



Fiturtech'14
Foro de Innovación y Tecnología Turística **iTH**

Travel & Technology: What's Next
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL MEDIA MEETING

#TECHTRAVELTRENDS

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FITUR: **RECINTO FERIAL JUAN CARLOS I** (MADRID, SPAIN)

DISCOVERING ITMM

ITMM is an opportunity to gather key travel media to analyze trends, technologies and changes technology may bring to tourism. Fitur 2014 hosted the first edition of ITMM, where experts and journalists from different countries offered their views, opinions and insight about how travel industry will evolve in the next years, and the role technology is playing in this evolution.

ITMM took place at FITUR, within Fiturtech, on Thursday January 23rd, 2014. The main findings, conclusions and contributions of ITMM 2014 participants are summarized in this final paper, under an [Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported Creative Commons license](#)

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WHO IS WHO AT ITMM2014

Who came to ITMM2014? Let's take a look:

FLORENCE KACI, PHOCUSWRIGHT

CARLOS BECKER, PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER, VODAFONE SPAIN

DEBATES

JASON CLAMPET (SKIFT) - ÁNGEL JIMÉNEZ DE LUIS (EL MUNDO-OCHO LEGUAS)

MARIAH ASSUNCÃO (EYEFORTRAVEL) - ANDRÉS FDEZ. RUBIO (EL PAÍS-EL VIAJERO)

PATRICK MAYOCK (HOTELNEWSNOW) - DAVID PLACER (O2B)

KEVIN MAY (TNOOZ) - JUAN DANIEL NÚÑEZ (TECNOHOTEL)

TECH2COME

EDUARDO ARCOS, ALT1040 - HYPERTEXTUAL

DEFINING DEBATE TOPICS FOR ITMM2014

The topics covered and analyzed in this paper were chosen by speakers who pointed out four specific trends that will define travel industry practices, from a technological point of view.

Topics were classified under four categories that corresponds to the four main stages in which technology have a say in travel process, either for travel, transport, accommodation, ancillaries or for destinations:





Plan & Decide: EyeforTravel - El País The Mobile Booking Pattern

Mariah Assuncao, Global Conference Director at EyeforTravel, and Andrés Fernández Rubio, Editor-in-Chief at El País-El Viajero, break down the steps travelers' follow during the travel booking process in mobile devices and propose strategies that tourism companies could carry out to maximize sales and client loyalty.

According to [EyeforTravel's Social Media and Mobile in Travel](#), **63% more travel suppliers saw mobile booking volumes increase between 2011 and 2013**, with this increase of mobile in the travel industry, travel brands now, more than ever, need to have an effective mobile strategy to remain competitive. Mobile-optimized sites are now considered business critical and some metasearch operators will not aggregate brands that lack this functionality.

But what are the advantages and what are the challenges companies are facing when placing a lucrative mobile strategy?

Key industry players have brought up several topics related to this issue, from a bypass point of view, the discussion will be aimed at understanding what can be done to improve and increase sales in different platforms.

One of the main issues the travel industry is currently facing comes from having a mobile-optimized site that will function across all platforms, and maintaining the customer active in your brand across all channels.

How can you ensure a smooth transition and guarantee sales when the consumer navigates from the desktop, tablet and smartphone?

According to EyeforTravel's research, **one of the main solutions for this industry problem is maintaining a seamless brand experience across all devices**, which can be improved by optimizing various social media and marketing channels that will result on keeping your consumer engaged with your brand and avoid dropped baskets along the way.

Capitalizing last-minute booking

Brands can also capitalize on the last minute booking trend throughout mobile; the mobile consumer is rarely without their phone and can go from contemplating the idea of using hotel accommodation to booking, paying and checking in all on the same device in a matter of minutes.

According to EyeforTravel's report, **mobile is powering the last-minute segment through geo-location technology. 45.3% of travelers would make a last-minute booking on a tablet up to a week before travel, while 43.8% would do so on a mobile.**

To what extent are last minute bookings throughout mobile a myth or reality? How can that impact travel companies' revenue?

In fact, **the last minute booking trend is cost effective and the revenue stream can generate profit if done in an internally optimized and hard hitting manner.** The point that should be carefully analyzed on this topic is: are you optimizing your product or devaluating it by lowering the price for last minute mobile booking? In a business model that works as a last minute booking engine and cannot forecast pricing that can be effective, **but in consolidated revenue forecasting business models the last minute booking trend could butcher your existing price clientele.**

Servicing the customer throughout mobile is essential to increase brand engagement and guarantee return sales, companies can now remediate problems or offer better solutions to the customer whilst they are in their journey.

Whilst providing a better customer service, the results can be an increase in consumer loyalty and the jack pot to upsell and cross sell in that platform. But what are the best ways of doing this? And how can big or small companies capitalize on this trend? Is building native apps the solution?

Companies such as the Spanish airline Vueling and the American airline JetBlue have been investing millions on features such as real time flight updates according to the clients' geo-location, with that they have been getting staggering results and positive feedback on customer service.

There are minor changes you can make to an app design and functionality, such as mobile check in and customer review, that will satisfy the consumer and minimize the companies hassle, therefore, increasing loyalty, revenue, and brand credibility.

These upcoming mobile trends are closely related to the travel consumer behavior. **Getting a better understanding of how has the growth of mobile affected the industry and knowing what is necessary to remain competitive in a multi-platform market,** are now essentials know-hows for having an effective mobile strategy.



Move (Around): HotelNewsNow-02b Social media for travel: the ultimate client service channel

Patrick Mayock, Editor-in-Chief at Hotel News Now, and David Placer, journalist at 02b.com examine new trends in social media for travel, focusing in its potential for client service and customer care purposes, in a time when immediacy is taken for granted by customers and travelers.

What would you do if an airline lost your luggage? Write an angry email? Make an irate phone call? Or shout your disdain from the digital mountaintop?

Twitter user Hasan Syed took the latter approach when British Airways lost his bags on a recent trip to Europe. He initially tweeted, "@British_Airways is the worst airline ever. Lost my luggage & can't even track it down. Absolutely pathetic #britishairways," adding "Thanks for ruining my EU business trip #britishairways. I shouldn't have flown @BritishAirways @British_Airways. Never flying with you again."

When British Airways failed to respond, Syed amplified his ire through a digital megaphone, paying \$1,000 for a sponsored tweet to @BritishAirways' 300,000 Twitter followers. His simple message: "Don't fly @BritishAirways. Their customer service is horrendous."

While Syed's persistence and ambition is something of an anomaly, his use of Twitter as a customer service tool is not. **More and more consumers are using the 140-character tool and other social media platforms as customer service channels, eschewing the more traditional telephone calls or face-to-face interactions.**

More than one in 10 respondents to a recent [eDigitalResearch survey](#) said they expect to be able to speak to a brand representative via social media. A report from the [Aberdeen Group](#) corroborated the findings from the other side of the customer service chain: 12% of service requests originated in the social sphere, with that number projected to have risen to 22% this year.

Companies have responded, dedicating extra resources to their marketing departments and its social media subset. And the results largely have proven positive: **contact through social media is the “quickest and most reliable way to get in contact with a brand and currently the only channel that will guarantee a reply to your query and complaint,” according to the [eDigitalResearch report](#).**

The motivation driving those response rates are as much a mark of proactive customer engagement as it is a fear-based avoidance of a Syed-type customer nightmare. As the eDigitalResearch report points out, "this is only because this form of communication is so open and public."

American Express came to similar conclusions in its [2012 Global Customer Service Barometer](#), which claimed that “consumers who have used social media for service wield the greatest amount of influence. They tell significantly more people about their service experiences, and say they’d spend 21% more with companies who deliver great service—compared to 13% on average.”

Similarly, technology research company Gartner found that a failure to respond to a social media user can lead to a 15% increase in the brand’s churn rate. And companies that ignore customers on social media have the same negative perceptions as companies that ignore customer’s email or phone.

Platforms and devices

The largest social media network is still Facebook, with more than 1.2 billion users who generate approximately 4.5 billion “likes” each day. Video channel YouTube follows with approximately 1 billion users who watch 1 billion videos per day on average.

From there, the numbers drop almost in half. Twitter counts approximately 500 million users who send 500 million tweets per day. Rounding out the top five are Google+ (343 million users) and LinkedIn (238 million users), according to research from the Technology Services Industry Association.

Nearly all major players in the hospitality space have a presence on at least one the major platforms—and in many cases a very large presence. Hilton Hotels & Resorts, for example, has more than 1.1 million likes (and was the first major hotel chain to cross the 1-million plateau).

There exist a plethora of social media platforms beyond the heavy hitters of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, each its own mouthpiece for an army of users who can now connect on a 24/7 basis.

Complementing such growth is the steady increase of mobile devices. There were nearly 700 million smartphones with Internet access as of 2012, according to Euromonitor International. That number is expected to reach approximately 1.5 billion by 2017.

The ultimate client service channel?

Will social media emerge as the ultimate client service channel? The rise in incidence would certainly support that argument.

One example of an exception that proves the rule: Ryanair announces the corporate twitter account (with a surprising joke “we don’t charge if you follow us”) but some weeks later the company decided not to interact with people, in fact, they do not answer anything. Conversely, there are examples like KLM that offers you the social profiles of the people that will be besides you on the airplane: this example shows how to take good advantage of social media to offer new services.

Feedback is key, as well as sharing quality content, since this kind of information will have a very important role during the planning process, because social networks are actually influencing consumers in deciding where to go on holidays: in fact, according to [Four Pillar Hotels](#), tourists don’t trust on TV or newspapers ads (47%), they rely more on their Facebook friends (52%) or on other consumer reviews (70%).

This data supports other fact, web search on Google (including hotel and destinations) are decreasing while social media use and search in specialized websites such as TripAdvisor or Expedia have increased.

Taking this into consideration, destinations are exploring new ways to use social media to promote its attractions. For the first time, Madrid is inviting Asian bloggers and app developers to get to know and discover the city, instead of specialized journalists. In Korea, for example, there are a lot of social apps, in which tourists and expat Koreans help other nationals to plan and enjoy their trips abroad, reducing communication barriers by adapting all relevant information to their needs and language.

Cases as this last one demonstrate **digital consumers demand tools that allow them to solve issues on-the-go, especially when they are in a non-familiar environment. This is a unique opportunity for travel companies**, since travelers constantly interact with them by any means available. **Optimizing these communication channels helps to increase customer satisfaction, but also leaves a recognizable trace throughout the Internet, that contributes to improve social recognition, corporate reputation, branding and, consequently, their ROI.**

That's the reason why airlines and hoteliers are considering social media is not the only way to support this increasingly digital customer service exchange, since **companies can link themselves to travelers through their own devices**. For example, hoteliers are leveraging the rise of smartphones and tablets by creating new applications, or apps, to reach guests—

both on and off property, complementing the social media policy with a broader e-customer policy.

Marriott Hotels, for instance, has a mobile app that allows guests to check into their room and pick up a pre-programmed keycard at expedited mobile check-in desks. Hilton Worldwide's Conrad brand launched a Conrad Concierge app that acts, as the name implies, as a full-service concierge, allowing guests to order room service, book spa treatments and choose what kind of bath amenities they want stocked in their bathrooms. And W Hotels' app features streaming music in addition to standard booking and concierge services. The list goes on.

Even though the nature of these apps vary, the consistent thread is that they allow for hotels to stay connected with guests, and viceversa. Whether through social media or tech-enable apps on a slew of devices, **such is the level of personal interaction that is quickly becoming the hallmark of customer service in the new digital age.**



Stay: Tnooz-Tecnohotel Selling my hotel in an ultra-connected market

Kevin May, Editor-in-Chief at Tnooz and Juan Daniel Núñez, Editor-in-chief at Tecnohotel, suggest how to make the most of technology to increase bookings, sales and revenue in an ultra-connected market, in which channels grow as technology becomes more complex and offers more possibilities to learn from customers and design niche specialist travel services and products.

For hoteliers, increasing bookings and engagement with this new hyper-connected consumer has become one of the main challenges in terms of marketing and distribution. **The usage of metasearch, social media and mobile apps before, during and after travelling has multiplied the number of different tools in which users can interact with hotels and vice-versa.** In this context, it has become essential for hotels to optimize their online presence in search engines, metasearch, social media and mobile.

The hotel website

The job starts at the hotel website. Considering that one of the purposes of online marketing is to sell through hotels' own channels, their websites have to provide the same services and features than most of the big OTAs do. **It is critical to include a booking engine that will allow users to check availability,**

book a particular date and complete transaction in as few steps as possible.

Website speed and engaging content will complete the equation. **It's very likely that any future costumer will abandon a hotel website if it takes more than one second to load.** Also, the importance of visuals should be a major priority, including high quality pictures and videos of the property. Taking into account that most of hotel potential customers will leave the website without booking a room, hotel could consider including remarketing services, which will also help them understand their website strengths and weaknesses.

Metasearch

Metasearch is meant to be the big thing this year, with Google and TripAdvisor trying to reach the costumer in every single step of the travel cycle. Soon, users will have the chance to search, compare prices and book through and OTA, hotel chain or independent hotel without leaving one single app.

Setting a whole strategy in these channels, whether it is Hotel Price Ads or TripConnect, will allow you to gain same visibility as OTAs, display your prices and lead users to your own channel, as well as having a good visibility on mobile, which would be something quite difficult on your own.

Social media

Measuring ROI and success in social media has become an obsession for many travel marketers. Considering that hotels will

have presence in social media and users will review them there whether their managers like it or not, there is no question hotels should take care of their online reputation.

Social Media must become an extension of hotels CRMs, a way to interact in a fast and personal way with travelers and customers. Also, the chance of selling straight through social media should not be underestimated, including a booking engine on Facebook page, for example.

Mobile

More and more, users will be planning, booking and managing their travel on tablets and smartphones. **Expecting users to carry apps from 20 different hotels in their phones is more than impossible**, so an independent hotel, building its own app face an almost unattainable challenge. **Hotel presence in metasearch apps and geo-targeting tools will be critical**.

Also, there is a big opportunity to reach consumers through mobile while they're staying at your hotel. Plus, this will give you a chance to improve upselling and cross-selling, as well and receiving important guest satisfaction information right away.

Big Data

Every single data hotels get about theirs clients through all four channels mentioned above will allow them to shape a personalized product, which is basic for engagement, considering new customers are less loyal than ever to hotel brands are most of them are basically price-moved.

No one has come up with a standard definition for Big Data, but **every hotelier should consider adding new technologies that will help them get a better understanding of their customers in order to contact them in a way that would match their preferences and having the capability to offer the right product and the perfect user, and at the perfect moment.**

In-destination services

A key element of the hotel experience is not only what a hotel provides on-site, but where it sits within its location. **Hoteliers have an incredible opportunity to outline things to do in a destination, provide booking services for such products and act as virtual concierges for guests.**

This can be achieved through a **combination of the mobile services and Big Data noted above, giving managers the chance to "sell" the destination and its environs to potential guests ahead of a booking but also during act as a "helping hand" through a stay.**

"Going niche" with marketing

So-called "Tribes" or pockets of consumers are easier to reach than ever before, primarily because they often group together in certain areas of the web and behave in search in the same.

Targeting these groups is achieved through long tail marketing using keywords on Google (and other engines!) and by pro-actively reaching out through social channels such as Facebook, blogs and forums.



Enjoy: Skift-El Mundo Getting local in global destinations: Tech4Travelers

Jason Clampet, Editor-in-Chief at Skift and Ángel Jiménez de Luis, technology and travel writer from El Mundo-OchoLeguas, explain how technology allows hotels to customize tourism products and services and to offer local and unique experiences in global destinations, making the most of what makes each destination authentic and unrepeatable.

The golden era of the classic travel guides seems to be coming to an end, as **more savvy guest are demanding a different kind of experience when traveling**. They do so empowered by the easy access to local information thanks to mobile apps and the rise of social networks.

The classic top attractions and must visit lists are now competing with small venues and events that, before, were only known by locals.

This trend is taking many faces:

- **Hotels partnering with local venues and small businesses to give a taste of the city** -or even the neighborhood- to their guest.

- **Collaboration with local artists and chefs for in-house events** that will not only attract visitors but also the local community.
- **A more visible presence in social media**, not just for customer relations but as a way to reach to the community.

For big publishing firms this new reality forces a fast change of strategy. This year, for example, Lonely Planet bought the startup TouristEye, a social recommendation engine for travelers. The contents of the Frommer's guides are now embedded in Google Maps and Google Plus and its being complemented with local information gathered by the Google City Experts program, an initiative that uses volunteers to hunt for city insight.

Addressing these needs, however, can be tricky for the hotels, especially for large established brands with a very consistent image across locations. **Curating the best of the local scene requires a great degree of specialization and help from people with deep knowledge of current trends.**

Hotels as “curators” of the local scene

But for hotels, this trend comes with great opportunities. **By leveraging the local scene they will be able to create what more and more travelers of all ages refer to as an “authentic” travel experience and, in the process, better communicate their own brand and identity or create a sense of “uniqueness” even in the context of a global brand.**

Some ideas currently being explored give us a glimpse of the possibilities. **Collaboration with local artists and chefs for in-**

house events, for example, that not only attract visitors but also the local community.

A good example of this is the [Ace Hotel: in their New York location a gallery space welcomes installations by artists, designers, photographers and collaborators](#) like Allied Works, MoMA PS1, Jaimie Warren, the Impossible Project, Chase Jarvis, Fifty and Fifty: The State Mottos Project or Ricky Powell. Thanks to it, the Ace has quickly become a well-known spot among the New York art and fashion world.

The [Wythe Hotel](#), in Brooklyn, transformed an abandoned cooperage into a 70-room space where local artist have also left a significant footprint. A lot of the furniture in the hotel has been made by neighboring workshops or designed by Brooklyn-based artists. The restaurant is led by restaurateur Andrew Tarlow, also famous for his Brooklyn establishments Marlow & Sons and Diner. Tarlow sums up the experience of the Wythe hotel in one sentence: "It's a grown-up version of what's happening in Brooklyn".

For certain hotel brands, this could even be the defining quality of its existence. It's the case, for example, of [Starwood's W line](#), a collection of urban hotels born in the 90s that has always been characterized by its edgy look and custom furnishing created by local designers.

Focusing on the local can redefine the very role of the hotel, transforming it from a place to sleep to a particular set of eyes that allows the guest to experience the destination with a different perspective. [Four Seasons, for example, asked its concierge team in New York to list their top 10 things to do in the](#)

[city on their day off](#), and with the answers created 12 separate itineraries for guests to try. The hotel has also created an app with local information on various destinations.

In Spain, Único Hotel has followed a similar plan, creating free apps (Guías Punto) that work as a local guide for the cities of [Madrid](#) and [Barcelona](#). The apps are updated frequently and include numerous trendy spots that are not usually seen in conventional travel guides. It has been a success, with tens of thousands of downloads since launch.

Curating the best of the local scene requires a great degree of specialization and help from people with deep knowledge of current trends. This usually translates into a diverse concierge team that not only knows of the best or more luxurious spots in the area, but also what kind of places will give the guests the idea of being in-the-known, and the feeling that they are discovering a city in a way that sets them apart from their peers. Intercontinental was one of the first brands that took advantage of this through the "[In the Know Experiences](#)", promoting local places in the surroundings of the property but it's a growing approach by many brands, and the only one likely to engage the customers going forward.



Tech2Come: ALT1040 - Hypertextual Technology should be invisible

Wearable devices, robotics, nanotechnology, Machine-to-Machine, advance the future technology innovations and the astonishing gadgets to come and how they will impact the way people relate to the world.

Twelve years after Minority Report, a science fiction film directed by Steven Spielberg, based on the short story of the same name by Philip K. Dick which happens in a fictional 2054 future where the police can predict crimes, we are posed with a question: is our future going to look like that?

In the 70s' Dieter Rams, tired of looking how companies were approaching industrial design on new technology he decided to write what he thought was the ten principles for good design.

He basically thought obsolescence was something to avoid at all costs, and the importance of form following function, and not the other way around.

There are four principles that are especially sound today:

- 1. Good design is innovative.**
- 2. Good design makes a product useful**
- 3. Good design is long lasting**
- 4. Good design is as little design as possible**

Thirty years after Dieter Rams wrote his 10 principles of design, most of the biggest brands and companies are designing their products with utility and function in mind, making the tech itself disappear.

This is happening in almost all aspects of technology today. From smartphones to tablets, new TVs, household equipment, laptops and even software; user's interfaces are simplifying to make room for content, and to let the user focus on what is really important.

So we might not have a future like Minority Report where you have to move your whole body to open a file or watch a video. Technology is really useful when it gets out of the way, when it doesn't look like technology. We are probably looking at a future more like Spike Jonze's Her. Where the most useful user interface and artificial intelligence ever created is simply invisible.

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CONTACTING ITMM

Instituto Tecnológico Hotelero

Ana María Márquez

Telf. +34 91 417 12 46

Orense 32, Entreplanta, 28020 Madrid (Spain)

amarquez@ithotelero.com

