
Getting personal with airline passengers

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A look at how airlines are failing their brand messaging and where there is still room for them to grow.

Airline brands

Airline brands (just like all brands) are seen as having personalities. These personalities often have the behavioral characteristics of humans. Thus, airline brands may be perceived as being serious, funny, caring, friendly or indifferent.

Every interaction between a passenger and the tangible or intangible airline brand artifact can be seen as a brand experience. Such interactions vary and can include a visit to the airline website, planning a trip, reading the inflight menu, drinking a favorite drink on board, or even reflecting back on a favorite trip. These places of interaction are referred to as touchpoints of the passenger journey. Hence, an airline brand experience ought to include as many of the recipient's five senses as possible and cause a positive interaction or response.

Experiences do matter

The experiences an airline creates can be big or small, whether they take place inside an 20,000-square-foot airline lounge or in a 200-character Instagram entry. What's important is that each experience should mean something to a passenger, ideally that it is engaging and memorable. Look at the way [Thai Airways International](#) meticulously sustains the inflight-only crew uniform to enhance its brand image in flight. Where some airlines see a work uniform, Thai Airways sees an opportunity to enhance the passenger experience by having female crew members wear a traditional Thai silk dress.

Integrating emotional value

More content and more products could overwhelm passengers. Generating a rather busy picture just to stand out amongst the competition is not the answer to muscling your way through all the white noise. As they say, less is more!

The old process of creating value took place in silos, with one agency handling packaging, another one strategy, and yet another taking care of digital. Today, airlines need to evolve to see everything through the lens of integration. Everyone from marketing teams and managers to designers, strategists and developers must come together so as to create experiences that truly mean something. The simple truth is that today people want to feel good about what they buy, and they have more control than ever over the brands they bring into their lives. It's a new economy, one in which belief is the new currency. Invest in it, and customers will invest in you. Creating authentic, direct messages that project emotional value can help an airline to stand out.

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