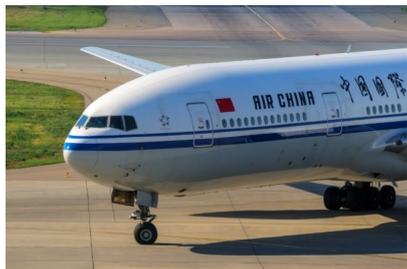# IN-FLIGHT INTERNET CONNECTION IN CHINA EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS

It has been a year now since China announced the installation of in-flight Wi-Fi on board their passenger planes. The goal was to provide internet access to 500 million passengers by 2022. The government allocated a budget of $1.45 billion and $145 billion, respectively, was allocated for two in-flight internet projects in this view. However, there are problems surrounding this concept in the Asian country and it is not working as it should.

Reports say that only 3% of Chinese airplanes offer in-flight internet access at the moment. **The main reason slowing down the process are infrastructure issues, mainly the lack of satellites to handle the many connections from the planes.**

The problem is that China only has one communication satellite that is capable of contributing in terms of in-flight internet access – ChinaSat16. According to some inside sources, however, even this satellite is not sufficient enough to provide the best services. Several airplanes offering internet access still rely on traditional satellites with very poor services.

Regulation Issues

Another issue surrounding this is the fact that the in-flight internet connection would have to comply with Chinese internet laws and regulations. It would have to be behind the so-called Great Firewall, which is a combination of several legislative actions to regulate the internet enforced by the country.

Every single information created by passengers on Chinese airline planes with in-flight connection has to be stored on Chinese servers. This applies even to information created when the plane is not in the territory of China.

However, there is a huge demand for this service in the country and airlines are ready to keep pace with competitors worldwide. But even if eventually it starts to grow, it will still probably not make the average international traveler very happy, with no Instagram, Facebook or even Dropbox available.

Competitors Ahead So Far

Meanwhile, in Europe and the United States the concept of in-flight internet connection has been growing for years now and has reached a level of stable quality. As of 2018, 82 airlines in the world offer in-flight internet connection. This is 17% more than last year. 13 airlines offer 100% WiFI coverage, including Emirates, Etihad or Lufthansa.

In general, the US is considered to be the most developed market in terms of on-board WiFi connection. According to Routehappy, 9 out of 10 routes with best internet connection are in the United States, with the only other being in Japan.

Latest airlines offering in-flight Wi-Fi connection are Air France, who look to have their entire fleet equipped by the end of 2020 or Southwest Airlines in the United States. This shows a clear trend of this being mainly a matter of the US and European market, though some Asian

countries like Japan are also very much developed in this aspect.

Overall, this concept is still a bit less used that in it is perhaps desirable. A survey showed that less than half of passengers (45%) had the possibility to connect to the internet on board. 65% of surveyed said they chose to use this service when it was available. In the future, however, we may expect the numbers to increase, with the growing digitalization trend in the world.

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