

The fully mobilized passenger | Check-In.aero

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Mobiqa's mobi-pass service is now 'live' with Northwest and Qatar Airways and is in the trial stage with a number of other airlines in Europe and the Middle East.

It has been reported that by 2010 60% of airlines will offer mobile check-in, a development that is inevitably linked with IATA's target for 100% Bar Coded Boarding Passes (BCBP) by 2010. The drive to achieve 100% BCBP means more airports will be mobile-enabled; the target for BCBP is an enabler of mobile check-in. "Most airlines that are implementing BCBP are also looking at mobile check-in. If airlines make mobile check-in available there will be no reservations from passengers as it is so convenient," said Ronnie Forbes, founder and chief technical officer, Mobiqa.

Both iPhone and BlackBerry sold more than 6MM units in Q3 2008; that is particularly significant as they are devices that are typically sold with data plans attached.

Alon Kronenberg, IBM's Practice Lead - Mobile Applications, believes that if mobile check-in is defined as the ability to receive a BCBP on your mobile - even if the check-in transaction itself took place in a different channel - then the 60% figure is certainly possible.

IBM has several initiatives underway; last year it added support for SMS-based check-in, where the check-in transaction transpires entirely through an exchange of text messages between the passenger and the airline. "We believe this approach will resonate in emerging markets where data plans for mobile devices are not as readily available as they are in Europe and North America," said Kronenberg. "We are also looking at further tailoring our mobile check-in offering to automatically adapt itself to the look, feel and input methods of the target device, thus delivering a more natural user experience."

Ronnie Forbes, founder and chief technical officer, Mobiqa: "We have also been expanding our airline product suites. We have a vision of the completely mobilized passenger - for the complete journey from reservation to check-in, flight alerts and revenue-generating ideas."

Real Time's technical director Alastair Deacon believes that by the end of 2010, we will see mobile check-in as a regular option. "However, I'm not sure it will become the dominant check-in mode. Into 2011, we will see maybe 30-50% of passengers moving from remote check-in to mobile check-in," he said.

It was announced in February that Austrian Airlines has launched Real Time's paperless mobile phone boarding solution FirstPass, which was previously successfully trialed and rolled out in the UK by bmi. "Put simply, a passenger using FirstPass no longer needs to queue to check-in, use a kiosk or even find a printer to print an online paper boarding pass. One mobile boarding pass will give a passenger everything he/she needs to board an aircraft via security with additional information displayed as text for inspection once on board," said Deacon. "FirstPass also provides additional benefits such as sending passengers immediate flight updates to their mobiles or, for low-cost carriers, delivery as a premium service to increase passenger revenues."

FirstPass uses WAP Push and MMS technology to deliver a boarding pass directly to the passenger's mobile phone. Real Time's technology then ensures that the boarding pass and 2D barcode are sized correctly.



David Reszner, Austrian Airlines' ground product development manager, said: "We are delighted to be one of the first European airlines to introduce mobile phone boarding passes. We were looking for a mobile solution that would not only improve the service we offer our customers but, over time, would also reduce our costs. Real Time's FirstPass solution has met all our requirements and we are excited at the prospect of rolling out this groundbreaking technology across our whole network."

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Swissport has been looking at mobile check-in possibilities. It is implementing the mobile boarding pass into web check-in for its biggest customer - Swiss. "It is not a pure mobile application, but removes the need for a printer. It is the first step towards pure mobile check-in," said Rico Barandun, Head e-Services, BOE, Swissport.

The Swiss application will be rolled out in June 2009. Development was completed in April and followed by two months of testing.

Mobiqa's mobi-pass service is now 'live' with Northwest and Qatar Airways and is in the trial stage with a number of other airlines in Europe and the Middle East. Forbes reports that the trials have been very successful and those airlines are looking to go into live operation. "NWA, which went live with the service in May 2008, is rapidly expanding the mobile check-in service across airports in the US; Qatar Airways is extending it across different countries. This is now becoming recognized as the best practice mobile check-in," he said.

NWA has extended the capability of its offering so that whether the passenger checks in via the web, via their mobile or on a kiosk, they receive their boarding pass on their mobile phone. "We have also been expanding our airline product suites. We have a vision of the completely mobilized passenger - for the complete journey from reservation to check-in, flight alerts and revenue-generating ideas," said Forbes.

Revenue opportunities

There are revenue opportunities to be gained from mobile applications; these are predominantly likely to be upselling opportunities. "With mobile, adverts can be interactive - the user can make a rental car or hotel booking, for example. It is 'the kiosk in your pocket'. Airlines are very happy to have revenue-generating ideas," said Forbes.

Kronenberg explained that many airlines have gone through the process of unbundling services to generate ancillary revenue. "I believe the mobile channel presents a unique opportunity to further realize that revenue stream, since mobile - unlike any other channel - offers the prospect for interaction at any time," he said. "For instance, I am likely to be a great deal more amenable to purchasing a lounge pass if offered - perhaps at a nominal discount - when notified of a delay on my mobile than I might have been weeks earlier at the time of booking."

Advertising and retail opportunities will, according to Forbes, come in the first half of this year, with SMS text alerts tied into the offering. "The concept of the fully mobilized passenger is gradually being implemented. The ability to use mobile phones onboard, such as the recent Ryanair/OnAir deal, opens up opportunities to prepay for inflight F&B. If airlines can capture that revenue on booking, it means they don't have to handle cash onboard," he said. "We recently did a trial of this with OnAir; this was very successful and we are now in discussions with them about proposing discounts at duty free, for example, to the airlines."

Kronenberg similarly referenced the possibilities relating to duty free and F&B. "I would not be surprised to see something along those lines piloted soon - especially around duty free," he said. "I do believe that mobile devices offer a unique



Name:	Mr Alastair Deacon
BN:	003
Flight:	OS123
Class:	Business
Status:	
Seat:	3C
Gate:
Boarding:	12:35
Routing:	VIE - FRA
Date:	06 FEB 09
ETIX Nr.:	257-2109908862
Departure:	13:15

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opportunity to generate ancillary revenue. Similarly, I expect the passenger's mobile device to quickly become his/her primary point of interaction with the airline for many - if not most - CRM-related initiatives."

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Deacon highlighted another potential revenue area - the possibility to offer a premium rate service on domestic routes. Real Time, for example, offers First Pass as a premium rate service. Instead of the airline paying for the mobile boarding pass, the provider would pay the airline and then make money by charging the passenger for sending the message containing the boarding pass.

An additional benefit of mobile technology indicated by Forbes is that if the traveler has a multi-sector journey and misses their connection because the inbound flight is delayed - mobile technology means the airline can automatically rebook the passenger and issue them a boarding pass, which is a popular objective of airlines.

IBM believes that the mobile channel will play a significant role in a number of areas; not only check-in, but also as far as booking, day-of-travel - flight status, delay notifications, etc - and even inflight. "However, one must realize that simply shrinking an existing web application to fit into a smaller mobile screen will not yield success, it is truly imperative to re-think each of these functionalities and re-shape them to leverage the unique nature of the mobile channel," said **Kronenberg**. "We are focused on enabling the mobile channel beyond check-in. We are identifying what other airline functions/processes can be transformed to leverage the unique mobile interaction and are building associated applications. Essentially, we are looking at ways of helping our customers transform their mobile channel from a mixture of various disjointed schemes to a single and consistent initiative that will transform, in a very significant way, how they interact with their customers."