Smart Hotel Technologies and Services: The Role of 5G technology at W Hong Kong

Source: Unsplash (2020)

Background

As technology continues to evolve and shape the way we live, providing reliable internet access is now an essential guest service within the hotel industry. A fast and stable connection with the outside world can mean the difference between a productive and enjoyable stay or one filled with frustration and disappointment (Surfsonix, 2023).

To address this rising need, W Hong Kong and 10 other hotels under Sun Hung Kai Properties have partnered with local telecom company SmarTone to offer 5G network experience to their guests (Sun Hung Kai Properties, 2021). Partnering with SmarTone, which offers the widest network coverage in Hong Kong, not only provides hotel guests with the highest-quality 5G experience but also empowers other smart technologies within the hotel (Marketing-Interactive, 2021). To achieve cross-promotion, W Hong Kong has also rolled out a special "Extravagant Hotel Staycation" offer for SmarTone's new 5G customers, allowing them to enjoy one-night luxurious staycation experience at the hotel with free room upgrade and complimentary cake for birthday or anniversary guests (SmarTone Facebook, 2021).

At the same time, W Hong Kong introduced the first-ever 5G service robot (Marketing-Interactive, 2021). Together with SmarTone's 5G ultra-low latency, coupled with AI and Chatbot technology, Robot "WW" serves as a digital concierge that can quickly respond to guests' inquiries through connecting to the Cloud (Sun Hung Kai Properties, 2021). Moreover, the robot can also engage guests by singing songs, such as birthday or love songs, to create a memorable experience during their stay (Sun Hung Kai Properties, 2021). Additionally, the hotel organized a "MomentswithWW" photo/video contest campaign to encourage social media engagement and visitation, further capitalizing on the 5G robot (W Hong Kong Facebook, 2021).

Challenges

The majority of leisure travelers, unless they are business travelers or influencers streaming live videos, do not have such a high need for internet speed, and most travelers may not even notice the difference unless informed by the hotel. Therefore, it is important for the hotel to find ways to promote and package its 5G service as a unique selling point. Furthermore, with 5G technology matures, the popularization of 5G network in hotels seems inevitable and W Hong Kong may soon lose its competitive advantage. Furthermore, since Robot 'WW' and other smart technologies in the hotel rely on the hotel's cloud service through SmarTone's 5G network, any service interruption from SmarTone could significantly impact hotel operations.

Discussion Questions

1. How important is high-speed internet access to different types of hotel guests, and how can hotels tailor their services to meet these varying needs?

2. How can hotels ensure that their staff is adequately trained to manage and maintain new technologies like 5G and service robots?

3. What contingency plans should W Hong Kong have in place to address potential service interruptions from SmarTone's 5G network?

4. As 5G technology becomes common nowadays, how can W Hong Kong further develop its 5G offerings with SmarTone to maintain its competitive edge?

5. How can hotels ensure that their staff is adequately trained to manage and maintain new technologies like 5G and service robots?

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