Bags Fly Free

Yes they do—on Southwest. What a great campaign for them. As the “legacy” carriers tack on more and more fees, cut flights, increase fares and generally screw the passenger, Southwest is going gangbusters (relatively speaking). They are actually adding routes and eschewing bag fees. Who do you think will keep or increase its customer base?

On the other hand, American cut all flights to Albany, NY and is charging $30 roundtrip for the first checked bag, $50 for the second. Additionally, they have added many fees and surcharges for everything from checking odd-sized bags, flying with a pet and changing your ticket.

I fail to see the marketing sense in what the large carriers are doing. If you are hurting for money, do you do everything you can to make sure your customers think twice about doing business with you? If what you are doing is ridiculed by many, and fodder for anger, is this not a public relations nightmare? What good news are you hearing about the airlines? Is there any additional perk that is being given to passengers who are paying through the nose? Why would you fly if you can drive for less money? Bottom line is that Southwest seems to get it and American, et al just don’t. All you have to do is look at JetBlue. They started flying as the other airlines had started cutting back on the perks of travel. JetBlue gave passengers are real alternative, that cost less and get this: was more comfortable and had more amenities. This made JetBlue an extremely popular airline. In fact, the only reason JetBlue is not the biggest airline, in my opinion, is that they travel to secondary airports.

I just read an article on CNN regarding the fees and cutbacks. The article also quotes travel experts who think the fares will keep climbing. I wonder if the airlines will be forced to slow down fare increases and nickel and diming if enough

customers say no way. Southwest is definitely capitalizing on these sentiments and running an enticing campaign plus putting in place some smart operational plans.