

Guest Sweets: How Digital Innovation Is Transforming Hospitality CX

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Every time we visit a hotel, frequent a restaurant or hop on a plane, we as customers see evidence that the hospitality world is morphing thanks to digital technologies. Marriott hotels [are experimenting](#) with voice activation so that you can ask an in-room assistant for tourist advice. McDonald's is [renovating](#) some restaurants to include digital menus and self-order kiosks. And [Wi-Fi on airplanes](#) is no longer an exercise in extreme patience. But this is just the tip of the iceberg.

This summer, OZ is hosting its first travel and hospitality event, which is expected to draw approximately 100 attendees. This is exciting because an event of this size indicates an explosion in industries that have heard the gospel about customer experience (CX) and are living it through digital innovation.

The OZ Travel & Hospitality CXDX Summit, on June 20 in Miami, will feature leaders from airlines, hotels, cruises, restaurants and wineries who will discuss how they have enriched their customer experience through digital services and solutions — and where they are going from here. It's going to be a whirlwind day packed with tips on how attendees in any hospitality industry can implement digital innovation practices in order to vastly improve CX and drive revenue growth.

Why have we decided now is the time to hold this summit? The answer is simple. While we have seen an explosion of exciting new technologies used in hospitality over recent years, we believe we are at the very beginning of a new era. Hospitality is on the cusp of being forever changed in a way that brings CX to the forefront of action, transaction and

design. OZ is thrilled to usher in this new age by introducing companies to what they can be doing now, how to prepare for what is soon to come — and how these digital technologies will help them grow and change over the next decade. Here are a few key areas where digital technology in hospitality is really going to make a difference:

Personalization: Customers willingly and eagerly share personal data with their favorite hotels, and this is benefiting them in myriad ways. Using artificial intelligence, resorts can determine whether a guest is interested in spa treatments or golf packages based on past website searches — and then preemptively offer these perks accordingly. Hotels are experimenting with [facial recognition technology](#) to make a guest's stay smoother (quick check-in, no room key and charges sent instantly to room bill just by a glimpse of your pretty mug). Restaurant servers might greet a patron by name and offer her a glass of her favorite wine based on past orders. And when guests check into their cruise cabin, they just [might find](#) it's been heated to the temperature they last set it to on an earlier cruise.

Communication: There are a plethora of apps that keep guests connected with what is happening every step of the way, from booking a luxury experience to checking out or disembarking. We're going to see it become easier and easier for customers to communicate with their companies of choice, with one other and with the outside world as more [tech ounes](#), [location-based services](#) and [mobile hubs](#) are developed to make the world a seamless bubble of interconnectivity.

Service automation: We're moving quickly beyond [Pepper the Humanoid](#) robot, folks! We've now got robots that flip burgers, make lattes and even [act as a bellhop](#). Guests don't incredibly cool tech-loaded [wearables](#) and [RFID tags](#) that allow for all sorts of cool benefits like GPS, cash-free purchasing and keyless, hands-free room entry. And increasingly there are voice-activated assistants provided to rooms or dining tables so that your every whim or order can be collected — and hopefully fulfilled — almost instantly. We're going to be seeing a lot of new apps on our mobile devices and [chatbots](#) that will help you along the way in your travels, whether it be booking a room that provides beachside drinks, setting up a massage at your hotel post-check-in or making a dinner reservation.

Marketing: A lot of this boils down to reaching the right customers and encouraging the current ones to share their opinions word of mouth (well, over social media). Frankly I love seeing targeted ads from my favorite hotels letting me know about a new [virtual reality tour](#) that allows me to test the waters before plunging. And if a restaurant or airline reaches out to me with an announcement about an event I've previously enjoyed, I'm much more likely to push a couple keys to return to their websites. Target marketing makes for happier customers who receive a seamless individualized experience that they feel was built for them from the very beginning.

I look forward to learning more about these topics and others at our summit in June. [Click here](#) if you're interested in joining our digital tech leaders at an unforgettable event!