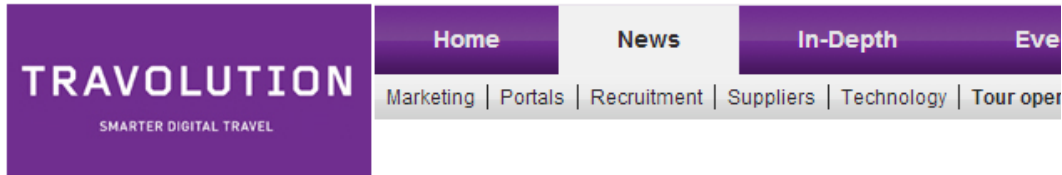


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## Guest Post: The three areas in which technology will de-stress airports



By **Travolution**

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*By John Jarrell, head of Airport IT at Amadeus*

Airports are notoriously stressful.

The combination of early starts, hefty queues, and straight-backed, unforgiving furniture takes its toll on the traveller, so creating a more pleasant environment is therefore a key priority for many airports today.

In the recent report we commissioned, 'Re-inventing the airport ecosystem', 72% of global respondents stated that the process from check-in to boarding is 'inefficient', and 69% of respondents said they feel frustrated by the security process.



Airports are well aware of the difficulties travellers face and are taking steps to mitigate accordingly.

For example, Stansted Airport's new owners are employing psychologists in a bid to 'de-stress' the airport as part of their £80 million overhaul.

The role of airport technology will be key as airports shift towards creating a more traveller-friendly environment, and seek to serve ever-increasing numbers of passengers with capital investment constraints.

There are three key areas where we are starting to see significant progress being made.

### **Streamlining Check-in**

Checking-in has traditionally been a painful process, but this is changing.

Whereas passengers previously found themselves inching along towards the check-in desk via slow queues, airline check-in kiosks have made the process quicker and easier.

Travellers can print out their own boarding pass at home or the airport, and skip the queues by going straight to bag-drop.

Mobile boarding passes go a step further; travellers can download their boarding pass onto their mobile phone as barcodes, and use these to board.

Where we see a lot of focus now is a greater push towards self-service.

For example, self-service bag-drops are becoming more prevalent; Edinburgh was the first UK airport to use self-service bag drops, which can handle luggage for a variety of different airlines.

Passengers can print luggage tags themselves, self-attach them to their luggage and then take their bags to the self-service bag drop.

The software at the bag drop checks each bag for compliance in terms of airline regulations and security, weighs the bags, and then processes them with the airline's own Departure Control System (DCS).

Iberia is already allowing self-printing of baggage tags at home and Lufthansa has enabled self-printing from kiosks, which expedites the process still further.

At Amadeus we have been working to develop a self-service bag drop solution, which can interoperate with any airline DCS system, rather than just being suitable for our Altéa airline customers.

Interest in this product has been high since we began conversations with a range of airports recently, and we foresee widespread adoption of self-service over the next few years.

For frequent fliers some airlines have refined the process even further by introducing permanent electronic bag tags.

Qantas has implemented them for domestic frequent travellers and BA is now trialling them with certain customers. Each e-tag is permanent and removes the need for a paper bag tag to be printed at all.

In Qantas's case, the customer can check-in at home and simply drop their bags with the tag automatically synchronising their personal details with a reader and the DCS.

### **Simplifying airport navigation with common airport apps**

Finding your way around a large airport can be a challenge: the business traveller may need to quickly know where his or her lounge is located at a specific terminal or leisure travellers might want to locate a restaurant or find their way to a gate.

Given the prominence of smartphones, airports are starting to develop apps to help travellers by

offering a layout and descriptions of retail outlets.

Apps can be hugely helpful but the industry is now beginning to realise the advantages of a common app which can be downloaded once by the traveller and which contains information on all airports in a given country or region.

Work and discussions are currently on going within the industry to achieve this goal and prevent the need for a traveller to download, store and use multiple apps.

The potential for apps is significant as a means for navigation but also for other services such as managing airport parking.

Expect a lot of innovation in this area over the next five years as the potential of mobility is further explored by airports working collaboratively.

### **Improving efficiency to reduce traveller delays**

Airports are hugely complex operations and as a result of that complexity there is always potential for inefficiency, which results in traveller frustrations and delays.

The good news is that plans are afoot to create a far more tightly integrated airport environment.

Airport Collaborative Decision Making (A-CDM) is an initiative being led by Eurocontrol.

It is about airport stakeholders cooperating more efficiently and transparently in the way they work and share data, improving the overall efficiency of operations at an airport.

One of the main benefits is more accurate flight take-off times which can be used for better planning of air traffic.

Travellers will benefit from a reduction in delays, fewer missed connections and, when disruption does occur, recovery will be faster.

When Amadeus decided to move into airport IT, delivering a new range of solutions that is compatible with the A-CDM vision was fundamental to our decision.

The benefits of closer collaboration between multiple airports as well as airlines, ground handlers and their airport partners will be hugely significant.

Eurocontrol recently forecast that unless more capacity is added in Europe 12% of air travel demand will go unmet by 2035.

Technology has a significant role to play in helping to achieve more efficient throughput of travellers using existing airport infrastructure more effectively.

However, the challenge for airports is to go a stage further to extend the benefits of technology investments beyond efficiency alone, to offer a more relaxing, simple and hassle-free experience.