

# A LOOK AT THE GLOBAL AIRLINE MARKET

Why 90% of airline bookings fail and your  
comprehensive blueprint to reverse it.



## Why abandoned bookings are a big deal for airlines.

Let's face it: airlines tend to have some of the highest cart abandonment rates in all of ecommerce: **hovering around 90%** (source: SaleCycle Global Cart Abandonment Statistics). Imagine organising a glamorous cabin crew gala, only to have 9 out of 10 guests slip away before the buffet even opens.

### Ouch.

But fear not, dear marketing pilot! Across this guide, we'll delve into identity resolution, strategic remarketing tactics, and a generous dash of wit to help you capture those flighty shoppers, **without** catapulting your marketing budget into the stratosphere.

We'll highlight real data from **Air Tahiti Nui**, **Air Caraïbes**, and a **well known Portuguese airline** alongside stories (and cautionary tales) from a couple of unnamed mega-carriers (let's call them **Airline A** and **Airline B**). We'll also revisit the tale of a North American airline that finally joined us after four years of back-and-forth.

The big picture? With the right combo of technology, timing, and transparency, you can shrink that 90% abandonment rate and transform lost leads into confirmed bookings. Strap yourself in, because we're about to reach our cruising altitude.



## Identity resolution: your in-flight entertainment system.

Imagine watching an in-flight movie without headphones. Sure, something's happening on-screen, but it's muffled and frustrating. That's exactly what marketing feels like without identity resolution: you sense that travellers are interested, but you can't piece together who they are, where they came from, or how they're bouncing between devices.

### How It Works

- 1. Data Capture:** Deploy tags on your booking engine or main site to grab critical inputs, like email addresses, at the moment of user intent.
- 2. Cross-Device Mapping:** Travellers bounce between devices before booking. Recognising them across mobile, tablet, and desktop prevents lost opportunities and ensures consistent messaging; whether they started searching on their phone during a layover or switched to a laptop later.
- 3. Unified Profile:** Consolidate all sessions into one cohesive record, so you're dealing with a single traveller's story rather than fragmented data.
- 4. Personalised Engagement:** With real-time data, airlines can deliver dynamic offers like "Only 2 seats left at this price!" or "Your flight to NYC is almost full"; creating urgency and increasing conversions.

One unnamed Airline A (privacy matters to us!) experimented with re-validating consent every time visitors returned to the site. While it led to a 60% drop in total sends, click rates **soared by 55%** and conversions from those clicks **hit 30%**. Quality trumped quantity, fewer but more meaningful messages often convert better than bombarding a massive, uninterested crowd.



## Two anonymous airlines: consent, chaos & conversions.

Before we move on to more concrete examples, let's spotlight our two anonymised carriers, Airline A and Airline B:

### Airline A (Consent Crusaders)

- Chose to re-prompt for retargeting consent whenever a user returned.
- Saw a 60% dip in total sends but a 55% jump in click rate and a 30% conversion from those clicks.
- Lesson: A smaller, hyper-engaged audience can outshine a sprawling, disinterested list.

From these carriers' trials, it's clear that balancing compliance, departmental expectations, and marketing best practices can be messy. Yet the payoff, reduced abandonment, makes the turbulence worth it.

### Airline B (Tangled in Red Tape)

- Wrestled with multiple internal teams: legal, data, design, all wanting to dictate how to deploy tags and scripts.
- Integration took too long, but eventually their two-cycle cart abandonment campaign captured a hefty slice of previously lost bookings.
- Lesson: Smooth or not, the implementation journey can pay off once everyone's in sync.

# AIR TAHITI NUI

## Harvesting paradise bookings.

Who wouldn't dream of turquoise waters and white-sand beaches? Air Tahiti Nui leverages that allure, plus some identity resolution magic to bring reluctant shoppers back to the booking journey.

>63%

open rate



>24%

click-to-open rate



>17%

conversion on click



Over €540,000 in extra revenue\*

They also used on-site remarketing with around a >14% display rate, generating €1,558,000 in conversions. This multi-touch strategy, both on-site and off-site, offered timely, relevant reminders. Abandoners got a gentle “Don't forget your ticket to paradise!” nudge, complete with real-time seat availability.

A simple formula, but clearly effective

\*source: SaleCycle internal data

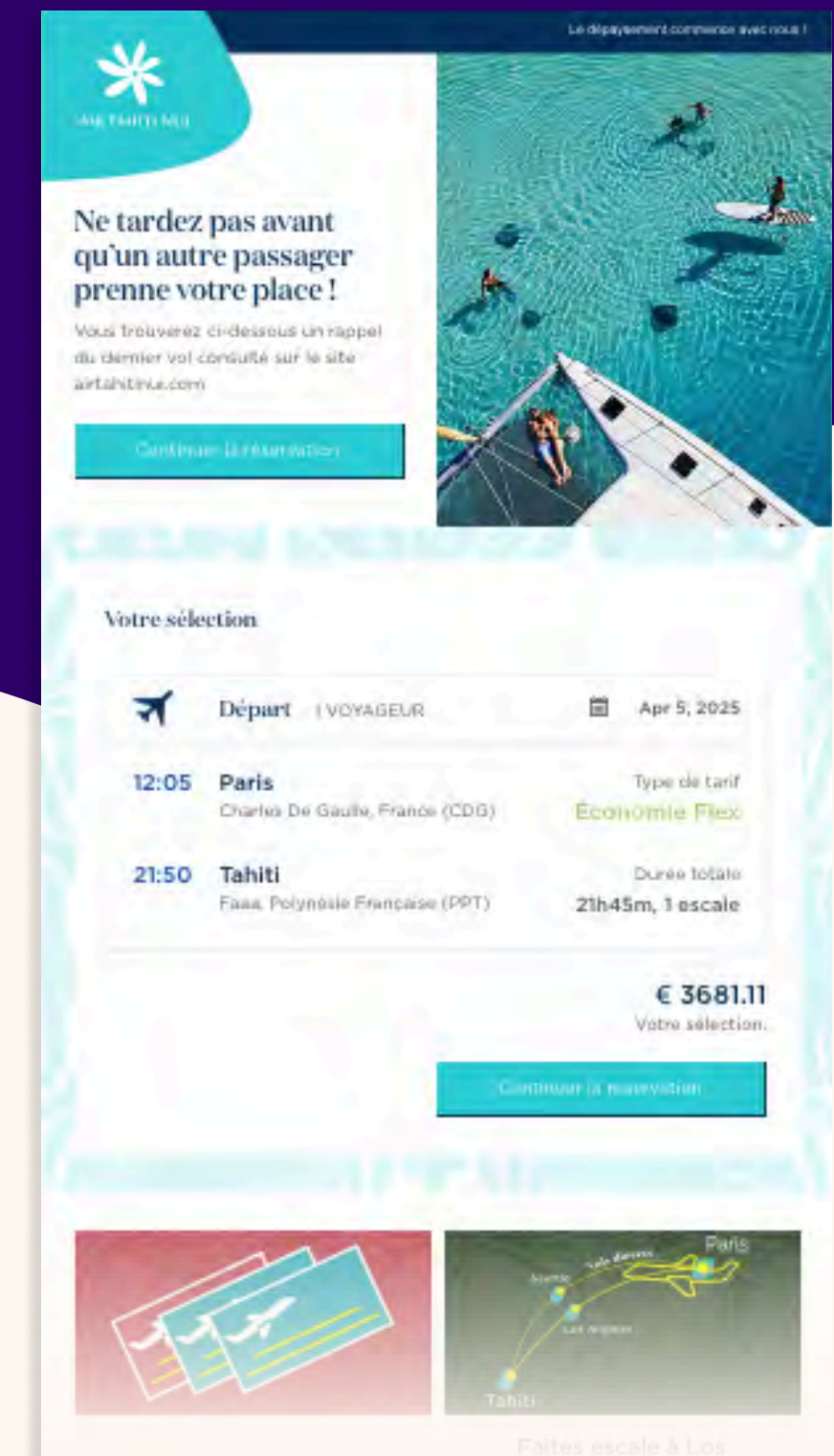
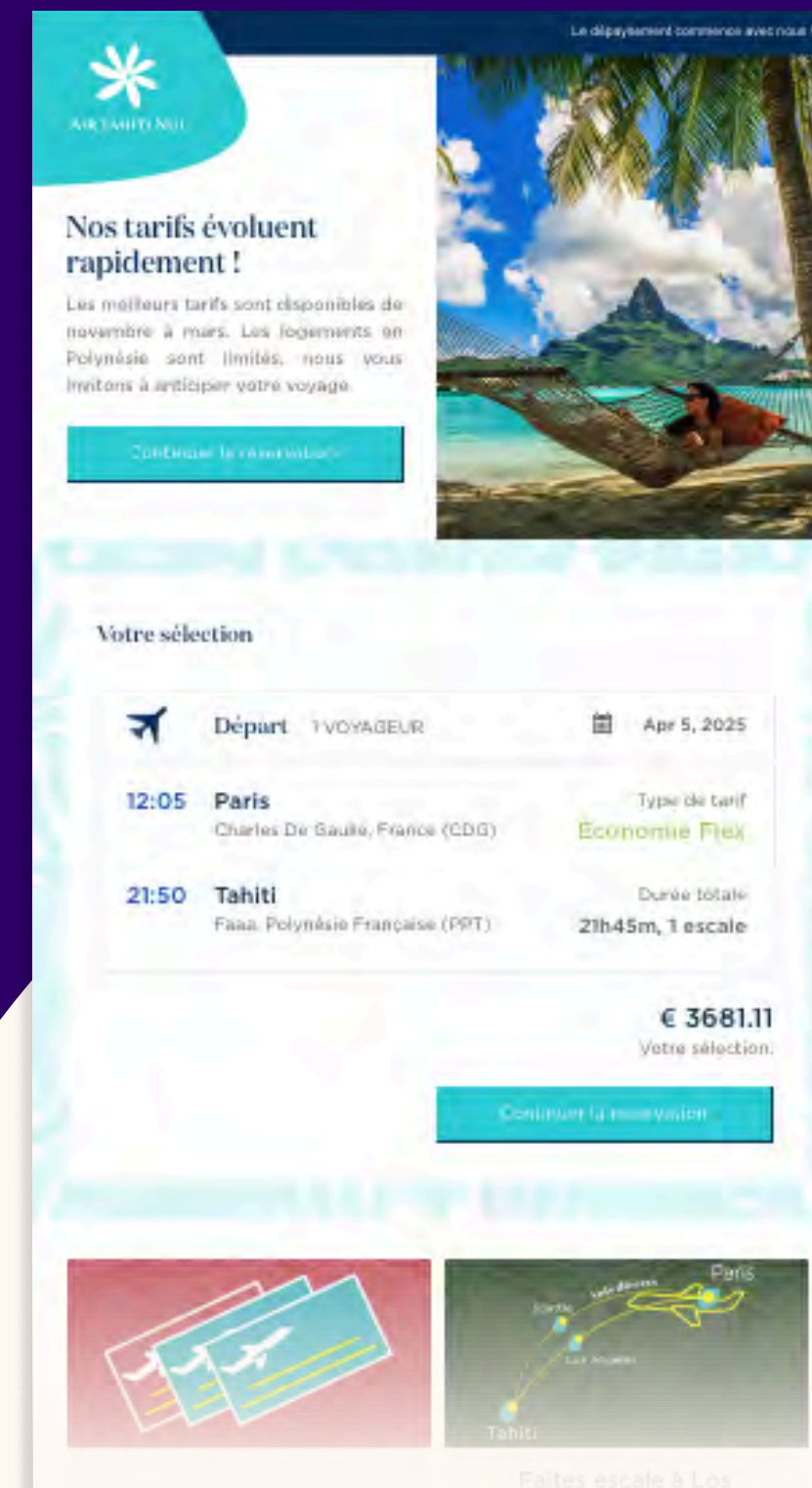
Their secret sauce? A two-phase cart abandonment email approach:

### Phase 1:

An email goes out one hour after someone abandons, reminding them of their near-complete itinerary.

### Phase 2:

A second, more urgent message hits 24 hours later (“Seats are filling fast: don't miss your tropical getaway!”).



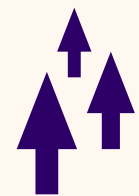
## Meet our well known Portuguese airline, a trusted client since 2013.

Next up: One of our longstanding clients. They've been with SaleCycle since 2013, and in 2024 alone they've seen a >4% revenue uplift through our cart abandonment campaigns. Given that airline margins can be razor-thin, even a few percentage points make a noticeable difference.

### Here's how they're pulling it off:

- **3-Cycle Email Campaign:** On average, a >14% **click rate** from send and a >4% **conversion rate** from send across these emails.
- **Live Trends Message:** Dynamic content appears on the "review" page if a customer shows inactivity or hesitates after seeing the final price. This message shows how many other users recently viewed the same journey, instilling a subtle fear of missing out (FOMO).

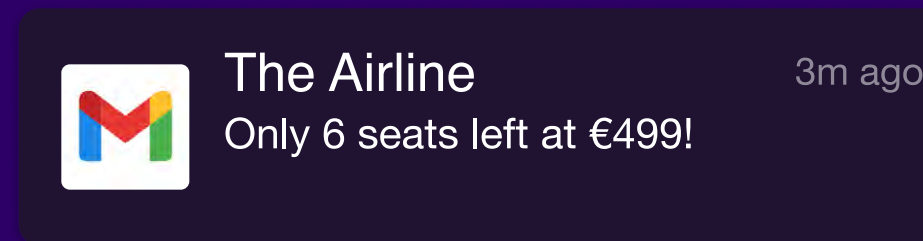
**55%**  
Click rate from  
display



**>4%**  
conversion rate  
from display



Their cart abandonment approach delivers results despite these challenges. A >4% **revenue bump** for an airline is no small feat, proving even moderate remarketing can land impressive wins if it's data-driven and well-timed.



# AIRCARAÏBES

## From idle browsers to beachy bliss.

For another data-packed example, look no further than Air Caraïbes. Their 2024 performance (source SaleCycle data) speaks volumes:

<p><b>372,000</b> emails sent</p>	<p><b>13,000</b> conversions generated</p>	<p><b>14%</b> year-on-year revenue growth</p>
<p><b>ROI of €270</b> for every €1 spent</p>		

They accomplish this via carefully timed cart abandonment emails and on-site pop-ups. A gentle, "Need more time? Email yourself these flight details!" approach lets potential travellers revisit the booking when ready, rather than forcing them to restart the entire search.

By backing each message with identity resolution, Air Caraïbes ensures that returning visitors see dynamic updates on seat availability and pricing, eliminating any 'stale data' effect. When travellers realise a seat or fare they wanted might vanish, the impulse to finalise grows exponentially. That's how you turn idle browsers into full-fledged bookers.



**Le garder pour plus tard**

Si vous avez besoin de plus de temps pour vous décider et que vous souhaitez revenir à votre panier plus tard, indiquez votre adresse e-mail ci-dessous et nous vous enverrons un rappel.

Ne m'envoyez que ce panier

Votre adresse e-mail... **ENVOYER**

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## That one north american airline: a four-year courtship.

Not all client wins come quickly. One North American giant took **four years** of courting, staff changes, and legal wrangling before signing a pilot program for remarketing. Initially, they tried a **£15,000** contract over **60 days** in four markets. The result? **£1.4 million** in recovered revenue during that pilot alone.

### Key Learnings

- 1. Patience & Persistence:** Frequent personnel swaps meant re-pitching the benefits of identity resolution and remarketing each time someone new took the helm.
- 2. ROI-Driven Confidence:** Demonstrating how even a small recapture of their 90% abandonment rate could pay major dividends sealed the deal.
- 3. Phased Rollout:** Proving success in four markets paved the way for expansion to more routes and additional solutions.

Sometimes the path to remarketing glory is a turbulent one. But if you can maintain enthusiasm and keep championing the data, even the biggest carriers eventually come around.





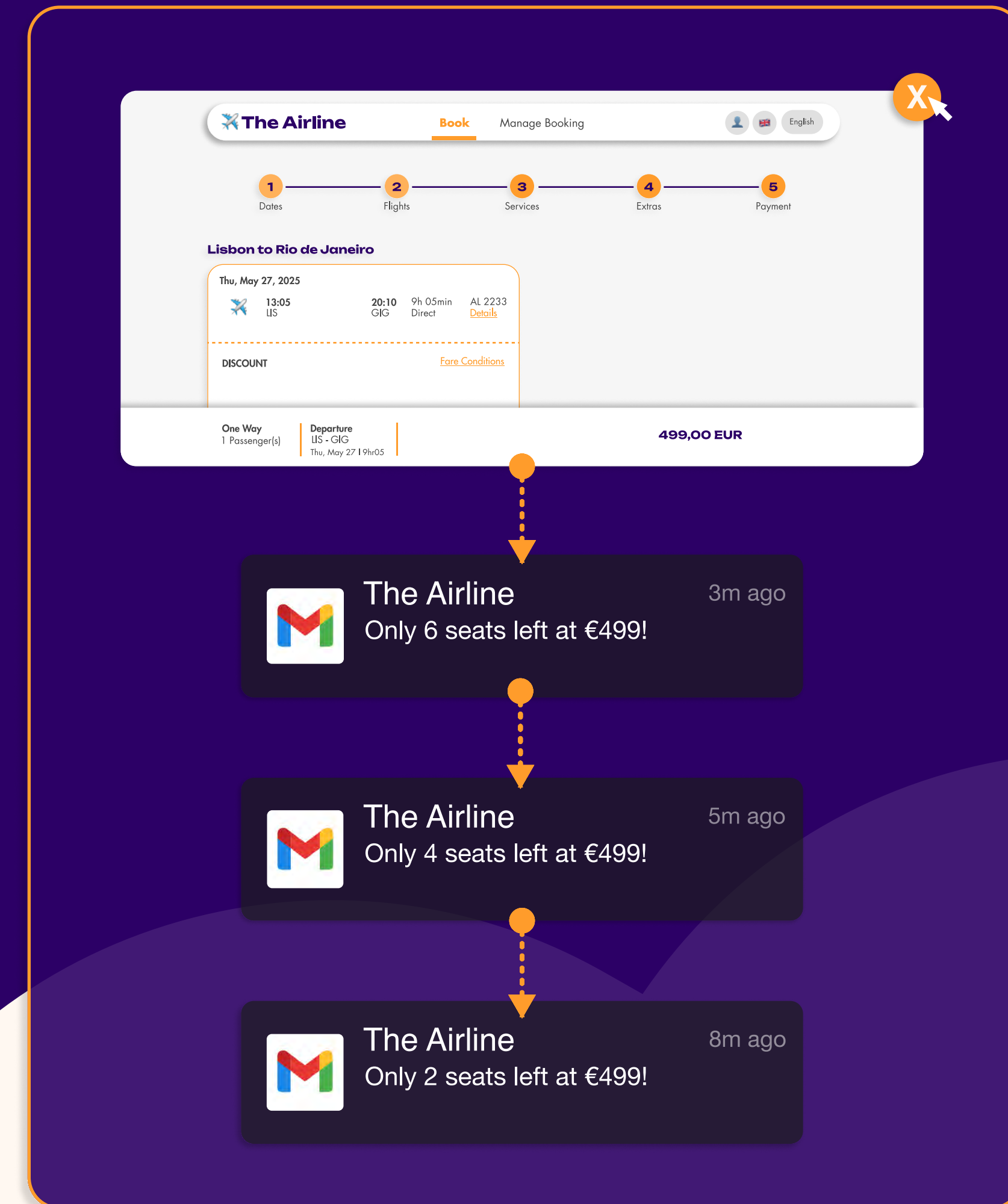
## Why Amadeus integration fuels these high-flying results.

So how do all these airlines update seat counts or fares in real time? Many leverage the Amadeus-SaleCycle partnership ([Amadeus Airlines Product](#)). This integration injects dynamic data, like real-time seat availability, into cart abandonment emails and on-site messages.

### Picture this

- A traveller abandons a Lisbon-to-Rio flight on an airline's site.
- They receive an email that says, "Only 2 seats left at €499!", no guesswork, because Amadeus feeds up-to-date info directly into the message.
- If those seats sell, the email dynamically reflects the new price and availability. No more "Oops, that's outdated" fiascos.

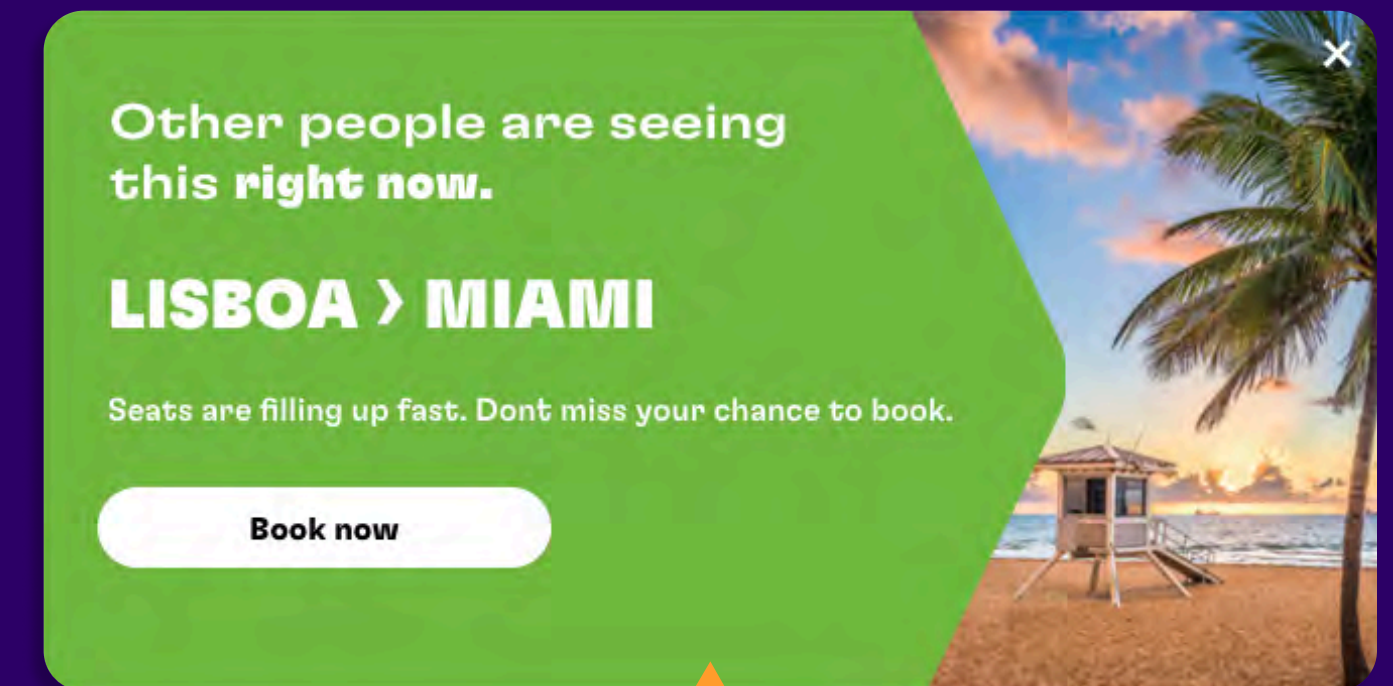
Combined with **deep linking** (so the traveller returns directly to their half-finished checkout), you reduce friction to near-zero. In the notoriously competitive airline industry, that difference can mean a huge jump in conversions. Why re-enter passenger details when one click can seal the deal?



## On-Site remarketing : catching them before they drift away.

While off-site emails do heavy lifting post-abandonment, on-site remarketing captures attention **in the moment**. Exit-intent pop-ups or dynamic banners can appear when a shopper hesitates. For instance, "Still deciding on that flight? Want us to email you the details for later?" **Our well known Portuguese airline** uses a live trends message on the review page, reminding uncertain travellers how many others have viewed the same journey. Talk about subtle peer pressure, an **11% click rate** and **4% conversion** from display is nothing to scoff at.

By demonstrating real-time user interest, you invoke FOMO, nudging those undecided visitors to buckle up and finalise their seat. It's a delicate balance; be helpful without shoving pop-ups in customers' faces 24/7. That's where identity resolution helps you avoid overkill, if you already captured an email address, maybe hold back on showing the pop-up again.



## Data protection at 30,000 feet : why consent is key.

In an industry handling sensitive passenger details, privacy compliance is paramount. **Airline A** took a strict approach, re-validating consent on each return visit. Although that slashed total sends by **60%**, the hyper-engaged recipients who did opt in drove higher click and conversion rates.

### Privacy Best Practices

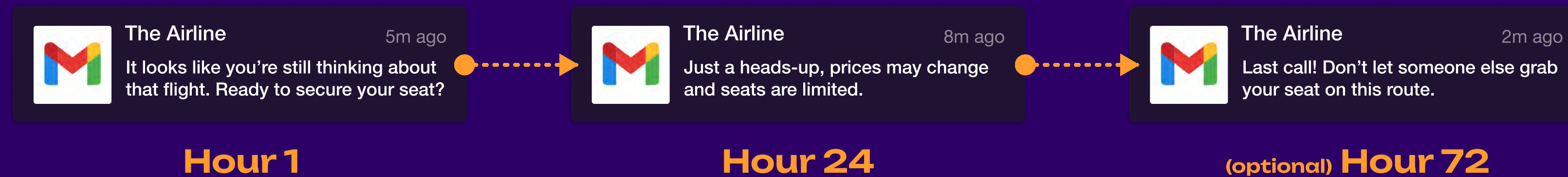
- Keep disclaimers short and sweet: "We'll only email you about your flight details."
- Provide clear unsubscribe or frequency options; build trust instead of suspicion.
- Display compliance badges or references (e.g., GDPR-ready) for added credibility.

Travellers appreciate transparency, especially if they're spending hundreds (or thousands) of euros on flights. Done well, privacy efforts become a selling point, reassuring prospective flyers that you won't misuse their data.



## Multi-email sequences: turning hesitation into confirmation.

Many airlines, including our well known Portuguese airline, adopt a multi-email approach rather than a single “You left your flight behind!” message. Typically, it goes like this:



Our well known Portuguese airline reports a **14% click rate** across their 3-cycle email campaign and a **>4% conversion from send**, proving that politely persistent follow-ups can gently remind travellers just how close they are to a getaway. And if they do finalise after the first email, identity resolution ensures they're removed from the sequence, so they won't get hammered with more messages. Nothing kills goodwill like receiving “Complete Your Booking!” after you already have.



# A/B testing: your cockpit instruments for optimisation.

Running a remarketing strategy without **A/B testing** is like flying an aircraft blindfolded. You need real-time visibility into open rates, click rates, and conversions to tweak subject lines, email layouts, and send times.

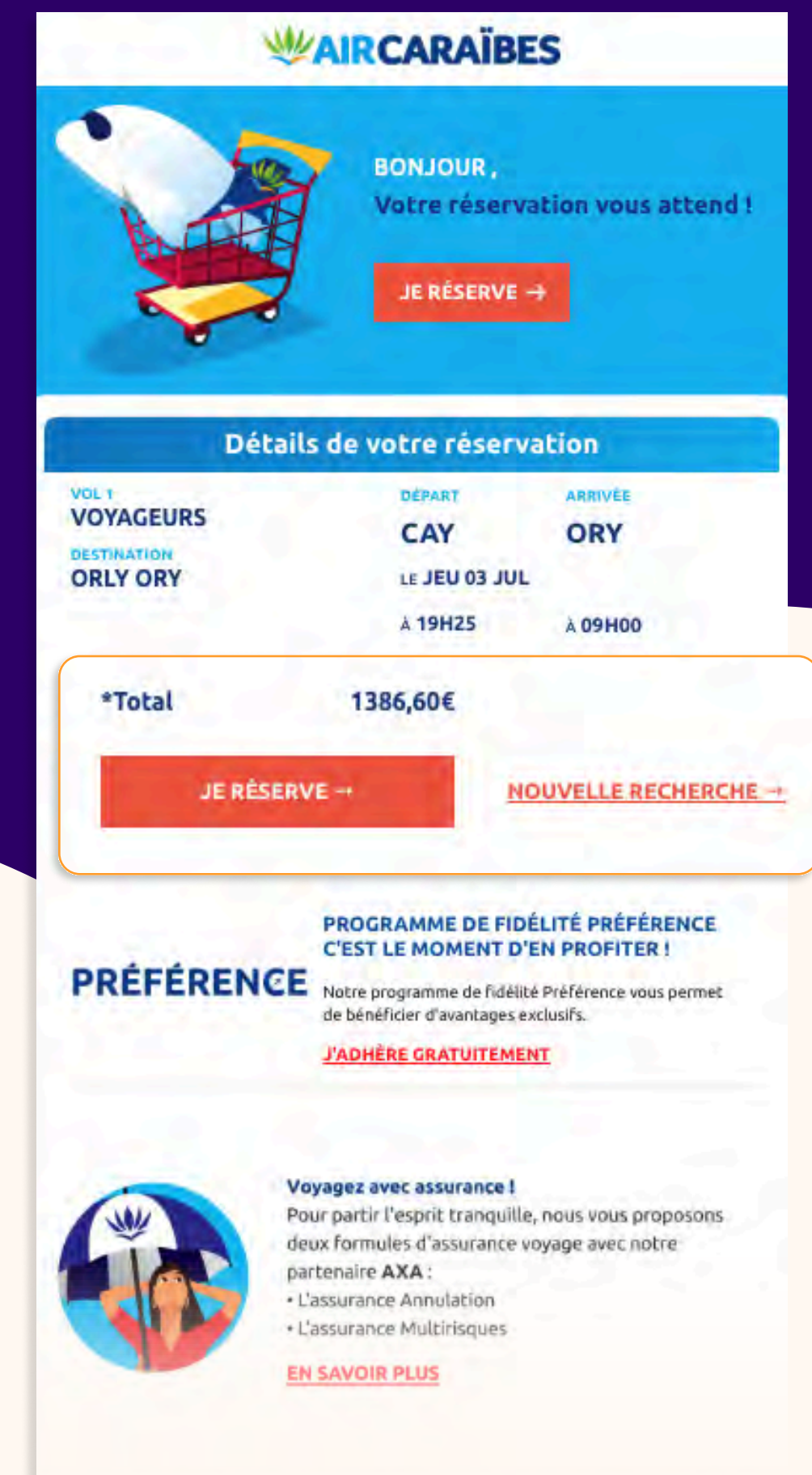
- **Subject Lines:** “Your seat awaits!” vs. “Still interested in your flight?”
- **Email Layouts:** A single CTA button vs. multiple route highlights.
- **Timing Variations:** Morning vs. evening sends; midweek vs. weekend.

**Air Caraïbes** used ongoing design tests to maintain their 14% YOY revenue growth, and **our well known Portuguese airline** hopes to adopt more testing once internal approvals ease up. Even if some tests don’t move the needle, you learn what doesn’t resonate; a step closer to that sweet spot of maximum engagement.

**Email A :**  
No total price displayed



**Email B :**  
Total price displayed



# Creating your own runway: a step-by-step game plan.

Here's your blueprint for success:

## 1. Tag & Track:

Integrate site/booking engine tags to collect partial bookings, device data, and email inputs.



## 2. Identity Resolution Setup:

Map cross-device visits into singular traveller profiles for laser-focused follow-ups.



## 3. Consent Management:

- Be clear about how often you'll email and why, it builds trust.
- Use real-time seat availability and live pricing to add credibility and urgency.



## 4. Cart Abandonment Emails:

- Devise 2-3 cycles, spaced out over hours or days, referencing fresh data each time.
- **On-site Remarketing:** Exit-intent pop-ups or review-page banners can capture a traveller's email for later follow-up.

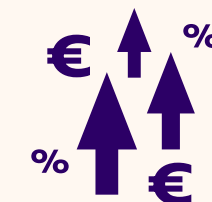


## 5. Roll Out Gradually

- Like the North American airline, start small (a few routes) before global expansion
- **Test & Iterate:** A/B test everything, from visuals to subject lines, to refine your strategy continuously.



When executed in tandem, these steps create an interconnected net that catches your near-converts before they disappear to aggregator sites or competitor offers.



## Final touchdown: converting browsers into jet-setters.

Congratulations! You've navigated through identity resolution, cart abandonment wizardry, on-site retargeting magic, and real-world success stories from Air Tahiti Nui, Air Caraïbes, our well known Portuguese airline, and more. Let's recap:

- **~90% cart abandonment** isn't the end of the journey, it's an opportunity, given how far along the booking path these visitors already are.
- **Identity resolution** ensures you recognise the same traveller across devices, enabling personalised, high-impact follow-ups.
- **Amadeus integration** (see [SaleCycle-Amadeus solutions](#)) provides real-time flight data to nudge indecisive browsers toward booking.
- **Consent strategies**: whether lenient or strict, impact audience size but can boost engagement if done transparently.
- **Multi-cycle emails** and on-site remarketing give travellers multiple, well-spaced chances to finalise their seat.
- **A/B testing** is your navigational dashboard, guiding you to optimise everything from timing to design.
- **Long-term partnerships** (like the one with our well known Portuguese airline since 2013) prove that sustained, evolving strategies pay off over time.

Now you're armed with a flight plan to tame sky-high abandonment and turn curious browsers into happy passengers, without blowing the budget.

By fusing technology, creativity, and good old data, you'll see your eCommerce conversions soar and your airline's flights stay comfortably full.



**Bon Voyage!**



Founded in 2010, SaleCycle is a European company and a pioneer in marketing activation technology.

With over 500 active clients worldwide, we support some of the largest e-commerce sites at every critical stage of the customer journey, from visitor identification (including anonymous users) to purchase and retention. Equip yourself with the best tools and experts to supercharge your year-end sales!

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