

EDITORIAL

Customer Centric Positioning — Really

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In a world where we create markets with a size that one and every consumer is different, all consumers now pay a different price for the same experience. Today's consumer is both the revenue manager and performance evaluator. All brought to you through the internet. Take for example:

- *Farecast* (<http://www.farecast.com>), which bills itself as the first airfare prediction website, and offers airfare predictions from over 75 US departure cities to top domestic destinations. Users can check if fares are rising or dropping, and are provided with recommendations on when to buy. Farecast now also offers rate keys for hotels (<http://www.farecast.com/hotels>) in 30 destinations. Each of the 5,000 hotels on the site has its own 'Hotel Rate Key' with a chart showing what they've charged in the past and what they (probably) will charge over the next 90 days. What's fascinating about Farecast is that it capitalises on the vast amounts of data that have accumulated over the last ten or so years. ...
- *FareCompare.com* (<http://www.farecompare.com>) is another fare prediction site, offering historical prices for trips in 77,000 markets in the US and Canada — data that wasn't previously available to consumers.
- *Yapta* (<http://www.yapta.com>) stands for 'Your Amazing Personal Travel Assistant', and is a tool to 'tag' the trips people like while shopping online. Yapta then tracks prices on these trips and alerts users when prices drop.
- *Skytrax* (<http://www.airlinequality.com>) offers travellers a comprehensive choice of airline and airport information, including customer recommendations of the best seats on the plane per airline. They also have a 5-star ranking system reflecting the reality of delivered products and services supplied to customers.
- *SeatGuru* (<http://www.seatguru.com>) helps passengers select airplane seating, in-flight amenities and airline information based upon the airline and type of aircraft they're flying. It also has a travel resources section, advising travellers on finding power for their laptops, choosing noise-cancelling headphones, baggage restrictions, etc.
- *Flatseats.com* (<http://www.flatseats.com>) is a site all about 'premium' airline seats and for passengers, airlines and suppliers who want independent seat reviews and analysis. It includes customer reviews of airline seats, results of seat surveys and seat tests, and information about which airlines offer lie-flat seats and flat beds. Forget accepting the evils of flying discomfort, these customers take their airline seating comfort concerns to a whole new level.
- Oh, and a first in the industry, *Homewoodsuites* (http://homewoodsuites1.hilton.com/en_US/hw/index.do) by Hilton Hotels now offers guests the option to choose their hotel room: much like selecting one's seat for a flight on aforementioned SeatGuru. Guests can view hotel floor plans and book specific suite types based on their location, photographs and descriptions, and choose accordingly. The Suite Selection tool has (for now) been reserved for premium Hilton club members who use Hilton's eCheck-in.

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