

The National Airline Passenger Survey 2014

Blair C. Boies, Undergraduate Research Assistant
College of Aviation, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Prescott, AZ

Dr. Erin E. Bowen
Chair, Safety Science
ERAU Prescott

Dr. Brent D. Bowen
Dean, College of Aviation
ERAU Prescott

Dr. Dean E. Headley
Associate Professor
Wichita State University

Abstract

The Airline Passenger Survey is conducted annually and participated in by frequent flyers who wish to contribute their experiences as an opinion-based alternative to the Airline Quality Rating. Passengers have responded to the request of researchers who wish to provide a consumer perspective on the quality of today's air travel experience. Upon the collection and interpretation of results of the Airline Passenger Survey, they contribute a validation component to the quantitative data produced by the Airline Quality Rating.

About the APS

- Developed and conducted annually since 2009 by Dr. Erin E. Bowen
- The Survey was intended partly to address questions raised by Nebraska Congressman Lee Terry, a sponsor of the Airline Passenger Bill of Rights
- Items included consist of a combination of demographic variables, categorical data, and Likert-type scale responses
- The main goal of conducting this study is to capture the passenger perceptions of the airline industry
- The secondary objective is to compare them with the objective data derived from the Airline Quality Rating (AQR)

About the AQR

- The AQR produces an objective calculation for comparing airline performance on a weighted scale
- The outcome is a rating for individual airlines with interval scale properties that is comparable across airlines and across time
- The criteria elements are obtained by the U.S. Department of Transportation

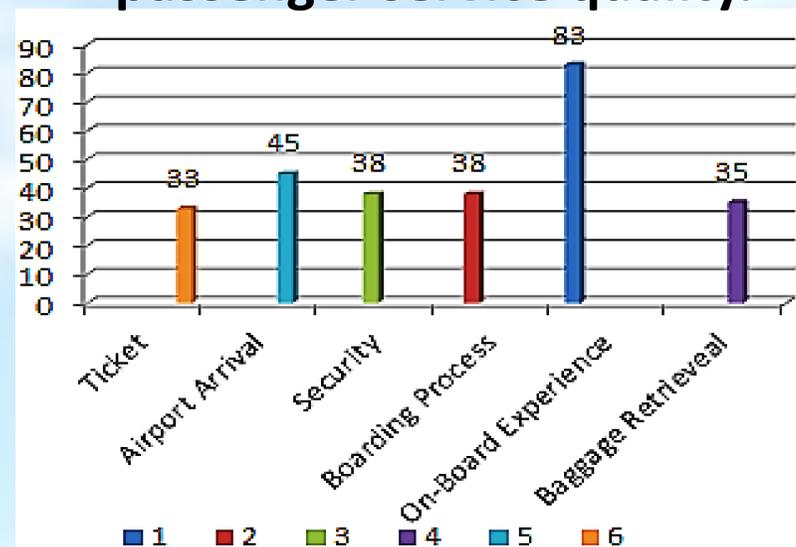
Survey Sample Information

- Average number of flights
- Airline most preferred to fly
- Duration of most recent flight
- Satisfaction with most recent on-board travel experience
- Ranking of most important elements of the air travel experience and process
- Most passenger-friendly airline
- Level of agreement with statements such as: "The U.S. government sequester has negatively impacted my air travel experience."

APS & AQR Compared

As reported in the Airline Quality Rating 2014, Southwest Airlines has shown a decrease in overall quality in the past year, yet they manage to obtain the popular opinion of frequent flyers in regards to the most preferred airline to fly and the most passenger-friendly airline.

Rankings of most important (1) to least important (6) elements of passenger service quality.



2014 APS Results

- Southwest Airlines continues to surpass the competition in regards to passenger perception of most friendly airline with an astounding 32%
- Frequent flyers have rated their on-board travel experience to be mostly satisfactory while more than half of consumers claim air travel has gotten worse in the past year
- Participants under the age of 25, as well as participants over the age of 55, prefer to fly Southwest Airlines by a significant margin
- Frequent flyers between the ages of 25 and 55 prefer to fly Southwest Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and United Airlines with slight variances
- 35% of males consider customer service to be the most important factor when purchasing a ticket with price coming in second with 30%, where as price is most important to females with 47% and customer service in second with 24%

Conclusion

Southwest Airlines has been able to consistently win over the popular opinion of air travel consumers regardless of declining quality results, which goes to show that the other airlines need to improve their efforts in regards to passenger perception.

Selected References

- Bowen, E. E., Bowen, B. D., & Headley, D. (2013). Development of a model of airline consumer satisfaction. *Aviation Technology Faculty and Staff Publications*.
- Bowen, B. D., Bowen, E. E., & Headley, D. (2010). *Consumer Airline Perceptions Survey Results*.
- Bowen, B. D., & Headley, D. E. (2014). *Airline Quality Rating*.
- Kleinsasser, J. (2008). Airline Quality Plummet in Summer; Frequent Travelers Disappointed; U.S. Congressman Discusses Airline Quality Rating; New Study Launched. *Press Release*.
- Purdue News Agency (April 4, 2012). Frequent Fliers Not Convinced Airline Quality Has Improved. *Press Release*.
- Wildt, C. T., & Kirschner, J. (2012). Development of a Model of Airline Consumer Satisfaction. *Aviation Technology Undergraduate Student Research*.