Call for Papers for *Hospitality & Society* Special Issue and APA Paris Summit 2026

Hospitality & Society

The American Phygital Association (APA) is excited to announce a call for papers for the **APA Paris Summit 2026**. This groundbreaking event, themed "Theorizing Phygital hospitality," is in collaboration with the *Hospitality & Society* Journal.

Special Issue Call for *Hospitality & Society*

Theorizing Phygital Hospitality: Designing Guest-Centric Experiences in Hybrid Physical-Digital Realms for Positive Change

Special Issue Editors

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Aim and Scope

The convergence of physical and digital ecosystems, referred to as "phygital" (Batat, 2024a), is reshaping hospitality into a hybrid experiential space. These environments integrate material, human, architectural, and virtual elements to craft immersive, relational, and affective guest encounters (Tlili et al., 2023). Phygital hospitality is not merely a technological evolution; it reflects a deeper transformation of the social, cultural, emotional, and experiential dimensions of

hospitality.

Hospitality scholars have long emphasized embodiment, presence, and interpersonal dynamics in service encounters (Lynch et al., 2021; Lugosi, 2021). As AI tools and immersive technologies such as augmented reality and virtual interfaces become embedded in hospitality settings (Wirtz et al., 2023), they reconfigure these dynamics, thus mediating how guests experience space, interact with hosts, and form emotional connections. These shifts raise critical questions around engagement, immersivity, inclusivity, accessibility, and the design of welcome in phygitally mediated environments. In today's hospitality landscape, guests are perceived as active, phygitalized social actors who seamlessly navigate physical and digital realms. Their functional, emotional, cultural, and sensory needs increasingly shape the design and delivery of hybrid hospitality experiences. Phygital hospitality must therefore prioritize human-centric strategies that enhance, rather than dictate, guest agency, satisfaction, and well-being (Addis et al., 2022). This aligns with the Phygital Customer Experience (PH-CX) framework (Batat, 2024a), which underscores the importance of addressing both tangible (e.g., comfort, quality) and intangible (e.g., emotional resonance, belonging) dimensions of guest experience.

Building on recent developments in phygital service research (PSR) (Batat, 2024b), this special issue explores the broader service ecosystem in which hospitality is embedded. PSR offers a guest-centric paradigm for understanding service delivery and consumption in hybrid physical-digital environments, emphasizing positive impact at individual, community, and environmental levels. By placing all stakeholders, including guests, hosts, employees, and communities, at the center of the experience design process, PSR enriches the study of phygital hospitality through a holistic and transformative lens. In this sense, phygital hospitality spaces are viewed as performative arenas where digital and physical elements co-construct evolving meanings of hospitality. These meanings shift in behavior, sense-making, engagement, and belonging as guests transition between physical and digital realms. Phygital hospitality also introduces new organizational mindsets and leadership practices, alongside emerging hierarchies of access and participation, potentially reinforcing or disrupting existing power structures within hospitality organizations. As in phygital consumer environments, hospitality settings must support seamless transitions between physical and digital touchpoints, ensuring continuity, trust, and emotional engagement.

This special issue invites critical engagement with the phygital turn in hospitality, emphasizing its implications for business and management, social science, cultural practice, and human-centered design. Contributions to this special issue should align with *Hospitality & Society*'s mission by:

1) Advancing hospitality knowledge through theoretical and empirical insights into phygital transformation and its impact on service encounters and spatial practices.
2) Creating interdisciplinary dialogue on the socio-cultural dimensions of phygital hospitality.
3) Contributing to hospitality social science by examining how phygital ecosystems reconfigure interpersonal relationships, cultural rituals, and the politics of space.
4) Bridging hospitality and phygital research to explore the fluid, evolving interactions between guests and hospitality organizations, and how guest preferences, emotional needs, and feedback shape phygital hospitality design.

We welcome submissions from marketing and management, sociology, tourism, anthropology,

design, and hospitality management, with a clear focus on phygital hospitality as a social and cultural phenomenon. The special issue aims to foster inclusive, memory-rich, and socially meaningful guest experiences in the phygital realm. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Guest perceptions of presence, embodiment, and relationality in phygital hospitality encounters
- Socio-cultural dynamics of immersive technologies and AI tools in hospitality spaces
- Inclusive and culturally sensitive design of phygital hospitality environments
- Phygital spaces as evolving and transformational arenas of social meaning and guest behavior
- Phygital experience design and its role in shaping comfort, engagement, and cultural resonance
- Power structures and guest-staff relationships in phygitally mediated hospitality
- Emotional atmospheres, affect, and belonging in phygital hospitality practices
- Memory-making and social significance in phygital guest experiences
- Human-centric strategies for phygital hospitality that promote positive transformation and guest well-being
- Methodological innovations for studying hybrid phygital hospitality environments, including approaches that center guest feedback and lived experience
- Community and environmental impacts of phygital hospitality practices

Submission Instructions & Dates

We cordially invite all participants to submit a **500-word abstract proposal** for the American Phygital Association (APA) Summit 2026, which will be held on February 26-27, 2026, in Paris, France. Authors should submit their abstracts via the APA Summit Website Portal. The deadline for abstract submission is **December 2, 2025**.

Full article submissions from all APA attendees will be accepted after the summit, with the submission window opening shortly thereafter (between **March 5 and September 4, 2026**). The publication of the Special Issue is expected in 2027.

Final manuscript submissions should be made electronically by registering with the Submission System: https://callisto.newgen.co/intellect/index.php/HOSP/login. Please refer to the Notes for Contributors: https://www.intellectbooks.com/hospitality-society when preparing your submission.

For information about the APA Summit and the special issue, contact Dr. Wided Batat at wided.batat@univ-lyon2.fr

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