

Quote by Aarti Harbhajanka, Managing Director, Primus Partners

Published in Impact Magazine
August 23, 2026

The Skies Are Open For Business

As connectivity reaches cruising altitude, airlines and brands are exploring if the aircraft cabin can become marketing's next big high value touchpoint

Authored by Isha Khatu

...connecting and creating a new touchpoint for commerce, content and customer engagement.

A NEW KIND OF ATTENTION ECONOMY

The appeal of the aircraft cabin lies less in the availability of Wi-Fi than in the quality of attention it offers. **Pragya Priyadarshini, Managing Director, Primus Partners**, says brands are beginning to view connected cabins as an environment where consumers are naturally more engaged.

"The aircraft cabin holds a unique promise as a marketing space, offering something that's becoming increasingly rare in the world of digital advertising—'undivided attention'," she says.

Industry estimates peg the global in-flight retail and advertising market at around USD 3.5 billion in 2025, with projections suggesting it could exceed USD 6 billion by 2032. In India, adoption is still at an early stage. **Priyadarshini** points out, "Air India has already recorded over one million connected passengers between June 2025 and June

2026, while Wi-Fi adoption among eligible flyers has climbed from around 30 per cent to 55 per cent during the same period. IndiGo's ongoing rollout could significantly expand that reach over the next few years."

SELLING LESS, SERVING MORE

If brands are tempted to treat connected cabins as another place to run banner ads and video pre-rolls, experts warn they are likely to lose passengers before they gain customers. **Tanvi Bosmia, Vice President - Business, SoCheers**, mentions, "The biggest mistake brands can make is treating in-flight connectivity like another digital inventory to monetise," she says. "The brands that win here won't run more ads; they'll run fewer, better-timed ones—a restaurant suggestion before landing, an airport transfer offer, a travel deal that actually applies."

Globally, some airlines already offer ad-supported Wi-Fi where passengers voluntarily watch a short, branded video in exchange of complimentary Internet. Others integrate destination guides, shopping catalogues and branded content into entertainment systems instead of interrupting them.

Ravi Gosain, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), believes this value exchange is essential. "The most effective experience of in-flight connection will be based on the following principles: it should be used voluntarily, in a relevant manner and exclusively for providing useful information."

Instead of traditional advertisements, he sees greater potential in destination guides, travel recommendations, quizzes, exclusive offers and useful content that complements the journey.

Darshana Bhalla, Founder and CEO, D'Artist Ventures adds, "The opportunity is not to recreate digital advertising at 35,000 feet; it should be to design experiences," she says. "Imagine destination-linked commerce, multilingual entertainment, wellness content, concierge services, curated retail, airport-to-hotel journeys and loyalty ecosystems that seamlessly extend beyond the flight."

Read on: [Page 20, IMPACT Magazine](#)