iBeacon:
Integrating Technology with Travel & Hospitality

By Abhishek Vinod Singh, SVP, Kellton Tech

Based in New Brunswick, NJ, Kellton Tech is a software services company, providing consulting, systems integration, and outsourcing solutions for the hospitality and other sectors.

The advent of iBeacon introduced by Apple is attaining leverage in the hotel industry by transporting the consumers into a futuristic ambience. The Bluetooth based software allows a guest to resolve any trepidations while at a hotel or resort through an electronic concierge constantly at their disposal. Imagine an experience where a customer wheezes in through check in and check outs and is conveniently guided to their rooms through automated navigation systems. All this because we have reached a point in technology where gadgets can converse with each other wirelessly, capitulating a quantum leap in the hospitality sector.

Restaurants all over the world have incessantly imbibed to advancements in mobile technology. Personal Data

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Assistant (PDA) equipped waiters no longer have to dash to the kitchen every time they receive a new order. However, a limitation with the PDA is that it requires the user to select the table number, every time he or she has to dispatch an order. With iBeacons, the app automatically knows which table the waiter is at. It displays the name of the client, their dining/preferences history, and automatically links the order being made by a particular table, without requiring the waiter to manually select the table number.
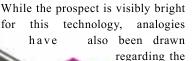
The iBeacon is expected to play a significant role in making the hotels smarter in the long run. It is becoming a proponent for the concept of the smart hotel where the physical world is ceaselessly being reinvented with

digital media channels. Checking-in a hotel, a self-guided tour of the hotel, finding your room, availing room services and in-room entertainment services at a touch of your phone, leaving feedback for the management are some aspects where iBeacon can augment the hospitality industry.

In short, iBeacon is expected to replace the front desk services and the need of a room key in a hotel completely. Simply said, iBeacon is not just a technology, it is a window to personalizing your stay at a hotel. Though a niche segment of hotels are flaunting beacon-enabled mobile apps at the moment but the number is expected to increase rapidly with more and more hospitality giants opting to go mobile.

Apart from hospitality, travel is a predominant sector that can reap the benefits of iBeacon in a multitude of ways. Mobile devices have become significant ports of connection on the go. Hence, a technology that operates in a mobile device to enhance our travelling experience is of utmost importance to us.

In the process of a journey, an airport is not just a point of departure. In fact, it is a destination in itself which has its own confluence points. From arrival to check in, from boarding a flight to disembarking, airports serve as hosting destinations for an odd number of events. At this moment, this entire process is primarily being man managed with some secondary help from technological advancements. The iBeacon is being looked upon as machinery that has the capability of revamping this process by introducing an unmanned airport ticketing and baggage counter kiosk. And that's not all. By using iBeacon enabled mobile applications, one can navigate the airports with the help of maps and additional information related to airport lounges and eateries.

While the prospect is visibly bright for this technology, analogies have also been drawn regarding the privacy

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concerns related to the iBeacon. Since it works on the principles of location tracking, if developed, it could become a deterrent for the movement of its users. While creating an App, care should be taken that the terms and policies are clearly articulated to the customers and there should be a reign over the frequency of messages received by a user.

The iBeacon framework can also be opted for as less as $10 per month and with a life span of two years. The cost of developing an app for iPhone varies but for an average database app where you provide every piece of content, image and writing, it can range somewhere from $8,000 to $50,000. With a vast price variation to choose from, the installation of an iBeacon with a complementary app to go with it should not be much of a hassle for the travel and hospitality industry looking out to enhance the hotel stay of a consumer. Also, more airports and travel junctions are expected to be enabled with beacons soon in order to give the best of services to travelers. All said and done, it would be interesting to see how creatively we use iBeacon to serve us better on the go. CR