

TravelMate brings tech to tourism

Travel guides are easy to come by, but Stratos Baschenis came to realize that finding comprehensive, interesting, easy and knowledgeable content in one's own language at an affordable price was another matter altogether.

He launched TravelMate two years ago with this in mind and then some, as his app acts not only as a tour guide but also as a concierge, providing information on services and virtually anything you might need when visiting a city -- something you can't get from a guidebook. And all this at an affordable price point.

"We don't want to be a traditional audio guide as the one you can find in a museum but something different like a touristic companion who tells you the most important things of the most important venues of the city visited," says Baschenis.



An eye-catching display at International Terminal at Milan/Bergamo Orio al Serio airport

More than 200,000 people have now used the company's apps, with more than 3 million files listened to. The products are performing especially well given that the company launched just as the pandemic was beginning.

"Given that our products were all brand new and launched in the COVID period, we've had strong sales. We have been performing well in airports shops, in travel agencies, money change companies, with tour operators, and with ticketing companies that combine our products to the ticket entrance—for example in museums, parks, leisure venues," he says.

As the company launched in Italy, that country has seen the most sales. "In our airport in Bergamo (near Milan) we have airlines that fly to Athens, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rome, Madrid, Prague etc. In this venue our products sell in departures for these locations."



TravelMate's portfolio is on prominent display has a key location at the entrance of the most important store at Milan/Bergamo Orio al Serio airport

TravelMate could be given as a gift to certain travelers, and he sees big inflight potential — as a value-add for those in business and first class and as an option to purchase within the inflight store for other passengers. It can also be offered ahead of time to those buying tickets to certain destinations.

Why TravelMate

Baschenis says while you can find audiocontent within the Google play store and Apple store, it's mainly in English. "We have invested in translating and speaking with professionals in seven languages. Then we decided to sell our content not only via apps on the App stores but also to allow people to find our audiocard and audiopack in physical shops."

The audiocard is simply a card with a hidden pin code that allows the user to download the app and enable the content of the city he will want to visit. The audiopack is a box that contains earphones for android smartphones, an adapter for Apple smartphone plus the audiocard.



A small selection of items within TravelMate’s portfolio. Currently, the company offers audio material for 33 cities in seven languages

Baschenis feels the TravelMate audiopack can capture some earphone sales, as it offers not only the earphones but also a digital companion for the city the traveler will visit. While TravelMate is a tech product that competes with earphones, however, it’s also a hybrid in that it could compete with the Lonely Planet book “In our airports we have a specific place at the entrance of the store,” he says.

Easy integration

Because of the company’s innate tech abilities, it has developed API integration to allow partners to integrate the sale of our digital content through their booking engine. “In this case we don’t ask money to buy any PIN code in advance, but we work in a win-win method,” Baschenis states. “For example we are integrated in Booking.com, so travelers can buy our TravelMate audiocontent in the experience sector. In this case the user pays Booking.com directly, and Booking pays us and keeps its commission. We could certainly replicate the same business model with airlines, hotels, air booking agencies, etc.”

While the company began and flourished in Italy and Europe was the first main market, TravelMate is available for 33 international cities from Asia to Europe and USA. Because the audio is available in seven languages, TravelMate products are useful for the majority of people traveling to any one of these cities. Currently the company is more focused on European and US travel and less focused on the Chinese market because Baschenis is of the opinion that it will be another 12-18 months before the Chinese will be able to travel abroad.

Current cities available: Amsterdam, Assisi, Athens, Barcelona, Beijing, Bergamo, Berlin, Cinque Terre, Dubai, Florence, Hong Kong, Lecce, London, Madrid, Miami, Milan, Moscow, Naples, New York, Palermo, Paris, Pisa, Prague, Rome, Saint Petersburg, Santorini, Singapore, Tokyo, Trento, Turin, Venice, Verona, Washington

Languages available: Italian, American-English, Spanish, French, German, Mandarin and Russian