



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

e-Travel Stops Web Scraping



e-Travel protects the integrity of its online data, affiliate program, look-to-book ratios, and GDS pull costs with Imperva

Overview

e-Travel is an e-commerce travel specialist. For airline tickets it's among the top 10 online travel agencies in the world, and is one of the most successful startups in Greece. Launched in 2007 in Athens, it operates 11 websites, is translated in 42 languages, and serves over 1.5M travelers annually from 60 countries.

Challenges

Competitors and upstarts used bots to steal e-Travel's data

"Most online travel agencies have been in this industry for a long time," explains Nick Bitounis, Director of IT at e-Travel. "New players have a very big gap to cross to survive. Most don't have what it takes to cope with the complexity and low margins. It's a very competitive market."

To gain an immediate presence in the travel industry, competitors' web scraping bots—a common bad bot type—were stealing e-Travel's data. Scrapers will often steal pricing information, sell it to a specific competitor, group of competitors, or even put it up for auction. Bitounis wanted to put a stop to that.

Incessant scraping put a strain on both team and technical resources

"Bots were scraping our sites so often that they were hurting our service. It doesn't take much to write a scraper bot, but these bots can consume a disproportionate amount of web infrastructure resources. I had to deploy people and technology to meet bot demand—not that of legitimate customers," says Bitounis. "It becomes very expensive when customers are interrupted by a spike in bot traffic while retrieving flight information."

Skewed Look-to-book ratios and inflated advertising and GDS pull costs

"We relay these flight booking requests to global distribution systems (GDS). The GDS expects we're going to make one sale after a certain number of lookup requests. Each look takes time to complete, requires

Protects

content and data
from nefarious
scrapers

Eliminated

site slowdowns

Integrity

across website KPIs

computing resources, and we're charged for them if we exceed a certain number of look-to-book. Bots were increasing our GDS pull costs," says Bitounis.

"Bots also polluted the integrity of our affiliate relationships. We were paying for bot-driven clicks. It wasn't always clear if a bot was scraping a competitor, or if there was something fishy going on with my affiliate itself. Certainly we did want to be paying for these non-human clicks."

Homegrown solution couldn't keep up with the bots

"We knew we needed an anti-bot solution. We have a large software development team and tend to want to write everything ourselves, so in 2015 we deployed our own 'Bot Hammer' solution. But as you might imagine, we couldn't keep up—it's not our core function. The only bot traffic we could evaluate was our own, and our bot problem persisted," says Bitounis.

"At the beginning of 2017 we had a few denial of service attacks. We didn't know if it was a competitor, or if scrapers were providing data to other marketers. e-Travel couldn't continually deal with that from an operations perspective."

The Result

Imperva Bot Management shines right out of the gate

"Imperva Bot Management (formerly Distil Networks) looked like a great specialist solution. The fact that Imperva leverages the collective experience of numerous clients was especially attractive," says Bitounis.

"We tried it on one of our larger sites to start. A few scrapers hit our site in that first month, so we witnessed Impeva's value under real conditions. Once we saw how Imperva Bot Management works—coupled with all it can do—it was a lock and we rolled it out to ten more sites."

Easy integration with ELK stack, HAProxy, and AWS

"We use the ELK stack (Elasticsearch, Logstash, and Kibana) with HAProxy as our load balancer—all of it running on AWS. The Imperva deployment was perfect; I don't think e-Travel has experienced a quicker integration."

Proven ROI

"Like any profitable business, we think in terms of ROI. On the investment side, Imperva Bot Management increases IT operations spend. I wanted to show management that we would recover our investment, and possibly a bit more."

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Nick Bitounis, Director of IT at e-Travel

“The Imperva team helped us formulate the answer to the question, ‘If we block this specific area of fraudulent clicks, how much money would we save?’ Being flexible, their team made that happen, and together we found a way to communicate the ROI of Imperva to upper management.”

Incomparable customer support

“I put high value on vendor cooperation. Imperva is extremely flexible, especially when it comes to support. Whenever we had a question, we could reach someone very quickly—regardless of what it was we wanted. It’s hard to find a company as responsive and knowledgeable as Imperva.”



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Imperva is an analyst-recognized, cybersecurity leader championing the fight to secure data and applications wherever they reside.

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