

Airlines: New Customers and Loyalty through Mobile

The mobile phone has become a permanent accompaniment for almost every adult on the planet. Many organizations are realizing the value of the device in brand exposure and regular advertising. The mobile is personal and therefore more trusted than the TV for example. The aviation industry has not been left behind on this front. Using the mobile to advance the industries' interest is becoming a staple in airline marketing.



The mobile method starts with an understanding of the customer's device. The popularity of smart phones has opened up more opportunities. This is due to the fact that smart devices can accept a wider range of media such as internet making the marketing process easier. Once you have identified the device type, you can then go ahead and tailor content that is suited to the device. It is also very important to observe how customers are using their devices in air travel.

Most airlines have recognized the increase in customers booking flights through their phones. These airlines have taken hint to develop products such as mobile checking, mobile booking and paperless boarding passes. The airlines are in a position to text information to customers too.

According Mr. Stephen Johnson, JetBlue executive, there are key stages during the travel experience that provide the greatest opportunity for airlines to target customers.

The first stage is the discovery phase. At this stage the consumer is looking through flights available and doing their booking. The second stage is the pre-flight travel phase. At this stage the customer is considering the destination.



The third stage is the in-flight phase. This stage provides one of the biggest opportunities to impress.

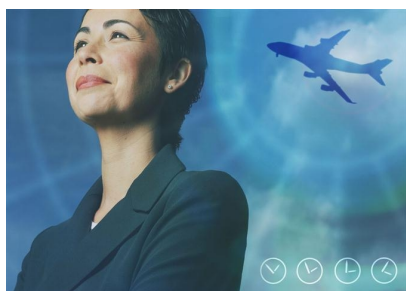
This is because the customer has already chosen an airline. All that remains is delivering up to his expectations. At this stage most airlines will offer free Wi-Fi, meals and games to keep the customer happy. The last stage is the destination management stage. At this stage the airline is aiming at repeat booking from the customer.

Airlines need to be aware of the constantly changing technology. This ensures that their customers are able to reach them easily. The future will present more opportunities to interact and connect with customers through the mobile.

Today, any serious airline marketer should be well versed with location-based services, social media sharing, mobile apps, mobile payments, movement tracking, NFC and advanced push notifications among others.

The social media route is phenomenal considering that travel is a personal experience. There is a shift away from mobile optimized web pages towards mobile apps. Apps deliver more content and are more interactive. An airline has to understand what method serves it best.

Mobile commerce is thus growing fast. Airlines are fast embracing it. NFC, for example, presents huge opportunity for mobile commerce. Airlines need to be aware of these changes so that they can take advantage of them to improve customer experiences.



Any airline that seeks to incorporate mobile in its operations must craft a strong mobile strategy. The airline must recognize that mobile goes beyond apps. As Mr. Johnson said “An app is not a mobile strategy. It is an aspect of the mobile strategy.” The airline mobile campaign must focus on building consumer relationship.

Airlines can run campaigns such as rewarding consumers who post messages about their travel experience with the airline on their social media page. This campaign takes advantage of the fact that customers will post about their travel experience anyway. Another approach involves partnering with a relevant organization such as Pandora to offer customers free nonstop music during their travel.

Companies in the aviation industry are upgrading their mobile campaign tools. There are many airlines that offer custom apps especially for android phones and iPhones. It is important to keep refreshing the content and delivering more value through those apps otherwise they get deleted. The mobile friendly site should be regularly updated too. The mobile marketing team must strive to deliver content that is

geographically relevant to the mobile owner if they hope to make any impact.

Mobile sites and apps that form part of the mobile strategy must be easy to use. The most important content should be easily accessible. Apps must continue to deliver value over different geographical areas so as to keep the customer glued and hence breeding loyalty.

Date: 2012-09-24

Article link:

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