



FCM

Dare to be different
The future of business travel

fcmtravel.com

More than 16 months into the global pandemic and it's clear that COVID-19 will leave a lasting legacy. There will be no return to pre-pandemic life as we knew it. In fact, emerging trends show us that COVID-19 is having a continuing impact on consumer behaviour, attitudes towards office work, business and leisure travel, digital innovation, health, education and much, much more.

What will this new world look like for business travel, a sector hard hit by the pandemic?

It's hard to imagine as post-COVID recovery, vaccination programmes and travel restrictions still look very different around the world. In Europe, the EU Digital COVID Certificate launched across the continent on 1st July in an attempt to lift restrictions in a co-ordinated manner. While the UK's vaccination programme has been lauded as one of the quickest and most successful, it still faces restrictions and quarantine measures whether departing or arriving.

In April 2020, Indian author Arundhati Roy wrote,

"Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next."



Against this backdrop, it's clear that a return to business travel will require a new and unconventional approach. An alternative mindset which puts people, information, innovation and responsible travel at the heart of any travel programme.

In this time of uncertainty, travel managers are facing more pressure than ever before. From up-to-the-minute information, travel advisories and alerts to a strong focus on duty of care, travel managers are looking for an alternative, agile partner. One who can help get them back on the road safely, seamlessly and successfully – and in-line with their own changing goals and objectives.

COVID-19 is reshaping corporate travel, but there is opportunity in change and FCM's rebrand is both a reflection of transformative times and an exciting response to the need for a new way of thinking.

A new playing field:

Five trends that will shape corporate travel in 2021 and beyond

Since April 2020, global spending on business travel plummeted 68%, while global real GDP is expected to decline by an estimated 4.4% according to research published by the Global Business Travel Association. Meanwhile, air traffic in Europe decreased 88 per cent year over year in May, at the height of the start of the pandemic.

All is not lost, however, and we are seeing green shoots emerge across the world, with further improvements expected as inoculation of the global population ramps up. The biggest barrier remains uncertainty – and an uneven playing field in terms of economic recovery, vaccination programmes and lockdown levels across the world.

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While this makes forecasting a “return to normal” for business travel nearly impossible, there are a few trends we can identify for the year ahead.

01 A heightened focus on safety

Top of mind for any travel manager for the foreseeable future is duty of care. The burden of keeping travellers safe and healthy is felt keenly by decision-makers and travel bookers.

Companies today – more so than ever before – want to be able to track their travellers while they’re on the road. They want to know exactly where their travellers are if they need to bring them back. They are looking for a professional travel agency to be able to flag any potential risks, alert travellers (and the team back home) to any developments and actively liaise with local consulates and embassies should the need arise.

For hotels, the focus will be less on nice-to-haves like attractive rooftop bars or indoor pools and more on the latest sanitisation measures. For airlines, the priority is biosafety, sanitisation and touchless technology.

02

Technology will continue to boost traveller confidence

Challenging. Difficult. Uncertain. These are some of the words travel managers used in the FCM State of the Market survey to describe corporate travel since the COVID-19 outbreak.

Traveller confidence will remain a key focus for travel managers in the years to come. The question is, how can TMCs do their part to restore and nurture traveller confidence? According to research, the answer lies in adopting technology to streamline the user experience, eliminate friction and maximise safety.

Based on a survey commissioned by trusted travel tech company, Amadeus, 84% of the 6,000 travellers interviewed said that technology would boost their confidence to travel in the next 12 months. When asked to be more specific about what type of technology would provide a much-needed sense of relief, the majority responded by saying that mobile applications offering on-trip notifications and alerts are at the top of the list, closely followed by contactless mobile payment options.

For travellers today, 24/7 availability is not just a convenience, it is a necessity. The new FCM Platform with AI-enhanced chatbot tool Sam provides live chat and real time assistance across all of the platform’s channels for round-the-clock service.



Source: GBTA BTI Outlook Annual Global Report & Forecast, Prospects for Global Business Travel 2020 – 2024, January 2021.

03 Smarter ways to tackle budgets

The FCM State of the Market shows that while the average number of business trips per traveller was 6 – 8 per year in pre-COVID times, this number is forecasted to fall to 3 – 4 trips per annum until the year 2023. And 31% of companies have indicated a decrease in travel budget for 2021. Unfortunately, less travel may not equal a reduction in travel and expenses quite yet. Flexible fares, fewer flights and fewer routes mean a higher price tag – and now is not the time to scrimp on budget accommodation or untested suppliers.

Smarter ways to tackle and maximise the travel budget will be an important focus for the years ahead. Even though travel requirements will be next to impossible to predict for the coming year, it's still good practice to review where you have been spending money on travel in the past and make smart choices for the future.

04 A flexible mindset

From travel programmes to supplier negotiations and traveller sentiment, a flexible mindset is key to navigate the new post-COVID landscape.

With no two days the same, travel programmes need to be flexible and easily adaptable to changing travel realities. It's important to have a TMC that understands your needs, builds your travel programme around those needs, and has the ability to scale up and down as those needs change.

The majority of travel suppliers have also adopted more flexible booking policies and solutions. It is now easier to make a booking and to postpone or cancel that booking should a COVID-related event or problem get in the way ahead of an employee's departure. As COVID is likely to hang around for the next few years, these flexible booking policies and solutions will likely remain in place for a long time to come in an effort to boost company and corporate traveller confidence.

05 New ways of engaging with suppliers

Hotel contracting will look very different in 2021 and beyond. Travel managers now have an entirely new set of criteria to evaluate their choice of hotels: from hygiene protocols to cleanliness, safety, improved meal offerings and contactless technologies. Many hotels and chain groups are now providing regular communication and demonstrated evidence of their new standards in a bid to grow traveller confidence.

What is certain, is that COVID has created a buyers' market for the first time in 10 years. Based on market research conducted by FCM Consulting, global hotel rates in key cities are set to reduce by an average of 4.5% in 2021. Over 50% of hotels are offering a combination of fixed negotiated rates combined with a dynamic discount rate off Best Available Rate (BAR) enabling travellers to select the most favourable rate option.

Airline engagements will also look decidedly different in 2021 and beyond, as the aviation landscape has changed considerably since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Airlines need to constantly adjust their schedules in a bid to anticipate traveller demand, government directives and border closures. Unsurprisingly, the majority of travel buyers (56%) in the FCM State of the Market Survey indicated that they are reviewing their airline supply strategy. The changes they are considering include pricing reviews, risk management reviews, as well as route and capacity changes.

"Duty of care is built into every aspect of our clients' travel programmes. From managing traveller concerns with trustworthy advice, real-time information and smart recommendations, to safety dashboards and traveller tracking, FCM is transforming business travel. Yes, we're able to move fast. Yes, we can bring your travellers home. But I honestly believe that it's our commitment to safety from the get-go, and our ability to design itineraries, eliminate problems and mitigate risks that makes FCM an impressive alternative."

Steve Norris, Managing Director, FCTG UK

"There'll be no return to pre-pandemic status quo. Navigating a post-COVID world is going to require a new way of thinking, new technology and a positive, growth mindset. We believe that FCM offers an alternative approach to business travel. We've got the history and track record to instil confidence in what is still an uncertain environment, coupled with the agility, tech and skills to offer up real, workable solutions for all your business travel needs. The team is passionate about 'seamless travel', which in current times is an exciting prospect."

Chris Galanty, Global CEO of Flight Centre Corporate



Looking for an exciting alternative?

The top 5 things to consider in a TMC

01 Going beyond duty of care

An alternative mindset takes into consideration so much more than vetting transport suppliers or accommodation establishments.

It's about pre-travel risk assessment and educating your employees (both around your travel policy and how to mitigate their risks while on the road). You need to update their travel profile, contact details and next-of-kin information so you can alert them to any travel advisories or itinerary changes. And, importantly, be able to track your travellers so you can bring them home quickly and safely should the need arise.

Today trust, communication, and the flow of timely, accurate information between TMCs, travel managers and travellers is more important than ever before. For decision makers and travel managers alike, this means working closely with a TMC that can address traveller insecurity with confidence; manage the logistics of pre- and post-COVID travel; and understand (and detail) health and safety protocols at every point of the journey.

With FCM's new Safety and Risk tools, you will be able to customise a safety dashboard to your needs, ensuring that all vital information is in one place. Our travel experts always go beyond the call of duty – and are on hand to provide information, advice and moral support 24/7/365.

02 An agile, flexible approach to customer needs

Not only do travel managers need to know that their travellers are happy and safe, but they need a travel partner that can respond quickly to their needs – and to any unpredictable situation – with ease and flexibility.

FCM's new digital booking platform can be customised to your needs. You can gather (and analyse) data from travellers, including insights around likes and dislikes, queries, traveller friction, traveller preferences and travel behaviour – meaning you can design the best itinerary and book the best product to meet their needs.

Our digital travel champion Sam just keeps getting better and better. Now available across the FCM platform and app, ever-evolving Sam will soon solve problems proactively, often before you (or your travellers) are even aware of them. This will include rebooking suggestions, itinerary updates and travel alerts.

Even better? FCM's 'always available' promise means that your travellers can access information via Sam's live chat widget, or be connected to a dedicated travel consultant whenever needed.



03

A unique culture and caring people

The FCM family is a fun, forward-thinking and committed team who is ready to change the face of corporate travel.

An unconventional, alternative mindset requires a certain attitude and culture. An energetic, can-do team of out-of-the box thinkers who can have a real and positive impact on their client's business.

04

Game-changing technology

In today's fast-paced environment, travel managers and bookers are no longer willing to put up with slow, clunky systems. A new world requires new tech.

Handy plug and play functionality means that you can integrate your preferred OBT into the platform instantly putting a wide range of travel content (matched to your budget and travel policy) at your fingertips, be it your laptop, tablet or mobile phone.

Significantly for travel managers, approvals and reporting also just got a whole lot easier. COVID-19 has resulted in stricter approvals for many multinationals as decision makers assess the necessity of each and every trip, the risks associated with certain destinations, and the needs of their travellers. FCM understands this and works with your team to make sure the process is as seamless (and painless) as possible. FCM's newly-refined Approvals system allows all traveller requests to be integrated into one report, while approvals go directly to the traveller on their mobile.

Reporting is also a breeze. FCM's functionality allows you to analyse your company's travel behaviour, spend, bookings and leakage – pulling up-to-the minute reports for cost analysis, budgeting and planning.

Clear, concise data? Yes, please.

The new FCM Platform is a game changer, using intuitive, AI-enhanced technology to improve your user experience – applying your preferences to suggest product and design digital itineraries.

05

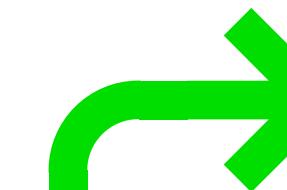
Creative and unique solutions to customers' problems

They say that necessity is the mother of invention, and there is no doubt that COVID-19 is driving progress and innovation.

We're living in a world where contactless check-in, biometrics, virus screening and digital health passports will become the norm. Look for a TMC which is tackling the current chaos head on, exploring new ways of doing things and delivering creative and seamless solutions for companies who need to be back on the road.

As Kate Smaje, Senior Partner at McKinsey explains:

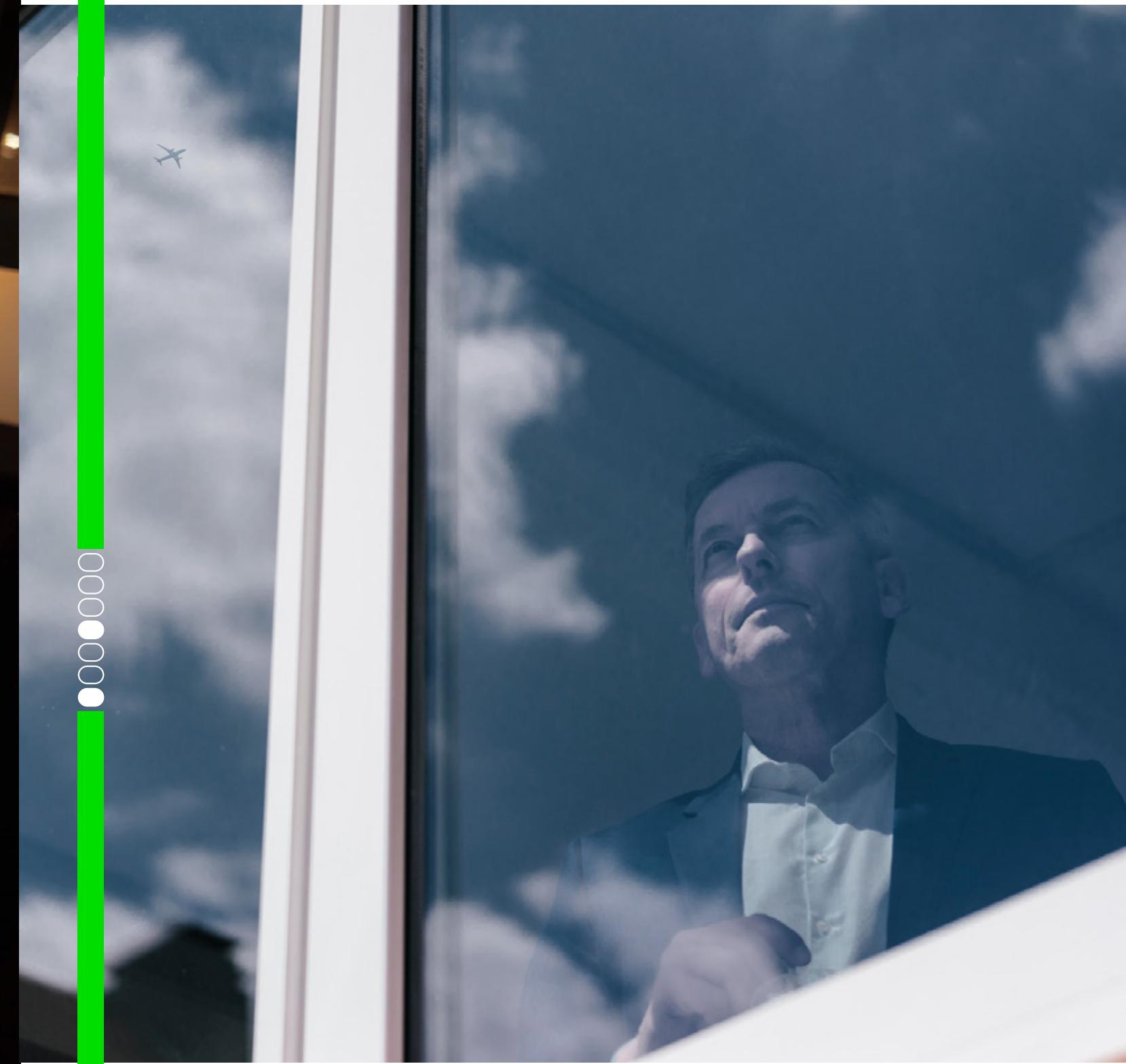
"COVID-19 has launched the greatest behavioural change in our lifetime. We vaulted five years in the adoption of digital in just eight weeks. This great digital migration has forced every company into a massive experiment in how to be more nimble, flexible and fast."



The great 're-set'

COVID-19 has turned our world upside down. It's brought our lives, priorities and habits into sharp focus. It's unsurprising that companies are also reconsidering how they approach business travel.

After all, travel has changed forever. It's time for a positive, solutions-driven, more conscious – and alternative – mindset.





FCM is a single global brand providing a comprehensive range of corporate travel and expense management solutions. We have a presence in more than 95 countries and are regarded as one of the top five travel management companies in the world. FCM is responsible for the travel programmes of some of the world's most successful corporate brands.

It has always been personalised service that sets FCM apart from the rest and we blend this with innovative technology and unrivalled access to content to drive the optimum performance of your travel programme.

Contact us today to find out how FCM can elevate the performance of your corporate travel programme.

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