

# Are we there yet?

Destination-specific programmes to provide new revenue stream for airlines

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→ Inflight magazine publishers have been doing it for years: offering airlines a slice of the revenue generated from advertisements in the magazines they publish on airlines' behalf. The inflight magazine model has proved to be a win-win-win for airlines, advertisers and passengers as it puts products and services in front of a captive audience.

Now a company that has been publishing hardcover visitor guides for cities throughout the United States – utilising on the ground a similar model to inflight magazines – is readying to take its approach to the skies. Instead of offering a paper product, the firm, called A Look at Media Ventures, will offer destination-specific programming on inflight entertainment (IFE) screens. And, crucially, it will pay airlines for the pleasure.

"I'm a double-million miler with Delta Air Lines and I always wished there was something on the IFE about the city I was going to," says A Look at Media Ventures' founder and CEO Fred Mullins. "I realised it's really quite simple to do what we're doing in tourism books, except in video form for a captive audience."

High-end restaurants, sightseeing tours, shopping and "anything you'd like to see when you're going to a city" will be highlighted in the videos, says Mullins. He notes, however, that the model "will only work in larger cities where there

are high-end restaurants doing USD25-30 million in revenue because of the price we'll ask from them."

A free mobile app will be promoted at the end of each video, connecting airline passengers with the restaurants and sights they've seen on the programme. The app will allow passengers to book a table or buy tickets for an amusement park, for instance. And they'll be able to get more visuals and information about their selection.

To ensure a multimillion dollar share for airlines, A Look at Media Ventures would produce IFE videos covering at least 20 destinations. "I knew [we would need to offer revenue share] to get airlines interested," says Mullins. "So it's our job to go to the cities, produce the videos and include the advertising we sell. It's not rocket science. We work directly with airlines or their content service provider (CSP)."

He acknowledges that A Look at Media Ventures will compete with some of the hardcover tourism books in the big cities but feels a video product for IFE "will sell better than these big books". He adds: "Our revenue stream is as believable as anything I've ever believed in, and our advertising sales people think it's going to sell in a very big way."

Indeed, A Look at Media Ventures has already scored its first airline partner in British Airways (BA). "We are thrilled that one of the world's leading airlines has chosen our product for their inflight entertainment platform because they feel

this product will entertain their passengers en route to major cities around the world and enable them to engage with the city before they even land," says Mullins, who credits Spafax – a content service provider to BA – for getting the ball rolling with the airline.

British Airways' TV and ambient manager Hannah Shire says, "British Airways passengers travelling for business or leisure have the potential to be empowered by knowledge of their destinations available within these video guides. This may help them on their current journey or educate them for any future travel plans."

A Look at Media Ventures is a new member of the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). The firm first exposed its concept at the industry conference in Long Beach in September 2012. Response from the airlines has been tremendous, says Mullins, who expects to announce more airline customers soon.

Long-time IFE veteran Lee Casey, who works as VP of customer programmes with IFE hardware provider Lumexis, also has high praise for the concept.

"So many involved in the airline industry have faith in the product," she says. "Mr Mullins understands better than anyone the value for all parties, and we are anxious to see this concept become a global product that all airlines will embrace in the immediate future. It's a win-win-[win] for passengers, airlines and advertisers."