
Assessing Passenger Loyalty Programs in the Airline Industry: A Comparative Analysis of Value Delivery and Customer Perceptions at Polish Regional Airports

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of passenger loyalty programs in the airline industry, focusing on value delivery and customer perception in Polish regional airports. The research investigates how these programs influence customer loyalty, satisfaction, and overall travel behaviour.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data collected through surveys. Data were gathered using CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing), PAPI (Paper and Pencil Interviewing), and CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) techniques. The sample consists of 2256 passengers from seven regional airports in Poland, surveyed between December 2022 and March 2023.

Findings: The results indicate that only 15.5% of respondents participate in airline loyalty programs, with a higher participation rate among traditional carrier customers (28.21%) compared to low-cost carrier customers (12.86%). The most popular loyalty program is Miles&More, followed by WIZZ Discount Club and Flying Blue. Key benefits valued by participants include mileage bonuses, increased baggage allowance, and priority services. There is a positive correlation between program participation and increased travel frequency, preferred airline choice, and overall satisfaction.

Practical Implications: The findings provide insights for airline and airport managers to enhance loyalty programs by tailoring benefits to meet passenger preferences and improving communication strategies. This can lead to increased customer retention and higher revenue.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a comparative analysis of loyalty programs in the context of Polish regional airports. It highlights the specific needs and preferences of passengers in this market, offering practical recommendations for improving program effectiveness.

Keywords: Air transport market, frequent flyer programs, passenger satisfaction.

JEL codes: M31, L93, Z32.

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1. Introduction

Loyalty programs have become a significant element of value creation in recent years. They contribute to the acquisition and retention of customers who receive greater value compared to non-participants. Literature often equates loyalty with satisfaction, habituation, repeat purchases, preferences, engagement, retention, fidelity, word-of-mouth, and coercion (Urban and Siemieniako, 2008). Loyalty combines behavioral, cognitive, and emotional elements (Kucharska, 2017), with loyal customers endorsing products and resisting competitors' marketing efforts (Griffin, 2002).

Behavioral loyalty involves habitual purchases, while F.F. Reichheld (2003) defines loyalty as a willingness to invest or sacrifice to strengthen a relationship. Two dimensions of loyalty are identified: primary loyalty (frequency of purchases) and behavioral loyalty (psychological commitment). Primary loyalty reflects engagement and a positive attitude, while behavioral loyalty includes recommendations despite infrequent use (George and Sahadevan, 2019; Sahin, Kusakci, and Mbowe, 2021). Loyalty is reciprocal, encompassing loyalty to products, manufacturers, and purchase locations (Huczek, 2013).

Building loyalty among passengers is particularly noticeable in the high-yield segment, namely business travellers (Vasigh, Fleming, and Tacker, 2018). The literature indicates that in the airline service market, customer loyalty is above average compared to other industries (Baumeister, Nyrhinen, Kemppainen, and Wilska, 2022).

This suggests that loyalty programs are an effective tool for enhancing the competitiveness of airlines. Carriers that implement such programs stimulate market demand (Altexsoft, 2024). Passengers are willing to engage in relationships with the company and establish long-term bonds, having similar expectations of themselves (Reichheld and Teal, 2007).

Therefore, the main focus is on building and strengthening relationships with customers by viewing loyalty as an attitude composed of customer behaviors. Passenger loyalty is greatly influenced by satisfaction with past experiences. In the literature, satisfaction is defined as an evaluation of perceived consumer outcomes in terms of acquiring, consuming, and disposing of a product (Smyczek, 2012).

The topic of passenger loyalty has been the subject of extensive research; however, there is a notable scarcity of studies specifically focused on the aviation services market in Poland. Despite the global interest in understanding and enhancing customer loyalty within the airline industry, the unique dynamics and specificities of the Polish market remain underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating the effectiveness of passenger loyalty programs in the airline industry, focusing on value delivery and customer perception in Polish regional airports.

2. An Overview of the Literature

Loyalty is often perceived as a direct result of satisfaction, where customer satisfaction leads to repeated interactions and long-term relationships. In a scientific context, satisfaction is a key predictor of loyalty (Alhandan and Hadi, 2024), suggesting that the level of satisfaction can directly affect the degree of customer loyalty.

Nieżurawski, Pawłowska, and Witkowska (2010) distinguished two groups of factors affecting consumer loyalty: endogenous (internal) and exogenous (external) factors. The first group includes elements directly related to consumers and their subjective perception of reality. They also mentioned the expected benefits for the consumer, the level of involvement in the purchase process, and the associated risk. External factors, on the other hand, include elements not directly related to the customer, such as the quality of products and services, market saturation level, variety of the company's offer, and brand characteristics.

Studzińska (2015) identified factors influencing loyalty, such as consumer characteristics (risk attitude, novelty seeking, susceptibility to influence, past experiences), social environment (culture, prevailing norms and values, recommendations), market conditions (degree of market development, industry, level of competition, number of entities, availability of substitutes, price level), and brand characteristics (identity, reputation, marketing-mix instruments supporting the brand, recommendations).

Mazurek-Łopacińska (2003) outlines three approaches to customer satisfaction: the psychological approach, which integrates cognitive elements and emotional reactions; the empirical or holistic approach, focusing on experiences gained during product use; and the relativistic approach, which compares clients' feelings to a defined reference point (Skrzypek, Grela, and Piasecka, 2019). From a marketing perspective, satisfaction is an emotional state resulting from comparing customer expectations with their experiences (Beliczyński, 2009). Notably, repetitive purchases alone do not constitute consumer loyalty.

Haffer, Sudol, and Szymczak (2000) describe the creation of customer satisfaction using three models: the emotional model, the equity model, and the expectation-disconfirmation model. The expectation-disconfirmation model, often applied in practice, evaluates customer satisfaction based on the alignment between their experiences and prior expectations (Johann, 2019). Satisfaction occurs when expectations are met or exceeded, and dissatisfaction arises when expectations are not met.

Passenger satisfaction can be studied using various models, such as the ACSI (American Customer Satisfaction Index) model, which is an extension of the Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer (SCSB). This model includes perceived

value and the potential consequences of satisfaction, such as complaints or loyalty processes. The ACSI assesses overall satisfaction levels across companies, industries, sectors, or countries (Morgeson, Hult, Sharma, and Fornell, 2023) and also examines individual satisfaction formation processes (Mao and James, 2020).

The ECSI (European Customer Satisfaction Index) model is similar to the expectation-disconfirmation model and the ACSI model. It incorporates the company's image as a factor influencing perceived value and customer loyalty, and divides quality assessment into technical and functional aspects (Gašior, 2019).

Advancements in satisfaction research have led to models where satisfaction results from perceived quality and value, compared to established expectations, with outcomes being either positive (customer loyalty) or negative (customer complaints) (Kowalik and Klimecka-Tatar, 2018).

Building passenger satisfaction is a long-term process influenced by factors such as affective state, personality traits, expectations, product quality, experience, cognitive states, and safety. A solution to this challenge lies in loyalty programs, which are designed to establish lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with customers. Effective programs focus on consumers, setting clear goals, fostering engagement, and leveraging financial, social, and structural bonds. Originality and uniqueness in relation to competition allow for the building of an effective, long-term program (Alshurideh *et al.*, 2020).

Airline loyalty programs, or Frequent Flyer Programs (FFP), aim to increase ticket sales, enhance customer loyalty, and encourage purchases at partner points (Altexsoft, 2022). However, a study by Google and Greenberg (2018) found only 46% of high-yield travelers are motivated by such programs when booking travel.

The first airline loyalty program, AAdvantage, was launched by American Airlines on May 1, 1981, in response to heightened competition following the deregulation of passenger transportation in 1978 (Kwiatek, 2010).

Advantage aimed to retain customers by rewarding them with miles that could be exchanged for free flights, a model that other airlines, including United Airlines with its MileagePlus program, soon adopted (Radomyski, 2018). This program is highly regarded, scoring 7.85 out of 10 points globally (Statista, 2023).

Miles are earned and redeemed based on factors such as travel distance, fare, and class, with additional variables like travel zones and promotional offers influencing mile accumulation and redemption (Hoszman *et al.*, 2019).

Some airlines award miles proportionally to ticket price, particularly rewarding high-revenue passengers. Initially, airline loyalty programs were confined to the airline's network, but now they include partnerships with various travel-related and

non-industry businesses, including co-branded credit cards, providing additional revenue streams for airlines (Reales and O'Connell, 2017).

Loyalty programs are valuable assets, accounting for 40-50% of airline market value in 2019 (LTIMindtree, 2023), and provided stable revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic. Delta Airlines' SkyMiles was valued at nearly \$28 billion in 2023 (Statista, 2024).

Miles&More, the largest loyalty program in Europe, is an excellent example of the effectiveness of such programs. Among the participants of the Miles&More program are PLL LOT and other carriers, which demonstrates its global reach. Participants of the Miles&More program can accumulate miles during their travels, which they can then exchange for rewards such as free flights, travel class upgrades, or access to airport lounges. It is worth noting that other Polish carriers do not offer participation in loyalty programs.

More and more low-cost airlines are deciding to implement loyalty programs. Wizzair offers customers membership in the "Wizz Discount Club" at a price of 34.99 euros per year, which entitles passengers to purchase airline tickets and additional services at reduced prices. It should be noted that the most popular low-cost carrier in Europe – Ryanair – does not offer a loyalty program. The decision to implement such a program depends on many factors, such as the company's strategy, the costs associated with maintaining the program, and customer expectations and preferences (Rane *et al.*, 2023).

Loyalty programs enhance both consumer and investor loyalty, moving beyond functional needs to create emotional resonance and financial benefits (Dziawgo, 2023). However, traditional strategies focusing solely on discounts may fall short as competitors can easily replicate these (Prentice *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, innovative marketing strategies are necessary for airports to stand out and deliver unique value.

The study by Wever (2017) reveals no consistent relationship between frequent flyer program (FFP) memberships and customer loyalty, highlighting distinctive positive and negative aspects for different customer groups. For non-members, FFPs offer no perceived benefits, while entry-level members recognize both advantages and disadvantages, such as awards and constraints on airline choice.

Medium- and high-level FFP members primarily value boarding priority, indicating that these programs do not consistently enhance customer loyalty and retention. Similarly, the research by Limberger *et al.* (2022) emphasizes the need for a deeper understanding of user profiles within loyalty programs. The measurement instrument used in the study confirms the multidimensional nature of involvement in such programs. It is important to note that these dimensions may vary across different member groups, underscoring the complexity and variability of user engagement within these programs.

3. Research Methods

This paper presents a segment of research conducted as part of the preparation for a doctoral dissertation. The focus of the analysis is on identifying attributes of passenger loyalty, encompassing loyalty programs offered by both airlines and airports. Based on the review of the literature and previous studies, the following research questions were formulated:

- RQ1: How does participation in airline loyalty programs influence passenger loyalty and travel behavior at Polish regional airports?
- RQ2: What are the key benefits of airline loyalty programs that most significantly enhance customer satisfaction and perceived value among passengers in Polish regional airports?
- RQ3: How does the level of digital engagement (e.g., use of mobile apps, online services) affect the effectiveness of airline loyalty programs in Polish regional airports?

The study was conducted following the acquisition of approvals from the management of regional airports within the operational area (post-security control) at seven regional airports: Łódź (LCJ), Warsaw-Modlin (WMI), Wrocław (WRO), Katowice (KTW), Poznań (POZ), Kraków (KRK), and Gdańsk (GDN), as well as onboard aircraft during six flights operated by Ryanair and Wizzair.

The research was carried out between December 2022 and March 2023. It was specifically designed to allow only passengers to participate, with a random sample selection. The study utilized a questionnaire survey available in both Polish and English, comprising 34 questions distributed across four sections. The data collection was conducted using three techniques: CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing), PAPI (Paper and Pencil Interviewing), and CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing).

The study involved 2,256 respondents, of which 57.05% were women. The largest age group was individuals aged 26-35 years (25.58%), while the least represented were passengers over 56 years old (12.06%). The frequency of travel varied. In the last 24 months, the largest group of respondents (39.45%) traveled by air 1 to 3 times, while 13.03% did not travel at all during this period, possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most numerous group of respondents were those traveling for leisure (67.24%). This was followed by business trips (9.93%) and work-related trips (8.60%). The most common mode of transport to the airport was by bus (27.58% of respondents), followed by personal car (25.46%) and taxi (16.35%).

It was crucial to examine passenger preferences regarding the propensity to purchase additional services. The majority of them (71.32%) did not purchase additional

services, which may be due to insufficient knowledge and awareness of the carrier's offer, as well as a lack of perceived need. Additional services were utilized by 26.68% of respondents, with the most popular being the option of paid cabin baggage (16.46%). This was followed by the reservation of a preferred seat on the plane (13.6%) and paid checked baggage (13.2%).

The majority of respondents (1,866 individuals, or 82.71%) used the services of low-cost carriers. This high percentage is likely due to the fact that the research was conducted at regional airports, where low-cost carriers have a significant market share. It is worth noting that at the Łódź and Warsaw/Modlin airports, nearly 100% of regular passenger traffic is handled by low-cost carriers.

The most frequently chosen carrier was Ryanair (63.70%), followed by Wizzair (13.79%). Other low-cost carriers included EasyJet (3.06%) and Norwegian (2.16%). Conversely, 17.29% of respondents chose traditional carriers. Among these, the most popular was PLL LOT (9.41%), followed by Lufthansa (4.83%) and KLM (1.77%).

4. Results of the Research and Discussion

To gain insights into the effectiveness of airline loyalty programs in the Polish regional airport market, a comprehensive passenger survey was conducted between December 2022 and March 2023 at seven regional airports in Poland. The findings reveal significant patterns in passenger participation and preferences regarding loyalty programs.

The survey results indicated that only 15.5% of respondents declared participation in airline loyalty programs. Interestingly, the percentage of individuals with accounts is higher among traditional carrier customers (28.21%) compared to low-cost carrier customers (12.86%). This discrepancy may be due to differences in the loyalty program offerings or varying customer preferences and perceived value.

The data presented in Table 1 indicates the participation rates in airline frequent flyer programs (FFP) among passengers at various regional airports in Poland. The highest participation in airline FFP is observed at Poznań (POZ) airport, with 24.76% of the overall passengers having FFP accounts. This rate is significantly driven by passengers of traditional carriers, where the participation rate reaches 29.28%.

Conversely, the lowest participation is reported at Warsaw-Modlin (WMI) airport, where only 9.87% of passengers are involved in airline FFP. This percentage is entirely attributed to passengers of low-cost carriers (LCC), as there is no participation data for traditional carriers at this airport.

These variations highlight the influence of the type of carrier on the likelihood of

passengers participating in FFP, with traditional carriers generally showing higher participation rates compared to low-cost carriers.

Table 1. Participation of respondents in airline loyalty programs at Polish regional airports

Departure Airport	Participation in Airline FFP			Non-participation in Airline FFP		
	Total	LCC	Full Service Carriers	Total	LCC	Full Service Carriers
Łódź (LCJ)	13,89%	13,89%	-	86,11%	86,11%	-
Warsaw-Modlin (WMI)	9,87%	9,87%	-	90,13%	90,13%	-
Wrocław (WRO)	15,56%	12,04%	24,42%	84,44%	87,96%	75,58%
Katowice (KTW)	14,01%	13,86%	28,57%	85,99%	86,32%	71,43%
Poznań (POZ)	24,76%	10,84%	29,28%	75,24%	89,16%	70,18%
Kraków (KRK)	12,5%	11,33%	25%	87,5%	88,67%	75%
Gdańsk (GDN)	18,1%	16,55%	29,27%	81,9%	83,45%	70,73%

Source: Own elaboration based on empirical research.

Among respondents who are participants in loyalty programs (350 respondents), the most popular program is Miles&More (42.5%), which allows passengers of, among others, LOT Polish Airlines to accumulate miles. This program has a significant lead over the second-ranked WIZZ Discount Club, which received 27.60% of the responses. The third place, with 11.8%, went to the Flying Blue (KLM-Air France) program.

Other loyalty programs have less significance: EuroBonus (SAS) 2.9% and Norwegian Reward (2.7%). Programs such as Emirates Skywards, MyRyanair, British Airways Executive Club, and others received less than 3% of the responses.

Table 2. Participation of respondents in airline loyalty programs

Program	Number of Responses	Percentage
Miles&More	205	42,54
WIZZ Discount Club	133	27,60
Flying Blue (KLM-Air France)	57	11,83
EuroBonus (SAS)	14	2,90
Norwegian Reward	13	2,70
Emirates Skywards	11	2,28
MyRyanair	10	2,07
British Airways Executive Club	8	1,66
Avios	6	1,24
Miles&Smiles (Turkish Airlines)	4	0,83

AerClub (Aerlingus)	4	0,83
Privilege Club (Qatar Airways)	4	0,83
AAdvantage	2	0,41
TAP Miles&Go	2	0,41
Aeroplan (Air Canada)	2	0,41
Finnair Plus	2	0,41
Flying Club [Virgin Atlantic)	1	0,21
KrisFlyer (Singapore Airlines)	1	0,21
ShebaMiles (Athiopian Airlines)	1	0,21
Qantas Frequent Flyer	1	0,21
SkyMiles	1	0,21
n=	482	100,00%

Source: Own elaboration based on empirical research.

The benefits of participating in airline loyalty programs can be categorized into several points with varying levels of attractiveness for customers, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Benefits of participating in airline loyalty programs*

Benefits (multiple choices allowed)	Number of Responses	Percentage
Mileage bonus	231	19,88
Increased baggage allowance	128	11,02
Priority check-in	114	9,81
Access to executive lounges	107	9,21
Discounts with partners	105	9,04
Priority on the waiting list	101	8,69
Priority baggage handling	95	8,18
Vouchers for travel class upgrades	91	7,83
Reservation guarantee	75	6,45
Mileage credit	60	5,16
Additional card for partner/spouse	30	2,58
Dedicated helpline	25	2,15
n=	1162	100,00%

Source: Own elaboration based on empirical research.

Participants in airline loyalty programs use a variety of strategies to accumulate miles (Table 4). The choice of method depends on individual preferences and the lifestyle of the passengers. Flights are the most popular way, but other methods are also frequently used, such as taking advantage of promotions, renting cars, or staying at partner hotels.

Table 4. *Methods of accumulating miles/points in airline loyalty programs*

Methods (multiple choices allowed)	Number of Responses	Percentage
Flights	232	36,25
Airline promotions on selected flights	88	13,75
Car rentals	64	10,00
Stays at partner hotels	55	8,59
Transfer of points from other loyalty programs	50	7,81
Using an airline-branded credit card	43	6,72
Purchases at duty-free shops at airports	43	6,72
Buying additional miles	35	5,47
Purchases at other partner locations	30	4,69
n=	640	100,00%

Source: Own elaboration based on empirical research.

5. Airport Loyalty Programs

Unfortunately, airport loyalty programs are significantly less popular, with only 2.8% of respondents declaring participation. This may be due to several factors. The first is a lack of passenger awareness of their existence, especially since there are fewer airport loyalty programs than airline loyalty programs. Most often, airport loyalty programs are offered at American airports. Another reason for the low number of participants could be the unclear benefits of participating in the program or a lack of effective communication. The lack of attractive rewards might also contribute to the low interest in these programs.

The data presented in Table 5 provides insights into the participation rates in airport loyalty programs among passengers at various Polish regional airports.

The highest participation in airport loyalty programs is observed at Gdańsk (GDN) airport, with 4.75% of passengers enrolled in such programs. This high participation rate is primarily driven by low-cost carrier (LCC) passengers at 5.07%, whereas full-service carrier passengers contribute 2.44%.

In contrast, the lowest participation is noted at Warsaw-Modlin (WMI) airport, where only 1.97% of passengers are involved in airport loyalty programs. This participation is exclusively among LCC passengers as there are no full-service carriers reported at this airport.

It is worth mentioning that both Katowice (KTW) and Kraków (KRK) airports have their own airport loyalty programs. Kraków (KRK) shows a relatively higher participation rate of 3.05%, predominantly due to LCC passengers at 3.33%, while there is no participation from full-service carriers. Katowice (KTW) has a participation rate of 2.55%, driven by LCC passengers at 2.61%, with no full-service carrier passengers reported in the program.

Table 5. Participation of respondents in airport loyalty programs at Polish regional airports

Departure Airport	Participation in Airport FFP			Non-participation in Airport FFP		
	Total	LCC	Full Service Carriers	Total	LCC	Full Service Carriers
Łódź (LCJ)	2,22%	2,22%	-	97,78%	97,78%	-
Warsaw-Modlin (WMI)	1,97%	1,97%	-	98,03%	98,03%	-
Wrocław (WRO)	2,32%	2,78%	1,16%	97,68%	97,22%	98,84%
Katowice (KTW)	2,55%	2,61%	0%	97,45%	97,39%	100%
Poznań (POZ)	2,57%	2,41%	2,63%	97,43%	97,59%	97,37%
Kraków (KRK)	3,05%	3,33%	0%	96,95%	96,67%	100%
Gdańsk (GDN)	4,75%	5,07%	2,44%	95,25%	94,93%	97,56%

Source: Own elaboration based on empirical research.

Among the respondents, the most popular program is Kraków Airport Loyalty (31.8%), followed by Kameleon (15.2%). Respondents also mentioned loyalty programs of foreign airports, such as The Fraport Rewards Program (12.1%), Changi Rewards (7.6%), and Privium – Schiphol (7.6%). Other programs available at Polish airports with low popularity include Mazury Airport B2B (3%) and KTW Airport (1.5%).

Table 6. Participation of respondents in airport loyalty programs

Program	Number of Responses	Percentage
Kraków Airport Loyalty	21	31,82
Kameleon	10	15,15
The Fraport Rewards Program	8	12,12
Changi Rewards	5	7,58
Privium – Schiphol	5	7,58
Heathrow Rewards	4	6,06
Extime Rewards - My Paris Aeroport	3	4,55
The U.S. — Thanks Again	3	4,55
ViaMilano	3	4,55
Mazury Airport B2B	2	3,02
HKairport Rewards	1	1,51
KTW Airport	1	1,51
n=	66	100,00%

Source: Own elaboration based on empirical research.

The benefits of participating in airline loyalty programs are presented in Table 7. Respondents most frequently pointed to free Wi-Fi (13%) and tangible rewards such

as electronics (11.2%). It is worth noting that the difference between the most desired benefit (free Wi-Fi) and the least desired (additional card for partner/spouse) is 8.3 percentage points, indicating varied respondent preferences in this regard.

Table 7. *Benefits of participating in airport loyalty programs*

Benefits (multiple choices allowed)	Number of Responses	Percentage
Free Wi-Fi	22	13,02
Tangible rewards, e.g., electronics	19	11,24
Discounts with partners, e.g., hotels	18	10,65
Discounts in Business Lounges	15	8,88
Tangible rewards, e.g., gadgets/luggage	14	8,28
Priority security screening	14	8,28
Special parking offers	13	7,69
Access to executive lounges	13	7,69
Option to transfer points from other programs	12	7,10
Participation in special events	11	6,51
Discounts with partners, e.g., restaurants	10	5,92
Additional card for partner/spouse	8	4,73
n=	169	100,00%

Source: Own elaboration based on empirical research.

The most popular methods of accumulating miles/points in airport loyalty programs are flights (15.76%), hotel reservations (13.94%), and airport-branded credit cards (12.12%). The least popular method is the transfer of points from other loyalty programs (4.85%).

Table 8. *Methods of accumulating miles/points in airport loyalty programs*

Methods (multiple choices allowed)	Number of Responses	Percentage
Flights	26	15,76
Hotel reservations	23	13,94
Using an airport-branded credit card	20	12,12
Special parking offers	13	7,88
Car rentals	13	7,88
Promotions on selected destinations	11	6,67
Purchases, e.g., restaurants at Airports	11	6,67
Paid access to Business Lounges	10	6,06
Referrals	10	6,06
Purchases, e.g., retail shops	10	6,06
Other purchases	10	6,06
Transfer of points from other loyalty programs	8	4,85
n=	165	100,00%

Source: Own elaboration based on empirical research.

Passenger willingness to share their experiences is a crucial aspect of creating and

managing customer value. Research indicates that a significant proportion (62.1%) of individuals are ready to actively participate and co-create value by sharing their experiences. Passengers of low-cost carriers (62.7%) show a higher propensity to share their experiences compared to passengers of traditional airlines (59.2%). Analysing the results further, it was observed that 66.86% of respondents who participate in airline loyalty programs express a willingness to engage in value co-creation.

This could open new opportunities for airports and carriers to gather feedback and improve services. However, it is important to note that 37.9% of respondents did not express a willingness to share their experiences. This reluctance may be due to a lack of trust, privacy concerns, or simply a lack of interest.

6. Conclusions, Proposals, Recommendations

Loyalty programs in the airline industry significantly influence customer behaviour, leading to increased flight frequency, preferred airline choices, and overall travel satisfaction. Research has shown that participation in loyalty programs often results in a higher number of flights (11 or more per year declared 29,14%) taken by members compared to non-members (1-3 flights per year selected 42,76%). This behaviour is driven by the desire to accumulate points or miles, which can be redeemed for various rewards such as free flights, upgrades, and exclusive services.

The conducted research indicates that loyalty programs among passengers of Polish regional airports attract little interest. This may be due to the fact that the main carriers at these airports are low-cost airlines. Based on the conducted research and analysis of loyalty programs, the following considerations should be taken into account:

- Conducting promotional campaigns,
- Expanding the benefits catalogue,
- Establishing partnerships with new partners,
- Introducing new tangible rewards,
- Personalization of rewards to better match customer preferences,
- Simplifying the user interface for program interaction,
- Enhancing communication strategies to effectively convey the benefits of the program,
- Continuous feedback collection from participants to improve the program's offerings.

Loyalty programs can become more attractive if they offer benefits tailored to the individual needs and preferences of participants. Additionally, the process of earning points/miles should be as simple and transparent as possible. One of the most popular loyalty programs, Miles&More, introduced a new, transparent points accumulation system on January 1, 2024, allowing frequent travellers to achieve

status (Frequent Traveller, Senator, or HON Circle Member) within the program.

In conclusion, airline loyalty programs play a crucial role in shaping customer behavior, enhancing satisfaction, and building long-term loyalty. The strategic implementation and continuous improvement of these programs can lead to significant competitive advantages and sustained business growth for airlines.

The study has certain limitations, as it was conducted in only half of the regional airports in Poland. Future research should aim to replicate the study across all regional airports to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, future investigations should examine the aspect of loyalty in greater detail and consider the impact of digitalization on passenger loyalty programs.

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