

# Supplier gets the add-on edge

The Internet and accessibility to new information has initiated significant change in the industry. Such change, coupled with the current economic crises, has compelled tourists to modify their preferences and travel patterns.

The industry, in turn, has been presented with the urgent need and challenge to innovate. Companies and destinations are, therefore, rapidly rethinking strategies, innovating systems and processes and improving facilities and infrastructure to steer ahead of competition. Innovative ideas and technologies have been the backbone of the resilient change witnessed in the industry, and will continue to play the role of persistent catalysts for change in the near future.

To think about it, just a few years ago, the Global Distribution System (GDS) was the only platform available for airlines and hotels to distribute their inventories to the market. The airline industry created the first GDS in the 1960s as a way to keep track of flight schedules, availability and prices. However, it soon evolved to become a worldwide computerised reservation network used by travel agents, online reservation websites and large organisations as a single point of access for



(The writer is Anil Parashar, President & CEO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient)

booking airline tickets, hotel rooms, taxi services and other travel services. With time, GDS very successfully created a sort of electronic supermarket that connected buyers and sellers; it offered a plethora of options and saved cost and time of travellers as well as companies. The growth and the expanding reach of the GDS gradually made way for the Internet travel distribution system.

Today the GDS is evolving by the minute. It is no more responsible to only book tickets

on the system, but it is multifaceted. GDS today plays a major role in both leisure and corporate travel distribution. It continues to innovate and adapt to meet the evolving needs of travel suppliers, distributors, and ultimately travellers themselves, it will continue to shape travel distribution for years to come

The major trends we have been witnessing over the past couple of years will continue to evolve. Market forces will continue to drive us towards the implementation of new interfaces designed to deliver greater efficiencies, greater and broader inventory and also to support new revenue models for vendors, travel agents and the GDS itself. Well established GDS players will continue to play a major role in the sector.

Last year, we have Travelport Rooms and More which provides a unique platform for the agents to view hotel inventory from multiple aggregators on a single platform. It offers convenience of choice and bookings and provides enormous options to the agent as well as the end traveller.

Travel agents need fast and accurate information to service the needs of its customers. Providing only real-time information is no longer sufficient. Due to the vast amount of data, travel agents require enhanced capabilities such as intelligent search to help them sort through and search for the relevant content they need to sell, as well as a streamlined platform to efficiently fulfill bookings. Our core desktop solution – Smartpoint – enable agents to have access to the breadth of travel content they need in real-time, whilst providing capabilities to enable agencies to work faster and more efficiently.

As mentioned previously, there is no one-size fits all solution and therefore requirements vary. However, opportunities are endless.

## Managing inventory

Most hotels struggle to keep track of their inventory that is distributed through various channels. AxisRooms provides them with a single platform where they can manage inventory and pricing – not just for online travel portals but now also for offline agents.

Anil Kumar Prasanna, Co-founder and CEO of AxisRooms, says, "We have now introduced a new product called HotelXchange or HeX that is designed for hotels to manage their inventory sold through offline agents as well. Private distribution is high on volume and is especially difficult to keep track of. HeX helps hotels in doing just that."

Explaining this further, he adds, "So far, no one really looked at the offline market. Over 90% of hotels in India are standalone, independent hotels with no big brands attached to them."

Through our interface, they can save a lot of time and make more money by streamlining and automat-

ing everything." Through the AxisRooms interface, hotels can upload their agency contracts, instant updates of availability, rates, etc. "We are not



Anil Kumar Prasanna co-founder and CEO of AxisRooms

the middleman – we are only the interface and only facilitate. The transaction takes place directly between the agents and the hotels," Prasanna says.

The company also has an Android application for hotels (sellers) and is working on a similar app for the agents (buyers). This will be ready by September 2014.

Started in 2011, AxisRooms today works with over 600 hotels and plan to reach 3,000-plus hotels by next year. "We have started charging them on the transaction model now. I think the Indian market has matured and is ready for it," he says.

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