

TECHNOLOGY

IS THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL INTERACTION FREE?

THE THOUGHT OF INTERACTION-FREE TRAVEL MAKES US SQUIRM WITH UNEASE.

Who wants to go on holiday only to be met with the silent treatment from their airline, hotel or experience provider?



Travel is all about human experiences and interactions but with the rise of AI and automation technologies, travellers could soon find themselves faced with a robot for many aspects of their travel experiences.

According to futurist, Michael McQueen the rise of AI and automation doesn't have to be scary if the industry can find the right balance.

We chatted with McQueen last week (<http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/futurist-warns-agents-need-to-add-value-you-cant-get-online/>) about what the future holds for travel and the major obstacles the industry will face in the coming years.

McQueen's new book *How to Prepare Now for What's Next* (<https://www.wiley.com/en-au/How+to+Prepare+Now+for+What%27s+Next%3A+A+Guide+to+Thriving+in+an+Age+of+Disruption-p-9780730349846>) explores how businesses and industries can thrive in a time of disruption and forecasts trends coming up in the next five to ten years.

We were so fascinated by his work, we've decided to make a three-part series of weekly articles about future trends and overcoming disruption for the travel industry.

See also: Futurist warns: "Agents need to add value you can't get online"
(<http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/futurist-warns-agents-need-to-add-value-you-cant-get-online/>)

Today, we're focusing on, you guessed it, interacting with robots!



McQueen assured us the chaotic tendencies of the above robot will not be a problem in the foreseeable future, but we're still holding out for the robot apocalypse.

He thinks automation and AI will actually be very useful in streamlining the experience and assuring traveller comfort, particularly when checking into hotels.

"Few people actually want to deal with a human after travelling for 30 hours," he said.

"Having to front up and speak to someone at that point, there is no value in that."

"I just want to get in, I want to have a shower, I want to go to bed immediately. The less contact points the better."

"However, the next day when I wake up and I want to get some inside goss on what I should see in the city, where are the best tours, then the concierge then is tremendously valuable. And that relationship will remain really important."

McQueen told us it will be about whether or not the human aspect of a transaction adds value to the experience.

"When you go to the bar at a hotel you're going to want to be served by a human."

"If its an experience you're going to be paying for and, realistically, if you're going to a bar and ordering a \$23 cocktail you want a bit of pizzazz."

"IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE TRANSACTION THERE. IN THOSE MOMENTS THE EXPERIENCES ARE STILL GOING TO BE ABOUT PEOPLE."

"But purely transactional stuff, which is checking in, getting food delivered will be different."

“You don’t need someone to bring your club sandwich and fries to your room, which is why they’re developing robots to drop it off for you, so you can answer the door in your bathrobe.”

Personally, we would still answer the door in a bathrobe given the option, delivery robot or not.

We’d wear one to the office if we could.

McQueen said biometrics will be another aspect that deletes the human aspect in exchange for a swifter transaction.

“I STILL FIND IT ABSOLUTELY STAGGERING THAT WE USE PASSPORTS,” HE SAID.

“To think we use a paper document as our most important reference point for verifying data its crazy when you think about it.”

“So for security and immigration checks, the future of those transactions is biometrics.”

Many airports are already trialling **facial recognition** (<http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/face-scans-to-ai-everything-you-need-to-know-about-biometric-tech/>) and **fingerprinting** (<http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/this-airline-just-casually-introduced-fingerprinting/>), but McQueen said this will become much more widespread.

See also: [Passengers love self-service tech at airports \(http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/passengers-loving-self-serve-tech-at-airports/\)](http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/passengers-loving-self-serve-tech-at-airports/)

“WE’LL SEE PASSPORTS DISAPPEAR IN OUR LIFETIME. AND BIOMETRICS WILL TAKE THEIR PLACE.”

*ch with Travel Weekly Editor Ali Coulton here to share your
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LATEST NEWS (/latest-news/)

(<http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/big-fat-agent-wrap-41/>)

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BIG FAT AGENT WRAP

(<http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/big-fat-agent-wrap-41/>)

(<http://www.travelweekly.com.au/article/were-all-getting-robbed-vic-tourism-hit-by-scam/>)

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“WE’RE ALL GETTING ROBBED”: VIC TOURISM HIT BY SCAM

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AT LAST, QANTAS INFLIGHT WI-FI TAKES OFF

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