

# Guest column: The rise of inflight connected commerce - a new era for airlines and passenger experience



Tanguy Morel, CEO & co-founder of [MOMENT](#)

The airline industry is undergoing a profound digital transformation as demand is reshaping traditional business models. With IFEC emerging as a cornerstone of the modern travel experience, airlines have the opportunity to disrupt passenger engagement while exploring new revenue streams. As the pressure to adapt grows immensely with passenger traffic experiencing its fastest global growth in years, onboard connected commerce is a promising transformation in experience-centric interactions.

## **Elevating passenger experience in the sky**

Today's travellers expect seamless connectivity, whether on the ground or in the air. As digital pioneers like Amazon, Netflix, and Uber continue to set new standards for convenience and personalization, airlines must embrace similar innovations to meet evolving expectations. In their eyes, real-time connectivity is not a luxury, it is a given. Passengers now expect a digital experience that mirrors the immediacy and personalization they enjoy in their daily lives.

Traveling in the sky is a time for relaxation, used now to browse social media or stream entertainment content. So why wouldn't it also include shopping opportunities? As airlines explore their ability to customize the onboard experience, they must consider extending their services for the benefit of passenger satisfaction and new avenues for monetization. Long constrained by obsolete systems that prevented them from guaranteeing connected services, airlines can easily adopt a holistic approach that puts the passenger back at the heart of the journey without having to invest massively.

## **The power of inflight commerce**

Traditional inflight retail has long been constrained by static catalogs, limited product selections, and cumbersome transaction processes. However, the rise of e-commerce platforms is transforming onboard shopping.

Airlines can now unify all ancillary revenue streams into a single marketplace, simplifying e-commerce management while enhancing the passenger experience via seatback screens or personal devices. Beyond traditional inflight sales such as meals, travel essentials, branded merchandise, and duty-free products, airlines can expand their offerings to include services like seat or class upgrades.

Through partnerships with third-party vendors, airlines can integrate destination services such as hotel reservations, restaurant bookings, and tickets for concerts or museums. They can even facilitate larger purchases that go far beyond the cabin's limitations. The possibilities are endless.

With secure payment options, whether via credit card or loyalty rewards, real-time inventory updates, and flexible delivery choices—onboard, at the airport, or at home—this next-generation retail experience maximizes both convenience and revenue potential.

## **Challenges and opportunities**

Despite the immense potential, inflight connected commerce does present challenges. Connectivity instability, lack of bandwidth, infrastructure costs, and cybersecurity or fraud concerns remain significant hurdles, and even more so in an aircraft. However, the industry is witnessing rapid advancements in satellite technology and cloud-based SaaS solutions, making these innovations more viable than ever.

By leveraging agnostic technologies, airlines can refute weaknesses, even at 10,000 feet, digitizing services, streamlining operations, reducing logistical costs, and maximizing engagement, regardless of the type of aircraft or the embedded system. They no longer have to worry about content accessibility, as it is updated before takeoff and can be streamed offline. Connectivity is only required during identification and payment.

With modern solutions, the shift to digital commerce onboard also enables dynamic pricing strategies, product recommendations based on passenger preferences, order history, navigation history, or cabin class driven, as well as cross-selling opportunities—enhancing profitability while delivering an enriched travel experience. The traveller's e-commerce journey is no longer restricted to the aircraft and can be extended to maximize loyalty, starting at home when booking tickets, through the flight, and even upon arrival—ensuring greater flexibility for passengers. This upstream connection with the traveller allows airlines to offer them an advanced digital experience with a tailor-made marketplace and adapted offers.

## **Breaking down boundaries**

The future of inflight retail is digital, dynamic, and deeply personalized. Embracing connected commerce, airlines can not only enhance passenger satisfaction but also create new revenue

opportunities in an increasingly competitive market. IFEC technologies, as strategic tools, can seamlessly help them to integrate entertainment, shopping, and even more services into a unified and agile digital marketplace experience.

As the boundaries between travel and technology continue to blur, the sky is no longer the limit—it's the launchpad for a new era of airline commerce. The question is no longer how airlines can digitize, but which new standards they can set in the cabin.