

4 Cabin services and amenities

Background

As well as providing assistance to passengers, on-board services also include providing meals, drinks, and entertainment. There are also shopping and communication facilities. The nature of these services will vary from airline to airline and class to class. Airlines, like any business are looking for ways to increase their revenue. Airline passengers are a “captive market” and the chances to increase profits are naturally tapped. The importance given to this varies between airlines.

One of the primary sources of revenue for airlines is the in-flight duty-free shop. In most countries, tax does not have to be paid on goods which are being exported. Accordingly, the goods can leave the country tax-free or the tax can be reclaimed later. Travellers are allowed to import the goods into the country to which they are travelling, as long as the amount of these goods does not exceed the set “duty-free” allowance.

Airlines vary in their approach to in-flight duty-free sales. The traditional duty-free items are cigarettes and alcohol, perfumes, airline memorabilia, gadgets and gifts, food, and beauty products. Some airlines attach a great deal of importance to this source of income; indeed, in some cases crew members are given incentives in order to encourage sales. On many airlines, as with many other businesses, attention is given to the choice of products that are on offer and there are special offers and promotions. These products are often promoted through the Internet or in the airline brochures. During the flight, they may also be promoted directly over the address system or during the in-flight entertainment. Sometimes, this may be done at the check-in desks.

There are many ways in which airlines seek to augment their revenue being trialled or already in use on flights. If passengers can pre-order, this allows airlines to carry less stock and a larger range. Flight attendants on some airlines can now take purchase orders using wireless handsets. A record can then be kept of which products sell well on certain routes or at certain times of the year. Cabin crew can take orders for food, luxury goods and ground-based services such as bus and rail travel and theme-park tickets. Other special purchases include limousine services on arrival, bookings for theatres and hotels, selling SIM cards and calling credit for the destination country, ski hire and selling advertising space. Many carriers also sell pay-to-view films, scratch cards and even smoke-free cigarettes. Still others provide home-delivery, alerts and information on the destination city and a charge for being able to choose your seat. One airline this year announced plans to install vending machines.

As well as being involved with on board purchasing, a competent flight attendant has to be familiar with a variety of on-board services, ranging from reclining seats to the entertainment facilities. Other services provided on board some airlines or envisioned by some in the future are ATM machines, high-speed internet connections and the ability to pre-book your own entertainment package for the flight.

Jargon Buster

Airlines must provide for different diets. Accordingly, special meals are provided for passengers according to their specific needs. These needs may be religious, cultural, medical, or because the passenger is a vegetarian or vegan. Special meals are also provided for children. Airlines require special meals to be pre-ordered. The most commonly available special meals are as follows:

- **Diabetic** meals generally contain low-calorie and low-fat foods; fruits, vegetables, wholegrain breads, cereals and low-fat meat are used in their preparation.
- **Gluten-free** meals cannot contain ingredients derived from gluten-containing cereals – wheat, rye, barley, and oats. This diet is for those suffering from coeliac disease (an inability to digest gluten).
- **Lactose-free** meals cannot contain milk and dairy products of animal origin.
- **Children’s** meals vary from airline to airline, but generally contain healthy options that encourage children to eat.
- **Babies’** meals are usually commercially available baby foods, containing meat, vegetables, fruits and dessert.
- **Kosher** meals are prepared, packaged, and certified in accordance with the regulations of Jewish dietary laws and under rabbinical supervision.
- **Islamic** meals are prepared according to “Halal” food standards, free of pork, gelatine and alcohol.
- **Hindu** meals do not contain beef, beef derivatives, veal, or pork. Vegetarian Hindu meals do not contain fish, shellfish, meat, poultry or eggs.
- **Jain** meals are strict vegetarian meals. The food is prepared to an Indian style, the meal does not contain onions, potatoes, garlic or root vegetables.
- **Vegetarian** meals may not contain meat or meat products, fish, poultry, gelatine or any other product containing animal fat.
 - Lacto-ovo vegetarian: Use of dairy products and eggs is allowed
 - Strict **vegan**: Dairy products, eggs and honey are also prohibited. These menus are generally made of vegetables, cereals and nuts.
- **Anti-allergic** meals are also prepared for passengers with allergies to peanuts, shellfish etc.

Activity Assistant

Starter

- 1 Possible answers include the friendliness and manner of staff, speed of service delivery, staff “going the extra mile”, the quality of the service itself, staff predicting your requirements, the appearance of the establishment and staff, the knowledge of the staff (with regard to the services and products on offer), the range of services/products, the teamwork among staff, the general smoothness of your visit combining a few of the above.
- 2 General answers here will consist of the opposite of the above.

3 This will inevitably be a matter of opinion, but students should be encouraged to discuss which ones may be said to be generally accepted and which ones might be required in more specific situations, e.g. a very serious attitude about everything may be required in, say, a company providing legal services, but would not be suitable in many parts of the airline business. A very informal way of speaking may fit certain situations and markets, but would be inappropriate in others.

4 The following methods could be discussed:

- using pictures
- actually showing the passenger the dishes / the drinks on offer as you are asking the question
- asking a colleague who speaks the language of the passenger
- asking another passenger to interpret

15 You may wish to use the following dialogue.

You could 1) build up the dialogue on the board, using the one below as a model, but accepting any appropriate variables or 2) ask students to change the underlined sections for either sentences or phrases which carry the same meaning or appropriate replacements from the pictured articles. Suggestions are in the line underneath the underlined items.

Flight Attendant (FA) Good afternoon. Can I interest you in any duty-free items?
Would you like to see/have a look at/buy...?

Passenger (PS) Yes. Could I take a look at the titanium watch?
*Could/ Can I have a look at...? Could/Can I see ...?
Would you mind showing me...?*

FA Certainly, sir. Here you are.

PS That's lovely. Do you have the same watch in black?

FA Let me have a look. I am sorry. I only have light or dark brown.
Let me see/One minute, sir and I'll have a look/I'll just have a look for you.

PS Can I see the dark brown one?
Could/Can I have a look at...? Would you mind showing me...?

FA There we are, sir.

PS Oh yes. That's nicer than the first one!

FA I am glad you like it.

PS How much is that in Japanese Yen?
How much does that cost in...?/What's that in...?

FA That's 22, 000 yen, sir.

PS Would it be possible for me to pay with yen?
Could/Can I pay with...?/Is it OK to pay...?

FA Certainly, but I'll have to give you your change in dollars.

PS OK. That's no problem.
That's fine. No problem.