Case Study

Retail
AI Robotics

New Era AI Robotic Helps SM Supermalls Deliver a More Engaging Shopping Experience

Customer-facing AI robotics solution helps simplify and personalize each customer's visit using Intel® technologies

For shopping malls and other retail businesses, customer experience is always top of mind. To keep up with the pace of evolving technology, they need to ensure the seamless and hassle-free delivery of goods and services. These companies are seeking to modernize the in-mall shopping experience and explore new ways to disseminate information to customers—including personalized offers and tailored marketing information.

New Era AI Robotic (New Era) is a forward-thinking technology company that's helping make it possible. The company provides robotics-based solutions for retail businesses that enhance the customer experience by providing directions, movie showtimes, tailored marketing, and more.

When SM Supermalls, a large chain of shopping malls in the Philippines, set out to streamline and improve their visitor experience, they turned to New Era for the technology required to make it happen.

"Our guests find the robotics solutions to be fun, engaging, and useful tools for getting the information they need. They help our brand stand out and make customer visits more efficient and enjoyable."

—Joaquin L. San Agustin, senior vice president of marketing, SM Supermalls

Enriching the in-person customer experience through AI and robotics

Customers don't want to wait to get the information they need—whether it's the overall mall map, the specific location of their favorite store, or the next showing of the latest blockbuster movie.

To help streamline the experience, SM Supermalls has deployed New Era's voice-interactive, smart-service robot: an intelligent, AI-enabled solution that provides customers with the assistance they need. Using it, SM Supermalls can handle more customer inquiries without overburdening mall staff. To date, the company has deployed fleets of the New Era robots in two of their locations.

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Using the real-time interactive voice features, guests can ask for directions to their desired store or location and receive step-by-step instructions based on their current position. Matching the voice directions, the robots' onboard displays show the route visually. Users can also request a listing of upcoming showtimes in the on-site movie theaters at each SM Supermalls location.

"The robotics solutions ensure our customers can get the assistance they require with minimal time spent waiting," says Agustin. "Meanwhile, we're reducing the burden on the concierge employees and ensuring they can focus on other high-priority tasks."

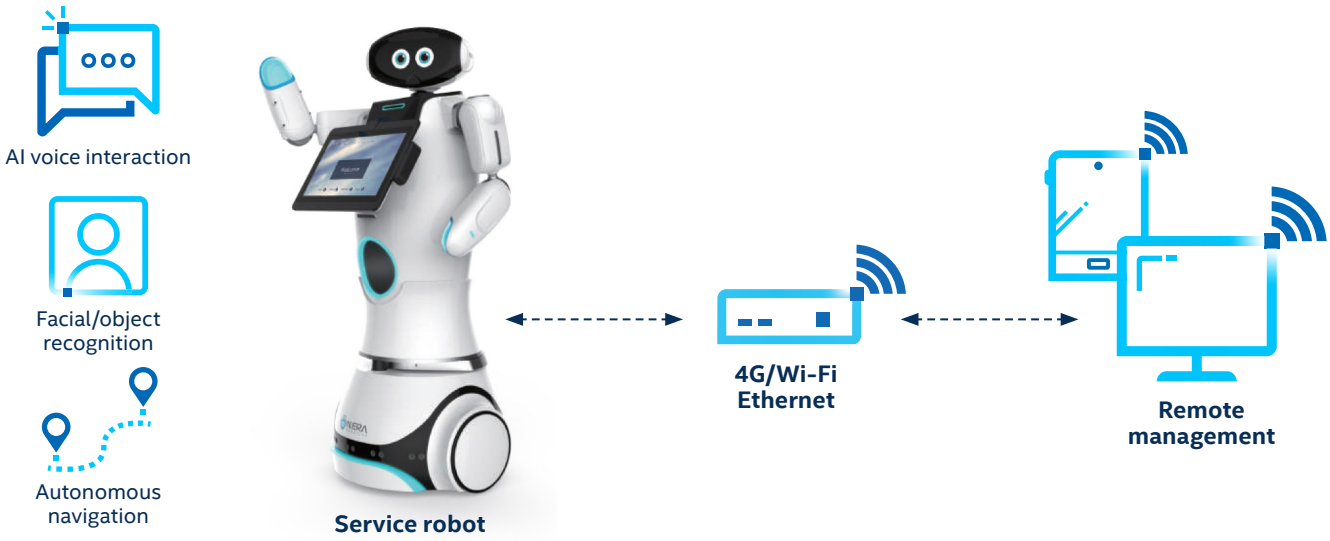

Figure 1: By combining voice interaction, facial recognition, and autonomous navigation in a mobile robotics solution, New Era AI Robotic solutions help SM Supermalls more efficiently answer customer questions and streamline the shopping experience.

By reducing wait times, shortening lines, and providing a noncontact method for getting information, the New Era robots also help promote social distancing and reduce physical contact at each location. Each robot can display a QR code that users can scan to display directions directly on their device—no physical contact required.

Additionally, SM Supermalls uses the robotics solutions to deliver tailored promotions and marketing messages to each customer. The robots use AI technology to determine their most relevant demographic and deliver the appropriate message or offer. The robots are also used to share seasonal messages such as holiday greetings and even allow customers to play a digital roulette game for a chance to win in-store coupons.

"By creating these rich, interactive, and personalized engagements with our in-store customers, we're delivering a unique experience that customers can't find elsewhere," says Agustin.

The robotics solutions are managed via a centralized fleet management system and can be controlled remotely. "The intelligent, automated solutions help our staff get more done," says Agustin, "and the streamlined management system ensures keeping the fleet running optimally is easy and free of headaches."

How New Era robotics solutions help deliver business benefits for SM Supermalls

- **Enhanced visitor experience** with convenient access to mall information and directions
- **Deeper business intelligence** through data collection that enables a deeper understanding of customer behavior and targeted marketing
- **Increased productivity** via a 24-hour service robot that can be monitored from the fleet management system or controlled remotely, allowing employees to prioritize higher-value tasks

Expediting results and delivering performance with Intel technologies

The New Era solutions deployed in the SM Supermalls locations leverage Intel® Pentium® processor N-Series (running Windows) and Intel® Core™ i5 processor U-Series (running Linux) to deliver fast, reliable performance that helps enhance the in-person shopping experience.

"We needed a solution that was customizable, open for integration, and suitable for localization," says Ligo Lim, head of sales and marketing at New Era. "Strong computing power was a necessity. But we also needed a partner with a complete product portfolio and tools that could help us solve problems and accelerate results. Intel was the obvious choice."

To enable the autonomous navigation and obstacle avoidance, New Era uses Intel® RealSense™ technology. Doing so, they can equip each robotics solution with simultaneous localization and mapping techniques for autonomous indoor navigation. The Intel® Distribution of OpenVINO™ toolkit allowed New Era to quickly build the needed capabilities for facial recognition and computer vision.

"It's a powerful toolkit that we found immensely valuable throughout the development process," says Lim. "The prebuilt elements were easy to customize to our needs—and they helped dramatically shorten our time to market, which increased the overall effectiveness and efficiency of our efforts."

Ultimately, the Intel Distribution of OpenVINO toolkit helps enable the personalized marketing functionality of the robotics solutions. "Using the toolkit, we were able to quickly build the necessary computer vision capabilities. Our robotics solutions can recognize the age and gender of the shopper in near-real time and then seamlessly deliver the information that will be of the most interest. Relying on Intel's toolkit helped us realize the finished product much more quickly," says Lim.

An innovative approach to enhancing in-person shopping experiences

When New Era and SM Supermalls deployed the robotics solutions, they were met with immediate, strong success. The forward-thinking approach was heralded in digital, traditional, and social media outlets. And, most importantly, customers immediately took a liking to them—with high engagement numbers for the included games and nearly twice as much interaction when compared to traditional digital kiosks.

Using the robotics solutions, SM Supermalls is able to shorten visitor wait times, decrease the burden placed on concierge staff, and help promote compliance with social distancing guidelines. The result is an enhanced, personalized, and streamlined customer experience across the shopping center locations. This innovative approach earned SM Supermalls a Gold award in the Innovation in Consumer Products & Services category of the 2020 Asia-Pacific Stevie Awards.

"The robotics solutions have already delivered great results at both malls," says Agustin. "We're seeing a strong response and high usage among our customers."

By relying on New Era and Intel, SM Supermalls gained valuable partners that can help them continue to provide standout shopping experiences while ensuring day-to-day reliability and performance from their robotics solutions.

"We couldn't deliver these unique capabilities without them," says Agustin. "New Era and Intel are integral to enhancing our customer experience."

Learn more

Learn more about New Era AI smart service robots ›

Learn more about SM Supermalls ›

Learn more about Intel technologies

Intel technologies for retail ›

Intel Distribution of OpenVINO toolkit ›

Intel RealSense technology ›

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