

VR Technology in Hotel Industry: A Case of Best Western Hotels



Source: Pixabay (2018)

Background

Virtual Reality (VR) is a technological tool that allows humans to immerse themselves into spaces that are very close to seeming real. The virtual reality world is one that can be modified, suggesting that companies can easily tailor this tool to their specific needs to provide newer and unique experiences for their guest (Forbes, 2023).

Best Western Hotels is a future focused company and leading hotel brand in adopting VR technology into daily use. In collaboration with Murison, the group integrated virtual simulations into its staff training program (Murison, n.d.). The training simulates service delivery against a virtual guest that carries human qualities, in which challenging issues that mimic real-life customer problems will be presented (Training Magazine, 2020). This simulator can test the reaction of the staff and better prepare them for actual service and ultimately boost service quality.

As part of Best Western Hotels' virtual reality experience, guests are provided with an immersive 360-degree view of the company's properties in the North American region. Each video lasts between 50 seconds and 2 minutes and features both narration and music (Best Western Hotels & Resorts, 2016). These videos are accessible via Best Western's YouTube channel, bestwesternTV, enabling potential guests to preview guest rooms, lobbies, and amenities online before making their decision.

Challenges

While virtual reality (VR) simulations can serve as an effective tool for staff training, the initial cost of introducing customized VR training modules and ongoing costs for equipment maintenance and software updates can put a heavy strain on the hotel's finances. Additionally,

the recording and production of VR videos require substantial time and resources, which has resulted in the availability of VR previews being limited to the group's hotels in the United States.

Discussion Questions:

1. Given the high cost associated with introducing VR training program, do you believe the benefits of using VR for staff training outweigh the expenses? Why or why not?
2. What strategies could Best Western Hotels implement to scale their VR training program to accommodate larger groups of new employees?
3. How might the immersive VR experience for guests influence their decision-making process when choosing a hotel?
4. If Best Western Hotels were to expand their VR offerings, what additional features or experiences could they include to enhance both staff training and guest engagement?

References

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Keywords

- Virtual reality (VR)
- Immersive experience
- Staff training
- Hotel
- Technology
- Employee experience

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