

Abstract

The SkyRider seat was presented in September 2010 at the Aircraft Interiors Expo in California as a potential strategy to decrease space between seat rows and increase the revenue generating capacity of an airline. Many airlines already raise revenue with differential pricing to customers on seat widths, legroom, seat location, and seat choice. This mixed-seating methods exploratory study seeks to identify what factors passengers consider when faced with selecting a traditional seat or a saddle seat for a short-haul flight. A saddle seat is significantly different from current airline seats, designed with minimal amenities, including a hook to hang a jacket or bag and a shelf for another car carry-on. Additionally, how much an airfare would need to be reduced compared to regular airline seats to entice purchase of the saddle seat instead of a contemporary padded, reclining seat with upwards of 30 inches of legroom typical of an airline's economy class? The sequential phase of the study did not yield any emergent research questions from phase one. Subsequently, the conjoint analysis determined what attributes of the SkyRider seat that were most influential to their choice in airline seats. Although the saddle seat has not been certified by the European and American aviation authorities that have stringent requirements on structural seat performance and emergency egress, numerous airlines have expressed interest in the seat expecting future certification as they pursue more flying revenue per plane (Jones, 2010). An airplane's seat configuration could be adjusted to increase the number of paying passengers per flight as much as 40%. If an airline could increase its revenue by using SkyRider seats, the economic benefit could promote adoption by at least the low cost airlines or any airlines with short haul flights. Additional costs will include additional weight, fuel, baggage handling, aircraft modifications, and operational policies.