

## AIRLINE: IDENTITY, DESIGN AND CULTURE

Worldwide air travel is, at its most surreal, a parallel universe. While the airline industry is in contact with terra firma for a certain percentage of its kinetic life, it is also spinning an invisible (and sometimes visible) web of vapour trails around planet Earth. In the last year of the last millennium, approximately 1,500 million airline passengers flew a total of 240 billion kilometres worldwide. In other words, a return trip to the Moon for the population of Denmark. And while engineers and pilots (and statisticians) defy gravity, inside the aluminium fuselage the human culture must be maintained. Fashion, product and interior design, and food are adapted for life at 35,000 feet. In the mid-1930s there were no tiered classes on commercial aircraft – only the rich flew, so there was no reason for segregation or choice. Over the following six decades, as aircraft got bigger, faster and more reliable, more and more people wanted and were able to travel by air. New airlines came (and sometimes went), often opening up original destinations to different types of passenger, but often competing directly with established carriers.

With the help of marketing analysts and designers, the commercial aviation industry advanced at high speed. The identity, design and culture of air travel has, in short, adapted, developed and sometimes mutated. This book illustrates and analyses the successful – and occasionally not so successful – results of the airlines' relentless quest to vie for attention.

(From the FASHION chapter)

A fashion pageant parades from the airport concourse through the air bridge and on to the aircraft; for passengers and crew alike, glamour and flying have always been synonymous. Hollywood scriptwriters and blockbuster bestselling authors continually use the skies as an arena for staging glamorous histrionics. The airline industry is a catwalk for the image makers and the image takers.

Air travel has always been 'fashionable', but until the invention of stewardesses, passengers held the monopoly of the flying fashion-conscious. In 1919, Deutsche Luft-Reederei (the forerunner of Lufthansa) began a regular air service between Berlin and Weimar with the first all-metal winged aircraft, the Junkers F13. The first to cash in on its courageous new venture was the publicity-seeking show-business set. Hans Albert, a blond, swashbuckling film star of the time, posed for photographers in a passenger seat in his dress clothes. Today, the airport arrival/departure publicity shot still has front-page value, although snatched photographs of celebrities in the departure lounge do not have as much glamour as the boarding-steps 'wave and smile' of the 1950s and 60s. Airline publicity and fan-club walls in the 1950s were peppered with stills of Gina Lollobrigida, Raquel Welch and The Beatles disembarking from planes.

Before the Second World War, air stewardesses were a relative luxury. Stewards, however, were an integral part of the service on the 'flying-boats'. In the 'flying dining cars', as they were also known, a single steward of 'respectable age' wore a crisp white waiter's jacket and served passengers inflight snacks and drinks. Airships and flying boats gave rise to the nautical descriptions of the airline staff – captain, first officer and steward – and even ground staff wore sailor-collars and caps. Stewardesses today can thank one woman for their career: in 1930, Ellen Church, a registered nurse, convinced Boeing managers that women could work as stewards, so nurses serving aboard the 18-passenger, fabric-covered Boeing 80A became the first female flight attendants in the history of aviation. They wore just-below-the-knee-length A-line skirts, double-breasted jackets, soft cloth hats and very sensible shoes. Swissair was the first European airline to introduce stewardesses in the early 1930s. Lufthansa soon followed and employed stewardesses on board the 40-seater Junkers 90. They wore dark, mid-calf-length A-line skirts, dark ties bearing the company motif – a flying crane – and white box-cut jackets, all topped off with jaunty, fez-style hats bearing the company logo. Lufthansa grasped the concept of corporate identity from the outset and realized that the stewardess could be a symbol for the airline – a walking, talking advertisement.