



How to create a positive passenger experience at the airport

Discover how airports around the world are leading the way with a positive passenger experience by optimising untapped resources & disruptive technologies.

Airports around the world are leading the way with a positive passenger experiences during and post pandemic.

If there's one thing an airport can't survive without, it's passengers. So when the COVID-19 pandemic struck and passengers were confined to their homes, it's no surprise that airports' revenues plummeted. As we move into the recovery period, airports are under increased pressure to cut costs and claw back revenue. Still, they also have the challenging task of restoring passengers' confidence in air travel, getting them back to the airport and encouraging them to spend.

Here we will look at how some airports around the world are leading the way with a positive passenger experience.



Creating a positive passenger experience by putting the airport passenger first

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a lot of change, and it's fair to say that passengers aren't the same as they were before. Behaviours have evolved, and priorities have changed, so airports must revisit any planned investments and strategies to ensure they align with the post-pandemic passenger needs.



It's also essential to look at the airport journey from a passenger perspective, which they're doing at Hamburg Airport. "One area we're looking to improve is cross-functional data links for check-in, security and boarding. We will have to work together as an industry in the interest of the passenger because the passenger doesn't understand why they need to show their passport 5 times before they board or their vaccination status 5 times when they land. We need a common-sense approach in view of how the passenger sees it, and that is something we're challenged with as we look ahead," said CEO Michael Eggenschwiler at the International Airport Review Online Summit.

For most passengers, sustainability and safety at the airport are two of the biggest concerns to come out of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Nazareno Ventola, CEO & MD of Bologna Guglielmo Marconi Airport, explained at the Summit, "We know the world is different, priorities have changed. In Europe, the awareness of the fact that our aviation business needs to be sustainable as a whole is something that was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. From a passenger's point of view, we know that they will be much more safety-conscious than before. This awareness is there to stay as it was for security after 9/11. There's a new dimension of travel that will stay for the next 10-20 years at least, so we have to address the issues for passengers and our stakeholders. The ecosystem is changing, and we must be proactive and propose different solutions."

Along with the need to prioritise safety and sustainability at the airport, it's important to remember that passengers still want to have fun. Post-pandemic, there is an excellent opportunity to reinvent the passenger experience and make it even more exciting than it was before with disruptive technology and digital transformation.



Investing in disruptive technology to lead the way with positive passenger experience

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly prompted a faster uptake of technologies such as biometrics and queueless journeys. Essentially, it has forced airports to rapidly adopt better design and technology features that may have taken years to implement.



Examples of some of the key technologies disrupting the airport industry include:

- Contactless Fast Track Bookings and Queueless Journeys
- Biometrics
- Airport ecommerce
- Robotics and automation

At the height of the pandemic, many airports implemented, fast-tracked and upscaled these disruptive technologies in response to the immediate situation. But, as we move into the recovery period, it's essential to consider how these technologies fit into airports' 5 and 10-year plans.

"There's no point building something that needs to be redone in 2 years," said Karin Gylin, Head of Strategic Development and Innovation at Swedavia AB, during an IAR Summit Panel.

Post-pandemic airport technology needs to be sustainable, futureproof and serve long-term benefits as part of a complete digital transformation strategy.



Digital transformation

Digitalisation must be one of the pillars of airport strategies for the next few years to enable us to be more flexible and more adaptive to business evolution," said Nazareno Ventola (Bologna Guglielmo Marconi Airport) at the IAR Online Summit.

And he makes a good point. While many airports are busy implementing cost-efficiency programmes, there is still a growing trend for technology investment and digital transformations.

Digital transformation benefits the airport in terms of increased efficiency and contributes to a positive passenger experience by facilitating a more personalised and seamless journey through the airport.



In our article '[How leading airports are delivering their digital transformation journeys](#),' we look at the necessary steps to achieving a successful digital transformation, which may incorporate some of the following technologies:

[Airport ecommerce](#) - selling flights, hotels, holidays & all travel ancillaries in a single basket

Contactless airport technology - fast-track e-tickets & virtual queuing anywhere in your airport

Digital customer support services - live chat & touchless feedback to limit the need for staffed support desks

Passenger analytics - Data collected from all touchpoints to help airports get to know their passengers & make better passenger-centric decisions .

While there are many [benefits of digital transformation for airports](#), especially in terms of improving passenger satisfaction, efficiency and revenues, there are also various [challenges that airports must overcome](#). Hence, why it's so important to have a forward-thinking airport technology partner like Rezcomm.



Tapping unused resources

With airports under increased pressure to drive revenue while keeping costs to a minimum, it's essential to look at tapping into unused resources to create a positive passenger experience. Experiential retail is one example of how you can lead the way with a positive passenger experience. Many airports are now digitising the airport retail and duty-free experience and fusing it with ecommerce to make it more seamless, attractive and enjoyable for passengers. Similarly, we are seeing an increasing number of airports **diversifying food and beverage offerings to accommodate the post-pandemic traveller.**



Enabling passengers to pre-book their food and beverage orders through the airport's ecommerce website or app prevents lengthy queues, optimises dwell time, and with the addition of gate delivery, makes for a luxury experience that is sure to win passengers' loyalty.

On the topic of luxury airport experiences, it's worth considering any services and resources that can be bundled together as a reimagined VIP passenger package. For instance, valet parking, bundled with contactless fast track tickets and an airport lounge reservation, offers a seamless, luxury airport experience that passengers will be willing to pay more for.

And let's not forget the importance of optimising airport space. Interestingly **72% of travellers say there is too much retail in the airport.** So, put the airport passenger first and consider (or even ask) what they want to see at the airport. Perhaps business travellers would benefit from meeting room hire or co-working space? Or how about using the airport as a stage for local brands as suggested by Dr Michael Kerkloh (Former President & CEO of Flughafen München GmbH) at the IAR Summit.

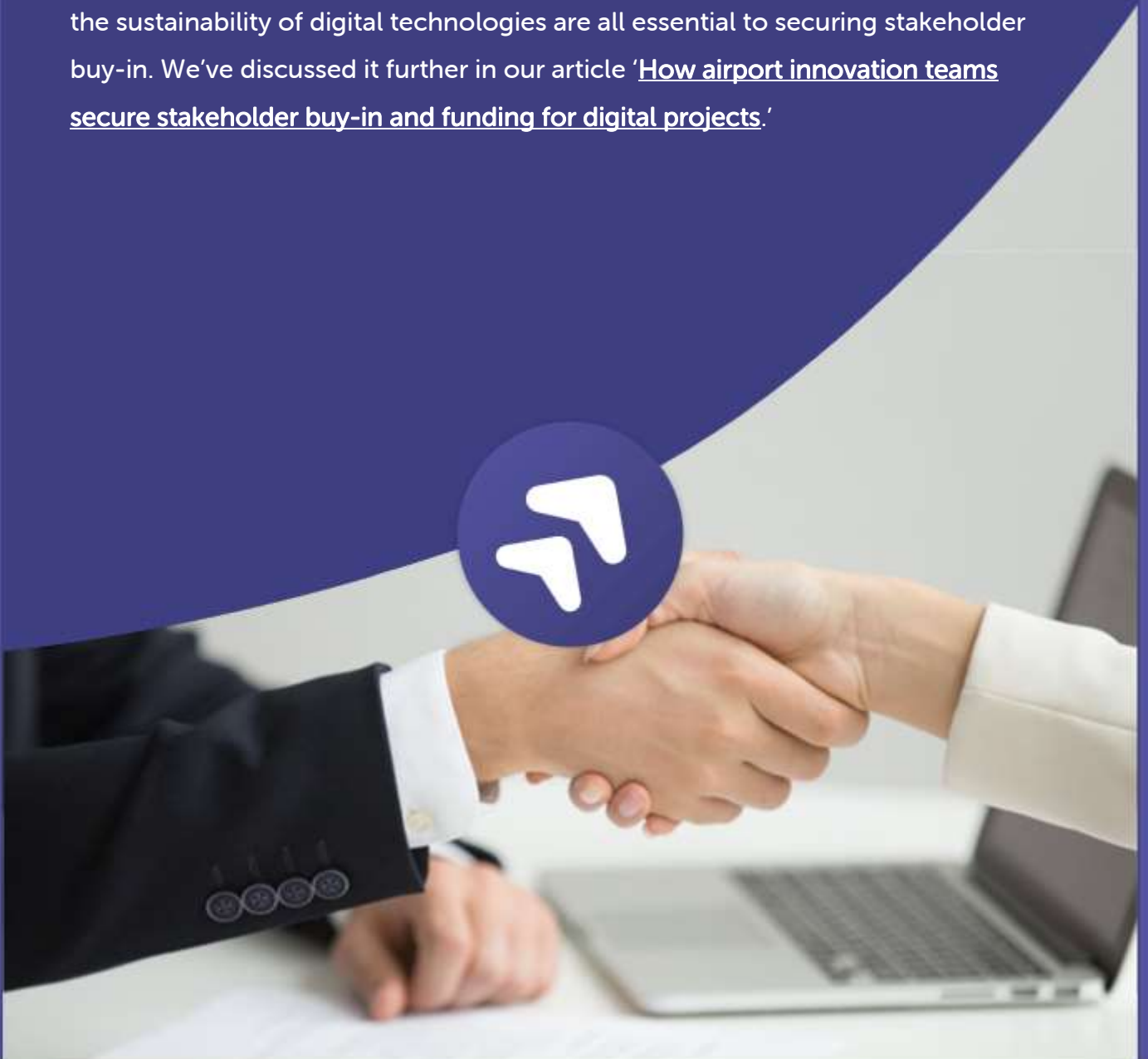
While these ideas are sure to get the creative juices flowing, we appreciate that airports are under increased pressure to keep costs to a minimum. So, if you're looking for tips on doing more with less, check out our blog post, **'how to drive innovation at a cash-controlled airport.'**

Stakeholder buy-in

Here at Rezcomm, we champion the benefits of disruptive technologies and digital transformation in evolving and enhancing the passenger experience. But we also understand how tricky it can be to get all stakeholders on board.

As Nazareno Ventola (Bologna Airport) said at the IAR Summit, there is a need to 'grow better and in a more harmonic way with shareholders and stakeholders,' highlighting the importance of a more collaborative approach to change and innovation at the airport.

Involving stakeholders early on, demonstrating how digital innovations can achieve the three e's (earnings, efficiency and passenger experience) and proving the sustainability of digital technologies are all essential to securing stakeholder buy-in. We've discussed it further in our article '[How airport innovation teams secure stakeholder buy-in and funding for digital projects.](#)'



Let's talk

Wherever you want to go next. Let's go there together. Our experienced ecommerce team is on hand to manage the entire process from set-up to go-live.

We will work with you to set out a project plan and ongoing management strategy to maximise sales and customer satisfaction.

Please get in touch to discuss your requirements.

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