

# INNOVATION IN TOURISM? HOW TO TAKE THE SECTOR TO THE NEXT LEVEL



One of the few industries that is always changing and evolving is tourism. The experience of traveling today is completely different from 10 or even 5 years ago and of course, due to the pandemic, more changes are certainly on the horizon. Innovation in tourism is thus essential for all professionals in the sector.

The pace of the industry's evolution is due to the fact that it cannot function without technological advances. While the travel agencies used to play an important role in the sale and promotion of tourist destinations, **nowadays sales strategies involve less investment with a very convenient return in terms of positioning brands globally.**

Besides marketing, the introduction of mobile apps, new private accommodation platforms, global search engines (metasearch engines) and artificial intelligence have forced the entire industry to undergo a constant process of innovation.

## What Is Innovation

But what exactly is 'innovation in tourism'? How is it possible to innovate in an industry that seems to be going faster than us? Why is innovation so relevant for tourism?

By definition, innovation is the constant creation of ideas and solutions that translate into monetizable products, services, or business practices. Why is innovation so important? Because it is the key to making tourism businesses sustainable.

## Profitability

Offering new, improved products and/or services adapted to modern needs by using available technology allows your brand to stand out from the competition. This approach translates into more customers, loyalty and, in the long term, greater financial results.

## Better Public Image

The more innovative a company is, the better it will position itself in its own sector; and the stronger the reputation, the greater reach it will have within its market. An innovative company will be a standard to follow, so making your company a leader in innovation will not only result in new and better customers, but also attract top-quality human resources.

## Technological Innovation in Tourism

There is no better time to talk about technological innovations in tourism than during the pandemic. The crisis caused by COVID-19 has harshly affected hotels, restaurants and tourism businesses, as travel restrictions, lockdowns and the duration of the pandemic have caused millions in losses without a clear recovery scenario ahead. Innovation is the cornerstone to offer added and differentiation value, which not only attracts customers, but also retains them.

## Internet of Things

The internet of things (IoT) refers to the connection that can be established between users and objects/devices. A good example of IoT used in tourism is one of Hilton hotels: the chain is currently developing a mobile application from which all guests will be able to manage the details regarding their stay, from check-in to room service.

## **Design Thinking**

In the same way that you can use IoT to your advantage, it is also important to consider design thinking when developing tools for clients. What is the goal? To obtain a design from a multidisciplinary team that takes into account the actual needs and challenges of users.

## **Video Mapping in Restaurants**

Somewhat peculiar, but the idea of projecting 3D animations on restaurant tables with the intention of making the wait more enjoyable has garnered the attention of diners. Will it increase sales? Not at first, but diners will certainly enjoy an unforgettable experience that will be shared with their acquaintances, which can then translate into more clients in the medium or long term.

## **User Experience**

User experience consists of designing and planning products or services while thinking about the feelings that you want to awaken in users.

## **Innovation Also Means Having an Eye for Details**

Small details make the difference between a good product or service and an excellent one, and the tourism industry is proof of this: a coffee served with homemade vegetable milk, a hotel that uses Alexa or Google as a host assistant, an accommodation that communicates with clients via messaging apps to avoid human contact (very convenient during pandemic times); ideas abound and their execution is what allows us to stay competitive.

## **Gamification**

Another innovative strategy with proven results is gamification. It consists of introducing game dynamics in apps or products in order to make the user experience more enjoyable, simple and unforgettable.

Lastly, **keep in mind that when it comes to innovation, there is no magic formula.** What we do know is that by striving for excellence through change and improvement, companies can stand out from the rest and will be able to push forward even in times of crisis.

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