Airline Quality and the Consumer Perception

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Abstract

Operational performance of the U.S. airline industry has been monitored for the past 27 years by a quantitative model of metrics known as the Airline Quality Rating. The National Airline Quality Rating (http://airlinequalityrating.com) sets the industry standard for comparing performance quality among U.S. airlines. Criteria included in the Airline Quality Rating (AQR) report are screened to meet two basic elements: (1) they must be readily obtainable from published data sources for each airline, and (2) they must be important to consumers regarding airline quality. Results from this report are retrieved from the April 2015 Airline Quality Rating Report.

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 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 reflect importance of the criteria in consumer decision-making, while signs reflect the direction of impact that the criteria should have on the consumers rating of airline quality.

Airline Passenger Survey

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 industry 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.

The APS most recently included items regarding air carrier preference, perceptions of passenger friendliness, weighting of quality factors considered when selecting carriers, open-ended items on recent travel crises and experiences, frequent flier status, and a variety of demographic variables.

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)

Airline Quality Rating 2015

Virgin America
JetBlue
Delta
Hawaiian
Alaska
Southwest
SkyWest
United
ExpressJet
American
Frontier
Envoy
Spirit

Consumer Preferences 2015

Southwest
Delta
United
American
Alaska
JetBlue
Virgin America
Hawaiian
Frontier
SkyWest
Envoy
ExpressJet
Spirit

Conclusions

• 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