DEMAND FOR INFLIGHT WI-FI IS DRIVING AIRLINE LOYALTY AMONGST PASSENGERS

News / Airlines

Two thirds of passengers would be more likely to rebook with an airline if high-quality inflight Wi-Fi is offered

Inflight Wi-Fi is a key driver in forming customer loyalty and satisfaction among today's airline passengers, according to the industry's largest poll of passenger attitudes. The fourth annual global Inflight Connectivity Survey is published today by Inmarsat (LSE: ISAT.L), the world's leading provider of global mobile satellite communications, in association with market research company Populus[1].

Wi-Fi is already an essential part of everyday life on the ground with more than three quarters of those surveyed (78%) believing that it is "fundamental" to daily life. With more than half of passengers (55%) describing inflight Wi-Fi as crucial, meeting the demand for Wi-Fi in the skies is key to improving passenger experience and driving loyalty.

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Wi-Fi is now so critical to passengers that two thirds (67%) would be more likely to rebook with an airline if high-quality Wi-Fi was on offer. Globally, passengers ranked inflight Wi-Fi as the fourth most important factor that they consider when choosing an airline, behind airline reputation, free checked baggage and extra leg room.

The impact of inflight Wi-Fi on loyalty and satisfaction is particularly significant for passenger groups most keen to remain connected in the air. High-value customers, parents and young passengers are among those most likely to use inflight Wi-Fi services: nine in ten business travellers (90%), parents travelling with children (90%) and 18-30 year olds (91%) plan to use the service if it's offered when they next fly.

Onboard Wi-Fi could also lead to more productive business trips, as almost nine in ten business travellers (87%) would use inflight Wi-Fi to continue working on the plane. Access to Wi-Fi is also an important driver of choice for nervous flyers, as more than half (51%) said that they would use the technology to remain in contact with family and friends on the ground.

The majority of today's airline passengers are so keen to get online that they will sacrifice other inflight amenities for internet access. Inmarsat's 2016 Inflight Connectivity Survey revealed that more than half of passengers (54%) would choose Wi-Fi over an inflight meal. Today, passengers are adding alcohol to the list of inflight amenities they would sacrifice to get online, with more than half (53%) suggesting they are even prepared to give up their inflight alcoholic drink in exchange for access to Wi-Fi.

As demand for inflight Wi-Fi soars, uptake is similarly high as two thirds (65%) of passengers that had access to the service in the past year chose to use it. However, the demand for quality onboard Wi-Fi is significantly outstripping supply on the fleets of airlines across the globe, as less than half of passengers globally (45%) travelled on flights where it was offered.

Philip Balaam, President of Inmarsat Aviation, said: "Wi-Fi is essential to daily life on the ground, and airline passengers see no reason why their time on a flight should be restricted or spent any differently. Whether it's used for sending that important work email, entertaining the children or even connecting with fellow passengers, staying online is becoming a crucial part of the inflight experience for today's airline passengers."

He continued: "As the only provider to offer a complete global satellite network, Inmarsat is making high-speed inflight Wi-Fi a reality for passengers on leading airlines across the globe. As demand for quality services continues to soar, we are delighted to be able to bring these services to life for passengers and allow them to stay connected to their daily lives on the ground."

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Global survey highlights

- 81% of passengers would use inflight Wi-Fi if it was available on their next flight, rising to 91% of 18-30 year olds, 90% of business travellers and 90% of passengers travelling with children
- 65% of passengers that have had access to inflight Wi-Fi in the last year used it
- 70% of passengers would be likely to recommend inflight Wi-Fi having tried it previously
- 74% of business travellers feel that inflight Wi-Fi is crucial, with almost nine in ten (87%) stating that if inflight Wi-Fi was available they would be likely to work and be productive on a plane
- Quality is key: for more than half of passengers (54%), no Wi-Fi at all is better than a poor quality service
- Over two thirds of passengers (67%) would be more likely to rebook with an airline if high-quality inflight Wi-Fi were available
    - This likelihood to rebook rises to 81% of passengers travelling with children, and 83% of business travellers
- More than half (53%) would be willing to give up their inflight alcoholic drink to get online

Inmarsat is transforming the global aviation industry by bringing complete connectivity to every aircraft and flight path in the world. It is the first and only provider with a complete High-Throughput Satellite (HTS) network spanning the world. Inmarsat is also the only aviation broadband provider capable of connecting the complete aircraft from cabin to cockpit. Passengers can browse the internet, stream videos, check social media and more during flights, with an on-board connectivity experience on par with broadband services available on the ground. Inmarsat's high-speed, secure connectivity solutions for the flight deck combine cutting-edge satellite technology with secure IP broadband connectivity. Inmarsat is able to deliver incomparable protected data capacity to the cockpit, resulting in vastly improved operational efficiency and enhanced safety.

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