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## Finnair Social Media to Allow Passengers More Choices In Seating and Meeting People

TRAVELERS TODAY BY **KAREN FREDRICKSON**

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Finnair is joining the growing group of airlines who are incorporating social seating into the flight experience. (Photo : Finnair)

The national air carrier for Finland, Finnair, is beginning to use social seating.

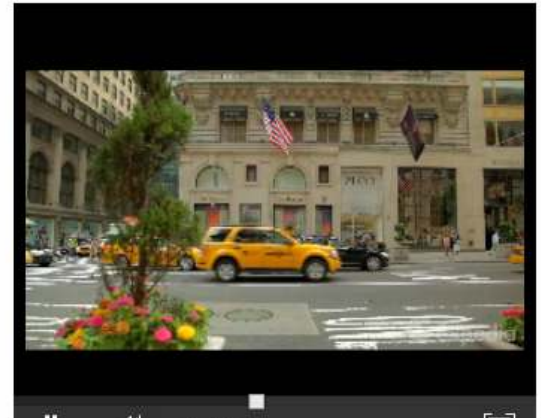
This allows passengers to link their Facebook profile with the flight's seat map, allowing other passengers on the flight to see customer's Facebook profiles. Customers can also see who else has checked in on the same flight and where they are seated, according to the airline, which made the announcement earlier this month.

"Many people like telling their friends on Facebook where they are traveling," Aku Varamaki, the social media manager for Finnair told ABC. "We wanted to make this a little bit easier and also add some value in the check-in process for those who want to see who they are traveling with and who are open to meeting new people."

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Finnair is not the only airline experimenting with social seating. A few other airlines have already introduced the program. AirBaltic, Latvia's national airline, introduced a program called SeatBuddy, which "enables customers to sit next to passengers with similar interests or travel mood."



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SeatBuddy does this by seating people next to the best possible neighbor, which is determined by asking passengers to indicate their preferred "flight mood." An example of a flight mood would include "Business Talk," for a person who wishes to network on their flight. The airline will then automatically assign a seat next to the closest available match, while still not disclosing any personal information.

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines announced a social seating program called "Meet and Seat" in January 2012. This

program allows fliers to access other passengers' social media information when checking in for their flight. They can then choose a seatmate based on similar interests. Malaysia Airlines also has a similar program called "MHBuddy."

Finnair's service currently only shows the customer's public Facebook profile and is only visible to the other passengers on the same flight. The social check-in service is optional and can be disabled to prevent other passengers from seeing the social network profile in concordance with the seating map.

The airline said that more social networks will be added later, but the service currently only includes Facebook.



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