

HOW LOOKING AT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES CAN BE USED TO RANK PROVIDERS.

There is a huge amount of real customer experiences online but do we make full use of them? Customers go to review sites, price comparison sites and forums to give their views on particular products and services and to document their experiences with the companies that provide these. The idea is that other potential customers can read this feedback and decide which company to go with based on the experiences of others. The reality is more difficult. It is hugely time consuming to read hundreds of reviews (trust me, I have recently read over 500 airline reviews, over 2000 energy company reviews and over 4000 hospital reviews!). If there was a way to read all of these reviews and get an idea for how customers feel and what the experience of dealing with the company in question was like that would save a lot of time and effort.

This is the motivation behind one particular application of Akumens PanSentic software. We can take large volumes of customer narrative and turn it into something measurable. Namely we have developed a tool that will give the emotional sentiment of the author (customer emotion) and the attitude of the staff/company they dealt with (staff attitude). We can then turn this in to a measurable score for emotion and for attitude.

This process is complicated and has taken a lot of development but has been put through many checks (hence the 1000s of pieces of feedback I have personally read!) but what it has resulted in is very powerful and an extremely practical result. We can cross reference customer emotion and staff attitude and create a chart that gives us a ranking of companies based on their combined score and hence we can create an "Akumen League Table".



To give an example, recently I conducted a study on Airlines. I took between 75 and 100 pieces of customer feedback for 15 Airlines and ran them through our software. The Graph below shows the results:

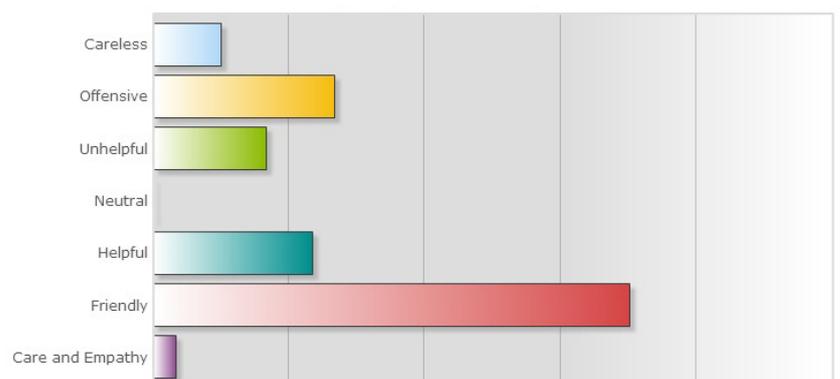
Each circle represents an airline. The x-axis shows the score for staff attitude and the y-axis shows the score for customer emotion. Circles that are green are above the average score for both attitude and emotion; those that are yellow fall below the average score for only one of the two and those that are red are below average for both.

By combining the scores for these we can rank all 15 airlines in order. We are all most interested in who ranks bottom, so here it is: Ryanair:

In Ryanair's defence, while they rank bottom of my chart for combined score, they do rate slightly higher than the next worse airline for attitude of staff. At least thats something!

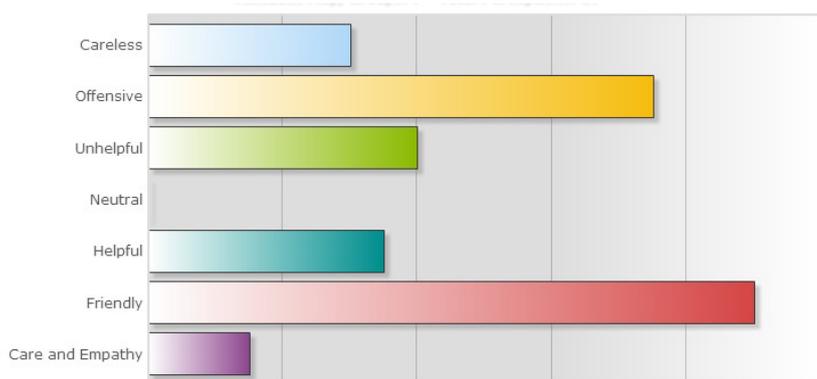
Now, this is useful and helps us to save time when looking for which airline we most/least want to fly with but we might want to know more. What is it that is causing such a poor attitude? Why are customer emotions so poor? We can look a bit deeper by checking the actual attitude and emotion categories for Ryanair against those of top 5 airline, and highest ranking budget airline, Jet2.com.

Firstly, lets see what the attitude map of Jet2.com is:



We can see that a lot of customers thought that staff are friendly and helpful. There is also a notable amount of offensive, unhelpful and careless staff. Overall though, we can see that if you fly with Jet2.com you are likely to encounter friendly staff. That's good!

Now let's take a look now at Ryanair's attitude map:



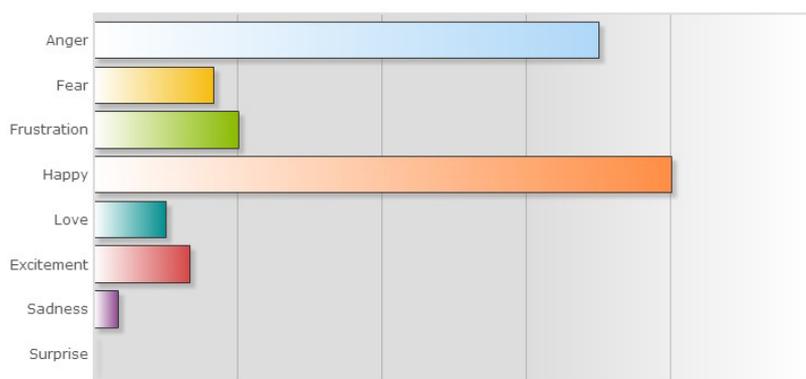
The change here is drastic. We can see that a lot of customers have perceived staff as friendly and helpful, but there is now a strong feeling that staff are offensive and there is an increase in unhelpful and careless staff. We can see from this that if you fly Ryanair, while you are still likely to encounter friendly staff you are now far more likely to leave feeling offended or having encountered unhelpful and careless staff than you were on Jet2.com.

We can do the same thing with the emotional response of customers. Before we look at the results it is important to note that there is often a

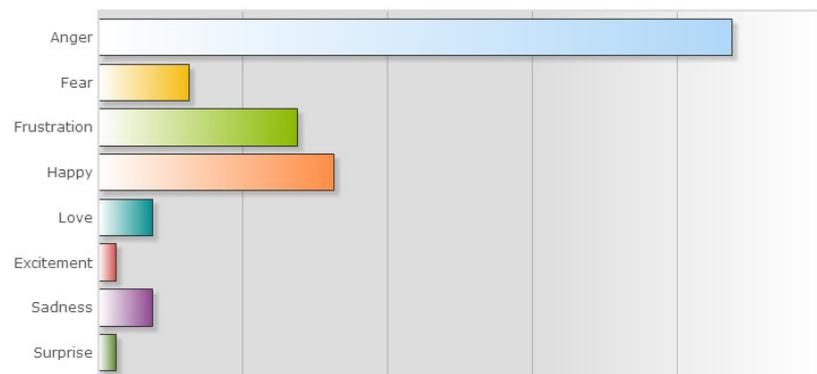
feeling of anger in the customer stories due to delays to travel and that these are not always the airlines fault. For this reason, even in the best airlines we are likely to see a large amount of anger.

Ok, so let's look at Jet2.com:

We can see that a lot of customers have left angry but we can also see that more were happy. We can conclude from this that if you fly Jet2.com you are more likely to leave feeling happy than you are feeling angry (but only just! Let's hope there aren't too many delays if you do).



Now we can compare that to Ryanair:



Well, this time we can see that anger comes across as easily the most common emotion amongst customers. We can also see that, while feeling happy is the next most common it is followed closely by frustration. We can take from this that if you fly Ryanair you are very likely to come off the plane feeling angry and frustrated but if you're lucky you might have a good experience and come off feeling happy.

So, after all that what have we learnt? Well we can easily see which airlines are perceived as best from a customer stand point. This could save us time if we can find flights for a similar price or if we are willing to pay a different price for a different service (it is important to note here that I do not know which company will be cheapest, it is likely that in some cases a higher ranked company will be a lower price than a lower ranked company). We can also look a bit deeper and see what we can actually expect from our experience, how we are likely to feel afterwards and what to expect when engaging with airline staff. But most importantly of all, we don't have to read 100s of stories for each airline we want to consider!