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The Future of Travel:

Leveraging Aggregators for Growth and Efficiency



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1. Executive Summary

In the rapidly evolving travel industry, the ability to access and manage comprehensive air content efficiently is a complicated task for travel agents aiming to deliver exceptional customer experiences. This white paper explores the pivotal role of flight aggregators in consolidating diverse air content, thereby enhancing operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. By leveraging a unified platform, travel agents can navigate the complexities of the modern travel landscape, streamline their processes, and offer personalized services that meet the dynamic needs of travellers.

Purpose of the Whitepaper

The primary objective of this white paper is to clarify the significance of flight aggregators in the travel industry. It aims to equip travel sellers, industry stakeholders, and technology partners with a comprehensive understanding of how aggregators consolidate air content, the evolution of travel solutions, and the ensuing benefits in terms of efficiency and customer satisfaction. Additionally, it explores the challenges currently facing the industry and presents future trends and strategic roadmaps that will shape the future of travel content integration.

2. Overview of a Flight Aggregator

A flight aggregator serves as an intermediary platform that consolidates flight data from multiple sources, including airlines, Global Distribution Systems (GDS), and other third-party providers. By integrating diverse air content into a single, accessible interface, aggregators simplify the process for travel agents to search, compare, and book flights. This consolidation not only broadens the range of available options but also enhances the accuracy and timeliness of information, enabling travel agents to make informed decisions swiftly.



3. Features of a Flight Aggregator

A robust flight aggregator platform is characterized by a suite of features designed to meet the diverse needs of travel agents and their customers. These features enhance usability, functionality, and overall effectiveness in managing air content.

Essential Features

-  **Real-Time Data Integration:** Ensures up-to-date information on flight schedules, availability, and pricing.
-  **Advanced Search Capabilities:** Allows for customized searches based on various parameters such as price, duration, layovers, and airline preferences.
-  **User-Friendly Interface:** Intuitive design that facilitates easy navigation and efficient workflow management.
-  **Automated Booking Processes:** Streamlines reservations with automated confirmations and updates.
-  **Personalization Tools:** Enables tailored recommendations and offers based on customer data and preferences.
-  **Comprehensive Reporting:** Provides detailed analytics on bookings, trends, and performance metrics.
-  **Security and Compliance:** Ensures data protection and adherence to industry standards and regulations.

4. The Evolution of Travel Solutions

The travel industry has undergone significant transformations driven by technological advancements and changing consumer behaviours. From traditional manual booking systems to sophisticated digital platforms, the evolution of travel solutions reflects the industry's quest for efficiency, accuracy, and enhanced customer experiences.

Historical milestones



Manual Booking Systems: Reliance on telephone and in-person bookings with limited access to real-time data.



Introduction of GDS: Emergence of Global Distribution Systems enabling centralized access to airline inventories.



Rise of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs): Digital platforms that offer self-service booking options to consumers.



Adoption of APIs and NDC Standards: Implementation of Application Programming Interfaces and New Distribution Capability (NDC) standards to facilitate seamless data integration and personalized offerings.

5. Traditional Travel Selling Challenges

The traditional travel selling has shifted from agent-centric models to customer-centric approaches. Traditional methods, characterized by limited information access and manual processes, have given way to dynamic, technology-driven strategies that prioritize efficiency and personalization.

Overview of key challenges



Data Inconsistencies:

Flight availability data can differ between systems due to multiple sources, system limitations and inconsistencies in real-time updates. As a result, travel sellers must remain vigilant in cross-referencing information from multiple sources to avoid booking errors and ensure the clients get accurate flight details.



Operational Inefficiencies:

Travel agents spend time switching between different systems. There is a need for more integrated tools or streamlined processes to boost productivity and minimize the risk of mistakes.



Customer Dissatisfaction:

Travellers are often frustrated by conflicting information and service delays. To maintain customer loyalty, it's essential to provide clear, consistent information and timely service, addressing any discrepancies promptly.



Missed Revenue Opportunities: Travel agents often rely primarily on Global Distribution System (GDS)s for flight inventory and pricing. However, this can result in missed opportunities due to limited content. Such as:

- **Exclusive Direct Offers:** Airlines may offer special fares or packages only through their own direct channels that aren't visible in GDSs.
- **Low-Cost Carrier Content:** Many low-cost carriers don't participate in GDSs, so their fares are invisible to agents using only GDS systems.
- **Dynamic Pricing:** Airlines can adjust prices in real-time on their own channels, which may not be reflected in third-party systems.
- **Bundled Fares:** Special fare bundles with added perks may only be available through direct airline channels.
- **Loyalty Program Integration:** Agents may not be able to fully leverage frequent flyer benefits or miles-based pricing without direct airline connectivity.

Key industry changes:



Shift to Digital Platforms: Increased reliance on online tools and platforms for booking and managing travel arrangements.



Enhanced Data Accessibility: Greater access to real-time data and comprehensive flight information.



Personalized Services: Focus on delivering tailored travel experiences based on individual preferences and behaviours.



Automation and AI Integration: Utilization of automation and artificial intelligence to streamline operations and enhance decision-making.

6. The Role of Aggregators in the Evolution

Aggregators have played a pivotal role in the evolution of travel solutions, acting as intermediaries that streamline the booking process and enhance user experience.

What do aggregators offer?

- **Consolidation of Offerings:** Aggregators combine offerings from various service providers, including airlines, hotels, and car rental companies, into a single platform. This provides travellers with a comprehensive view of available options, allowing them to compare prices and features easily.
- **Price Comparison and Transparency:** By enabling users to compare prices across different providers, aggregators foster transparency in the travel market. This competition often leads to better deals for consumers and encourages service providers to maintain competitive pricing.
- **Enhanced User Experience:** Aggregators typically invest in user-friendly interfaces and advanced search capabilities, simplifying the booking process. Features such as filtering options, map views, and customer reviews enhance the traveller's ability to make informed choices.
- **Personalization Through Data:** Many aggregators leverage data analytics to deliver personalized recommendations based on user behaviour and preferences. This means that travellers are more likely to find options that suit their needs, improving satisfaction and loyalty.

Integrating multiple content in a single window

To optimize the travel booking experience, it's essential to integrate various content sources into a unified platform. This approach allows travel agents to streamline their operations and offer enhanced services to customers. Here's a closer look at the key components involved in this integration:



GDS (Global Distribution Systems):

Networks that enable automated transactions between travel service providers and travel agencies. GDSs provide access to a vast array of travel products, including flights, hotels, car rentals, and more, from various suppliers.



NDC (New Distribution Capability):

A travel industry-supported program for the development and market adoption of a new, XML-based data transmission standard. NDC aims to enhance the capability of communications between airlines and travel agents, providing richer content and personalized offers.



LCC (Low-Cost Carriers):

Airlines that offer lower fares and fewer comforts, often providing services through their platforms. Integrating LCC content ensures that travel sellers can offer competitive pricing and a broader range of options to their customers.



Consolidators Content:

Content from various sources combined into a single interface, providing a broad range of options. Consolidators compile travel products from multiple suppliers, offering a comprehensive view of available options in one place.

10 ways aggregators benefit travel agencies



1. Unified Operations: Using a single platform that consolidates various content sources can reduce operational overhead. This reduces complexity and improves efficiency by eliminating the need to switch between multiple systems. Travel sellers can manage all bookings and customer interactions from one unified platform, saving both time and resources.



2. Automation: Bain & Company's survey of executives worldwide finds that companies report cost savings from automation of roughly 20% on average over two years¹. By implementing automation, travel sellers can reduce manual effort and errors, leading to more efficient operations and significant cost savings.



3. Efficient Data Management: Advanced data management capabilities ensure secure and efficient handling of data. According to McKinsey, businesses that implement robust data management solutions cut annual data spend by 5 to 15% in the short term & can double this rate long term². Handling large volumes of data securely and efficiently is critical, especially with regulations like GDPR. IBM reports that the global average cost of a data breach is US \$4.88 M³.



4. Regulatory Compliance: Ensuring compliance with industry regulations to reduce the risk of penalties. Solutions that incorporate compliance features can reduce the risk of regulatory fines. Adhering to varying regulations across different regions and markets adds complexity. Sources say that regulatory compliance can account for up to 15% of operational costs for travel agencies.



5. Personalised Experiences: Enhancing the customer experience through personalized experiences can make 78% of consumers likely to repurchase from the same company, according to McKinsey⁴. Understanding the client's preferences and providing customized travel solutions can set the agency apart. A survey by Google/ Phocuswright indicates that 57% of US travellers expect personalized experiences, and 36% are willing to pay more for tailored services⁵.



6. Enhanced Customer Service: Businesses utilizing integrated systems can experience an increase in customer satisfaction scores. Quick and accurate responses are critical for maintaining client loyalty. With integrated systems, travel sellers can deliver timely and precise information, significantly improving the overall customer experience.



7. Competitive Advantage: Aggregators help agencies stand out by offering advanced tools such as dynamic pricing, predictive analytics, and personalized travel recommendations. By utilizing these technologies, travel agencies can provide unique services that distinguish them from competitors, keeping customers engaged and satisfied.



8. Technological Prowess: Aggregators serve as intermediaries that simplify the integration process by providing unified platforms. They consolidate diverse booking systems into a single interface, reducing complexity for travel agencies and ensuring smoother, more efficient operations. Advanced APIs offered by aggregators can further streamline system connectivity.



9. Improved Accuracy and Speed: Integrated data platforms can enhance accuracy. Faster, more precise service delivery directly boosts customer satisfaction. With integrated systems, travel sellers can offer real-time updates and instant confirmations, reducing delays and errors. This not only streamlines operations but also fosters trust with customers who depend on prompt and accurate information for their travel arrangements.



10. Servicing Support: An essential aspect of travel aggregators is the servicing support they provide. Many platforms offer after-sales services, including assistance with itinerary changes, cancellations, and refunds. This support is invaluable, particularly in cases of unexpected events or travel disruptions. Having access to reliable customer service ensures that travel agencies can serve customers better.

Investment in Technology

Investing in comprehensive travel solutions ensures scalability and adaptability in a rapidly changing market. Key benefits include:

- **Scalability:** These platforms can handle increasing volumes of data and transactions as the business grows. The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) notes that scaling digital solutions drives significant impact⁶.
- **Adaptability:** The platforms are designed to adapt to new technologies and industry trends, ensuring long-term relevance. Modern technology can help businesses stay competitive in dynamic markets.



7. Cost-Benefit Analysis

Investing in a flight aggregator involves evaluating the costs against the tangible and intangible benefits it delivers. A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis highlights the value proposition of and driving revenue growth.



Cost:

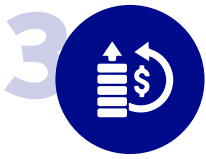
- **Initial Investment:** Costs associated with platform acquisition, customization, and integration. Additionally, content from low-cost carriers is not available on traditional GDS systems.
- **Operational Expenses:** Costs associated with Airline ADMS due to manual date change errors, as well as ongoing expenses for maintenance, support, and updates.
- **Training and Onboarding:** Expenses related to training staff and adapting workflows to the new system.



Benefits:

- **Revenue Growth:** Access to a wider range of flight options can lead to increased bookings and higher commissions. This growth is driven by high-quality content sourced directly from airlines, the seamless integration of airline ancillaries, streamlined servicing capabilities and automated margin management. Enhanced efficiency and customer satisfaction lead to higher booking volumes and repeat business, driving revenue growth.
- **Reduction in IT Costs:** Consolidating multiple systems into a single platform significantly lowers IT costs for travel businesses. By utilizing a unified solution, companies can minimize the expenses associated with maintaining various software and hardware systems. This reduction in complexity leads to decreased requirements for extensive IT infrastructure, which often involves costly servers, licensing fees, and ongoing maintenance contracts.

- **Lower Training Costs:** Modern travel platforms are designed with user-friendly interfaces and intuitive functionalities, which significantly reduces the training burden for new agents. With simpler navigation and clearer workflows, agents can quickly learn how to operate the system, decreasing the time and resources required for onboarding. This streamlined training process also minimizes downtime, ensuring that agents can start contributing to sales and customer service almost immediately.
- **Increased Efficiency:** The implementation of comprehensive travel solutions dramatically enhances operational efficiency by minimizing the time spent on manual processes and data management. Automated functionalities reduce the likelihood of errors in data entry, ensuring more accurate bookings and less time spent on corrections. By centralizing information and automating routine tasks, agents can focus more on high-value activities such as personalized customer interactions and strategic planning.
- **Enhanced Customer Satisfaction:** Investing in advanced travel solutions leads to improved service delivery and more personalized offerings for customers. By leveraging data analytics and customer insights, travel businesses can tailor their services to meet the unique needs and preferences of each traveller. This level of personalization fosters deeper customer loyalty, as clients feel valued and understood.
- **Scalability:** Comprehensive travel platforms are inherently scalable, enabling businesses to handle increased transaction volumes without a proportional rise in operational costs. As a travel business grows, its needs will evolve—ranging from more flight options to a broader array of ancillary services. A scalable platform can seamlessly accommodate these changes, ensuring that companies are not constrained by their technology.
- **Competitive Advantage:** In the highly competitive travel industry, leveraging advanced technology and comprehensive service offerings is crucial for staying ahead of the competition. Investing in a robust platform equips businesses with the tools needed to respond quickly to market trends and customer demands. This provides a competitive advantage that is vital in attracting new clients, retaining existing ones, and ultimately ensuring sustained growth in a rapidly evolving market.



ROI Considerations:

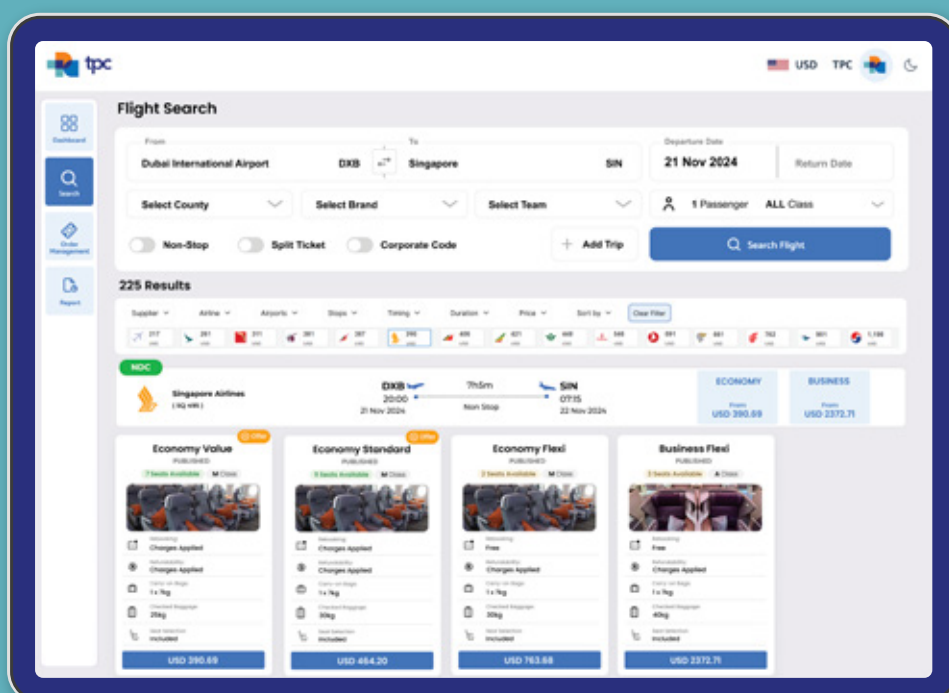
- **Short-Term Gains:** Immediate improvements in operational workflows and customer interactions.
- **Long-Term Benefits:** Sustainable growth through enhanced service capabilities and market positioning.



8. Iris Overview

In the rapidly evolving travel industry, aggregator platforms play a crucial role in streamlining operations and enhancing service delivery. Iris offers a comprehensive suite of features designed to meet current needs while positioning itself for future industry trends.

- **Advanced APIs:** Secure and efficient API integration ensures seamless data exchange. Iris uses industry-standard APIs to connect with various content sources, ensuring reliable and timely data transmission.
- **Robust Security Measures:** Ensuring data security and compliance with industry standards. Iris employs encryption, access controls, and regular security audits to protect sensitive information.
- **Scalable Architecture:** Designed to handle increasing data volumes and transaction loads. Iris' scalable architecture ensures that the platform can grow with a travel agency business, accommodating more users and higher transaction volumes without compromising performance.
- **Latest Schemas:** There are multiple schemas in use within the airline industry, and it is likely that airlines will update to the most recent versions. For travel agents, adopting a new schema requires significant investment in infrastructure, overheads, manpower, and time. With Iris, these investments can be reduced, coupled with an increase in speed to market.



Multiple Sources,
One Screen

Iris Features



1 Shop and Compare: Travel sellers can efficiently shop and compare offers from multiple sources on a single screen - GDS, NDC, LCC, and aggregators.



2 Selling and Servicing: Iris extends its capabilities beyond the Prime booking stage, offering a complete end-to-end solution. Servicing tickets with just 2-3 clicks, significantly reducing manual effort. Iris handles key post-booking tasks automatically such as date changes, refunds, upgrades, and responds to Order Change Notifications (OCN). Automation minimizes the risk of errors.



3 Pricing Engine: Iris empowers travel sellers with advanced pricing capabilities. Prices can be configured based on various factors such as distribution channels, carriers, routes, fare brands, departure times, etc. This enables travel sellers to maximize revenue and manage margins effectively, allowing for the development of robust pricing strategies.

The screenshot displays the Iris Pricing Engine interface. The top section shows 'Pricing Rules' with a table of active rules and a 'Weekend Rule' graph showing a price increase to 54114.33. The bottom section shows a 'Booking Summary' for a DKB-SIN route, detailing fare components and a total price of USD 440.69.

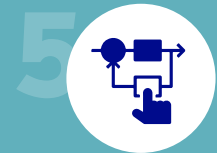
Rule Name	Departure / Arrival	Supplier	Status	Pricing Value / Type	Action
Weekend Rule	DXB	All	Active	0.00	
Winter LR 2 MTD	MEL, SYD, LHR	All	Active	50.00	
UK National Day	DXB, RGH, LHR, MEX, HNL	DX, BA	Active	2%	
Top destination Discount	GBR	All	Active	1%	
Advance Purchase	LON, BKK, MFC	All	Active	1%	

ORDER RULES	FARE SUMMARY
DKB-SIN	PASSENGER(S)
	ADT X 1
	Base Fare USD 356.64
	Fees & Taxes USD 34.02
	User Margin ADT 50 CHD 0 INF 0
	Original Total USD 390.69
	Grand Total USD 440.69

Pricing Engine



Order Change Notifications (OCN): Iris simplifies the management of flight schedule changes. With real-time updates, this feature prevents last-minute problems, improving customer satisfaction and loyalty. (*subject to supplier capabilities)



Content Control: Iris provides powerful tools for content management and distribution. It allows travel sellers to highlight specific suppliers or RBDs that align with business goals or promotional strategies. Travel sellers can dynamically show or hide RBDs based on factors like seasonality or special events.



Post-Booking Ancillary Services: Travel sellers can enhance revenue streams with Iris' post-booking ancillary services capabilities. Opportunities for upselling additional services such as seat selection, extra baggage or in-flight meals.



Commission Management: Iris simplifies the complex task of managing commissions. Travel sellers can efficiently manage and track Bank Settlement Plan (BSP) commissions.



Comprehensive Reporting & Forecasting: Travel sellers can gain valuable insights with Iris consolidated reporting and forecasting tools such as Destination Trend Reports, Seasonal Demand Forecasts, Profitability Analysis and Supplier Performance Scorecards.

9. Aggregator Industry Strategic Roadmap

As the travel industry continues to evolve, aggregator platforms in the travel industry are positioning themselves to meet future challenges and opportunities. Key areas of focus include:

- **Enhanced AI Capabilities:** Incorporating advanced AI to provide more personalized and efficient services. AI-driven analytics offer deeper insights into customer preferences, enabling travel sellers to tailor their offerings more effectively.
- **Expanded Content Sources:** Adding more content sources to offer a wider range of options. Continuously integrating new suppliers such as non-air travel products (hotel, car rental, train, insurance and bundle offers) ensures that travel sellers have access to the latest and most comprehensive content.
- **User Interface Improvements:** Continuous enhancements to the user interface for better usability. User feedback drives ongoing improvements to the platform, ensuring that it remains intuitive and easy to use.
- **Enhanced Integration Capabilities:** Developing more robust APIs and middleware solutions to facilitate seamless data exchange across platforms.
- **Expansion of Service Offerings:** Broadening the scope of services to include ancillary offerings such as hotels, car rentals, and travel insurance within the aggregator platform.
- **Sustainability and Ethical Practices:** Integrating sustainable options and promoting ethical travel choices to align with global sustainability goals.
- **Global Expansion:** Extending the reach of aggregator platforms to new markets and regions, ensuring compliance with local regulations and catering to diverse customer needs.

10. Conclusion

Flight aggregators play a crucial role in the modern travel industry by consolidating diverse air content into a unified platform, thereby enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of travel agents. By addressing the challenges of data integration, technological complexity, and evolving customer expectations, aggregators enable travel agents to deliver superior customer experiences and drive business growth. As the industry continues to evolve, embracing advanced technologies and strategic integration will be key to maintaining a competitive edge and achieving long-term success.



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12. About TPConnects

TPConnects Technologies is an IATA-certified, global travel content aggregation and distribution technology company. TPConnects provides modern air retailing products that transform content distribution for airlines and travel sellers, through swift, seamless and smart solutions. TPConnects helps travel industry players streamline their operations, increase revenues, and enhance the customer experience.

TPConnects is granted Airline Retailing Maturity status under International Air Transport Association (IATA) Airline Retailing Maturity (ARM) programme. TPConnects has also received IATA ONE Order Certification and IATA Financial Gateway (IFG) Certification.

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