

# Amadeus Expects Fare Search Engine To Boost Web Plan

## New 'Intelligent' System Allows Multiple Queries

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MADRID — Amadeus Global Travel Distribution SA has a new weapon in the race to win the Internet travel battle that analysts say will give the company a clear advantage over its competitors.

ITA Software of Massachusetts presented its new air-fare search engine Thursday in San Francisco at the unveiling of Microsoft Corp.'s new Windows 2000 operating system. The still-unnamed application is seen as an improvement upon existing systems, since it integrates low-fare searches with seat availability, booking capabilities, and an "intelligent" interface. Amadeus, a Spanish travel-reservations company which owns a 20% stake in ITA, will be the exclusive global distribution system, or GDS, driving the new operation.

The new product will be deployed in the U.S. in the first half of the year, and international-search capabilities will be added throughout 2000. Initially, it will be available on the domestic Internet travel portals driven by Amadeus, such as Wal-Mart Stores Inc.'s Internet travel service, before being expanded to include Amadeus's international joint ventures with Terra Networks SA and Grupo L'Espresso. It will also be enabled for WAP, or Wireless Application Protocol, in Europe. This will allow users to access the information from wireless devices.

The new application has several advantages over existing models. First, it uses the processing power of the new Windows Data Center Server to do the heavy lifting on the server itself. Right now, air-fare searches are done through the GDS mainframes, which limits the number of responses that the customer receives. The one-stop search engine also allows for multiple queries — a different airport, a different date, or even a shorter layover along the way — with just one request.

At the same time, the application is "intelligent," — as the interface works like a travel agent, a bridge between the customer and the database that anticipates customer questions, according to Phillipe Chereque, Amadeus's vice president for corporate strategy. "This will give us a competitive advantage, since it is the first e-commerce travel application that integrates all the disparate data" involved in a fare search, Mr. Chereque said.

The new application should give Amadeus a leg up in the escalating Internet travel wars, says Nicolas Fernandez, a Madrid-based analyst with Ibersecurities SVB. "This is just phenomenal for their business," he says, citing the new search engine's user-friendly interface and integrated features. "It's exactly what they needed for their Internet strategy to really take off, and it will put them at a clear advantage to their competitors."