Abstract

The airline industry is facing tremendous changes linked to advances in Information and Communication Technologies which revolutionize consumer behavior by enhancing the availability of information and simplifying the booking process. Though success for airlines lies in understanding changing needs of customers little research has been done on the decision making process of passengers. The aim of this paper is to explore how passengers prefer to obtain information, which information sources they perceive as trustworthy, which distribution channels are used for bookings and the evaluation of distinct product attributes. The Arabian carrier Emirates was selected for an in-depth analysis, and a survey among Emirates’ passengers was conducted in order to obtain up-to-date insight into their decision making behavior. Results show that passengers carry out extensive information searches and stress the need for integrated marketing communication. A trend towards disintermediation and re-intermediation was observed. As far as specific product attributes are concerned, Emirates’ passengers place the most importance on safety, punctuality, staff and the seat pitch. Recommendations for Emirates and any other carrier include a proactive approach towards new Information and Communication Technologies and their integration as marketing tool.