

Finnair Joins 14% of Airlines That Use Chatbots

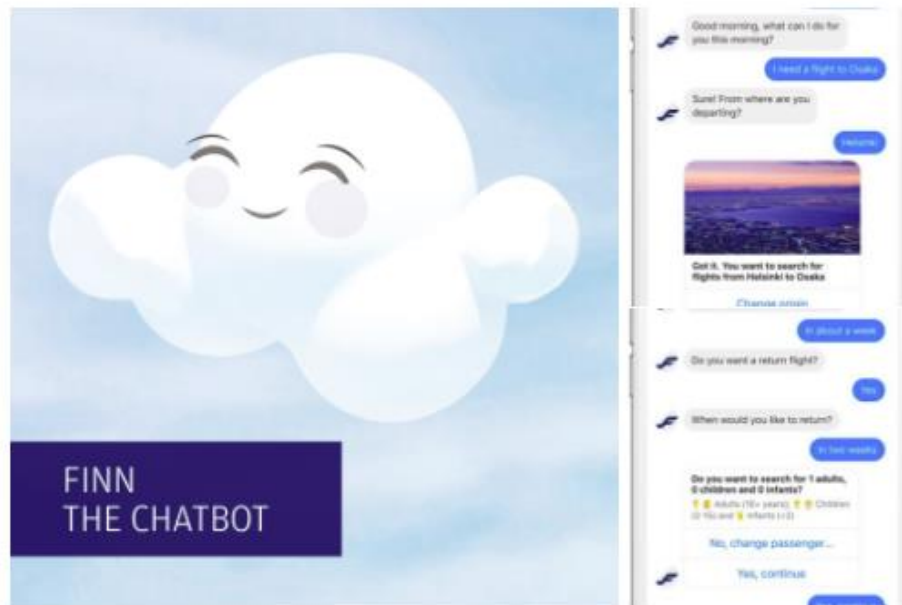
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APEX Insight: Finnair joined the 14% of airlines that use AI-powered chatbots when it launched Finn on Facebook Messenger this week. According to SITA's 2017 Air Transport IT Trends Insights, aviation CIOs intend to push this percentage to 68% by 2020.

This week, Finnair launched its first artificially intelligent chatbot on Facebook Messenger. [Finn](#) can communicate with customers in English about things like purchasing flights and baggage allowance, and will be available in Finnish and Chinese by the end of this year. Finnair is also looking to expand Finn to other social media platforms, such as WeChat.

Finnair joins the 14% of airlines and 9% of airports that already use AI-powered chatbots, according to SITA's 2017 [Air Transport IT Trends Insights](#). By 2020, aviation CIOs intend to push these percentages to 68% and 42% respectively. Additionally, 52% of airlines are planning major programs or R&D in AI over the next three years, and in the same period 80% of airlines plan to invest in AI-reliant prediction and warning systems.



SITA's report also accentuates the continuing ascendancy of self-service: The percentage of passengers using mobile phones has risen to 73% for check-in, 70% for boarding, and 68% for flight status notifications – expected to rise to 97% by 2020. Airports and airlines are seeking to engage with customers' mobile phones “to boost both direct and ancillary sales via their apps” with airlines expecting app-based sales “to double by 2020 and reach 17% of their total sales”.

“We know that passengers prefer to use technology and when it is well designed it can really improve the passenger experience” said Jim Peters, Chief Technology Officer, SITA, at FTE Global in Las Vegas. “Airlines and airports are investing in AI and mobile programs to make services better for the passenger, supporting sales and providing customer support, particularly during times of disruption”.

Which is where social media comes in. Disgruntled passengers often vent their frustrations across Twitter and other platforms when customer service falls below expectations. Airlines are trying to preemptively connect on these same channels before things go wrong: 31% of airlines provide flight status updates via social platforms, but this is expected to leap to 92% in the next three years.

But often the problem with IT is that there are too many different technologies and platforms which simply aren't joined up. SITA's report finds that topping passengers' wishlist is having a seamless experience: 94% of passengers rated "streamlining services into a single app" as a "priority", with 58% rating this as a "high priority".

At the terminal, investment in "Internet of Things" technologies such as beacons and sensors is on the rise. SITA's insights show that 80% of airports are investing, or planning to invest, in these technologies over the next three years. Specifically on the subject of way-finding solutions, 74% of airports are investing in IOT technologies and 68% are committed to implementing solutions to improve personalization for the passenger.