Il mercato del trasporto aereo

Una premessa: costi fissi vs. costi variabili

Nel manifatturiero è abbastanza semplice:

costi fissi: ammortamento dell'impianto, sua manutenzione, ecc. + eventualmente una parte dei costi generali

costi variabili: praticamente tutti gli altri

La distinzione deriva da quella fra input fissi ed input variabili (come da libro di testo di microeconomia) nel BREVE periodo.

Nel LUNGO periodo si dice che tutti gli input sono variabili e quindi non esistono costi fissi.

Ma nel trasporto aereo?

Dipende dalla situazione che stiamo considerando

- Definizione della dimensione della compagnia/dimensionamento della flotta (**lungo periodo**, come da libro di testo)

- Definizione della rete di rotte servite e frequenza dei voli (**breve periodo**, sempre come da libro di testo)

- Scheduling e relativo timetable**: QUESTO È IL PROBLEMA !**

Infatti, quando i voli sono schedulati e si raccolgono prenotazioni (fino ad un anno dal momento della prenotazione!), TUTTI I COSTI DIVENTANO COSTI FISSI (a meno di non fare sistematico uso delle cancellazioni, ma ciò causerebbe un forte danno di reputazione per la compagnia).

Questo implica costo marginale per passeggero = 0

Ma allora, come le compagnie aeree fissano i prezzi ?

Anche prima dell’avvento dei cosiddetti low-cost carriers (LCCs) le allora compagnie di bandiera, ora ribattezzate full service carriers (FSCs), praticavano una differenziazione di prezzo basata su:

1) Qualità del servizio (first)/business/economy class;

2) Tipo di viaggio (le tariffe più basse erano riservate per viaggi A/R in economy che in Europa dovevano essere a cavallo del Sabato e che per i voli intercontinentali dovevano prevedere una permanenza di almeno 6/7 notti).

Come sappiamo dai libri di testo di microeconomia la differenziazione di prezzo massimizza il profitto (che in questo caso coincide con la massimizzazione dei ricavi, dati i costi fissi costanti) se le elasticità delle domande dei diversi gruppi di “consumatori” sono diverse.

E nel nostro caso lo sono, perché lo scopo di tali segmenti tariffari era di discriminare fra un’utenza business e/o facoltosa ed un’utenza normale/turistica.

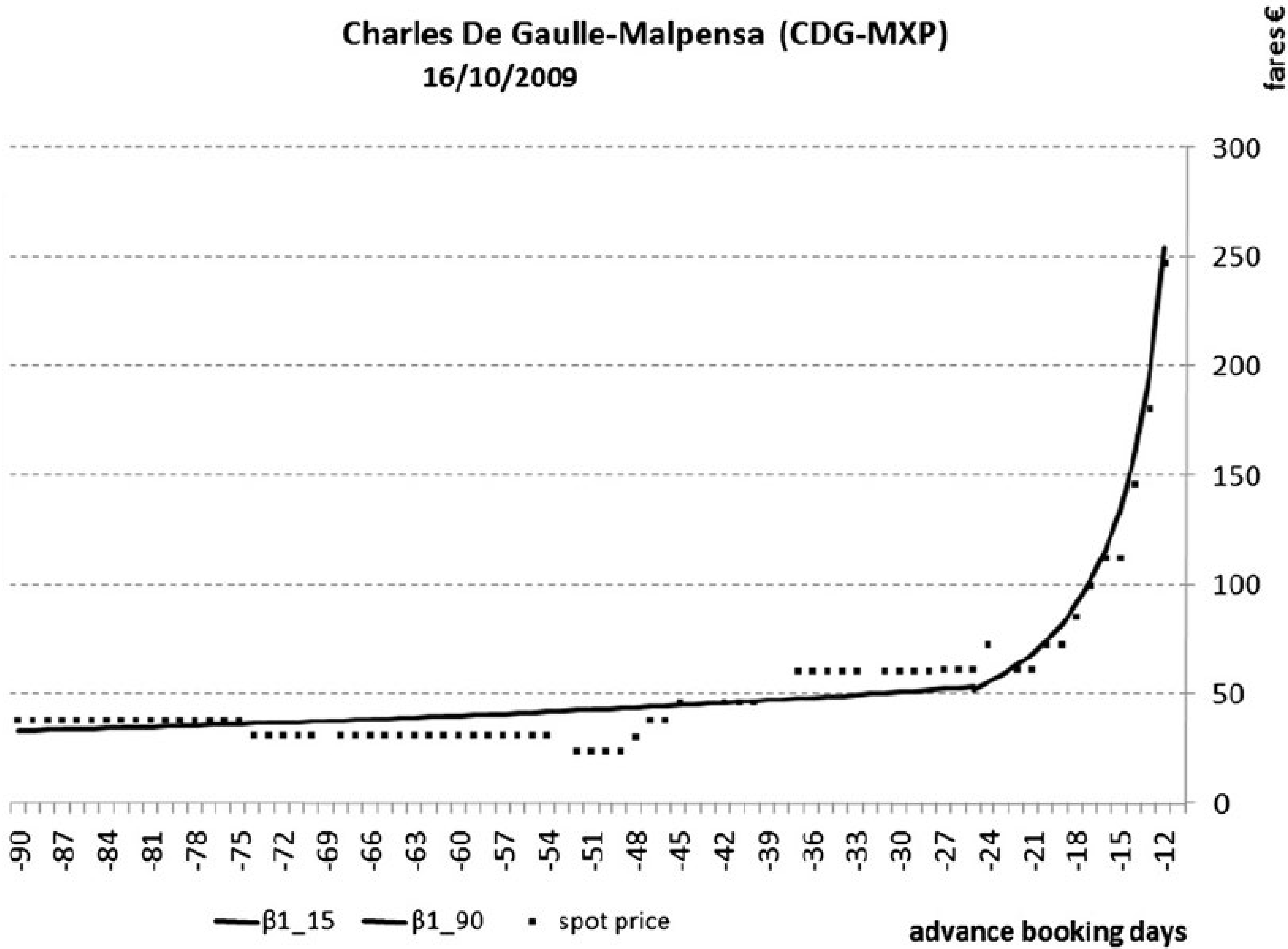
Modello di business dei LCCs (ovvero, fattori che consentono di avere costi inferiori ai FSCs):

- ➢ Unicamente economy class;
- ➢ Rotte punto a punto (no hub);
- ➢ Unico modello di aeromobile impiegato;
- ➢ Più rapido turnover dell’aeromobile in aeroporto (soste ridotte a 30/35 minuti);
- ➢ Prenotazioni (e check-in) pressoché unicamente on-line;
- ➢ Costo del lavoro ridotto.

Sia pure con costi inferiori, anche i LCCs hanno comunque dovuto praticare differenziazioni di prezzo.

Avendo un’unica classe di servizio (economy), ed evitando di praticare sconti per voli A/R, praticano una differenziazione di prezzo basata sul cosiddetto **dynamic pricing**, tendente a discriminare fra passeggeri che possono prenotare con un più o meno ampio anticipo rispetto alla data del volo e passeggeri che prenotano nelle ultime due settimane.

Tale forma di discriminazione in parte coincide con una discriminazione fra un’utenza business (che solitamente non può prenotare con largo anticipo) ed un’utenza leisure, anche se non si sovrappone perfettamente.


Charles De Gaulle-Malpensa (CDG-MXP)
16/10/2009
fares €
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
-90
-87
-84
-81
-78
-75
-72
-69
-66
-63
-60
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-54
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-42
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-36
-33
-30
-27
-24
-21
-18
-15
-12
β1_15
β1_90
spot price
advance booking days

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Low-cost pricing strategies in leisure markets

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ABSTRACT

The practice of dynamic pricing typical of low-cost carriers is generally regarded as a form of price discrimination between “leisure” and “business” travellers on a single flight or route. The same may not be true across different routes because of the different incidence of business travellers. If price increases in the 15 days prior to departure are meant to discriminate business demand, leisure demand should account for earlier price variations. In the present study, we used a database containing the daily fare over the 3 months prior to each flight operated by easyJet during 2009. For each route, we defined the “leisure index” as the difference between the price rates of change during the 90 days and 15 days prior to departure. Overall, “business” routes had lower average prices per km, while “leisure” routes showed less dynamic price behaviour, with higher minimum and lower maximum prices per km.

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Competitive vs. monopolistic routes: Are fares so different?

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A B S T R A C T

Many different carriers operating on the same route is usually regarded as a signal of a competitive setting and, therefore, as a situation potentially beneficial for customers in terms of lower prices. This is obviously true if the argument involves a comparison between different market forms given the level of demand. Across different routes, however, the number of carriers depends also on the level of demand for each particular pair of destinations, so that we cannot assume a priori that fares per kilometre on "monopolistic" routes are higher than on more "competitive" ones. We study the price policy during 2008 of the two main European low cost carriers, Ryanair and easyJet, with reference to one hundred of the least, and one hundred of the most, dense routes among those operated by the two carriers respectively. The systematic occurrence of higher (for Ryanair), or at least no lower (for easyJet), average prices on competitive routes if compared with prices on routes with a single carrier by the same airline, surprising as it may be, supports the conclusion that a low level of demand is sufficient to impose low fares to some extent irrespective of the degree of competition.

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Changes in frequencies and price variations on point-to-point routes: The case of easyJet

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes how changes in flight frequencies contemporarily affect the pricing strategy of airlines. Focusing on the low-cost carrier (LCC) framework, we compare easyJet's 2012 average fares on all routes with their 2011 counterpart in the same "equivalent" week. Empirical analyses show that changes in frequency are negatively correlated with fare variations, both in monopolistic and competitive contexts. Our conjecture is that if the load factor has to be maintained within a sustainable range and the demand level can be assumed roughly constant, at least in the short period, variations in average fares should be negatively correlated with changes in frequency at the route level. Moreover, by analyzing easyJet's price discrimination dynamics, we find that an increase in weekly flights leads the airline to strategically price discriminate demand among offered flights (*between-flights discrimination*), especially in competitive situations, while reducing its ability to intertemporally price discriminate on the same flight (*within-flight discrimination*).

A Tale of Airline Competition: When Full Service Carriers Undercut Low Cost Carriers Fares

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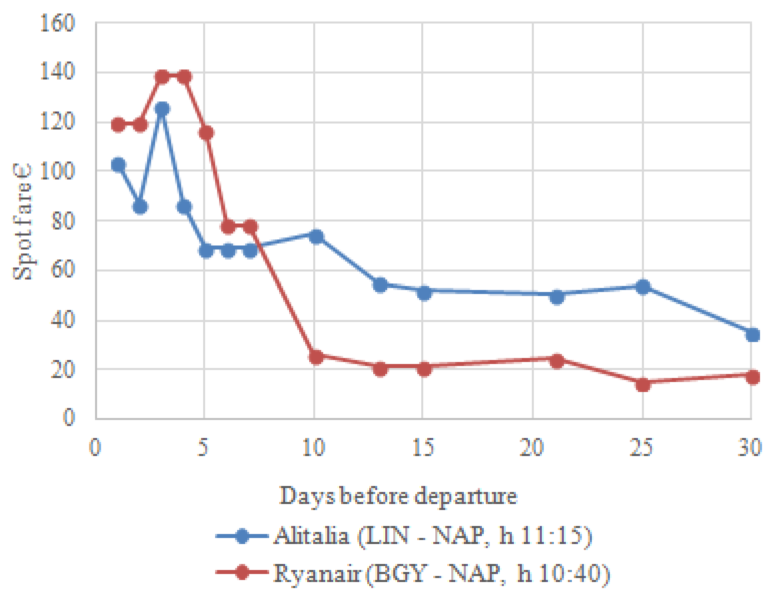
Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to investigate the occurrence of low-cost carriers (LCCs) sometimes offering higher fares than full service carriers (FSCs) on competing flights (an observable fact scarcely explored within current literature). Utilizing a data set expressly collected for this purpose, we are able to quantify its frequency and to hint at some possible explanations of it. All in all, these concur to cast some doubts on the widely held preconception of vertical differentiation between LCCs' and FSCs' offered services. Further research will be needed in order to grasp the relative weight of the supposedly alleged factors.

Figure 1: Prices for O&D Milan – Naples 30th Nov, 2017in the 30 days before departure



- In order to restore air travel after the recent pandemic peak of covid-19, the unprecedented and already envisaged measures of social-distancing, sanitisation, and so on, will surely have a big impact on airports and air transport activities.

- Concerning the comparison between LCCs' and FSCs' fares on the same routes, the comparative position of LCCs and FSCs will surely be affected and in need of further research. For the moment our guess is that the increase of costs (and consequently of fares) will affect LCCs to a greater extent (higher proportion) than FSCs, due to the previously experienced higher load factors and aircraft turnover by the former.

- As a result, cases of FSCs undercutting LCCs might become even more frequent. On the other side of the market, the more troublesome procedures inside airports as well as onboard, together with a decreasing level of demand because of higher fares, could result in an increased importance of those elements of horizontal differentiation already hinted at in this paper.