

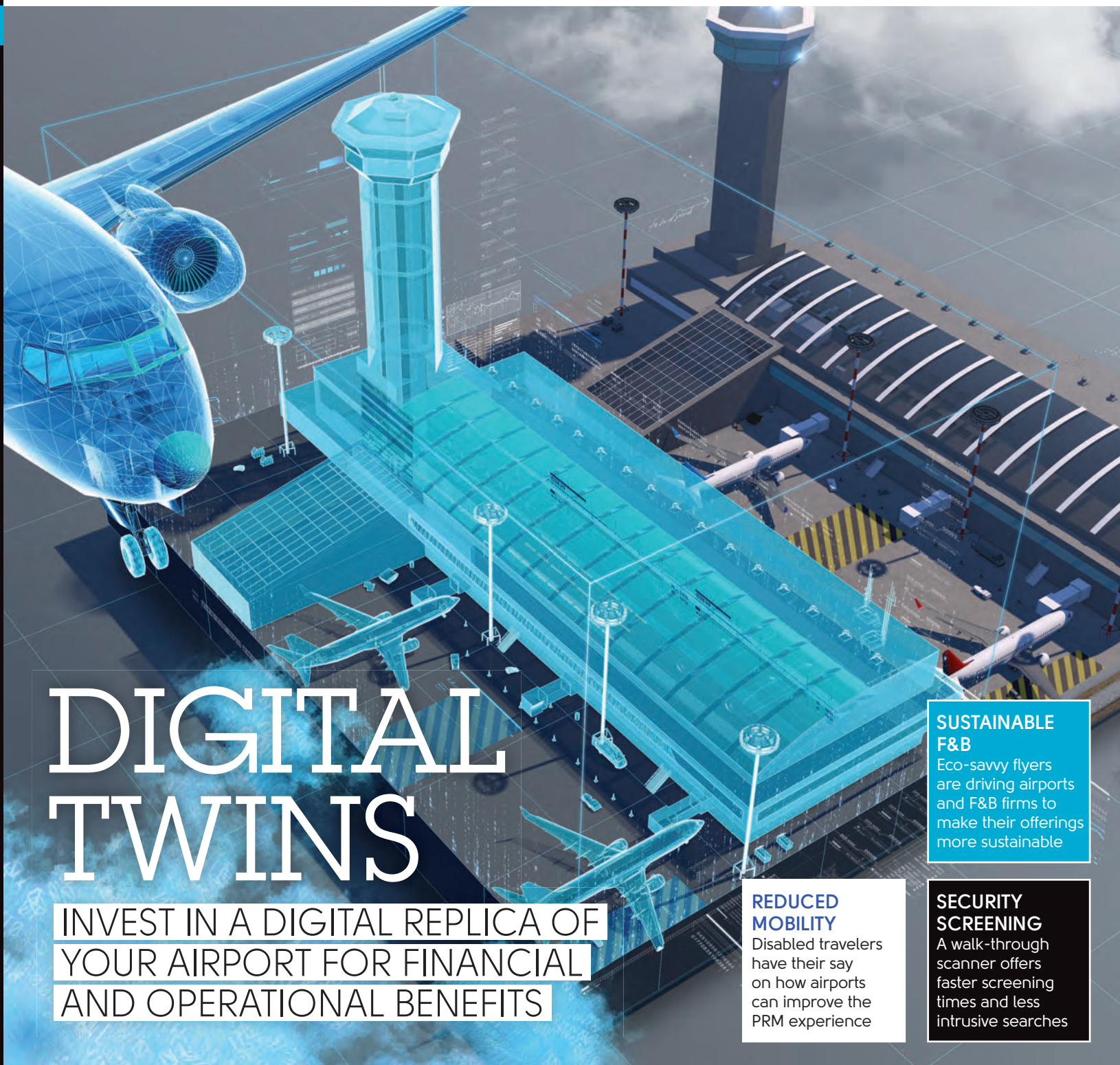
# PASSENGER TERMINALWORLD

25  
YEARS

PASSENGER TERMINAL WORLD | SEPTEMBER 2019

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## DIGITAL TWINS

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### SUSTAINABLE F&B

Eco-savvy flyers are driving airports and F&B firms to make their offerings more sustainable

### REDUCED MOBILITY

Disabled travelers have their say on how airports can improve the PRM experience

### SECURITY SCREENING

A walk-through scanner offers faster screening times and less intrusive searches

# silent airports

To realize the full potential of silent airports, it is essential that the remaining announcements are carefully managed

■ Nowadays airports are  
■ implementing all sorts of programs intended to enhance the passenger experience – and for good reason. For the average passenger, flying remains an unsettling experience, leaving them reliant on both technology and other people.

It therefore makes sense for an airport to do everything possible to reduce the stress felt by passengers as they pass through its terminals. This will give the traveler a pleasanter feeling about the journey, which they will then associate with the airport. In a sense it is a marketing tool, part of ensuring that the traveler uses that airport again.

## Passengers and stimuli

Introducing a silent airport policy is one of many ways to reduce stimuli at the airport. The more stimuli passengers experience, the more stressed they may become. Many elements of the passenger experience have the potential to create stress: being on time for check in; queueing in the security lanes; passing through customs with hundreds of fellow passengers; rushing to the gate; and queueing, again, at the gate. Passengers must also deal with the overwhelming noise of aircraft engines, people talking, music from the shops and bars and, on top of that, the flight announcements.

Of course, stress levels are not only affected by what a traveler is experiencing at the airport – they will have started building as soon as the flight was booked. To counter this, passengers will have prepared themselves thoroughly for the journey.

But however well-prepared a passenger may be, once at

the airport they may find that everything has changed. The flight may be delayed, there may be gate changes, diversions, even cancellations. Recent studies have shown that once people are no longer in control of what is happening to them, their stress levels increase on a scale similar to that of people who are moving house – and that's before the effect of airport stimuli is felt.

Becoming a silent airport is a good way to reduce the stress experienced by passengers, by dispensing with at least some of the announcements. These can be annoying, especially if they are done manually by untrained staff who may have other priorities and whose voices may not be ideal for making announcements. The announcements are often made hastily, sometimes even in colloquial language, by staff who fail to use the microphone correctly – all of which can lead to very poor intelligibility. Not being able to understand an

announcement that may concern their flight will be extremely stressful for passengers.

## The silent airport in 2019

So where are we after all these years? The idea of reducing the number of announcements at airports dates back to 2003. Some airports began operating as silent airports shortly after, but there is still a long way to go. If the concept works, why has it not been more widely adopted after more than 15 years?

There are two important reasons for airports' reluctance. On one hand, passengers want to be in control of their journey and want to be kept informed about their flight; on the other, airports need to manage their own daily operations and comply fully with local legislation. An airport

must issue fire alerts and make evacuation announcements. In some countries, in fact, safety and security announcement are legal requirements.

In many ways, the reduction of announcements is a good option, but it must be done correctly. Announcements need to be delivered at the right moment and in the right language – in an area of the airport where the likelihood of reaching the passengers involved is highest. If managed appropriately, passengers will hear few announcements. And that is how a silent airport should be. This can only be achieved by using intelligent automatic announcement systems – developed by specialists that can support the silent airport, such as Dutch firm AviaVox.



Poorly managed announcements add to passenger stress

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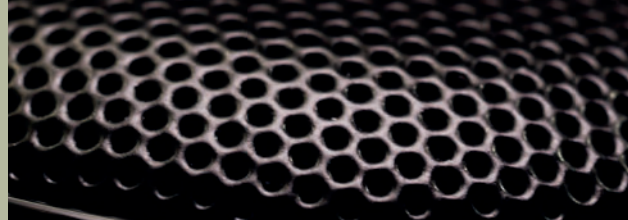


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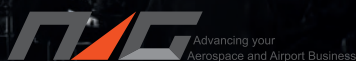
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