

# New York Hospitality by Vijay Dandapani

A hotelier's outlook on NYC, travel and the hospitality industry



July 11, 2007

## Guestroom 2010

Guestroom 2010 was once again a big draw at HITEC in Orlando late last month. Capacity crowds were there to view the room's promise that encompassed green ideas to futuristic technology. The organizers claimed that each product reflected a wide range of technologies including "green", electronics and nanotechnology. The green products included a shower head that uses air pressure to conserve water and carpet made from corn. RFID tags were used in food service trays as a way of retrieving empties.

One new item that was not there in its debut in Minneapolis last year was IBM's speech translation device called "Mastor". Designed to allow hotel staff members to easily communicate with foreign-language speaking guests to ensure better service, the proto type on display outside GUESTROOM 2010 allowed for translation in and out of two languages - Arabic and Mandarin - a curious selection given the rather meager number of Arabic and Chinese speaking tourists who land on US shores as both groups have a rather difficult time obtaining visas to the US. Nevertheless, MASTOR was easy to use and the clarity and instantaneous output makes it a winning bet whenever IBM gears up the device with other languages.

Some of the other features of GUESTROOM 2010 have been reviewed by Rob Lovitt in MSNBC's report of yesterday. They include "a phone with a contactless IC chip, like the one displayed by NTT DoCoMo USA, you'll eventually be able to open your hotel room simply by swiping your handset across a sensor outside the door"; the Ammique bed {that} "isn't so much a bed as it is a body suspension system. Instead of a mattress, it features a system of linked rods and small plastic-domed caps that move independently to contour to the natural curves of your body" and "The Smart Mill & Brew Coffeemaker from Melitta combines a programmable, 10-cup coffeemaker with up-to-the-minute weather reports. Capable of handling both whole beans and ground coffee, the unit also features a backlit LCD display that shows the local weather forecast (in 125 cities) via MSN Direct. The product's distributor is currently in discussions with hotels for in-room use".

Before hoteliers jump entirely on the numerous gizmos such as the TV inserted in the bathroom mirror they would do well to read a related Lovitt column that polls readers on the most important aspect of a hotel - the vast majority (over 65%) voted for "a comfy bed" with hi-tech, posh bathroom and eco-friendly coming in at 2, 3 & 4 respectively.