Hello HFTP Dubai Chapter members.

The Dubai HFTP Research and Innovation Center at the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management has decided to briefly discuss the following topic: The Era of Seamless Service. The HFTP Research and Innovation Center hopes this sparks conversation amongst HFTP Dubai Chapter members.

Welcome to The Era of Seamless Service

By Janam Bharwani

The digital revolution has transformed the operational process of numerous industries, including the retail and hospitality industry. Industries have started utilizing an omnichannel approach which aims to provide customers with a seamless experience, regardless of which channel they are using to shop a good or book a service. The hospitality industry is significantly increasing its innovation tempo, immersing numerous rising technologies including blockchain, artificial intelligence, big data, Internet of Things (IoT), virtual reality, robotics and cloud-based property management systems (PMS), to mention a few.

An example of a digital disruptor in the hospitality industry is the Flyzoo Hotel in China, opened by e-commerce giant Alibaba and operated mostly by non-human staff. Located in the city of Hangzhou, 170 kilometers southwest of Shanghai, the Flyzoo hotel room rates start from 1,390 yuan (USD 250) per night, and robots are utilized for guest check-ins and check outs, as well as in-room services. Moreover, the facial recognition systems in the hotel enable guests to access their rooms as well as other hotel facilities without the need of a physical keycard or smartphone. The hotel rooms are also equipped with a multitude of Alibaba’s intelligent products, including voice-activated digital assistants, also known as “Tmall Genie”, which helps guests place orders and have their food delivered to their rooms, as well as control the lights, curtains, heating and entertainment devices through voice command. In addition, the hotel is fitted with AI management systems and intelligent robots that are used for the in-room services as well as F&B outlets to serve meals and beverages to guests. Not only does this make the hotel stay more convenient for guests, but it also acts as a form to showcase some of Alibaba’s innovative products.
The implications of such digital advancements in the hospitality industry are vast. Alibaba created this futuristic hotel with the intention of cutting down on human labor costs and eliminating the need for guests to interact with hotel staff, reducing awkwardness and discomfort and therefore having a positive impact on guest satisfaction. Moreover, this technology-driven hotel utilizes these digital advancements to increase consistency, a key component in the hospitality industry. "It's all about the efficiency of the service and the consistency of service, because the robots are not disturbed by human moods. Sometimes, we say we are not in the mood, but the system and the robot will always be in the mood," said Andy Wang, CEO of Alibaba Future Hotel Management, the unit that oversees the hotel project. However, Wang also acknowledged that FlyZoo faces plenty of issues that need upgrading. For example, some of its services, such as using a smartphone to check-in via the app, only work for guests with a Chinese national ID, which may pose barriers for non-residents and tourists visiting the destination.

To conclude, this article shows how hotels in China are leveraging cutting-edge technology to help evolve the hospitality industry, ultimately inspiring the tourism industry as a whole to embrace technological advancements and operate more innovatively. Not only do these intelligent systems improve operational efficiency, but also result in reduced monotony for hotel employees and gives them the opportunity to focus on providing better customer service to guests. Thus, ultimately resulting in increased guest satisfaction and brand loyalty.
List of References


