



Stakeholder Engagement for the Launch of Stay Smart+ at Hilton

London Metropole

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Executive Summary

This report provides a critical assessment of how to introduce StaySmart+, a high-end customer service based on artificial intelligence, that combines smart guest engagement, travel advice and sustainable amenities, to Hilton London Metropole. This report suggests that the project should be understood not as a technology upgrade, but as an opportunity which will be successful only if it is accepted, trusted and delivered as an integrated hotel service ecosystem. Hilton London Metropole is a suitable pilot location in London, as its size, conference function and its link to the Hilton global network offers opportunity and a challenge. The study highlights internal stakeholders, such as senior management, project manager, hotel operations, front-line staff, IT, HR, marketing, finance, procurement, sustainability, legal and compliance teams; and external stakeholders, such as guests, technology vendors, sustainability amenity providers, regulators, corporate clients, travel agencies, the local community, owners, investors and Tripadvisor. SWOT, PESTLE and SMART objectives help to evaluate the project environment while stakeholder mapping, RACI, engagement planning, communication planning and the 4C's model are used to engage stakeholders. Risks include staff resistance, unreliable systems, privacy, regulatory and sustainability risks and greenwash. This report suggests a pilot roll-out, role-based training, governance of AI, supplier verification and regular feedback to enhance customer satisfaction, productivity, trust, sustainability and brand value.

1. Introduction

This report analyses how to leverage stakeholder engagement for the successful roll-out of StaySmart+ at the Hilton London Metropole. Hilton London Metropole is a large central London hotel (1,100 rooms) that caters to leisure, business, conference and international travellers. Its size, centrality and affiliation with the Hilton brand make it a good choice of location to test a premium service innovation prior to international expansion (Hilton, 2026a). Being part of the larger Hilton group means it can leverage brand recognition, operational standards, loyalty programs and digital guest services such as app check-in, hotel chat and Digital Key (Hilton, 2026b).

The StaySmart+ is proposed as a premium customer service innovation based on AI, which provides smart guest engagement, travel planning and sustainable amenities. This could translate into messaging via AI, personalized local insights, room and service prompts based on guest preferences and sustainable amenities. The aim of the service is to enhance speed, convenience, comfort and uniqueness. But the most value from AI in services is when it augments human judgement and emotional intelligence, and not when it replaces human service interactions (Huang and Rust, 2021).

This report explores how Hilton London Metropole should identify, classify, engage and manage stakeholders in the development of its StaySmart+ project. Stakeholder engagement is crucial because achieving project success requires the coordinated action of leaders, managers, employees, IT experts, suppliers, guests, regulators and community stakeholders. Modern stakeholder theory focuses on communication, engagement and value co-creation, rather than unidirectional communication (Kujala et al., 2022). As such, the focus is on company appraisal, stakeholder analysis, models of engagement, conflict resolution, ethics and business.

2. Company Appraisal: SWOT, PESTLE and SMART Objectives

Hilton London Metropole is an ideal candidate to trial StaySmart+ because it is operating in a high-end, competitive hotel market in London where guests expect quick and personalized services, as well as trustworthy and sustainable business operations. The hotel's current digital presence is significant because it enables StaySmart+'s innovation to build on existing guest habits, such as mobile check-in and app notifications (Hilton, 2026b). Personalization through AI may also enhance guest satisfaction if guests view the service as beneficial, trustworthy and safe (Al-Hyari, Al-Smadi and Weshah, 2023).

Table 1: SWOT analysis for StaySmart+ at Hilton London Metropole

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Hilton brand reputation; central London location; diverse guest base; conference facilities; access to international digital standards.	High implementation cost; staff training requirements; data governance complexity; possible anxiety about AI and workload.	Premium differentiation; faster guest communication; personalised travel support; sustainable amenities; improved service evidence.	Cybersecurity incidents; inaccurate AI responses; guest privacy concerns; competitor imitation; supplier inconsistency; greenwashing criticism.

The SWOT analysis indicates that the hotel's strengths are conducive to innovation, but weaknesses and threats need to be addressed. Resistance to the service may arise if employees perceive AI as spying or taking their jobs. Project management best practices emphasize the need to plan and manage stakeholder engagement as technology delivery does not ensure value

(Project Management Institute, 2021). Hilton's Travel with Purpose agenda creates an opportunity to link StaySmart+ to responsible hospitality, but only if environmental claims are measurable and credible (Blanco-Moreno et al., 2025).

Table 2: PESTLE analysis

Factor	Implication for StaySmart+
Political	London tourism policy, local authority expectations and international travel conditions may influence demand and service priorities.
Economic	Inflation, labour costs and technology investment pressures may affect profitability and the pilot budget.
Social	Guests expect convenience, personalisation and ethical service, although some still prefer direct human contact.
Technological	AI, mobile applications and analytics enable responsiveness but increase dependence on reliable systems (Knani, Echchakoui and Ladhari, 2022).
Legal	Data protection, fairness and transparency obligations apply where AI uses personal data (Information Commissioner's Office, 2023).
Environmental	Sustainable amenities should reduce waste and support responsible consumption rather than act as symbolic marketing.

The SMART objectives should be measurable. Hilton London Metropole should pilot StaySmart+ in a controlled environment within six months; ensure 90% of relevant frontline staff are trained before rollout; ensure 75% of all guests are aware of StaySmart+ within three months; decrease the time taken to respond to routine guest inquiries by 30% within six months; and

increase guest satisfaction related to digital service and personalization by 10% within six months. These link stakeholder engagement to operations and guest trust, and future rollouts.

3. Identification and Categorisation of Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder identification is critical as StaySmart+ affects stakeholders with varying expectations, roles and power. The Project Management Institute (2021) argues stakeholders should be identified and assessed regularly as things can change throughout a project. At Hilton London Metropole, stakeholders can be grouped into internal and external, and prioritised based on power, interest, legitimacy and influence.

Table 3: Key stakeholders and interests

Stakeholder group	Examples	Main interest or influence
Internal strategic	Senior management, owners, finance	Investment approval, return on investment, risk appetite, brand value and strategic alignment.
Internal operational	Hotel general manager, project manager, frontline employees, HR, operations	Delivery, training, guest interaction, workload, service consistency and adoption.
Internal technical and governance	IT, legal, compliance, procurement, sustainability	AI reliability, cybersecurity, data protection, supplier verification and ethical standards.

External market	Guests, corporate clients, travel agencies, online review platforms	Convenience, trust, booking experience, reputation and feedback.
External institutional	Technology suppliers, sustainable suppliers, regulators, local communities, industry bodies	System performance, legal acceptability, responsible sourcing, social impact and legitimacy.

In the case of the Metropole, internal stakeholders include senior management, the hotel general manager, project manager, staff, IT, HR, marketing, finance, procurement, sustainability, legal and compliance. Senior management has high power as it authorises investment, plans and measures success. The hotel general manager ensures Hilton's broad goals are translated to the hotel level. The project manager will manage and align scope, risk, communications and stakeholders. Staff are of critical importance as they will explain, advocate for and even challenge StaySmart+'s use during guest encounters. Their real power may be greater than their formal power.

External stakeholders include guests, technology suppliers, sustainable amenity providers, regulators, corporate customers, travel agents, local communities, owners, investors, industry groups and online review sites. Customers affect StaySmart+'s trust, usage and advocacy.

Technology providers affect AI trustworthiness and security. Green suppliers impact environmental acceptability, and regulators impact legal acceptability. So, stakeholder classifications should not be based solely on formal authority. Employees and customers may lack contractual power, but can influence acceptance and image. Research on hotel sustainability

also demonstrates that environmental sustainability measures need managers, employees, customers and suppliers to collaborate (Khatter et al., 2021).

4. Roles, Responsibilities, Benefits and Challenges of Key Stakeholders

For successful StaySmart+, it is important to understand the roles, responsibilities, benefits and challenges of stakeholders. Senior management has oversight of the service vision, budget, risk and strategy. The benefit is power, allocation of resources and legitimacy. But their dilemma is the potential for a financialization view of success. If top management prioritise return on investment, they may overlook employee readiness, guest trust and ethical risk. This is a problem because stakeholder engagement should enhance their value to the hotel's strategy, ethics and practicality, not just compliance (Kujala et al., 2022).

The Hilton London Metropole hotel general manager is responsible for readiness. This involves coordinating the departments, service quality and suitability for the hotel's target guest. The advantage of this role is knowing the hotel operations. The downside is managing regular business, events, staffing needs and a digital service roll-out.

The project manager's role is to plan, communicate, control risks, co-ordinate and monitor. The value they add is integration because they link senior management and IT, operations, human resources, marketing, vendors and legal. They face a dilemma in balancing the trade-offs between time, cost, privacy, service and labour. Project management advice is that delivering value takes managing expectations throughout the project life cycle (Project Management Institute, 2021).

Employees are vital as they bring StaySmart+'s benefits to guests. They provide an advantage in understanding the guests' behaviour, complaints, emotional responses and recovery. But they may be worried that AI will take the humanity out of hospitality, or increase surveillance.

Research on AI services shows that guests may reject the use of automation if it is perceived as lacking human warmth, or being unreliable or less effective (Mariani and Borghi, 2021; Du et al., 2025). So, training employees to use StaySmart+ to complement human hospitality is important.

External users are guests. They receive quicker replies, recommendations, planning assistance and sustainable facilities. Their challenge is trust. There are potential issues with data privacy, recommendations, algorithm bias and loss of human interaction. Technology providers offer expert knowledge but there are security risks if they are not delivering service. Green providers add sustainable amenities, but face issues with verification and replication. Government and lawyers offer protection against data protection, consumer and AI governance risks. In all cases, each supplier adds value, but also risk, so they need to be engaged strategically.

5. Stakeholder Engagement Frameworks and Tools

For effective stakeholder engagement for StaySmart+, we need tools such as stakeholder mapping and matrices to understand influence, roles, communication requirements and expectations. Engagement needs to be considered a dynamic relationship building process of dialogue, participation and value co-creation (Kujala et al., 2022). This is necessary for StaySmart+ which involves digital, guest experience, change, supplier, privacy and sustainability.

Table 4: Stakeholder power-interest map

Category	Stakeholders	Engagement strategy
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High power, high interest	Senior management, hotel general manager, project manager, IT, legal, technology provider	Manage closely through steering meetings, risk dashboards, decision logs and compliance reviews.
High power, lower interest	Owners, investors, selected corporate partners	Keep satisfied through business case updates, performance evidence and milestone reporting.
Lower formal power, high interest	Frontline employees, guests, sustainable suppliers, travel partners	Actively involve through training, surveys, testing, feedback forums and supplier meetings.
Lower power, lower interest	General public and indirect industry observers	Monitor through reputation tracking, public communication and review analysis.

Mapping is helpful - it prioritises action - but can be simplistic. Power and interest is not static.

For instance, a guest has low authority to use the service, but can gain power through a bad review. Likewise, staff may be just operational, but their self-esteem determines whether they value and promote the technology or not.

Table 5: RACI matrix for key StaySmart+ activities

Activity	Senior management	Project manager	IT	HR	Legal	Operations	Suppliers
Approve budget	A	C	I	I	C	C	I
Select AI provider	C	A	R	I	C	C	C
Train employees	I	A	C	R	C	R	I
Data protection review	I	C	R	I	A	C	C
Launch pilot	C	A	R	C	C	R	R
Evaluate performance	C	A	R	C	C	R	C

RACI is a tool that eliminates uncertainty with responsibility, accountability, consult and inform (Project Management Institute, 2021). But it should not hinder collaboration to solve problems. The matrix can be reviewed at design, testing, launch and evaluation as the project environment can be dynamic.

Table 6: Engagement and communication plan

Stakeholder	Engagement method	Frequency	Core message
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Senior leaders	Steering group and dashboard	Monthly	Progress, risk, value and strategic fit.
Employees	Workshops, briefings and feedback forums	Fortnightly before launch	AI supports service quality and does not remove human hospitality.
Guests	Pilot testing, app prompts and post-stay surveys	Pre-launch and ongoing	StaySmart+ offers convenience, personalisation, privacy choices and human support.
Suppliers	Performance meetings and audits	Monthly	Quality, delivery and evidence-based sustainability standards.
Legal and regulators	Compliance reviews	Design, testing and launch	Data protection, fairness, transparency and accountability.

When it comes to using it, evidence of engagement should be quantifiable. Readiness should be measured by training completion, employee confidence surveys and mystery guests. Guest adoption should be tracked through adoption of the app, requests for service, opt-out, guest satisfaction and complaint themes. Vendor performance should be tracked for delivery, product

quality, sustainability and escalations. These indicators test the effectiveness of engagement in generating behaviour change, rather than just meeting attendance.

6. Stakeholder Engagement Process and Conflict Management Using the 4C's Model

To ensure the success of StaySmart+, stakeholder engagement should be planned, monitored and evaluated. The project manager should adopt the 4C's approach of communication, collaboration, consultation and commitment as the service impacts on technology, people, guests, suppliers, regulators and performance. This mirrors current project management advice that suggests stakeholder engagement be managed through planning, monitoring and revising to suit the circumstances of the project (Project Management Institute, 2021).

The first 4C is communication. The project manager needs to communicate what StaySmart+ is, the need for it and how it impacts different stakeholders. Executives need briefings on the cost, risk, benefits and progress. Staff need to know how AI can help them, not take over, hospitality. Customers need clear info on convenience, customisation, privacy and options. Suppliers should be given quality, time and sustainability expectations. Communication can be via briefings, emails, dashboards, employee training, signs, app pop-ups and guest pages. It minimises uncertainty, particularly in cases where employees worry about job loss, or watchfulness. AI services studies demonstrate automation boosts efficiency, but companies need to retain empathy and relational attributes (Zahidi, Kaluvilla and Mulla, 2024).

Second is collaboration. The project manager should set up a team comprising operations, IT, HR, marketing, finance, legal, procurement, sustainability and front-line representatives.

Collaboration ensures StaySmart+ is more than a technological system, but an operational experience. IT can provide guidance on the accuracy of AI and cyber security concerns, while front desk and concierge can explain what questions guests ask and what needs to be done to

recover a service issue. Legal can evaluate risks of data privacy, and marketing can avoid over-sell. Sustainability and suppliers can check the amenities offered are sustainable and scalable.

This is essential as hotel sustainability and sustainable innovation rely on an approach that includes collaboration between departments and partners (Elkhwesky, El Manzani and Salem, 2024).

Consultation is the third stage. Hilton London Metropole should ask staff to comment on processes before they are finalised as they know the realities. Workshops should elicit staff feedback about training requirements, potential guest concerns and service breakdowns. Guests should be consulted via pilot testing, guest surveys and the app. Business clients can help to explain expectations of business and conference travellers. Consultation is ethically crucial as stakeholders can identify issues with data privacy, accessibility, equity and a balance between AI and human interactions. Guests' reaction to AI can be positive and negative, so hotels can't take it for granted that all customers will accept it (Sousa, Cardoso and Dias, 2024).

Fourth stage is commitment. When stakeholders' views are taken into account, they support change. The project manager should respond to feedback, release project milestones and thank departments that assist with the process. Staff should be trained and assured their service expertise is vital. Customers should be offered control, including the option for the AI or a human. Suppliers should sign service level agreements and make substantiated sustainability claims. Executive support should be given for the launch and the strategy.

Conflict resolution should be throughout the 4C's. Employee AI concerns should be managed by co-ordinating, educating and discussing. Guest concerns about privacy should be managed by gaining consent, minimising data, providing notices and opt-out options. Finance vs IT should be managed through risk analysis of short-term cost savings vs long-term costs of system failure,

guest and reputation risk. Competition between suppliers should be dealt with by audits, performance management and alternative suppliers. Cultural variance should also be considered as future global roll-out of AI may need to be tempered by different cultural attitudes to AI, privacy and service. So the London trial should be viewed as a trial and error phase, rather than a final product.

7. Impact of Stakeholder Engagement on Business Performance and Recommendations

Good stakeholder engagement can boost Hilton London Metropole's bottom line by improving the chances of successful acceptance, trust and usage of its StaySmart+ system. This project is not just a technology roll-out, it's a change management and relationship management project. Early engagement can help the hotel identify potential problems, enhance the service and mitigate opposition. Project management best practice establishes the relationship between stakeholder engagement and value achievement because it harmonises expectations, roles and results (Project Management Institute, 2021).

First, engagement can improve guest satisfaction. When guests recognise the advantages of StaySmart+, trust their data will be secure, and perceive the technology will help them, they will be more likely to use it. By asking guests and piloting and reviewing their stays, Hilton London Metropole can find out whether guests appreciate quicker replies, personalised suggestions and green facilities. Research on AI personalisation in the hotel industry indicates that trust, privacy concerns and technology use experience play a role in satisfaction (Makivić et al., 2024). Service attributes enabled by AI can also lead to loyalty when the service is perceived to be useful (Chotisarn and Phuthong, 2025).

Second, engagement can enhance employee loyalty. Employees will explain, provide guidance and even correct StaySmart+. When they are trained and engaged in the decision making process they will see the technology as something that assists them to provide a better service. If not engaged, employees may feel ignored and/or fearful. Recent research in the field of AI in hospitality suggests there are efficiency benefits from automation but that there are also issues with human touch, employee skills and customer acceptance (Acharya and Mahapatra, 2024; Du et al., 2025).

Third, engagement increases efficiency. Enlisting IT, operations, housekeeping, guest relations and suppliers can help the hotel resolve problems in advance. IT can assess IT reliability, operations can assess the guest experience and housekeeping can ensure sustainable amenities are provided and presented appropriately. This eliminates redundancy, delays and service lapses. Research into AI in tourism also suggests AI can assist bookings, information management and service processes, but requires strategic management to reap rewards (Henriques, Almeida and Ramos, 2024).

Fourth, engagement helps brand and reputation integrity. StaySmart+'s AI and personal data means privacy, fairness and transparency are important. Involving lawyers and compliance early in this project helps ensure that it complies with data protection (Information Commissioner's Office, 2023). And if the hotel ever expands to Europe, the EU AI Act's risk-based approach supports the need for safe AI (European Commission, 2025). Fifth, involvement helps sustainability. Sustainability amenities only have value if they are authentic, coherent and communicated well. Suppliers need to demonstrate the value of claims; staff need to communicate environmental value without over-stating. This eliminates greenwash and helps achieve Hilton's sustainability goals (Hilton, 2026c).

A model assessment must also account for trade-offs. Speed may be enhanced by AI's responses, but luxury hotels cannot sacrifice hospitality, empathy and inclusiveness for speed. Guests might be digitally illiterate, dislike automation or dislike sharing data. So, StaySmart+ should be an opt-in service that offers AI as an option to increase convenience but where human support is also readily accessible. So service quality and risks are safeguarded. It also facilitates global scalability, given cultural and market differences in attitudes to privacy, technology and personal service. Generative AI offers personalisation, but hotels need to assess cultural and readiness factors for scaling (Wang, 2025).

Table 7: Recommendations

Recommendation	Rationale	Performance indicator
Pilot StaySmart+ at Hilton London Metropole before wider rollout.	Tests guest response, employee readiness, system reliability and supplier performance.	Pilot completion, guest satisfaction, defect rates and adoption levels.
Create a stakeholder steering group.	Maintains cross-functional oversight and fast escalation.	Attendance, issue closure and risk reduction.
Deliver role-specific training.	Builds confidence and protects human hospitality.	Training completion, employee confidence and mystery-guest results.
Publish an AI and data privacy policy.	Improves trust, consent and accountability.	Opt-out rates, complaints and compliance checks.
Verify sustainability claims.	Protects credibility and reduces greenwashing risk.	Supplier audits, waste metrics and evidence records.

The last recommendation is to leverage ongoing feedback via employee focus groups, hotel guest surveys, guest complaints and usage metrics. In summary, stakeholder engagement can enhance satisfaction, loyalty, use, efficiency, ethics, sustainability and future proofs projects. These benefits make engagement a strategic project enabler, rather than a "nice to have".

8. Conclusion

In summary, the potential introduction of StaySmart+ at the Hilton London Metropole is a good opportunity to enhance guest satisfaction, efficiency and market competitiveness in London. But the project will not be a success simply because of AI technology. It must involve strategic, ethical and ongoing stakeholder engagement during planning, implementation and evaluation. The central finding is to assess stakeholder engagement by its impact on behaviour and trust. A technically successful launch would be poor if staff did not use the system, guests didn't trust its recommendations or suppliers did not back up sustainability claims. As a result, the project manager needs to engage stakeholders post launch and interpret the data to fine-tune the service. As a consequence, stakeholder engagement is part of an ongoing learning, risk mitigation and strategy process.

This report has demonstrated that Hilton London Metropole needs to engage with internal and external stakeholders with varying expectations, roles and risks. Leaders give legitimacy, employees deliver the service, guests drive use, suppliers affect reliability and regulators impact legitimacy. SWOT, PESTLE and SMART objectives help set the strategic framework; stakeholder mapping, RACI, engagement plan and communication plan help with accountability and coordination.

The 4C's model is particularly helpful since it transforms stakeholders from awareness to commitment through communication, collaboration, consultation and commitment. Risks include

staff and guest resistance, privacy, system, supplier, regulatory and greenwashing. These can be managed through targeted training, AI governance, guest preference and supplier certification, and feedback. In summary, the Hilton London Metropole should consider StaySmart+ a relationship-driven change program. This will enhance its use in London and provide a structured evidence base for its use in a number of other Hilton hotels around the world.

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