

SHOULD WE DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN BUSINESS AND PRIVATE CUSTOMERS?

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Abstract

The literature on how customers make their service-provider choices largely distinguishes between private and business customers, and companies' offerings have been separated accordingly. This study takes a closer look at the possible differences between these two customer categories. The results are explorative and based on both qualitative and quantitative studies focusing on customers' actual behavior. The findings show that it is not only job-related aspects such as "being able to work" that influence business travel, and that private matters such as "time with the family" are clearly of equal significance in the choice situation. Price perception is important, but only when it is set against the appropriate social costs. The contradiction appears in the airlines' offers to these customers, which are generally specifically job related. The results of the present study show that most business customers are, in fact, "private customers".

Keywords: air travel, customer relationships, business-to-business relationships, preferences, choice, service

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