

## Review Article

### AIRLINE CABIN CREW MEMBERS ARE THE EMPLOYEE BRANDING OF THE AIRLINE

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#### ABSTRACT

One of how this can be obtained is by scrutinising their employees while discovering their skills and knowledge, which is essential in customers identifying themselves with a Brand. Therefore, this is known as employee branding, which has begun to unfold in affecting customers' choice of airlines to travel with. This process can aid airlines in their strategic measures on brand perception by current and future customers, which will have a powerful effect on the percentage of market share an airline can achieve. It is essential that managers and senior board members focus on this aspect of their business as the employees demonstrate the brand values in the public eye. This paper will explain the role of airline cabin crew members and their contribution to the airline's strategic branding. It will allow the airlines to utilise their skills and knowledge in maintaining brand strength relating to the airline's values and public image and its role in the minds of cabin crew members, customers, and other employees. If airlines focus on the essential knowledge and skills their cabin crew members hold, this can create a sustainable competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** Airline industry, Applied Sciences, transportation service.

#### INTRODUCTION

##### Statement of The Problem

The branding of an airline is of utmost importance, as it has a significant effect on customers purchasing power, which is linked to the airline's image. An airline's branding is brought to life by its frontline employees, who have instant customer access. For this paper, we will be focusing on airline cabin crew members; there is a misconception that these individuals perform the role as one of unimportance. Very little work has been done on the role of cabin crew and the vital contribution they make to the airline. Therefore, several areas which affect cabin crew members need to be addressed by airlines. This paper intends to highlight the importance of their contribution to the airline brand in maintaining customers, bringing new customers on board and building a solid brand image.

##### CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The proposed study bridges the existing research gaps in cabin crew members and their relationship in building the airline brand to a strength stage. Highlighting the neglected knowledge, skills and attributes cabin crew members bring towards the airline and the physical and mental demands the role demands. The literature is beset with a need for more research pertaining to the significance of airline operations involving cabin crew members.

##### Business Model

As we know, the airline industry has become one of the most fierce industries, with many airlines offering the same city pairs to destinations. Due to this, airlines need to differentiate between themselves to enable them to compete on a competitive advantage with various business models. Guillen and Ashish (2004) have stated

that airline models are used to cut costs and create significant differences in the airline network planning and its structure, affecting the organisation structure and airport choices.

Over the years, we have seen an increase in full-service airlines choosing to reduce costs, especially with the selection of cabin crew members on long and short-haul destinations, with an endeavour to cut operational costs to their maximum. In retrospect, this intended business model of reducing cost can have a significant effect on the standard of onboard service provided by cabin crew members; according to Aldamari and Fagan (2005), several types of business models can be adopted by airlines, which include leadership, which if sustained it can establish costs to match an industry average—further, establishing a basic or standard product. However, suppose an airline chooses to adopt this method. In that case, they reduce their chances of producing a differentiation in their product and services offering to maintain a competitive advantage. This is essential, especially for long-haul destinations. It adds value to the products and services provided to customers.

##### LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand values consist of an amalgamation of assets that should contribute to the identity and character of an organisation. These assets should identify the type of customers they are planning to attract as these form the relationship building with these customers with product choices. These elements will benefit organisations in building an extensive consumer base by indicating loyalty to consistently high-quality products. This will create consistent sales-generated revenue, positively affecting profit margin and enabling competitive advantage. (Widayati, Hellen Arifin, 2020). Further, Branding is the asset of every company that seeks to establish an adequate customer base. It goes beyond the product and services aspect of the offering. Boosting customer demands enables the airline to capture more of a superior value from its customers and future customers while at the same time strengthening alternative marketing impacts in other marketing areas, certifying collaboration

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support, which enables facilitation to take place in identifying individuals who will represent the quality and delivery products.

It is a marketing value creation process that requires individuals to build a brand image an organisation wishes to represent to attract a specific market. (Kotler 2023). This, in return, creates a brand strategy to develop further customer value, which further creates collaborator value, brand position and brand mantra, which leads to the repositioning of the brand—overall leading to alignment of the brand and its power and equity.

This process initiates market share growth to differentiate the airline from its competitors, creating a value above and beyond other aspects of the offering. The role of a brand is to create market value in the way that companies create a distinctive image in the minds of their target group, in other words, customers. Customers are at the forefront of the airline business and, therefore, evaluate the service at the frontline they receive; in this case, this paper will focus on the role of cabin crew members and the value they bring to the airline branding image. These individuals who chose to take on this role as cabin crew became the company's face despite several areas of operation within the airline company. The cabin crew are an essential contribution to the brand as their knowledge, skills, and attitude towards the service they deliver sells the brand and builds loyalty in the long term. Several areas relating to cabin crew affect the delivery of their skills; these areas affect the branding delivery of the airline. They need to be discussed across the literature The role of Cabin Crew members is a unique position which affects an airline's branding significantly. The performance of these cabin crew members relies heavily on the disposition of their customer service skills alongside medical, safety and hospitality knowledge. Cabin crew members' performance relates to their behaviours in how they discharge their duties. This discharge of skills, responsibilities, and knowledge that these individuals carry out when operating within the aircraft stipulates the value of the brand of the airline's strategic intentions. These skills and knowledge engagement are measured in their counterproductive performance as cabin crew (Ramawickrama 2017). Cabin crew members carry out an essential part of building an airline brand by providing a service to onboard customers; this results in cabin crew building relationships with customers, which assists in the building of loyalty from customers to the brand. (Anastasiou and Nathanailides, 2015).

Airlines provide transportation service from one destination to another; due to the nature of the business, it is a service-based organisation that functions on the level of customer service provided by frontline staff, in this case, cabin crew members. Therefore, the individuals these airlines choose to employ as cabin crew members hold the essential skills and knowledge to create a valued brand for the public eye to enable it to be a success. Cabin crew members are increasingly viewed by airlines as competitive in the market, hence the extreme marketing of them to the public in adverts. This enables new customers to come on board while maintaining their current loyal customers. (Heracleous, Wirtz, and Pangankar, 2015).

Branding is an essential area for any company; the image of any company is decorated with a design related to the organisation's idea. This image enables an individual to align themselves with the products and services they sell. This brand image is partially displayed by cabin crew members, which creates differentiation from competitors pending its effect, be it positive or negative, on the purchasing power of individuals, contributing enormously to an airline's success. As they would depend on the loyalty of their customers. As it is known in the industry, retaining loyal customers creates a significant reduction in operational costs (Alaaraj,

Mohamed, Ahmad and Bustamam, 2018) When a customer decides to be loyal to a brand, it is on a long-term basis, which constitutes a relationship based on the product and services that individuals have experienced over some time; therefore, in this form, it is a fair statement to say brand loyalty is a relationship on a long-term basis between the organisation and its customer or customers. (Kotler 2019)

Brand loyalty is an extensive area that must be broken down into several factors that need investigation (Jiang, Luk, and Cardinali, 2018). The brand of a company is supposed to illustrate the organisation's culture. It is usually based on the quality of products and services, which is posed at the specific types of clientele.

The targeted customer's characteristics are one aspect of branding focused upon (Drennan *et al.*, 2015), and the other is the brand's characteristics (Sasmita and Mohd, 2015). Both these areas are vital in branding; the intended research will focus on the path of the branding and how the branding convey through to cabin crew on how they become part of the brand, as this area is extremely limited in the on cabin crew members' roles. The perspective of branding. Identifying its clientele brings in an analysis of self-congruence from the target customers' perspective. Self-congruence is associated with individuals and their attributes and features. Self-concerns, beliefs and thoughts generally generate these attributes and characteristics. (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Customers who believe they hold these attributes and features will look for a brand that demonstrates their opinions based on these attributes and qualities. Characteristics and features, in essence, self-congruence and self-concepts, and the brand of an organisation will attend, which would lead to the encouragement of the customer purchasing intentions and positive attitude towards the brand by the customers. (Baur and Sauer 2008). The purchasing intentions of customers based on their self-congruence and self-concepts hold an enormous impact on the buying behaviour of individuals. (Quester, Karunratna and Goh 2000) Branding holds the strength of an organisation on how customers and or intended customers perceive it; alongside branding, a service strategy is designed to represent the brand and the intended level to initiate the target market it poses its brand.

Service quality in an airline brand focuses on flight safety and in-flight services, specifically, the airline cabin crew members who elevate the brand significantly. (Chen and Tseng 2010, Taneja 2010 Shaw 2016). Branding of an airline has a significant effect on strength building within the aviation market; if the brand projects a sign of quality within its products and services, it will build a solid customer base, which builds loyalty, leading to brand trust, which derives from good marketing. (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman 2005).

The strength of a brand within society can encourage a high level of purchasing by customers, having the knock effect of high customer satisfaction. (Oliver, Rust and Varki 1997) In the airline industry, cabin crew members are predominately demanded by the airline to provide customer satisfaction, as they are the face of the airline. These individuals who choose to become cabin crew hold many skills; these skills are essential in discharging their professional skills and knowledge. Becoming a cabin crew member is exceptionally prominent in many airlines alongside previous studies (Osaki and Kubota 2016; Koklic *et al.*, 2017). As previously discussed, it is evident that cabin crew members are the face of the airline and, as such, are representatives of that airline when onboard the aircraft. These individuals are extremely eager and willing to assist consumers in maintaining and increasing their satisfaction, which leads to the positiveness of the airline (Loureiro and Fialho 2017).

The interrelationship of these areas of branding discussed has a real connection with each other. However, the contribution of airline cabin crew appears to be under-minded with little value; this needs to be brought forward as to the severe amount of weight they bring to the brand's strength in its growth. The brand depends on growth; the Cabin crew assists in creating this growth; therefore, the elements of their role and their contribution need to be investigated as to the value they bring to the organisation. Therefore, all these areas will be discussed in an intertwined manner in this proposed study.

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