The economics of airline financial performance and wider economic benefits

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Brian Pearce, Chief Economist, IATA www.iata.org/economics

Outline

- Why is the airline industry suddenly profitable?
 - After decades of investor capital destruction
 - Is the change widespread?
 - Have the underlying economics of the industry changed?
 - Why is the emergence of protectionism such a threat?
- How does air transport bring economic benefit?
 - Users
 - Wider economic benefits
 - Come from the people, goods, capital and ideas we carry between cities
 - Rather than the jobs required to run the service (with some exceptions)

Airlines have suddenly become profitable (for their equity investors)

Return on capital invested in airlines and their cost of capital



Source: IATA Economics using data from McKinsey, The Airlines Analyst, IATA forecasts

After decades of investor value destruction

Difference between investing in airlines and investing in similar assets elsewhere



Source: IATA Economics using data from McKinsey, The Airlines Analyst, IATA forecasts

And widespread airline failures



airberlin

SkyExpress

Pegasus

WIZZ

Source: HSBC report – early 2014 situation. Since then Monarch and airberlin have failed

But improvement has been very uneven across the industry



Source: IATA Economics using data from IATA and The Airline Analyst

Balance sheet remain highly leveraged in some regions

Adjusted net debt/EBITDAR



Source: IATA Economics using data from The Airline Analyst

There has always been a paradox at the heart of air transport

Industry total for each year, 2004 - 13 CAGR, percent		Industry aggregate, 2004 - 13 simple average, percent	
Healthcare equipment and services	6.2	Software and services	94.7
Rail	6.2	Pharma, biotech, and life sciences	45.7
Airlines	6.1	Household and personal	36.4
Energy	6.0	Healthcare equipment and services	33.9
Tech hardware and equipment	5.8	Media	30.7
Materials	5.2	Food, beverage, and tobacco	26.8
Software and services	4.7		24.7
Utilities	4.6	Tech hardware and equipment Communications and professional services	24.7
	4.0		21.5
Freight forwarding		Semiconductors and equipment	
Capital goods	4.3	Telecom	20.6
Economy	4.3	Postal/CEP	16.6
Pharma, biotech, and life sciences	4.2	Consumer services	15.7
Retailing	4.1	Retailing	15.7
Food, beverage, and tobacco	3.9	Consumer durables and apparel	15.6
Food and staples retail	3.8	Economy	13.9
Transportation & logistics	3.6	Capital goods	13.6
Trucking	3.4	Bus	13.6
Contract logistics	3.4	Food and staples retail	13.3
Household and personal	3.3	Energy	12.7
Telecom	3.3	Materials	12.4
Shipping	3.0	Contract logistics	12.4
Semiconductors and equipment	2.8	Freight forwarding	2015-18:
Communications and professional services	2.6	Rail	8.1
Consumer services	2.4	Shipping	7.7
Consumer durables and apparel	2.4	Transportation & logistics	7.5
Bus	2.2	Automobiles and components	6.8
Automobiles and components	2.1	Trucking	6.4
Postal/CEP	1.6	Utilities	6.1
Media	1.4	Airlines	4.0

1 Real revenue growth, 2004 - 13 CAGR inflation adjusted, median for industry

2 ROIC after tax, excluding goodwill; excludes outliers

Technology continues to cut costs dramatically



Source: Lee

Typically airlines pass all gains through to consumers



Source: IATA Economics using data from ICAO and IATA Statistics

In fact prices have fallen further than costs forcing up breakeven loads



Breakeven and actual load factors

Have industry economics changed or is it just low fuel costs?

Airline industry ROIC and jet fuel prices



Source: IATA Economics using data from McKinsey, Platts and own forecasts

The underlying economics of air transport

- Perishable
- Fixed costs high
- Barriers to entry low
- Competitive advantages hard to defend
- Aircraft are a platform to serve many markets
- Economies of scale in aircraft size but business travelers want frequency and flexibility
- Few scale economies in fleet size but economies of density in networks

OUTCOME:

- Prices pushed down towards variable costs,
- But ways need to be found to cover fixed costs:
 - Differential pricing, sequential use of coupons, non-refundable tickets....and now **ancillaries**
- Network density economies through merger prevented by bilateral and O&C regulation barriers:
 - Leading to code shares, alliances and now ATI JVs and equity partnerships on international markets

Improvement in performance pre-dates fall in fuel costs

Breakeven and achieved weight load factors



Source: IATA Economics using data from ICAO, IATA Statistics, IATA forecasts

Airlines are sweating assets as well as improving margins

Components of return on capital



Source: IATA Economics using data from ICAO, McKinsey, The Airline Analyst, IATA forecasts

Wide variety of successful business models



2015 ROIC = adjusted EBIT/revenue * revenue/invested capital

Source: IATA using data from The Airline Analyst

Ancillaries are changing the nature of the airline product

Airline revenues, tickets, cargo and ancillaries



Source: IATA Economics using data from ICAO, The Airline Analyst, PaxIS, IdeaWorks

Consolidation important but not simply because of size

Return on invested capital versus invested capital, 2016



Source: IATA Economics using data from IATA and The Airline Analyst

JVs doing better job than code shares/alliances to get density economies



Source: Lufthansa

Protectionism (or the new 'localism') is a major threat

Share of goods trade (exports+imports) in global GDP



Source: IATA Economics using data from Netherlands CPB

Benefits to consumers (and economy) arise from cheap city connections

Unique city-pairs and real transport costs



Source: IATA Economics using data from ICAO, Boeing, OAG, SRS Analyser

Wider economic benefits

- Often measured by the jobs and GVA in the supply chain, through I-O models
 - Economic footprint is a useful description
 - But it measures cost not benefit
 - Do labor productivity gains really mean lower wider economic benefits?
- Economic benefits generated by connecting cities at lower cost
 - Air transport network is an infrastructure asset, a bridge between cities
 - Boosting the productive capacity of an economy
 - Generating flows of people, goods, capital, ideas, competitive pressure
 - Raising productivity through agglomeration, gains from trade
 - Higher GDP from the supply-side, in economies close to full capacity
 - Demand-side/spending flows do matter where economies/regions under-developed
 - More research and evidence required!

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