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GLOBAL MARKET CHALLENGER



BATTLING FOR SUPREMACY in the STRATOSPHERE

It's an industry that spews challenges unabated. For starters, between airline brands has reached frenetic levels given that considerable pressure to generate expected returns.

By Raghunath



Brand Equity

And given that time is never sympathetic, new entrants must be tenacious and resilient. In 2003, despite the intense battle for sectors and seats, a new airline brand took to the skies with a bang.

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates entered the business with 29 Airbus and Boeing aircraft with an investment of US \$8 billion; the largest-ever start-up fleet order in aviation history.

'And last year, we repeated history at Farnborough, with firm orders for 55 Airbus and 45 Boeing aircraft,' says Adam Phillips, Country Manager of Etihad Airways Malaysia.

Etihad offers a strong case-in-point in extreme growth. Explains Phillips, '... in under 34 months since we took off, we flew regularly to 34 destinations. That increased to 54 within the first five years, an accomplishment that is unprecedented.'

But the airline business is somewhat

commoditized with every airline claiming to deliver a unique experience to customers; their own version of course.

The Etihad brand claims to bear a clear intent. 'We aim to be one of the world's leading luxury brands with service standards that is delivered with a touch of Arabian hospitality,' reveals Phillips.

Decibel levels have been raised consistently, and the then fledgling Etihad is now sitting pretty on a steep growth trajectory, with share of voice orchestrated to levels that audiences, and the competition cannot afford to ignore.

At the center of Etihad's global marketing strategy are a slew of sponsorship in mainstream international sporting events, as well as a number of tactical deals with country or region-specific sports.



Adam Phillips

'In order to reach a global audience, we signed in 2007 a seven-figure three-year deal to be the title sponsor of the FORMULA 1™ Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, starting with the inaugural race in 2009,' adds Phillips.

And hot on the heels in the same year was an aligned three-year sponsorship deal with the Ferrari F1 team, the then world championship holders; a move



A320 aircraft painted in the F1 racing car. And the mix of trackside advertising as we branding.

And this year, the airline inker three-year deal to be the sponsor and partner of Pre

side, Manchester City FC; a to secure maximum public action is, albeit cost effecti

But how does a brand deliver and loyalty; and manage the experience given the cry for these days?

Explains Phillips, 'We a cognisat of the specific variety of target segments. travellers include business; religious traffic to Saudi Ara families and among others student market. Being pric students are eligible for change fee, and their tickets valid for a year.'

'And customers come thro distribution network. Whilst c team is the main driver of o in Malaysia, we have arrangements with a netwo agents, of which a select are religion travel focused, student focused,' says Philli

And in the last 18 months, tl

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of 'inspired service' has taken center stage in Etihad's marketing arsenal; and one that claims to be more intimate and intuitive.

'The inspired service includes a repertoire of seamless service elements that operate in unison to deliver a great experience to our customers. It operates when our customer leaves home, journeys to the airport, gets into the premium lounge, while dining on-ground and in the air, and right after disembarking,' says Phillips.

All said, industry experts admit that Etihad has set new standards with the introduction of several new in-flight service concepts—including new amenity kits and an on-demand menu that allows premium passengers to decide exactly what they would like to eat and when during a flight; with advice from an on-board Food & Beverage manager.

And to be fair, every passenger regardless of class can access over 600 hours of entertainment as well.

To support its marketing strategy Etihad has also invested in its loyalty program and website, both of which feature several industry innovations such as special online auctions and raffles, giving members the opportunity to use their miles to bid for rewards, including tickets for top sporting events and sell-out pop concerts.

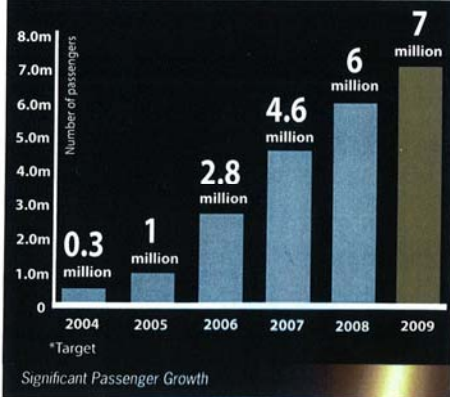
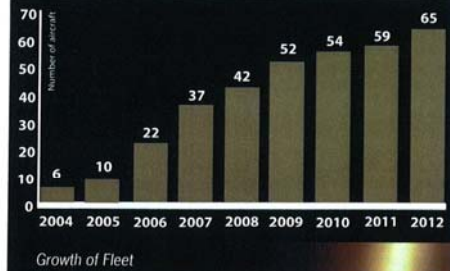
Members of the Etihad Guest loyalty programme have also donated more than half a million 'miles' to humanitarian and environmental charities and projects across the world through the scheme's innovative reward shop.

Etihad has evolved into a strong brand in an extremely short time-period; with recognition and appreciation in hot pursuit.

The airline picked-up 10 international awards in 2007, and topped that with 16 in 2008.



Etihad Stadium, Melbourne, Australia



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