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From easing the pangs of jetlag to reinforcing brand loyalty, today’s intelligent cabin lighting systems are beginning to make a big difference to the passenger experience.

**Brendan Gallagher, Aircraft Interiors International**
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passengers’ expectations, and good design companies to help them produce something that will work well.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: The airlines take no chances with their lighting systems and scenarios, however, and test them rigorously before throwing the switch in a working cabin. “Lighting affects the look of not only the cabin furnishings but also the people in it and the food and drink they consume,” says B/E’s Scover. “We do some simulation work, certainly, but we have found that the true proof of where we are with a design is to build a physical mock-up before putting the first installation in an aircraft. When all the science has been completed, we like to get the product into a mock-up for a final visual check.”

Gerhard Zwickel of Schott knows what can go wrong if suppliers and airlines don’t do their homework. “At mealtime passengers expect their salad to look green and their steak brown,” he explains. “Get the colour temperature wrong and the meat can appear greyish and very unappetising.”

Nuremberg-based Diehl Aerospace supplies cabin lighting for all the top air transport programmes, including the Airbus A350 and A380 and the Boeing 787. Its success reflects years of painstaking preparatory work in cooperation with airlines and aircraft manufacturers. Activities included measurements of passenger response to lighting scenarios, as well as changes in pressure and vibration, in the cabin mock-up Flight Test Facility at the Fraunhofer Aviation research centre in southern Germany.

“It’s very important to take a close look at how a particular lighting effect might impinge on the passenger,” says Dirk-Achim Schevardo, the company’s application engineering manager for cabin interiors. “We have to ensure that there won’t be any undesirable outcomes – the excessive use of red lighting can sometimes provoke aggression, for example. So we learned as much as we could about possible effects before offering our products.”

SIGNATURE EFFECT: One welcome effect to emerge over the last few years is the realisation that intelligent lighting can be a powerful reinforcer of the airline’s brand in the minds of its customers. “Advanced lighting systems allow the airline to project its brand look and feel – the colours and graphical styles – throughout the cabin,” says Melissa Parsons of Luminator Aircraft Products, which supplies a variety of lighting products for Boeing aircraft types.

Scover of B/E Aerospace agrees that this is something whose time has come. “The airlines have recognised the opportunity offered by branding by light and now it’s a matter of their cashflow catching up with the idea,” he says. “We can expect to see more and more lighting systems echoing the colour schemes of the airlines. But it must be subtle – passengers don’t want to walk down the jetway and suddenly be bombarded by a rainbow of bright colours.”

There’s another reason for exercising the power of lighting with care, according to Gerhard Zwickel. “Much depends on what the brand itself represents – lifestyle and fun, like Virgin, or something much more conservative,” he says. “If it’s the latter, splashing the brand in first class could be counter-productive.”

Whatever the airlines decide to do with their new lighting systems, there’s little doubt that they are getting more value for