

Expectation of more international visitors

Average rates and occupancy levels in the U.S. are likely to increase over the next few years, influenced by a very new market. "Leisure demand from abroad, fueled in part by the new Discover America campaign, will stimulate a new demand" according to Arne Sorenson, President and CEO of Marriott Hotels & Resorts. China is preparing to send about 100 million leisure tourists into the international market every year. If the U.S. gets its typical share, that will mean an additional 10 million visitors from China alone. Considering the average Chinese traveler spends a week in the U.S., demand is created for an additional 70 million room nights in a market where prices are steadily rising. The globalization of travel will prove to be a massive force.

Robert Rauch (2014) Top 10 Hospitality Industry Trends in 2014 published on Hospitalitynet.

Global Going Strong: International Knowledge in Demand

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, the Travel and Tourism industry is currently among the largest and fastest-growing industries worldwide, forecasted to support 328 million jobs, or 10 percent of the workforce, by 2022.1 A top 10 industry in the U.S., Travel and Tourism provides one out of eight jobs, with that number increasing at an exponential rate, adding approximately 55,000 jobs per month in 2013.

Specifically, with the U.S. a global travel hub, forecasting nearly a 30 percent increase in international arrivals through 2018, and Chicago already reaching 65 percent of the mayor's goal of 50 million visitors by 2020 in just two years, Kendall suggests the number one trend is "International Knowledge in Demand."

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Reputation Management

There is much anticipation that reputation management will begin to dictate the hotel industry in upcoming years. Considering there are millions of reviews written each day across a plethora of different platforms, the world wide web has the power of influencing one's decision making process; being able to manage your businesses reputation will determine success or failure. TrustYou had made it their mission to influence travel decisions in a positive way, developing a technology and software making it simple to monitor, manage and market a business's reputation. Another company, Flip.to, has been making strides to tap into the market of potential travelers' family and friends considering 70% of customers take recommendations from their family or friends when choosing a product, brand or business.

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Rankings Mean Business

Never has a user-generated online rating meant as much as it does now. The 21st Century is the age of digital referrals, and the power of what's posted on the web via user-generated review sites – digital word of mouth – can drastically impact a business' revenue. There are 3.3 billion brand mentions in 2.4 billion brand-related conversations within the U.S. every day, and the typical American mentions brand names 60 times per week in online and offline conversations. According to the 2012 Luxury Trend report, more than 33 percent of its customers consider TripAdvisor reviews to be extremely important.

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Review site tactics

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Yelp reports 50 million users across its web and mobile platforms. TripAdvisor has become the world's most popular travel website with 34 million unique users each month. Google Places is the Yellow Pages of the digital age meaning that business listings also show up on iPhone searches as well as on Google Maps. In 2014 there is a need to:

- Monitor Yelp, TripAdvisor and Google Places reviews and alert management of any low reviews twice a week
- Comment on glowing reviews to thank them
- Comment on low reviews and how the property intends to handle future situations
- Feature Yelp deals

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Back At The Bar – Traditional Gets A Twist

What's currently on tap? Classic is the new contemporary, with bars serving up a renaissance of classic and pre-prohibition cocktails; Vermouth is a big hit. And one of the most classic beverages, tea, is giving cocktails a makeover. With its broad range of appealing flavor profiles and vibrant spectrum of visual characteristics, tea is being elevated to a contemporary status as mixologists and spirit bars across the country are using it to enhance their gin-, rum- and vodka-based cocktails. Whether it is incorporating a floral hibiscus tea to gin or a smoky lapsang souchong tea to vodka, they can add interesting subtle or assertive dimension as a complimentary ingredient. Tea offers adaptability to cold or hot and savory or sweet cocktails making it more user-friendly and appealing to a wider audience in the market place.

Go sweet...on sour beers. A traditional method of beer making from Belgium and Germany is making a comeback. The "sour" element comes from the wild yeasts and natural bacteria that caused beers to taste funky prior to the advent of refrigeration. Modern brewers have learned to control this process better and the resulting beers provide intriguing flavors for the adventuresome beer drinker. These high-acid beers are great for pairing with food but less desirable for quenching your thirst alone on a hot day. Many restaurants have added sour beers to their beer lists and, with their high acidity content, chefs are happily pairing them with food like Carolina BBQ, vinaigrette dressings, deep-fried cheese curds, Tex- Mex chili or New Orleans gumbo, to name a few.

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Millennials will become the core customer within the hospitality and travel industries over the next five to ten years. The majority of airlines, hotels and travel companies will benefit from this sector as they enter into their peak earning, spending and travel years. Within this group of GenY travelers, there are many different markets considering the fact that exploration, interaction and experience are the major focus of Millennials. Willing to pay more for a greater experience, "foodies" are a prevalent subset of this market; looking for an overall gourmet experience for a reasonable price will cause the industry to revamp their lobby bars, restaurants and food service. Internet bloggers, culture buffs, LGBT and Multi-generational travelers all looking for a unique, novel experience will command change within the market.

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Sustainability is The New Standard

In the U.S. alone, hotels represent more than five billion square feet of space, nearly five million guest rooms and close to \$4 billion in annual energy use, according to the U.S. Green Building Council. That's a big impact the industry can make and has made on the environment, in an effort to make sustainability the "new standard" and better appeal to environmentally conscious business and leisure travelers. In fact, 2013 marks the "tipping point" for sustainable hospitality, with eco-friendly practices becoming the norm, rather than the exception, so expect 2014 to see standard "green" practices, products, programs and packages. The message that sustainable practices can save money for a hotel operation has come through loud and clear.

According to research released earlier this year by Travel Advisor, 58 percent of travelers said that they would either not pay more or expect to pay less, nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of travelers expect hotels to have some type of environmental program in place and the majority (84 percent) do not see these practices as having a negative impact on comfort or luxury. The survey found that only 17 percent of travelers would be willing to pay more for eco-features.

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Room Service Reinvented

With room service revenue drastically decreasing – and some hotels like The New York Hilton who are forgoing the amenity later this year – the majority of hotels are dedicated to reinventing the concept, contributing to an eight percent increase in the number of hotels offering room service from 2011-2012.¹¹ What's hot? Well known chef names, concept-driven restaurants and artfully crafted menu items to digital in-room dining menus and online ordering to brown-bag meal deliveries.

Hotel Belmont in Dallas enlisted Chef Tim Byres, voted best southwestern chef by *Food & Wine* to head up Smoke, a barbecue restaurant with an emphasis on smoked and cured items. And, Omni Chicago Hotel in Chicago offers a digital in-room dining menu, which includes pictures and descriptions of each meal. The term "at your service" will continue to evolve to support consumer needs for simple, fast and quality service – room service isn't going away anytime soon.

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WOW customer service will become even more influential this year. Service today consists of four levels: basic, expected, desired and WOW. Basic service can be found at the post office whereas expected service can be found at most fast food restaurants and many businesses. Desired service is often found at good hotels and restaurants but WOW Service is the only way to ensure repeat business. By creating an impressive, unique guest experience that exceeds all expectations, you are able to capture the customer.

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