

Augmenting growth

Hospitality businesses can leverage AI technologies to great effect in various tasks, such as housekeeping, maintenance, reception, transportation, and room service, writes **Reza Etemad-Sajadi**.

Many companies are undergoing digital transformation and automation to reduce costs, create a unique customer experience, and improve productivity. The challenge is to strike a win-win balance, where the company reduces its costs, adapts the activities of its employees, and the customer feels the added value of using this technology. The societal impact of this transformation is likely to be significant, and several ethical questions will be at the heart of discussions in this field.

In just a few months, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a trending topic since the introduction of ChatGPT and several other AI tools. AI technologies can replicate human abilities, such as learning and problem-solving, to enhance guest experiences, optimize operations, and increase revenue. With AI, hotels can automate and optimize various tasks, such as maintenance, housekeeping, transportation, reception, and room service. This leads to efficiency and cost reduction, as well as personalized guest experiences, data-driven decision-making, and automated repetitive tasks. Pepper, a robot from Soft Bank Robotics, is an example of how AI can improve a hotel's day-to-day operations by interacting with guests, assisting with check-ins and check-outs, and completing other tasks. AI technologies can enhance the guest experience

at every phase of their journey, from purchasing to staying to post-trip chatbots that simulate human conversations through text or voice interactions, providing personalized recommendations.



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With AI, hotels can automate and optimize tasks such as maintenance, housekeeping, and room service



The use of AI will become a fundamental aspect of daily business operations. However, the industry needs to adapt its workforce to these new practices. Emotional intelligence, which includes managing one's own and others' emotions, remains the most crucial skill set for hospitality employees. Even though new technologies are entering the industry, employees can display better empathy and kindness than any machine built to date through their soft skills, allowing them to adapt to various situations without requiring training. However, employees with high emotional intelligence also need to be tech-savvy to monitor all AI tools implemented in the industry.

The challenge is to ensure that companies integrate AI in a fair and equitable manner. There are six ethical dimensions to consider: replacement, privacy and data protection, responsibility, trust and security, social presence and degree of humanization, and autonomy.

The EHL Hospitality Business School has been studying the potential applications and implications of AI in the hospitality industry for several years. We need to teach both hard and soft skills to prepare future employees with the necessary expertise to utilize, monitor, and evaluate technology applications in the industry. As a result, the workforce will experience a significant shift, requiring managers to provide thorough training to their current staff. →