



Finnair Catches Up to Social Seating

By GENEVIEVE SHAW BROWN | Good Morning America – 1 hour 27 minutes ago

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Finnair, Finland's national carrier, is the latest airline to dip its wing into the world of so-called social seating.

The airline announced earlier this month that passengers are now able to link their Facebook profile with the flight's seat map, allowing other passengers on the flight to see the customer's Facebook profile. It also allows the customer to see who else has checked in on the same flight and where they are seated.

"Many people like telling their friends on Facebook where they are traveling," Finnair social media manager Aku Varamäki said. "We wanted to make this a little bit easier and also add some value in the check-in process for those who want to see who they are traveling with and who are open to meeting new people."

A few other airlines are also experimenting in the social seating space. Last year, airBaltic, Latvia's national airline, introduced a program called SeatBuddy, which "enables customers to sit next to passengers with similar interests or travel mood."

The airline seats people next to the best possible neighbor by asking passengers to indicate their preferred "flight mood." For example, a person who wishes to network will choose "Business Talk." The airline will, it said, automatically assign a seat next to the closest match, without disclosing any personal information.

In January 2012, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines announced their social seating program "Meet and Seat," which allows fliers to access other passengers' social media information when checking onto a flight online and then choose their seatmate based on similar interests. Malaysia Airlines launched a similar program called "MHBuddy."

Finnair's service only shows the customer's public Facebook profile and is only visible to the passengers on the same flight. Using the social check-in service is optional. It's possible to disable the social check-in at any time, and prevent other passengers from seeing the social network profile in conjunction with the seat map.

In the first phase, the service only includes Facebook but more social networks will be added later, the airline said.

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