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HOSPITALITY IN THE AGE OF CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT
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Hospitality in the Age of Consumer Empowerment

Landmark research tracks the use, challenges, and benefits of customer engagement technologies by hotels and restaurants

Rapid technological advancement over the past several years has led to a dramatic shift in the way that consumers engage with businesses. With these advancements, a new category of technology has emerged – customer engagement technology (CET) – that includes a wide variety of mobile, social, digital and location-based applications.

As these applications converge not only with each other, but with traditional technology – from restaurant point-of-sale and loyalty systems, to reservations and service delivery systems in hotels – consumers become newly empowered with the ability to find and compare restaurants, make hotel reservations, order room service, download coupons, make payments, complete surveys and share feedback with other prospective consumers, all from their mobile devices.

Consider the rapid adoption rates: According to the International Telecommunication Union (www.itu.int/ict), there were an estimated 6 billion mobile subscriptions worldwide at the end of 2011, with projections of 8 billion by the end of 2016. eMarketer reports that more than 91 million people in the United States regularly access the Internet via a mobile device; more than 67.1 million iPads have been sold to date and an anticipated 90.8 million units will be in use by 2015; and by 2015, nearly 30% of the U.S. population will own and regularly use this device.

For the hospitality industry, customer engagement is a significant contributor to success, and as such this revolution in consumer empowerment must be met head-on by hotel and restaurant operators. In doing so, hotels and restaurants will have the ability to tap into innovative and exciting advancements in technological capabilities, affecting everything from customer loyalty, to operations, to revenue.

To learn how hotels and restaurants are engaging with today’s empowered consumers, Hospitality Technology launched a comprehensive study of its readership in April 2012. The survey asked hotel and restaurant operators about their current and future planned use of CETs to enhance the consumer experience, their challenges, and the resulting benefits. For the purposes of this study, CETs were defined as technologies and/or applications which can be utilized to create deeper and more meaningful connections between a company and its customers to enhance the overall quality of their experiences, drive customer loyalty, and ultimately result in increased sales and profitability.

Hotel and restaurant executives shared with us, via an online survey, their respective experiences with a broad range of customer engagement technologies (CETs), and then dove deeper to discuss specific interactive marketing technologies and social media networks. Throughout the study, technology adoption rates are shown via “Tech Timelines” that depict current use as well as implementation plans over a one- and two-year period. Each technology’s effectiveness at enhancing customer engagement and restaurant business performance was determined by asking respondents’ opinions on a five-point Likert scale (from “1= strongly disagree” to “5= strongly agree”). The results of these opinions are shown on various “Impact Scales” throughout the report.

Two separate surveys were distributed electronically to HT readership, inviting about 4,000 hotel and 4,000 restaurant professionals to participate. The restaurant survey captured 96 responses for a 2.4% response rate and the hotel survey captured 131 responses for a 3.3% response rate. Respondents included a diverse mix: owners, managers, sales and marketing professionals, and technology professionals from corporate, franchised, professionally managed, and independent hotels and restaurants across all industry segments, including quick service, fast casual, full-service family/casual, and fine dining restaurants; and all hotel segments from economy to luxury.

In total, restaurant survey respondents were responsible for decision-making authority and oversight of more than 8,560 restaurant units worldwide. Hotel survey respondents were responsible for oversight of more than 6,200 properties and 1.5 million rooms worldwide.

What follows are the results of this survey, along with key trends and the practical significance of these trends to both restaurant and to lodging operators.
Technology is Reshaping the Pathway to Loyal, Engaged Guests
Integration with mobile and social platforms emerges as top priority for restaurant technology

From social media and digital signage to tablet-based menus and mobile ordering and payments, significant changes are in the air for restaurant operators, and customers are the direct beneficiaries of these new developments. Innovations are also affecting the competitive dynamics of the industry, the cost structure, and how business will be transacted going forward.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TECH: MOBILE AND DIGITAL DEVICES
The mobile category represents one of the fastest growing areas of restaurant CET. Smartphones and tablet computers (e.g., iPads) are quickly becoming important points of service and engaging more customers directly in the service delivery process in a do-it-yourself type fashion. Restaurant consumers have quick and convenient access to information and tools that influence their restaurant selection, buying decisions and overall spending. For restaurant operators, the game is changing. They must operate with greater transparency and work hard to deliver flawless experiences and service.

Our study revealed that restaurants are responding to mobile trends by placing a great deal of their emphasis on mobile websites and mobile apps. As shown in Figure 1 (“Customer Engagement Technologies: Tech Timeline”), our respondents reported mobile websites as the most common currently utilized technology to build customer engagement (45.7%), followed by mobile apps (27.2%), static digital signage (25.9%), interactive digital signage (8.6%), and kiosks (4.9%). When looking at future CET, it is obvious that late adopters of mobile technology are planning to catch up quickly and embrace both mobile websites and mobile apps in the year ahead. Just 2.5% of the study’s respondents indicated currently using tablets for tableside payment; 1.2% use tablets for digital menus; and 1.2% use tablets for tableside ordering. However, this trend may soon change dramatically: 21% of the respondents indicated that they plan to use tablets for tableside ordering at their establishments within the next two years. Similarly, a significant portion of the respondents expressed plans to use tablets for tableside payment and tablets for digital menus within the next two years (20.9% and 18.5%, respectively). The findings suggest that restaurant operators are beginning to adopt next-generation point-of-sale (POS) enhancements by using touch-screen devices to improve service efficiencies, to enhance suggestive selling, and
to provide a cutting-edge experience to customers. (See Figure 1, “Customer Engagement Technologies: Tech Timeline” for adoption rates across a variety of CETs).

The adoption of digital signage is growing in fast food and quick service restaurants for menu displays and merchandising. Benefits include easy updating of menus and pricing (especially across multiple units), consistency across multiple units, and increased sales and up-selling as a result of high-quality digital imagery of menu items and menu pairings. The findings from our study suggest that the use of static digital signage is expected to continue growing, as 12.3% of the respondents plan to implement this technology within one year and an additional 17.3% within two years. The use of interactive digital signage may increase, but at a slower rate than static digital signage, since fewer respondents indicated their intentions to use this CET within the next two years (8.6% in one year and 11.1% in two years).

Although only 3.7% of the respondents of this study reported currently using digital signage to convey nutritional information, we expect to see an uptick in the next two years since over 20% of our respondents indicated this to be a possibility. However, we suspect that most restaurant companies will find it more economical to post this information on their web sites and make it available via their mobile apps.

Self-service kiosks, while still in use, seem to be losing ground as a result of the rise in mobile technologies, which provide more convenient ways to offer the same features, functionality, and services but without the issues associated with kiosk implementation (e.g., location, aesthetic appeal, costs to support and maintain). We suspect that kiosks will not completely disappear, but their use will be relegated to high traffic areas in specific industry segments (i.e., fast food and quick service) for a specific set of services such as ordering and completing exit surveys. Supporting these claims is the fact that only 4.9% of respondents in our study reported current kiosk use in their restaurants. Additionally and not surprising, most respondents identified kiosks as the least effective CET to enhance customer engagement.

**INTERACTIVE MARKETING**

Marketing is going both digital and social. Figure 2 (“Interactive Marketing Technologies: Tech Timeline”) shows the loyalty marketing applications respondents of this study identified as currently in use or plan to be used within the next one or two years. Our study found that more respondents now use social media (76.5%) than traditional loyalty programs (42%) to recognize and reward repeat customers. In order to drive customers to their own branded web sites, restaurants offer rich media (e.g., social media, videos, games, informational feeds from other sites). They are focused on building emotional connections between the restaurant brand/company and customers. In this study, 37% of the respondents indicated using brand.com websites to offer rich media to their...
customers, with an additional 28.4% planning to deploy rich media applications within the next two years, citing its importance in contributing to loyalty marketing effectiveness.

Successful loyalty programs will be contingent on adding value and by leveraging customer data augmented with analytics to gain valuable insight to deepen customer engagement and reward profitable customers. In our study, just 11.1% of restaurants reported current integration of social media with their loyalty programs and point-earning systems; however, almost 50% indicated that they plan to use this new loyalty marketing application within the next two years. Information analytics and business intelligence will become even more important as more searches, services, and transactions go digital. Restaurants that can mine the vast volumes of data collected, discern patterns and relationships, predict future behaviors, and act accordingly will be the ones to win market share and increase profits. Competitive advantage will be derived from one’s ability to do real-time behavioral, contextual, and geographical target marketing.

As restaurant operators become more comfortable with implementing social media as part of their loyalty programs, they turn their attention to the question regarding the return on investment of social media. To answer this question, we asked the respondents about their opinions on effectiveness of each loyalty marketing application, including social media, in terms of improving customer engagement and restaurant business performance (Figure 2, “Impact Scale”). Most respondents agreed that both customer engagement and business performance can be enhanced through social media, traditional loyalty programs, and social media integrated into a loyalty earning system. Most respondents somewhat agreed that offering rich media on websites and GPS/location-based marketing can help restaurants to improve customer engagement and business performance.

SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS

With social media networks topping the list of marketing technologies, for both their adoption rates and their perceived impact, this study is also able to provide perspective on the restaurant industry’s use of specific networks for engaging customers. Generally speaking, we see a correlation between social media outlets used and how long these outlets have been in existence. As expected, usage and interest with more established social media services (e.g., Facebook) was more common, with shifts in the future towards some of the newer services that seem to be capturing consumer traction (e.g., Pinterest and Google Plus). What follows are our restaurant respondents’ current use ratings for a variety of popular social media sites (as seen in Figure 3, “Social Media Networks: Tech Timeline”): Facebook (77.8%), Twitter (65.4%), Yelp! (43.2%), YouTube (42%), Foursquare (35.8%), Urban Spoon (30.9%), LinkedIn (29.6%), and Pinterest (17.3%). The respondents plan to increase their use of Google Plus (14.8%), Pinterest (11.1%), Foursquare...
(8.6%), and TripAdvisor (8.6%) within the next year. Interestingly, most respondents reported that they currently do not use daily deal sites such as Groupon and LivingSocial (with 13.6% and 11.1% current use rates, respectively).

In the future, restaurants will engage in multiple social networks, which may or may not be a conscious choice. What we see is that many of these social networking sites are becoming more integrated with common sign-ins and/or applications that unify the communications and features from multiple sources into a common user interface. For example, consumers can now simultaneously post to Twitter, Facebook, and Foursquare. Only a few respondents plan on adding the use of Groupon (2.5%) and LivingSocial (3.7%) within the next year, and about 50% of them have no plan to use such daily deal sites. These findings suggest that flash sales promoted and managed by third-parties are losing their appeal. We suspect that this is due to the high costs of using these services, the small contribution margins they generate, and the difficulty in creating customer loyalty with these deal-seeking consumers.

The respondents’ levels of agreement on the effectiveness of each social media site are demonstrated in Figure 3, “Social Media Networks: Impact Scale.” The findings show most respondents of this study believe Facebook and Twitter are the most effective at enhancing both customer engagement and business performance. Most of them also believe Foursquare, Yelp! and YouTube can be effective tools to deepen customer engagement. On the other hand, Groupon was ranked the lowest as an effective tool for both enhancing customer engagement and business performance.

One of the best ways to use Foursquare to deepen customer engagement would be to include it in a three-pronged campaign with Facebook and Twitter. For instance, when customers check in on a restaurant’s Foursquare, many will share their check-ins on Facebook and Twitter, which leads to a presence on all three popular social media sites. The restaurant should carefully select what to offer as specials on Foursquare. Rather than offering similar specials to those of competitors (e.g., free appetizers, 5% off for every fifth check-in), the restaurant should identify specials consistent with its strengths, for example priority seating for engaged users. Another advantageous factor of Foursquare is that a restaurant can obtain a dashboard which tracks useful information that measures customer engagement, such as the time of day people check-in and most frequent visitors and customer demographics. However, with growing concerns about personal privacy and identity theft, it is critical for restaurant operators to collect and utilize customer data in a way that is respectful of user privacy and educate employees about the significant consequences of mismanagement of customer data.

CLOSING REMARKS: 4 KEY FINDINGS

While this study covers an array of topics related to CETs, the results are quite revealing and suggest that the restaurant industry must find ways to blend high tech and high touch together to create great service and memorable experiences. Restaurant operators will need to devote more time, attention, and resources to leverage CETs and focus on how to integrate them into the entire service delivery process.

Here are five important CET trends seen in the findings of this study: 1) Smartphones and tablet computers are replacing kiosks and quickly becoming new and important points of service. As such, they need to be integrated with other touch points and architectured into the service delivery process. There is still great technology debate over how best to achieve one’s mobile strategy; through the mobile web or via mobile app. There are pros and cons to both that need to be evaluated based upon one’s situation. Regardless of the approach taken, restaurants need to ensure that their mobile initiatives are reliable and focus on solving customer needs, adding value and convenience, and helping to build customer loyalty and switching costs.

2) Mobile devices are empowering customers to perform tasks that restaurant staff would normally do, with a do-it-yourself approach to customer service. Restaurants must rethink their service proposition and how to best provide personal touches and customization using technology. They should also ensure that their brand personalities are communicated through the various user interfaces and that the experiences rendered are consistent with their brand images.

3) Restaurateurs must embrace social media and work to mine consumer posts for important and constructive feedback. Because word-of-mouth travels to so many people in very little time, restaurants need to work to provide flawless or near-flawless service and experiences. Restaurants must work to capitalize on loyal customers and tap them as extension agents to the marketing team. When possible, it makes sense to hire someone who can manage social network channels and initiatives.Regrettably, return on investment related to social media efforts will continue to be difficult to fully quantify, but there are ways to measure impact on sales and customer engagement.

4) Restaurants are working to integrate their loyalty programs and social media and shifting their promotional campaigns towards behavior-based, context-based, and location-based programs. As such, they are shifting their marketing spend away from traditional marketing channels in favor of more electronic and social media channels. Restaurant marketers must look to reward customers differently than in the past. Loyalty points are not as valuable as free drinks, complimentary appetizers, discounts, or priority seating for customers using mobile apps and social media services such as Foursquare. What’s more is that restaurant companies will need to invest more in business intelligence and analytics to understand and use the vast amounts of data collected on each customer via the various digital tools they use.

Many industry professionals tend to focus on the next new thing. While it is important to be on the lookout for any new development and potential game changer, the real focus should be placed on integrating mobile and social into the restaurant experience and service delivery processes to provide exciting, unique, personal, memorable, and convenient experiences. One must remember that technology innovations can be cool — but only if used effectively and appropriately to provide value.
Mobile Technology Poised as Game Changer

Opportunity hinges on creating integrated applications and memorable experiences at every phase of the guest life cycle

Advances in customer engagement technologies (CETs) are creating unparalleled opportunities to re-architect service delivery, customer encounters, and the overall customer experience. The creative and thoughtful blending of high-tech and high-touch is driving a new source of competitive advantage in the lodging industry.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TECH: MOBILE LEADS THE PACK

The mobile movement is clearly driving CET application deployment and utilization across all segments of the hotel industry now and into the foreseeable future — and rightly so. In this study, respondents reported mobile as their greatest priority, the best suited technology to enhance customer engagement, and the most likely to improve business performance.

In a March 2012 webinar, market research firm PhoCusWright declared that mobile is now mainstream, and by 2013, mobile travel bookings are expected to exceed $8 billion and account for 6.5% of all online travel bookings for leisure and unmanaged travelers, but are hoteliers properly prepared?

This survey asked respondents which CETs are currently deployed in their operations and which ones they expect to deploy in the next one to two years (see Figure 4, “Customer Engagement Technologies: Tech Timeline”). Of those respondents reporting a mobile presence in this study, there was greater likelihood that the mobile presence was through a mobile website (59.6%) versus through a mobile app (42.7%), although some reported having both. Mobile websites also slightly edge out mobile apps on the CET “Impact Scale” (Figure 4). There is much debate over which approach is better and more cost-effective, but as the technologies and software tools get better and cross-platform support becomes more common, this debate will likely become mute. Surprisingly, though, nearly 40% of the respondents indicated still having no mobile presence, but they have identified mobile as a top priority with plans to establish a presence in the next two years.

When asked about future mobile priorities, respondents reported that expanding and enhancing mobile check-in using smartphones was paramount on their lists: 33.7% plan to implement check-in via a guest’s mobile device within the next year, 23.6% plan to implement in-room guestroom access using mobile phones (i.e., replacing room keys with mobile phone apps). While none of the respondents indicated current adoption of mobile technology as room keys (we suspect this is due to the low penetration of NFC-enabled phones), about a third of the industry (33.7%) expects to move in this direction within the next two years.

We predict that future mobile functionality and features will include mobile payments, more efficient connectivity to service staff, location-based services, and the ability to control the in-room experience (e.g., thermostats, lighting, ordering services, and televisions) via mobile devices.

Tablet computers such as iPads are increasingly becoming part of a hotel’s mobile strategy. As such, distinctions between mobile smartphones and tablets are blurring. There is considerable interest across all segments to deploy tablets in various ways to enable employees in their jobs and provide real-time access to information. There are some initial signs, too, of using tablets to alter the service experience and waiting times at front desks and in the concierge department.

When it comes to a tablet/iPad as an in-room amenity, a very small percentage of our respondents (5.6%, only those at the resort/upscale/luxury segments) indicated this as a current competitive method. There are some expectations of growth as 27% of our respondents indicated a willingness to consider offering in-room tablets/iPads over the next two years. However, mainly because the economics and return on investment of in-room tablets are not evident yet, most hotels are taking a wait-and-see approach and focusing on supporting customers who carry their own smart devices including iPads.

The most frequently offered CET using tablets was “Tablets/iPads at concierge” (20.2%), and about 38% of the respondents plan to implement it either in one or two years. Only 9% of the respondents currently utilize “tablets/iPads for check-in”; however, the adoption rate is expected to increase as 40.5% indicated having a plan to use it within two years.

Overall, tablets/iPads showed a slower adoption rate than mobile websites, mobile apps, and digital signage technology, but in many cases, there is overlap between iPads and mobile. Oftentimes, the iPad is just an extension of the mobile website and mobile app strategy. Like smartphones, the iPad is just another device to access and use these technology services via a larger screen.

Digital signage was another popularly reported CET application in this study. DigitalSignageToday reports that the digital signage industry is experiencing double-digit growth. It predicts over 22 million digital signs will be in use by 2015. The declining costs of screen technology combined with the aesthetic appeal and high-quality resolution of plasma and LED screens make digital signage an attractive service amenity for hotels and resorts of any size or segment.

As seen in figure 4, more than 48% of respondents indicated that static digital signage is currently in place, and 28% indicated that they are using interactive digital signage (i.e., signage which functions more like an information kiosk capable of receiving user input and commands for applications such as wayfinding and Internet searches). Furthermore, our respondents reported a strong potential for digital signage to positively influence cus-
Customer engagement as well as business performance (See Figure 4, “Impact Scale”).

While static digital signage implementations currently overshadow interactive digital signage, based upon our respondents’ input we should expect to see growth in more interactive digital signage implementations in the coming years as the applications improve in terms of functionality and ease of use and as costs continue to decline. Over a two-year period, 28.1% of the respondents plan to implement interactive digital signage, compared to just 14.6% who will invest in static digital signage.

About 23.6% of the respondents in this study currently use kiosks at their hotels. Kiosks ranked low in terms of impact on the guest experience and low as a vehicle to improve business performance. These observations are consistent with anecdotal evidence from hoteliers suggesting that kiosks are seldom used by their guests. What we suspect, though, is that kiosk technology is being replaced by mobile technology and mobile apps, allowing guests the ability to perform the same functions and more, from anywhere, in a more convenient and private manner.

**INTERACTIVE MARKETING**

Increasingly, hotel marketers are shifting their marketing expenditures towards digital marketing channels and media. Social media outlets top their lists, with 73% of our respondents indicating current activities geared towards social media sites (see Figure 5, “Interactive Marketing: Tech Timeline”). Both social media and traditional loyalty programs are high priorities for engaging customers, strengthening relationships, and enhancing loyalty. The results of this study indicate that these can co-exist and complement each other, but looking to the future, attention given to social media will likely outpace that given to traditional loyalty programs. Loyalty programs will continue to influence customers’ choices and provide incentives to loyal customers, but these loyalty programs can be seen as artificial or fleeting, particularly as the industry becomes more commodity-like with interchangeable products.

Furthermore, consumers want to experience rich media and are seeking it out. Therefore, in order to drive consumers to their own websites rather than let them go to third-party websites, hotel companies should offer rich media on their websites. It is about establishing a deeper relationship between the hotel brand/company and its customers, which will eventually lead customers to feel like they own the brand, not the company — one of the key marketing strategies to create fans. This emerging approach was confirmed by our study as 44% of our respondents indicated currently using “brand.com websites to offer rich media (e.g., social media, feeds, and videos),” and additional 27% are planning to deploy it within the next two years. Rich media is also effective at enhancing both customer engagement and business performance. As a result, this application’s effectiveness was ranked
among the top three among loyalty marketing applications (see Figure 5, “Interactive Marketing: Impact Scale”). The implication is that hotel operators should start building their websites around the sense of joining a community where people can interact with each other, create a dialogue with customers, and then provide appropriate products/services based on customers’ positive or negative comments.

In examining traditional loyalty programs, historically these have focused on the transactional side of the relationship (i.e., customers’ purchase behavior). Our findings indicate that hotel operators already have started (10.1%) or plan to integrate social media into their loyalty point-earning systems within the next two years (39.3%). The trend in marketing has shifted towards customer engagement and relationship rather than transactions. The integration of social media into loyalty programs and rewards will enable hoteliers to reward customers based on both their transactional and non-transactional behaviors (e.g., spreading positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) or contributing high-quality content). It will also help hoteliers understand the factors that trigger customer defection and, in turn, improve customer retention programs and prolong the loyalty lifetime of customers. For example, hotel marketers will be able to identify vocal critics from comments/discussions in the company’s virtual community and will have a chance to demonstrate to them how a specific problem they drew attention to had been addressed. If their complaints are reasonable and help the hotel company enhance service or product quality, the company should reward them using their loyalty programs. Consequently, many of the critics can be converted into active and enthusiastic supporters of the brand/company.

Rounding out the list of loyalty marketing technologies are quick response (QR) codes and location-based marketing. Currently, QR codes are used by only one-fourth of the respondent pool, but usage is expected to double in the next two years. Although location-based marketing was cited by only 14.6% of the respondents for current usage, the adoption rate will nearly triple in the next two years.

**SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS**

With social media topping the list of current and planned interactive marketing technologies, it begs the question, which specific sites are hotels using? And further, what impact are these sites having on customer engagement and business performance?

Our results suggest a strong correlation between the use of specific social media sites by lodging organizations, with how established a social media service is. Currently, hotels are actively engaged with Facebook and Trip Advisor (at 82% and 77.5%, respectively). Looking to the future, we see an interest in devoting more time and resources to newer services such as Pinterest and Google Plus (see Figure 6, “Social Media Networks: Tech Timeline”). While there are significant shifts in how
and where marketing dollars are and will be spent, challenges remain in quantifying the benefits and return on investment for social media activities. TripAdvisor tops both of our study’s “Social Media Impact Scales,” perceived as having positive influence on not only customer engagement but also on business performance. This shows a reversal of the industry’s initial perception that a no-holds-barred platform for customer feedback could damage reputations.

One-third of our respondents indicated experience with flash sales (e.g., Groupon and Living Social), but interest seems to be fading (note the slowed adoption rates for deal-of-the-day marketing in Figure 5). Respondents indicated that flash sales sites were not as effective as social media or traditional loyalty programs in engaging customers, building loyalty, and adding to the bottom line. Thus, we can expect that while flash sales may continue to exist as a means to sell distressed inventory, they will likely be used sparingly under very specific and guarded circumstances.

CLOSING REMARKS: HOLISTIC RE-ARCHITECTING

The results of this study suggest opportunity and change for the hotel industry. There will be more shifts toward digital media and marketing through interactive digital signage and social media networks, but clearly mobile is going to be the key driver in CET. To be successful, though, mobile web sites and mobile apps must be easy to use and add value, and hotels may need to provide incentives such as loyalty points to encourage guests to download and use mobile apps. As the industry looks more to delivering services through mobile technologies, it needs to find ways to minimize key strokes and maximize what can be done on small screens.

To manage costs, hotel companies will need to find ways to streamline mobile development initiatives and leverage source code across platforms so as to avoid maintaining and supporting multiple versions of applications for the various mobile platforms. Achieving these goals will require a complete re-architecting of service design and delivery processes, plus a strong dependence on and integration with a customer relationship management (CRM) system. Recognizing guests and being able to use data in real time about them, their specific needs, and circumstances at each touchpoint, will be critical to create engaging and memorable customer experiences. Real-time predictive analysis will help to anticipate guest needs and cross/upsell customers. The future isn’t about a single app but rather a holistic, seamless set of value-added experiences. What will matter most is how mobile technology is integrated into the service delivery process and how service staff interact with customers at other touchpoints to create an aggregate set of pleasant experiences and build emotional connection with customers. In the end, hotels must remember the value proposition — it’s all about service and hospitality, and mobile will be a game changer.
HOSPITALITY TECHNOLOGY THANKS THE RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC PARTNERS AND SPONSORS OF THE FIRST ANNUAL CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY STUDY. THEIR SUPPORT HELPS TO MAKE THIS LANDMARK RESEARCH POSSIBLE.