

srijan:



Customer Experience in 2021 - New Frontiers

Media | Hospitality | Telecom | Retail | BFSI | Pharma

The last decade saw the rise of the customer from the mere consumer of goods and services to an active participant in determining what they buy, who they buy it from, and how they buy it. Even more importantly, they had the ability to share this entire string of choices with other customers, further influencing choices throughout the market. Never before has the single customer wielded so much power within the market, and brands across industries have accepted this fact.

That is how customer experience (CX) - designing and improving it - became an integral part of enterprise strategies. And it will continue to do so in 2021. In fact, this decade will see CX become the central driving force of enterprise strategy. From investment to innovation, technology adoption to digital and cultural transformation, everything will be centered around how it delivers enhanced customer experience.

In this e-book, we take a look at how these six industries will evolve systems and processes to offer frictionless, intuitive customer experiences.

Media

Travel

Telecom

Retail

BFSI

Pharma

Media



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Over the past decade, the media and entertainment industry has been at the cusp of rapid transformation. Digital media emerged as an alternative distribution medium, taking center stage across all sub-sectors like print, films, advertising, gaming, animation, radio and music. It has also proved to be a core revenue generation platform, compelling several media companies to adopt digital strategies to survive the fiercely competitive market.



**2.4
trillion**

2.4 trillion is the expected growth in global media and entertainment industry revenue by 2022.

PwC

Interestingly, all of this has vested more power in the hands of the customer and prioritising customer retention will be the most significant trend for 2021. Companies looking to increase their profits are turning to innovative tactics, including AI, AR/VR, and phygital to keep their customers engaged.

This can be segmented into the need for:

Personalized Digital Experiences

Customers around the world are embracing the expanding opportunities to enjoy customised media experiences. They want greater control over how and when they experience and consume media. To ensure that, they are curating their personal selection of channels, managing media consumption and bringing more digital content into their everyday lives.

All this is a direct indication to the media and

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entertainment industry to focus on personal experiences, innovate continually and make significant investments in the following:

Personalized recommendations: Amazon, Netflix, and Spotify use AI/ML algorithms to analyze user interests, and make personalized recommendations on what to watch or listen to. Several other media companies are keen on developing these capabilities, to design customer-focused programs, and drive customer retention.

Using AI systems, they can import data from lots of sources, uncover patterns, and help write and produce unique stories in near real-time.



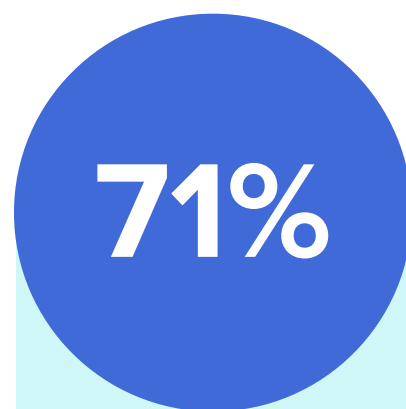
Forbes uses AI powered bot named Bertie, to recommend article topics for contributors based on their previous output, headlines based on the sentiment of their pieces, as well as images.

Personalized advertisements:

Using AI, and data based on user behavior patterns, media companies are able to personalize what ads to show to garner user interests. While the scope of this was for larger groups in the past, starting 2021 this will zero in for more specific buyer personas, and eventually be targeted for individuals!

This increasing adoption of AI will In 2021 will make people used to working alongside AIs, using them in the cloud, for fact-checking and creating content on-demand.

This rise in AI adoption will be supported by providers of as-a-service platforms, the likes of Amazon, Google, and Microsoft, where you simply need to feed data and pay for the use of their algorithms.



71% of consumers prefer personalized advertisements, and for that reason, marketers are doing more and more of it.

Adlucent

Multi Experiences

We have seen AI work its wonders, as well as several computer-generated experiences being created thanks to virtual, augmented and mixed reality in the last few years. The way forward in 2021 is to combine several of these emerging technologies to create more immersive digital experiences.



Captive has paired blockchain tech with AR to create new user experiences in which consumers interact with brands in new and entertaining ways. Once users register with the app, they can acquire “Captive coins.” Those coins can then be used to buy real goods in the Captive marketplace.

While the use of VR and AR in media and entertainment is relatively new, they are already captivating consumers and making businesses money. And 2021 expects to see a lot more use of AR/VR in a wide range of enterprise apps.

The underlying trend is the shift from technology-literate people to people-literate technology, where the burden of translating intent is transferred to the computer. And media enterprises can choose how best to utilize these technologies for the same.

**3.4
Billion**

3.4 billion devices, from 1 million, is the expected growth in the number of mobile devices enabled with AR technology in 2021.

Decentralized Distribution and Transparency

Last few years saw an unprecedented rise in the number of fake news and videos, while also risking the misuse of customer data. In 2021, media companies are expected to exercise more control over their data, use AI algorithms to detect and block deepfakes, as well as trace their creators to make data privacy and security a top priority.



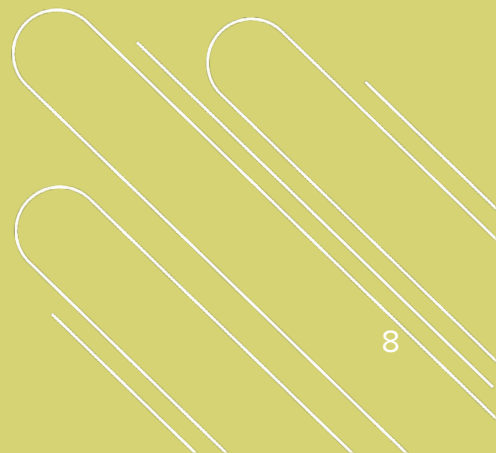
Deloitte's most recent Digital Media Trends Survey shows that consumers still fear identity theft, financial loss, and unauthorized use of sensitive data—largely because many have experienced these threats directly. They are increasingly demanding the same level of control over their personal data that they enjoy in crafting their home entertainment experience.

Blockchain has the potential to completely transform the industry, as it eliminates the need for an intermediary from entertainment and media distribution. With direct access to the consumers, media companies are in a much better place to distribute original content, while also ensuring transparency and traceability.

Travel



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Travel has become one of the biggest industries in the last decade, fuelled by the desire to experience new cultures, rising disposable incomes and the quest for an Instagram feed filled with perfect sunrises. But the 1.8 million people slated to travel in 2025 will also be driven by how convenient travelling becomes - right from finding destinations that they will love to booking their stay to curating their experience during the trip.

In 2021 and beyond, customers will expect a highly frictionless experience from brands in the hospitality industry. This can be segmented into the need for:

Personalized Experiences

Personalization in travel can cover a huge spectrum. It can mean anything between a simple “Hi Sarah” when she opens a website, to a complete microsite that has information on Sarah’s favorite destinations, tour offers at custom prices, and even booking options for pet-friendly hotels for her dog Max. Customers are already relying on these personalized recommendations to plan their travel, actively looking for the next good deal, the next unique experience.

In the new decade, customers’ dependence on personalized recommendations will only increase and they will expect brands to know exactly what they like - their favourite destinations, activities, travel preferences.

For travel enterprises - hotels, airlines, cruises, OTAs - delivering this kind of personalization will depend upon how they collect, sift through and extract behavioural insights from the huge volumes of customer data. This is data coming in from user interactions across different digital channels and consolidating all of that in one comprehensive profile of each customer is key to predicting their needs and fulfilling them even before they can express it.



45%

45% of millennials and 37% Gen Z travelers are very or extremely likely to book a flight after receiving a personalized notification.

The other technology solution required to deliver personalized experiences is a content management system that can:

- Handle the vast amount of content types being produced for personalized experiences
- Enable tagging, segmentation and categorization of content based on a wide variety of parameters
- can push out content onto multiple display formats

Intelligent & Contextual or 'Smart' Experiences

Customers also expect the complete process - from finding the destination, to booking tickets and hotels, to booking the cab to pick you up from the airport - to be as seamless as possible. They don't want to be kept waiting for an answer, switch multiple devices or even switch tabs to complete their booking, and definitely do not want to be standing in lines.

With several hotels launching virtual concierge services and 'smart home' devices like Alexa or Google Home integrated into their rooms, the next decade will be all about creating low-contact, hassle-free experiences. The ones that are expected to become more commonplace in 2021 and beyond are:

Omnichannel: This will be a key aspect that travel brands will want to get right - ensuring that customers can pick up their journey on any channel, from right where they left off last time. While most of the top brands are already omnichannel to an extent, the focus will be on expanding the number of channels, and reducing the effort required to deliver consistent brand experiences across them.

Chatbots: The intelligent assistants with chirpy personalities are making travel booking and hotel experiences as easy as talking to a friend or answering a set of questions. Facebook Messenger



bots and website chatbots will become more commonplace, and a key digital channel for interacting with travel brands, replacing customer service executives and even manually searching for information on the website. But besides that, chatbots will also become more contextual as technology advancements iron out the challenges of accurately understanding and responding to natural language queries.

Self-service: Talking to disgruntled receptionists at different counters will be out as brands battle to create intuitive, simplified self-service experiences. While self-check in kiosks have become commonplace across airports, others like hotels, theme parks and cruises will also focus on creating similar solutions to help customers quickly get through the transactional elements of their trips.

Mixed Reality: To aid people in booking the right travel experiences - destination, holiday activity, hotel rooms - brand will start offering AR/VR tools. Feel that bungee jump or take a tour of the hotel room before you book it.

Progressively Enhanced Experiences

With the increased focus on customer experience, the point of differentiation will shift to how brands work to retain their customers. Maintaining brand loyalty will be a key goal and customers will see this translating into enhanced experiences for them.

67%

67% of customers prefer self-service over speaking to a company representative.

Zendesk

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79%

79% of travelers mentioned loyalty programs as a main reason for choosing specific airlines or hotel brands.

Criteo

Tailormade loyalty programs that offer improved personalization, better offers, and exclusive experiences are becoming increasingly popular. Beyond 2021, travel brands will dedicate significant strategic thought to crafting and marketing stand out loyalty programs to attract and retain customers.

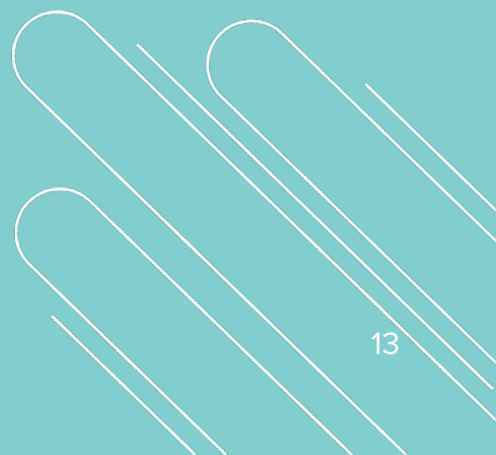
The other aspect to customer loyalty is how it will help brands serve users better. As customers interact more with a brand, they share more data, allowing brands to better understand and service them. Advanced recommendation engines are one of the key solutions to emerge from this symbiotic relationship, benefitting both customers and the brands. For customers, it's a way to discover new destinations/adventures/food that they will like, and for brands it's a way to drive more sales.

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Telecom



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The key challenge for the telecom sector in the last decade has been the fact that their customer connection and revenues have been eclipsed by OTT services. Calls, messages streaming - everything can be done on apps that do it better and faster than telecom networks. And this is despite the fact that telecom enterprises are the ones actually making OTT services possible by delivering access to data connectivity and network infrastructure.

So in this decade, telecom enterprises across the globe are setting their sights on becoming more relevant in the daily lives of their subscribers - being more than just carriers, and actually delivering services to both individual customers and businesses. A key peg in this transformation strategy will be the increased focus on delivering new and improved digital experiences to attract and retain customers.

Some of the key opportunities for telcos to enhance their digital customer experience will be:

Improving Network Performance and Service Quality

With almost every single aspect of their life being managed online and from their mobile phones, customers expect their telecom network to be always on, always available. So telcos will have to invest in improving the experience on their core service - voice, text, video, VoLTE etc - with:

AI powered predictive maintenance: To constantly monitor network performance and anticipate peak usage and other patterns that signal possible disruption of services. Customers will appreciate advance notice of such disruptions. And telcos will have the opportunity to exceed expectations as they predict network challenges in advance and fix them before they cause major connectivity disruptions.

68%

68% developed market operators, 46% emerging market operators - cite customer experience as a leading strategic priority in 2021

Ernst & Young

Proactive, personalized service plans: Intelligent data analytics and machine learning models can sift through customer usage patterns, locations, billing plans etc to identify new customer needs. These can be leveraged to create hyper-personalized service plans and offers for customers. These plans that offer them greater benefits on optimal budgets will help reduce customer churn.



Ericsson Expert Analytics (EEA)

Through a Service Level Index, EEA measures customer's satisfaction based on the end-to-end (E2E) customer experience and then predicts the Net Promotor Score (NPS) for each subscriber. EEA automatically finds customer experience degradation symptoms, undertakes root cause analysis on top of that and takes next best actions, resulting in reduced handling time, fewer escalations, thereby reducing the churn rate.

Frictionless, Omnichannel Interactions with Telecom Brands

As with all industries, customers will expect an intuitive, convenient and connected experience when they interact with telecom brands. Clunky IVR menus, long wait times for issue resolutions, complicated processes to purchase or update SIM cards and data plans - all of these will have to be shown the door. What will replace them is a customer support and service ecosystem that offers simple, consistent, convenient brand interactions.

This will be powered by:

Chatbots: With easy-to-follow question and answer formats, all major customer queries and issues can be successfully handled by chatbots. They eliminate long wait times, frustrating verification processes, and get stuff done with a few quick clicks - all in

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one place. In short, they are the perfect replacement for telecom's historically unwieldy and unresponsive customer service experience.

Integrated digital channels: Telcos would do well to create 360 degree customer profiles that aggregate all customer activity in a single place. This would mean greater visibility into customer data and the ability to view and analyse it holistically rather than piece-meal. For the customer, this will translate into integrated, omnichannel experience where they have access to all information pertaining to their account on a single portal, while also ensuring that any activity - new connection, plan upgrades, billing and other associated tasks - can be carried out seamlessly on different digital and physical channels.

Rolling out Accessible and Affordable 5G Services

5G will be the biggest innovation on the telecom horizon in this decade, and rolling it out to consumers in attractively bundled services will be key to telecoms attractive new customers and retaining old ones. The transition to 5G is expected to generate a windfall for network, infrastructure, and equipment vendors.

While initial years of 5G will see high growth for telcos with first-mover advantage, the markets will soon reach equilibrium and customer acquisition will be driven by outstanding customer experiences within the 5G services offered by different networks. Key to delivering competitive 5G services will be:

- Developing the whole ecosystem of 5G business use cases, app developers, and corresponding 5G offers and plans
- Preparing the network infrastructure - plan for increasing cell sites, digitize and automate site deployment, and build higher fault tolerance within the network

**\$4.2
Billion**

\$4.2 billion worldwide 5G network infrastructure revenues in 2021, recording year-over-year growth of 89 percent.

Gartner

- Plan roll-out strategies based on specific micro market requirements, to better anticipate and deliver on customer expectations

Prioritising Security and Privacy

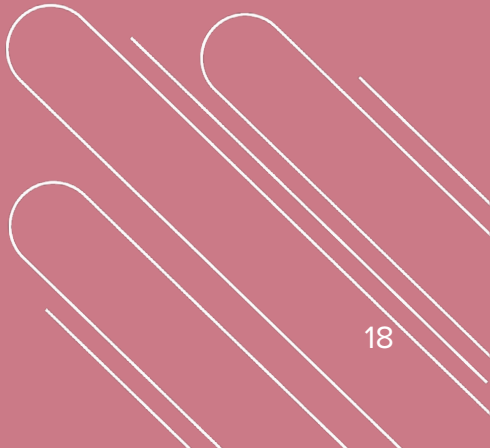
The final leg of the last decade has been kind of a mixed bag for digital security and privacy. While countries have woken up to the diverse array of threats to data privacy and passed laws that actually keep up with them, there have also been major security breaches across the world, and misuse of user data to influence electoral processes.

In 2021 and beyond, telecom enterprises have to heavily emphasize their security credentials to gain and retain customer trust. They will have to work closely with government organizations to craft appropriate regulation, evaluate how they handle customer data, and bring in greater degree of transparency into their work.

Retail



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Retail has always been one of the sectors where customer experience is of critical importance. But in the last decade this experience has been transcending the physical stores, acquiring an expanding digital component, and settling down into highly integrated customer experience that seamlessly moves between online and offline spaces.

2021 and the decade that follows will see retail giants focusing on perfecting this mix of analog and digital customer experience. So Amazon opening physical stores, or Sephora offering AR-based make-up trial apps will cease to be mere interesting trends and become the expected standards of customer experience in retail.

Some of the emerging trends from the last decade that will become key pieces for retail enterprises in 2021 are:

Easy Discoverability with Voice & Visual Search

With the digital native millennials managing their entire lives online, consumption patterns are driven largely by the products they see on their feed. From the latest shade of lipstick on a celebrity they follow, to gym equipment used by a particular fitness blogger - everything consumers need is seen, searched and bought online. And so it makes sense to focus on leveraging voice and visual search technology to drive product discoverability.

62%

62% Millennials and Gen Z consumers want visual search technology more than any other technology.

43%

43% of Millennials made a voice-based purchase over the previous year.

Also, according to the study, visual search and voice search technology can increase the eCommerce revenue by 30% by 2021.

Search Engine Land

For the consumer, it means being able to take a simple screenshot and run it through a visual search algorithm to find the exact or similar products to buy. Or simply speak to their Alexa or Google Home device that they want a new pair of shoes, and get recommendations for where to buy them.

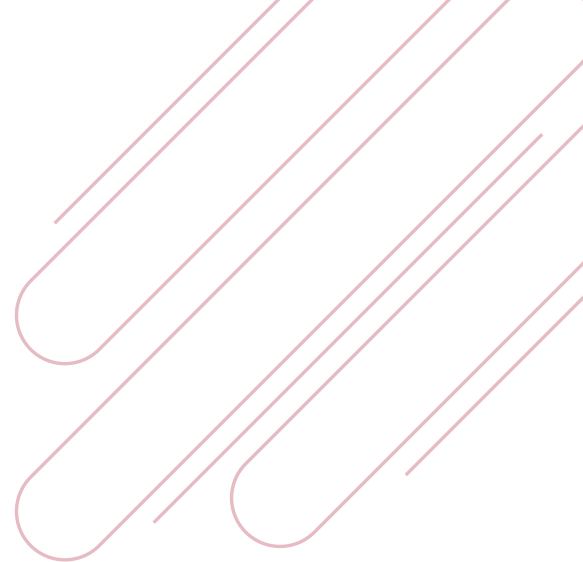
For brands, it would mean developing visual search algorithms that are intelligent enough to recognize exact or close match products from their catalog to meet a customer's requirement. Easier, and what should probably be the first priority for brands, is to update their product information content, and make it ready for voice-based search. This means reformatting and tagging content in a manner that picks up clues in voice-based queries and maps them to product attributes, giving the user a set of product options that meets his needs.

Virtual Trials with Augmented Reality

The whole genre of products whose purchase is based on visual appeal - clothes, furniture, makeup etc - were losing out on online revenues due to the lack of trials. This was especially true of high-value or the luxury range of these products, where consumers still preferred to experience the product before purchase.

Augmented reality however has solved this challenge, allowing for virtual try-ons. At the close of the last decade, big names like L'oreal and Sephora, IKEA, and Lacoste were using AR-enabled applications and smart mirrors to allow customers to try-on the merchandise, evaluate the look and feel on themselves. More importantly, they could do all this without having to actually wear/apply/place the physical product or stand in queue outside the trial rooms.

Notable is the fact that these AR-based apps enhance the customer experience both online as well as in the physical stores. Retail brands can offer



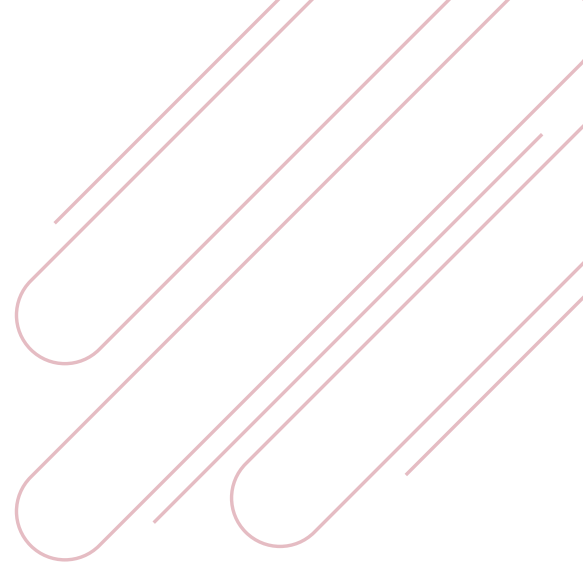
these solutions within their apps, allowing consumers to try-on everything from lenses, to lip colour, to dresses online. But even for customers that walk into physical stores, smart mirrors and in-store apps can deliver the same experience - try several different product variations in minutes.

2021 and the decade that follows will see almost all retail brands start to offer similar hybrid customer experiences powered by mixed reality. While the key driving force behind this would be to deliver enhanced digital customer experience that prompts purchase, the benefits brought in terms of operational cost savings will also be a significant factor for adoption.

Optimized Operations with Robotic Process Automation

Automating repetitive and tedious processes and ensuring near-zero errors in retail processes has a huge impact on customer experience in retail. While it might not be a direct experience or on a digital channel that the customer uses, improved processes indirectly translate to more satisfying customer experiences.

Processes like inventory management, supply chain management, or logistics of delivery and product returns, when handled by robotic process automation solutions, become streamlined and optimized. So when customers are browsing through products in-store, on the app, or on an eCommerce portal, they receive accurate information on product specs, prices, offers, availability and delivery dates. This simple fact - upfront and reliable information - infinitely enhances digital customer experiences, which becomes apparent when a customer receives a product in the wrong colours, or later than the predicted delivery date.



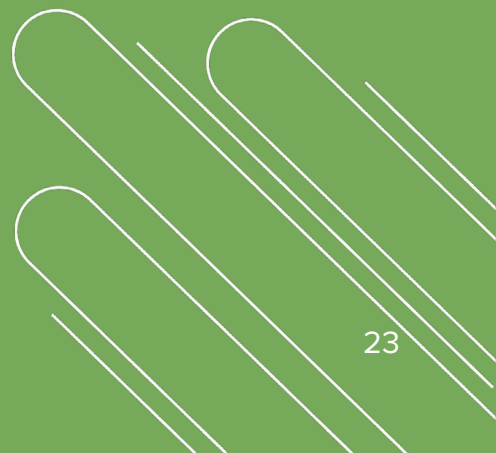
Once again, RPA has been adopted by retail brands in varying degrees and for a diverse range of function in the last decade. 2021 will see a rise in adoption, with the technology and innovations teams aiming for increasingly complex and high-value automations.



BFSI



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The financial services industry has seen a massive disruption right from the global economic crisis of 2008. Huge transformations with respect to regulatory frameworks, transparency, and data protection took place. Digitization of banking, fintech disruptions, coupled with rapid adoption of emerging technologies were the highlights of the decade.

81%

81% and more banking CEOs are considering the impact of digitization in the finance world.

PwC

The year 2021 is predicted to see greater infusion of technology solutions in the industry and the emergence of new value-added services from both the incumbent and industry disruptors. And the end objective is directing these technologies to make BFSI more customer-centric and efficient, thus helping deliver more secure and intelligent solutions to the users.

This can be segmented into the following:

Customer Centric Experiences in Spotlight

The fast pace disruption in fintech over the past few years have pushed several financial companies to follow suit. They are now leveraging emerging trends like chatbots, AI, blockchain, AR/VR etc. And this has tremendously benefitted the industry.

Coupled with that is the ability to make more effective lending decisions and better risk management owing to simultaneously working with big data analytics, voice interfaces, RPA, etc.

\$447 Billion

\$447 billion is the average estimated cost savings for banks using AI by 2023.

Business Insider

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Fintech can considerably improve customer experience, combining new data processing and storage strategies with advanced analytics and new capabilities of cybersecurity. Utilizing customer intelligence provides an amazing opportunity to understand what users value, and give them what they really want.

This is made possible by using:

AI powered robots and chatbots that help streamline customer experiences at any point of the user journey

Robotic process automation (RPA) to deal with low-priority questions like account balance check, payment queries, etc., and save the time of human agents to deal with high-priority concerns. In the coming years, human involvement is going to reduce further by using AI robots instead

Bots enabled quick response and resolution of issues in banking organizations. And they are increasingly being used to offer financial tips, detect fraudulent activities, and even assist customers during registration

Cloud computing to enable 24/7 customer service, greater flexibility, more deployment options, and better optimization for infrastructure, security and compliance

Blockchain and facial recognition tech to improve security, and transparency of money, thus improving the user experience. Enhanced online security will be one of the most crucial fintech trends in 2021



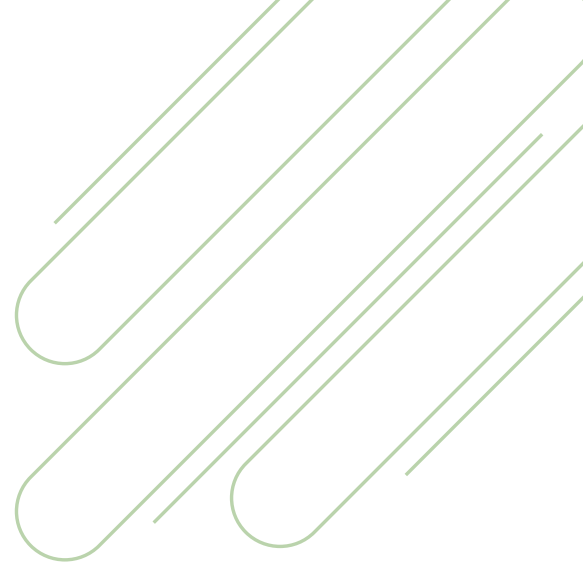
Open & Decentralized Finance

2021 is expected to be a watermark year for banks and financial institutions, bringing about a large scale transformation. The concept of open finance, shared economy will be the overarching trend for the coming year.

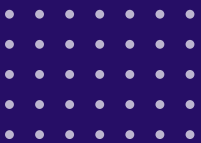
Open finance is an ecosystem of shared services that converges users and companies in one place to enable better efficiency and experiences. Thus financial organizations will have shared transaction data, IT infrastructure, and cross-compatible systems, while the ecosystem itself will be enabled by distributed technologies and more sophisticated and accessible APIs.

This means that in 2021 and beyond, consumers will need banking services, but they may not turn to a bank to get them. The concept of shared economy introduces decentralized asset ownership, where information technology will be used to find efficient matches between providers and users of capital, rather than automatically turning to a bank as an intermediary.

Blockchain can prove to be an enabler, as it acts as a system of decentralized customer database. On the other hand, open banking APIs can prove to be valuable assets for the organisations as it enables them to enhance their service offerings, build new digital revenue channels and improve customer engagement.



Pharma



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The pharma and healthcare industries have been undergoing a period of rapid change and transformation for almost a decade now. In the coming years, this is expected to increase further as companies advance towards becoming more tech savvy, and adopting new groundbreaking solutions in the arena.

In 2021, the focus will be more on creating patient-centric experiences, and leveraging technologies like AI, IoT, machine learning and blockchain to innovate and transform.

Here's what that translates to:

Healthtech with a Focus on Customer Experience

Like BFSI, the healthcare industry is also expected to go through a disruption where combined with emerging technologies, they will play a greater role in ensuring health and wellness for all. Increase in customer focus is the overarching trend, and 2021 will see several companies re-organising the way they work to ensure they are putting patients first.



Starting 2021, it will become vital to put patients front and centre and engage as they make their healthcare choices.

This also means that there will be an increased focus on value-based outcomes, accountability and transparency, as well as mapping customer journeys to identify their pain points, and create a complete experience tailored to patient's needs.

Pharma companies will incorporate AI, IoT and machine learning in their operations to give rise to CX initiatives such as:

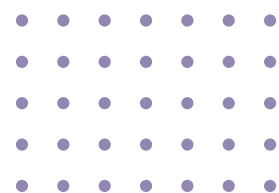
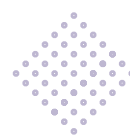
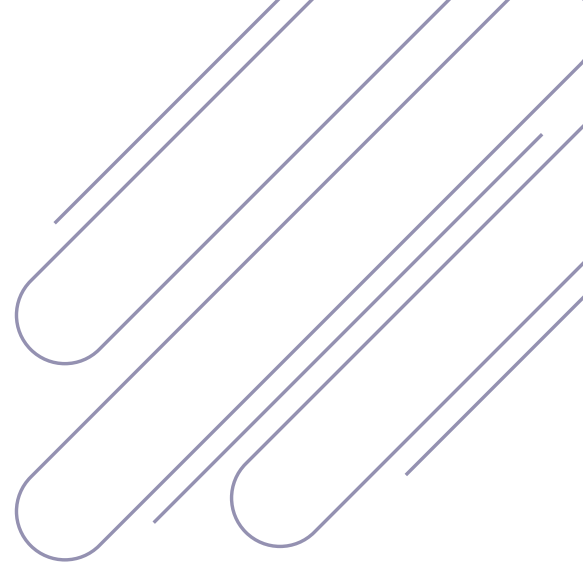
- Patient portals which will ensure easy access to their records, updates and appointments
- Omnichannel strategy where the customers can communicate with their service providers via all channels i.e., email, text, social media, web and mobile phone
- Automated processes to reduce patient waiting period and streamline payments
- Innovative payment solutions which will benefit both revenue cycle management and customer engagement

The year will thus be phenomenal for pharma companies looking to leverage CX to differentiate themselves and gain trust through relevant and valuable content.

Going Beyond the Pill with Portable Health Gadgets

One of key innovation tracks within the pharmaceutical industry in the last decade was technology that took healthcare outside of the medical facility and made it accessible to the patients. While you have the Fitbits and health trackers at one end of the spectrum, you also have more sophisticated devices aimed at monitoring and managing specific health challenges - smart inhalers, gluten testers, chip-in-a-pill to monitor adherence to medication in transplant patients.

Going into 2021, pharma companies will be investing heavily into identifying new use-cases for technology enhancement in patient care and packaging them into affordable and accessible products. The focus will be on transforming their



traditional R&D and product development teams to incorporate digital expertise - agile, iterative workflows, incorporating feedback, understanding the centrality of data in building effective digital products.

Another aspect to consider while launching health tech products will be existing and evolving government regulation. Innovating digital products within the stringent regulatory environment that comes with the healthcare sector would need a different set of strategies than the general tech sector, and that's something pharma enterprises will have to figure out in 2021.

The Last Word

As you can see, enhanced digital customer experiences that consistently showcase your brand and business to your customers do not happen without significant digital transformation. This makes it critical for enterprises to frame their digital strategies, and identify their specific technologies to enable the same.



85%

85% of enterprise stakeholders surveyed by IDC say that it's imperative to achieve significant digital transformation by 2021, to avoid losing business to competitors.

Now all that's left for enterprises is to understand what exactly works for them and how best to deploy it. Srijan expert teams can engage with your business goals and key stakeholders to craft digital experience solutions tailored to your requirements.

Srijan is working with leading enterprises in the US, Europe and APAC regions. We are aiding these enterprises' digital transformation journeys, helping them drive superior digital customer experience and future-proof their content ecosystem with Drupal. Our teams work closely with enterprise business and technology stakeholders to create solutions that align with the organizations' overarching strategic goals.

Looking to enable digital transformations with Drupal? Let's do a little brainstorming and see how we can help.

Book A Consultation



About Us

Srijan is a creative technology firm that builds transformative digital paths to better futures for Fortune 500 enterprises to nonprofits all over the world. We have championed open-source technologies over the last two decades, bringing advanced engineering capabilities and agile practices to some of the biggest names across FMCG, Aviation, Telecom, Technology, and others.

We lead in Drupal with 300+ Drupal engineers and 75+ Acquia certified Drupal developers and are amongst the 4th globally. With preferred partnerships with Acquia, advanced consulting partnership with AWS, and APIGEE we offer the best technology stack in the market.



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