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The Future of Hotels: Social Vibes Supported by Robots and Technologies

Hybrid hospitality

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Dr. Meng-Mei Chen, Author of Hospitality Vibes and Associate Professor at EHL, imagines a near future where travel journeys are stitched together by AI, robots, and smart environments, but the real magic of hotels comes from “vibes hosts” who curate social connection, shared hobbies, and meaningful moments between guests. She argues that as agentic AI, IoT, and robot-as-a-service quietly handle logistics and chores, hotels can evolve into social hubs where people choose to stay not for the tech, but for the relationships and community they experience.

Imagine planning a vacation where everything just flows. You tell your virtual assistant you want a week away with your partner. Instantly, it suggests three perfect destinations, tailored to your travel history and even your biometric signals during past trips. You pick your favorite, and your assistant takes care of the rest—bookings, preferences, and sharing your global traveler ID so every company along your journey knows exactly how to make you feel at home.

When you arrive, a driverless car is waiting. Insurance is calculated on the fly, based on real-time traffic and weather. At the hotel, there's no check-in line—just walk straight to your room, already set up to your liking, thanks to your personal data. The room's environment keeps an eye on your comfort and health, and if anything seems off, your wearable device quietly alerts your doctor's AI assistant. Even the shower cleans itself, ready for your next use.

But the real magic happens outside your room. In the lobby, you meet your vibes host—a hospitality pro who's also a piano enthusiast, just like you. Maybe you'll jam together, or meet another guest who joins in. These spontaneous moments can spark new friendships, just like the last time you played music with a stranger and ended up sharing dinner.

Your partner heads to the golf court and will meet golf buddies selected by the vibes host. Tomorrow, it's racquetball with another vibes host, who is also a certified sports medicine expert. Meanwhile, in the kitchen, another vibes host leads a group cooking session, blending amateur cooks and professional chefs as everyone learns about local cuisine. Dinner is communal, conversations flow, and after the meal, everyone pitches in to tidy up—while robots handle the rest.

Later, you wander to the bar for a TED-style “story night,” where guests share their most memorable childhood experiences, coached and moderated by vibes hosts. Or maybe you'll go for a poker game in the game room. Every event is designed to bring people together, guided by hosts who know how to spark connection.

All these technologies—virtual assistants, driverless cars, smart rooms, robots—already exist and are rapidly improving. As they become more affordable and widespread, hotels will use them to create personalized, home-like environments. Robots will handle the chores, while humans focus on what matters: solving unique problems, teaching machines, and—most importantly—helping people connect.

WHO ARE VIBES HOSTS?

Vibes hosts are the heart of this new hospitality era. They're not just staff—they're connectors, facilitators, and community builders. Skilled in sports, arts, hobbies, and local culture, they attract guests with shared interests and help friendships blossom. Their work is meaningful because it's about building relationships and enhancing well-being. As the hospitality industry embraces this role, vibes hosts will gain new respect and draw more talent to the field.

WHY SOCIAL CONNECTION MATTERS

Humans are social creatures. We need interaction as much as we need food and water. Without it, loneliness sets in—studies show it's as harmful as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day! Yet modern life often gets in the way: urban migration, single households, social media, and remote work can all make us feel isolated.

Hospitality businesses are perfectly positioned to fill this gap. Think of your favorite barista or bartender—they're part of your “weak ties,” but can contribute to your happiness through social interactions.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

While AI often grabs the headlines, building the future of travel requires more than just powerful algorithms. We need to move beyond simply digitizing data and start digitizing entire processes—something agentic AI can help make possible. The digital ecosystem must break down old industry boundaries, encouraging collaboration across transportation and service providers to create truly seamless journeys. Imagine a world where every travel option and complementary service is woven together, offering experiences tailored to your unique history and real-time needs. The Internet of Things will expand far beyond today's electronics, with smart walls and everyday objects equipped with sensors to enhance comfort and personalization.

But it's not just about the digital and virtual worlds. Companies focused on senior care and home markets are racing to integrate humanoid robots and robotic arms into daily life. [Here](#) is the video from Figure 03. Advances in robotic training—such as learning from demonstration, simulations, and the use of digital twins—are making it easier and faster for robots to acquire new skills and share them instantly with others. Companies are training robots in different skills. Once a robot acquires the skill, it can share the skill with all other robots. Simulations and digital twins also enable companies to break physical barriers and train robots in various scenarios within the digital world. For example, creating 500 different table setups or 500 different room configurations is not particularly difficult. Robots will be able to address these hundreds of scenarios. [Here](#) is a video from Nvidia. Once mass production ramps up, new business models will emerge, such as “robot-as-a-service,” making advanced robotics more accessible to a wider audience. Just like your smartphone, these robots will receive regular updates to continue getting smarter and more helpful.

PARADIGM SHIFT

Should we fear AI and robots? Not at all. Technology will continue to advance, but our need for human connection will remain unchanged. The hospitality industry can lead the way, transforming itself into a hub for socializing, guided by vibes hosts who help guests create lasting memories and friendships.

The hotel industry will likely be unable to develop its own industry-specific robots. Yet, the industry must keep a close eye on the robot development, including both robots and robotic arms. Furthermore, new hotel developments or renovation plans for existing projects should incorporate these technologies into their blueprints. For example, the future kitchen may be fully automated and require only one employee per shift, instead of having robots replace every kitchen staff member. It is a paradigm shift for hotel operations.

Nevertheless, vibes hosts will skillfully create a human touch and foster genuine connections with customers. People will be drawn in and choose to stay because of the relationships and meaningful interactions they experience, rather than the technology offered.

