The Future of Hotels

Hotels have always been a high touch low tech business. Today, and into the foreseeable, future, hotels are going high tech, low or no touch, and doubling down on digital throughout the guests' 6 stage hotel journey: Imagine-Book-Stay-Report-Recommend-Return.

Hotels are going to take back the Imagine part of the guests' journey from OTA, search, and social platforms by carefully curating informationally and emotionally engaging messages, beamed directly to past guest using sophisticated customer relationship management (CRM) systems via software providers like Salesforce.com, and to future guests who have clicked on, liked or forwarded their messages on multiple legacy and social media channels.

With the 'book direct' campaigns going into overdrive at most hotel companies, building a one-to-one relationship to enable a smart and customized 'one-click' Book capability via apps are going to be more the norm than the exception. During the reservation process, and at check in, instead of agents trying to get guests to sign up for the brand's loyalty program, they will be incentivized to have guests download their app instead.

Self-service, a frowned upon brand standard for hotels, especially at the high end, for example, espresso machines in luxury hotels, already prevalent in several luxury hotels, is going to be much more prevalent during the Stay stage enabled by smart, intuitive, tailored, and easy to use technology of all kinds.

Real-time guest feedback systems, attended to 24 hours, via for example a text message as I received as I checked in to my stay at The Breakers Palm beach, will become the more prevalent form of dialog between guest and host hotel staff to Report all requests and service failures. Enabling dialog in this way will move hotel guests away from having to report their problems on social media sites, to publicly shame the hotel to get their attention, will not be as necessary.

High value incentives to Recommend the hotel to all family, friends, and colleagues of the guest, enabled via lucrative, targeted, and easily claimed offers (no fine print) which the guests' can upload to their LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok feeds, will be much better thought out and executed.

Well-timed, thoughtfully constructed (using pictures and messages from staff from the prior stay to evoke memories), and deeply personalized (same room same amenities, same special food and beverage orders, some surprises) SPNT (same period next time) or 'call back' campaigns will be designed to motivate guests to Return to the same place by giving them compelling reasons to do so.

In all, in one sense the hotels of the future will be like hotels of the past, way past: intimate, personalized, and welcoming. In another sense, everything in the hotel will be different: better, smarter, and faster, enabled by technology.

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[Dr. Chekitan Dev](), a distinguished professor at [Cornell University's Nolan School of Hotel Administration in the SC Johnson College of Business,]() is an internationally renowned expert who wrote [the book on Hospitality Branding](), and has testified in numerous hospitality-related lawsuits including many cases involving hotels.