

## TRAVEL TECH

# Pandemic: Contactless technology on an overdrive

As demand for travel rises, industry must meet it while ensuring passenger safety



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Travel came to a complete standstill last year, in an unprecedented fashion, when the pandemic wreaked havoc not just on the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors, but on the global economy as a whole. All forms of travel including air, rail, road and sea, were suspended, except for aid and humanitarian missions. Governments across the world, imposed lockdowns and curfews to curb movement. None of us are equipped to handle such prolonged isolation - we are social animals after all. This prolonged isolation has had an impact on a lot of us, which includes depression, loss of motivation, general apathy and restlessness.

We would be mistaken if we think that the worst is behind us, because this pandemic is not going away soon. With each new wave, the virus seems to be getting more potent, and the only thing that can protect us is the vaccine. However, as each wave subsides, the latent desire in people to travel seems to intensify. This has led to the phenomenon called 'revenge travel'. People have become more eager to travel after being deprived of it for over a year and a half. Boredom, and the confidence of being fully vaccinated is what's driving this trend. This is the pent-up demand for the first post-pandemic trip, though we still seem to be right in the centre of the pandemic.

With the demand for travel being as strong as ever, the industry needs to facilitate this while also ensuring passenger safety. In

such a scenario, technologies that enable contactless travel becomes critical. This could include contactless check-in through touchless kiosks, touchless boarding leveraging facial recognition, touchless check-in at the hotel, and more. While most of these technologies already exist and are in operation today, it is important to further augment them in order to earn the travellers' trust. From a procedural standpoint, the travel passport which gives details of the vaccination status will also be crucial in enabling safe travel. Certain tech-



**Touchless travel:** Technology must be augmented to gain trust

nologies that are already in use in other industries could potentially be tapped into and scaled for use in the travel and hospitality context. A few use cases would include touchless baggage handling, room service by robots, and more.

If the pandemic does not subside soon, it is quite possible that the industry that's already on an accelerated path to modernisation will attempt to further advance the adoption of these technologies. This will help bring about a higher standard of safety and security in the travel and hospitality space.

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