responses.

These are the top areas of innovation for 2024:

- Rules-based AI for process optimization and recommendation engines leads with 76%.
- Direct booking of local experiences/activities has jumped in importance, up 26 percentage points to 69%.
- Creativity-focused AI is emerging as a new area, with 67% planning to deploy it.
- Chatbots with full booking capabilities are also seen as important, with 63% interested in this area.

Areas where innovation has either reached its peak or become a lower priority:

- Energy management has dropped significantly.
- ESG (environmental, social, governance) is also down.
- Robotic Process Automation (RPA), AR/VR/Metaverse and Blockchain technology have lower expectations in 2024 compared to 2023.

Methodology

Overall study results are based on the input from **88** unique hotel chains.

In total, **91 responses*** provide the data for our quantitative research and break down to
77 online surveys and
14 executive interviews on hotel chain level.

Regional coverage: **Europe, Middle East & Africa, Asia Pacific and Americas**

Hotel chains with properties across multiple regions are assigned to the region with the most properties.

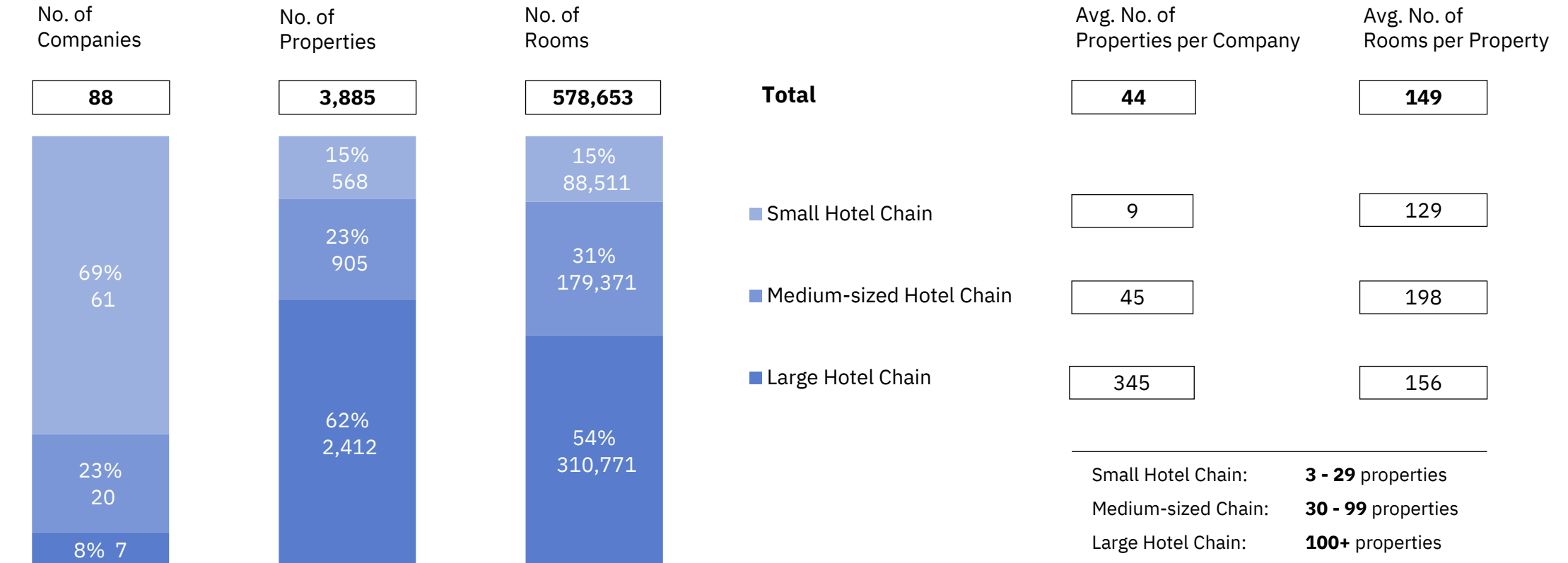
The **overall study evaluation** is based on the number of responses as opposed to weighted averages by hotel chain size. The results are not weighted because global chains would offset the feedback by a large margin. For a better understanding of the total results, they are broken down by chain size (small, medium-sized, and large hotel chains) and regions.

Distribution channel shares are calculated as the average of unweighted percentages (evaluated by number of responses) and weighted percentages (evaluated by number of rooms). The same methodology was used in prior years, making core shares comparable.

*One chain provided 2 surveys, and 2 chains provided an interview and a survey. All responses were from different individuals.

Participating Hotel Chains

By Company, Property and Rooms Size



NOTE: This year's study does not include mega chains like Accor or Marriott

What kind of hospitality company do you represent? N = 89 (88 unique companies). Figures may not add up due to rounding.

Sponsors

in alphabetical order

amadeus

Amadeus powers more personalized and authentic travel experiences. Our solutions are designed to enrich every stage of the traveler journey and help hospitality providers acquire, service, and retain guests by profitably driving demand and converting them into loyal fans. To find out more about Amadeus, visit www.amadeus-hospitality.com.



BLASTNESS

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS

Blastness is a one-stop shop providing a comprehensive suite of systems and services to boost direct bookings and maximize hotel revenue. The company offers all types of properties reservations and connectivity systems, revenue management software, website development, and digital marketing to help them make the most of digital market opportunities.

Cendyn™

Cendyn is a global hospitality cloud-based technology company that enables hotels to drive revenue, maximize profitability, and create deeper connections with guests through its integrated solutions. Cendyn drives commercial success for hotels through its Find, Book, Grow promise: find the right guests; drive them to book direct, and grow loyalty and revenue.



dailypoint™ is the leading #abovePMS solution for hotels, focusing on enhancing guest data management. By collecting and AI-driven data cleansing from PMS, POS, websites, newsletters, and Wi-Fi, it develops a unified guest profile. This process significantly boosts your hotel's CRM, guest satisfaction, and revenue, making it the pivotal tool in #HotelTech.

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D-EDGE is a leading SaaS company offering cloud-based e-commerce solutions to more than 17,000 hotels & chains worldwide. Combining technical excellence with digital marketing expertise, D-EDGE simplifies hospitality through a comprehensive suite of easy-to-use solutions (CRS, Web, Digital Marketing, CRM, Data Intelligence), covering every touchpoint of the hotel guest journey.



ErmesHotels is a consolidated Italian CRS with more than 1,000 properties in the upper segment of the hotel industry, focusing on chains and hotel groups, both leisure and business. Its array of tools includes Booking Engine Solutions, Channel management, Premium Proposal Platform, GDS Representation and advanced and compliant payment systems.



Oracle Hospitality brings over 45 years of experience in providing globally recognized technology solutions to independent hoteliers, global and regional chains, gaming, and cruise lines. Our solutions include cloud-native platforms for property management, point-of-sale, distribution, and guest engagement and merchandising that empower our customers to deliver personalized guest experiences, maximize profitability, and encourage long-term loyalty.



P3 Hotel Software delivers customized booking engines and guest communication solutions for hotels, exclusively integrating with Oracle Opera. As a strategic Oracle partner, P3 enhances direct bookings and guest engagement, offering scalable products to meet the needs of hotels globally.

Sponsors

in alphabetical order



Profitroom's award-winning booking engine boosts direct bookings by up to 96% for outstanding hotels. Our platform integrates direct bookings with other distribution channels, automated email marketing, SEO, paid campaigns, and more. Increase guest volume, profits, and brand recognition while reducing staff workload—all from one comprehensive tool.



SHR (an Access company) is the premier global specialist technology and service provider for the hotel sector. SHR empowers hotels and casinos to increase revenue and customer lifetime value at every step of the guest journey by combining the immense potential of AI, with a dynamic integrated and automated suite of applications and services.



Thynk empowers hoteliers to thrive in a dynamic hospitality landscape. Thynk's Hospitality Commercial Platform, powered by Salesforce®, improves sales performance, streamlines operations, and delivers exceptional services. By integrating customer data from different systems and properties, Thynk provides strategic insights, driving personalization at every step of the customer journey. Thynk serves over 2,500 hoteliers globally.



Zucchetti Hospitality, a leading Italian software provider operating globally, offers a full range of solutions including PMS, CRS, RMS and POS for hotels and accommodation facilities that meet the needs of every type of property, serving more than 30k clients in more than 100 countries.

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- [HospitalityInside](#)
- [Hotelverband Deutschland \(IHA\)](#)
- [HSMA Germany](#)



Thank you

for supporting this
important study!

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About h2c

Founded in 2001, h2c provides professional services for the hospitality industry. With a focus on **technology solutions**, covering system specifications and RFP processes, h2c also offers consulting and associated project management support, among other services. Hotel management systems and services are analyzed in detail as part of our regular market research projects to identify technology trends, challenges and opportunities.

Conttessa by h2c is a unique product development that enables hoteliers to automate the updating of static content for OTAs and other channels.

Our Mission: h2c inspires success in hospitality commerce. Our passion to translate marketplace complexities into actionable strategies shapes our relationships. The goal: clients are confidently in control.

For more information, please visit [h2c.de](https://www.h2c.de)