

HVS Monday Musings: Faster technology adoption will bring a paradigm shift in hotel operations in India

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Pre-COVID, the hospitality sector had successfully adopted technology at the first point of customer contact with increasing number of bookings being done online. However, technology adoption during the other phases of the customer journey was still lagging as hotel rooms followed the standard practices using nearly defunct tech in rooms. The situation, however, changed drastically during the COVID era when tech features, such as keyless check-in and digital menus, that were once considered as luxuries suddenly became necessities for hotels to remain relevant.

Technology will bring about fundamental changes in hotel operations going forward

Keyless / mobile check-in and check-out, digital menus and contactless payments have become the norm today. The Reception, Bell Desk & Concierge are likely to soon be dead and will be reborn as an invisible virtual help desk. The Help Desk operations would be outsourced and operate from a call center.

In the longer-term, hotel rooms will be equipped with Alexa/ Siri or Google Assistant variants, which will soon become a standard feature. All guest in-room functions and service requirements from operating the curtains, lights, air conditioning, TV, switching TV channels to ordering a meal from in-room dining will be done through a virtual assistant and chat buddy leading to an almost contactless stay. Entry and exit to the room would be through a QR/RFID code on the mobile phone. Room telephones will become obsolete, with the mobile phone and the virtual assistant becoming the communication tools to send and receive messages.



All service menus will be available on the TV and Mobile App fully integrated to the virtual assistant in the room. Room toilets will have sensors for WC's, Showers, taps & soap dispensers in keeping with the need to deliver a contactless stay.

New generation contactless vending machines for ice, food, drinks & hot beverages placed in dispensing rooms created on each guest floor will now be a standard feature even in upscale & luxury hotels. Getting a robot to deliver in-room dining meals will no longer be an imaginary future trend.

Efficient usage of technology will help the sector to streamline processes and improve profitability, while enhancing guest experience and personalization.

Summary

Efficient usage of technology will help the hospitality sector to improve profitability, while enhancing guest experience going forward.

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Introducing technological innovations and automated processes can help in optimizing operational efficiency, improving staff productivity, and reducing man hours at various departments such as the Front Office, Inventory management, Housekeeping etc. Staff to room ratios are likely to decline as almost every aspect of 'guest service' is now available through the guest's mobile and hotels increase the usage of predictive data analytics to personalize guest services in the post-COVID era.

Technology is poised to play a greater role in improving profitability in the hospitality sector going forward, as hotels use AI, chatbots, IoT, cloud-based technologies etc. to further improve efficiency and enhance guest experience.

About **Mandeep S Lamba**



Mandeep S. Lamba, President – South Asia, oversees the HVS global hospitality practice for South Asia. He has spent over 30 years in the hospitality industry of which the last 19 have been in CEO positions. Having worked with leading International and domestic Hotel Companies such as IHG, Radisson & ITC Hotels, he also set up joint venture companies with Dawnay Day Group UK and Onyx Hospitality, Thailand to own and operate hotels in India giving him a broader exposure to the hospitality business.

An established industry leader, Mandeep has won several awards and recognitions in India and abroad for his accomplishments and contribution to the hospitality industry. He is a Certified Hospitality Administrator from the American Hotels Association (CHA), a member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, UK (MRICS) and a member of the Tourism Council of CII (Northern India). His views are often solicited for television and print media as a spokesperson for the hospitality & tourism sector.

Prior to joining HVS in 2018, Mandeep was the Managing Director, Hotels & Hospitality Group for JLL.

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