Take a Byte: Technology in the Hospitality Industry
Technology eases the process of the stay and customizes the experience for guests. “Technology is our friend,” or so the saying goes. Technology has entered almost every aspect of our lives, the hospitality industry is no exception. Technology in the hospitality industry is intended to ease the process of the guests’ stay. It also can allow for a customized guest experience.
More and more hotels are invested millions of dollars to offer mobile services to guests. Technology plays an important role in the hospitality and tourism industry. Both customers and businesses can benefit from advances in communication, reservations and guest services systems. Technology allows continuous communication and streamlines the guest experience, from reservation to checkout.
Besides furniture, guest amenities and personnel, hotel owners have to make a substantial investment in a hotel property management system (PMS) to manage the hotel’s operations. Considered the “heart” of the hotel, the PMS enables all other hotel systems to work together, handling the guest room check in as well as consolidating all group charges. Property management systems are usually networked and track all information that applied to tracking systems, making them available to all computers on the hotel’s network. Both the housekeeping and the front office department (and all of its departments in a larger hotel) can access the same PMS to track needed information.

The PMS can manage or view:
- Banquet
- Check out process
- Electronic key systems
- Guest check in
- Guest feedback
- Guest Laundry
- Group check in
- House Keeping
- Inventory view
- Maintenance work order
- Purchasing
- Receiving
- Reports
- Room layout
- Stay view
- Summary view
How can hotels benefit from cloud computing?

- Cloud computing is more cost effective. Smaller hotels are able to pay as they need the services. This is sound business practice in good and in bad times.

- Smaller hotels are able to gain access to “big chain functionality”. Large hotel companies have the resources and money to create their own custom cloud. Smaller hotels and chains do not, but when in the cloud it can help them utilize development, maintenance and upgrades across many small hotels.

- No information technology system is required. Small to mid-size hotels have less systems to deal with and do not need to throw out much when they switch to a cloud based PMS.

- Security is important for both small and larger hotel chains. The cloud offers some protection against hackers.

- The cloud is more reliable than most think. Problems have occurred in the past but in the long run, using a cloud system is reliable and efficient.
Downloading applications is a new way for guests to interact with the hotel. This allows one to request amenities, services and other incidentals right from a phone or tablet. There are applications for guest services, guest devices, staff, booking and tablets in rooms. Whether an individual needs extra pillows, extra towels, or just some one-on-one hotel attention before a stay, applications can help make life easier.
How Technology is Changing in the Hospitality Industry

As common as credit and debit cards are, 55%, or 14.85 million businesses still operate in a cash-only basis. Is it really beneficial to hang onto traditional transaction practices? Here are some facts that may help your hospitality business make the jump into the new era.

http://visual.ly/how-technology-changing-hospitality-industry

Click on hyperlink to view infographic:
At one time, you or your family may have stood in a line waiting to check in to your hotel. The ability to make hotel reservations online led to the ability to use a check in kiosk at a hotel. Your smart phone also allows you to check in to your hotel on your way from the airport. Front of the house employees are still available, some hotels call these employees “Lobby Friends.”
Guest comments and feedback are an important gauge for a business. The sooner a business receives customer feedback the better. Businesses must have a mechanism in place that allows their customers to give them feedback instantly and at times it’s convenient for them. Hotels are able to receive guest comment and feedback via the Internet, tablet or smart phone.

Positive feedback reinforces their exceptional service and negative feedback alerts them to issues and areas they can improve. When measuring customer feedback, it’s important to focus on the specific requests and actionable items found within this feedback, rather than on the scores themselves.

These team leaders may not need to know every detail of each customer interaction, but it’s crucial they have an overall sense of customer sentiment and important issues that need attention.

This information should encourage team leaders to use customer feedback for coaching, not just evaluating – ultimately helping employees meet their personal, team and company goals.

Have you ever provided a guest comment or feedback for a hotel stay? Was it a positive or negative one?
Hotel room entry has changed from a key, to a magnetic key card, and now the upcoming ability to use your smart phone as your room key. Perhaps, in the future facial recognition used in the government industry will make its way to the hotel industry.
Technology does not stop at the hotel lobby. Some hotels provide a tablet in each room that control various functions. The tablet also allows guests to make restaurant reservations, access hotel services and tourist attractions.
Click on hyperlink to view YouTube™ video:

Smart Hotel Room of the Future in Action
See the Smart Hotel Room in action, a collaboration with Caesars Entertainment, WeChat, and Ayla Networks to Showcase the future of IoT in hospitality.
https://youtu.be/JpnqT5VNuCs
As the Internet has grown over the years, so too has its impact on the hotel industry. The business traveler has led the charge for guests’ availability to Wi-Fi throughout the hotel property. Hotel websites may increase reservations, as guests can see pictures of the property and reserve a room online without a travel agent. Due to the growth in online reservations, larger hotels see the benefit of connecting with online travel agencies to increase their booking rates.
Social media is everywhere. A guest’s opinion of hotel properties, guest experiences and customer service can be available immediately to the Internet community. Travel blogs can offer a more in depth opinion of the property and the writer’s experience.
Click on hyperlink to view YouTube™ video:

The Hotel Room of the Future.
A four minute video showing a futuristic hotel in Germany.
https://youtu.be/RZqEAkTEOqE
Review

- Name two ways technology has impacted the hospitality industry.
- What are the functions of a property management system?
- How can a cloud service benefit a hotel’s management system?
- Compare and contrast hotels from the decade of the 1990’s to today.
- What are the functions of a hotel kiosk?
References and Resources

Images:
- How Technology is Changing in the Hospitality Industry (Infographic).
- Photos obtained through a license with Shutterstock.com™.

Websites:
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  http://associationsnow.com/2013/09/technology-takeaways-from-the-hospitality-industry
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- The Center for the Future of Work
  Digital Technologies Transforming the Hospitality Industry.
References and Resources

YouTube™:

- Smart Hotel Room of the Future in Action
  See the Smart Hotel Room in action, a collaboration with Caesars
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