

30. INNOVATIONS AND TECHNOLOGIES IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Service sector has dominated the world's economy. In most countries, services nowadays contribute to more economic values than agriculture, raw materials and manufacturing all together. Service economies' dominant position is more apparent in developed countries. Up to three-quarters of the wealth and 85% of employment are generated by services, and most new job growth comes from services.

Service innovation has been constantly studied to serve customers better. However, as one of the oldest industries, it is hard to innovate in hotel industry with traditional methods. Fortunately, information technology is an outstanding representative of modern civilization, gives us a good chance to innovate services in a new way. Hotels make profit mainly by providing lodging service.

For many of travellers in their vacation, visit or business trip, hotels are places they stay when out of home. As a mature industry, hotels industry now includes all types of lodging from luxurious 5-star hotels to youth hostels. Besides room services, most hotels also offer a variety of accessorial services, including but not limited to food, beverage, laundry and valet services. Additionally, the high level hotels can offer conference rooms, swimming pools, beauty salons, fitness centres and many other facilities to both business and leisure travellers.

Compared to hotel industry, Information technology came out rather recently, but has developed into one of the biggest industries with influences to most other industries. In hotel industry, the possibility to supply qualified IT services is regarded as one of the prerequisites for, at least, top level hotels. At high-end hotels, new computer systems that connect individual rooms to network servers can now keep track of guests' preferences and change the room conditions automatically.

These "smart" systems can learn whether a frequent guest likes the lights dimmed, the curtains closed or the room toasty warm. They can also personalize the electronics in the room so that John Coltrane, for instance, greets jazz buffs when he

enters his room. And sensors in refrigerators alert maids when the minibar is running low on soda.

The backbones of these smart rooms are the data networks that hotels are installing to carry phone calls, video and Internet connections. The networks also allow hotels to connect the lights, air-conditioners and other room devices to a central computer so they can be remotely monitored or controlled.

To manage all these devices with a hand-held controller or remotely by computer, hotels are installing an assortment of adapters, antennas and sensors in their entertainment consoles, curtains and thermostats. A guest can turn down an air-conditioner using a remote-control device that communicates with an infrared reader in the machine. But a clerk might just as easily adjust the air-conditioner if it is connected to the hotel's network. A memory chip in the air-conditioner could also remember how a guest adjusts it.

Smart networks rely largely on a user's preferences that hotels learn in various ways. Some guests, for example, are asked to fill out questionnaires before they arrive. The hotel looks at digital trails someone leaves, like the programs he watches and the music he listens to. When he checks in, the concierge calls up his profile on a computer and adjusts the networked devices in his room to fit his preferences.

Hotels are installing universal remote controllers so guests can operate a variety of electronics with a single device. The apartment has technology that allows controlling room temperature, adjusting the lighting and operating multimedia equipment.

Wireless technology also links hotel employees to the network. Some maids wear wireless tags so the front desk can determine who can get to a room fastest with towels or an extra pillow. Other maids use wireless messaging devices to tell the front desk when a room is ready. Luxury hotels are looking to add high-tech furniture.

I think it is very important to provide new technologies in hotel industry.

Service organizations are constantly attempting to find innovative ways to serve customers more effectively and efficiently.