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A review paper on recent technology trends in hospitality industry

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Abstract

India always welcomes millions of national as well as foreign tourist every year. Tourism and hospitality contribute to the major part of Indian GDP. The covid-19 crisis has majorly affected the hospitality industry. As per the data shared by world travel & tourism council (WTTC) approx. 174 million people lost their jobs due to covid crisis. Many of the hotels are shutdown permanently due to this pandemic and the remaining hotels are fighting for the survival and also to overcome with the financial losses. But now customers will sneak cautiously to come back to travel with new expectations and requirements. Therefore, the hotels must be prepared to cater the expectations of the consumers very carefully. Technology these days is advancing at a faster pace than ever before, and this is changing both the expectations of guests as well as the way in which the hospitality industry conducts its business. Some of the latest trends are significantly helping the industry with recovery roll outs thus leading to great improvements and savings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, this paper aims to some of the recent technological changes adopted by the hotels to deal with the covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Hospitality, covid-19, technology, trends and hotels

Introduction

Hospitality industry is one of the oldest industries of the world with the motto of “*Athithi Devo Bhawa*” which means ‘customer is king’ or ‘Guest is God’. Our hotel industry has witnessed and survived many crises like world war, recession, outbreaks etc. Also, we are trying hard to cope-up with present pandemic i.e., covid-19 crisis, which is one of the biggest pandemics which stuck the entire world. As the lockdown and curfew was imposed several times, which cause the mobility ban due to which the hotel industry has faced tremendous loss. Since this pandemic is rapidly affecting with the human contact and to overcome with this the use of touchless technology is need for hour. Technology these days is advancing at a faster pace than ever before, and this is changing both the expectations of guests as well as the way in which the hospitality industry conducts its business. Some of the latest trends are significantly helping the industry with recovery roll outs thus leading to great improvements and savings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives

To recommend various technological trends to overcome with the covid-19 pandemic in hospitality Industry.

Research Methodology

For the present study, secondary data is collected, arranged and analyzed from journals, magazines, books, hotel websites, theses etc.

Findings & Recommendations

To overcome with the COVID-19 outbreak, some hotels are using Robots with UV Rays for Cleaning of rooms. A robot has been specifically engineered to clean and disinfect services. The following are the suggestions about the latest technology trends for the upcoming years that need to be accepted in the hospitality industry to come back to the normal pace.

Service automation through AI

Automation continues to be a trend that is changing the way guests are served. With the advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), hotels are looking at new ways to interact with guests digitally while freeing up hotel staff to work on other tasks.

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This also improves the travel experience as language differences can be eliminated, ensuring clear communication with travelers wherever they may be from. Some examples of robot restaurant in India are 1) Robot Restaurant, Semmancheri, Chennai 2) Indian Swag Restaurant, Ahmedabad 3) Robo Kitchen Hyderabad.

Self-Service Meeting Spaces

Modern meetings run on technology. Business people need to make multimedia presentations and videoconference remote attendees—sometimes both simultaneously.

Internet of things (IOT)

Smart devices that can collect data and interact over the internet. Examples in the hospitality sector; IOT technology is being used to control the shades or the drapes of the lights, turn on the T.V or alert housekeepers that the room needs cleaning. Hotels in New York Wynn Las Vegas is enabled with Amazon's Alexa voice assistant to let guests' control, lights, temperature, shades, TV and more in their hotel rooms.

Mobile as a guest door key

Smartphone as a room key! Most of the guests would find it convenient. And it's possible – thanks to smart lock apps that allow guests to unlock rooms, right from their mobile phones.

Virtual reality (VR)

VR is gaining traction across various sectors in recent years. The hospitality industry is no exception. Many hotel websites like Marriott employ 360-degree imaging technology to enable users to make a virtual hotel tour before booking.

Direct booking engines

Direct booking engines are coming handy for hoteliers and small property owners with its zero-commission fees. This eliminates additional costs charged by third parties like travel agencies or big reservation engines like Booking.

Wireless charging

Cybersecurity

Nowadays, cybersecurity is a real issue. Hackers easily gain access to valuable systems and data. In the hospitality sector, this can lead to various problems since hoteliers are storing lots of sensitive data. Cloud-based patch management and endpoint protection platforms. Such software systems often provide a set of user-defined controls that help IT managers to filter and report on vulnerabilities of their infrastructure.

Robots in hotels and restaurants

The Japanese Henn-na in Nagasaki hotel replaced reception staff with robots. Guests can check-in, check-out, and ask questions without any human interaction. Hilton Hotels uses Connie – an AI-powered robot that can answer questions normal questions.

Voice-enabled devices

It's a type of recognition technology that allows devices like smartphones to understand simple voice commands. Customers can reserve a table at the hotel restaurant through a voice command.

Face recognition

It's biometric technology that can be deployed to identify people by analyzing their faces.

Here's how it can be implemented in the hospitality sector:

- Security access – the tech can be used by guests to access their rooms.
- Payments – it can help authorize payments. MasterCard has implemented systems powered by face recognition.
- Customer service – face recognition can allow employees to identify guests before check-in.

Blockchain technology

Blockchain is a public ledger that can record anonymous transactions. The records are called "blocks" and are secured on the ledger by the help of cryptography. It can be used in the hospitality industry from securing payments to baggage tracking and identity management. For example, Transparent, safe, payments can be streamlined to accommodation properties at reduced costs.

AI Chatbots

Customer's value real-time interaction. So, the property needs to deliver high-quality customer service through various channels to be able to stay ahead of the game. Chatbots have been an emerging hospitality technology trend for several years, but the importance of this option is only growing, especially as customers now demand swift answers to questions at all times of the day. Hotels and restaurants will also often attract queries from people in different time zones, so having staff available is difficult. A good chatbot will answer the most common questions without the need for any human involvement. In more advanced cases, the chatbot can obtain information from the customer and then pass the query on to a human staff member at the earliest opportunity, while also providing them with access to what the customer has said.

WiFi 6

WiFi 6 is the term used to describe the next iteration of WiFi, a faster, more efficient connection enabled through new technologies. WiFi 6 is about 30% faster than our current WiFi.

Digital conference facilities

Besides being able to offer high density Wi-Fi for conferences and meetings, hotels also need to be able to offer access to audio-visual (AV) and digital facilities for conferences. While the amount of AV and digital equipment that goes into a typical conference room is fairly minimal, staging companies are often hired for various projects in order to equip the facility as required.

Mobile communication and automation

In many airports, it's no longer necessary to stand in a queue to check in and people are expecting the same kind of easy, technology-driven check-ins at hotels. Guests want to be able to do everything from checking in at a venue's automated kiosk to ordering room service with a digital device instead of standing in queues and moving around the hotel premises to order food.

NFC technology

Near field communication (NFC) technology is the next-generation short-range high frequency wireless

communication technology that gives users the ability to exchange data between devices. Communication between NFC devices can transfer data at up to 424 kbits/second and the communication is enabled when two devices touch each other, which makes mobile payments (by touching the smart phone to a credit card) an instant, secure process. This technology is also ideal for self-check-ins by guests at hotels.

Infrared sensors

Infrared scanners are now also used to minimize disruptions relating to housekeeping (which is a common complaint from customers). Instead of hanging a 'Do Not Disturb' sign on doors or having cleaning staff wake up traveling guests with knocks and phone calls, hotel staff can take a more innovative approach by using infrared scanners that will detect body heat within a room and tell cleaning staff that they should rather come back later if the room is currently occupied.

Cloud services

Being able to provide entertainment on tap and mobile content has led to the trend of hotels investing in cloud services. While hotels want to be able to offer digital content, they don't necessarily want to invest in IT infrastructure and IT staff, making cloud computing the ideal solution.

Privacy as the new luxury

The demand for high-end resorts is a clear indication that there is a pent-up need to travel and get out. Hotels and resorts that naturally lend themselves to social-distancing and provide expansive settings such as private pools and private lawns have seen a surge of interest. So, also are private accommodations, like larger suites, villas and residences, where people can gather with family and friends while social distancing from others and yet feel safe.

COVID-19 has brought family, friends and loved ones closer together. People will have an emotional need to travel with people they know and trust and stay where they feel safe. Personal space has become more important than ever before and hoteliers must determine how to give travelers personal spaces they feel they can control.

Virtual Reality

Virtual reality is another of the major technology trends in the hospitality industry. In particular, this can make the difference at the stage when customers are ready to make a booking, because it will give potential customers a much clearer sense of what they can expect when they visit for real. Most modern virtual reality tour videos can be viewed within a web browser, making them easily accessible. A greater level of immersion can also be achieved if users have access to a VR headset.

During the COVID pandemic, those working in hospitality marketing have a particularly good opportunity to capitalize on virtual reality technology and gain an edge on rivals, because it provides customers with the ability to experience elements of a hotel or to see the layout of a restaurant prior to booking.

Augmented Reality

Finally, augmented reality has exploded as tech trend in a similar way to VR technology, but is even more accessible;

typically requiring little more than access to a smartphone and the internet. Unlike VR, which places users in a digital environment, augmented reality is about enhancing the real-world environment through information overlays. Again, this offers limitless potential.

Some other operational techniques that are listed below and can shine as latest trends might also be helpful looking at the current scenario.

- Having gourmet food dispensers on floor pantries. People are going to use in-room dining more.
- Digital payments of bills and food and beverage at kiosks which will give out receipts much like the ATMs.
- Liquor options in the guest room mini-bar which will automatically bill the guest folio when bottles are withdrawn from the bar.
- Self-service room amenities from dispensers in the floor Housekeeping store.
- Robots for cleaning carpeted and other surfaces and automated dish washing, etc.

Guest Apps

In current scenario smart phones taken a center stage, from chatting with friends or purchasing any products online, in a nutshell everyone has depend upon on such applications. Smart guest app connects guest with the hotel with just a touch in his/her Smartphone and helps hotel provide outstanding service to guest every time. Some features of Guest apps are virtual payments, Food order, Housekeeping amenities, Laundry services, SPA, 360-degree tours of a room and immediate contact with a concierge.

Voice searches

As technology is rising gadgets such as Siri, Amazon Alexa is very helpful now in modern days as we are upgrading into a hands-free world, this actually makes a great deal of sense. Guest can now switch on-off lights, change TV Channel, book reservations, Wake Up calls etc. using dedicated voice-activated applications. Voice technology is absolutely set to replace traditional like static telephone number.

Personalization marketing

Personalized marketing field is one of the most important one, because it actually deals with the healthy future relationship making strategies in between hotel and customers. Its aim is to make the potential customers feel more special by providing them different kind of discounts and packages through email services or via other automation technology means. This kind of marketing is used to maintain a special relationship which will further going to benefit the hotel in near future. This futuristic approach uplifts customer's interest to revisit the hotels.

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