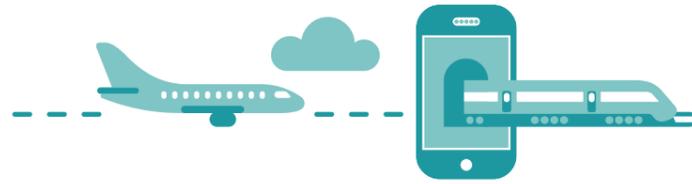# INNOVATION 2020
The future of business travel

Leading business travel company Carlson Wagonlit Travel and Contagious, a global insights publisher and consultancy, explore the implications of pervasive technology and hyper-connectivity on the complete traveler journey.

It may be an old adage, but the assertion that the world is becoming a smaller place has never been more apt. Thanks to technology it is also becoming more seamless, more connected and more efficient for anyone who travels it. And there are simply more people traveling than ever before.

Over the next decade, the world's population will swell by more than a billion people, and Amadeus predicts that as a result, the global travel market will grow 5.4% per year, outpacing global GDP growth by 2% annually. China, with its emerging middle class, will soon surpass the US as the largest outbound travel market in the world, and the world's most populous nation will become the biggest domestic travel market as well within a few more years. The burgeoning global population will be mobile in more ways than one. The GSMA's Mobile Economy 2014 report predicts that there will be 9.2 billion active mobile connections by 2020, spread across 4.3 billion unique subscribers. Ubiquitous, 'hyper' connectivity will be the norm.

As a result, digital interactions will dominate. Microsoft predicts that by 2020, 85% of all customer interactions will be digital. Hand-in-hand with digital's rise will come the expectation of personalization. Devices will become extensions of the self, and people will come to expect customized, personally tailored offerings and services. Combine the expanding capabilities of digital with the personalized counsel that humans can provide, and business travel as we know it will change forever.

Here's how.

PRE-TRAVEL

CONTEXTUAL SERVICE DESIGN
From purchase to post-trip, travelers will be continuously connected to agents and their services via mobile devices and ubiquitous Wi-Fi, from front door to taxi door to coffee shop door and beyond. This means that small pain points in customer journeys can be solved in real time – if not pre-emptively – based on an individual's context and the conditions around them. Services become responsive, specifically geared for individuals at precise points in their journey, and travelers feel taken care of at every turn. People need never hit an unexpected traffic jam en route to the airport, miss a last-minute gate change or settle for a mediocre meal on-the-go again.

OMNICHANNEL BOOKING
The line between commerce, e-commerce and m-commerce will dissolve, enabling travelers to move from one platform to another as they go about their day without any disruption. Seamless, mobile-first experiences will allow people to connect with their travel agents however they'd like to at any given moment, moving from phone conversations to online booking to mobile confirmation without missing a beat.

CONSCIENTIOUS CONSUMPTION
Businesses will be able to opt in to eco-friendly options, furthering the advance of the travel industry toward a smaller carbon footprint. Alternative fuel flights and less resource-intensive travel options like trains, and increasingly high-speed rail, will become comparatively more affordable as fuel prices rise, making it more attractive for business travelers to choose more sustainable journeys. Readily available information will make it easier for customers to understand various options and their repercussions, empowering them to make conscientious choices that meet their business objectives and values.

SYSTEMATIC COLLABORATION
As traveler data becomes more readily shared and accessible, seating will become smart. Business travelers will automatically be seated according to their on-record preferences (e.g. near co-workers, near networkers, near strangers). These pairings will extend to ground transportation from airport to final destination as well, allowing for shared cabs and other efficiencies. Beyond efficiencies, the availability of social data and user profiles will enable serendipity as well, connecting travelers to friends and colleagues they didn't even know were in town. And travel services providers will be able to link such serendipity to rewards for travelers – share a cab with your in-town co-worker and get a free drink at the hotel bar together.

ON-POINT PERSONALIZATION
Integrated booking systems and traveler profiles will allow travel agents to have a complete picture of what an ideal trip might entail. As business trips increasingly overlap with personal vacations, it will be important for agents to be able to tailor suggestions and opportunities to specific travelers based on preference profiles, loyalty memberships, and trip details. Additionally, personalized recommendations will extend beyond activities to things like in-flight entertainment, airport dining and even well-being and nutrition tips. As these personalized recommendations become more widespread and accurate, travelers will feel more comfortable sharing information with agents because they appreciate the return delivered on their data.

DURING TRAVEL
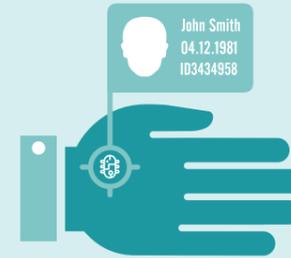
EMBEDDED BIOTECH
Biotechnology and biometric identification will become commonplace and, increasingly, biological authentication will take the place of passwords and passports. Fast, long-range retinal and fingerprint scanners, along with vein-matching hand scanners, will start to take the place of photographic IDs, allowing for fast and easy identification, as well as rapid personalization.

INVISIBLE SECURITY
Advanced monitoring and universal databases of travelers will expand current Fast Pass systems to apply to nearly all business travelers who opt in. The TSA will be minimally invasive for frequent travelers, country entry requirements will be loosened, and passports will be digitally enabled to make the pre-flight screening process a breeze.

SMART, DIGITAL WALLETS
Kiss that cash goodbye. As banks, stores and transit become increasingly digital-friendly, payments – and wallets – will follow. Digital money transfers will become the norm. Scan, snap and tap-to-pay functions will be present for nearly all transactions, and smartphones, wristbands and other tech devices will become intelligent wallets. Travelers will also be able to track, log, and sync transactions across various devices, making budgeting and expense tracking easier than ever.

PREDICTIVE PLANNING
Connected systems and smart algorithms will make on-the-go decision making easier and more fluid than ever before. Traveler pain points like missed connections, cancelled flights and delays will be easily handled, with travel agents able to quickly re-route and re-book travel without any input from the traveler. Contextual and consumer data together will allow services to be provided more proactively, with travel agents able to connect travelers to one another for more rewarding trips, in addition to solving problems before they happen.

SMART CITIES AND FIRST STAGE TRAVEL
As cities expand and urban centers become more complete, itineraries will be crafted with first-stage, door-to-door, travel in mind, creating the best end-to-end travel experience possible for business travelers. This includes smart city transportation and increasingly available high-speed train transit between regional hubs, as well as off-peak travel and improved commuting logistics.

ALWAYS-ON ASSISTANCE
With universally available Wi-Fi and wireless connectivity, and near-100% smart device penetration, people will come to expect 24/7 service from agents and service providers. Real-time language translation and video chat will make global face-to-face support as reliable as telephone service today, and 'Mayday Button' style instant access will make support services the go-to source for information and assistance. Technology will enhance human interaction, creating rich, ongoing relationships between agents and travelers instead of one-time service offerings.

POST-TRAVEL

CONNECTED HOME/WORK/LIFE
Business travelers will expect more aspects of their lives to be linked and available at all times, from baggage location and cloud-stored documents to up-to-the-minute status updates on their home or apartment. This expectation will give rise to connected eco-systems of information available at the tap of a button – including things like movies, games and other entertainment. Beyond media and entertainment, we will also see the facilitation of human connection, with features that enable travelers to stay connected to their families while away from home.

AUTOMATIC EXPENSING
Purchases will be overwhelmingly digital, via smartphone rather than credit card or cash. These purchases will be automatically logged and categorized, making it simple for travelers to compile (and edit) expense reports for their business travel. These transactions will then feed into algorithms that formulate personal profiles, which learn about each person's behavior to better personalize recommendations and bookings in the future. Centralized hubs for all travel information will minimize the hassle of post-trip paperwork.

STRATEGIC LOYALTY ALLIANCES
Travelers returning from trips will be able to immediately reap the rewards of loyalty points earned, rather than waiting for their next trip. Centralized loyalty brokerages will allow customers to use points more easily and across a number of brands. Thanks to mobile technology and digital wallets, these points will be easy to spend at will on small ticket items like beverages and books, as well as on traditional point expenditures like hotels and tickets. In essence, branded loyalty systems will become an alternative currency for business travelers, before, during and after their journeys.