

TUI relies on Artificial Intelligence to support customer service

- **State-of-the-art technology improves guest service**
- **Requests for transfer times and visits by reps are answered automatically within seconds**
- **In-house development of the TUI Innovation Lab in Palma**

Palma, 26 August 2019. TUI Destination Experiences, under whose umbrella the TUI Group bundles its range of tours & activities, excursions and guest services, relies on the support by Artificial Intelligence at its contact centre in Palma de Mallorca to further improve the service for TUI guests. The world's leading provider of destination experiences has developed a digital platform with which holidaymakers can get answers to telephone and written enquiries, such as transfer pick-up times from the hotel or the rep's visiting times, automatically in a matter of seconds. Such standard queries account for over 30 percent of the enquiries in the current summer season. For the agents in the contact centre in Palma, it is a significant reduction in their workload which allows them to respond much quicker and spend more time with guests that require personal customer care.

The platform, called AIR (Artificial Intelligence Response), was developed in the Innovation Lab of TUI Destination Experiences in Palma, in cooperation with the Madrid-based company, Strategy Big Data. In the first phase, AIR answered telephone enquiries. When guests phone TUI and request information on transfer and visiting times, they are either asked to enter their booking number or are identified by their mobile telephone number. They are then forwarded to the AIR platform, where they receive the requested data automatically. Should the guest have any further questions or require assistance, he or she will be transferred to a member of the contact centre staff. Otherwise, the customer's request was resolved in a matter of seconds.

In the second phase, which started a few weeks ago, AIR is now also responsible for processing written enquiries made by guests via the TUI App (TUI Digital Assistant). "As a first step, we have the system work out answer suggestions, which are then checked by a contact centre agent before they are sent," explains Chris Carmichael, Head of the Innovation Lab at TUI Destination Experiences. "Gradually, however, AIR will learn so that we can also answer many of our guests' questions fully automatically.

Carmichael sees the learning effect as a decisive advantage of Artificial Intelligence. "We deliberately decided against using a normal chatbot, as it does not learn and

answer options remain limited. That can be extremely frustrating for a guest. Our goal is to provide our guests not only with a quick response, but also with a satisfying one in all cases." AIR is currently being used to answer English queries. The extension to German and Swedish requests will follow this summer.

The time that AIR saves on standard enquiries can be used by contact centre staff to devote extra time to more complex enquiries or to advise holidaymakers on activities and excursions. AIR has already managed more than 5,800 guest queries which has helped to reduce waiting times for other calls to the hotline or enquiries by e-mail, SMS or the TUI App. "Our service quality has once again improved thanks to AIR. This is also confirmed by our guests. This summer, they rate our Digital Services significantly better than last year," says Fernando Nogueras, Head of the Contact Centre at TUI Destination Experiences.

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However, TUI Destination Experiences is not only investing in new technologies to improve guest service, but has also significantly increased the number of contact centre staff compared with the previous year. In addition to local reps, this summer around 370 contact centre staff are looking after holidaymakers from TUI's European markets. The majority of the agents, around 280 of them, work in Palma. There alone, 80 new jobs were created, an increase of 40 per cent over the previous year.

About TUI Destination Experiences

TUI Destination Experiences is the world's leading provider of destination experiences. With 9,000 employees in 49 countries, the company generates turnover of 700 million euros. TUI Destination Experiences, based in Palma de Mallorca, offers its guests a broad product portfolio of high-quality travel experiences including excursions, activities, tours, transfers and customer services. The company sold more than six million activities and excursions last year. Through its subsidiary InterCruises, TUI Destination Experiences is the world's leading provider of cruise handling services. The company also includes Musement, one of the leading online platforms for tours & activities. The development of sustainable tourism in all destinations in which TUI Destination Experiences operates is a key feature of our corporate culture. TUI Destination Experiences is part of TUI Group, the world's leading tourism group.

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