

Hotels could soon host 'dark kitchens' so that food delivery aggregators such as Deliveroo can supply in-room takeaways for customers that don't want traditional room service.

A senior executive at the delivery firm has confirmed that conversations have already started within the hotel sector that could dramatically alter the typical F&B structure of hotel operations in future.

At a recent business forum held by HEGM and EP Business in Hospitality, attendees discussed the prospect of 'delivered-in' food from dark kitchens replacing hotel room service as consumer demand for in-room takeaways soars.

New research from HEGM's latest consumer survey reveals that 66% of hotel guests have used a delivery service to order food to their room and experts insist that will only increase, particularly among millennials prepared to snub hotel food for their favourite takeaway brands.

The debate, which led to a heated discussion on whether hotels should embrace the offer of collaborating with external food delivery brands or risk causing embarrassment to their customer, was led by Alberto Lo Bue, head of business for Deliveroo and Paul Fitzgerald, director for Bespoke Hotels.

Mr Lo Bue spoke of new conversations that are beginning to take shape within the hotel sector, whereby Deliveroo would potentially create their own kitchen space within a hotel's premises.

This idea of having 'dark kitchens' within hotels is one that resonated with many hoteliers in the audience as it was recognised that this could create a very clear differentiator for hotels.

It was also noted by Mr Fitzgerald, meanwhile, that while they had assumed that most delivered-in foods would be ordered late at night in the City and East of London, it was found that the majority of bookings were made between 8pm-9pm. Only in the West End was it after 11pm.

HEGM's research shows that 71% of guests aged between 26 and 35 order-in food while staying in a hotel. This is due to a combination of personal preferences, quality and cost, with 48% of consumers saying they find hotel food unappealing and 35% arguing that hotel food is too expensive.