



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Denise DiMeglio 610-228-2102  
[denise@gregoryfca.com](mailto:denise@gregoryfca.com)

## **Airline Passenger Experience Improves During Pandemic, but Hotels Struggle to Satisfy Fewer Guests, ACSI Data Show**

**ANN ARBOR, Mich., (December 16, 2020)** – Before the pandemic, customer satisfaction among the travel industries tracked by the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®) was mixed.

Airlines had been gradually trending upward in passenger satisfaction for two years running and hotels made slight gains year over year. But internet travel services posted a substantial satisfaction loss relative to 2019.

However, according to the [ACSI Special COVID-19 Travel Report 2020](#), only airlines have improved customer satisfaction during the pandemic.

“Hotel guest satisfaction takes a U-turn, with ACSI losses for nearly every major chain,” said David VanAmburg, Managing Director at the ACSI. “Online travel agencies dig themselves an even deeper hole as the industry reaches an all-time user satisfaction low.”

The new report examines satisfaction results for airlines, hotels, internet travel services, and the debut scores for the car rental industry. Based on surveys conducted from April 1, 2020, to September 30, 2020, the new scores are compared to previously published 2020 results for the four travel industries from surveys conducted between April 15, 2019, and March 20, 2020.

### **Southwest soars to the lead among airlines**

Despite the dire financial situation for airlines this year, passenger satisfaction with the industry is flying high, climbing 1.3% to a previously unmatched ACSI score of 76 (out of 100).

Southwest soars to the top of the industry with a 1% gain to 80. Delta places second for the first time since 2004, rising 3% to a company record high of 79. Alaska Airlines comes in third place, stable at 78. Two airlines tie at the industry average of 76: JetBlue (down 3%) and United (up 1%).

The remainder of the field is below the industry average. The group of smaller carriers jumps 6% to 74, while American dips 1% to 73. Budget-minded Allegiant is next, falling 3% to 72.

The bottom of the industry remains the territory of two ultra-low-cost carriers, although both

Frontier (up 3% to 68) and Spirit (up 3% to 67) post individual record highs in 2020.

### **Hilton hangs on to the top spot in the hard-hit hospitality industry**

The hospitality industry has taken a beating during the pandemic, and it is uncertain when most consumers will feel more at ease with staying in a hotel. During this turbulent time, guest satisfaction for the industry overall falls 2.6% to 74.

Hilton remains the industry satisfaction leader despite tumbling 4% to an ACSI score of 79. Hyatt sits in second place, slipping 1% to 78. IHG (down 1%) and Marriott (down 4%) tie at 77.

Moving in lockstep with the industry average, Best Western falls 3% to 74. Choice slides 1% to 72, tying with Wyndham, which remains unchanged. The group of smaller hotel chains slips 1% to 71, leaving G6 Hospitality alone at the bottom of the industry, down 2% to 64.

Among these hotels' individual brands, based on 2019-2020 data Marriott's AC Hotels takes the top spot with an ACSI score of 85. Choice's Econo Lodge populates the bottom of the chart with a score of 62.

### **Enterprise debuts atop the car rental industry**

The car rental industry debuts in the ACSI in 2020 with a score of 76 (based on surveys from January to March 2020). From April to September 2020, overall customer satisfaction remains unchanged.

Enterprise holds the top slot, unchanged at 79. Dollar improves dramatically during the outbreak, grabbing second place with a 5% gain to 78. The two other Enterprise brands, Alamo and National, tie for third place, each down 1% to 76.

The namesake Hertz brand is steady with an ACSI score of 74, while Avis inches back 1% to 73. The group of smaller car rental companies is unmoved at 71, tying both Budget and Thrifty. For Budget, customer satisfaction slides 3%, while Thrifty is up 3%.

### **Internet travel services slide to an all-time low score**

From April to September 2020, user satisfaction with internet travel services plummets 5.2% to an all-time low ACSI score of 73.

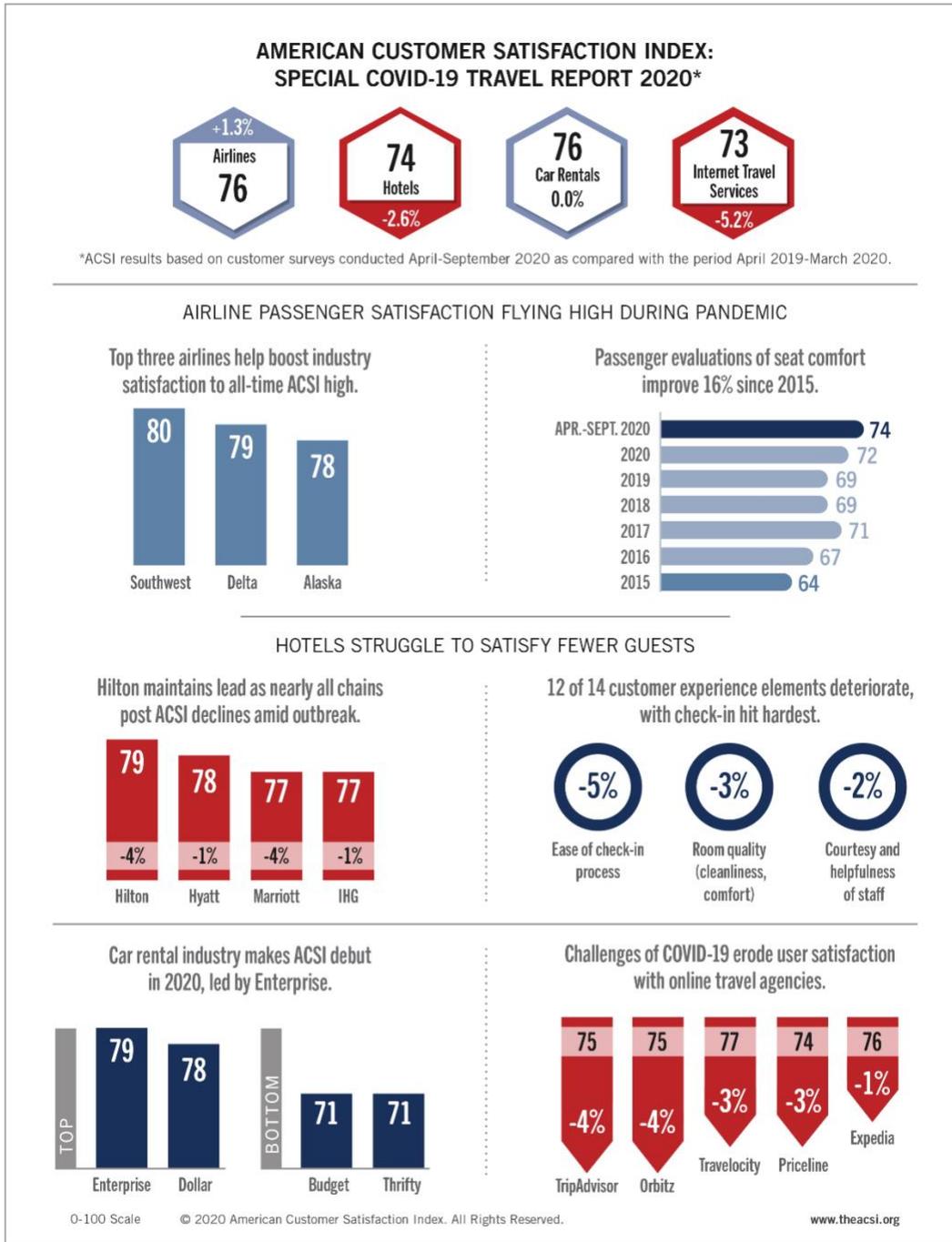
All five major travel sites, along with the group of smaller sites, experience downturns in user satisfaction during the outbreak.

As of September 2020, Travelocity holds the lead for customer satisfaction despite dropping 3% to 77. Expedia is next, slipping 1% to 76.

Orbitz and TripAdvisor both decrease 4% to 75, followed by Priceline, which slides 3% to 74.

The group of smaller online travel agencies sits alone in last place after deteriorating 6% to a record-low ACSI score of 72.

The ACSI Special COVID-19 Travel Report 2020 on airlines, hotels, car rentals, and internet travel services is based on interviews with 4,642 customers from April 1, 2020, to September 30, 2020. Download the [full report](#), and follow the ACSI on [LinkedIn](#) and Twitter at [@theACSI](#).



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### **About the American Customer Satisfaction Index**

The [American Customer Satisfaction Index](http://www.theacsi.org) has been a national economic indicator for 25 years. It measures and analyzes customer satisfaction with more than 400 companies in 47 industries and 10 economic sectors, including various services of federal and local government agencies. Reported on a scale of 0 to 100, scores are based on data from interviews with roughly 500,000 customers annually. For more information, visit [www.theacsi.org](http://www.theacsi.org).

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