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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Travelers positive towards biometry

The general opinion among travelers is positive and those who have tried it are even more positive.

This is the conclusion of the survey conducted by Scandinavian Airlines after its customer trials of simplified travel using biometry at Umeå Airport in Sweden. The survey covered those who have tested the method and those who haven't. The results are considered reliable despite the limited scope of the test.

Some 78% of those tested feel that SAS should definitely introduce biometric identification if it means the continued possibility of ticket-less travel and 22% responded "yes, maybe".

Among those not tested, 58% responded "yes, definitely", 31% "yes, maybe", 8% responded "no" and 3% had no opinion.

"This confirms the interest in a smooth passenger flow through the airport and that biometry can be the key," says Charlotte Rosengren-Edgren, Product Innovations Manager at SAS.

Of the two techniques tested, iris photography was considered to work slightly more smoothly and is marginally preferable to fingerprint verification.

In the survey, a total of 72% were positive to travel documents being a form of identification in the future.

"Passports and ID cards are now being equipped with biometric data, so in the future these could be linked to a reservation and serve as travel documents. Travelers would then have no need for other cards or tickets," adds Charlotte Rosengren-Edgren.

Not decided

SAS has not yet taken a decision to use biometry, pending official requirements by the authorities for increased ID control.

There are a multitude of various biometrics tests and other initiatives within this field: at airports, by airlines and by the authorities.

"Biometry is advancing on all fronts and there is now a global interest that matches SAS vision of simplified travel," says Charlotte Rosengren-Edgren.

Retain simpler travel

The SAS customer trial at the Umeå Airport was started in November 2003. The aim was to test how SAS could retain an efficient self-service flow, since ID controls of the travelers and baggage are expected to increase in the future.

During a period of five months, some 80 SAS frequent flyers passed through a turnstile at the departure gate with the aid of an SAS smartcard and biometrics, a technique used to read a person's unique characteristics. Fingerprint scans and iris photography were tested.

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