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How Will You Experience Innovation?

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About the Author



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How Will You Experience Innovation?



How do you define hospitality and how do you think the hospitality industry should be perceived?

Hospitality is a constantly evolving industry that is the marrow of society. Individually and collectively, we desire human interaction. The hospitality industry provides the venues and opportunities for us to have experiences we value and long remember. Hospitality, however, is in a state of transition and the shift can be dramatic when it's encountered. We are no longer limited to providing service. Today, the growing expectation is that we are orchestrating experiences. This demands a deep understanding of our targeted audiences and the longing to surprise and delight – creating those unexpected moments where expectations are exceeded, and people feel cared for genuinely. This is what experience orchestration is all about.

From an internal perspective, we can lead experience orchestration – a next-step approach to customer experience design and delivery. This necessitates a culture where team members feel empowered to cater to individuals and not apply one-size-fits-all hospitality. As described by American marketing author Philip Kotler, we operate in the context where five generations of customers, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha simultaneously co-exist. They collectively form an

extremely complex customer landscape. Understanding that no brand can be for everyone, it's essential to identify and prioritize audiences and then understand unmet or early-stage customer expectations. This forms the platform that personalized experiences are built upon – the orchestration of meaningful touchpoints that matter. This doesn't happen without significant effort. From hiring team members with high emotional intelligence to consistent training to a customer-first attitude, effective experience orchestration always begins internally.

The reason to invest in customer experience is simple. Exceptional experiences influence behavior. They stir emotion. They motivate engagement and foster brand loyalty. They can also reinforce differentiation and increase competitive barriers. In today's YOLO (you only live once) mindset, audiences often respond positively when the ordinary becomes extraordinary. By making the effort to truly know your audiences and understand their wants, you have the chance to stand out and build lasting relationships based on trust. This strategy can be effective for any customer-facing business or industry.

What does experience innovation mean to you?

Experience innovation means going well beyond the role of providing service. It means creating experiences that form relationships – between people, and between people and brands. The role of experience innovation must become fundamental to everyone within hospitality. It is the best way to maximize value, earn, and retain customer loyalty, and ensure sustainable growth.

This hospitality evolution is well timed as the Traveler Tribes 2033 Report by Amadeus stated that more than 50% of respondents think travel and hospitality experiences will be significantly different in 2033. Those businesses who choose to put the emphasis on customer experience hold the potential to prosper.

Experience innovation is taking many forms. Accor is working on expanding its brand experience for customers. The augmented hospitality hotel group is partnering with Citroen and JC Decaux, with the goal of delivering robotic transportation for guests.

Le Bristol Paris launched a collection of 11 NFTs (non-fungible tokens) that allows its owners to unlock exclusive and unique offers including dishes and cocktails not listed on the venue's menus as well as access to private events.

DWorld took to the Metaverse to promote the Principality of Monaco as a destination. It created personalized immersive virtual experiences for people to explore the small country to increase awareness and motivate travel.

Innovation related to technological advancement can offer benefits including initial novelty, streamlined planning for customers, greater backend efficiencies, and access to

endless amounts of consumer data, but it is not without concerns. Customer privacy, cybersecurity, dramatically increased levels of online communication, and the risk of impersonalizing experiences all could limit the effectiveness of technology or its adoption.

It's also essential not to tie experience innovation exclusively to technological advancement. True innovation is based on having the courage to stop, look at the way we are doing things in the context of what our customers crave, and be proactive in thinking in new ways. Innovations to enhance an experience may be grounded in technology, but they may also be adjustments to the way we communicate or enhance human interaction.

What do you think the future of events and event planning looks like and how will this reflect experience innovation?

The future of events will increasingly rely on the use of technology and the way we orchestrate the customer journey in real and digital dimensions. The use of AI inputs will help companies scale up their capacity to deliver customized experiences, from venue selection to better planning management, and therefore provide space for creativity and innovation. Using these advancements, customers will increasingly expect authentic one-on-one approaches to delivering upon their expectations.

AI has been a core topic at professional meetings across the globe as it may deliver greater potential for CX enhancement. The Traveler Tribes 2033 Report by Amadeus, however, indicates hospitality and tourism AI faces a paradox: while 60.6% of consumers feel confident AI can help plan experiences, 50.7% have serious concerns about AI for this application. The limited trust customers can have in AI relates to the psychological dimension that protects the need for human interaction. AI needs to embrace this psychology in order not to alienate a significant portion of the population.

To date, AI has proven to be a helpful tool in hospitality and events by optimizing administrative tasks such as transcription of meeting discussions in real time with [otter.ai](#), or creative support to organize thoughts with a writing assistant, [audiopen.ai](#), launched by Cvent. ChatGPT may be a more controversial tool as its use requires a constant analytical review of prompts and responses by a human being.

In perspective, we must align AI advancement with consumer behavior and carefully define frameworks for functional use. Simply put, AI is no replacement for human interaction. While brands will be focusing on translating core values into comprehensive customer experiences, AI will be an integral part of this process. The key will be implementing artificial intelligence intelligently.

What essential steps should everyone within the hospitality industry, regardless of their role, take to continue to evolve perceptions and value of hospitality?

It is important for everyone in hospitality to become fully aware of the role we are playing in building relationships. To support this, we must also have self-awareness of our personal leadership style. Internal organizational culture is paramount, regardless of size, ownership, or location of the hospitality venue. Providing space for and encouraging the self-expression of peers and involving everyone in the co-creation process can be done at any managerial level and will help to move hospitality forward.

Considering the transversal character of the tourism industry, this recommendation can also be fully transposable to other players in the value chain. The intertwined relationships existing between hospitality providers create a solid base for common action built under the experience innovation umbrella. In this sense, all the touchpoints comprising a customer experience, regardless of the business providing hospitality, can be implemented in a manner that is seamless and intuitive to guests.

An example of this can be seen in how the Paris Tourism Board is using a branded communication platform, Paris, je t'aime, to support the Summer Olympics. The goal is to unite the hospitality market and provide a common thread for all guests regardless of the businesses contributing the individualized customer experiences.

Relationship building is common to all successful hospitality venues and events. We must remember to not only focus on establishing our relevance with customers but also actively engage each other within the hospitality industry to maximize our own growth and assure continual experience innovation. Technology can play a supportive role, but the lifeblood of hospitality will always be human connections that demonstrate genuine care.