

2021 AIRLINE DIGITAL TRENDS REPORT

Insights from 23 airline digital leaders

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Iztok Franko is passionate about digital marketing and ecommerce. He has more than 10 years of experience as a CMO and CIO in airline, travel and multinational companies. He currently works as a strategic digital marketing and ecommerce consultant for global airline and travel brands.

Through practicing true data-driven digital marketing, testing several ecommerce processes and experimenting with different team management approaches, he has established a conversion optimization framework that works.

Iztok also regularly writes and speaks about travel and airline marketing, ecommerce, conversion optimization and ancillary topics.

He is the founder of <u>diggintravel.com</u>, a content platform for smarter travel marketing.

Iztok is also a mentor and instructor at Diggintravel Airline Digital Retailing Academy.



ABOUT DIGGINTRAVEL

Diggintravel is a content platform designed for airline ecommerce and digital marketing professionals.

Diggintravel was built to help digital marketers in the travel industry, especially airline professionals who run and manage online sales.

We provide in-depth insights and research on airline ecommerce and digital marketing. Diggintravel specializes in airline conversion rate optimization and ancillary revenue disciplines, and by combining both helps airlines become true digital retailers.

If you are an airline looking to grow your online sales; we can help you with tailor-made workshop for airlines, advanced analytics designed for airline booking funnel and conversion optimization consulting services.

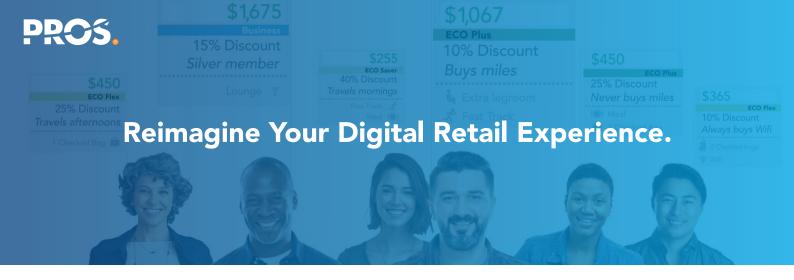
In cooperation with PROS, Diggintravel has developed the first-ever Airline Digital Retailing Academy. The Academy is the best resource for digital training for airline industry professionals.



ABOUT THE SPONSOR

PROS Holdings, Inc. (NYSE: PRO) provides Al-powered solutions that optimize selling in the digital economy. PROS solutions make it possible for companies to price, configure and sell their products and services in an omni-channel environment with speed, precision and consistency. Our customers, who are leaders in their markets, benefit from decades of data science expertise infused into our industry solutions.

Today, PROS expertise spans across airline revenue management, groups sales, dynamic pricing, digital retail and distribution. PROS solutions power 80 percent of the airline market, 57 percent of the world's airline traffic and over 2 billion airline tickets sold a year. PROS is also IATA NDC Level 4 Capable.



Who We Are

If you don't already know us, PROS optimizes every shopping and selling experience an airline owns. PROS Platform for Travel optimizes revenue and costs while improving the customer experience around shopping, booking, and managing air travel. It enables airlines to transform legacy processes and move to a more seamless shopping, booking, and trip management process for air products across all retail channels.



Digital Platform Development



Complex Shopping & Booking Flows

How We Help Airlines

With a legacy of over 30 years within the airline industry, PROS supports carriers on their journey to digital retail. PROS customers benefit from decades of data science expertise infused into our industry solutions. Airlines, using PROS retail solutions have increased online revenue by 10%, mobile conversion by 500% and stopover conversion by 1000%. Imagine what we can do for you.



Customer Journey Mapping



Digital UX & UI Consulting

Digital Retailing Academy







An Academy Designed for Industry Recovery

Both PROS and Diggintravel have a mission to transform airline digital retail for the better. Together we bring a strong focus on customer experience and agile digital retailing as well as deep knowledge of how airlines create, distribute and deliver their products to travelers.

PROS aims to give back to the airline community by providing free access to critical knowledge, expertise and airline success stories. We want to promote the recovery and sustainability of the industry we love by supporting airlines through a dedicated scholarship program.

If you're interested in learning more, please visit https://www.diggintravel.com/academy or contact PROS at travelmarketing@pros.com.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION / FOREWORD

AUTHOR'S NOTE

If you are an airline digital professional and you made it to 2021, congratulations!

This is not meant as a tease. You, airline digital people, are the heart of our Diggintravel community. Over the last year, I saw many great people leave the industry. I would get sad every time I saw an airline person change a job on LinkedIn, or when an airline email was wiped clean from our subscriber database.

I was sad because I've met and even become friends with a lot of them. But there is a much bigger reason why I hated seeing digital experts leave our industry.

The main reason is that in 2021, the airline industry will need the best and the smartest digital people. Why?

2021 - THE MOST CHALLENGING DIGITAL YEAR FOR AIRLINES

In my 2020 Airline Digital Optimization Yearbook, I wrote about how airlines will need to do more with less. The "less" part of "more with less" was quite obvious. We saw almost all airlines downsizing their costs to prevent cash burn in 2020. IATA estimates that total employment by airlines decline by 35.5% in 2020.

The "more" part of "more with less" is the tricky part. COVID-19 accelerated digital transformation across all industries, and the airline industry was no exception. Even before the pandemic, many

airlines were playing catch-up, trying to fix their digital user experience. For many, providing a great digital experience on their website, mobile app, check-in, and in-flight entertainment system was too much to handle.

The pandemic increased expectations and set the bar for digital experience higher. Touchless, contactless digital experiences became the norm. This will put huge pressure on airline digital marketers to deliver in 2021.

How can airlines do more with less?

As I write this, most countries around the world have begun vaccination. Depending on how quickly everyone gets vaccinated, travel will be possible again sooner or later, hopefully before the summer season.

When that happens, airlines will fight to survive, with a focus on generating demand and revenue. Yet the pressure to meet customers' increased digital expectations will remain.

In 2021 airlines will face a difficult challenge. They will need to balance their short-term revenue-generating goals with long-term digital transformation initiatives.



DIGITAL BOTHISM - BALANCING SHORT AND LONG TERM

I ran across the concept of **digital bothism** when I was doing research for this paper. It's a term coined by two marketing experts, Mark Ritson and Ashley Friedlein (founder of Econsultancy).

In a nutshell, it's a much nicer way of saying "do more with less," or balancing the long term and short term.

Ritson and Friedlein talk about the need for "marketing bothism."

In marketing, we've seen the divide between the long brand-building approach and short performance marketing. The gap between "top of the funnel" and "bottom of the funnel" marketing. The difference between personalization and mass

marketing. Friedlein argues that marketers need to embrace a bothist approach and to have both a short- and long-term mindset.

Econsultancy's recent Future of Marketing survey identified balancing the long term and short term as a key challenge for 2021.

This couldn't be more true for the airline industry. I cannot think of an industry that has as much pressure on the short term as the airline industry does.

Yet the long-term challenges of mastering digital retailing and building digital platforms remain.



2021 AIRLINE DIGITAL TRENDS REPORT - INSIGHTS FROM AIRLINE DIGITAL LEADERS

One of my most important learnings in 2020 has been that solving complex challenges requires broad, non-specialized knowledge. This learning came from a book by David Epstein, Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World.

Epstein argues that specialists can flourish in socalled "kind" learning environments, which have recurring patterns and provide quick and clear feedback (like chess, golf), while generalists are better off if we're speaking about "wicked" learning environments. Wicked environments, are more volatile, unpredictable, and the ones where patterns are harder to notice. A broad set of skills and know-how make generalists better positioned to solve complex problems in wicked environments.

The environment in which airlines will operate in 2021 is definitely not a kind one. Solving complex challenge of balancing long- and short-term goals will require smart marketers with broad knowhow.

I don't pretend to be smart enough to provide you with all the answers. What I can do is to give you a broad perspective from our community of airline digital experts.

This is the goal of this report: to provide you with the perspectives of your digital peers and how they see the wicked 2021 airline digital world. At the beginning of January 2021, I reached out to more than 20 airline digital leaders and they provided us with their thoughts. On this occasion I want to thank them again.

We've started one other initiative to help airlines navigate the challenges of the digital world. In partnership with **PROS**, Diggintravel launched the first-ever **Airline Digital Retailing Academy in 2020**. With the Academy we want to provide airline professionals a modern learning platform to help them stay on top of the latest digital trends.

Even if I don't have all the answers to the challenges you face, I'm certain of one thing: continuous, intentional learning is the best way to find those answers. You will see how learning and brainstorming in a micro-community of airline digital professionals can help you become a better marketer in the second part of this report.

Enjoy the report!

Iztok Franko
Founder | Consultant | Mentor
Diggintravel Airline Digital Academy





2021 AIRLINE DIGITAL TRENDS

DIGITAL TRENDS WE SEE OUTSIDE OF ECOMMERCE AND DIGITAL MARKETING

At Diggintravel, we specialize in airline digital retailing. Digital retailing is an interesting concept that includes many different areas. In the airline world, we see it as a blend of ecommerce, digital marketing, conversion optimization, UX, ancillary revenue, revenue management, pricing, data and analytics.

However, digital has long exceeded the boundaries of digital marketing and website optimization. Over the last 25 years, many other digital touchpoints have become part of the travel customer journey. We've seen the rise of mobile devices and apps that empower travelers to find information anywhere, anytime. Airlines have developed chat bots, airport kiosks and in-flight entertainment (IFE) systems to engage with passengers throughout their travel journey.

We preach and teach about airline conversion optimization (CRO) here at Diggintravel. In a nutshell, CRO is a systematic optimization of the digital experience based on data, customer feedback and experimentation. We do airline CRO research and benchmarks every year, and we've seen our industry make great strides in this area. Yet even the airline digital leaders are doing digital optimization on their websites and apps only. Inflight entertainment systems have long been an isolated digital touchpoint – one we've failed to connect with other touchpoints throughout the customer journey.

It seems we're playing a catch-up game. As soon as we master one digital touchpoint, new ones appear.

NEW DIGITAL TOUCHPOINTS

COVID-19 has accelerated digital transformation and the adoption of new digital, contactless technology. Travelers' expectations for a touchless, self-service digital experience have risen significantly. People expect contactless check-in and baggage self-drop, and even the use of biometrics to remove friction from their travel experience.

This new post-pandemic behavior also brings opportunities. Airlines can speed up automation and self-service initiatives. These self-service initiatives remove friction and reduce costs, making them a win-win for the airline and for the traveler.

CONVERGENCE OF DIGITAL TOUCHPOINTS

New touchpoints also add another layer of complexity and data to the airline digital ecosystem. New data, like new touchpoints, is a double-edged sword. More data can help if we manage to collect, analyze, interpret and use it – or it can be overwhelming. Airlines need to leverage data on customer behavior across all digital touchpoints.

We still see data silos, data being collected within departments based on internal processes and organization. Digital marketing teams collect and use CRM, website analytics and social media data, while data from other touchpoints is the domain of other departments, like customer service, airport operations or in-flight experience.



For airlines to do real retailing throughout the traveler's journey, they'll need to understand and leverage data from all digital touchpoints.

One example is digital food and beverage preorder. Because of the pandemic, online food delivery services experienced a gold rush, driving food delivery app downloads up by as much as +88%. Several airports, like Schipol and Dallas/ Forth Worth Airport, have launched food and beverage pre-order initiatives.

Food and beverage pre-order is a retailing opportunity for airlines. Airlines have the most traveler data of anybody involved in the travel ecosystem; they know when a person buys a ticket, when he checks in, when he gets his boarding pass, when his flight is and from which gate he'll fly. Using this data and leveraging all digital touchpoints, airlines can present an offer for food and beverage pre-order at exactly the right moment.







DIGITAL TRENDS THAT AIRLINE DIGITAL MARKETERS NEED TO KNOW

When talking to digital leaders for this paper, we focused on airline digital marketing and digital user experience trends (you'll find insights from airline digital leaders in the next section).

However, we're including an overview of the broader digital trends we see developing in 2021 in this section. We won't explore them in detail; you can find more information about them in the references section.

It's important for airline digital marketers to know about these trends, though, as they will converge with their digital marketing world in the near future.

DIGITAL HEALTH PASSPORTS

Vaccination is the airline industry's biggest hope to contain the pandemic and enable safe travel again. Some airlines, like Qantas, will soon demand that international air passengers have had the coronavirus vaccine before they fly. Others have talked about a negative coronavirus test as a prerequisite for flying.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has developed a Travel Pass in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to enable travelers to store and manage their verified certifications for COVID-19 tests or vaccines. Singapore Airlines and Etihad Airways were two of the first airlines to start trials with a new digital health passport solution based on the IATA's Travel Pass framework.

Similarly, American Airlines developed the VeriFLY app, a mobile health passport. It will enable their passengers to provide results of a negative

COVID-19 test and other documents that are currently required for international travel into the United States.

AUTOMATION AND ROBOTS

Statista's Digital Economy Compass 2020 report shows that COVID-19 has prompted more robot usage around the world. We've seen new applications of robots in travel as a means of fighting the pandemic. Temperature measurement, disinfection, delivery to quarantine locations, and robot assistants are just some of the areas the travel industry has explored with robots.

AirAsia announced last year that they will start implementing robotic process automation (RPA). The airline plans to automate mundane and repetitive tasks, which will free up their workforce to focus on more complex tasks that require critical thinking and experience-based judgment. You can read in this paper about how one of our airline digital leaders from Turkish Airlines, sees robotic process automation as one of the key digital trends for 2021.

Additionally, airlines like Vistara in India are experimenting with robots that could serve as customer service agents in airports. Imagine an airline chatbot in the form of a robot, moving around the airport from gate to gate to help solve bottlenecks.





BIOMETRICS

We mentioned contactless self-service as one of the key trends evolving because of the pandemic. Airlines are leveraging biometrics as a key component of the contactless digital journey.

Etihad Airways and SITA are trialing a form of biometric check-in for their cabin crew at the airline's Crew Briefing Center in Abu Dhabi. Etihad will use facial recognition technology to identify crew members with the goal of providing their cabin crew with a seamless and contactless check-in experience. They plan to expand the usage of this technology to passengers in the future to speed up check-in and boarding.

Spirit Airlines, too, is introducing biometric checkin at some airports in the U.S. Their goal is to reduce face-to-face interactions between airport staff and passengers and increase efficiency. Passengers will be able to tag their own checked bags and use an automated self-bag drop unit equipped with biometric photo-matching. The airline's initial tests showed that the new biometric-based process was faster than the existing one by 70 seconds.

SUSTAINABILITY

The pandemic didn't only change our behavior; it also changed our mindset. It strengthened the movement for more responsible, sustainable travel and tourism. Airlines' current sustainability efforts include reducing fuel consumption, using newer,



more energy-efficient aircrafts, exploring alternative biofuels, and reducing plastic usage. We've seen airlines like Delta appoint Chief Sustainability Officers as well.

The new generation of consumers prefer to engage with and buy from sustainable brands. Airline digital marketers will need to understand and be aligned with their airline sustainability initiatives to meet customer expectations. They will need to incorporate sustainability in their messaging and explain to their audiences how the airline is addressing environmental concerns.

NO-CODE

Per Wikipedia 'No-code development platform (NCDPs) allows programmers and non-programmers to create application software through graphical user interfaces and configuration instead of traditional computer programming.'

The democratization of technology is another trend that has had a huge impact on digital marketing in the past few years. Martech expert Scott Brinker defines democratization of technology as:

"A progression of taking the power to create and discover out of the hands of an elite few and putting it in the hands of the everyday many."

Brinker writes about the transition from code to low-code and eventually no-code citizen developer platforms. Here is his full quote:

"With citizen developer platforms — tools that democratize the development of mobile and web apps — we steadily see the evolution from code, to low code, to no code, to eventually creation through experiences that don't even feel like a "builder" process, and how this maps across discipline experts, domain experts, power users, and regular users."

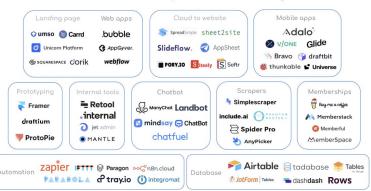


Why is this important to digital marketers?

Ten years ago, you needed a lot of developers to build a website, an online business, or an online shop. Today, platforms like WordPress, Wix, and Shopify allow you to do that with minimal development support.

Furthermore, platforms like Zapier or Airtable enable you to connect different digital marketing platforms and create integrated workflows.

2021 No-Code Landscape for Product Managers



By Arthur Mo

This means marketers can do marketing automation and create customer journey orchestration scenarios without a huge team of software developers.

At Diggintravel, we promote experimentation and building prototypes when it comes to new digital product development.

No-code tools and platforms enable airline digital people to build prototypes without significant development investments. For you as a digital marketer, it's important to be aware of the no-code landscape and to see if you can leverage some of these tools for digital innovation.

FUTURE OF WORK AND EDUCATION

The pandemic changed how we work and how we learn. By learning, I don't only mean formal education, but also all other forms of education. For example, during the pandemic we launched

our digital online learning community – Diggintravel Airline Digital Retailing Academy.

There's so much speculation at the moment on how remote learning and remote working will impact the travel industry. Will it reduce business travel? If so, by how much? These are the questions I hear from many colleagues in the airline industry.

There will be some impact on traditional business travel, for sure. Remote and home working are not the future of work; they are the present. Amazon claimed they saved \$1 billion in travel expenses during the pandemic due to this massive shift in how we work. Here's what travel tech expert Mauricio Prieto told me during a recent Diggintravel Podcast interview:

"I'm very interested in the so-called future of work, which also is now future of education. It has been fast forwarded, and now it's like really the present of work. It used to be work from the office, and then you were able to work from home maybe one day a week and now it's work from anywhere. Of course, not everybody, but a significant percentage of the work population has changed. That also is changing in terms of education. Not that everybody will want to do education online, but at least a segment of the population will look at online learning in a different way. And that has some relationship with travel as well. So that is an area that I'm interested in looking at: how the whole future of work and future of education impacts travel. You have very interesting companies like Selina which I think will be able to take advantage of this whole digital nomad trend. The way that these sectors interact will be interesting to see and see what the impact on travel is."

This new way of working and education will also open up new opportunities for airlines. Airlines need to recognize and address the new shapes of



work and education and their impact on travel. United Airlines provides one example; they're already testing out bundling flights with meeting spaces in a subscription product. Together with Peerspace, a provider of meeting and event spaces, United offers flights bundled with meeting space rentals.

Similarly, in the quote above, Mauricio mentioned a hotel startup company called Selina. Selina provides travelers with co-working spaces and is currently building a subscription travel service for digital nomads to suit this new era.

Forming partnerships and innovating with digital products in this new work, education and travel ecosystem is something that all airline digital marketers should explore in 2021.





INSIGHTS FROM 23 AIRLINE DIGITAL LEADERS

2021 AIRLINE DIGITAL TRENDS – INSIGHTS FROM 23 AIRLINE DIGITAL LEADERS

The goal of this paper is to provide you with insights into key airline industry trends from people who work in the industry, particularly the airline industry's digital leaders.

I'm happy that 23 airline digital experts agreed to participate in this project and shared their views on the future of the airline digital landscape.

As I read through all of these quotes (several times!), I tried to reflect to see if I could find common themes among the insights these airline digital leaders had provided. When I consolidated all the quotes, I found that I had a dilemma on how to structure the insights. Should I group parts of different quotes in areas that are connected to highlight the trends?

In the end I decided not to edit any of the quotes and to leave all of them in their original, full form. Each of the experts provided their unique view, and only the full quotes show their perspective on the 2021 outlook.

What I did to help you think about the 2021 airline digital trends was to identify the areas these digital leaders talked about, and the ones which I see as important in the future.

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Word-cloud from more than 23 quotes and over 6,000 words

Below are the 12 areas I identified as common themes across all quotes from our panel of airline digital leaders:

- Improving customer service
- Rebuilding confidence, driving demand and ancillary revenue
- Providing flexibility and removing friction
- Creating new digital habits and a touchless, contactless journey
- Growing your own digital platforms and direct distribution
- Self-servicing, biometrics and automation
- Digital DNA, design thinking, digital product development
- Leveraging data & analytics
- Conversion rate optimization (CRO)
- Digital bothism (doing more with less, maximizing marketing ROI)
- Personalization
- Evolution from user experience (UX) to digital experience (DX) to omni-channel customer experience (CX)

As you read through the insights, try to find these themes (and some of the trends identified in the prior section) and think about how you can embed them into your airline digital strategy.





SANDUN DISSANAYAKE Strategy Manager at Eurowings Digital

The global pandemic has made it more obvious than ever before that we as airlines have to act and steer our strategic initiatives more agile and closer to customer concerns. The volatile travel restrictions and guidelines have put a massive burden on our industry to find alternative options and effectively communicate these to our customers. Naturally in a crisis, not everything runs smoothly, but as we have quickly shifted our focus to improving customer service, we have seen a promising positive trend. The main silver lining here is that especially in these disruptive times, customers value direct contact with the airline. This creates a great opportunity to build loyalty and engagement.

The next challenge will be to convince people to fly again. We know from consumer research that demand is high, but concerns are equally high. Not only as a contribution to society, but also as a promise to our customers, we need to maintain and ensure the highest possible hygiene standards on board and on the ground. Communication through digital channels is a key enabler to ensure these standards are met. Beyond that, it will be crucial to assist customers at every step to drive engagement and improve the journey. We can then further utilize these moments to create interesting upselling opportunities.



KAI LING TING Innovation Lead at Etihad Airways

With the roll out of vaccinations globally, we're hopeful for a recovery to travel this year.

We believe there is pent-up travel demand among travelers, and a top priority for us is to instill travel confidence in our guests by delivering the highest standards of care and service through Etihad Wellness, our enhanced health and wellness proposition, so that when they are ready to fly again, Etihad will be their airline of choice.

Sustainability is also a key focus for us, and we remain firmly committed to sustainable development in aviation. Through the likes of the Etihad Greenliner Program, we will continue to support partnerships and adopt new technologies and innovation to ensure that travel is made more secure and sustainable.

In 2021, the three key digital trends I see are automation, advanced self-service and biometrics as well as the development of digital health credentials for travel.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen an increased sense of urgency amongst airlines and airports to accelerate their adoption of digital technology to ensure operational efficiency and flexibility. Travelers have also developed new digital habits and are now more willing to embrace self-service, the use of biometrics and sharing of data in exchange for greater ease and peace of mind when it comes to travel.

With social distancing, health declarations and contactless service likely to continue being the norm in 2021, I believe that developments in these technologies are only expected to accelerate even further this year and I look forward to seeing how they can improve the Etihad guest and employee experience.





AMIT SAGI Chief Digital Officer at EL AL Israel Airlines

As the CDO of EL AL, in 2021 I will focus on five key areas:

- Making the most out of the traffic we have.
 Conversion rate optimization, CRO. Demand is limited. I cannot allow myself to lose potential customers. I need to make the most out of the potential traffic.
- 2. Driving demand by giving tools to support customers' comfort to book; in addition to flexible changes, we provide tools like Time To Think or content on what is available for the destination to book and what restrictions are in place. We've also developed new ancillary options such as Empty Seat.
- Seamless, touchless, supportive journey.
 Making our application even better with a new personalized timeline, giving you alerts of changes in-flight, contactless boarding, entertainment on demand, etc.
- New ways to redeem points we opened an ecommerce site so that customers can buy products and services with points at special prices.
- Conversation of CDO (marketing side), CMO, CXO – I believe this is the time to converge those roles to support our view of the customer journey.



SAMUEL LACARTADirector, Digital Business at
Vueling Airlines

2021 is going to be a year full of challenges. After the experience lived last year, we want first of all to transmit confidence and all the sanitary guarantees to our customers so that they continue to resume traveling and trusting our sector. And for that, we are working on clear messaging and updated content and functionality in our digital assets so we can remove as much uncertainty as possible.

This will result in an even more digital, flexible and agile Vueling. The pandemic has shown that people want to have even more control over their own space and the management of their travel, so we will double the effort to make all the digital steps easy for the customer, from inspiration to understanding what is required to travel safely to any destination and, of course, offering digital means for customers to manage their reservations with flexibility if necessary.

Another important issue will be to help stimulate demand by identifying those markets and customer segments that are most willing to travel. We are ready to adapt our product development and marketing tactics depending on the opportunities that 2021 brings.





SERDAR GÜRBÜZSVP, Digital Innovation & Analytics Solutions at Turkish Airlines

The pandemic has made it easy for digital leaders to convince people that companies should perform digital transformation on all functions of their businesses, from product to HR, customer experience to operations. However, it is not easy for some sectors like aviation to make the necessary investments in digital while the revenue is shrinking by more than half and the recovery is not expected soon. Not surprisingly, this leads us to think of solutions which can cut costs very fast and have ROI time in less than a year.

In this regard, one of the simplest but most effective solutions is Robotic Process Automation (RPA). Most companies, including Turkish Airlines, had already started RPA projects before the pandemic, but we quickened the adaptation during this time. In 2021, we'll continue to have a great focus on RPA, operating the robot farm by a center of excellence which we built in 2020.

Another topic I'll focus on is customer data. During lockdowns around the world and Europe, Turkish Airlines was one of the top carriers in terms of flights operated daily. Many customers had to change their carriers and fly with TK. This brought many new customers to TK and caused a change in our customer data models. In 2021, we will focus on improving our analytics models and do our best so the new customers will keep flying with us.

The third one is about our fastest growing air cargo business, Turkish Cargo. They managed to carry 1 out of every 20 air cargos in the world. In order to manage this growth in their business, they need better insights, and we are committed to providing them that with our advanced analytics team.

Some of the key digital trends I see in 2021 are digital workplaces, online commerce and cloud. I believe many people, including me, miss their office, but it will never be the same again when we go back to normal. This leads to the creation of new tools to collaborate digitally and improvements on current remote working solutions. Ecommerce sites gained customers without spending anything on marketing. So many people experienced online shopping during this time, and this will continue. Lastly, adaptation of cloud solutions has also been positively affected during this time. It will benefit from increased interest by companies in 2021.



RAVI SHANKAR Chief Growth & Digital Officer at AirAsia.com

With the transformation of AirAsia.com from an airline tech platform to the No. 1 ASEAN super app, 2021 is the year where we transform marketing functions to growth functions by developing more touchpoints and more user journeys powered with data. We will use the data across 3 verticals:

- Travel
- Ecommerce
- Fintech

to engage the customers at every stage of the funnel, with activation and retention being the key.





JAMES MILLETT SVP of Digital & Marketing at Royal Brunei Airlines

One of the many things we learnt from 2020 is that predictions are tough! It was only 12 months ago that the industry was front footed on growth with more than one conference speaker touting that with a sprinkling of Artificial Intelligence, a splash of Voice Search and a dollop of Augmented Reality all airlines had the recipe for success.

With many planes still grounded, we should strive to stay grounded too. Yes, of course we 'think big,' 'dream the dream,' 'push the boundaries,' as our speaker friends would say. But if we're really getting with the program, 'more with less' and 'focusing on the simple things that matter' need to be the airline mantras of 2021. With this, my trend is simply that we'll see a sharpening of effort into common sense, commercial and considered applications of data across airlines. Areas in which I believe we'll see a notable behavioral change:

- Media plans Inevitably, budgets will be lower and therefore marketers still using digital glory metrics will be forced to question plans and granularity more than ever – doing everything won't be an option! Ultimately I believe this will result in material budget shifts towards brand away from 'digital signposting.'
- Digital acquisition An awakening that the goal posts will shift with the wealth of third-party cookie changes. Airline reliance on the old way that digital advertising worked will need to be reimagined with investments in first party data sets and new evaluation methods.
- 3. Revenue management With no baselines from 2020 this will be reimagined with a long overdue coupling and use of look-to-book data to support real-time pricing decisions. This partnership will grow and develop as

investments pay off across revenue management, digital merchandising, analytics and ancillary.

Welcome to the year of common sense, commercial and considered applications of data. That, of course, and a beach holiday. We travel types deserve it.



PETER POHLSCHMIDT
Head of Digital at Malaysia
Airlines

The key area of focus has to be to accommodate the travel regulations and technologies being put in place to facilitate international travel.

Vaccination and test results certifications, IATA's Travel Pass initiative and accommodating the unique requirements of each airline's home market need to be adopted. Since there isn't much clarity on the regulatory framework and so many parties are involved, planning for a solution is challenging. The airlines that make it easy for customers to plan and prepare for their trip will have a competitive advantage.

Another technology-led focus area is to facilitate the usage of all the travel vouchers our customers are holding in huge numbers. Whether EMDs, open tickets or any other form of voucher, there are still more online transactional tools to be put in place to make it easier for customers to use the credit balance they hold with the airline.

From a distribution point of view, online direct has obviously gotten a huge boost in revenue share, albeit at low volumes. While this will certainly correct itself back to some degree once the offline channels, corporate travel and the lesser ecommerce savvy segments come back, it is a good opportunity for airlines to sustain the online direct share at a significantly higher level than before the pandemic.





SARAH PANTHOU-PROVENSAL

Strategic Marketing - Retail & Ancillary Revenues at Air France-KLM

The year 2020 and the pandemic have definitively changed our world and our priorities, and this is particularly true for the entire airline industry. Focusing on the airline industry digital trends for 2021, we can easily observe a clear change of mindset.

In the context of heavy aftersales activities induced by COVID-19 turmoil, airlines will continue to invest in easy and robust aftersales solutions, often neglected in the past in favor of more trendy and innovative digital features. Finding the right information, being able to change tickets and options easily, being refunded on the spot, and customer-friendly claims will become an integral part of the customer experience and UX design hopefully. It is still very difficult for airlines to clearly display the conditions of flexibility for tickets and options, following the many changes of rules and successive open/closure of borders. Beyond pure airline responsibilities, it is still almost impossible to provide clear information to customers regarding travel conditions, vaccines, and COVID tests, which are still very fluid. For digital touchpoints, contactless services and interactions (contactless kiosks, QR codes, mail, pushes on apps) have made quick progress and will continue in the future.

In parallel, following strong expectations from customers regarding seat assignments, airlines will finetune in 2021 their seating policy (chargeable or not) and enhance accordingly the various options proposed to customers on all their (digital) touchpoints. Neighbor-free options (like middle seat blocked) were shyly introduced in the past by some airlines with the help of creative digital startups. Those offers will, for sure, be (re)assessed by airlines.

Finally, this sanitary crisis has definitively accelerated a change of mindset of travelers (already started before the crisis). Airlines will speed up their roadmap for sustainable propositions (if not already done) such as CO2 compensation, sustainable aviation fuel, multimodal journey, etc.



NOËLL VISÉE-WEVER Head of Strategy, Data & Intelligence at Transavia

The trends we have seen during this period (working from home, shopping online but also increasingly local, sustainability, etc.) have just accelerated like never before. However, consumers had to deal with more uncertainty than before, resulting in different needs during the crisis itself, and to which we had to adapt our (ancillary) product, with increased flexibility (flex as a product), travel options closer to home, and the security of package deals. We do see that as soon as the possibility arises (in terms of travel advice), the consumer is very eager to travel, and I expect the travel market to bounce back, though with more conscious travel.

Data & analytics have of course been called the holy grail for many years now, but they have definitely proven their worth in this crisis.

Especially in these extremely dynamic circumstances in which we had to be effectively flexible and continuously assess the many possible scenarios, data & analytics have proven to be unmissable – but as a key ingredient/means to an end in a bigger integral approach and leveraged from a business problem perspective, and not as a goal in itself (on a separate tropical data island).





A tumultuous and exhausting 2020 has come to an end. But while there've been green shoots of recovery, 2021 will continue to be a year of transition for aviation. Here's a shortlist of 5 'digital' trends that will get their due precedence over the rest:

- Accelerated product development/extension: A
 paradigm shift in digitalization will result in
 'digital' product managers spending more time
 refining and tweaking their existing platforms
 while developing new product extensions
 (shopping, etc.). A natural corollary would be an
 uptick in demand for experienced hands and a
 welcome delineation of digital from IT.
- 2. AI, IoT, AR, and Blockchain will no longer be buzzwords: While the usage at best has hovered between medium to nascent, do expect some developments and announcements to crop up in the latter part of the year. Digital marketing teams will be directly using AI that lies at the heart of their MarTech stack, which in turn will drive their campaign optimization and automation efforts.
- 3. Greater revenue share for direct channels: This has been a focal area of airlines for some time, but the post-pandemic world will only expedite the shift from traditional to direct streams. For the ones heading to the channel, however, you can expect your revenue targets to go up.:)
- 4. Ancillary focus: 2019 was a good year in revenue terms and helped in withstanding the shock of 2020. The focus will now be back as airlines continue to experiment with lower pricing in a bid to lure back travelers.
- Advanced passenger profiling (vaccines and testing): Lastly, if not the most topical, COVID-

related information will be integrated even further in the booking and check-in journeys of the airlines' websites and apps, to be further shared with airports and governments.

All in all, travel is an inherent need of mankind, and this is the hope which aviation looks forward to in 2021 as and when the airports open up.



ESAMATTI VUOLLE Head of Digital Commerce at Finnair

About product management:

Developing digital experience products requires enormous patience and skill to explain your discipline to senior leaders who have a product point of view. Everyone at the company has a product opinion, but little experience building it at scale.

About experimentation and data:

Honestly, it's not especially visionary; we just listen to the customers and do what they want. And what I mean by listening is that we experiment with things and trust on data which is not new oil but more like the sun to bring the customers' voice to life.

About customer expectations:

Customers of today want to be able to buy from any channel, to interact with any channel when it's convenient for them and still to be recognized as individuals and as Finnair customers.

About the future:

The customer of the future is looking for consistency. From awareness to retention, one needs to be relevant. I would postulate that in the future, the lion's share of purchase journeys will start from Google. It starts with people looking for answers or solutions to their problems, and we need to be able to onboard customers to our flagship store, Finnair.com, seamlessly to close the deal.





NADINE MEICHSNER
Consultant at Lufthansa
Consulting

Digitalization continues to play a tremendous role in the aviation industry. The circumstances in 2020 triggered an acceleration of changing, adaptation and thinking outside the box. Real-time data has become more relevant and will play a critical role in 2021. Understanding customers' needs instantly at the various touchpoints along the journey enables airlines to offer tailored solutions and to react quickly to changes along the customer journey.

Touchless travel, supported by new technologies such as biometrics, will be critical in regaining customers' confidence in travel. The shift to digital communication shows how new technologies, such as Al-powered chatbots, improve the customer experience by interacting directly with the customer. Insights into customer preferences help to offer tailored solutions before, during, and after each flight.

Therefore, customer-centric offers continue to be of high importance in 2021. Applying advanced analytics and artificial intelligence enables airlines to be a step ahead and to influence the customer decision. This is still a fairly untapped opportunity to gain a competitive advantage in the aviation industry. Thus, the interlinkage of the travel ecosystem disrupts the current value chain and steers a redefinition of business models, products and ways of working in aviation, tourism and transportation. The success of digitalization is mainly determined by the speed, commitment and openness for change.



PER LILIE Consultant, former Head of Loyalty at Qatar Airways, former Head of Digital Product at SAS Scandinavian Airlines

In what will be another challenging year for most airlines, focusing on customer experiences will be more critical than ever in 2021.

Health, hygiene, and safety is the new loyalty currency of earning trust. During 2020, many airlines claimed to be the most reliable one. 2021 will be the year to prove it. The moments of truth will be many when the most eager travelers share every step with their networks. Just like they are used to doing with Uber and Airbnb, they prefer to solve their customer service issues on their own and on their mobile. Digital re-booking, upgrades, and remembering and honoring customer preferences regardless of channel must be part of the new normal. Instant notifications on local outbreaks or changes of regulations will be preferred. And why not integrate with their favorite global mobility service to provide value both on the road and back home?

As we have learnt from other industries that are bouncing back, namely retail, we can expect physical and digital experiences to blend even more. The last few hours before takeoff will be critical to build trust and there's a lot of service design to be done. The touchless check-in, the socially distanced boarding, and the contactless payment onboard to upgrade a seat. For international travel, a lot of design thinking will also have to be done into guiding, handling, and validating ever-changing travel restrictions, digital, and manual health passes. It's a great opportunity for head offices and ground staff to show collaboration. Great experiences retain, and those airlines who have the right mindset and execution in 2021 will be the trusted ones beyond.





A year that no one will forget, 2020 brought with it a whirlwind of turbulence for the aviation industry along with the rest of the world. While we witnessed nationwide lockdowns, travel bans and a stalled economy, we also experienced a digital wave like never before. Whereas having a strong digital presence was earlier considered an added good, it now became essential for survival. IndiGo prides itself for its relationship with customers and audiences on social platforms – a result of constant improvisation amidst changing market dynamics. So, to take 2020's challenges head on, we took digital transformation to the next level by:

- Simplifying experiences through self-service options
- 2. Taking a customer-centric and customerempathy approach in services
- 3. Embracing automation to maximize digital potential
- 4. Marrying design thinking and tailored content creation

Brands must move towards creating proactive customer experiences by identifying and addressing hurdles in their way. We traced our customer's journey to improve our website and app experiences. To connect with them more easily, we launched support services on popular mediums such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, and also integrated our virtual chatbot with a human-like persona. Additionally, we went multilingual by launching our Hindi website. This approach is also reflected in our regional airport and in-flight announcements, connecting with tier 2 and tier 3 flyers. We leveraged heavily our social

media, creating opportunities for relatable, engaging conversations with our audiences during the lockdown, despite the physical barriers. We restarted operations by rebuilding our customers' trust, by campaigning about our hygiene practices and new services such as booking multiple seats for social distancing on the flight, among others. An efficient in-house team and the best industry partners have made it possible to adapt to the new normal. We aim to continue with this omnichannel digital-first approach for a sustained onward journey in 2021.



JOLANTA REMA
VP of Ecommerce and
Commercial Distribution at
airBaltic

There are 2 things that I see as particularly important this year:

- Customer re-acquisition strategies and tactics used. After COVID, product lines developed will form the basis for future growth. Direct distribution for many years has played a significant role in the airline distribution mix; thus, now in 2021, it's becoming a key to optimizing costs and maximizing revenues.
- 2. The COVID pandemic, with the overloaded customer support lines and huge increase in manual handling of ticket changes highlighted the need to prioritize all kinds of automation and self-servicing. Restricted physical contact accelerated growth in a number of digital savvy customers who expect real-time information and proper digital servicing in all steps of the travel journey. It is irreversible, so it needs to be addressed to meet customers' expectations and ease customer support lines.





ALEKSANDAR BOSKOVIĆ

Ecommerce Development Manager at Air Serbia

In 2021 we hope to use the increased focus on digital as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and further develop our ecomm and digital services so as to be closer to our targeted market segments. Several key projects, such as the mobile app, new booking flow options and the affiliate program, were launched in the pre-COVID period with an aim to penetrate the market more via online channels and to better understand customer needs. The success of these projects is serving as a foundation for the next step in the ecomm development strategy. Furthermore, after accessing the needs of users for a better UX/UI experience and the possibility to achieve an optimized and lighter system structure, in 2021 we will focus even more on developing new and redesigned online solutions, channel integration, decreasing dependencies on traditional systems and lowering system communication costs in the existing structure, thus providing a better user experience through an omnichannel approach.

We believe that automatization of pricing modules, machine learning and personalized offers will enable further growth amid the travel restrictions. This development needs to go hand-in-hand with what's being offered to the market so users can see additional value for their purchase. Air Serbia was and still is offering unlimited user flexibility for the change of travel dates, and we are bouncing back by listening to our user demands.

It will be interesting to see different models being tested out on the market, especially because customer price sensitivity is higher than ever. Some will probably try to test out the subscription model or other similar models, and this is also very attractive even for us; others will deploy different pricing structure models, yet the ecomm

team at Air Serbia and myself would rather stake our money on personalization. To put it simply, our focus is on accelerating the ongoing digital transformation journey.



ERIK
SCHOLLENBERGER
Project Manager of Digital
Experience & Ecommerce at
Lufthansa

Digitization has created an emancipated and well-informed customer who expects easy-to-use service on all channels, and the corona crisis is stimulating it. For us at Lufthansa Group, this means that both the organization and the business model have to be focused on the needs of the (digital) customer to create a permanent, hard-to-copy USP for Lufthansa in the market. Customer experience has become a significant driver in this process.

Every employee has the opportunity to contribute by repeatedly asking themselves:

How can I improve the customer experience for our customers?

Data-driven approaches and agile methods will support us in evaluating the given customer values and the adoption until the target values are reached.





I see the following key digital trends for 2021 in the airline industry. They are also common for other industries in the 'new normal' era.

- 1. Transition to the retailer subscription economy: According to benchmarking, around 55% of the top 125 airlines have already pursued at least one of the subscription initiatives, like loyalty programs, discount clubs, flight subscriptions, unlimited flight passes, and ancillary memberships in summer 2020. To me, the subscription economy is paramount for the 'new normal' time. On top of the well-known giants, like Apple and Amazon, I am inspired by HelloFresh (meal-kit subscription service) and Readly (digital magazine subscription). They have an amazing customer experience, and you see the growth of subscribers and share prices. Subscription offerings bring stronger relationships with the customers. Amazon Prime customers buy 133% more while being loyal members of Prime, and this is growing each year. This is where I see the future for airlines in the long term. 2021 will pave the path for this transition.
- 2. Customer-centricity and providing flexibility: One of the main customer needs exposed clearly in this crisis is flexibility. Flexibility concerns not only the period of travel but also the destination. All airlines in 2020 started to provide flexible cancellations and re-bookings for all their fare families. I strongly believe they will search for a long-term customer-friendly solution.

- 3. Simplicity of the digital customer journey: It is still way too complicated to book a ticket in comparison with a 1-click purchase on Amazon. It is still not easy to compare prices and have all the inspiration in one place. There are many technical restrictions and old legacy systems which make this complicated, especially for older people and people who traditionally use call centers and travel agencies. This will be a challenge to solve in 2021, and I see that airlines will learn from successful retailers a lot.
- 4. Omnipresence in people's life: Many airlines want to be more than just an airline. The best and most inspiring example for me here is AirAsia, who transitioned from a digital airline into a comprehensive lifestyle platform for everyone.
- Data analysis, machine learning, and personalization: Giving the choice of the right product(s) at the right time and removing complicated processes. It echoes my first point about the subscription economy.
- 6. Digital and mobile first: I am really inspired and will monitor closely this year two start-ups in the aviation industry: Flyr and virtual airline Green Airlines. The famous airline guru Erik G. Braathen plans to launch the new airline Flyr amidst the pandemic and put a mobile app at its core. Another airline has an even crazier idea green and "virtual", like Airbnb. I think the dream of airlines sharing business like Airbnb is in the air, so more and more experiments will follow.





YOUVRAJ SEEAM

E-sales & Product Manager (eCommerce - Commercial) at Air Mauritius

Let us bring the human desire to travel to life again in 2021. Making travel safer, more comfortable, and enjoyable through innovation, technology and use of digital will be key.

Health Passport

 IATA Travel Pass initiative to use Registry of Health requirements, Lab App and Contactless Travel App to securely manage, share and verify vaccine information or test data matched with traveler identities in compliance with border control requirements among governments, airlines, laboratories and travelers.

Touchless Passenger Journey: The new norm

- Use mobile app or airline website to check-in flight, add bags, and pay any applicable fees.
- At airport, use touchless kiosks to scan boarding passes from mobile device or printed copy, and print associated luggage tags.
- Biometric boarding or self-scan boarding passes at gate readers.
- Supply of wrapped hand sanitizer wipes as passenger boards the plane.

Destination Portals

 This becomes an easily accessible central source of all information related to a destination related to health, border and immigration, travel, airline, accommodation, activities, people and more. Most updated source of reliable information for any traveler.

Easy & Flexible (Re-)booking

 Airline, hotel, and activity providers must provide flexible direct and online booking and re-booking possibilities. Platform readiness for online payment through Travel Vouchers (issued during 2020) to ease the overall re-booking process.

Personalization

 Starting with personalized communication (email) through to personalized offers will help to build the trusted relationship required more than ever with the customer. Customer profiles and segments, personalized customer journeys all will contribute towards creating personalized digital experiences.

Conversion Rate Optimization

 Airlines and hotels need to tap into the acceleration of ecommerce and new customer behavior for online booking. Good opportunity for improving overall conversion rate by enhancing the digital customer experience using tools like Optimize, Optimizely, Monetate, Visual Website Optimizer and similar tools for A/B and multivariate testing.

Ancillary Services

 Considerable opportunity for ancillary services in the form of preferred seating, duo seats, extra seats, upgrade by bid, and subscription models like OptionTown, all through the airline website or mobile app.

Loyalty Shift: Better service for all

 Higher health and safety standards are the new currency for earning customer trust. Airlines, hotels and destinations must demonstrate their loyalty to travelers by demonstrating their commitment to health, hygiene and safety. Use their website or social media platform to visually showcase what they are doing to ensure safe and secure travel of guests.





MIKE SLONE
VP, Principal Travel Retail at
PROS

2020 was a year in which most of us could not have predicted and one that none of us will ever forget, even though we quickly want too. As many others have said before, with obstacles and challenges come great opportunities and this is especially true for airlines emerging from the Covid tribulation. In 2020, airlines were soberly reminded that without Customers, their planes sit vacant on tarmacs or are limited to transporting only cargo.

But, as every set back is an opportunity to learn, 2021 should be the year in which airlines reinvest in thoroughly understanding their greatest assettheir Customers. Covid has changed the travel industry like never before and amplified the importance of digital retailing while accelerating Customer expectations.

For airlines to succeed, they must be committed, more than ever, to ongoing research and processes that will allow them to understand each and every travel persona, targeted scenario, and multitude of complex, ever changing Customer journeys. These Customer-centric exercises are not something airlines should do once per year, but constantly, 24/7. The airlines that invest the most in listening and understanding their Customers will have the best foundation for success in 2021 and beyond.

As airlines begin to understand evolving Customer needs and design new digital products to meet their demands, the importance of having a flexible and easy to manage Retail platform will be be essential for experimentation and success. Airlines will need to take control of not only their digital retailing environment, but also ownership of new digital distribution channels.

2021 brings with it an immense opportunity and responsibility for airlines to listen, change, experiment, and innovate. I am excited to be part

of this industry and very much look forward to the progress that I believe we will see from airlines in 2021 and beyond. Now is the time of the Customer, Let's not let them down.



REMUS MORARU

Product Manager for

Optimizing Conversion Rate

& Digital Experience at Wizz

Air

I believe 'focus' is the right keyword for 2021. As the industry tries to find its path back to the skies, it will be paramount to focus on its core elements. That being said, digital departments will have a pivotal role in supporting the industry back to the skies.

Focus within the digital area will remain very much on customer experience, as consumers crave enjoyable experiences that are easy and memorable. New challenges are arising amidst this pandemic, starting from new regulations to changing customer behaviors, but also opportunities, specifically around mobile technologies and how those can help unwind the friction points in the customer journey that have been created in the last one year.



SIDDHARTH KINI
Product Owner at Emirates

Here is my perspective on the key focus areas and trends in the airline digital space for 2021:

- Unleash the 'X' factor in the customer eXperience by offering a highly engaging, personalized, real-time and seamless digital platform.
- Deliver enriched and bespoke products and offerings (B2C and B2B) that'll drive higher conversions and also facilitate unlocking new revenue streams.
- Build a fortified and robust digital platform that'll foster innovation, scalability and 'futureready' evolution, leveraging data and technology enablers.



HOW TO DO MORE WITH LESS – DIGITAL BOTHISM CHALLENGE

In the prior section, you read about "digital bothism," the idea of digital marketers being able to do both short- and long-term digital marketing. In 2021, airlines will face immense pressure to generate revenue, to focus on the short term. Yet we saw how the pandemic increased customer digital expectations and made airlines accelerate their digital transformation.

How do our airline digital leaders see this challenge? How will they address both short- and long-term goals in 2021?



RAVI SHANKAR Chief Growth & Digital Officer at AirAsia.com

Honestly, this is a marketing and tech problem.

Tech

- Short term Focus on contactless and safety, enable uploading COVID test documents in the app, and avoid the queue.
- Long term Enable products for the long-term, like hotels and stuff.
- Balance Priority and resource allocation is the key. CTOs must clearly define what is going into the next sprint and the resource must be allocated in such a way that they can move from airline tech to platform tech seamlessly.

Marketing

 The function of marketing doesn't change; they know how to generate demand. But the messaging will change. If you managed to crack the cross-sell, up-sell framework, the retention is taken care of. The additional function that has to be set up is product marketing, meaning, promoting the feature of the app.

- Short term Same as before, run promos.
- Long term You are not marketing the airline, you are marketing product (web & app).
- Balance If you have separate teams for this, no issue; if only one team, then how the marketing team is structured will matter more.

Priority Framework for Both Tech & Marketing

Survive – Enable – Innovate. Survive now –
enable the product and function to be able to
transform – and then comes innovation. You
don't want a sexy, cool feature now; it can go
down that road later.



NITIN SETHI Vice President of Digital at IndiGo Airlines

It's a great question. We have defined short- and long-term goals while keeping customer centricity in mind. Digital marketing has two parallel goals: increase reach and retention. Also, to create topical content and have meaningful conversations across channels with our customers. Building confidence and making customers travel has both short- and long-term aspects which gets measured while keeping customer segmentation in mind. For us, customer empathy plays an important role in the balance between creating demand and direct channel strategy. Social listening and surveys have done wonders for IndiGo to command the leadership position in aviation in India.





MEHAR SRIDHAR AVP of Ecommerce and Digital Marketing at Jazeera Airways

Your question highlights the key dilemma that digital product owners like us face, especially in smaller airlines. While the bigger ones (both legacy and LCCs) can afford to set aside resources (people and energy) and pursue projects that have 6+ month timelines, smaller ones and leaner ones don't have the same luxury. We tend to pursue revenue more.

But to respond to your question, airlines in the post-vaccine world will chase revenue in a bid to shore up lost top-lines and bottom-lines. Plain and simple. Any products that are projected to give additional revenue or bring in more will take precedence.

This will then be counterbalanced by BKNG (booking) and CKIN (check-in) processes that will incorporate proof of vaccine, testing, etc. (not revenue, but customer experience that will help cut long lines at the airports – both departure and arrival).

Any other project will take a backseat and will have to wait once the initial tsunami dies down a bit. The larger airlines (as stated above) will use their additional strength to pivot into product extensions like shopping, etc., like AirAsia and Malaysia Airlines have done recently.





THE FUTURE OF AIRLINE DIGITAL JOBS AND EDUCATION

AIRLINE DIGITAL JOB TRENDS - WHAT KIND OF PROFILES ARE AIRLINES LOOKING FOR?

By now you've read about the digital trends we see at Diggintravel and learned how airline digital leaders see the digital future unfolding.

Yet trends and ideas are one thing, while what airlines are doing in practice is often very different. This year especially, because of the pressure our industry is facing to prevent cash burn, it will be difficult for airlines to execute their long-term digital strategy.

How can we see where airlines will actually invest? Sometimes, new job roles and openings are a good indicator of not only how airlines see the future, but where they are actually investing. I can imagine how hard it is currently for airlines to invest in new jobs, so any new investment is well thought out and shows where the focus is.

DIGGINTRAVEL'S AIRLINE DIGITAL JOB BOARD INITIATIVE

Back in September 2020, one of our Diggintravel community members, Remus Moraru (Remus also provided insights for this paper), came up with a great idea.

The idea was to connect our community of more than 5,000 airline digital professionals with airlines looking for talent. I loved the idea, and this is how the first-ever Airline Digital Job Board was created. The Airline Digital Job Board is a non-profit initiative, with only one goal: to help the airline industry recover by connecting people and sharing positive news.

Since then, we've posted more than 90 digital jobs for airlines from all over the world.

Contact us



Academy

Resources

This is our initiative to help airline digital and e-commerce professional find new opportunities. We want to connect our Diggintravel community of great digital pros with airlines that are looking for new talents.

If you are an airline and want to let our community of more than 5.000 digital pros know about your new opening, you can submit it via the button below. Our team will review, approve and reach out to the Diggintravel community!

Strategy Manager

SAS - Scandinavian Airlines @ Solna, Stockholm County, Sweden

Sr Analyst, Data and Reporting

Frontier Airlines @ Denver, USA

Senior Product Manager, Ancillary and Analytics

Frontier Airlines @ Denver, USA

Business Transformation Manager

VivaAerobus @ Mexico City, Mexico

Senior Manager Digital Strategy and Innovation

Air New Zealand @ Auckland, New Zealand

Find Airline Digital Jobs & Opportunities

https://diggintravel.com/airline-digital-jobs



ANALYSIS OF 93 AIRLINE DIGITAL JOBS

Now, let me get back to our question: where will airlines invest in 2021?

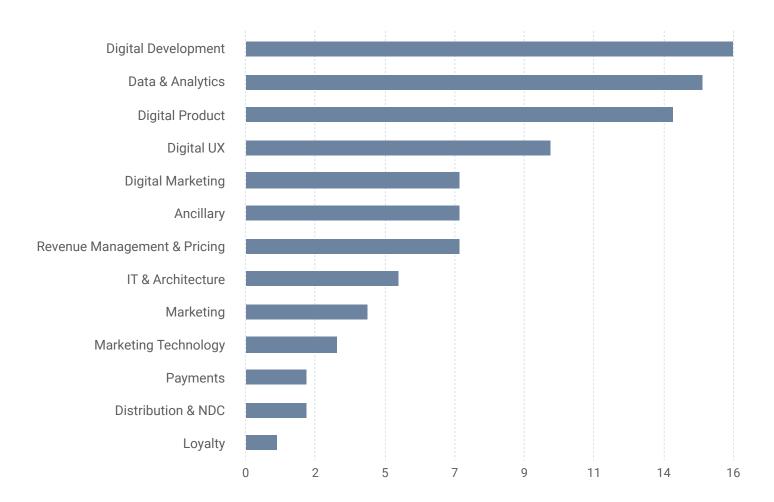
Even in what might be the most difficult times our industry has ever faced, some airlines are investing in new roles. To try to figure out where the investment will be, we analyzed 93 airline digital roles published on our job board.

Here is the full chart, showing what kinds of new roles airlines are investing in.



Word-cloud from 93 published airline job titles

Diggintravel Airline Digital Job Board - Jobs By Area





We can see that core digital roles are at the top of the list. By core digital roles, I mean digital development, digital product and UX roles. You read the quotes from many of our airline digital leaders who think the pandemic is an opportunity for airlines to strengthen their direct distribution. To be able to do that, airlines will need to invest not only in their digital platforms, but also people and skills to manage the platforms. Our analysis shows airlines are doing that.

We see the need for a lot of developer roles to build and optimize the digital platforms. Digital Tools Web Developer, Software Developer, Mobile App Developer, and Frontend Developer are some examples of listed developer roles.

However, technology doesn't solve business problems by itself; people who use digital tools are needed for that. Digital product roles like Digital Product Owner, Digital Portfolio Manager, and Digital Solutions Manager make sure the platforms are built to support the airline's business goals.

Data and analytics is another investment area our digital leaders identified for 2021. Finding actionable insights in data and being proactive are crucial to understand our customers and for digital retailing. Data Architect, Data Engineer, Data Scientist, Data Analyst, and Customer Intelligence are the typical data roles we see on our job board. These kinds of data roles sounded futuristic five or ten years ago, but are now integral to how airlines operate.

DIGITAL BOTHISM AS SEEN IN OPEN AIRLINE ROLES

We've talked a lot about digital bothism, the challenge of doing things for both the short and long term, in this paper. You can see it in the airline roles posted on our job board as well. Investment in digital development, data science, and advanced analytics is a long-term investment. For many airlines, taking control over their digital platforms and data is a strategic goal.

But you also saw that the digital leaders talked about how 2021 will be all about the focus, and how all projects that save cost or have immediate revenue impact will be prioritized. This is why you can see revenue management, pricing and ancillary revenue roles right after digital product roles in our analysis. It's no coincidence that data and analytics are imbedded in a lot of ancillary and revenue management roles. We talked about how leveraging data to understand customer touchpoints will be crucial to generate retailing opportunities. You can see this line of thinking in roles like Ancillary & Revenue Analytics Operations or Revenue Management Operations Research.

The pandemic will reshuffle the way people travel. New travel products and partnerships, even new business models, will occur. Mauricio Prieto talked about the future of work, about the future of education. He also talked about the digital nomad trend and how some companies are taking advantage of it by building new innovative products.

Being fast and agile in taking advantage of these kinds of opportunities is something airlines will need to do in 2021. We already see some airlines addressing that. Ancillary strategy, partnership and package roles are all areas that airlines are investing in, and they will continue to invest in these areas in 2021.



YOUR DIGITAL SKILLS FOR 2021 AND BEYOND

The airline industry wasn't the only industry that was disrupted in 2020. The pandemic changed the learning and education industry drastically as well. Everybody who's going through the experience of helping their children with home schooling can confirm that.

However, it's not only our children's education that has changed; we as adults and professionals must change how we learn as well.

I believe that the pandemic will change the way we think about learning and education on **two levels**.

1. WHAT SKILLS DO YOU NEED FOR THE FUTURE?

The simple and the correct answer is, nobody knows.

Last year the World Economic Forum (WEF) published an article titled "We need a global reskilling revolution – here's why." In the article, they claimed that because of the impact technology has on jobs, there is a need to reskill more than 1 billion people by 2030.

The World Economic Forum states that reskilling should focus on future areas of job growth: care, engineering and cloud computing, sales marketing and content, data and AI, green jobs, people and culture, and specialized project managers.

What surprised me even more was this statement in the article:

"Forty-two percent of the core skills within roles on average are expected to change by 2022."

The main takeaway we can get from this is that we don't know what exact skills or competences we'll need in two years' time.

Learning as a key skill

However, based on the WEF's finding, I strongly believe there is one skill that you will need in order to be ready for the future. That skill is learning, because yes, learning itself is a skill. If you want to become ready for the future, you need to become a continuous, intentional learner.

Continuous learning starts with the mindset. You need to be open to learning about new things, open to change and open to accepting that learning never stops. Curiosity and willingness to learn will become the most important traits of a modern marketer.

McKinsey has called intentional learning the most fundamental skill, and here is how they describe an intentional learner.

"While intentional learners embrace their need to learn, for them learning is not a separate stream of work or an extra effort. Instead, it is an almost unconscious, reflexive form of behavior. Learning is the mode and mindset in which intentional learners operate all the time."

2. WHAT IS THE NEW WAY OF LEARNING?

The pandemic showed us some things can be done differently. We can work from home, we can learn from home, and we can do some parts of those two things more effectively from home. However, the explosion of online webinars and other videos makes me believe we got remote learning wrong. Learning is not a one-way street.

You don't learn much by watching or listening to a mentor telling you how to do things.



You learn the most when you can try new concepts on your own – when you learn by doing. Another important aspect of learning is engagement.

To learn about new concepts, you need to be able to think, reflect on and discuss them with your mentors and peers.

Micro-communities are the future of learning

If you can discuss new concepts with domain experts, exchange ideas with your peers, and work on a problem in a group, you will learn much more than by just watching an online lecture.

Here at Diggintravel, we strongly believe that by learning in a micro-community environment, you can do exactly that. We believe that in a global world where learning content is still mostly broadcasted in a 1:1,000 or even 1:10,000 model, online micro-communities are the future.

We built our Airline Digital Retailing Academy with the goal of connecting airline professionals who want to learn with digital experts and their peers. Our Academy is a micro-community platform that enables airline professionals to learn, engage and build relationship in a small group of up to 30 people.

THE AIRLINE DIGITAL RETAILING ACADEMY WAS BUILT FOR AIRLINE DIGITAL JOBS OF THE FUTURE

In the previous section, you read about what kinds of profiles and digital roles airlines are looking for.

These are the key areas we cover in our Airline Digital Retailing Academy in our 5 modules:

- Digital retailing strategy (digital and ancillary)
- Digital product, digital development and customer journey mapping
- Understanding users (UX & user research)
- Data, analytics and visualization
- Conversion optimization and experimentation (increasing revenue)

As you can see, we cover areas and skills that are most sought after by airlines at the moment. Becoming better at digital retailing is on top of most airlines' priority lists.

To be great at digital retailing, an airline professional needs to have a broad set of skills:

Data, analytics, visualization, A/B testing, experimentation, user and UX research, UX design, digital product development, customer journey mapping, understanding user behavior and persuasion.

If you remember our introduction and the reference to the book Range, you'll understand that a broad skillset is required to solve complex problems in wicked environments. The current airline environment is definitely a complex and "wicked" one.

At Diggintravel, our mission is to provide airline digital marketers with the know-how needed to handle complex digital challenges.

We'll help you to become a digital marketer with range – the airline digital marketer of the future.



Next Academy batch starts on May 10th, 2021

Diggintravel Academy is the first digital training designed especially for you, the airline professional.

This 5-week, part-time program will teach you the **fundamentals of digital retailing, digital optimization, digital analytics and digital product development.**

ACADEMY - KEY FACTS



5 weeks, 8-10h weekly workload



Learn in a micro-community environment, with 30 other airline peers



5 modules, video lessons, expert contributors videos, and real airline case studies



Learning by doing model - work on airline case studies, airline frameworks and live weekly workshops

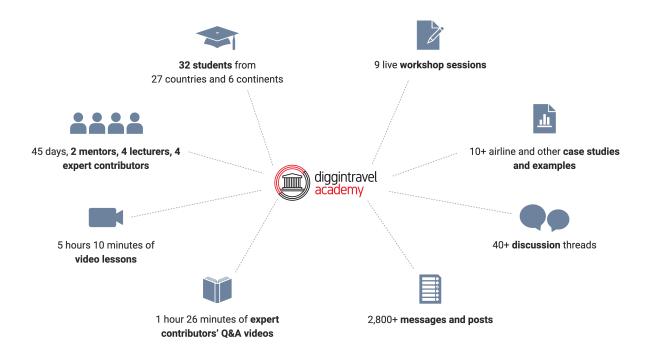


Individual feedback from mentors and peers



Achieve Diggintravel Airline Digital Retailing certification

WHAT DID WE DO WITH OUR LAST ACADEMY GROUP?



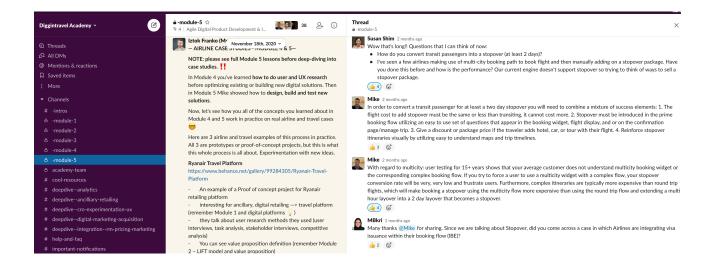


LEARNING SHOULD BE AN EXPERIENCE, NOT ANOTHER WEBINAR

The current online learning model where you watch videos or webinars is broken. It's made for the masses, it's one-size-fits-all, and people are alone in the learning process. Videos are great for getting information and new ideas, but not for learning. Without engagement and support, it's really difficult to learn new things. We want to change that and make learning the experience that it's supposed to be.

In our Digital Academy, airline professionals will learn in a micro-community environment, in **a small group of 30 people**. You will have the **1:1 support of mentors** who will check on your progress, help you with assignments, provide feedback, and make sure you get the most out of this training.

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR MENTORS AND PEERS VIA OUR UNIQUE ACADEMY ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM



WORK ON WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS AND EXCHANGE IDEAS ON LIVE WORKSHOP SESSIONS





WHAT DO OUR STUDENTS SAY ABOUT US?



"Exceeded my expectations. Great theoretical concepts and use cases that suggest exactly how practice can work. Dedication and knowledge of the mentors - extraordinary!! Thank you!"



"The experience has been amazing. I felt that the learning path has been built with care and dedication, from content to engagement."

DIGGINTRAVEL ACADEMY - A PLACE WHERE PASSIONATE LEARNERS MEET



Initially thought a 5-weeks course is going to be long but now that it has ended, I want more! Thank you James Millett for the support and thank you to Diggintravel Academy and PROS Iztok Franko Bostjan Kozuh Stanislava Yordanova for giving me this opportunity to be part of the first group of students in the Academy!! Sacrificing my weekends for assignments was worth it. I've learned so much from the group and will definitely put them into practice. #neverstoplearning #airline #digital #levelup





2021 AIRLINE DIGITAL RETAILING ACADEMY





Next Academy group starts on May 10th, 2021

Only 30 seats available

Learn more about the Academy and see the full curriculum at diggintravel.com/Academy



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PHOTOGRAPHY

Some of the amazing photos used in this paper were provided by Mike Slone





