

Kian Gould (AOE)

None of the industry's positive disruptors have made a bigger impact on the travel retail sector than the founder of German company AOE.

In January AOE, a pioneer of airport omnichannel retail activities, announced a €13 million investment from German private equity firm LEA Partners. That investment has allowed the entrepreneurial venture to accelerate its mission of digital transformation across the world's airports.

AOE is playing a key role in **Frankfurt Airport's acclaimed omnichannel development**, through the deployment of Gould's company's OM³ (Omnichannel Multi-Merchant Marketplace) Suite. Since then it has signed a partnership with Auckland Airport, which the latter's CEO Adrian Littlewood said would transform the New Zealand airport into "Australasia's most digital gateway" and "provide our global and domestic passengers with a one-of-a-kind personalised journey".

Hot on the heels of that deal came a similar agreement with London Heathrow Airport. Again, the deal was part of what Heathrow called a "digital transformation strategy". OM³ will be used to digitalise Heathrow's non-aviation revenues and provide customers with a "unified and seamless online and offline experience", the partners said.

Heathrow Airport Retail and Service Proposition Director Chris Annetts commented: "This partnership with AOE is the next step towards building seamless end-to-end experiences for passengers and enabling us to interact with them more efficiently for an enhanced and memorable journey."

AOE said its omnichannel platform will integrate seamlessly with Heathrow's existing infrastructure. The OM³ suite will ultimately align with numerous

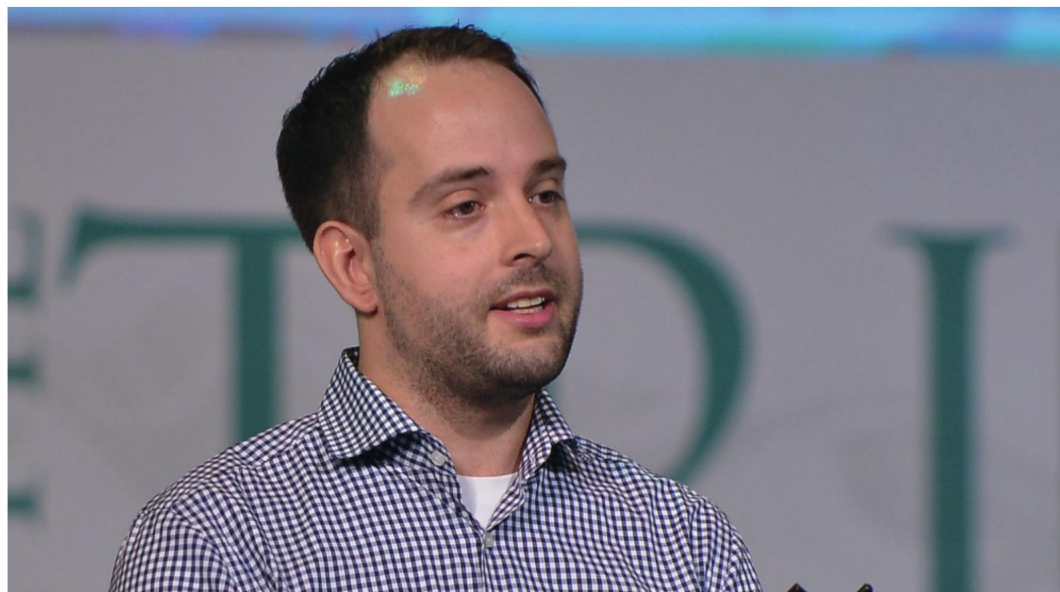
additional features, including loyalty programmes, lounge access, parking and VIP services.

Gould is a fascinating, outspoken character. He ruffled more than a few feathers in his keynote session at the recent Trinity Forum, but one suspects that that won't have worried him too much. Taxi drivers the world over derided Uber; hoteliers dismissed Airbnb; Blockbuster scorned Netflix; Newspaper moguls scoffed at the Internet. Industries are not saved by



those who seek to maintain safe havens.

[Read our interview with Kian Gould here.](#) 



Today AOE employs close to 200 people in its head office near Frankfurt; that number will reach around 300 globally by the end of the year