

The GDS in its latest avatar – the Universal API

A universal application programming interface will not only be innovative, but the presence of a single interface can help enrich user experience and results says Anil Porter

In an ever changing, highly dynamic environment, the travel industry is forever demanding an innovative approach for a holistic travel experience. To bring this to effect and in respect of existing GDS technology, an additional access to a world of content and functionality through a single application programming interface (API) connection, is innovation.

There are many examples of innovation flowing when platforms are open and this fosters a robust travel industry that is in sync with technological advancements. The GDS that has consistently been relied upon throughout the evolution of the travel industry and forms the backbone of its basic form of function has also reflected this constant innovation. The GDS is arguably the most influential link in the travel value chain. GDS products and attitudes about travel technology have driven much, maybe most, of the way suppliers, TMCs and many corporate buyers think about the travel technology landscape.

On another note, although not explicitly stated, the GDSs have often been criticised en masse as culprits on the 'gatekeeping' front. The entry of the Universal API earmarks an important achievement in running travel content businesses. The Universal API is an answer to completing that much awaited seamless travel experience that starts with the trade agents and finishes with the end consumer. Designed to run alongside existing API solutions for an efficient and low-risk implementation, the Universal API is the next driving trend and avatar of the GDS.

It is interesting to note the 'value add and benefits' which Universal API brings to the forefront. How a single interface can boost

your efficiency and time to market, given the rapid movement between end consumers. The solution that can greatly reduce the time and money Travel Agents have been spending on IT, negates the need for OTAs, travel agencies etc. to manage and maintain multiple content integration.

Dynamism of the GDS was proved with the various audiences the GDS addressed; the traditional player, TMCs, e-tourists both B2C and B2B. Web capabilities have enriched the user experience for the e-tourist as GDS functionality has allowed users to build personal itineraries. On the other hand, in the case of business travel, online agencies are still outperformed by corporate travel agencies, who continue to play a vital role as a distribution channel.

Universal API as a revolutionary approach presents a gigantic revenue opportunity for airlines to partner with the GDS and Travel agents and be enabled to drive additional point-of-sale. The Universal API also can aggregate content and related services from GDSs, low-cost carriers, high-speed rail operators and hotel content with depth of regional content.

Naturally the opportunity is the same for the non-air or the Hotel industry. It is expected that non-air will be exposed to explosive growth through leveraging such new technology as it represents a path leading to greater opportunities for up-sell and cross-sell revenues for travel retailers and suppliers, and greater satisfaction for traveller.

In essence, the Universal API will enable travel distributors to create one single integration for deployment on the Web, on travel agency desktops or within mobile



applications. And more so, this marks a peak in the technology evolution trends.

In conclusion, complexity will not go away even as the travel industry simplifies. Travel is a business that grows and hence demands constant re-invention that will become the norm in the world of travel technology. UAPI is the only tangible offering currently available in the market space which has a real potential to bridge the gap between increased business opportunity and increased technology and process complexity.



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