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# INTEGRATING AV AND DESIGN

Beyond the reception desk, advanced AV is also increasing interaction opportunities with guests to enhance their experience and back end budgets, writes **Alifiya Sura, business development manager**, Omnix International

**I**magine checking in to a hotel with your smartphone, and in the room your picture is on the TV and an automatic call welcomes you. A tablet, pre-loaded with apps, enables you to adjust the lighting and temperature, order room service, and book a spa treatment. Then you watch a film that you had downloaded on your smartphone by streaming it on the room's HD TV.

This isn't a futuristic fantasy -- this is the experience of staying at some of the world's most luxurious hotels. And it's becoming the norm for hotels of all sizes and star ratings across the MENA region. In order to deliver the best impact, architects, engineers, and construction companies need to collaborate on integrating audiovisual systems starting from the design phase.

In the Middle East, tourism has promising medium- to long-term growth, according to a report from the United Nations' World Tourism Organisation. It's especially robust in the GCC, with five GCC countries (UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) in the top seven most competitive in travel and tourism in MENA, according to a World Economic Forum report.

MENA travellers are among the most connected in the world, with our clients seeing each guest bring an average of three mobile devices. This outpaces the global trend of 65 percent of travellers taking smartphones and 80 percent taking laptops, according to the VISA Global Travel Intentions Study 2013. As a result, global guest demand for IP bandwidth is rapidly increasing, especially due to streaming videos, according to the Hotel Technology Next Generation trade association.

We've worked with leading hotels in the region – including the Burj Al Arab, Atlantis The Palm, and Emirates Palace – to integrate audiovisual systems. These hotels provide guests with high bandwidth and mobile apps, and transformative features such as videowalls for meetings and conferences,



enhanced lighting for restaurants, and interactive wayfinding signs.

Thanks to integrated audiovisual systems, hotels receive immediate feedback from guests, and can even interact with them via social media. Hotels can also monitor energy consumption to improve sustainability, and move IT systems to the "cloud" for centralised control and enhanced savings.

But too often hotels are designed without consideration for the audiovisual systems that drive these technological innovations. As a result, the guest experience suffers from problems like unsightly exposed cables and difficult-to-access services, while hotel budgets are swollen with duplicate technology and more construction to fit in audiovisual systems.

We are in a unique position to

offer both our expertise and practical solutions, thanks to a Promedia division that provides integrated audiovisual solutions, and a Computer Aided Engineering division that offers 3D Building Information Modeling software.

As a result, our clients in the architecture, engineering, and construction industry can integrate audiovisual systems starting from early on in the design phase, and follow-through the development and execution phases.

At the rate of technological change, hotels in the pipeline need to include audiovisual systems immediately in their designs. Meanwhile existing hotels need to upgrade their audiovisual systems in the next six months, or risk losing out on significant tourist business.