THE NEXT LEVEL OF CHINA AIRLINES AND AIRPORTS AUTOMATION

News / Airlines, Airports / Routes



Airlines and airports in China are moving to another level of passenger service. They are embracing artificial intelligence and automation to provide the hyper-personalized self-service experience their passengers are demanding. According to the SITA 2019 China IT Insights, shared today, China's airlines and airports are using these technologies to expand mobile services and automating the journey with self-service every step of the way.

A key technology that is attracting investment is artificial intelligence (AI). SITA's China IT Insights reveals that 88% of both airlines and airports are planning major programs, or R&D, with AI by 2022 and they are focusing on virtual agents and chatbots. This investment matches the demands from passengers; SITA's research of passengers in China shows that 64% of them want a digital travel concierge. Already nearly half (43%) of airlines in China have AI-driven chatbot customer services and the planned investment should see the availability of them rising quickly over the coming years.

May Zhou, Vice President and General Manager of SITA China, speaking at the SITA China Air Transport IT Summit in Nanning, said: "China's airlines and airports have a strong record in embracing technology and automation to drive efficient operations and high levels of passenger services. Now they are moving to the next level where they will harness artificial intelligence to deliver more services, faster and to more people."

For passengers of China's airlines and airports, self-service has reached a strong level of maturity, but a step-change is coming as biometrics is being adopted. Today, 27% of airports have self-boarding gates using biometrics with travel documents but in just three years this will jump to 66%. And more than half of the airports have plans for secure single biometric tokens for all touch points by 2022. Airlines too are committing to self-boarding gates using biometrics with ID, 60% are

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planning to use them driving a secure and seamless passenger experience right through the airport with the next three years.

Zhou added: “The adoption of self-service by passengers across China has been very encouraging for airlines and airports. At SITA, we see many in the industry who are now ready and planning to add biometrics to bring self-service to the next level.”

Mobile services are vital to meet China passengers’ demands and by 2022, all airlines and 93% of airports are planning investments in them. Services including flight discovery, airline offers, check-in and flight status notifications via mobile are already provided by all airlines. One fifth are also using mobiles to sell newspapers, magazines and movies/TV to passengers.

Airports too are investing in mobile services to offer a more personalized experience for passengers. Services including, notifications about flight and airport status, and customer relationship management are well established and are offered by up to 81% of airports. Keeping the passenger informed and connected is not only what China’s airports are providing via mobile, they are also facilitating mobile payments. Close to three quarters enable passengers to buy airport services and allow cashless payments via mobile. This hyper-personalized service via mobile confirms it as a vital tool for China passengers.

The report highlights that blockchain technology is another key area of investment for airlines, today only 24% have major programs, or R&D, planned but this is set to jump to 80% by 2022. This is in line with the recent trends and commitments to blockchain technology in the country.

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