

Written Report

Do the number of passengers booked for a flight on a CRJ200 aircraft relate to how long it takes to board? This is my research question and it was interesting and a lot of fun to find out if there actually is a relation between the two. I'm a flight attendant of 9yrs for SkyWest Airlines and have a general idea of how long it takes to board. But when it came down to actually timing the boarding process and comparing it to how full the aircraft is, there were some surprising results.

I typically work 4 days on with 3 days off and between 8 to 12 flights a week. It all depends on the schedule given to me, but as of the last 5 years this has been very consistent. My test was a simple random sample test considering SkyWest Airlines operates 1,750 flights per day, which would then equal to about 12,250 flights a week. I purchased a basic stopwatch and started timing the boarding process from the moment the first passenger steps foot onto the aircraft and then stopped timing just after closing the main cabin door. I made note in my planner how many people were on each flight and the length of time it took to board.

Watching these observations was very interesting. Common knowledge and sense to me would say: "Yes, I think there is a relation in how quickly or slowly an aircraft is boarded based on the number of people getting on." But while making these observations I began to doubt that concept and think that there really is no relation between the two variables.

Mechanical hick-ups would come up during the boarding process, requiring us to wait for the quick fix with people still on board. Sometimes we had to wait for fuel (the door needs to stay open while fueling with passengers on board), or switching seats around to try to get couples and families seated together, or computer issues at the gate can also slow boarding. On March 3, 2012 the merger between United Airlines and Continental Airlines was finalized (SkyWest flies under contract for United, Delta and Alaska Airlines and U.S Airways). Through the merger United adopted Continental's ticketing computer program. This slowed down the boarding quite a bit! The gate agents weren't well prepared for the change and there were a lot of discrepancies between tickets scanned at the gate and those that actually made it on the aircraft, we always make sure both counts match.

Doing the math and seeing the statistical results, I pretty much expected these results based on the notes I made. There is somewhat of a relation between the two the variables but not a strong one. The average passenger load was about 40 and the length of time to board 16 minutes. When comparing these estimations to the actual figures, there are a just few that fit in, but for the most part, most of them really don't.

I've concluded that there is a small relation between the number of people booked for a flight and how long it takes to book that flight, but there are way too many other factors outside of those two variables that could affect the length of the boarding process.