

Technological evolution is changing the way travel and hospitality players identify and acquire new customers. New-age technologies such as internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud are being adopted to deliver a personalised experience to customers. The majority of these players are using analytics to create a strong and loyal customer base for their brands. **Manish Amin, Co-founder and Chief Information and Technology Officer, Yatra.com** shares his views on the evolving ICT needs of the sector and future technology trends...

### **What are the key ICT trends shaping the travel and hospitality industry?**

The travel industry is being massively disrupted by technology as it connects consumers and providers more and more directly. Improvements in communication technology over the past decade have increased ways in which travel agencies can communicate with each other as well as with customers. With Indians increasingly using smartphones, travel companies need to leverage this opportunity through technology. Though this comes with its own challenges, the speed and scope for growth in the sector is unparalleled. Technology is being leveraged to create a large repository of information. Travel portals have made browsing, bookings, etc. highly personalised. Technology advancements have made businesses more capable of managing and maintaining their content on the website and keeping a record of clients' interests and bookings. A one-stop shop model enables a host of activities, such as ticket booking, hotel booking, car rentals, and sightseeing, insurance, and even travel-related shopping, on a single platform. Online travel agents (OTAs) are also using a unified technology platform to efficiently roll out new products. Yatra.com has been aggressively using data analytics and AI in marketing to enhance customer services. The data points of different users are mapped to understand their preferences. At Yatra.com, we are deploying a combination of in-house and third-party technologies to offer more personalised experiences to customers. Through the data gathered, Yatra.com is able to provide recommendations of hotels/flights, etc. to users depending on their budget.

### **What are the technology solutions that your company is deploying?**

Modern ICT solutions will play a key role in determining the future direction and pace of the tourism industry. The OTA industry has also stepped up through innovation to provide better

customer experience. At Yatra.com, we offer bookings for hotels, air travel, trains, cabs and packages, etc., and try to provide travellers with a hassle-free booking experience. This is enabled through technological intervention aimed at enhancing consumer interaction and increasing the query resolution speed. The integration of chatbots, UPI and Truecaller, etc. is in line with our endeavour to improve the user experience. We have launched features such as the Facebook chatbot for booking tickets, a self-serve platform to address customer queries and a marketplace chat platform to enable travellers to chat with the sellers in real time. Further, Xplore, a user-friendly feature that simplifies user experience while planning their holidays, and Voice Search in Android and iOS applications that allows domestic and international customers to book their flights, have helped Yatra.com become a one-stop shop for all customer needs.

### **How are technologies such as AI, IoT, cloud and blockchain transforming the travel and hospitality industry? What is your future roadmap for their deployment?**

Technological advancements in the travel and tourism industry have helped every company cater to travellers' need for ease and convenience in booking and enquiry across all platforms, be it the website or social media. Big data, cloud technology, AI, IoT and blockchain have had a positive impact on the industry, providing customers with useful insights. They have helped enhance the company's potential and introduce a series of changes in the tourism market. Today, customers are pampered with choices in terms of travel platforms, where each brand is intuitive enough to map the trends and needs, and offer suitable solutions to remain at the top of the game. At the macro level, ICT will shape the future of tourism by improving the production, distribution and sale of complex tourism products. It will also enable effective and efficient management within the company.

### **What are the key challenges faced in deploying these technologies?**

Technological disruption will shape the future of the Indian market and every sector will be touched by digital transformation. In order to adopt new technologies and utilise them to their maximum potential, it is important to train the staff accordingly considering the risks involved due to heavy investments. Also, customer preference is constantly evolving and it is very important to analyse customer behaviour. Tools like big data and AI make it easier to communicate and understand this abundant data. Thus, it is important to reduce costs and improve data analytics to enable real-time decision-making.

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