**SELF-SERVICE TECHNOLOGIES IN THE HOSPITALITY SUPPLY CHAIN**

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**ABSTRACT**

Currently, the use of self-service technologies in a lodging environment has been focusing primarily on check-in and check-out functions. This project will investigate the use, effectiveness, and potential of self-service technologies for a lodging environment in the following areas:

* Can the self-service technologies increase revenue opportunities? Is the customer experience enhanced?
* Will this product produce efficiencies in service?
* Does self-service create awareness about the different products and services the property is offering?
* Do the self-service technologies provide information on promotions?
* Does self-service technology improve product delivery times?
* Does it keep pace with competition?

**INTRODUCTION**

With the rise in the Do-It-Yourself trend, the hospitality industry is joining the bandwagon and altering its methods of service delivery. According to a 2008 survey by *Hospitality Technology,* kiosks usage in hotels, following the adoption in other industries such as airlines, retail, and banking, is increasing across the United States, and guests will continue to have a propensity to opt for a self-service dyad if given a choice. Upwards of 62% of the study’s respondents indicated a strong preference for and likeliness of using kiosks for guest registration. This transformation is driven by more technologically-savvy customers seeking control over transactions, wanting to be empowered anywhere and any time to conduct business, and looking to protect their privacy. It is also being driven by necessary pressures within the business market place to reduce costs and address continuing labor shortages. For example, many major hotel chains such as Hilton, Marriott, and InterContinental Hotels Group have followed the lead set by other industries (such as airlines, retail with self check-out, banking with the ATMs) to embrace and promote self service through kiosks, the Internet, and now mobile devices. They are helping customers to serve themselves and in the process of doing so, getting them to purchase upgrades and additional services. The adoption of self-service is also migrating to luxury hotels, which are known for pampering their guests and serving their every need. In these environments, self-service may seem like the antithesis of the desired customer service model, yet if implemented thoughtfully and under the right set of circumstances, self-service models can add value and be well-accepted, if not preferred, by guests. For example, the Four Seasons Miami installed self-service ordering devices at its pool to improve guest experiences by enabling guests the ability to place their own food and beverage orders, reserve spa treatments, and request an attendant. The solution is not only trendy and cool but also essential to allowing the hotel to satisfy its service standards.

Service must be architected. Transitioning to self-service models requires a great deal of planning, mapping processes, and finding the right technologies, and creating the right balance of human versus machine touch. Given the change in the service dyad, software should be used to provide customer recognition and build intimacy through personalization and linkages to guest profiles and the company’s customer relationship management (CRM) database. When a guest uses a self-service device, software will recognize him/her and communicate in his/her native language, acknowledge past visits, remember preferences, and present information (e.g., currency and units of measure) in a format appropriate for each guest based upon his/her background. If guests perform the data entry tasks, the roles of service associates can change and focus not on data entry and transaction processing but instead on guest interactions and meaningful conversations.

Currently, the use of self-service technologies in a lodging environment has been focusing primarily on check-in and check-out functions. This project will investigate the use, effectiveness, and potential of self-service technologies for a lodging environment in the value-adding areas.