

EMERGENCE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY: TO STUDY HOW MOBILE DEVICES ARE REDEFINING THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

In today's world mobile device has become a very important component of our life, hence we are heavily depended on our smart phones for almost everything, from being in touch with our family, friends and relatives for delegating work, managing the house, ordering food, buying for groceries, payment of various bills, booking movie shows like entertainor any musical event, booking for transportation like Ola, Ubar, or rail ticket, using it as a e-wallet for making gateway payment, opening doors at hotel, making various payment it's a big list. Mobile communication has changed the very nature of how we interact and communicate with everyone. As we are becoming habituated of using mobile technology at our fingertips, hospitality industry has not been left either when it comes to mobile communication, hospitality industry has also been highly affected due to the increase in the use of mobile devices; as it has significantly reshaped their functioning. It could be rightly said that mobile devices are influencing the future of the hospitality industry. This study focuses on the importance of mobile communication in the hospitality and how these mobile devices are playing an important role in redefining the hospitality industry. The findings show that very few study is available on this topic at the same time very limited attention has been put on use of mobile technology application in the hospitality industry, therefore further studies are encouraged to improve the communication system between the guest and the hotels. For this study Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire distributed to the Senior Managers and Supervisors working in Front areas of Three to five star hotels of Pune and Aurangabad city. Around 70% of questionnaire which were gathered were filled completely this data was further analyzed using statistical tools and conclusions were drawn.

Key Words: Mobile devices, Hospitality Industry, Information Technology, Mobile information technology application

Introduction:-

With the growth in information and communication there has been a dramatic revolution in the hospitality and tourism sector. In recent years, there has been a remarkable use of mobile device and mobile applications in the hospitality industry and because of this guests can easily obtain information about product and services and can purchase them anywhere and at any time. The advancement in smartphones are assisting the guests who wants customized hospitality services. This study, deals with the term mobile technology applications which also means mobile technology in general, which includes both mobile devices, tablets as well as Smartphones mobile apps.

How Mobile Application are Enhancing the Guest Experience in Hospitality Industry

In today's global scenario the behavior and expectations of the guests have changed, every one carries their smartphone or tablet with them. A lot of time is spent on the mobile apps and this is increasing enormously mobile devices helps people to stay connected with anyone, anywhere and at any time. Like other industries, hospitality industry is realizing the importance of this technology and the business opportunities created by mobile technology with the help of this technology hotels and resorts will be able to improve the guest experience and succeed financially and operationally.

Importance of mobile communication in hospitality industry

Presently the guests visiting hotels are on constant move, carrying their mobile phones with them they have become more busy, spontaneous and curious than ever before, and they cannot imagine themselves without a mobile device as it has become a guide, which is used for messaging text, as a diary with an important feature of inbuilt camera all this features helps the guests to communicate with the hotel staff conveniently this devices also helps the guest

in requesting something or clarifying their doubts, as staff of hotels are mostly mobile in nature it also eases the working of the employees as they don't have to be glued on the desk top.

Important Mobile Communication Trends in Hotel Industry

In the current scenario technology is beginning to reshape the hospitality industry, as IT is becoming a very vital factor for the operational areas in the hotel in order to enhance the guest experience. As the hospitality industry is becoming more competitive, it is becoming more important to identify new opportunities with the help of mobile devices, and also attract new customers and retain the existing ones.

The following are the areas where mobile technology is playing an important role.

1. Mobile Door Key

Many International branded Hotels have discontinued with the plastic room key cards for checking in their rooms and have implemented the use of mobile phones to enter their rooms allowing guests to check in to their room with their mobile phones this is done with the help of scanning a code.

2. Services provided at different Locations

This is a new technology and is still in infancy stage but its effects are huge. This mobile technology helps to locate the staff and guests of the hotel which helps in enhancing the services for the guests, while checking in or out of the room it also helps in attending their questions and requests.

3. Self Service

With the advancement in the technology, guests today are preferring self-service right, from checking in the hotel to place room service orders they prefer to do it on their mobile device this also helps to enrich the guest experience. This is a very important aspect of mobile technology and is going to increase in the near future.

4. Mobile Fixed Junction

Around a decade ago there were room phones installed in every room of the hotel. With the invention of mobile devices the use of conventional room phones has been greatly reduced. But it hasn't lost its role in future room phone may serve as a hub where a guest after arriving at the hotel will be able to pair his mobile device to the room phone after which it can help the guest to use the mobile device to control the TV, sound, temperature and blinds in the room. Even request for a wakeup can be arranged along with laundry facilities if required by the guest. Another important feature of mobile devices is that if the guests need to take a call from the lobby while going out of the hotel to catch a cab the guest will not miss the meeting because the handoff from Wi-Fi to 4G technology is seamless, sometimes it sounds like a fiction, all this is a sign that guests of tomorrow are going to be more connected in future.

3. Mobile Guest Apps

Mobile applications are playing a very vital role in the business world be it any industry these apps have really made a big difference in carrying out the business as guest apps are a hub to host multiple functions through mobile devices. A elegantly designed guest app today combines a lot of things from sending notifications related to the hotel's services to the guest loyalty programs. With the help of the app guests are able to get information about the functions, conference, events happening in the hotel, these apps are able to electronically send the guest details of the events with the itinerary, with the map of meeting venue where the event is going to be held.

Majority of star hotels are taking advantages of this on their day to day operations and updating the app regularly there are a lot of developments expected to reform these apps with the help of technology this is definitely going to make hotels' guests gain good experience, keep them connected with the hotel and make them happy and empowered guests.

4. Tech Lounges

Many hotels are coming with the new concept of lounges near the lobby of the hotel where guests after checking out of their rooms can still get the access to Wi-Fi in order to relax and get their work done at the same time.

8. New Sip-Dect Technology

The technology is already becoming popular in hospitality and other industries especially in European countries this is a radio-based network, this is very useful where the employees are highly mobile like hotels, with this technology employees can be contacted all over the hotel or in the premises without tethering them down to a specific location. Since hotel operation staff like housekeeping, F&B service staff, valet, front office, concierge, and

other event staff are often on the move, Sip-Dect technology is very advantageous for the hoteliers. Being relatively low priced to other alternatives, ease of operation and quality Sip-Dect technology is going to be used in the hotels in a big way.

9. Meeting Spaces with mobile Technology -Enabled features

The modern meeting space which has evolved is no longer about tables, chairs and nice serving carts. Modern meetings can be carried out virtually on any mobile device which runs on technology. In the current scenario business customers are preferring advanced technology enabled ballrooms and banquet halls where they get use the features like mobile enabled communication system

Latest trend in Customer Service -Mobile enabled Self Service

Today's tech-savvy Guests expect a very good service quality this has been a very important feature of the hospitality industry as mobile technology is changing the way people perceive superior service, currently they interact with hotel employees as per their preference like check in procedure to be done on their mobile devices instead of waiting in que at the front desk. This way mobile apps are becoming very vital in rendering superior services to the guests.

Situations where guests can use a mobile app in the hotel.

At the front desk for Check in and check out

To make booking at the dining area of the hotel.

To place order from the room for dining service

Making booking and appointments for wellness services such as spa and massage

Availing laundry services and valet

Through GPS placing orders for food, and beverage services

Importance of Mobile Technology in Today's Scenario

Satisfied Guest

The guests coming to the hotels with downloaded mobile app at the time of arrival are often satisfied with the value for the price they paid, and are satisfied in the current scenario Guests are accustomed to on demand services that are accessed via smart devices, they also expect the same convenience during their stay at the hotel, as convenience is becoming increasingly important, hotels have to give their guests the access to various services via mobile, either in the form of an app or via mobile communication chat like text messaging, Facebook Messenger, or WhatsApp.

Accountability and Competency of the Staff

In order to track the performance of the hotel staff mobile plays a very important role like contacting anybody, anywhere in the premises, settling any issues in time. General Manager, vice president of the hotel after reaching home also can solve the issue or problem on mobile, and they can also keep a track of what is happening in the hotel. Mobile phones have also been proved to be better than clipboards, Notice board as it can directly exchange the information amongst the staff but mobile apps enables them to communicate more effectively and efficiently. With the mobile apps staff have to be more accountable as they can respond to the requests of the guest immediately, Mobile apps also has the feature of recording every document and details of it such as who, what, where and when with this the chances of mistakes and excuses gets reduced, also the written confirmation provides the guests with more confidence that their request will be delivered.

Challenges of Mobile Communication:-

Issues related to the Bandwidth

Travelers have become more tech-savvy than ever, they carry with them smart phone, laptop, tablet or a e-reader along with them during their travel all these devices are Internet bandwidth-sucking devices which put a huge strain on the IT system of the hotels this is one of the major problem with the mobile devices as they rely on the hotels system for quick and reliable data or else they get offended and declare it loudly to the hotels staff. Hotels are searching for possible solution for this, whatever may be the solution in future the demand for bandwidth at the hotel is only going to grow.

Hotels should make the booking process easy through mobile but the reality at present is that, many hotels are still lacking in installing a booking engine or payment gateway which is mobile friendly, this will help the hotels encourage the travelers to take seek for the next step and to make them comfortable to book the hotel rather than exit

the website of the hotel and search for some other hotel. This often happens when the CRM system of the hotel doesn't use the application properly on the mobile, this really calls for a good training session for the staff who deals with the mobile application of the hotel.

Wi-Fi Set-up: Some years back nobody thought that Wi-Fi will become a vital factor while choosing a hotel currently travelers check their mobile devices on an average of 120 times in a day, at present Wi-Fi has become a need unlike a luxury and it also makes them unhappy if it is unavailable in the hotel the travelers staying in the hotels are of the opinion that this Wi-Fi should be freely available, hoteliers should take this very seriously and update their networks and try to increase the coverage.

Increase in the Self-Check Process: The pace with which we are living today no one wants to wait in the lobby for checking in their room guest today are preferring to check in through a mobile check-in option, this allows helps them to avoid the que on the front desk, there is no doubt that self-service check-in through mobiles will become a new standard in the coming times and the conventional front desks will fade away also this has given birth self-service kiosks in their lobbies.

Upsurge of the Portable Concierge: Though the importance of the hotel concierge still exists in the hotels today but with the invent of the mobile technology many social apps which are travel based are available, to the guests and they can search and find the information which they require which was earlier provided by a traditional concierge. Many hotels and Resorts have come out with their own mobile app this provides the travelers with access to important locations and tourist place with other information which a traveler is seeking this infact is now available on the tips of their fingers.

The End of Pay and View: In the last decade on-demand video in the room was a very important feature of the hotel for many generations but in present times the guests staying in the hotels are preferring streaming from their personal mobile devices. Guest are delighted to have the access to their own mobile content and this mobile content availability at the hotel has become a reason for choosing a particular hotel.

Hotels and Resorts coming with the arrangement of all in one system in order to give the option to the guest of more room control through mobile device for lights, temperatures, music, etc. all through their mobile device.

The staff can also gather customers data easily which would help to improve the efficiency of the hotel staff, at the same time services that were required to be done manually can be handled through the mobile app and the work could be done more meticulously with the mobile technology.

With the help of mobile technology the role of a mobile app has a very vital role to play when it comes to managing the CRM policy of the hotel, since this mobile app helps the hotel to encourage upselling and drive to get repeat business, another important feature of this app is a loyalty program. With the help of push buttons, hotels can send messages to guests based on their likings preferences profiles, behavior history etc. Loyalty programs also include special offers, promotions, discounts, and more that encourage users to make additional purchases, during their stay in the hotel.

Objective of the study

- 1) To study and understand the importance of mobile communication in the hospitality industry.
- 2) To find out how mobile devices are facilitating the employees of the hotels

Methods: - This study is based on Primary data which was collected through questionnaire filled by the Front line Managers and Associates the collected data was further analyzed through the application of statistical tools and conclusions were drawn, the secondary data was collected through books, journals and Internet.

Practical Implications of the Study: - As mentioned in the initial para of this study that very few study is available on this topic the findings of this paper will help the hoteliers to understand and implement mobile technology in their hotels to sustain the competition as well as retain and attract the new customers to their hotels this study will also enable the management of the hotel to get updated with mobile technology and create awareness about this technology.

Conclusion and Discussion

It can be said that technology has decreased the human interactions especially between staff and the guest but the finding of the study show that guests are preferring the self-service model through their mobile device and this technology has become beneficial to both customers and the staff of the hotel as the guest can book the hotels service make reservations, and customize their hotel stay at a click of the button, this lessens operational bottlenecks, reduces waiting time, it also helps in enhancing the customer service, and tries to reduce the workload of the staff. Mobile devices provides the travelers with the channel to communicate with the hotel, and vice versa.

Today's world is a hyper-connected age, and with the mobile phone all the physical and geographical communication barriers have been completely eliminated.

Mobile apps have created a very big opportunity to the hoteliers in enhancing the guest experience, improving the operations of the hotel, and initiate repeated business.

It has only been a decade that the mobile has ominously reshaped the hospitality industry and has transformed the traveler's expectations. As mobile technology continues to create more importance in the guest's daily life, time has come to fine tune the hospitality venture so it could well be said that mobile technology will play a very vital role in driving guest engagement, and increasing the revenue growth of the hotel.

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