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Airline industry 'in recovery after 9/11'

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The aviation industry has made a convincing recovery since taking a battering in the wake of the September 11 attacks, with the budget airline sector faring particularly well, experts said today.

The atrocities provoked an immediate and severe downturn for the global industry, with 2002 seeing 1.5 million flights fewer flights than the year before.

But last year the figure was higher than it had been in 2001 for the first time, with 27.4 million flights being made worldwide compared with 26.7 million in the year of the attacks.

However, the proportionate increase in seats available over the recovery period was greater than that in scheduled flights, because low-cost services – which carry more passengers – grew at a much greater speed, according to air information company Ascend.

The general economic downturn at the time of the attacks and the problems the big carriers were experiencing created a “window of opportunity” for budget airlines, Ascend managing director Gehan Talwate said.

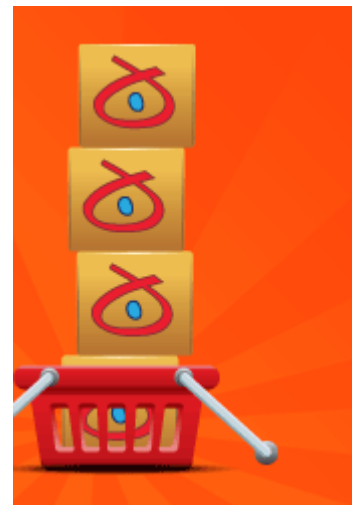
The total number of worldwide scheduled flights fell by 5.6% in 2002 compared to the previous year.

The number of seats fell by 124 million fewer seats, down 4.2% and the number of airlines and operators going into liquidation leapt by 30%.

But Ascend's overall statistics for the period 2002 to 2005 show that the industry has more than recovered.

The number of scheduled flights increased by 8.8% during that time, while the number of seats was up 11.6%.

For the period 1996 to 2005 the figures were 13.4% for flights the 27.8% for seats.



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There have been 328 new airline start-ups in the last three years.

“By and large when you look at the picture today the recovery has been complete,” Mr Talwatte said.

TCH Group » ed to suffer most of its problems were not related to
9/11, he added.

“There was a much stronger growth in seat availability than in actual scheduled flights themselves,” Mr Talwatte said of the global industry’s recovery.

“That is a particular result of September 11.”

Low-cost carriers, which had already started to take off before the attacks, were at an advantage as the big carriers had to scale back what they offered, he said.

“It was a unique window of opportunity to go out there and capture market share, almost entirely on price.

“September 11 wasn’t just something that affected the aviation industry

“People started looking for was to save money and for low cost carriers the timing was perfect.”

More than 20% of flights in the US are now with budget airlines, while in Europe the figure is 14%, Mr Talwatte added.

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