

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## How Emirates and others can learn from Alaska Airlines' mobile strategy

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*Photo courtesy of Emirates*

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By BRIELLE JAEKEL

PALM SPRINGS, CA An Applause executive at the Mobile Shopping Summit 2016 detailed the software testing platform's report on the top applications on the market, explaining that providers need to fundamentally delight customers.

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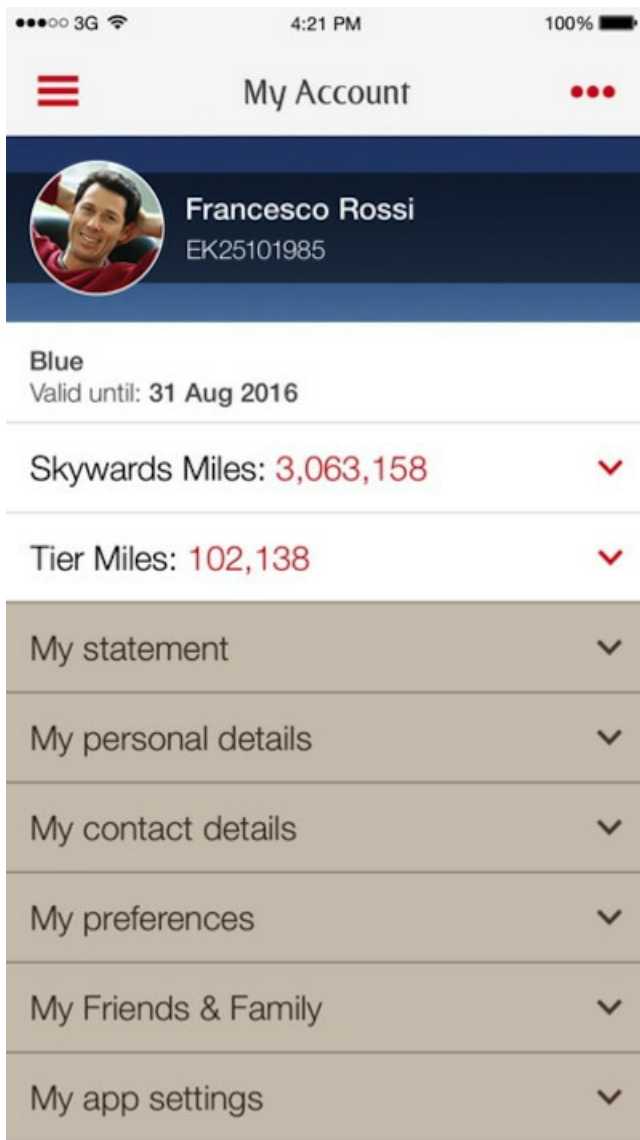
During the Oct. 17 session, "Become A Mobile Leader: The Best And Worst Shopping Apps," the executive ran through the top and bottom app performers in the travel industry, which has some interesting innovations but is leaving a lot lacking. For instance, Emirates was listed in the poor performance sector for iOS and has even dropped down since last year, significantly behind sector leader, Alaska Airlines.

"The airline industry, to its credit, has taken pretty great strides in approving their digital presence and improving their mobile apps presence," said Ben Gray, digital experience analyst at Applause. "But there is one clear leader in that space, but it is not one of those major airlines

"It is Alaska Airlines," he said. "They have built such a robust customer program and are actively soliciting feedback from their customers throughout the customer journey."

Soaring past expectations

For luxury travel providers such as Emirates, customers have high expectations for their experiences, but this does not just mean while onsite. This high bar also goes for their technology performance, and as of late, they are just not cutting it.

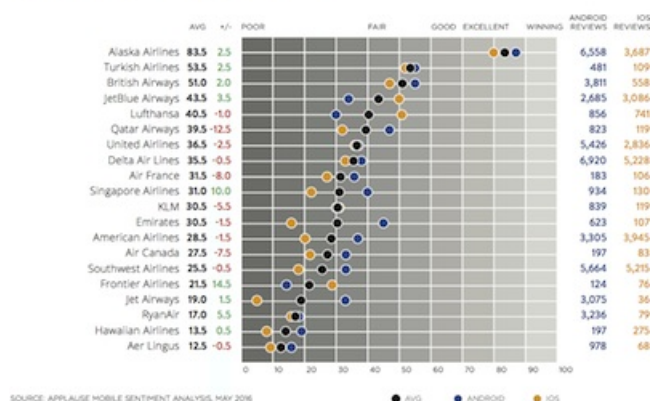


Alaska Airlines is by far the top provider in technology and mobile for iOS and Android, judged by actual customers on Applause's rankings. The airline is continually asking customers for their opinions on every platform possible.

Posts from customers on social media, multiple surveys and complaints on app stores are all taken into account by Alaska Airlines, which are then incorporated into its mobile strategy. The mobile app provides a clean customer experience with features they come to expect, but also with innovating ones that allow for an exciting experience, such as calendar integration and wait list tracking.

The airline's five star rating is reflective of how the luxury flight industry should be approaching its consumer.

FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - FLY



SOURCE: APPLAUSE MOBILE SENTIMENT ANALYSIS MAY 2016

### Applause's rankings of airline apps

While British Airways has seen a 2.0 increase in satisfaction, it is nowhere near the level of performance needed to wow customers. Emirates saw a 1.5 percent drop in performance, but its Android app is inching towards the "good" label.

## Competition flight

Luxury airlines have to compete with a wide range of standard airlines, whose technology is helping gain on others such as Emirates. But private flying is also something airlines such as Emirates have to compete with, and mobile technology is growing in this sector as well.

For instance, a new private jet-booking platform has emerged on the scene, valuing technology to help combat waste within the industry, but hoping not to sacrifice luxury.

While bookings within the private jet sector have slightly spiked within the last year, the sector is still highly inefficient and segmented.

New platform and mobile application Stratajet has launched for users to book flights with accurate, real-time costs instead of just ballpark quotes and cutting costs to appeal to the average consumer, but it will be its performance and capability that will really show if these are just marketing claims or not ([see more](#)).

But it is not just airlines that need to focus on developing fine-tuned strategies. Hospitality brands in general need to up their game in terms of mobile, but that also means social media marketing.

A surprising number of luxury hotels and hospitality brands have put stock into accounts on Google+, but the effort is proving fruitless, as consumers are not interested, according to L.I.K.E. Hospitality Consulting.

While Google and hospitality marketers would like to believe that their presence on the social media platform is making a difference, unfortunately consumers just do not flock to the channel as much as others. Facebook and Instagram are proving to obtain the most engagement from consumers for luxury hotels, but many brands are spending budgets on platforms such as Google+ that are proving ineffective ([see more](#)).

"[Alaska Airlines] is constantly putting out surveys and have a massive data community," Mr. Gray said. "They are listening through every channel for which consumers can share feedback back to the Alaska Airlines."