

JAPAN: AUTOMATION ACROSS HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

National, 30th November 2020: Every breakthrough happens somewhere, but when it comes to innovation and technology, Japan has always been at the forefront. Automation and robotics are so deeply engraved in their day to day life that there is no going back. In the current times, even the super leaders from around the world are looking up to Japan for deriving inspiration as to how to incorporate these hacks into their economy. Japan for decades has been working on the ethos of social distancing by depending on technology and utilizing the power of automation.

Gradually, even the organizations worldwide have realized the potential of robotics and are investing heavily in it. Therefore, robots are no more restricted to industries but are making inroads into other businesses such as restaurants and local retail stores. Although automation remains prominent in our day to day for various mundane tasks, robots are advanced enough to work in tandem with humans. There are even sushi-making robots in Japan which guarantee to produce authentic Japanese sushi. The bots are designed to replicate handmade sushi quality but have extreme efficiency. These machines have even gone through a various round of tests by strict critics and sushi masters.

Robotic firms have even invented Japanese ramen robots that prepare scrumptious meals than compared to a normal chef. At one such restaurant, you can witness your Japanese noodle shop being prepared by a bot. **Japanese ramen chain Kourakuen in Motomiya, Fukushima** is hoping to make social distancing easier, and ease staffing issues at the moment by relying on a new tablet-operated "Ramen Serving robot" called the K-1. The K-1 helps with social distancing and contactless service, as it's a shelf-equipped robot with a sensor that allows it to navigate the restaurant and service customers without bumping into people or objects. The robot can reportedly respond to voice commands and can be navigated with a tablet that both customer and restaurant staff have.

Japan also has the world's first robot bartender that has begun serving up drinks in a Tokyo pub. The robot, for its part, can prepare a cocktail in one minute and can pour a beer in 40 seconds. Deploying robots in a workforce not only reduce operation cost exponentially but also provide phenomenal customer experience.

"There are even hotels in Japan that are primarily operating on robots. One, in particular, is the Henn-Na Hotel in Japan which deploys humanoid robots. They designed in a way that they act like humans and speak fluent Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English. Even the rooms have features like facial recognition, room temperature monitored and adjusted according to body heat, and a tablet that allows guests to request services. This hotel and few others in Japan have set an example for the world to show how full proof social distancing can be imposed.

One would be shocked to know that even the taxis in Japan come with an automated door for years now. The moment your ride arrives, just stand back as the door automatically opens for you. You just have to inform the driver of the location to be reached and everything from then on happens on its own. After getting off too, the door shuts on its own.

For centuries now Japan's technological alternatives have outshined the nation worldwide. Even when it comes to cashless payments at the smallest of a convenience store, the option is readily available. Travelers can also use their credit cards to make cashless payments and ATMs are easily available all across the country. For those looking to maximize the convenience of cashless

payments, Japan's commuter cards, The Welcome Suica is a e-money card for moving around and shopping. There is no more need to buy a ticket from a vending machine. Just touch your Welcome Suica to the ticket gate and the fare is automatically deducted from your Welcome Suica. The Welcome Suica can be used not only for JR East trains, but subways and buses as well. See the Welcome Suica Map for transportation systems

Taking automation and robotics to a notch higher one of the most ground-breaking measures to be used during Tokyo 2020 Games—is the facial-recognition ID system that has been implemented to identify the faces of officials and athletes, granting them access into the venues. The system, provided by NEC Corporation, one of the world's leading companies in facial-recognition technology, will allow approximately 300,000 athletes, officials, volunteers and media representatives access to restricted areas. **It will be the first time in the history of Tokyo 2020 Games that this kind of facial-recognition system will be used to verify the identity of Games officials and authorized people.** Tokyo 2020 Games aim to be the most innovative Tokyo 2020 Games to date. From airports to sporting venues, innovative Japanese technology is helping to provide an environment where everyone can enjoy the Games with peace of mind.

As the world gradually transcends to a post COVID era, contactless culture has deliberately become a critical part of our daily life. From contactless delivery to travel to shopping and even everyday work; this has indeed become the new normal. We are already witnessing many hospitality chains, transport, and even airports utilizing technology to its best to reduce the touchpoints during an individual journey. Therefore, as Japan has always utilized technologies that promote contactless policies it has swiftly adapted to the ongoing change in world dynamics. Consequently, this also makes Japan one of the safest destinations to travel to when tourism gets back to normal.

JNTO Website: <https://www.japan.travel/en/in/>

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