IN PLANE TERMS

Special Edition: Passenger Experience

Are your passengers satisfied?

The passenger experience is a critical aspect of airport business. When passengers have a good experience it influences their future travel plans and creates a sense of trust. On the other hand, passengers who have a negative experience form not only a negative association for the airport, but associations that have been demonstrated to have a flow on negative association with a city or country, with down-stream economic implications.

Your Problem

Do you know how your passengers spend their time at the airport?

Most research about people’s experiences in airports has focused on passenger facilitation, processing and technology. However, two-thirds of passenger time in the airport involves non-processing, or discretionary, periods.

Our Solution

Airports of the Future (AoTF) research is looking in depth at these often overlooked aspects of passenger and staff activities in the airport.

The basis of our research is close observation of passengers and their activities. From this, we develop maps of activities that illustrate the relationships between people, process and technology. By examining the maps of interaction (Figure 1 over page), we draw conclusions about passengers’ activities and interactions.

For example: (i) passengers begin to prepare for outbound processing activities

Before, as well as at, check in;

(ii) passengers with wavers make far more use of landside retail than other passengers;

(iii) passengers show ownership of things they carry with them after check-in;

(iv) passenger group activities show there is a need to provide areas for groups to assemble while waiting for other group members;

(v) security personnel activities at the security checking points, such as assisting passengers, affects length of time before, during and after screening process;

(vi) passengers experiences are affected not only by past experience but by that of their social group;

(vii) and passengers are encouraged to ask questions in the locations which cause queues to form prematurely, thus lengthening queue time.

In contrast to other research methods that rely on passengers’ reflections, generally in the form of surveys, observation of passengers is instrumental in understanding their activity patterns and movements.
Our descriptive models of passenger experiences provide a significantly more comprehensive understanding of passenger experience at the airport. Consequently, our recommendations are highly relevant and can have immediate impact on the airport planning and design.

What next?

AoTF researchers’ current focus is on a classification of discretionary activities that not only describes passenger’s activities, but also the context(s) in which these activities occur and how they interrelate.

Eight taxonomic groups are identified:

- Processing
- Preparatory
- Consumptive
- Social
- Entertainment
- Passive
- Queuing
- Moving

The next step is modeling the taxonomic groups to identify interrelations between them in order to assist airport planning and terminal design to facilitate and manage passenger experiences.

Want more information? Please contact the Human Systems team within the AoTF.