

Are travellers the only destination on the travel map?

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For those not involved in the world of commerce, B2B sounds like a boy band or brand of headphones. So if you work in the B2B travel sector, small talk at a Sunday lunch with your mother-in-law can be daunting.

Using the term 'travel technology' can get even more confusing. Someone who designs suitcases or the seating on airplanes? Or maybe fixing the broken radar or computers on jumbo jets?

But when you try another tack and say 'behind-the-scenes', they imagine something physically behind-the-scenes - perhaps working on the luggage conveyer belt behind the check-in, or at best someone in accounts payable back in the head office of a hotel.

Even when they work out that you aren't a bell boy or tour guide, friends and family still keep asking you for holiday tips or, worst of all, discounts for flights or hotels.

It's perhaps understandable that the average person can only conjure up images of consumer brands. But why do business people, and even people in the travel industry, still focus on this one area?

From an economic perspective, they couldn't be more wrong. B2B services are where the money is at. For example, did you know that the market capitalization of many of the biggest hotels or airlines in Europe is still way less than travel technology firms such as Amadeus?

A well-known venture capital investor for the travel space once commented on how frustrating it was that 9 out of 10 ideas pitched to them were for consumer services, despite such businesses tending to be much lower profit margins than B2B.

Even when you look at the speaker line-ups for industry conferences, you would have the impression too that B2C is really the more dominant sphere.

Nonetheless, opinions on B2B are starting to shift as technology is creating more B2B opportunities than ever before.

Recently at World Travel Market (WTM) in London they recognized this shift and created a whole new area called Travel Forward, with its own conference stage too, dedicated to technology. Step forward hundreds of channel managers, API connectivity, GDSs, payments processors, inventory systems, revenue management tools and most importantly, of course, our sector: bedbanks. There was a whole world of successful technology companies to be found.

That's why at Hotelbeds we are 100% focused on the B2B market only: we know our strengths and focus on our core offering. It gives us a great sense of achievement to have built the world's largest and best bedbank. Since Tourico Holidays and GTA joined us in 2017, we've been busy bringing the companies together into one offering for our travel intermediary clients and hotel suppliers.

Late last year we announced that from now on we'll be just one brand and we've launched a new brand image to match this. This reflects that at Hotelbeds we are proud to be behind-the-scenes, dedicated to helping our B2B partners increase margins and allowing them to focus on what they in turn do best: managing the relationship with travellers.

Consumers might be the final stop on the travel industry journey. But as the growth of B2B players

and travel technology partners shows, consumers are not the only destination along the way.

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