



Opinion (/Opinion) | Technology (/Technology)

How the coronavirus gave QR codes a major role in travel

By Sooho Choi - Publicis Sapient (<http://www.PublicisSapient.com>) | October 28, 2020

No other industry has been hit harder by the effects of COVID-19 than travel and hospitality.

While we all hoped for a rapid recovery, eight months into the pandemic, there is still no imminent end in sight. Airline passenger numbers are still down, largely due to both quarantine restrictions, reduced flights and traveller concerns over health and safety.

Major cruise lines continue to suspend most, if not all sailings. Although the hotel business is showing early signs of recovery in some geographies such as China and some segments of the dining sector have taken creative measures to continue to welcome guests, recovery has a long way to go.

Throughout all this, an unexpected technology has been instrumental in engaging customers and in helping keep them safe.

Instantly recognizable and universally readable by virtually all modern smartphone cameras, the Quick Response (QR) Code, **[invented by a Japanese engineer in 1994](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QR_code)** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QR_code), had humble beginnings and was originally used to better track car parts across the automotive supply chain.

Elegant and standardized encoding and decoding allow substantial amounts of data to be stored on a simple grid image: Up to 7,089 numbers or 4,296 alphanumeric characters in the latest Version 40 standard.

We have been accustomed to the obvious advantages of QR codes for many years: URLs, payments, site logins, joining Wi-Fi networks, online shopping, etc.

Now, in the wake of a global pandemic, QR codes hold even more potential as they have become an essential and welcomed tool for travel and hospitality brands, in particular, helping the industry get back on its feet in the face of adversity by enabling it to:

Reduce friction and increase engagement

QR codes help to streamline necessary steps in the traveller journey such as checking in, checking bags, going through security, ordering, and paying, just to name a few.

Many of these self-service capabilities eliminate communication breakdown and human error and provide an element of transactional consistency that customers expect. And as the use of QR codes for many common interaction points or transactions become ubiquitous, the human associate is free to engage with the customer on differentiation opportunities.

The airport agent can assist a lost or concerned traveller. The restaurant server may wish to describe a personal experience with a particular dish or understand more thoroughly what allergies the diners may have. The hotel host will be better able to use their time focusing on proactively responding to a guest's needs such as restaurant or activity recommendations.

Regardless of what part of the travel journey a particular brand focuses upon, QR codes can help them focus on providing the unique and tailored experiences that the guest expects.

Enable touchless capabilities

With the amount of data a QR can hold, many content related interactions may not even require an internet connection in the future. How much longer will paper information booklets in airports exist? Many people no longer carry physical membership cards.

Physical restaurant menus are disappearing. Furthermore, QR codes can facilitate ordering and payment. Forced by the pandemic to rethink how physical exchanges are handled, QR codes have made a rapid resurgence filling needs people did not even know they had.

Recent research showed that 78% of respondents indicated contactless capabilities as one of their top three hotel selection criteria.

With health and safety at the forefront of everyone's mind, QR codes quickly give access to information on cleaning procedures and expected customer behaviour protocols.

Beyond content, the layer of safety that contactless capabilities provide is a clear benefit to all parties interacting with each other in public settings.

Speed up

While perhaps counterintuitive at first, in addition to removing friction and supporting contactless capabilities, QR codes can help speed up many of the customer steps in a journey.

Numerous tasks now effectively have zero wait times. With a quick scan of a code, customers can access content on new safety protocols and offerings freeing up the associate. Self-service and automation eliminate the staffing dependency on physical queues enabling more lines to remain open removing the staffing barrier to fully utilize the available infrastructure.

Fewer queues mean social distancing measures can easily be adopted. Even when human interaction is required or desired by the customer, QR codes can help accelerate and facilitate the interaction between the associate and the customer - for example scanning a code to quickly identify a reservation that may require agent assistance.

Furthermore, we've seen QR codes rolled out en masse with the launch of contact tracing apps in the UK and other countries, used by the travel and hospitality industries in tandem.

By easily collecting and storing customer/traveller data, it is easier to locate and contact people who could have been exposed to COVID-19, thus protecting their health & safety, and that of those around them.

Practical benefits

QR code technology is standardized, quick and cost-effective for travel and hospitality brands to implement.

Furthermore, from a marketing perspective, codes allow companies to track data in real-time and gauge interest. By measuring the number of interactions, the success of campaigns can be easily tracked and analysed for preferences and behavioural patterns.

In many ways, the rise in QR code use due to the pandemic has not just increased customers' use of the technology but also forced a level of adoption. It didn't take long for the traveling public to shift their channel to web, mobile, and kiosk check-in for travel.

Similarly, I expect customers to become comfortable with QR code use very quickly and anticipate continued significant adoption. While we are working through the dos and don'ts of the current environment, QR codes work because they are easy and universally recognizable.

Using this technology to reach mass markets is the embodiment of a contactless and frictionless experience in an ever-changing digital plus physical world.

Airline (/Airline)

Airport (/Airport/Airport/16864)

Business Travel (/Business-Travel)

Ground Transportation (/Ground-Transportation)

Hotel (/Hotel)

Private Accommodation (/Private-Accommodation)

Ski (/Ski)

Tour Operator (/Tour-Operator)

Tours and Activities (/Tours-Activities)

Content (/Content/Content/16902)

Customer Relationship Management (/Customer-Relationship-Management)

Cybersecurity (/Cybersecurity)

Hygiene (/Hygiene)

Coronavirus (/Coronavirus)

ALSO ON PHOCUSWIRE

<p>Google plays hardball with ...</p> <p>2 months ago • 1 comment</p> <p>According to a travel executive, Google froze his company's advertising ...</p>	<p>How diversity in travel can move from ...</p> <p>2 months ago • 1 comment</p> <p>During the Diversity in Leadership panel at Phocuswright Europe, ...</p>	<p>How I Got Here, episode 38 - Travis ...</p> <p>2 months ago • 1 comment</p> <p>Travis Katz brought Gogobot through a crowded field of social trip ...</p>	<p>Travel indi to Google</p> <p>13 days ago •</p> <p>Google, it is abused its d position in s</p>
---	---	---	--

0 Comments **Phocuswire** **Disqus' Privacy Policy** **Login** ▾

Recommend **Tweet** **Share** **Sort by Newest** ▾



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS

Name

Be the first to comment.

Subscribe **Add Disqus to your site** **Add DisqusAdd** **Do Not Sell My Data**

More on Technology



(/Marriott-security-breach-fine-reduced)

Marriott has security breach fine reduced to £18M (/Marriott-security-breach-fine-reduced)

News | Technology



(/New-reality-interview-Andres-Fabris-Traxo)

VIDEO: New Reality With... Andres Fabris of Traxo (/New-reality-interview-Andres-Fabris-Traxo)

News | Technology



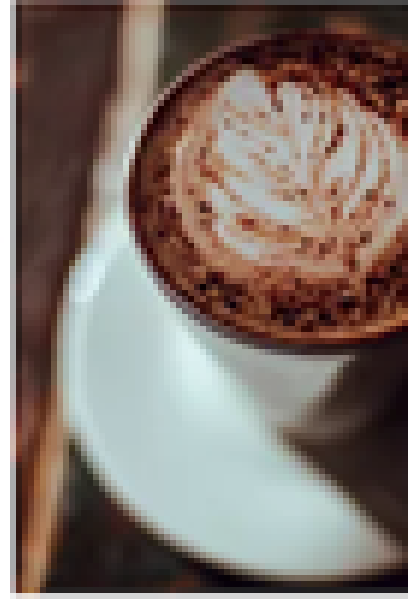
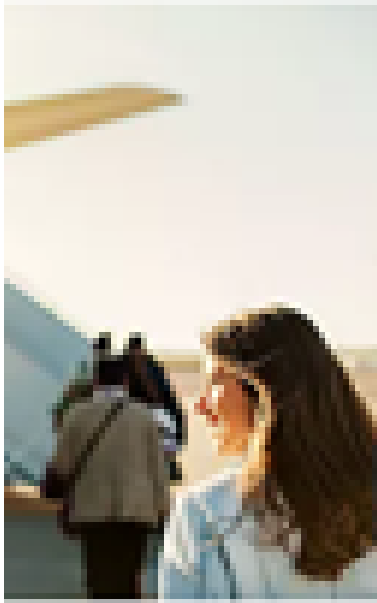
(/Webinar-Tripactions-improve-communication-lines-travelers-october-2020)

WEBINAR REPLAY! Playing telephone - how to improve communication lines with travelers

(/Webinar-Tripactions-improve-communication-lines-travelers-october-2020)

News | Technology

The Latest



When you take a

TRIP

We'll plant you a

TREE

For the price of a

COFFEE

(/startup-stage-Trees4Travel)

STARTUP STAGE: Trees4Travel offers a simple solution to address climate change (/startup-stage-Trees4Travel)

Interview | Startups



**Heritage Site Tour in
Hours)**

ia
11 reviews

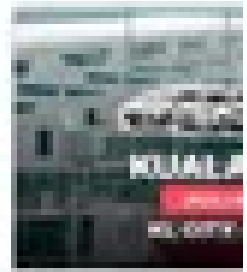
160 /car



**Full Day Kuala Lumpur Classic
Private City Tour (8 Hours)**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
11 reviews

From MYR 289 /car



**Kuala Lumpur
Airport Transfer**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
11 reviews

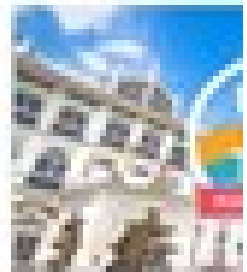
From MYR 120



**Full Day Tour at Batu Caves &
Genting Highlands (10 Hours)**

Genting Highlands, Malaysia
11 reviews

From MYR 360 /car



**Half Day Culture
Kuala Lumpur**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
11 reviews

From MYR 160

(/Tourplus-raises-1M-to-connect-tourists-to-guides)

Tourplus raises \$1M to connect tourists to guides (/Tourplus-raises-1M-to-connect-tourists-to-guides)

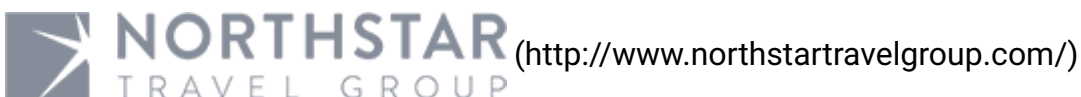
News | Online



(/Coronavirus-impact-travel-industry)

LIVE BLOG: Coronavirus and the travel industry - impact and recovery (/Coronavirus-impact-travel-industry)

News | Online



Copyright © 2020 by Northstar Travel Media LLC. All Rights Reserved. 116 West 32nd Street, New York, NY 10001 U.S. | Telephone: +1 860 350-4084

Phocuswright (<https://www.phocuswright.com/>) • The Phocuswright Conference (<https://www.phocuswrightconference.com/>) • Phocuswright Europe (<https://www.phocuswrighteurope.com/>) • Battleground (<https://www.phocuswrightbattleground.com/>) • TTE (<https://www.traveltechnologyeurope.com/>) • Web In Travel (<https://www.webintravel.com/>) • Inntopia (<https://corp.inntopia.com/>) • Retail Travel

(<https://www.northstartravelgroup.com/Audiences/Retail-Travel>) • Hotel Investment

(<https://www.northstartravelgroup.com/Audiences/Hotel-Investment>)