



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Fintech platform Zeta valued at \$300 million in its Series-C round led by Sodexo

Sachin Bansal expands his fin services portfolio

Netflix launches a mobile-only plan in India

B2B ecommerce startup ShipsKart is aiming for an Amazon-like disruption in the maritime industry

Today's View

Innovative Travelling (Contd.)

In our previous article (link [here](#)), we have seen how start-ups are looking at minute aspects of the travel journey and making it enjoyable. Here we continue our discussion on a few more start-ups and the technology companies that are making routine mundane work - like checking-in bags - a service.

Imagine dropping of your luggage bags at home and receiving it at the airport. **Airportr** based in London is a same-day luggage delivery service, transporting bags to and from London Heathrow, Gatwick and City airports, as well as homes, hotels and offices. It also offers the additional service of checking in bags remotely. Given international arrivals are set to increase from 1.3 billion in 2017 to 2.3 billion by 2030 and increasingly strict regulations around baggage, a services like Airportr that takes away the hassle are proving to be handy and popular among tourists.

Last minute meetings or tourist bookings could be very expensive and demoralizing, not to mention the hole they make in the wallet. **Hotel Tonight** is an app that lets users find cheap hotel rooms at the last minute. The company also added a couple of innovative features: users can now 'gift' a room to someone else, and '**Snap Your Stay**' encourages users to snap, edit, and upload shots of their hotel rooms to receive credits ranging from USD 5 to USD 10.

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Snapdeal in talks for fresh capital, raises funds from Piramal

Two years after a failed merger with Flipkart and a subsequent turnaround of sorts, online marketplace Snapdeal is in initial talks to raise a fresh round of funding, said three people familiar with the matter, requesting anonymity. The talks are at a fairly early stage and investor names have not been finalized yet.



Source – Mint

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Date – 24th Jul 19

When we talk about innovation in modern times, there has to be some aspect of AI involved. Its ability to understand human behaviour, particularly in terms of **natural language understanding (NLU)** and **natural language processing (NLP)** is now advanced. **Net Solutions** leverages chatbots to provide a personalised travel experience. The start-up's chatbots can be launched on **Messenger, Telegram, and Slack** and other services, providing full analytics to better understand customer behaviour. The service includes features such as customer support, tracking orders, and distributing content paving the way for more fluid conversations between businesses and guests.

Managing a hotel operations can be an enormous task. From inventory management to guest requirements, there is little room for disappointing the social-media savvy customers. **Alice**, a hotel operations platform has been created by start up to make life easier for hotels to manage their operations. **With Expedia** as an investor, Alice provides a single system for guests, front-of-house workers, and back-of-house staff to communicate and track requests. The unified system means that a guest request sent via text message for perhaps more pillows or mini-bar snacks is conveyed to the right member of staff at the hotel.

Travel Industry is growing and along with is growing the need for making customer journeys more eventful, easy and memorable with innovation through technology. With the scope for double digit growth in revenues, the future of innovation in travel tech holds immense promise.

Today's News

Fintech platform Zeta valued at \$300 million in its Series-C round led by Sodexo

Bengaluru-based Fintech platform Zeta, which offers employee expense management, corporate gifting and co-branded debit and credit cards, has raised an undisclosed amount in its Series-C round led by France-based Sodexo, valuing the four-year-old start-up at over \$300 million, according to the company. With this new capital, Zeta will look at expanding its business across 15 countries including the US, the UK, in Europe and in Southeast Asia. Until now, Zeta has been self-funded by co-founders. With this investment, Sodexo will have a minority stake in the company.

Source – Mint

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Sachin Bansal expands his fin services portfolio

Flipkart co-founder Sachin Bansal is steadily firming up his bets in the financial services space with the latest move being a debt investment of Rs 50 crore in consumer lending start-up Kissht, said sources directly aware of the matter. This is part of Bansal's overall focus on the fast-growing Fintech sector, including NBFCs such as Kissht. Armed with his over \$1-billion fortune from the sale of Flipkart, Bansal had mentioned he had chosen Fintech and the broader financial services sector as his next focus area during an ask-me-anything (AMA) session in Bengaluru.

Source – The Economic Times

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This News Letter has been prepared with the assistance of G Balakrishna and Prithwiji Ghosh

Netflix launches a mobile-only plan in India at Rs 199 per month

Netflix has officially announced a mobile-only plan at Rs 199 per month, after piloting it for several months in the country. Netflix the streaming major testing mobile-only subscription plans in the country. This plan enables subscribers to watch standard definition (SD) content on a single mobile or tablet screen at a time.

The plan will also enable users to download shows but will not offer the cast functionality. This will be the streaming major's fourth subscription plan in the country. Previously the company offered plans ranging from Rs 499-799 per month. During the test, Netflix was charging users Rs 250 per month.

Source – The Economic Times

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Chiratae, Younest Invest In Robotics Start-up Emotix

Mumbai-based robotics start-up emotix that identifies emotional intelligence, has raised \$2.69 million in a fresh funding round. According to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs filings, the investments have come in from Chiratae Ventures (formerly IDG Ventures), Technology Venture Fund and Younest India.

The creator of Miko, a robot for children focused on educating and entertaining children, emotix was founded in January 2015 by three IIT Bombay alumni: Chintan Raikar, Prashant Iyengar and Sneha Vaswani. The company last raised \$2 million in April last year.

Source – Inc42

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Cash Suvidha raises \$2.3 million in debt to increase its Loan Book

Delhi-based online lending platform Cash Suvidha has raised \$2.3 million in debt funding through private placement on non-convertible debentures and from various financial institutions. The amount has been raised in the first quarter of FY 2019-20. Cash Suvidha will use the funds to increase the loan books of the company. The company has raised \$10.25 million funding till date, with \$2.5 million in February last year.

Founded in 2016, Cash Suvidha offers business loans to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), micro small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and women entrepreneurs as well as personal loans to individuals. Cash Suvidha provides loans with a ticket size of INR 50,000 – INR 5 Lakh for SMEs and INR 15K – INR 50K for MSMEs. The company has tied up with over 25-30 players to expand business across India and has targeted a 4x increase in processing loan applications.

Source – Inc42

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B2B ecommerce startup ShipsKart is aiming for an Amazon-like disruption in the maritime industry

In the maritime industry, to make any purchase requires seeking approval from the shipping company's office, using complicated software to place orders, and still not being sure of the quality of the product. Hence, to streamline the complex process, logistics-focused technology is becoming increasingly important. Realising the need for this while at the sea, batch mates from Applied Research International, Dhruv Sawhney (34) and Vivek Sahi (35) joined hands with former-lawyer and friend Sunny Bagla to start ShipsKart in 2018.

Delhi-based ShipsKart is a B2B ecommerce marketplace for all maritime solutions. The start-up aims to revolutionise the fragmented procurement and supply chain in the maritime and offshore domain. The start-up currently has offices in Delhi and Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and plans to soon start its first aggregator centre in Mumbai.

Source – Your Story

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Big Tech and fair digital rules

Last month, a study by Virginia-headquartered industry association for newspapers, the News Media Alliance, estimated that Google may have earned approximately \$4.7 billion in 2018 in search advertising revenue through links to news content.

At the heart of the tension between publishers and Big Tech — a term used to describe large technology companies such as Google, Facebook and Amazon, among others — is control over content, including news, distribution and monetisation, especially through the advertising technology (ad tech) stacks Big Tech currently owns. Google, some publishers say, owns the entire supply (and demand) chain for ad tech and structures it in a way that disincentives companies from working with any third-party products.

Source – The Economic Times

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Cellestial E-mobility raises \$200,000 from Singapore investor

Cellestial E-mobility, a city-based startup working in developing electric tractors with longest battery life, has raised an initial funding of USD 200,000. The sum was raised from angel investor Meka Sudhakar Reddy, a Singapore-based NRI, with over 18 years of expertise in logistics spacing.

"We are readying to roll out the first prototype in the next one month," founder-promoter of Cellestial Siddhartha Durairajan said. E-mobility invention is a zero-emission ecological tractor apt for horticultural or greenhouse works or moving goods within factories and vehicle to haul luggage in airports, he said.

Source – Business Standard

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Reliance Retail starts pilot project ahead of e-commerce launch

Reliance Retail has started the pilot phase of its new commerce initiative, according to the company's latest shareholder presentation. The differentiated business model will provide a technology platform for millions of small merchants across India to strengthen and grow their business, the company added.

The new tech platform is said to drive efficiency and value creation for all players in India's retail market — particularly producers, brand owners, supply chain players, merchants and customers.

Source – Inc42

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