

time-consuming proposition, as change is a constant when it comes to technology. Not only is it expensive to incorporate each new technological advance, but it can also require a significant commitment in training and education for both employees and customers. In addition to time and resource commitments, there can be reluctance to adopt changes owing to fears of losing the human connection that has historically been the foundation of hospitality.

In spite of these concerns, technology is revolutionizing the tourism industry. In the face of rising wages, increasing input costs, and intensifying competition, doing business in the same old traditional ways no longer seems to be working. Technological innovations ranging from fairly simple handheld input devices to complex PMSs are improving communication, operations, profitability, and customer service. In addition, more and more consumers are expressing a desire to take control of the service encounter through the tap of a finger on their mobile devices.

All travel distribution channels and sectors were fundamentally changed by the advent of the Internet. The introduction of the Internet expanded travelers' access to information and choices for points of purchase, intensifying competition. In response, travel marketers created online booking engines that allowed travelers to compare available inventories by both price and availability. As online users have become more comfortable,

confident, and convinced of the security of the Internet, more and more travelers are relying on this medium for their travel needs.

Creating and accessing user-generated content found its way into the world of tourism and hospitality and it, like the Internet, has created even more changes for marketing managers. This new media format, like all technological innovations, has created both opportunities and challenges as information, both positive and negative, is created and disseminated at lightning-fast speeds, requiring constant monitoring. Handheld devices and tablet computers are also aiding employees in the service delivery process.

Revenue management, a foundational component of almost every MIS for tourism service suppliers, was initially used as a scheduling tool for the airline industry. However, its effectiveness in addressing a host of marketing, management, and financial issues soon expanded its use to other tourism service providers such as hotels/motels, resorts, restaurants, cruise ships, golf courses, and car rental companies as part of more complex MIS. Although revenue management holds the promise of maximizing revenues, it, like most other quantitative management tools, should not be used blindly. Revenue management and all of the other technological innovations discussed in this chapter will definitely change the face of the tourism industry. Where and when these changes will occur is anybody's guess.

## You Decide

Frequent travelers love them. The more you fly, rent, stay, play, and dine, the more you earn. And, the more you earn, the higher your status and prestige with the airline, car rental company, hotel, casino, or restaurant. What are they? Points!

The benefits that flow from points range all the way from upgrades to free flights, rental, stays, and more. So it's no wonder that travelers are willing to give up a host of personal information to tap into these loyalty programs.

Think for a moment about the types of information these program participants willingly share with their travel service providers. Depending on which travel service provider is concerned, your personal profile could contain credit card numbers, driver's license number, your mother's maiden name, or even information about other travel service providers you frequently use.

Once a traveler becomes active in a program, other information may be collected ranging from birthdays and

anniversaries to spending patterns and leisure versus business activities. All of these specifics provide the key pieces of information needed for creating effective targeted marketing communications. With ever-expanding databases and software enhancements, the depth and breadth of information that can be collected are limited only by the imagination of the data acquirer.

Although these programs have been designed to capture customer loyalty and enhance service delivery and satisfaction, a question of how much information is enough arises. What types of information is it ethical to acquire and store on loyal customers? How should this information be used? How long should it be retained? Can it be shared with other entities in the same organization and/or related travel partner organizations? Where should the lines be drawn on information collection?

## Net Tour

To get you started on exploring Internet links for this chapter, please see

[www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)  
[www.pegs.com](http://www.pegs.com)  
[www.radiantsystems.com](http://www.radiantsystems.com)  
[www.micros.com](http://www.micros.com)

[www.web20travel.blogspot.com/](http://www.web20travel.blogspot.com/)  
[www.utell.com](http://www.utell.com)  
[www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)  
[www.travelsupermarket.com](http://www.travelsupermarket.com)  
[www.interactivetravel.net](http://www.interactivetravel.net)