

**EFFECTS OF CABIN CREW APPEARANCE AND STYLE ON
MARKETING AND BRANDING OF THE AIRLINE: A QUALITATIVE
STUDY OF AIRSIAL AIRLINE**



Zoiez Fatima (F2020001042)

BS Aviation Management,

FINAL YEAR PROJECT REPORT

Supervised By: Dr. Ahmad Aizaz

**INSTITUTE OF AVIATION STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Effects of cabin crew appearance and style on marketing and branding of the airline: A
qualitative study of Airsial Airline**

Zoiez Fatima

F2020001042

Submitted in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelors of Science in
Aviation Management, University of Management and Technology, Lahore.

Supervised by: Dr. Ahmad Aizaz (Dean, IAS)



2025

University of Management & Technology, Lahore

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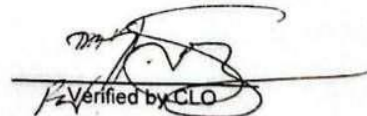
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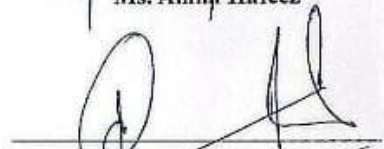
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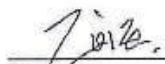

Dr. Ahmad Aizaz

Program Head IAS:


Program Head
Aviation Management
Institute of Aviation Studies (IAS)
University of Management and Technology
Ms. Amna Hafeez

Dean of IAS:


Dr. Ahmad Aizaz
Dean
Institute of Aviation Studies (IAS)
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Student of Institute of Aviation Studies,
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ABSTRACT

This research evaluates the impact of AirSial Airlines' cabin crew uniforms on its branding, cultural representation, and customer perceptions. The uniforms of the airline include elements that show Pakistani traditions, such as scarves for female crew members and the use of green to symbolize the national flag of Pakistan. Nevertheless, there are some critical factors with the branding consistency, color coordination, and appearance of the airline. The color combinations of uniforms don't align with the airline's logo, due to design flaws, it affects both the appearance and functionality of the airline, and difficulties in incorporating AirSial's brand colors. Furthermore, the uniforms require better color harmony with the aircraft interiors and need improved fabric quality for greater comfort and mobility. By addressing these issues, AirSial can enhance its brand identity, connect more effectively with customers, and increase its market presence.

Keywords: AirSial, cabin crew uniform, airline branding, customer perception, cultural identity, uniform aesthetics, functional design.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As the aviation industry is highly competitive, airlines work on different innovative strategies to create a long-lasting impact on their customers. These strategies are crucial factors in retaining customer satisfaction (Jou et al., 2008b; McNeely et al., 2017b; Sandvik, 2024). The most important elements in airline marketing and branding are the appearance and style of the cabin crew's uniforms. As an essential factor, the cabin crew's uniform is the airline's face, and most importantly, it showcases the airline's identity, quality service, and customer experience (Bonami et al., 2000; Craik, 2005). In addition to persuading passengers about airlines, the grooming standards, uniforms, haircuts, body image, and general appearance of cabin crew play a vital role in shaping passengers' opinions

Based on past research, beyond the passengers' focus on airline safety and efficiency, they also take an interest in the external image of the flight attendants as a crucial factor in creating an opinion about the particular airline. The cabin crew of specific airlines now becomes its strong brand identity (Black, 2013; Endrizalová et al., 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Y.-Y. Lee & Park, 2018; Lovegrove, 2000). To support these statements above, I would like to share the examples of different airlines. Globally, airlines are now keenly taking an interest in the deployment of their external appearances of the airline, especially in terms of the cabin crew's uniform. To have a strong corporate image in the industry apart from others, the uniform should align with the airline's vision and mission. Aligning the airline's vision, which includes its five-star service and luxury brand, Qatar Airways, for instance, is highly recognizable for its classy uniforms and burgundy color (McNeely et al., 2017a; Yang & Peterson, 2004a).

Similar to this, Emirates' red caps and fitted uniforms represent that it aligns with luxury airline status, with the airline going to great lengths to make sure that its crew embodies the class and exclusivity of the brand. KLM Royal Dutch Airlines has a unique blue uniform design, which is reflective of its Dutch heritage and professional and friendly service, while Qantas emphasizes a modern and sophisticated look that is representative of contemporary Australian refinement (Dick & Basu, 1994; Feather et al., 1996; Haise & Rucker, 2003; Jou et al., 2008b; Lakshmi & Pooja, 2017; Weon & Kim, 2001a). Airlines globally, such as Korean Air, Asiana

Airlines, Jeju Air, Jin Air, Air Busan, Eastar Jet, and T-way Air, have strategically used flight attendants to reinforce their brand positioning. Korean Air, for example, has emphasized having a greater proportion of flight attendants, recognizing their role in security and safety assurance, as well as projecting an image of prestige for the brand. Consistent with this, Asiana Airlines has an official flight attendant proportion to maintain a balance of security, appearance, and quality of service. Jeju Air takes this further by using internal model crews and theme uniform services to achieve a unique and interesting brand image (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007a). Customers' expectations and brand image are influenced by the cabin crew's uniform look, which is more than just a superficial marketing approach. As if we talk about full-service carriers (FSCs) for instance, Qatar Airways and Singapore Airlines focus on elegance, grooming, and emotional rapport so that their cabin crew showcases an image of warmth, sophistication, and premium service. On the other side, low-cost carriers keep in view their budget to stand out in their brand image, these carriers which includes Ryanair and EasyJet that have a more casual yet professional image, prioritizing friendliness and functionality over luxury (Itani, 2015; Jou et al., 2008a; Kim & Lee, 2011; M. S. Lee & Kim, 1995; Wheat & Dickson, 1999; Yang & Peterson, 2004b) .

Additionally, airlines are reinventing cabin crew fashion to mirror evolving industry trends and customer attitudes. Qatar Airways and Emirates have been introducing more gender-neutral policies, enabling male cabin crew to occupy leading customer-facing positions and supporting both security and service branding. Qantas and KLM have also redesigned their uniform patterns to be comfortable yet still possess a sophisticated professional appearance, meeting contemporary consumer demands (Haise & Rucker, 2003; M. S. Lee & Kim, 1995; Nagamachi, 2007; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b; Wheat & Dickson, 1999). The effects of hairstyles, uniforms, body image, and personal presentation have been thoroughly researched, with results indicating that customers perceive well-dressed and fashionable cabin crews to have better service quality and a more powerful airline image. Building on cabin crew appearance's role in branding, AirSial has taken the culturally responsive approach by providing scarves for female crew members. This appeals to the cultural heritage of Pakistan, reinforcing the national identity via uniform design. AirSial's use of green in the cabin crew uniform also symbolizes the Pakistani flag, further enhancing its brand identity by visually projecting the nation's heritage.

These aspects made AirSial a unique branding advantage and supported its position as a culturally oriented airline (Lakshmi & Pooja, 2017; Waheed et al., 2021; Weon & Kim, 2001b, 2001a).

Apart from these advantages, AirSial's current uniform needs to be fixed for a more consistent and attractive appearance. One of these is the incompatibility of the logo's color with the uniform, which causes a break in brand identity. Second, the entire color scheme of the uniform is monotonous and lacks the colorfulness necessary to make it attractive to the eyes. How the uniform is now being worn also seems haphazard, pointing to the lack of senior management guidance in maintaining proper dress codes. Based on the research, the following hypothetical statement is being examined.

1.1. Hypothesis: The current AirSial cabin crew uniform does not effectively reflect the airline's brand identity and logo aesthetics; therefore, redesigning the uniform in alignment with branding principles will enhance its market image and contribute positively to its marketing strategy.

The study examined the uniform of cabin crew. It detected some defects that doesn't align with the airline's logo and branding. The individual defects in the uniform design are classified into three levels of severity: severe (red), moderate (yellow), and minor (green). The red defects, which need to be addressed urgently, are the shoes, trousers, neck scarf, shoulder edge, blazer pocket, and the left corner shape of the shirt. The yellow flaws, which are minor but noticeable, are the design of the cap, the lack of the center button, and the blazer arm edge. The green flaws, although less serious, still need to be improved, particularly the chest design of the blazer.

These inconsistencies in the uniforms create a significant research gap, and AirSial can take advantage of them on their 5th anniversary. This anniversary is the perfect time to introduce a more advanced uniform that is closer to its cultural representation and brand image. It is interesting to note that Nomi Ansari's original uniform design has undergone several unforeseen changes that deviate from the original concept. In order to address this, our research looks at

these design flaws and provides a visually beautiful and culturally sensitive alternative.

The research follows a qualitative approach, where five professional marketers and designers are interviewed to gather opinions regarding the best upgrades for AirSial's cabin crew uniform. In case of consensus among the professionals, the suggested recommendations will then be further assessed and validated to determine their effectiveness.

This study is structured into five major parts: the first part showcases the introduction of the research, the second part is the review of the past literature's. The third part is the methodology of the research, the fourth part is discussion and analysis, and the final part is recommendations and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This section of the study will analyze past research on amendments to cabin crew uniforms. The appearance of cabin crew is one of the most important representations of an airline's brand identity, acting as a visual tag for its values, culture, and service standards. Uniforms have been a crucial part of customer perception and an essential tool in building brand identity in the highly competitive aviation industry for many years. (Dick & Basu, 1994; Weon & Kim, 2001a). AirSial, Emirates, Singapore Airlines, and Qatar Airways have managed to effectively present luxury, professionalism, and heritage through well-designed uniforms. Still, in the case of AirSial, its cabin crew uniforms are too weak to convey a stronger brand image and position itself as a leader in the market. It reveals the importance of uniforms for airline branding, customer perception, and marketing strategies to understand why AirSial's uniform change might be a game-changer (Dick & Basu, 1994; Lakshmi & Pooja, 2017; Weon & Kim, 2001).

(McNeely et al., 2017b) evaluated that uniforms are an important part of an airline's image and its employee well-being. A uniform change in 2011 at Alaska Airlines created widespread health complaints, from skin irritation to fatigue, due to hazardous chemicals contained in the fabrics. The incident demands safe, quality uniforms that resonate with the organizational identity. Updating the cabin crew uniforms for AirSial can help increase brand visibility and professionalism, guaranteeing comfort and safety for their employees, which is essential for operational success. As pointed out by (Jou et al., 2008b; Lakshmi & Pooja, 2017), uniforms are an important component in the identity of any organization, especially for airlines, as they portray the brand through a visual medium. Uniforms convey professionalism, cultural values, and brand ethos, leaving a lasting impression on passengers.

Airlines like Emirates and Finnair use the power of sophisticated color palettes to express feelings of elegance and reliability, while JetBlue uses bright colors to express energy and creativity. These design choices not only enhanced its brand recognition but a sense of pride and unity among employees (Jou et al., 2008b; Lakshmi & Pooja, 2017). For AirSial, redesigning the cabin crew uniforms is an opportunity to rebrand its image and be in step with global industry

standards. A well-designed uniform can make the airline more marketable, reflect its values, and improve employee morale and customer perception.

Aesthetic labor highlights the role of appearance in aviation, whereby cabin crew uniforms reflect brand identity and customer expectations (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b). In the case of AirSial, re-introducing uniforms becomes an avenue to improve the brand image, to go with internationally acceptable standards, and to drive competitiveness.

Cabin crew uniforms are one of the unique factor that can determine the brand reputation in the airline market and affect passengers' perceptions since they convey the identity of the airline and the professionalism of the flight attendants (Haise & Rucker, 2003). However, uniform designs often disregard the wearers' needs to satisfy the organizational objectives, which overlooks the aspect of comfort and functionality. In turn, this brings discomfort due to aspects such as poor fabric, wrong fitting, and unsuitable design (Feather et al., 1996; Wheat & Dickson, 1999).

By facing these sorts of challenges, Helander and Khalid (2005) suggested an approach to user-centered design that involves obtaining users' feedback. This approach will consider ergonomic, psychological, and physical needs in the design process to ensure uniforms improve comfort, performance, and satisfaction. Kansei ergonomics (Nagamachi, 2007), further helps bridge the gap between functionality and aesthetics by aligning user preferences with design elements.

Uniforms play a crucial role in establishing the brand image of an airline and, through that, customer perception, since the uniformed staff acts as the "face" of the airline and reflects the identity of the airline (Weon & Kim, 2001b). In the aviation industry, where services are intangible, uniforms especially their color serve as a powerful tool to form emotional connections with passengers and establish a unique brand presence (M. S. Lee & Kim, 1995; Yang & Peterson, 2004c). Good uniform designs mean greater brand recognition and increased pride for the employee, which eventually leads to customer loyalty. Colors, in particular, play a very crucial role in producing an emotional response in the customer and reinforcing the values of the brand (Weon & Kim, 2001b). The design of a uniform is a strategic marketing tool; hence, it is

about time for AirSial to rethink its present uniform to reflect its brand to enhance its positioning in the competitive aviation market.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Method

This qualitative study aims to analyze how AirSial's cabin crew uniform affects its company's reputation and customer satisfaction as well. With the detailed examination on the uniform and after the collection of professional viewpoints that is made possible by utilizing the qualitative research, which contributes to a deep comprehension of how uniform style affects airline branding, performance, and cultural representation. By employing expert opinions in uniform style and marketing, this study provides a thorough explanation of AirSial's current uniform's strengths and weaknesses.

Sampling Strategy

The research is based on the purposive sampling technique. And with that, semi-structured interviews were carried out, including ten industry stakeholders, five fashion designers specializing, and five marketing experts with keen knowledge about brand positioning and consumer opinions. Participants were selected based on industry exposure and direct professional involvement in the respective fields. Faculty members of the respective department of fashion designing and marketing were also approached to deliver academic as well as industry-backed insights and offer a holistic understanding of the subject.

Data Analysis

By utilizing thematic analysis, the collected data was being transcribed and analyzed as well, in this way, it allows the identification of key themes and recurring concerns. The analysis was organized into four main sections. In order to figure out whether the present uniform successfully conveys AirSial's identity and values and maintains consistency with the airline's overall branding strategy, brand alignment was investigated. The evaluation of how successfully the current uniform integrates elements of Pakistani culture, particularly the use of green as a symbolic reflection of the national flag and the inclusion of scarves for female cabin crew, was another crucial topic of focus. While analyzing other aesthetic and practical issues, the errors in the selection of fabric, color scheme, and the overall appearance of the uniform were also being observed. Finally, strategic improvements were examined, by providing recommendations

that are practically possible to boost the uniform's impact on functioning, branding, and customer attractiveness. Apart from that, providing a foundation for proposed modifications, this detailed examination provides valuable insights regarding the benefits and drawbacks of AirSial's current uniform design.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Discussions

The results from the designers, branding experts, and marketing professionals point to some of the key areas of development for AirSial's cabin crew uniform. Across all the interviews, there were some common points. One of the primary issues is brand heritage and visual identity. The uniform needs to reflect the airline's brand through the use of the logo elements, particularly the color scheme, to develop a consistent and recognizable image. Uniforms also have a strong contribution to make in terms of branding and promotion, enhancing AirSial's image and making a lasting impression on passengers.

The Impact of Aircraft Interior on Uniform Design

One of the most critical problems that emerged in the discussion is the absence of color coordination and uniformity in the existing uniform of AirSial. The incompatibility with AirSial's brand colors negatively impacts its brand recognition and general customer perception. Experts noted that the uniform should be more consistent with the airline's branding strategy to make a greater impression. Another important factor is how the internal body of the aircraft influences the appearance of the cabin crew uniform. Given that the aircraft seats are black, a two-dark-colored uniform would blend into the background and be less visible and overall, less attractive. To prevent this, a balance between dark and light shades must be achieved in efforts to create contrast and professional sophistication.

Visual Coherence and Brand Alignment

An initial issue put forward by designers and marketing professionals is that there must be improved brand alignment of AirSial's uniform with its general brand identity. The designers insisted that the color of the airline's logo needs to be used in the uniform to create a more powerful brand heritage. Marketing professionals agreed by arguing that a uniform color scheme increases customer identification and loyalty. The uniform is not efficiently incorporating the airline's central branding components, thus making it less effective in brand promotion.

Customer Perception and Brand Recall

Both marketers and designers concur that repeated colors have a significant influence on customer perception. Green and gold, being part of AirSial's colors, represent revolution, success, and professionalism. A harmonious uniform color scheme can also have favorable psychological effects, making the airline look more prestigious

and reliable. Branding specialists also cautioned that unless AirSial's uniform is visually different from its rivals, such as PIA, recall by customers will be influenced.

Functional and Aesthetic Considerations

Both designers and marketers agree that uniform colors have a profound influence on customer perception. Green and gold, being the part of AirSial's brand, signify revolution, success, and professionalism. A uniform color scheme can produce good psychological impacts, and the airline can appear more prestigious and credible. In addition, branding experts warned that if AirSial's uniform does not appear visually different from rivals like PIA, customer recall can be damaged.

Designers aimed at maintaining a balance between functionality and aesthetics of the airline. Functionality in movement, comfort, and durability are considered to be critical in a uniform design as narrated by our experts. The addition of trousers for female crew members and an inner and outer blazer layer is a suggestion at improving functionality as well as aesthetics. In addition, the fabric should provide flexibility, with at least 20% stretch for ease of movement for crew members who work for extended periods. The second most important point that was raised was how the interior of the plane affected the visibility of the uniform. As AirSial planes have black seats, designers said that they will be less noticeable and blend into the surroundings, as well as be less effective at making a general brand statement. In response to this, they proposed a mixture of dark and light colors so that the uniform can be made more visible but still appear professional.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The perspective of marketing experts, branding specialists, and designers indicated how important uniforms are for the consumer perception and recognition of the brand. By utilizing brand colors, balancing the aesthetic and functional elements, and taking into account the effect of the aircraft interior, AirSial can enhance its brand recognition and market presence. The suggested modifications are in line with best branding practices and can be strategically introduced to improve the image of the airline while being cost-effective. With the fifth anniversary approaching, AirSial has a timely chance to update its uniform and position itself as a top airline in Pakistan.

Limitations

Although this research provides valuable information, it has some limitations that should be taken into account. The limited sample size of ten specialists was a major drawback, which may not accurately reflect the wider viewpoints of the fashion and aviation sectors. In addition to that, the research focuses on qualitative data rather than quantitative data, which restricts the applicability of its conclusions to a larger audience. Finally, the analysis may have been biased due to the different professional backgrounds of the participants, which may have affected their viewpoints.

Recommendations

By doing this research and consulting with designing and marketing experts, several suggestions have been made in light of these findings:

- To improve brand consistency, incorporate AirSial's colors into the uniform.
- Make sure the uniform balances lighter and darker shades to match the black aircraft seating.
- The airline should enhance its fabric by adding breathable and stretchable materials so that it would improve comfort and mobility.
- The airline should align components in its uniform that honor cultural tradition, including male crew members wearing caps in the Allama Iqbal manner.

- To create a professional and brand-aligned style, think about implementing the recommended colors such as Black Forest, Ginger Root, and Argan into the uniform design.

This research highlighted different perspectives that are obtained from professionals and industry experts, indicate the qualitative part of this research. Based on the qualitative results, the design department has created uniform portraits with that the project moves into its practical phase. To get more input and confirmation, these graphic designs will be included in the study's subsequent phase. In order to guide the final uniform concept following brand identity and customer perception, this future direction aiming to combine creative design with this empirical research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix

Errors in Uniform



Red: Severe Error
Yellow: Moderate Errors
Green: Minor Errors

Marketing & Designers Questions

Questionnaire:

1. From a marketing perspective, how do you think the appearance of cabin crew uniforms influences the overall brand image of an airline like AirSail?
 2. What role do you believe customer perceptions of cabin crew uniforms play in shaping their expectations and loyalty towards an airline?
 3. How can the design of cabin crew uniforms be used as a strategic tool to communicate the brand values and identity of AirSail Airlines?
-
1. What challenges did you face in designing a uniform that balances functionality, aesthetics, and branding?
 2. In your opinion, how do customers perceive the cabin crew's appearance, and how does it impact their overall impression of the airline?
 3. What ethical concerns do you think should be considered when sharing information about the uniform design within this research?
 4. Are there any additional design elements you believe could enhance the branding of AirSail Airlines through the cabin crew's uniform?