



Guests get a tech-up in city hotels!

Growth for mobile reservations in hotels for Ahmedabad has been amongst the highest in India

Travel industry comprises almost 70% of the total eCommerce market in 2014-15

How hotels boost their tech presence?

- Mobile apps** which allow reservation, payment, check-in & check-out, pre-trip information like flights, train tickets among others.
- Interactive interface** gives users information like city-guide & recommendation for local attractions & restaurants, weather, travel tools like maps, among others
- One-touch control** that lets guests control temperature, adjust lighting, open/close curtains and turn the television on/off, among others.

Pics: Pravin Indrekar.dna



INVESTMENTS

Hoteliers invest huge amounts of money to boost their technology presence. Accor Hotels, which manages Novotel, said it will invest a significant ₹225 million (Rs1.575 crore) between 2014 and 2018 towards upgrading its IT infrastructure and data management.

E We have a virtual concierge with touch interface in the hotel lobby, that allows guests to access information about the hotel, maps, directions, recommendations weather & flight information



NILESH PATEL
director - IT, Accor Hotels

E Hotels have no choice but to harness the benefits of technology for connecting with guests, facilitating room bookings, and delivering high quality guest service."



MANOJ K MOHANTY
VP - sales, IDSNext

Ahmedabad: Picture this: You plan a holiday and no sooner you land at your destination, your smartphone app alerts you of the route to the hotel. 'App-led' you check into the hotel and, voila! It also gives you your room number and guides you to your room, a gentle tap on the smartphone will open the door and finally you are in. That's not all. Now, a touch interface will further let you control the light, temperature, curtains and even the room's infotainment systems. What else can you expect, right?

Well, these are some of the luxury that '007' enjoyed in his work-cum-vacation sojourns in seven star hotels in exotic locations. Thanks to the aggressive digitization taken by modern-day hoteliers, you don't need to be a James Bond to access such privileges anymore. Much of this is a reality in our city-based luxury hotels too!

Travelling has today become an online business now, from hotel reservations to ticketing. Mobile growth on hotels for

Ahmedabad has been amongst the highest across the country. In fact, a pWc report says India's e-commerce industry, which is expected to be in the range of \$22bn in 2015 is dominated by the travel industry, which comprises almost 70% of the total eCommerce market.

While increasing number of travel aggregators are nibbling away the reservation business from hoteliers, the app is yet to ensnare the hoteliers, but they too have taken to a digital revolution.

Realising the

potential of the digital platform, hotel chains are strengthening their digital presence to take on the growing competition.

"Hotels have no choice but to harness the benefits of technology for connecting with guests, facilitating room bookings, and delivering high quality guest service," said Manoj K Mohanty, VP - sales, IDSNext, a hospitality technology solutions company.

Accor Hotels, which manages Novotel, said it will invest a significant ₹225 million (Rs1.575 crore) between 2014 and 2018 towards upgrading its IT infrastructure and data management. The group said, 35% of its customers approaching through digital platforms are arriving by mobile devices.

Mayuresh Deodhar, director - sales & marketing, Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad said: "The hotel is going to implement the mobile check-in app in 2016 first quarter where guest can book the reservation, select the room, show their check, and use the mobile phone to open the door of the room."

Recently, Starwood Hotels & Resorts introduced SPG (Starwood

Preferred Group) keyless, for its loyal customers, allowing guests to use their smartphone as their room key.

At present, the system is available in Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park, and is soon to be a part of its counterpart in Ahmedabad, said Rituraj Soni, asst sales manager, Aloft Ahmedabad.

Hoteliers have walked a mile extra from merely applications. For instance, city-based Radisson Blu hotel, a part of Carlson Hotels Inc. has provides its guests, an access to

i-home automation system with a simple touch, where in they can control temperature, lighting, television and entertainment, window curtains and much more.

Sudeep R, director - sales & marketing, Radisson Blu Ahmedabad, said: "Our one touch app offers guests, to make reservation, amend them or even to order amenities and room service too. It allows guests to engage with the hotel much before they check in for any requests they make require during the stay," he added.



An attendant at city-based Radisson Blu hotel adjusting the room light using a tab

Asia hedge fund startups see record first half

The amount raised in the first six months was roughly equivalent to the total sum raised in all of 2014

Hong Kong: Asian hedge fund startups have had a bumper six months, raising a record \$5.3 billion in the first half of 2015, twice as much as in the same period last year, according to a survey.

The amount raised in the first six months was roughly equivalent to the total sum raised in all of 2014, according to industry survey, highlighting the structural changes in the financial industry as more traders and bankers leave traditional financial institutions to set up their own shops.

"This is what makes 2015 so remarkable, and let's not forget, we still have several

multi-hundred dollar launches by star managers slated for the second half," said Aradhna Dayal, head of Asia for HedgeFund Intelligence which runs AsiaHedge.

The spurt in startups has been fuelled by anchor investors and strategic backers which has helped these funds to lock away long-term capital. Overall, 25 new Asia-focused hedge funds were seeded, including the spinout of Graticule Asset Management from Fortress as well as a raft of new entrants, the survey said.

Despite the impressive headline capital raising numbers, hedge fund managers in



SORKIN

Hong Kong were cautious about the overall capital raising environment and volatile markets, making long term calls a difficult task.

"If you are below a particular assets-under-management size, many institutional money managers typically ignore

you even though it makes you faster and nimbler than the established guys," said the chief investment officer of a Asia-focused hedge fund.

Choppy market conditions have also made it difficult for many hedge funds to beat market indexes consistently,

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with the recent slump and spike in volatility in Chinese markets tipping many hedge funds into the red this year.

A broad Credit Suisse hedge fund index has returned about 2 percent in the first six months of the year. An MSCI index of Asian stocks ex-Japan is down nearly 3 percent so far this year.

Macro strategy focused funds stole a march over other hedge fund strategy launches, garnering \$4.2 billion, according to the survey. —Reuters

DIGITAL EQUALITY

Strides towards gender equality in Silicon Valley

Gender discrimination lawsuits filed by employees have kept the Silicon Valley in the headlines. Therefore, gender pay gap is receiving renewed scrutiny across organisations

David Gelles

California: Marc Benioff, co-founder and chief executive of Salesforce, was riding high a couple of years ago. His cloud software company had weathered the financial crisis; revenue was up; and the stock was at a record high. But as Benioff pondered his company's evolution, he had cause for concern.

"I was in meetings with managers and they were all men," he said. Silicon Valley's notorious lack of gender diversity, he realized, was a problem at Salesforce too. "I was really worried that there was something wrong with the company."

Hoping to change the ratio, Benioff started what he called the Women's Surge in 2013. The goal was to achieve 100 percent equality for men and women in pay and promotion, and to make sure that at least a third of all participants at any meeting were women. His efforts received a boost when Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook, published "Lean In," bringing more discussions about gender issues to the national stage.

Two of the women to receive promotions

were Cindy Robbins, who became head of human resources, and Leyla Seka, who took over the Desk.com division, a customer service unit.

"We surged. We got bigger jobs; we got promoted," Robbins said. "That's when we started to put our heads together. We wanted to help other women as well."

Now Salesforce is in the process of raising the salaries of underpaid women (and a few men), one at a time.

"Many men and women were on par," said Robbins, who is overseeing the effort to review and increase salaries. "But some salaries for men and women needed to be adjusted."

Throughout Silicon Valley, the gender pay gap is receiving renewed scrutiny. Gender discrimination lawsuits brought by Ellen Pao against the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, and by former female employees at Facebook and Twitter, have kept the issue in the headlines.

And while "Lean In" injected a note of optimism into the debate, encouraging women to negotiate for higher salaries, remarks last year by Microsoft's chief executive, Satya Nadella, suggested that progress might be slow. "It's

not really about asking for a raise, but knowing and having faith that the system will give you the right raise," Nadella said. Not asking for a raise, Nadella continued, was "good karma."

(In an internal memo, Nadella apologized for his remarks and said women at Microsoft earned 99.7 percent as much as their male counterparts.)

Other big technology firms also say that while

EVEN SMALLER TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES ARE TRYING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE

there may be a problem, it is not one of their making.

According to the Labor Department, men working full time make 28% more than women. In Silicon Valley the situation is even worse. Men earn up to 61% more than their female peers, according to Joint Venture Silicon Valley, a research group.

Even smaller technology companies are trying innovative approaches to address the issue. Buffer, a social media startup, compensates employees based on a formula that takes seniority, experience and location into account, and it makes all its salaries public.

SumAll, a marketing startup, has made its salaries transparent internally. And at Reddit, before Pao was ousted as chief executive this month, she started a policy of not negotiating salaries when recruiting new employees. —NYT



BizKwiz

Sanjay Chakraborty is a city-based marketing communication consultant

- An invention of the 19th century by Anyos Jedlik, named 'Bilaiti Pani'. What was the invention?
- Which famous brand comes from the latin word of Snow White?
- Where do you find these icons?
- Ted Turner, the American media mogul and philanthropist, during one of his famous speeches mentioned that "there would be 2 things in the future that would make all happy". Identify the things.
- About what brand/product is Mahatma Gandhi reported to have remarked, "One of the few useful things invented"?
- Identify the logo

7 Reliance Drishti is the first of its kind registered entity in India. What is this entity is all about?

8 In 1920's Queen Marie of Romania visited to the US, she enjoyed a product so much that she wrote to the company to supply its product to its country as well. Her letter was in turn was used for advertising this product and she joined the list of celebrities who had previously endorsed this product?

10 The Mayor of Tokyo, Mr Shimpei Goto, named this brand with the hope that this brand, (a luxury item of those times), would become widely available to common people and be sold throughout the world. Id this brand?

ANSWERS: 1. Soda or Tonic water 2. Nivea, established in 1882, is derived from Niveus, Latin for snow white 3. The Uniflora logo 4. Mobile phones & Aeroplanes, 5. Singer Sewing Machine 6. Puffin Books, brand of Penguin books 7. India's first Registered Braille Newspaper in Hindi 8. Pond's 9. Parle G and the location is Vile Parle, Mumbai 10. Citizen Watches