



Overview of the current market position

Web-based applications, built around the latest XML standards, can offer travel agents a far more intuitive and powerful interface. However here lies the problem: Tour Operators require a multi-channel approach and they know that by replacing Viewdata technology with a web-based reservation system they will alienate travel agents, as the agents would feel tour operators are pushing to sell directly to the public. In order to keep the retail channel open most tour operators are doing the following:

- Developing a public website. The most sophisticated of these sites allow the public to make the booking with a credit card online. However the vast majority of tour operators' sites only allow people to see what holidays are available; they then need to phone the tour operator to make a booking.
- Continuing to support existing Viewdata technology
- Working in partnership with 3rd party software developers to support Viewdata enhancements such as front-end multi-query systems.

Viewdata Emulators

There are a number of software developers who continue to develop Viewdata emulators. The fact that they are developing for the Windows XP platform suggests that there is at least a medium term future.

<http://www.sandsoft.co.uk/viewdata.html>

Viewdata Enhancements

There are a number of companies who continue to develop Viewdata enhancements such as the viewdataplus system, which allows travel agents to display brochure pages in conjunction with viewdata. Recent partners for this software include Manos, JMC, Crystal and Thomson. Tour Operators would not be buying into this service if they did not see at least a medium term future.

<http://www.viewdataplus.com/>

<http://www.comtec-europe.co.uk/news/ViewdatapluspressRelease.pdf>

Viewdata applications for integration with agency management systems

There a number of companies who continue to develop Viewdata applications which can then be embedded within their own agency management system.

<http://www.datasoft.co.uk/>

Support from infrastructure companies

The large communications companies still continue to develop and enhance their support for Viewdata products.

<http://www.telewest.co.uk/business/travel/fastrak.html>

<http://www.traveltradex.com/7.php>

The thing that all of the above points have in common is that there is significant time, effort and money being allocated to supporting and enhancing Viewdata technology. Therefore, it is safe to say it will probably be with us for at least the medium term.

The area of commonality for all of the aforementioned systems is that they have viewdata at their heart and consequently require people who understand and can use viewdata.

We are fully aware of the new technologies and standards currently being discussed and we fully intend to supplement Learn2Book with lessons on the new systems as and when they are adopted.