View on Web

Rethinking Tourist Experiences with a Unified Portal

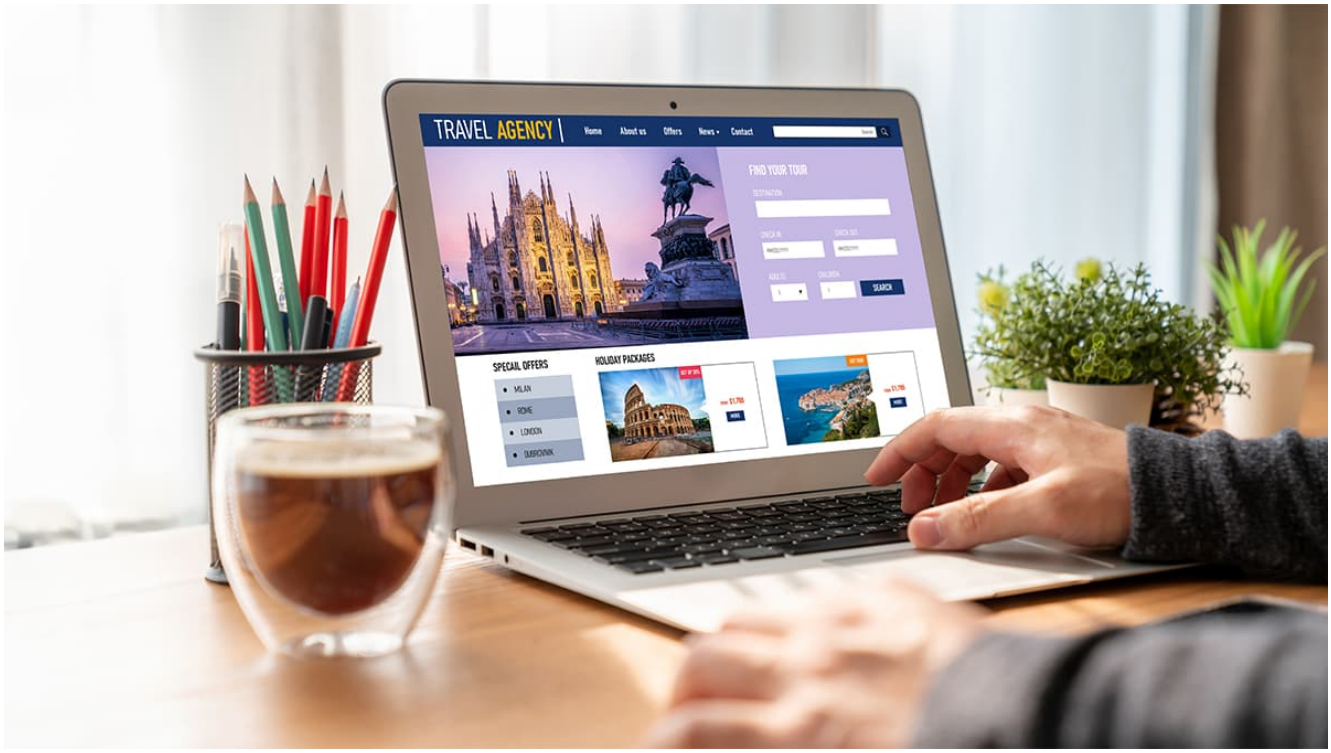
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The traveler of yore faced an array of challenges when she planned her trip. From exploring destinations to booking tickets and zeroing in on the right accommodation, the process involved juggling multiple platforms and navigating one portal after the other. Thankfully, today's digital traveler has a better experience in tour planning. That’s because private operators and government entities have designed platforms that ease worries. However, processes or components can be fragmented or siloed even within such platforms. **That's why half-baked digital tourism platforms aren't the magical silver bullets. The truly immersive platforms are the one-stop, seamless digital tourism portals that bake in convenience by design and offer delight by default.**



A **unified tourism portal** coalesces all travel components – from inspiration and discovery to booking and post-trip recommendations. Such portals are ingeniously designed with tourist experience in the nucleus like the ones exemplified by Tourism Australia or Visit Florida. Another example worth parading is the Indian Government's National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry or NIDHI. It is an initiative to use technology to empower businesses and is positioned as a gateway to opportunities in tourism.



Tourism going digital – the boom and benefits

The global digital travel market, estimated at $400 billion in 2022, is projected to zoom to $1618 billion by 2032 (Source: Future Market Insights). The growth is fuelled by rising disposable incomes, government efforts to expand tourism, increasing credit card and internet usage, and development of new online niches. Worldwide, the virtual tourism market too, is on an uptrend. Valued at $6.1 billion in 2022, it is anticipated to climb to $23.5 billion by 2028, clocking a CAGR of 30.2 percent.

A unified, seamless digital portal for tourism lumps many benefits for the tourists in a single interface:

Comprehensive Destination Insights: The integrated portal is a complete travel guide, providing valuable insights into different destinations. Users can explore a wide range of information, including cultural highlights, local cuisine, and hidden gems off the usual tourist path.

Personalized Trip Planning: The one-stop portal can comprehend user preferences and provide personalized itineraries by utilizing cutting-edge algorithms and **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**. This high level of customization guarantees that every trip becomes a one-of-a-kind adventure, perfectly tailored to individual tastes and interests.

Seamless Booking Integration: Integration with airlines, hotels, and activity providers ensures a seamless booking process. Users can plan their entire trip, from flights to accommodations and local experiences, all within the same portal. This simplifies logistics and can lead to cost savings through bundled offerings.

Real-Time Updates and Alerts: The portal informs travelers with real-time updates on their itinerary, flight status, and relevant travel advisories. Push notifications and alerts provide convenience that enhances the overall travel experience.

Post-Trip Community and Recommendations: After the journey concludes, the unified portal continues to engage users. It facilitates post-trip discussions, photo sharing, and community recommendations. This creates a virtuous cycle of user-generated content that benefits future travelers.



How CSM created sticky tour experiences with unified portals

CSM Tech boasts an enviable legacy of designing and delivering digital solutions. Having developed seamless and intuitive digital interfaces for mining, health, agriculture, and education, we got opportunities to reposition the Odisha Tourism website and create a one-stop, interoperable digital repository for Varanasi. Our exposure to digital technologies and adroitness in developing seamless and personalized **User Experiences (UX)** contributed to the success of the two tourism platforms.

Odisha Tourism: The rebranding of **Odisha Tourism** with a single, consolidated website integrated all actors in the travel and tourism value chain. The government's ownership of the website also instilled great trust in the stakeholders and democratized opportunities for all. The integrated website flattened the playing field, wherein even the wayside, unorganized tour guides in the remote hinterland got access to business opportunities. For tourists, this single portal offered all the stages of the travel funnel- discovery, planning, booking, and shopping without navigating to any external website. There are a string of other features that elevate the UX for tourists. The website features a travel aggregation portal for travel and tour operators to showcase their products and services, a contribution portal for bloggers and vloggers (video bloggers), a ready reckoner on 50+ tourist destinations in Odisha, and a trip planner. From a technology standpoint, the website uses analytics to influence travelers' purchase decisions and geographic targeting to promote specific tourist experiences to travelers of a particular geographic location.

Kashi (Unified portal for Varanasi): CSM Tech partnered with Varanasi Smart City Ltd to create a unified, one-stop portal for Varanasi, a confluence of culture, cuisine, religion, and civilization. Varanasi has been luring tourists of all stripes and, of late, has made quick strides in development, being the home constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, the millennial city needed a single web portal that could showcase the city's attractions. **CSM Tech made a detailed system study to develop the right solution architecture and had umpteen rounds of engagement and consultation with the clients and stakeholders. The outcome is Kashi – a single repository, a 360-degree window to Varanasi, showcasing the city's full splendor. Discovery, exploration, and an immersive experience- Kashi aggregates everything for you without the need to navigate to an external site.** Over and above the legacy data, this portal is a repertoire of Varanasi's top attractions, events, the changing vibes of a resurgent Smart City, and a To-Do list for visitors. Future-ready integrations could also link the portal to a **Unified City Tour Pass System**, allowing tourists to enjoy bundled entry to multiple experiences across the city.

As we gaze into the future, the merging of **data analytics**, AI, and immersive technologies is set to catapult Tourism 2.0 into a realm of unmatched convenience, personalization, and sustainability. This journey has only just begun, and the destination holds the promise of transforming the world of travel.



AUTHOR:

Jayajit Dash

Senior Manager- Corporate Communications (Marketing)

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