Attentiveness on Airline Quality as Viewed by the Domestic Consumer

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Attentiveness on Airline Quality as Viewed by the Domestic Consumer

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between the quantitative model of the Airline Quality Rating (AQR), and the qualitative model of the Airline Passenger Survey (APS): Operational performance of the U.S. airline industry has been monitored for the past 27 years by the Airline Quality Rating, and qualitative performance has been monitored for the past 6 years by the Airline Passenger Survey. The AQR provides consumers and aviation industry professionals a means to compare performance quality among U.S. airlines using objective, performance-based data. No other airline study in the country is based on performance measures. The APS was added as a new feature of the AQR in 2008 following increased interest in the relationship between consumer perceptions and objective airline industry performance. Results from this study were retrieved from data between the periods of 2008-2016 from the April 2016 Airline Quality Rating Report and the Airline Passenger Survey.

Method

• The data for the Airline Quality Rating for all criteria is drawn from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s monthly Air Travel Consumer Report (http://dot.gov/airconsumer/).
• Weights for the AQR were established by surveying 65 airline industry experts regarding their opinion as to what consumers would rate as important (on a scale of 0 to 10) in judging airline quality.
• Weights for the AQR reflect importance of the criteria in consumer decision-making, while signs reflect the direction of impact.
• The Airline Passenger Survey (APS) was added as a new feature of the AQR in 2008 following increased interest in the relationship between consumer perceptions and objective airline performance.
• The goal of the APS is to gather information from the flying public on airline preferences, perceived passenger-friendliness of airlines, satisfaction and perceived importance of DOT quality measures, and other relevant industry issues.
• Data was compared from the annual AQR report and from the APS to see any notable changes in consumer preferences versus the quantitative DOT data.

Criteria & Weights

On-Time (OT) Weight: 8.63
Denied Boarding (DB) Weight: 8.03
Mishandled Baggage (MB) Weight: 7.92
Customer Complaints (CC) Weight: 7.17

(Flight Problems, Oversales, Fares, Ticketing, Refunds, etc.)

AQR = (+8.63*OT)+(-8.03*DB)+(-7.92*MB)+(-7.17*CC)

(8.63+8.03+7.92+7.17)

Conclusions

• Southwest, Delta, and United remained among the top selections for most preferred airlines by consumers across the years. However, compared to the AQR they were ranked more towards the middle.
• Virgin America ranked #1 for the AQR for the past four years, but ranked between 4-7 for consumer preference.
• Acquisitions throughout the years have impacted survey and rating results.
• Airlines that have consistently performed poorly on objective quality measures are also low on consumer preference.
• The continued positive perceptions of carriers that have fallen in objective performance measures may suggest lingering consumer affiliation and loyalty.
• Future research on both the AQR and APS data seek to identify additional strategies for integrating such data. Such models and analyses will enhance researchers’ ability to communicate the needs of the flying public to both airline industry and government leaders.

References