SAY GOODBYE TO LOST AND FOUND

UTILIZING END-TO-END BAGGAGE TRACKING TECHNOLOGY TO REDUCE LOST BAGS AND IMPROVE THE PASSENGER EXPERIENCE

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), 7.2 billion passengers will be expected to take flight by 2035, a 4.59 billion increase from 2019. As the number of travelers and flights continues to increase, so will passenger expectations, associated airline costs and the number of checked bags to track.

SITA, a multinational IT company serving the air transport industry, reports that the industry is faced with approximately $2.3 billion in costs related to mishandled bags each year. Being able to track each bag practically 100% of the time would help increase passenger satisfaction and process efficiencies.

"It's been a long time coming and something that passengers have been requesting for years in an effort to improve the passenger experience," says Nathan Sims, an aviation project manager at Burns & McDonnell. "Now they can find added comfort in knowing where their bags are throughout the entire journey."

With improved baggage management and operations, radio frequency identification (RFID) has the potential to save the aviation industry more than $3 billion over the next few years, according to IATA. RFID uses radio-frequency electromagnetic fields to gather data in order to automatically identify and track baggage tags. The RFID chip technology is embedded into the bag tag that a passenger or airline staffer secures to his or her baggage.

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>
> **Nathan Sims**

7.2B

EXPECTED PASSENGERS IN 2035

$3B

IN POTENTIAL SAVINGS TO THE AVIATION INDUSTRY IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS

With the implementation of this tracking tool, passengers will not experience any additional process changes or steps to take as far as the flying experience is concerned — except the potential for a better baggage handling experience. To date, RFID has been implemented by just a handful of airports and airlines. Since Delta Air Lines launched RFID tagging in 2016, the airline has been collecting data to make improvements and adjustments to baggage handling. Now, with RFID tagging, 99.9% of Delta bags are being tracked accurately, according to *RFID Journal*.

With RFID technology, bar codes for baggage tracking could be a thing of the past. There are many benefits to favoring RFID technology over bar codes. For a standard bar code tag, line of sight is required to collect an effective scan, like at most grocery store checkouts. With RFID, bag tags can be obstructed and still emit data when energized by readers without the need for human intervention. In addition, information can be gathered at a greater distance than that of the standard bar code tags, allowing less physical effort and a quicker pace for collecting information.

An RFID tag is much more durable than its bar code counterpart. When a bar code tag gets crumpled or creased as it makes its way through the travel process, it becomes increasingly difficult for automatic tag readers and airline staff to obtain a proper scan. The RFID tag continues to emit data even when the tag experiences the wear and tear of the baggage handling process.

"The RFID technology is inherently more efficient because you can capture data without expending nearly as much money and effort," Sims says. "Technically, it's safer too, as automating repetitive bag handling processes reduces the exposure of working in a hazardous environment."

IATA will continue encouraging airlines to use RFID tagging systems on checked baggage. As aging infrastructure and ongoing growth drive the modernization of baggage handling, RFID can help solve many challenges the aviation industry faces today.

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