

## Travel apps will play key role in tourism recovery

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The desire for a 'seamless travel experience will have heightened during [COVID-19](#) with travelers searching for an easy-to-use platform, where they can be inspired and informed of where they can travel safely. COVID-19 has increased the race to deploy contactless processes, digital health passes and safely store customer data. Therefore, companies should be looking to re-model travel apps to more effectively service and manage the post-pandemic traveler.

The desire for contactless technology is strong among consumers globally as apps that typically use contactless payment allow consumers to purchase at ease. This is influencing how tourism companies target their customers when it comes to booking a holiday. Industry analytics data shows that both mobile payments and

online travel were in the top five themes mentioned in tourism company filings in 2020. Destination management organizations (DMOs) are looking to work towards more responsible tourism post-pandemic through better capacity management. All these areas suggest that travel apps are the way forward to benefit customers, company and destinations alike. Being proactive in developing an end-to-end service that inspires travel confidence, ensures safe travel and overall better management could prove highly lucrative and beneficial for all involved.

It now seems likely that some form of the digital passport will be required to travel safely post-pandemic. There is a lucrative opportunity and a growing need for a travel app that can encompass all elements of a trip into a one-stop solution, with omnichannel connectivity that covers everything from simplifying travel requirements to transactions. Anything that can help elevate the customer experience and inspire travel confidence should now be a key priority.

Contactless payment systems are key. A higher number of respondents (55%) in the recent survey selected they would only pay for products/services using their cards or mobile phones rather than cash. The same survey also revealed 60% aim to 'start or continue' making banking transactions online in the 'new normal' following the COVID-19 period. Reasons behind this likely relate to the general ease of use alongside health and hygiene. However, there are growing opportunities for app integration in tourism.

From a company perspective, apps provide an opportunity to upsell any additional products and can lead to a higher return on investment (ROI). With both mobile payments and online travel ranking highly on the industry's analytics database (theme mentions in 2020), this shows they are key areas of focus going forward. However, further developments need to be publicized and demonstrate the advantages of seamless app experiences to the end-user.

Other than displaying COVID-19 travel requirements, travel apps also offer overwhelming benefits for destinations. An app devised by a DMO for example could promote the experiences within a destination while managing capacity at certain attractions/locations. Benefits can also be seen here for airports, whereby tourists can be redirected to different areas of the airport due to heavy footfall, ensuring social distancing measures are adhered to.

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