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Trend watch: Four technology topics your business needs to be aware of in 2018

The online travel industry has seen rapid growth over the past few years.



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DataArt's take on top tech trends for 2018

And as it grows its presence in the travel industry, technology consultancy DataArt has outlined what it believes will be the trends that are set to impact the online travel agency space in 2018...

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Today's travellers are looking at technology to help them better explore a destination before they book it. Online travel agencies have already been leveraging AI to deliver the best customer experience via personalised trip recommendations to AI-enabled chatbots.

Digital personal travel assistants have the potential to improve the travel experience through existing data acquisition search preferences for airlines and hotels, and thereby streamline the process of choosing a destination.

“AI has come a long way in recognising travellers' behaviour, including a better understanding of their preferences, making it a lot easier for travellers during planning and booking process of a trip.

"DataArt's natural language processing and chatbots competence centre regularly evaluates practical use of machine-learning techniques for travel applications, separating the hype from the true potential of this emerging technology, identifying ways of how and when machine learning could be applied," says Charlotte Lamp Davies, vice-president travel and hospitality, Europe at DataArt.

Converting to mobile for revived tours and activities sector

More and more tours and activities websites have become mobile-oriented. In fact, the tours and activities sector has seen a revival having struggled to find serious interest or even a place to call its own over the years.

A strong mobile offering here is a must as travellers tend to book activities very last minute in destination. Companies such as Expedia, Airbnb and Booking.com are all gaining momentum by partnering with specialist tours and

activities companies making it easier for travellers to book directly from their mobile devices.

”Companies like TourRadar have attracted large sums of funding over the past year, and with Redeem recently winning three major innovation prizes at the Phocuswright Conference Innovation Summit, we’ll keep a close eye on this sector in 2018,” Lamp Davies adds.

Blockchain will influence OTA loyalty offerings

Loyalty programmes, integrated into the tourist experience, are undergoing a change. Most reward programmes are old fashioned and complicated for the consumers, that’s why they require new technology solutions.

Most of the programmes are already moving from physical loyalty cards only to a digital form (think mobile apps and online portals) and this trend will continue its development. At the same time, blockchain may be just the answer for simplifying the unwieldy process for exchanging points among program partners.

“Blockchain technology could provide instant redemption in exchange for multiple loyalty point currencies on a single platform. There can be little doubt that one storage ‘area’ for points has significant benefits. Implementation will, however, demand some serious business process re-engineering, but we are keen to see which OTAs will consider this move essential,” adds Lamp Davies.

GDPR countdown

The EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that comes into force in May 2018 will drastically affect the tourism industry. To remain compliant tour operators and online travel agencies will need to ensure monitoring protocols have been set in place to avoid a serious data security breach. Failure to comply could lead to a fine, which would be based on the turnover of the business.

However, the main topic for 2018 will be better customer experience. As the competition in the online travel industry is becoming more intense, agencies with an online presence should benefit from the newer technological advancements. As we are all aware, it is the arrival of new technologies that keeps most chief technology officers awake at night, and DataArt recommends they focus on some or all the points raised here.

Original article can be found here:

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