

Finding the Airline's Sweet Spot: Matching Travelers' Expectations and Experiences

ABSTRACT

As the tourism market is forecast to grow and the airline industry is expected to develop further, serving more destinations and passengers, competition among airlines is also expected to grow. Airlines will have to find new ways to attract customers and how to retain those customers. Thus the research questions "How can airlines successfully design the sweet spot that facilitates successful experiences and subsequently leads to loyal passengers?" will play a significant role in how airlines can differentiate. Many current research papers and journals available focus heavily on aspects such as loyalty, satisfaction according to price models, other specific aspects such as technology or sustainability; however, there is a lack of research into airline experience designs. The research question is answered using a quantitative study among leisure travelers that have flown to any destination in the past 2 years. This quantitative study is based on the literature review, which shows that several aspects such as price, reliability, safety, image, crew, and technology are important and can influence the satisfaction among airline passengers. The outcome of the study shows that there is indeed a gap between what passengers find important and attractive versus current satisfaction, and this study shows how this gap can be decreased by focusing on seat comfort and in-flight services mainly, boosting the airline experience design and improving satisfaction and loyalty. The sweet spot of airline experience design is visible, giving way for airlines to improve and retain customers