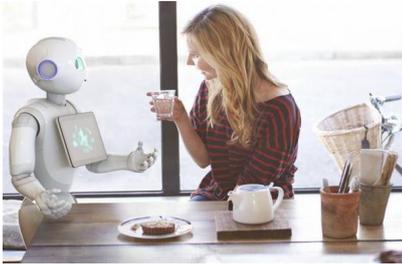


# ROBOTS HELPING TRAVELERS ON THE ROAD



R-tourism, standing for the robotics in tourism, is the new niche sector growing in importance in the coming age. Travelers can discuss their customer questions at the Indianapolis airport with a robot and more places with artificial intelligence are coming to the world of travel.

Regarding the interaction of robots with travelers two trends seem to be emerging: the TV robot, a mobile avatar, through which the staff responds to you and provides assistance, and the autonomous robot that uses its database to interact with customers, to guide them, etc.

To illustrate the example of mobile avatar, consider the "Double Robot", a mobile TV robot, made for passengers at the terminal of the Indianapolis International Airport in the USA. **Its function is to respond to airport customer questions to prevent them from having to go to the customer service department.**

The TV robot, developed by the California-based Double Robotics firm is remotely controlled using a Mac, iPad or iPhone, by the airport staff to meet the travelers. It allows them to interact with passengers using a head, using an iPad, placed on a long stick about 1 meter long, ending with large wheels and wearing a blue shirt, the same as the host employees are wearing.

A sort of Segway with a rectangular head shape big iPad. The robot costs \$2500, plus the price of the head, being the iPad. It can answer any questions, requests or even report incidents or delays in real time.

The face of the agent is displayed on the screen and passengers can have a conversation with him as they would if they are having a face-to-face talk like you would have if you were calling using Skype. Another very useful feature is that the robot can be used to handle passenger requests outside of the normal customer service office opening hours.

The first experiments show that the robot "seems particularly useful for people who want to know more on things like where to take a taxi or shuttle," said Brian Eckstein director of customer service.

Regarding the autonomous host robots several products already exist now. The most famous at this moment is Pepper made by the French company Aldebaran. Currently in Japan, **Pepper welcomes and answers a number of questions in some phone shops of Softbank Mobile and recently it started to handle queues in the Nespresso shops.**

This robot, having the size of a child, has animated eyes and comes with a vocabulary of 4500 words. At this time, Pepper is able to speak English, French, Japanese and Spanish. Aldebaran announced that in the coming months new languages will be available.

Pepper has a dozen of sensors: two touch sensors in his hands, three touch sensors on his head, six laser sensors and three sensors in its base to prevent shocks. It also has a tablet on the chest, two cameras and four microphones on the head, has wifi and ethernet connectors.

It uses artificial intelligence connected to a cloud to analyze human expressions, gestures and tone

of voice. Based on the universal emotions (happiness, surprise, anger, sadness and doubt), it analyzes facial expressions, body language and vocabulary. He can interact more sensitively by "guessing" the state you are in and trying to adapt as "empathically" as possible to the speaker.

In addition, Pepper is able to store all the discussions he has had with customers, and is able to spontaneously recognize a client who has already been there before, call him by his name and make an offer based on their previous interactions.

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