New consumer research reveals how technology can boost traveler confidence and accelerate demand

Tuesday 17 November, 2020

Global traveler study commissioned by Amadeus discovers key differences across countries and demographics to help the travel industry and governments address top concerns about traveling in the next 12 months

As 2020 comes to an end, leaders in governments and key industries are working to determine how people can safely return to work, particularly in travel and tourism where jobs in hospitality, airlines, cruises, travel agencies, car rentals, rideshares, events, attractions and so much more, accounted for 1 in 10 jobs in the world pre-COVID. (Source: World Travel & Tourism Council)

To gain more insight into how the travel industry and governments can work to rebuild traveler confidence, Amadeus, a global leader in travel technology, commissioned research to learn more about traveler's top concerns and what types of technology would help travelers feel safe and comfortable enough to travel and help spur recovery of the travel sector.

Informed by over 6,000 travelers across France, Germany, India, Singapore, UK and US, the study found that technology plays a crucial role in supporting recovery, as over 4 in 5 (84%) travelers said technology would increase their confidence to travel in the next 12 months by addressing concerns around mixing with crowds, social distancing and physical touchpoints.

When asked about technologies or technology experiences that would increase confidence to travel in the next year or make them more likely to travel, survey results show:

- 42% of respondents say mobile applications that provide on-trip notifications to inform about localized outbreaks and changes to government guidance would help boost their confidence to travel.
- 42% of travelers cite contactless and mobile payment options such as Google Pay, PayPal and Venmo as key to reducing incidences of physical contact throughout the journey.
- 34% of travelers who have concerns about travelling in light of COVID, say biometrics (i.e. facial or voice recognition) that enable check-in, pass-through security and boarding without the need for physical checks would make them more likely to travel.
- 33% of travelers agree they would like one universal digital traveler identification on their phone that includes all necessary documentation and immunity status, that meant they only had to prove it once.

Notably, the survey found that technology receptiveness and preferences differ by country and demographic, underscoring the importance of personalization in gaining traveler trust. Insights include:

- Almost half (47%) of Baby Boomers said they would need to be able to socially or physically distance throughout the journey in order to feel comfortable travelling, compared to less than 3 in 10 (27%) of Generation Z.
- Over half (52%) of travelers in Singapore who have concerns about travelling in light of COVID selected contactless experiences at hotels as a technology that would make them more likely to travel, while almost half of Indian travelers who have concerns about travelling in light of COVID(47%) selected mobile applications that inform them of the destination city's safety measures.
- For French travellers, automated cleaning processes (36%) and contactless and mobile payments (34%) were the most popular of the suggested technology options.
- A quarter (25%) of UK travelers and just over a quarter (26%) of US travelers said they'd most like technology to reduce the need for them to have physical documents. Additionally, 3 in 10 German and UK travelers (30% each) said they'd most like technology to minimize their physical contact with others.

The top five things travelers would most like technology to do when thinking about travel is:

- Reduce queues and congestion in public spaces (38%)

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- Minimize face-to-face or physical contact with others (31%)
- Protect financial data and personal information (31%)
- Notify in advance when there is a delay (29%)
- Ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of national test, track and trace programs (28%)

Ultimately, as stakeholders work to rethink travel, survey results show that the top five ways to build traveler confidence under current conditions include:

- Provide access to flexible change, cancellations policies and payment terms to avoid losing money (39%)
- Limit the number of passengers on a plane (38%)
- An ability for travelers to socially or physically distance themselves throughout the journey (36%)
- Having visibility to and assurance of sanitization, hygiene and safety measures in hotels and accommodations (36%)
- Effective test, track and trace programs in place (34%)

“This research provides a source of optimism for the industry as many of the travelers’ concerns can be addressed by technology available now, at every stage of a traveler’s experience. Whether it is new mobile applications, biometrics or contactless solutions, we need to explore together as an industry and with governments how best to accelerate adoption if we are to encourage global travel, which is a major driver of global prosperity,” says Christophe Bousquet, Chief Technology Officer, Amadeus.

Bousquet continues: “This research also shows that certain areas, such as social distancing and hygiene, remain a cause for concern for travelers during the journey itself – and we will continue to work side by side with our customers in order to increase awareness around the safety and sanitization measures that have been introduced. For example, recent research from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) has shown the extremely low rates of transmissions onboard aircraft due to cabin air filtering systems and other protection measures in place. By giving travelers easy access to the information they need to be assured of their safety while traveling, and giving them tools that address their individual preferences, we can build traveler confidence and speed up recovery.”

Stefan Ropers, President, Strategic Growth Businesses, Amadeus added: “From finding suitable destinations to going through airports and paying for travel services, today’s travelers want reassurance that their journey will be stress free, prioritizing safety and hygiene as well as experiences that meet their needs. This requires overcoming industry siloes to build a better experience by connecting the travel ecosystem, for example, via digital identity management, linking every step of the traveler journey.”

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Research methodology

The survey was conducted in late September 2020 by global insight-driven research firm Censuswide to explore traveler sentiment in light of COVID-19, how expectations and demands have changed and what can be put in place to strengthen traveler trust and confidence. The findings were based on 6,074 re-spondents residing in France, Germany, India, Singapore, UK and US who have traveled abroad in the last 18 months (with a minimum of 1,000 respondents per market). For reference: Generation Z = 16-24 year olds; Millennials = 25-39 year olds; Generation X = 40-54 year olds; Boomers = 55-74 year olds; 75+ Silent Generation

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