

Business travel to see growing demand for technology

As the world moves into the second year of coping with Covid-19 and the many changes and consequences that the virus has brought about, traveller confidence remains a key focus for travel managers. The question is, how can travel suppliers do their part to restore and nurture traveller confidence? According to research, the answer lies in adopting technology to streamline and maximise safety throughout the traveller experience.



Image via [123RF](#)

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What type of technology is key?

Based on a survey commissioned by trusted travel tech company, Amadeus, 84% of the 6,000 travellers interviewed said that technology would boost their confidence to travel in the next 12 months. When asked to be more specific about what type of technology would provide a much-needed sense of relief, the majority responded by saying that mobile applications offering on-trip notifications are at the top of the list, closely followed by contactless mobile payment options.

"We've seen the adoption of technology accelerate since the Covid-19 pandemic," explains Oz Desai, GM Corporate Traveller. "For travellers today, 24/7 availability is not just a convenience, it is a necessity. Mobile apps like Corporate Traveller's chatbot SAM:], for example, are quickly becoming the best solutions for around-the-clock service, as they are programmed to deliver reliable and personalised responses.

"Mobile apps such as these are programmed to keep travellers updated at all times, from weather updates at the destination to information on the traveller's departure gate, flight time changes and where to collect baggage. The power of technology is changing the very nature of corporate travel, making it feel more like leisure travel with a smarter focus."

Biometrics is another important innovation that will see an acceleration in 2021. About a third of the respondents in the Amadeus study highlighted how physical inspections and face-to-face interactions at the airport make them feel uncomfortable, and how biometrics in the form of voice or facial recognition could help them to feel more at ease in this regard.

Further to this, a third of the respondents agreed that universal digital traveller identification would be a great idea. The thinking behind this type of identification is that it would contain all relevant personal details about the traveller in question, including their immunity status, and that it would make it unnecessary to exchange any documents or Covid-related medical records by hand. The identification would also limit the number of times that a traveller would need to undergo screening and other checks before being cleared to board a plane.

Demands for digitisation

The reality is that not all travel suppliers can afford to invest in custom apps or automated solutions as mentioned above. However, they can still make the effort to embrace digitisation in various ways to streamline the traveller experience.

"It is quickly becoming evident that agile digitisation is more important than ever before," says Desai.

Considering how easily the virus is spread through person-to-person contact, we will see an increasing number of travel suppliers adopt contactless technology wherever possible. Many traveller suppliers have already embraced contactless technology to help flatten the curve, but the advancement of this technology will continue. Travel suppliers will opt to partner with tech companies to create bespoke solutions for their clients in order to provide their customers with maximum peace of mind.

"This will see the implementation of touch-free experiences, gadgets, and devices across the corporate travel experience. If experts are to be believed, soon enough, it won't even be necessary to touch a door handle to use the bathroom on a plane or flip a light switch inside your hotel room. The vast majority of these daily 'touch tasks' will evolve into effortless, sensor-controlled actions," he adds.

Communication and technology go hand-in-hand

It simply isn't enough for travel suppliers to be adopting and using in-demand travel tech to their advantage. It is vital that they clearly communicate all of this to their existing and future clients, too. Suppliers are urged to notify interested parties in every possible way to make certain that the message is received loud and clear.

"Pin the information regarding new Covid travel tech solutions on your social media pages. Create a pop-up message, as well as a dedicated web page, on your website. Send out email and SMS communication. Spend money on radio or newspaper adverts if budget allows. Record an informative voice message for your helpline. There are countless opportunities to make an impact regarding spreading the word about the new tech itself and its many benefits," says Desai.

In short, travel managers should never be left guessing regarding how TMCs and travel suppliers are prioritising their team's safety. They should know exactly what measures are in place, what resources have been made available to them, and why and how to leverage the benefits of these resources.

In conclusion, it is a combination of providing travellers with streamlined technology and solutions, coupled with ample communication regarding these solutions, that is going to make a real difference regarding how confident (or not) they feel about travelling again. More importantly, it is also going to impact how quickly the travel industry is able to recover over the next few years. Ultimately, every travel supplier has a role to play.

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