



Hello HFTP Dubai Chapter members.

The Dubai HFTP Research and Innovation Center at the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management has decided to briefly discuss two relevant topics: The Res-Tech Rant and the upcoming Expo 2020. The HFTP Research and Innovation Center hopes this sparks conversation amongst HFTP Dubai Chapter members.

## Res-Tech Rant

*By Janam Aswani & Naftali Tanyongana*

In this day and age, the prevalence of smartphones has contributed to the low attention economy, an issue that may lead to customers losing interest and seeking to try new things. To combat this on the F&B side, technology-driven restaurants have taken the stage in a bid to keep their customers entertained.

Innovations have had to meet the needs of the attention economy, like the Sunrise Gold Galaxy S9+ smartphone, where Ya Ge, a Michelin Star hotel in Taipei makes use of the AI, AR, and VR of the smartphone to create a captivating and interactive guest experience with every meal. These features allow the guests' attention to be captured from the moment they are provided with a menu. The entire process is fun and interactive, making the food selection process more engaging to diners. Once a picture of the meal is taken, an animation of each locally sourced ingredient plays. This is a unique way to inform diners of what exactly is going into their food, and can be a chance for hoteliers and restaurants to create awareness of their support to local suppliers and the environment.

VR headsets were used to immerse diners in a seascape with lobsters and marine life, preparing guests for a change in ambiance, changing the experience, and preparing them for the reveal of baked lobster. The use of this technology to change the entire ambiance of a meal or a restaurant is a more cost-effective way for restaurants to incorporate more experiences in a single meal.

Moreover, Japanese art collective and ultra-technologist company, team Lab, has developed a multi-sensory dining experience through its meticulous combination of art, science, technology and design with food and beverage (Moonflower, 2019). Through the launch of MoonFlower, teamLab has allowed Sagaya Ginza, a restaurant specialized in seasonal dishes and high-quality Wagyu beef, to enhance their meal experiences by inputting installations at their dining table. Although the restaurant only serves 8 guests per day, its interior spaces offer guests a unique and state-of-the art experience, with the perfect fusion of art and gastronomy.

To maintain innovation, new designs are implemented every month, inspired by the unique Japanese landscapes throughout the spring, summer, fall and winter seasons. For example, a theme with fully-bloomed cherry blossoms are utilized for spring, and a theme of plum trees is utilized for the winter season. What makes this idea so unique is that it is aimed at a niche market, specifically art-passionate, food-lovers and innovation-driven consumers, providing them with personalized and sensory experiences. Also, the outlet has a detail-oriented content marketing strategy, whereby consumers are enlightened with information such as the material and origin of the tableware, and the various art techniques that have been utilized throughout. This concept goes hand-in-hand with an emerging global consumer trend, "Back to Basics for Status", which states that consumers have started placing more value on higher quality, unique and differentiated service offerings, and are increasingly getting bored of generic products (Angus and Westbrook, 2019).

Ultimately, these two examples show ways in which hoteliers and restaurateurs can enhance their guest experience with the additional use of technology. These ideas can be used to capitalize on different market segments and can be adapted for use in different types of hotels and restaurants.



## Expo 2020

*By Mercy Kiprotich & Vladan Pantellic*

With the Expo 2020 around the corner, all eyes will be on the UAE and the hospitality industry. The GCC winning the bid to host the Expo is an historic win as the event has never been held in the Middle East before. This event is bound to bring in more visitors and will definitely have an impact on how business is conducted in the UAE. What can the hospitality industry expect as a result?

The Expo is an opportunity for Dubai to display its service standards and build its image as a global tourist destination. In 2018, there were approximately 1200 branded hotel keys with an expected increase of 6800. The Expo will bring in about 25 million visitors out of which, 19 million will be visitors from outside Dubai. This provides a unique opportunity for the hospitality industry in Dubai and the UAE to position itself as one of the top international tourist destinations by showcasing their customer service and capitalize on the idea of luxury.

With the increasing supply of keys ahead of the Expo, it is important for hotels to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Hoteliers are looking to implement technology to revolutionize every aspect of the hotel business. There is increased pressure to stand out and implement new technologies to keep up with the emerging trends and appeal to consumers. Having an integrated system will enable hotels to build the necessary connections for guests in order to cater to their needs and requests. There is a lot of focus on automation for rooms, adapting the smart home system of integrated and connected solutions.

However, the one fit all approach for the adoption of technology does not always work. Each property should adopt techniques that allow them to provide unique experiences to their guests. Personalizing experiences coupled with the “human touch” is still necessary to create these experiences. Technology alone is not enough to answer all the problems in the hospitality industry. We often see guests leaving reviews based on their experiences with individuals or teams that they interact with. Hoteliers should keep this in mind as they prepare to welcome an influx of international tourists. Finding a balance between these two is vital to ensure that the hotels will survive post Expo.

Haitham Mattar, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, proposes diversifying and enhancing the customer experience through differentiated product development. He advises that it is important to position and promote in international markets to attract higher yield customers to enable an environment of sustainable growth. This is an important point to consider while preparing for the Expo.

The Expo 2020 is a great opportunity for Dubai to showcase the city and what it has to offer. There are still a lot of visitors who have not visited the city and this is a chance to showcase the city and the hospitality industry within the city. While there is a lot of excitement about the scale of the event and what it means for growth of the industry, hoteliers should not lose sight of the important aspects of the industry.



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***Editorial Team: Janam Haresh Bharwani Aswani, (Janam.Aswani@eahm.ae), Vladan Pantelic (Vladan.Pantelic@eahm.ae), Mercy Kiprotich (mercy.kiprotich@eahm.ae), Naftali Marlon Tanyongana (naftali.tanyongana@eahm.ae), Research Scholars.***