Lack of data sharing between firms is holding back development in online travel

By Travolution

Big travel companies wanting to 'own the customer' stand in the way of the sharing of travel customer data.

This problem is holding back development agreed panellists discussing the Internet of Things (IoT) at the third DataArt Question Time event in London this week

Dissemination of the IoT in many parts of the travel industry depends a great deal on the ability of organisations and consumers to share data, the event was told.

Through the IoT, operations technology and information technology will blend together using sensors, analytics and machine applications – a development that will share and create even more data.

Jason Jefferys, founder of iRiS Software Systems, said: "I have found the biggest problem hoteliers have is really understanding their guests.

"If the guest has never stepped in a hotel before it's basically a surprise guest. I think there is a huge opportunity to start sharing information on who you are and where you are with the hotel, before you arrive. It could be what dietary requirements you have.

"What is important is understanding where a customer is in their journey, and that goes back into the airports – they know what time you are going to arrive at the hotel."

Paul Saggar, group director of IT at Maybourne Hotel Group, used to work for corporate services company Hogg Robinson (HRG).

"I think it was in about 2008 Hogg Robinson took the initiative to get its top clients to share the data of the passengers they were servicing.

"We wanted a mechanism for us to link up the knowledge between hotels, car companies et cetera.

"Everyone came in and discussed it and they all said it was a great idea, and nobody did anything about it.

"It all boiled down to ownership of the customer. Everyone wanted to own that customer and own the interactions with that customer. That will continue.

"This isn't a technical challenge I don't think. Via Google you can log into 25 accounts. In my example BA wanted to own that customer on that day.

"They did not want to share the information with, say Lufthansa, who are involved somewhere along the line.

Greg Abbott, senior vice president of travel and hospitality at DataArt, added: "OTAs do not pass on any passenger specific data down to the supplier. All the supplier knows is their name and check-in date.

"We are seeing the emergence of some companies that are going between OTAs and suppliers to broker the check-in experience, so I think it's coming, but not yet."

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