Study: Passengers Voice Overwhelming Preference For Boeing 777

A survey of nearly 6,000 European airline passengers found that the Boeing 777 twin-aisle jetliner was preferred by more than three out of four passengers who have flown aboard both the 777 and the Airbus A330/A340 airplanes.

The preference for the Boeing 777 held true for passengers flying in all three classes of service - first class, business class and economy.

The survey was conducted by six airlines flying long-range flights to and from Europe. Five of the participating airlines were European; the sixth a Middle Eastern airline with service to Europe. In each case, the survey was handed out by the sponsoring airline and contained only the identifying logo of that airline. Passengers were selected at random, using standard statistical procedures in order to ensure the validity of the results. Responses from passengers with potential conflicts of interest - those who worked for an airline, a manufacturer or a major supplier, for example - were discarded, a standard practice in market research.

"These results are spectacular," said Alan Mulally, president - Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group. "But when you think about it, the results simply validate what we and our airline customers, working together, set out to accomplish - designing and building a 21st century jet that would be overwhelmingly preferred by passengers, operators, flight crews, cabin attendants and ramp attendants."

European Marketing director Helga Griesbeck, who released the survey results today at the Paris Air Show, said: "The fact that 77 percent of European airline passengers prefer the Boeing 777 over the Airbus products provides further confirmation of the validity of our patented passenger-comfort model, which we incorporate into the design of every Boeing jet."

Airlines conducted the passenger-preference poll both for their own purposes and on behalf of The Boeing Company, which coordinated the survey. Airlines helped shape the survey with questions that would elicit information to help the airlines improve passenger satisfaction.

In all cases, passengers were provided a list of 12 long-distance airplane models from among five manufacturers and asked: "On which of the following aircraft have you flown in the past two years?" For each model recently flown, passengers were asked to rate the plane from "Strongly Avoid" at one end of the scale to "Strongly Prefer" at the other. Differences in preference formed the basis for the survey results.

Boeing was interested in such a survey for two reasons:

- To see how closely the results in Europe matched similar, annual, independent surveys of trans-Atlantic passengers
- To test the continuing validity of a Boeing-patented mathematical model that can be used by airlines to provide a consistent level of passenger comfort, or by a manufacturer in designing airplanes passengers will prefer.

"The results so closely match those of the trans-Atlantic survey we rely upon that the results are almost interchangeable," Griesbeck said. "When you consider the global make-up of intercontinental travelers in all our surveys, these results tell us that we've found the right global formula for comfort."

The patented Boeing "Total Personal Space" formula is based on the key spatial factors that account for passenger perception of comfort: legroom, seat width, sidewall clearance, armrests and the availability of an empty seat next to the passenger. The formula accomplishes two primary objectives:

- Helping Boeing design jets that passengers prefer
- Providing airline customers a competitive advantage in the marketplace - especially on flights of six hours or more, where comfort plays a major role in passenger preferences for one airplane over another.

For long flights, airplane type and cabin environment contribute as much as 42 percent to an airline's image. Selecting the wrong airplane for a flight that requires maximum comfort can come close to negating an airline's otherwise excellent in-flight service and marketing plans, such as frequent-flier programs.

The Boeing Total Personal Space formula also provides guidance to mixed- fleet operators wishing to deliver an equivalent degree of comfort throughout their fleet. It has been used by many airline customers to "tune" their products to their marketing plans.

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For further information:
Sean Griffin
Le Bourget: 33 1 41 57 44 30
Randy Harrison

office: Seattle: 206-766-2929