UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)
Airport Surveys

An Introduction

CAA Surveys have for over forty years offered new insights into the profile and behaviour of passengers at UK airports. The UK CAA passenger surveys have long been regarded by the industry as one of the most rigorous and informative available and these are being used now by researchers considering the big issues of UK aviation including the need for a new London airport and the growth of currently up-for-sale Edinburgh International. The CAA believes that its methodology could also be of interested to major airports and national system planners in other countries.

Overview of the Surveys

Since 1968 surveys have been undertaken to obtain information about air travelers and the determinants of the travel market. These surveys have been designed to obtain information of a kind that could not be collected on a routine basis from the air transport industry.

The surveys have included questions on journey purpose, final and intermediate surface origins/destinations, means of transport to and from airports, route flown, country of residence and income. This information is used in assessing the type of market served by airports and consequently for forecasting air transport demand and for planning airport facilities.

Cycles of surveys were undertaken at major UK airports in the periods 1970-1972, 1975-1978, 1982-1987 and 1990-1996. Each cycle covered, by sample, 95% of terminal passengers in the UK and usually surveys were arranged so that airports in the same broad regions were surveyed at the same time.

Continuous surveys are undertaken in London and Manchester where around 150,000 departing air passengers are interviewed each year. In parallel an active regional airport programme ensure passengers at all major UK airports are profiled every three years.

How are the surveys used?

The data has been a foundation of major airport and route planning projects for over four decades.

Typical uses include
- catchment analysis
- airport and terminal design
- route planning
- airport commercial planning (retail, car parking etc)
- national air system planning
- air service marketing
- airport investment appraisal
- airport traffic forecasts
Reason for Travel of UK Airport Passengers:

One of the core functions is the analysis of passengers by reason for travel. The CAA Surveys process identifies 27 reasons and 6 core reasons that are illustrated opposite cross-tabulated by passenger area of residence.

Summary Results Available

Summary results of the UK Passenger Surveys can be seen in the survey reports

www.caa.co.uk/surveys

Catchment Analysis of Stansted Airport

The data is widely used to show an airport’s effective catchment and passenger demographic profile.

This chart shows the density of the Stansted catchment, its unique districts and the degree of overlap with other airports. The data covers an analysis of responses to the question “Where did you come from to catch this flight?”. Passengers are then asked to specify the district where they began their journey. They are also asked how they arrived at the airport, with up to three modes used, and this data has been used to show the depth of an airport’s catchment and its zonal penetration.
Passenger’s surface journey time can be recorded and measured as shown in the chart above. According to this data, the first 80% of passengers appear to travel by surface transport for between 90 and 105 minutes to their departure airport. However, this masks the noticeable difference in surface travel time for UK residents and foreign residents, shown by the red and green lines respectively. While UK residents tend to travel from their point of origin for between 105 and 120 minutes to their departure airport, their foreign counterparts do so for only 75 minutes.

Source: Civil Aviation Authority – Airport market power assessments. Catchment area analysis Working Paper. October 2011

Benefits of the CAA System

The CAA has many years of experience refining the key value of its product – questionnaire design, sampling, weighting, analysis and end user reporting, all helping to make the Passenger Survey an internationally renowned product.

To gather usable, effective airport data requires having the right people, process and technology:

People: the CAA team have many years’ experience conducting airport surveys for major hubs, large airports and smaller regional airports. They have the ability to mobilise additional resource quickly and cost-effectively as required.

Process: the CAA process is proven in terms of data accuracy, speed of collection and cost-effectiveness. The CAA passenger weighting is a leading process for bringing sample results to route traffic flows in a uniquely accurate way.

Technology: the CAA has an impressive array of hardware and software to be used for survey design, sampling, weighting and analysing the data.

The CAA Surveys process can be implemented quickly and cost-effectively for airports and national air systems.
We Can Help You

CAA, UK, in collaboration with Lowdexaviation, is pleased to offer their experience to help you develop your own aviation themed research programme. We would be delighted to demonstrate the benefits of our airport survey process either in part or as a full turn key delivery. Specific services are outlined below.

Information Audit

Based on our experience of conducting airport surveys, we will help you to better understand the scope of qualitative and quantitative information that can be collected using survey techniques. We will then scope a study to suggest how further information could be captured to help you develop your business. Our auditing services will include a free appraisal on existing reporting and analytical capabilities.

Scope, Sample & Questionnaire Design

Based on the information audit findings we will assess your specific needs and recommend suitable technical designs to meet your requirements. We will suggest an appropriate sampling strategy along with specific sample sizes required for subsequent analytical and reporting functions.

We are able to help with this process, drawing on over 40 years experience to ensure fieldwork interviewing will capture core information with minimum disruption to the stakeholders and the general public.

Technical Design

Our Analysts can assist with technical discussions surrounding the weighting of samples to represent actual traffic volumes. Access to our own weighting application, which in turn, can interface with your data capture application can be made available.

Contact Us

To discuss in confidence your specific requirements please contact us for a free consultation.

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