

Convenience without the cost

Optimising passenger flow and minimising check-in hassle are two common airport goals being met by the increasing presence of self-service bagdrop machines. *Future Airport* talks to Borry Vrieling of **eezeetags** about how the company's unique bagtags are putting passenger convenience at the fore with no sacrifice of quality or innovation.



The convenience of self-service bagdrops means they are only going to become increasingly widespread in airports throughout the world.

The most important consideration in the design of any baggage tag is to ensure the instructions are as simple as the application. For eezeetags, the way its products integrate with a self-service bagdrop solution is key. If the complete end-to-end process is easy and intuitive, then passenger and airport are able to benefit.

With easyJet and Gatwick Airport opening the world's largest self-service bagdrop area earlier this year to great success, it's clear that automated services are a trend the industry would be wise to invest in more widely – especially as the technology continues to develop and improve. eezeetags contributed to the Gatwick installation, having already enjoyed a successful collaboration on self-service bagdrop installations with Lufthansa in Frankfurt, Munich and Hamburg.

It looks as though the company is fully on board with the potential for further expansion. In 2015, 15 million passengers used eezeetags' products at various airport bagdrop units serving multiple airlines, and the company forecasts that its existing customers will soon double in number as 2016 has already seen a wealth of new users.

What makes eezeetags stand out and how did the unique design come about?

Borry Vrieling: The unique design and adhesive were established long before there were any self-service bagdrop installations. We helped a leading supermarket chain in the Netherlands to overcome the pollution of returnable transport items that were being used for their warehouse-store-warehouse logistics. This pollution led to barcodes being read incorrectly, but since the adhesive

technique we use only sticks to itself, we could provide the company with an elegant means of clean operation.

A few years later, the demand for self-service bagdrop (SBD) started, and one thing led to another. Our competition is more or less the 'standard' baggage tag that was originally designed to be applied by a trained agent but, for SBD, this is far from ideal; passengers do not want to struggle with understanding how to tag a bag.

There are other techniques available from other companies, like permanent bagtags or e-paper tags that can be rewritten using NFC or RFID. From a technical point of view, those are great solutions but, in our opinion, they serve a different market, of frequent flyers, whereas we cater more to leisure travellers.

How do eezeetags help to keep passengers happy and on schedule despite the generally crowded nature of airports?

SBD in general puts passengers more in charge of their own journey and obviously they enjoy that. Furthermore, when all their details are firmly in place, they save a significant amount of time queuing.

To what extent are the company's practices environmentally friendly?

The tag itself is made of FSC-certified paper, meaning its components have been sourced responsibly. Additionally, there is no need to pull away a backing liner to expose the adhesive, so no waste is created at the point of tagging. This means no loose pieces of paper littering the airport floor and needing an extra cleaning team.

How does the company use customer feedback to inform and improve business strategies?

As our customers are airports, airlines and, of course, passengers, we listen to feedback from all of them. This led us to creating a highly customised product, and we keep on doing that, more or less on a customer order basis. For instance, a major connecting airline such as Lufthansa needs a bigger tag because it needs the extra space to be able to print transfer destinations. For most low-cost carriers that do point-to-point travel, this need for space is less acute, so we use a much smaller – and therefore less costly – tag.

The instructions on the back of the tag also keep evolving to become increasingly self-explanatory – in this instance, 'less is more' is very applicable.

How do companies such as eezeetags reconcile handing control back to passengers and ensuring security is still as tight as possible?

As a company, we can only do so much because we provide the bagtag and not the X-ray and so on. However, the reaction of several security officers was that they prefer eezeetags to standard bagtags. The change that comes with relabelling bags with eezeetags is very minor, since eezeetags only stick once and it is clearly visible when one has been tampered with.

What benefits can eezeetags offer the airports and airlines themselves?

We improve passengers' travel experience, since self-tagging is fun, especially if you do not have to stand in line. We help airlines and airports increase their capacity because they can handle more passengers on a smaller footprint. This reduces costs and means passengers have more dwell time in the retail area of an airport.

How do eezeetags affect the role and availability of baggage staff?

The role of the staff becomes much more a genuine service job. People that do not need assistance are in charge of their own journey; this gives staff the extra time to really be of service to the people that are likely in need of assistance, such as the elderly or first-time travellers.

What impact will the roll-out of the world's largest SBD at LGW North Terminal have?

Because easyJet wants to ensure it has the same level of service at all the airports it flies from, the LGW operation is considered the blueprint, so we get all kinds of enquiries from all over Europe and this raises the volume of eezeetags used even further. We are more than ready for that, having invested in doubling our production capacity at the end of last year. The market is ready for eezeetags, and we are ready to serve the market.

Are there any other applications for the unique adhesive used in the tags? Does the company have any plans for collaborating with other companies in this respect?

As a matter of fact, we see an increasing number of applications. We started off with a logistical warehouse-store application but, in the airline industry, we see many off-terminal uses of eezeetags.

In Norway, there is a new legislation that makes it possible that, although Oslo may be your first point of entry into the country, your baggage can now be labelled through to your end destination. This saves passengers and airports a lot of time and capacity. To indicate which bags are for transfer, Avinor at Oslo Airport uses eezeetags because, for the staff working in baggage handling, it is a very easy, fast and clean way of tagging.



The design of eezeetags makes them litter-free and supremely easy to attach.

At Copenhagen Airport, a company called Airport Solutions – a consulting and distribution channel for baggage solutions – uses 'rush' tags based on eezeetags technology, because speed is key and ours are the fastest tags around. Copenhagen Airport is also working on using them in lost-and-found-department solutions.

What's next at eezeetags?

The company will keep on developing; we have tested new instruction pictograms and will introduce these to passengers at several major airports in Europe over the coming months with the intention of again making the process several seconds faster. We will also concentrate on the material itself and make some future developments there. On a short-term basis, we will be scaling up our production and hiring more staff.

All in all, we will be facing a very busy second half of 2016, but this comes as no surprise to us thanks to the innovative clients and partners we work with. ■

Further information

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