

## **THE CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR TOURISM INDUSTRY**

**Fayzulloyeva Oysha**

Student of Karshi State University

**Annotation:** In the tourism and hospitality industry, the success or failure of our businesses and destinations depends on service. Some, however, deliver consistently higher levels of customer service. Why and how are they able to do this? This chapter will try to answer these questions as we explore the fundamentals of customer service in the context of a competitive global tourism environment.

**Key words:** tourism, customer service, tourism service, staff, quality of service, tourists.

Customer service is the process of providing assistance and support to customers before, during, and after they purchase a product or service. It can include everything from providing helpful information about a product to resolving customer complaints.

Good customer service is often the difference between a satisfied customer who will continue doing business with a company and an unhappy customer who will take their business elsewhere. In today's competitive marketplace, businesses need to focus on providing setting high expectations for customer service with their staff in order to stay ahead of the competition. By making sure that customers are always happy with the products and services they receive, businesses can build long-lasting relationships that lead to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth advertising. It aims to deliver high levels of customer satisfaction, retention, and better brand relationships.

Hotels, airlines, car rental companies, and others in the travel industry prioritize the customer experience as one of the most effective competitive differentiators. Indeed, companies that deliver in this area are more likely to generate customer loyalty and build positive reputations. In this article, you will find eight of the most effective ways for those in the tourism industry to improve customer experience.

### **8 Ways to Improve Your Customer Experience**

Below are some of the popular ways how to improve customer experience in the travel industry with technology.

#### **1. Smart Rooms**

One of the growing customer experience trends in the hotel sector of the travel industry is the use of voice recognition technology to create 'smart rooms'. Essentially, these allow guests to control various aspects of the room through simple voice commands, making the experience more convenient. One of the best-known examples is Alexa for Hospitality, an Amazon service that Marriott is already using. Smart speakers are included in hotel rooms, and guests can communicate with them to ask questions, find information, and turn other devices in the room on or off.

#### **2. Chatbots & Artificial Intelligence**

With modern advances in artificial intelligence, computer systems or machines can now perform functions that traditionally require direct human involvement. This can greatly benefit businesses of all varieties within the tourism industry because it allows for far greater automation.

One significant example is chatbots, which can be used by hotels, travel agents, and airlines to provide 24/7 customer service or fully automated booking processes. In terms of customer experience, the chief advantage of this is rapid response times, meaning customers will receive swift answers, even in the middle of the night.

According to the Chatbot Market Report by Precedence Research, the global chatbot market size is projected to grow at a CAGR of 19.29% until 2032. Find more detailed information and examples about artificial intelligence use cases in the travel industry in the article “How Artificial Intelligence is Changing the Travel Industry”.

### 3. Personalization Marketing

The basic premise behind personalization marketing is to deliver more targeted promotional content to users. This is usually achieved through data collection and automated digital algorithms, which allow content to be distributed to specific users who have specific interests and browsing habits or who fall into specific demographics. As a result, promotional content is more relevant to individuals, and this can be particularly important within the travel industry. For instance, it might mean that a user who has browsed a particular hotel website will see adverts for that hotel on social media. However, it can also allow companies to target their content to more specific demographics too. Taxi firms, for instance, might target those located within a particular airport or city.

### 4. Virtual Reality

Over the past few years, virtual reality technology has grown significantly, and VR headsets are now a mainstream consumer product. This gives those within the tourism industry a great opportunity because VR can virtually transform a user’s surroundings, effectively placing them in a different environment.

The potential uses for this are almost endless. Some online travel agents are using the technology to allow customers to experience hotel rooms before booking them, while other travel companies have developed virtual experiences, which enable a guest to get an idea of what it feels like to be at a major tourist attraction. Other examples might include interactive virtual maps, VR hotel tours, or 360 videos to present a resort, cruise ship, or tourism destination upfront. According to the Virtual Reality Market Report by Fortune Business Insights, the global virtual reality market size is projected to grow at a CAGR of 31% until 2030. Find more detailed information and examples about how virtual reality can benefit your business in the article “How Virtual Reality is Transforming the Travel Industry”.

### 5. Augmented Reality

Augmented reality is similar to VR, although it is more accessible to the average customer and requires only a smartphone and a relevant app. Rather than fully replacing a user’s surroundings, however, augmented reality is instead concerned with enhancing real-world environments through overlays.

For those in the travel industry, the main way this can improve the customer experience is by providing additional information. For example, a travel app might allow users to point their phone at a landmark and find out more about it or point their phone at a restaurant and see customer reviews and hygiene ratings.

## 6. The Internet of Things

Internet connectivity within everyday devices, commonly referred to as ‘the Internet of Things’, has been a major disruptor within the travel and tourism industry. Businesses looking to deliver in terms of customer experience can use such capabilities to add to the convenience, maximize comfort, and even pre-empt the need for repairs. In hotels, devices can be configured to detect and respond to conditions in real-time, meaning temperature and light can be regulated automatically. All industries can see live information about the operating status of devices, allowing for swift repairs, while the IoT can also enable location-based services.

- **Comfort** Automated temperature and lighting control in hotel rooms. Personalized room environments increase guest satisfaction and comfort.
- **Convenience** Smart locks for keyless room entry; IoT-enabled check-in and check-out processes. Streamlines processes, reducing wait times and enhancing convenience.
- **Seamless Travel** IoT-connected luggage tags and tracking systems. Minimizes lost luggage incidents and provides real-time tracking for travelers.
- **Personalization** Room preferences (e.g., lighting, temperature) are set via an app before arrival. Creates a tailored experience, making guests feel valued and understood.
- **Safety and Security** Wearables for guests that monitor the location and vital signs during activities. Enhances guest safety and provides peace of mind during travel activities.
- **Real-time Information** Mobile apps integrated with IoT devices provide local guides and information. Offers up-to-date, location-based content, improving the travel experience.
- **Efficient Transportation** IoT-enabled navigation and transport updates for optimized travel routes. Reduces travel time and anxiety with real-time updates and suggestions.

## 7. Robots

Another major technological trend emerging within all industries is the increased use of robotics, which can also drastically improve the customer experience. In the tourism industry, in particular, robots can play a number of roles, from security robots to robots offering services within hotels.

Japan has produced one of the most notable examples of a robotics-enabled customer experience, with the Henn-na Hotel being entirely robot-staffed, from check-in robots to robotic luggage porters. Robots can also enhance security at airports and airlines by detecting weapons and bomb disposal. Some companies have even produced robotic travel cases, removing the need for cases to be carried.

## 8. User-Generated Content

Finally, user-generated content refers to any content produced by users or customers rather than the business. Within the travel industry, one of the most obvious examples is images uploaded to social media websites by users. These can be highly influential because they often represent

customer opinion. For those in the tourism industry, the trick is to find ways to allow customers to create user-generated content that adds to their experience while also serving as positive word-of-mouth marketing. Many tourist attractions, for example, achieve this through branded photo booths, which allow customers to capture moments from their visit and upload them to social media easily, complete with a logo or some other form of subtle branding.

There are many examples of good **customer service in hospitality**, but one that stands out is when a business goes above and beyond to make sure that a guest is happy.

A few ways to provide exemplary customer service include:

- Sending a thank you note to guests who have stayed at the property
- Giving a small discount or complimentary upgrade to guests who are celebrating a special occasion
- Asking guests for feedback and taking action on their suggestions
- Making a personal connection with guests by remembering details about them
- Going above and beyond to solve a problem for a guest
- Going out of your way to help someone with their luggage
- Providing an unexpected gift in guests' rooms.

It's the little things that can make a big difference, and often it's the businesses that go the extra mile that guests remember the most. In today's competitive marketplace, good customer service is essential for businesses in the hospitality industry.

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