

# 'Travelport makes travel surfing, selling and buying easy'

**With varied options of online booking available to travellers, has the importance of GDSs lessened?**

The introduction of online booking channels have helped in increasing the importance of Global Distribution System (GDS) even more because in order to book a flight the OTA has to remain connected to a GDS, which in turn offers the available inventories. It provides the back end distribution solution to all travel agents, be it an online one or an offline travel agent. OTAs with their widened reach have helped GDSs distribute their products even more seamlessly.

Today's customers want more options to satiate their requirement of getting best offers. Travelport's enhanced search engine 'Smartpoint' offers exactly that, by aggregating content of over 400 airlines including leading international low cost carriers and ancillaries, 650,000 plus unique hotel properties, nearly 35,000 car rental locations, 61 cruise & tour operators and 12 rail booking providers across the globe. Bill Gates' famous words 'Content is king' is the truth of the travel domain as well, and we being the provider of global distribution content aided with advanced technology-display through our wide range of content.

**Considering the myriad options available for travel planning and booking, what is the major challenge facing travel suppliers and intermediaries today?**

Every age brings with it a new set of challenges. This era is one of revolutionizing technology. Operations have evolved through various stages: starting from manual work to desktop functionality, then from desktop to laptop and now the era of mobile is burgeoning. This changing dynamics is shifting the way people think and want things get done in their life. And in order to achieve success in such scenario predicting the future has become very important.

**Sandeep Dwivedi, Chief Commercial Officer, Inter-Globe Technology Quotient on the paradigm shift that revolutionary products are bringing in the way travel is bought and sold today**



As a result of this, we at ITQ keep on analyzing the opportunities to facilitate the industry by providing enhanced solutions and delivering better services. Understanding the necessity of soft skill due to shortage of trained workforce in this domain, we arrange Soft Skill Training, in association with TAAI, for our travel partners across India and offer Travel Education Programme to students aspiring to be a part of the travel industry. In addition, ITQ has tied up with CAP Foundation to train 300 underprivileged children in five cities to give them a bright future.

**How is your presence in the Indian market? How do you view the growth potential for GDS in India?**

InterGlobe Technology Quotient is an official distributor of Travelport in six markets across Asia Pacific region including India and Sri Lanka. Through our extensive reach and advance solutions, we have been able to demonstrate ground breaking technology which is still evolving.

Introducing customer friendly technologies is our core strength and we invest quantum amount of resources on developing the same. Servicing our travel partners to make their work easier and seamless is what we look forward to. And although we have attained quite a few milestones in our endeavours like India Travel Awards for South India, Most Innovative Travel Technology Partner Award in Jury Choice Award and 'Best GDS' in Tamil Nadu Tourism Award in this year, our potential for growth continues to get bigger and

better. More so with the entry of OTAs in the market, we have got a reach that was earlier not possible. Also, our revolutionary products are bringing a paradigm shift in the way travel is bought and sold today.

**Tell us about ITQ and how you are powering the travel industry with your portfolio of products?**

Travel Industry in the Indian subcontinent is dramatically embracing change. The technology driven market is now ready for smarter options. In this context, Travelport has introduced point and click operations in GDS in place of traditional programming language. Earlier, industry professional needed training sessions to book tickets on a GDS as coding language was part and parcel of GDS booking functionality. But with Travelport's Smartpoint having advanced set of features, any user can now use point and click features to book tickets.

Now, what about the earlier generation who had become more used to coding functionality? For them, Smartpoint has retained the manual programming option within the interface. Although, point and click is an option but the product also understands the manual programming features. Not just that, it also has a translation feature which can translate other GDSs language and make reservations. Therefore, Travelport has integrated the needs of the new and the old generation users and brought in a revolutionary change.

Similarly, the airlines showcasing their products and inventories previously had a set pattern which has undergone a change through Travelport's technologically advanced solutions. It has introduced Rich Content and Branding to reinvent the idea of featuring airlines inventories and services. Through this exclusive display tool, airlines around the world have full control over the featuring of their airline seats, various accesses, ancillary services display and much more. According to sources, it has been estimated that as much as 35 percent of the revenue generation for the airlines will be on ancillary services offerings by 2020. Therefore, showcasing accurately has become very important and Travelport Rich Content & Branding is in place to help airlines achieve this target.

**How does personalisation and customisation of fares to individual flyers represent an opportunity to Travelport, for example?**

Travelport works towards searching and finding the best possible fares in any class. And in case the traveler has specific requirement of services, the Rich Content and Branding tool makes that selection process easier. Apart from that, Travelport also is the fourth largest hotel inventory aggregator which makes

the choice of hotels across the globe more customer-centric. Travelport is a penchant of making travel surfing, selling and buying easy and these features make it all the more user friendly.

**How has the Civil Aviation Policy changed the face of aviation industry and tourism?**

The recently mandated Civil Aviation Policy is going to bring about a revolutionary change in the airline domain. Domestic tourism is going to boom and create a lion's share in its contribution to this sector. The first step by the government towards making this possible is capping the fares on regional flights at ₹2500 per hour. Also, the government is providing incentives to airlines flying on routes that are not used at present. Safety, infrastructure, affordability and regional connectivity has given a strategic boost through this Policy which is soon to be a "game-changer for the sector".

**Airlines have been talking about supporting a single connectivity distribution strategy through multiple indirect channels. What do you think are the challenges arising as a result?**

Travel agents play a major role in the selling of seats and ancillary services. Therefore, this should not come as a surprise that both the airlines and the GDSs are trying to reach out to them directly.

In India, a major portion of the travel



agencies book through GDS and they have got used to the set pattern of selling and distributing packages through it as it offers them a huge range of content. In this context, if an airline created single connectivity distribution strategy comes into place, it will only have to compete with a much more able and far reaching GDS network, which at present has the ability to offer best tourism packages — as their inventory does not limit itself to airlines, but connects them to hotels and cars availability as well.

In addition, the GDS has evolved a lot with the time and has become more technologically advanced making workings of the travel agents easier across the globe. It has

also contributed a lot into maximizing airlines revenue by providing various tools through which airlines can aptly display their products and ancillary services.

**Airlines say they need to compete on services offered in addition to price. What do you make of the technology that is available today to support this?**

As the aviation industry is growing, so is the competitiveness. And now with the moulding of 5/20 rule, any airline can enter the international market with 20 aircraft in place. Therefore, fare pricing and service delivery both have become crucial to the success of an airline. The rightly priced fare would not be enough, airlines need to develop on the service delivery quotient as well — the better and varied kind of solutions they offer, the more they can gain hold in the market.

Therefore, in order to support this variety Travelport has introduced Rich Content and Branding to offer a platform to the airlines where they can aptly demonstrate their offerings: food and beverages, on-board facilities, baggage charges, seating arrangements and so on.

Presently, nearly 200 airlines have signed up for this service and are successfully displaying their ancillary services by applying rich visual and textual branding. The airline looks and performs the same across Travelport's points of sale as it does in other channels. Travelport Rich Content and Branding just helps to unbundle the services and helps airlines to be visually more appealing and interactive. The service segmentation of the ancillaries enhances customized selling which further helps airlines to create improved brand experiences.

**What is the biggest contribution you think Travelport is making to the travel industry?**

Travelport's biggest contribution in the travel domain has been to modernize and update the previously existing Global Distribution System, making it more user-friendly and 'smarter'. It has redefined itself through enhanced technology and made itself more productive and less time consuming. With point and click technology even an amateur can start booking tickets.

Therefore, any travel agent sitting in any part of the world can now book travel and surf from over 400 network airlines (including LCCs connected to Travelport), 650,000 unique hotel properties with over 1.5 million offers and 35,000 car rental locations. As the travel industry grows in leaps and bounds, redefining travel commerce becomes the core mantra to surfing, selling and buying travel.