

Transforming hospitality through digitalisation

The hospitality industry is taking digital transformation initiative in a huge way. The post pandemic impacted everything from customer expectations and behaviour that simultaneously demands digitisation of the industry along with the rest of the world. Digital transformation in the hospitality industry signifies how the technology is distributed to enhance the customer experience and streamline operations. It embraces an array of digital tools, from mobile apps for guest services to data analytics for personalised marketing. This transformation isn't just about adopting new technologies; but also about rethinking business models to optimize guest satisfaction and operational efficiency. The ensuing sections provide a deeper insight into the historical context, market trends, challenges, and key drivers of this digital shift, having a deep influence on the hospitality industry.

Modern guests are looking for a hotel experience that puts their needs first, starting with the selection of the destination. Today's hospitality sector challenge is evolving market trends, including heightened guest expectations for digital convenience and personalised experiences. The hotel operators are finding new ways to keep up with this prediction. Nowadays, travel decisions are more dependable on ratings and reviews, influencer recommendation and if the place is Instagram worthy or not. Another key factor is the ease of booking, including website navigation and payment processes. Finally, flexibility with more frequent last-minute travel plan changes is more important than ever. Therefore, OTAs and B2B portals are doing well amongst millennials and Gen Z. Expedia, Booking, MMT, GTA, Hotel beds etc are offering best deals to hotel guests with easy bookings & payment options.

The role of digital transformation is creating a more efficient, effective business that can better meet customers' needs and wants. It is helping to reduce the costs of operations and make hotels more competitive in the market. Digitalisation is helping the hotel industry tremendously. It allows hotels to gather, analyse and interpret customer data, trends and needs and thus increase revenue by placing personalised offers. On the other hand, hotel guests are satisfied by the tailored services, complete control and ease of use. Few

innovations like facial recognition, artificial intelligence, chatbots, and data analytics are driving digital transformation in the hospitality sector. AI and machine learning are applied to the booking process to provide more personalisation, pricing recommendations, etc.

The digital landscape is revolutionising depending on how guests interact with establishments, enhancing convenience, and delivering tailored services that cater to individual preferences like never before. The latest study suggests the hoteliers to keep in mind that customers prefer interacting with brands online or through mobile. Mobile phone is being considered as the important key in digital hotel transformation. This is a successful method. Guests appreciate the opportunity to use their own mobile device and feel more comfortable and connected doing so. Most hotels that use mobile phones as part of their digital transformation strategies have created branded, user-friendly and straightforward hotel apps with a great design. A hotel mobile app gives hotel guests the ability to effortlessly check-in or check out, open their hotel rooms with mobile room keys, order services, book appointments, and communicate with hotel staff without physical contact. However, hotel mobile apps are not the only way to use mobile devices. Creating a mobile-friendly web app for guests to check-in without downloading a native app might be a huge relief for them. Another popular trend is using QR codes to quickly access hotel menus, activity schedules, booking appointments or get customer feedback.

The long-term solution is to invest in technology that can solve labour shortages, there are many more hospitality tools that has gained popularity this year like personalized customer experiences, enhanced digital advertising, data driven decision making, handheld hospitality, mobile check-in and check-outs, room service at your fingertips for contactless food ordering and payments. Many leisure and business travellers prefer hotels to offer more digital services. Mobile check-ins and check-outs, contactless payments and orders, and avoiding physical key transfers were all factors that played an essential role in people's safety and sense of security. The changing landscape requires hospitality industry to adapt to the digital edge or risk getting left behind by travellers. By integrating best practices for digital marketing and aligning with the new customer journey, the industry can tap into powerful opportunities to stand out and attract new audiences.

With digitalisation, the world is changing faster, customers would definitely choose something unique and comfortable to them over others. However, no matter which tool you use, you want to make sure that it makes the customer experience better. That is the whole idea in the first place, to make your customers want to come back and drink coffee at your cafe, eat at your restaurant, or book again at your hotel!