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“Enhancing Passenger Experience: Air India’s Rebranding Journey”

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ABSTRACT:

The current aviation industry is characterized not just by transportation efficiency but also by the quality of the experience provided to passengers. With increasing global competition, airlines are changing their strategies for customer service and brand image.

This research study examines Air India’s rebranding efforts and their effect on improving passenger experience. Following its purchase by the Tata Group, Air India launched various initiatives to enhance its brand reputation and customer experience.

The research examines major aspects including in-flight amenities, online platforms, employee conduct, and visual identity. By utilizing primary data (surveys) alongside secondary research, the project assesses the impact of these changes on passenger satisfaction levels. Results indicate significant progress in service provision and online interaction, yet opportunities for improvement remain in entertainment and customization.

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive airline industry, carriers need to do more than simply transport passengers; they must also deliver an outstanding travel experience. The concept of passenger experience encompasses all interactions throughout a traveler's journey, including pre-flight services like online bookings, airport check-in, boarding, as well as in-flight and post-flight encounters. As travelers' expectations shift due to technological progress and worldwide service benchmarks, airlines must continually evolve and innovate to remain relevant.

Air India, once the jewel of Indian aviation, has repeatedly faced criticism for its aging infrastructure, inconsistent service quality, and outdated fleet. After being acquired by the Tata Group, the airline began a major transformation aimed at refreshing its legacy while adhering to modern standards. This rebranding includes not only changes in visual identity such as logo and aircraft designs but also major improvements in service quality, employee training, digital platforms, and passenger engagement. This study examines the rebranding process and its effectiveness in enhancing the passenger experience.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To evaluate the impact of Air India’s rebranding on customer satisfaction.
- To analyze enhancements in in-flight services, digital platforms, and brand image.
- To assess passenger opinions prior to and following the rebranding.
- To pinpoint discrepancies between customer expectations and service provision.
- To offer practical suggestions for ongoing enhancement

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This research examines the effects of Air India’s rebranding on customer experience, addressing important aspects like online booking, check-in procedures, cabin comfort, in-flight services, and general brand image. It encompasses opinions from both local and global travelers from various travel classes to offer a comprehensive viewpoint. The goal is to assess if the rebranding has effectively tackled previous shortcomings and enhanced customer satisfaction.

Nonetheless, the research has specific constraints. The sample size is quite limited, consisting of just 15 participants, which may not adequately reflect the larger passenger population. The results stem from individual viewpoints, rendering them subjective and possibly biased. Moreover, access to internal performance information was restricted, and the research demonstrates only the current stage of rebranding, excluding its long-term impacts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The experience of passengers is crucial to the success of airlines, influencing loyalty and brand perception. Research indicates that apart from pricing and routes, the quality of service and emotional connection influence customer satisfaction. Carriers such as Emirates and Singapore Airlines have established standards through the integration of reliable service and powerful branding.

Rebranding is frequently utilized to restore customer confidence and enhance reputation, as demonstrated by British Airways and Lufthansa. Air India's transformation under the Tata Group aligns with this trend, emphasizing improved interiors, staff development, and technological enhancements. Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of research on how these changes influence passenger perception—this study seeks to address that void.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Past studies emphasize that service quality—especially reliability, empathy, and responsiveness—significantly influences passenger satisfaction (Ostrowski et al., 1993). In the post-COVID era, research from IATA (2021) and Deloitte (2021) highlighted that travelers started valuing health safety, contactless travel, and transparent communication more than conventional comfort-oriented services.

Carriers such as IndiGo and Vistara swiftly embraced these modifications, providing adaptable policies and digital solutions. Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of scholarly research concentrated specifically on Air India's change under the Tata Group. Despite media coverage emphasizing favorable changes, this research seeks to deliver organized passenger input to evaluate the genuine effects of the rebranding on customer satisfaction.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Survey findings show that Air India's rebranding has favorably impacted essential aspects of the passenger experience. Approximately 81% of participants regarded the revamped website and mobile application as more user-friendly, featuring more seamless booking and check-in procedures. In-flight services experienced significant enhancements—78% commended seat comfort, food quality, and cabin design.

The professionalism of the cabin crew was valued, although just 60% expressed satisfaction with the responsiveness of customer support. Punctuality continues to be an issue, as only 65% reported being satisfied with the management of flight schedules and delays.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research indicated that Air India's rebranding resulted in significant enhancements in digital services, cabin comfort, and general brand image. Travelers valued the revamped website, staff's professional look, and upgraded in-flight services. Nonetheless, problems such as flight delays and unreliable customer service persist as points of worry. To tackle these issues, it's suggested that Air India boost operational efficiency, unify service quality across routes, and strengthen customer support systems. Ongoing investment in digital resources and crew education will be crucial for maintaining passenger contentment and international competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

Air India's transformation under the Tata Group has resulted in notable enhancements across different facets of the passenger experience, such as digital services, cabin atmosphere, and employee professionalism. These improvements have contributed to changing public views and boosted overall passenger contentment. Nonetheless, the change remains an ongoing effort. Operational challenges like flight disruptions, varying service quality, and lack of personalization still impact customer experiences. To leverage the existing momentum, Air India should focus on reliability, enhance customer service procedures, and guarantee uniformity across every route and aircraft. Addressing these challenges while maintaining ongoing innovation and investment could enable the airline to become a globally competitive and customer-focused brand in the future.