

Atlanta Passengers Lead the World on Smartphone and Self-service Adoption



Smartphone adoption among passengers at the world's busiest airport, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta, has jumped from 28% to 75% in the last 12 months, fueling one of the highest rates of self-service use at any airport in the world.

The 2011 SITA/Air Transport World Passenger Self-Service Survey found that frequent, or occasional, use of self-service channels among Atlanta passengers is now running at 78% for online check-in and 90% for kiosk check-in compared to global rates of 73% and 65% respectively. Frequent or occasional use of mobile check-in is running at 24%.

The rising influence of the smartphone is a key finding from the 6th annual SITA/Air Transport World Passenger Self-Service Survey, carried out with a representative sample of the 283.5 million passengers who pass through six of the world's leading airport hubs, including Abu Dhabi International Airport; Beijing International Airport; Frankfurt International Airport; Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta; Mumbai International Airport; and São Paulo Guarulhos International Airport.

In Atlanta, 92% of frequent flyers (10+ trips per year) and 83% of business/first class passengers were carrying a smartphone. Atlanta frequent flyers who carry smartphones lead a worldwide trend towards adoption of the mobile boarding pass; 34% having used it at least once compared to 28% in the survey overall.

The high number of passengers with mobile phones at Atlanta could also support Bluetooth-enabled queue management. Here, 28% of all respondents carrying a mobile device had Bluetooth switched on, which is above the percentage required for effective use of sensors to measure the time passengers have to wait in line and allow a response to tackle potential bottlenecks.

Getting up-to-date information is of particular interest to time-conscious smartphone carriers with 85% interested in information on gate changes, flight delays and boarding status; 66% in wait times at security; 43% in the time to reach the departure gate; 15% in the location of the nearest lounge, and 21% in information on airport parking,

When it comes to flight information by SMS notification, 41% of Atlanta passengers report they already receive them and the remainder of survey respondents carrying mobile phones would also like to get them. There is less enthusiasm for getting shopping information on mobiles, with only 12% showing interest.

In the 2010 survey, 71% of Atlanta passengers booked online and this has risen to 82% in 2011 compared to a global rate of 57%. The breakdown in online bookings includes 53% for online travel agencies and 45% for airline websites.

On the day of the survey, only 23% of passengers used a traditional check-in counter at Atlanta compared to a global use rate of 44%, underlining the general popularity of self-service check-in

with Atlanta passengers. Online check-in grew from 33% to 37%.

Use of the traditional check-in counters is also dropping among the 58% of passengers who had to check in a bag. Among those who checked in a bag, 57% used a bag drop-off counter compared to 42% globally. In Atlanta, 77% of business and first class passengers used a bag drop-off counter.

While there is high interest in using airline websites for air and non-air offers, actual use among Atlanta passengers lags behind overall survey rates; with the exception of 79% using the websites to modify reservations compared to 72% globally. Otherwise, comparative rates for other services are: purchase preferred seating, 51% in Atlanta compared to 63% globally; booking a hotel room, 34% to 55%; car hire, 39% to 49%; book a vacation, 31% to 44%; buy products and gifts, 14% to 27%; and purchase additional transport, 30% to 37%.

Paul Houghton, SITA Regional Vice President for North America, said: "Atlanta is maintaining its position as a global showcase for the efficient and effective deployment of self-service technology to the benefit of both passengers and airlines. The smartphone is beginning to have a significant impact at key points on the passenger journey and this will spur the demand for new self-service options."

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