

Environmental protection and sustainability

[Education](#), [Sustainability](#)



Introduction

In the past 25 years, international passenger aviation has experienced a threefold increase. It is expected that the aviation sector will continue to see similar growth over the next 25 years (Walker & Cook, 2009). Due to the rapid expansion of the aviation sector, there has been a growing concern for environmental issues in airline operations, especially in terms of energy and environmental sustainability (Agarwal, 2010). The focus on sustainability and environmental protection is due to the environmental consequences of contemporary aviation, especially the contribution of aviation to global climate change (Upham, 2003). With the recognition of the harmful effects of aviation on the environment, experts predict that “ environmental factors will increasingly limit the expansion of air travel and the social benefit that it brings” (Green, 2003, p. 281).

Meridiana concurs that it is important to consider sustainability and environmental protection in aviation. It recognises the importance of green aviation and puts a lot of value on protecting the environment. In line with this, the company manages its activities in compliance with national and EU environmental regulations. As proof of its commitment, it has been awarded certification of its Quality System in compliance with UNI EN ISO 9001: 2008 regulation for air quality. SGS Italia SpA has certified the compliance of the company’s activities involving the design and supply of services on board of domestic, international, and intercontinental flights (Meridiana, 2009).

Recently, Meridiana joined the Association of European Airlines (AEA), which represents Europe’s major airlines. The AEA influences its members at the industry and institutional level in order to achieve goals that benefit the airline

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industry. One of the main thrusts of the AEA is to shape a more sustainable and competitive arena (AEA, 2013). Meridiana's membership in the AEA shows that it is committed towards achieving sustainability in the aviation sector.

Marketing Mix

Despite its success in some areas of the domestic market, the company has experienced heavy losses in recent years. With its ageing fleet, subscale international network, and its dependence in the domestic market, the company is facing very stiff competition from some of Europe's leading low cost carriers (CAPA, 2013). Taking these into consideration, Meridiana has to improve its current marketing mix in order to increase sales and remain competitive. Effective marketing strategies can have a significant influence on society; thus, it is important for the company to apply the appropriate marketing mix to achieve their objectives.

Product

Meridiana's major strength is its competitively priced business class seats for long haul destinations, targeted at leisure travellers. As a medium service carrier, it offers elements of both full service and low cost carrier. For example, it provides food and drinks like full service carriers but its price range is comparable to low cost airlines. Meridiana should utilise this mix and use it as a competitive advantage.

The airline needs to focus on its domestic flights and its short/medium haul destinations in Europe. The current marketing strategy fails to reach out to the business community. Their marketing strategy should emphasise

services for both holiday/leisure and business purposes. The company should target SMEs and become the airline of choice for small and medium-sized companies. This can be done by offering discounts and incentives for companies who want to purchase multiple seats or flights.

Price

Meridiana needs to use a competitive pricing scheme to attract customers. Its price point should be not too high from low cost carriers, but lower than traditional networked airlines. Although low cost carriers have lower prices, Meridiana should differentiate its slightly higher price point by offering better customer service. The aim is to have a mid-range price point, which can attract middle class consumers and SMEs.

Place

Meridiana has been highly successful in Sardinia and Sicily. The company should replicate its success by building stronger presence in other parts of Italy and in key international airline hubs such as London, Dubai, Beijing, Singapore, Narita, Paris, and New York. This can be achieved by improving airport check-in services and making their internet reservations website more attractive and easy to use.

Promotion

As a hybrid airline, Meridiana operates both as a low cost carrier and a network airline (Sansonetti, 2010). It needs to be highly competitive by keeping its unit costs down. This can be achieved by enhancing its internet and social media channels. Meridiana should upgrade its website to make it

more attractive and user-friendly. It should improve its tie-ups with hotels, resorts, car rentals, and other tourist services to attract more customers.

People

Meridiana should improve its services to customers in order to attract more consumers and gain more customer loyalty. Excellent customer service can be a competitive edge, especially when low cost carriers offer cheaper rates. Meridiana should also highlight their people and the value of customer service in their marketing strategies.

Process

Meridiana should ensure that its online reservations are always efficient and that customers can easily access the airline through phone or email. The airline's systems should be designed for the benefit of customers.

Physical Evidence

Meridiana should also ensure that its flights are always on time; its planes are spotless; and its service crew are highly efficient. Its check-in and guest lounges in airports should be clean and the services of both ground crew and in-flight staff should be excellent.

Promotional Mix

Meridiana should focus on tapping customers from the mid-market socio-economic segment and business people, especially from SMEs. The elements of the promotional mix must integrate different strategies. It should use a combination of various promotional strategies, particularly, advertising, public relations, sales promotions, and internet/online promotions. The integration of different promotional tactics will aid in achieving a more

successful result.

Advertising should be enhanced in traditional channels such as television, print, and radio in order to target domestic consumers in areas where Meridiana is not the market leader (i. e. Milan, Turin, Naples, Marconi, Rome, and Verona). To increase presence in international markets, the airline should advertise in popular travel magazines and international cable channels (i. e. BBC, CNN, NHK, etc.).

In terms of public relations, the airline should improve its relationship with Italian businesses and local government. It should also improve its public image by doing CSR activities and being more active in environmental protection. The company should emphasise their support for green aviation and sustainability in the airline industry.

Meridiana should also launch sales promotions on its ticket prices. It should conduct seat sales in which the flight fare is a fraction of its original price but customers can avail of the ticket only for a limited period. For example, the seat sale gives an 80% discount on ticket prices for 50 seats in the plane and the sale will be ongoing for 3-5 days only.

Meridiana should also prioritise internet/online promotions and strengthen its social media presence. The airline should improve its advertisement and tie-ups with online travel sites such as Expedia, Kayak, and Orbitz. It should also effectively make use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Meridiana should advertise in these sites and encourage customer feedback through social media. The company can also utilise viral advertising by putting very creative and highly memorable adverts in YouTube or other video sharing sites.

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