Table 5.2   Uses of Data-Mining Information in Hotel Marketing

- Determine usage patterns of hotel facilities by time slots and customer groups
- Identify micro market segments among in-house guests to provide customized services
- Evaluate training needs based on the nature and location of service failures
- Refine distribution channel management based on timing and volume of reservations from various sources
- Evaluate menu item popularity and profitability (menu engineering)
- Optimize website design based on visitor browsing patterns and click-to-book conversions

often incompatible with one another, with a single, integrated system. An enterprise system enables a company to integrate the data used throughout its entire organization. By streamlining data flows throughout an organization, these MIS are delivering dramatic gains in operational efficiency and profitability. The information generated from these databases can be mined and used for a variety of marketing programs as shown in Table 5.2.

Providing Customer Convenience and Enhancing Service

The do-it-yourself approach to customer service met with some initial resistance, but once customers became comfortable with on-demand services, these technologies spread rapidly. Nowadays, travelers are so accustomed to self-service technologies some even prefer the do-it-yourself option rather than traditional face-to-face personal service. For example, travelers can now book a flight online as well as check in and print out boarding pass at home or in a hotel lobby, or at the airport using a self-service kiosk. Or, as more and more travelers prefer, they are using their mobile devices for all of these functions. Similar options are available for hotel stays, train travel, and attraction visits. Some online tour operators allow travelers to custom design their own travel packages, or dynamic packaging as explained in Chapter 4, based on their preferences and budget.

Many quick service restaurants have installed touch screen kiosks at busy stores to allow customers to place their own orders. Casual dining restaurants have also placed ordering device on the table for diners to make order themselves. Many tourist attractions offer audio or video "tour guides" so that visitors can have an informed visit at their own pace. Tourist boards have also begun offering apps for consumer mobile devices for visitors to download. These apps provide instant, in-situ information about restaurants, hotels, shops, and attractions to orient visitors of the local offerings. These technologies certainly reduced the labor cost for operators, but ultimately customer service was improved. Shorter waits in line, reduced transaction times, and the ability to make changes without explaining the rationale for the changes were just a few of the improvements. With the aid of technology, including social media, user-generated content, video, mobile application, location-based services, and other new media and devices, consumers are more informed of the tourism products and more engaged in travel-related activities so as to enhance their consumption experience. An extra benefit to international travelers is that the self service option removes some uncomfortable moments due to language barriers.

Handheld devices and tablet computers are also aiding employees in the service delivery process. Airlines began using these devices to track baggage, but their use in many other customer service applications has led to their widespread adoption by other tourism service suppliers. Restaurants, always keen on finding new ways to improve customer service and reduce costs, are finding handheld POS devices to be an invaluable asset. The use of these devices to place an order can save an average of four minutes over the traditional POS system, freeing more time to focus on the customer.[3] Hotels have also used handheld devices to offer check-in service en route for guests who use their airport transportation service upon arrival. Technologically advanced hotels have developed apps to allow guests to check in and check out; make service requests, from wake up call to room service, on their mobile devices whether they are in the hotel or out and about.