

Opinions

Future of guest experience lies in connected mobile

14 MARCH 2017 7:14 AM

The next level of guest experience at hotels will mean keeping them connected throughout the stay.



By **Ravish Jhala**

We are living in connected world, and when it comes to the hospitality industry, we believe in delivering a personalised, yet high-tech experience to the guest.

Let's take a view: a guest enters your hotel and her mobile app buzzes to welcome her back and offer free Wi-Fi within the lobby area. The app informs the guest that she is now in line for check-in with a three-minute wait. The guest receives a notification that hot chocolate, a preference captured from a previous stay, is waiting in the lounge and the receptionist will meet her there. After check-in, the app launches a map of the property, highlighting all of the hotel's amenities. As she walks to her room, personalized dining and spa promotions appear—to be used anytime during her stay. A very basic, but “wow” experience for the guest.

I would like to take this experience to next level, where we link the lifespan of the guest experience for any hotel and create an engagement model at various touch points, such as discovery, booking, arrival, check-in, stay, check-out, post-stay and welcome back. We do this well, but we can take this to next level where a well-integrated solution provides seamless information flow to the guest and hotel management.

The logo for Hotel News Now, featuring the words "Hotel News Now" in a bold, sans-serif font, with "Hotel" on the top line, "News" on the middle line, and "Now" on the bottom line. The text is white and set against a dark orange rectangular background.

ISHC Global Insights is a partnership of Hotel News Now and the International Society of Hospitality Consultants to bring in-depth analysis of global topics to the hotel industry.

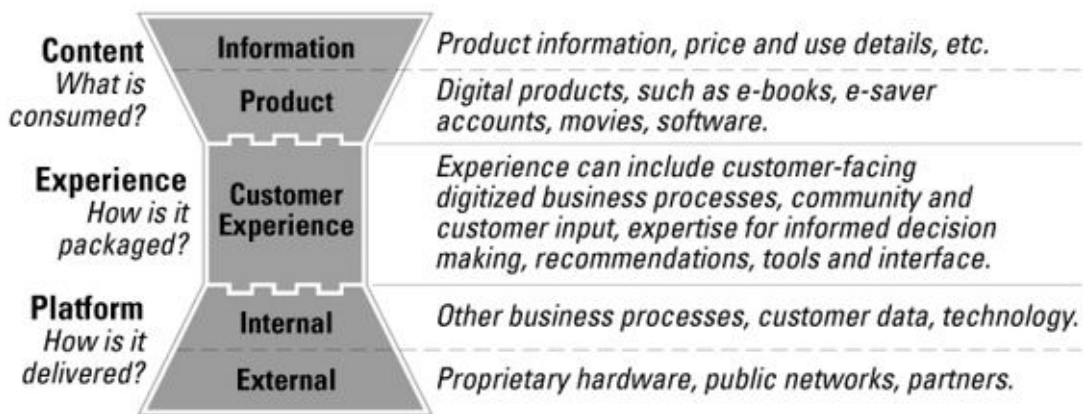
The logo for the International Society of Hospitality Consultants (ISHC). It features the letters "ISHC" in a large, serif font, with the full name "INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF HOSPITALITY CONSULTANTS" in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font below it. The text is white and set against a dark orange rectangular background.

We call this a platform where partner ecosystem comes together to build an offering to create the guest experience.

To deliver a good connected platform, we need to:

- Offer quality Wi-Fi that helps guests connect to the things they love;
- capture real-time analytics to understand guest needs and improve staff efficiency;
- enhance the guest experience with personalized services;
- keep it simple and set up an enterprise-class network; and
- be agile.

The graphic below shows the framework and key pillars of a connected guest experience. A good mix of these three will provide thick data for accurate decision making.



Per Pew research, 74% of smartphone users use their phone to get real-time location based information, and 18% use geosocial services to check in to certain locations or share their locations with friends and family. The hotel with a smart BLE (Bluetooth Low Energy) enabled Wi-Fi platform can detect the presence of guests and capture critical insight on the guest behavior, as well as his or her precise location. The same platform will help businesses reach out to guests with promotional offers, personalize information based on preferences and build brand loyalty. The complete flow is targeted to a specific audience with their age, profession and social preferences.

From online check-in to door-lock automation, room controls, hotel security based on sensors and notifications, social channel connections, preference and loyalty to empowering guests and employees, hotels can capture and understand guest data to drive the next level intelligence and automation.

Finally, we need to turn all information and intelligence to numbers and create a story to tell and sell.

Ravish Jhala, associate member of ISHC, is a technology evangelist with more than 15 years in the field of hospitality information, communication and technology. Formerly, he was a director of pre-sales for NCR Corporation Hospitality and chief information Officer of The Leela Hotels & Resorts, India.

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