

# THE BEST AND WORST TRAVEL APPS AS RATED BY THEIR OWN USERS

*Three million reviews reveal the mobile leaders and laggards of the travel industry.*

By Ben Gray, Digital Experience Analyst, Applause

## 55/100

The average mobile sentiment score of the 118 most popular travel apps in Google Play and Apple App Store, as rated by three million U.S. consumers.

## Apps Deliver Compelling Brand Experiences

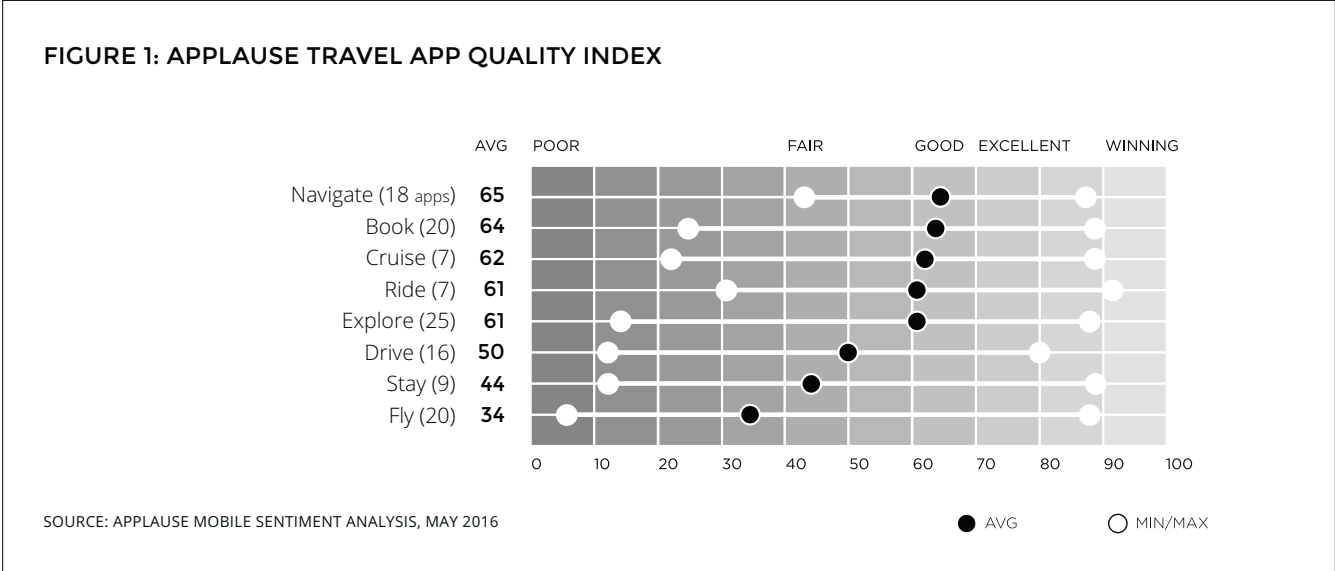
There are some amazing apps that can help you travel. For instance, look at brands like Booking.com, TripAdvisor and Yelp that actually deliver on their promise to help people find places to stay and businesses to support. Or look at services like Groupon that provide true value to people. Travel apps can help you get from point-to-point like GasBuddy and Waze. In short, travel apps have become essential to people's lives.

Not all travel apps can be winners. [ARC](#) from [Applause](#) analyzed three million reviews between the App Store and Google Play to determine the

mobile leaders and laggards of the travel industry. This analysis spans 118 of the most popular Android and iOS apps in the U.S. and is ARC’s third annual report on the state of the travel apps economy.

## Simplifying The Travel Apps Economy

The travel apps economy is incredibly competitive and is only becoming more crowded. To make sense of the landscape, we categorized apps into eight distinct actions a traveler takes on their customer journey (see Figure 1):



- Book (20 apps):** Book is the most highly used and the second highest-rated category—just behind Navigate—in part due to serving a core function but also because the apps are well designed and executed.
- Cruise (7):** The cruise industry remains in its infancy in engaging passengers via apps. Just seven qualified with 200 or more reviews and none topped 3,500. For comparison, 2,000 reviews was the

minimum criteria for inclusion for booking apps and one—TripAdvisor—is well on its way to achieving 100,000 reviews.

- **Drive (16):** Sixteen rideshare, rental and taxi apps qualified with more than 200 reviews, including rideshare apps Lyft, Uber and ZipCar.
- **Explore (25):** Four of the five most popular travel apps—Groupon, Google Maps, GasBuddy and Yelp—reside in Explore. These are the apps a traveler relies on to discover local hotspots, places to eat and stores at which to splurge.
- **Fly (20):** If there's one industry that's unable to keep pace with traveler expectations, it is the airline industry. Airline apps average a 34 on the 100-point scale, which is approximately half of the global average across the more than 30 million apps that Applause Mobile Sentiment Analysis continuously crawls.
- **Navigate (18):** Navigate includes the 18 most popular traffic optimization, GPS and map apps, including the single most popular travel app Waze and its half a million reviews. The Navigate category is the most highly rated of the eight due to their innovation, design and consistency.
- **Ride (7):** Ride specifically focuses on trains and buses. Ride is in the middle of the pack in terms of mobile sentiment but dominates its closest competitor: airlines.
- **Stay (9):** The Stay category includes the nine most popular hotel brands. This category includes the two brands accomplishing the greatest improvement year-over-year, signifying the industry is raising its bar for customer experience. (Spoiler alert: It's Hilton at +30.5 and Wyndham at +16.)

## Apps That Didn't Qualify For Analysis

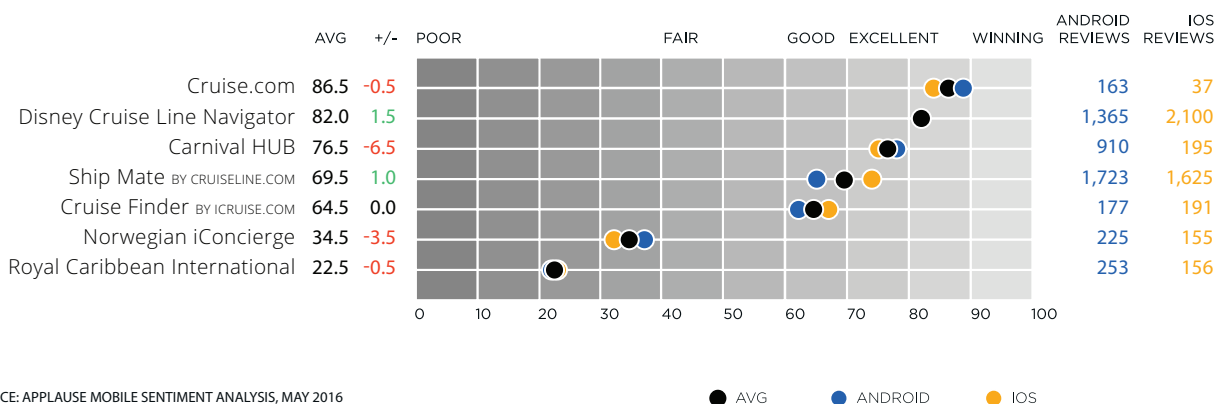
With more than 30 million apps worldwide, it's possible we overlooked an app or two. However, it's more likely the app didn't earn enough app store reviews to qualify as we only report statistically significant results. It is also possible ARC profiled the app in another report that was more relevant.

For insight into the 130 most popular travel companion apps/apps for business executives, see [The Best And Worst Mobile Apps For Business Executives report](#). Managing finances on the go? See the [Finance report](#). Staying in shape on the road? See the [Health And Fitness report](#). Shopping in a foreign hotspot? See the [Retail report](#). Dating in a new territory? See the [Dating report](#).

## Six Popular Apps Earn High Quality Marks

These 118 travel apps, relied on by consumers worldwide, garnered three million app store reviews in the U.S. alone. Apps that qualified earned at least 200 aggregate reviews between Android and iOS to earn inclusion for the third annual Applause Travel App Quality Index (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - CRUISE



SOURCE: APPLAUSE MOBILE SENTIMENT ANALYSIS, MAY 2016

FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - BOOK

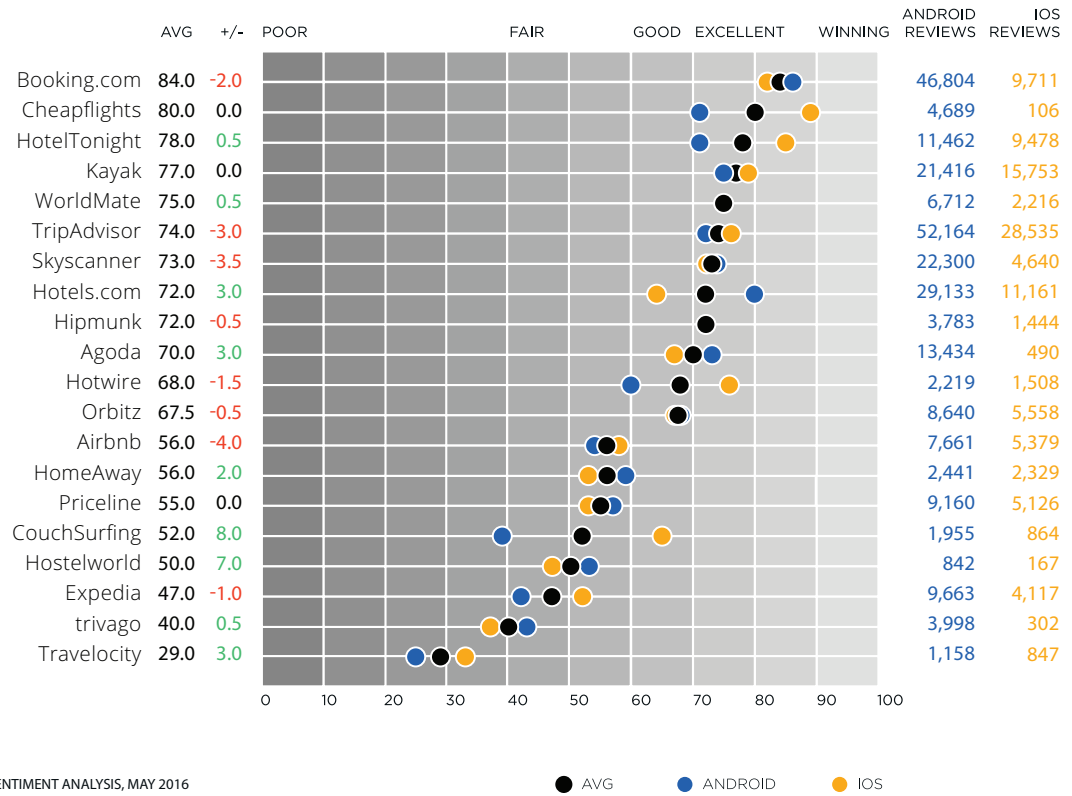


FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - DRIVE

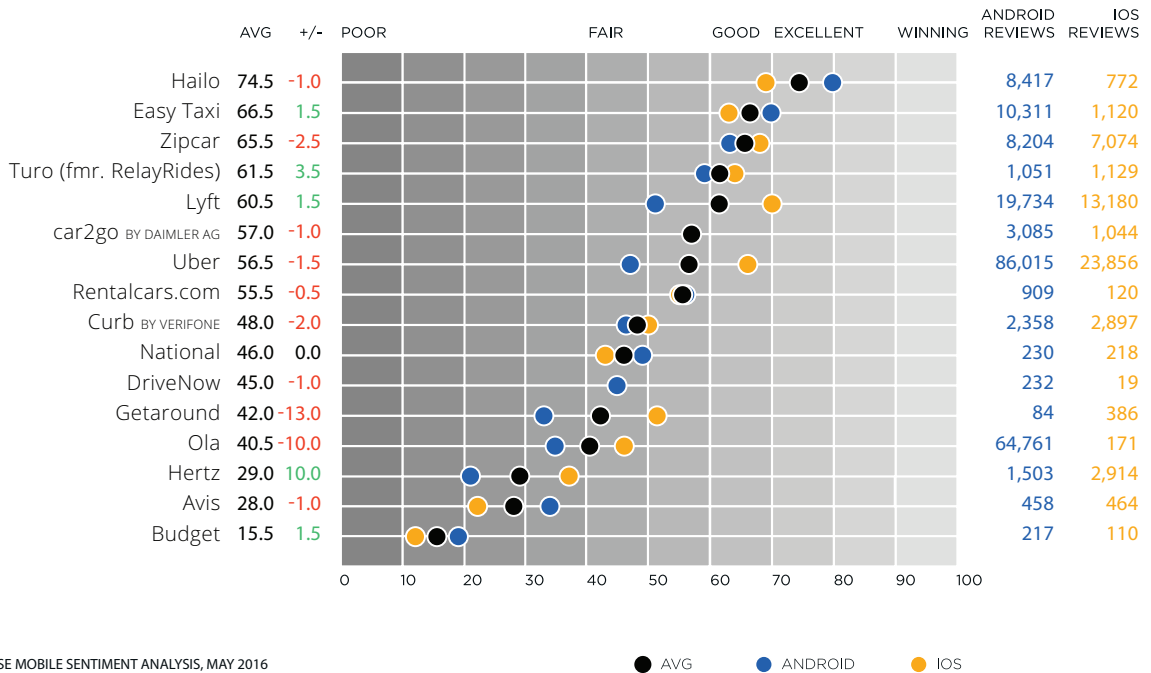


FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - EXPLORE

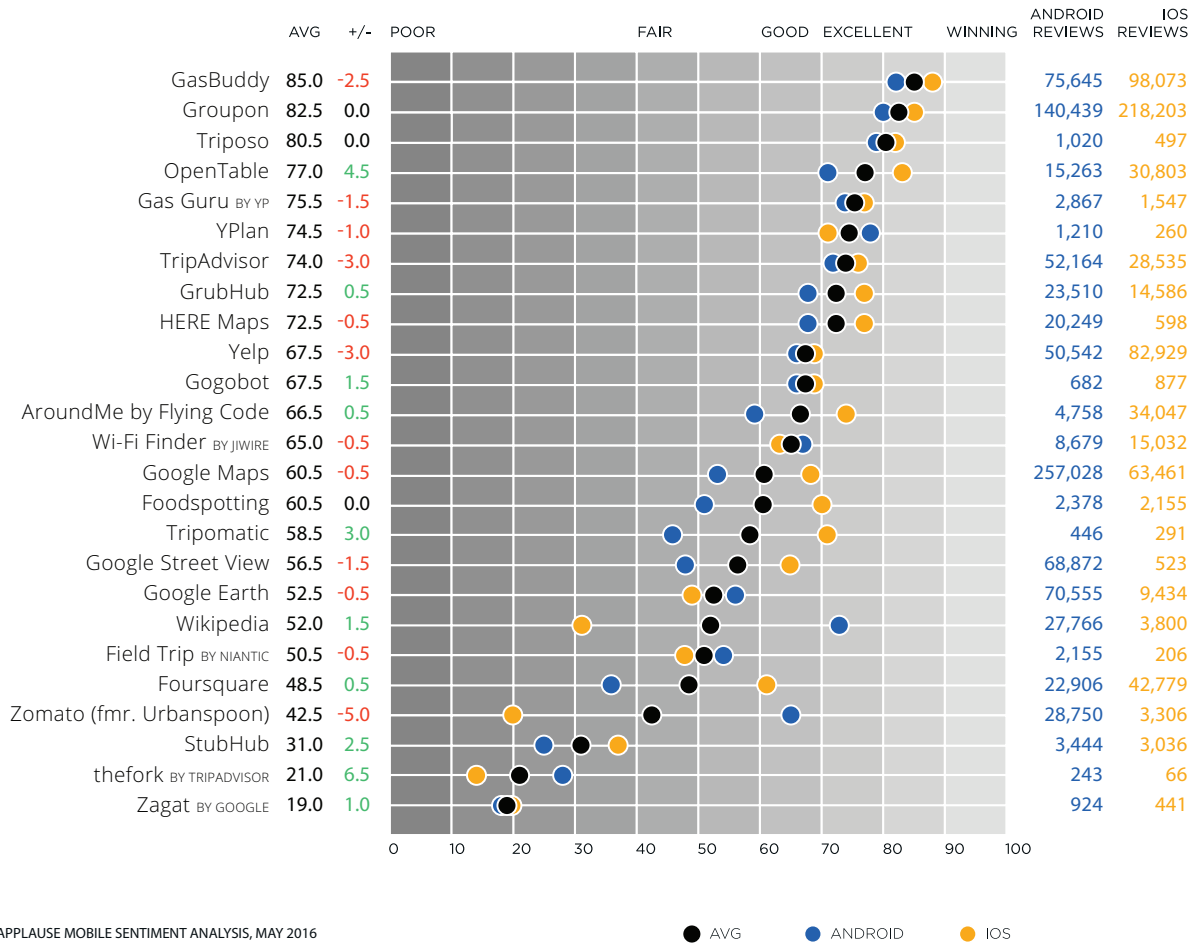


FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - STAY

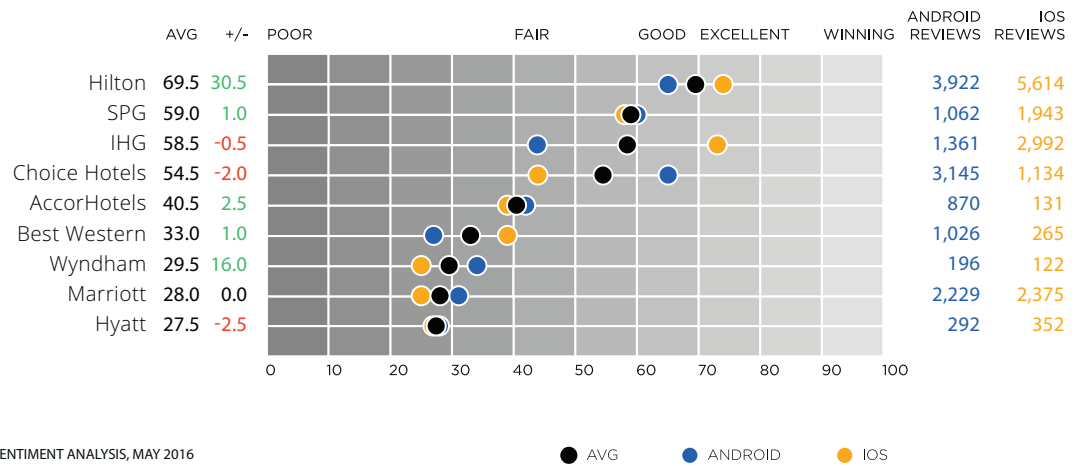
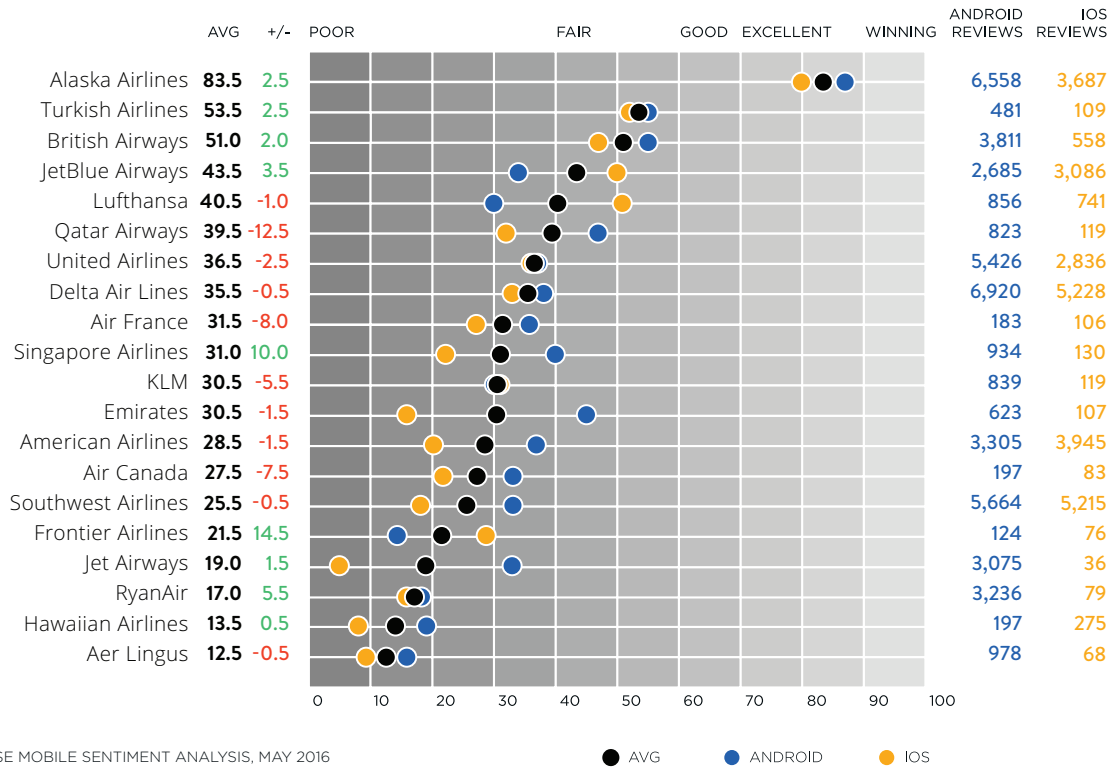
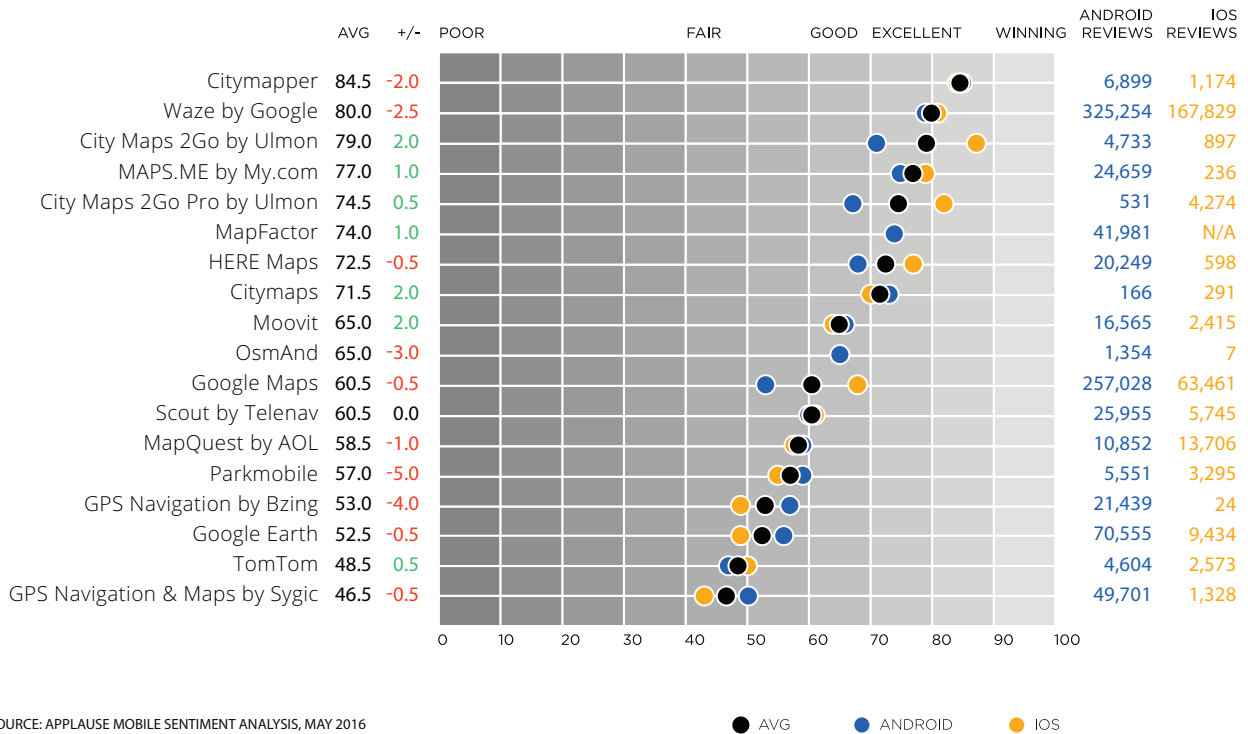


FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - FLY



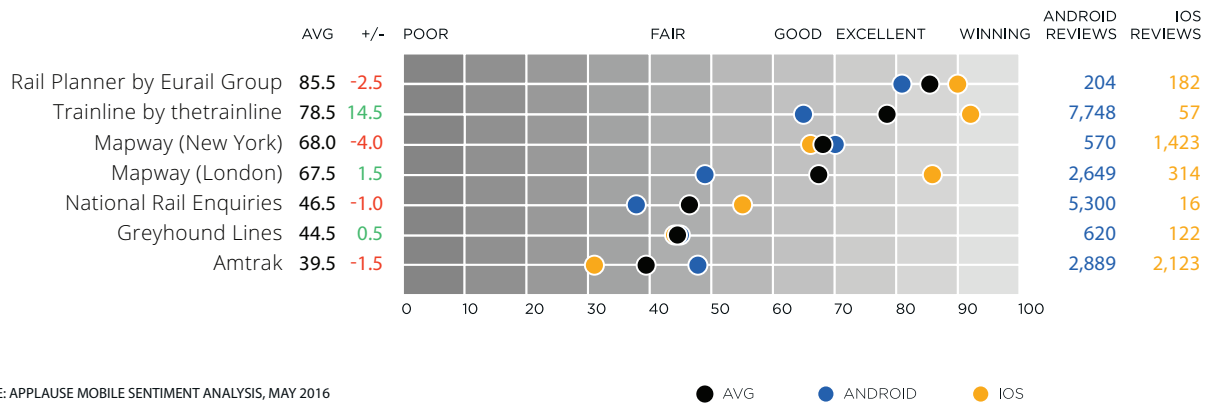
SOURCE: APPLAUSE MOBILE SENTIMENT ANALYSIS, MAY 2016

FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - NAVIGATE



SOURCE: APPLAUSE MOBILE SENTIMENT ANALYSIS, MAY 2016

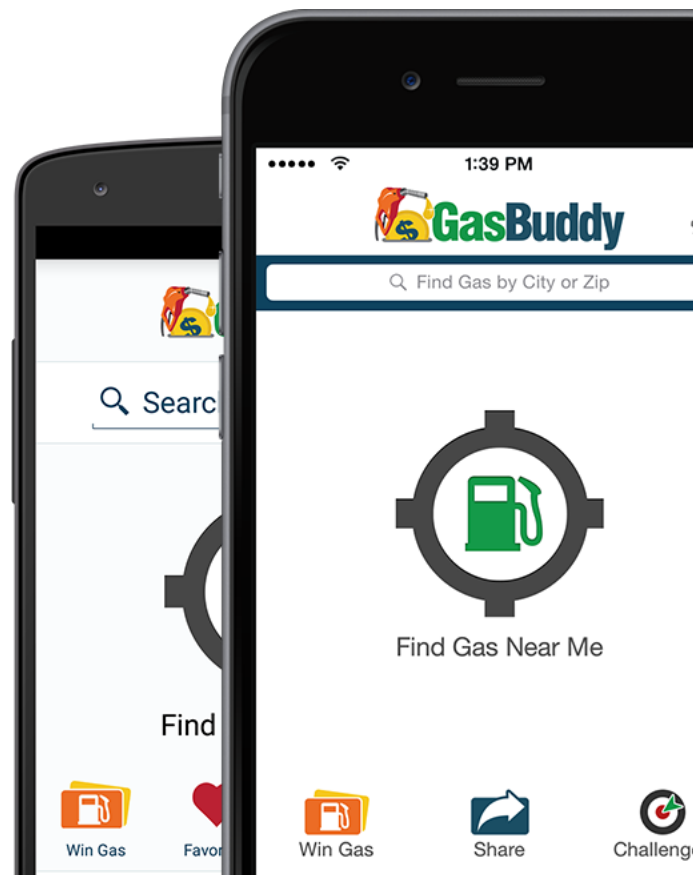
FIGURE 2: APPLAUSE TRAVEL APP QUALITY INDEX - RIDE



Across the more than 30 million apps Applause Mobile Sentiment Analysis crawls globally in real time, the average app quality score is a **67.3**. Six incredibly popular apps earned above average scores based on more than 50,000 reviews:

- **GasBuddy (85.0)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Booking.com (84.0)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Groupon (82.5)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Waze by Google (80.0)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **TripAdvisor (74.0)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Yelp (67.5)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)].

GasBuddy’s usability and satisfaction scores are through the roof with positive signals or attributes of mobile quality, such as useful, easy, simple, recommend, favorite, fun and enjoy, frequently appearing in text-based reviews.



Booking.com is most frequently praised for its performance and stability. Groupon for its usability, satisfaction, performance and pricing. Waze for its content and interoperability that stand out among its competition. TripAdvisor for its content and elegance. Yelp for its ability to delight (i.e., satisfaction) and its usability (i.e., usefulness, simplicity and elegance).

## Apps That Have Room To Improve

When travelers feel well-served or underserved, they have a channel in app stores through which to share experiences—good and bad. Just seven profiled apps with more than 10,000 reviews have mobile sentiment scores less than 50:

- **Foursquare (48.5)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Expedia (47.0)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **GPS Navigation & Maps by Sygic (46.5)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Zomato (fmr. Urbanspoon) (42.5)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Ola (40.5)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Delta Air Lines (35.5)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)]
- **Southwest Airlines (25.5)** [[Android](#) | [iOS](#)].

Apps that rate poorly tend to not optimize their experience for mobile moments. Short-term testing efforts (e.g., functional testing, usability reviews and security audits) will identify immediate issues.

Brands should evaluate and adapt to more agile development processes to build world class customer experience programs. A focus on customer

experience can help close potential disconnects between customers and their mobile/digital experiences.

## Some Brands Had Great Sentiment Swings

ARC from Applause analyzed how the mobile sentiment of the most popular travel brands' flagship Android and iOS apps evolved over the previous ten months from July 2015 to May 2016. Year-over-year, 23 travel brands experienced mobile sentiment swings of four points or greater on a 100-point scale, with two experiencing more volatile shifts of 15 points or greater.

Hilton—the Stay category's leader by more than 10 points over SPG, IHG, Choice Hotels and the rest—increased an astounding 30.5 points. How? By introducing *Digital Key* capabilities, adding Uber integration and increasing transparency on HHonors status. The app was rated below-average in the previous *Travel report* with a score of 39. Hilton has proved that there is innovation yet to be tapped within the travel industry and that apps can significantly improve given a conscientious design, development and test effort.

Wyndham increased its mobile sentiment score by 16 points. The achievement required a complete redesign of its app from the ground up. The redesign impacted features such as member benefits, call support, exploration features and mobile payment support, Wyndham is on its way to challenging more established domestic hotel brands through digital innovation.

# Apps That Got Hit By Savvy Competitors

Your standing in the apps economy isn't just impacted by your own operational decisions. It's impacted by competitive and market insight. If another app gets better and resets the industry benchmark, your app looks poorer in comparison. Customer perception is vulnerable to where your competition is just as much as to new industry dynamics

that influence how customers feel and act.

MOVERS & SHAKERS	
Hilton	+30.5
Wyndham	+16
Frontier Airlines	+14.5
Trainline by thetrainline	+14.5
Hertz	+10
Singapore Airlines	+10
CouchSurfing	+8
Hostelworld	+7
thefork by TripAdvisor	+6.5
RyanAir	+5.5
OpenTable	+4.5
Airbnb	-4.0
GPS Navigation by Bzing	-4.0
Mapway (New York)	-4.0
Zomato (fmr. Urbanspoon)	-5.0
Parkmobile	-5.0
KLM	-5.5
Carnival HUB	-6.5
Air Canada	-7.5
Air France	-8.0
Ola	-10.0
Qatar Airways	-12.5
Getaround	-13.0

SOURCE: APPLAUSE MOBILE SENTIMENT ANALYSIS, MAY 2016

Some airline apps have been negatively impacted by the progressive capabilities added by their competitors. For instance, look at innovative features that enable improved tracking of miles and schedule changes (Alaska Airlines), simplified search and booking experiences (British Airways) and a redesigned iPad interface and improved stability (JetBlue Airways). The likes of Qatar Airways, Air France, Air Canada and KLM have some ground to cover to achieve parity.

No matter the company's industry, geography or reputation, app users



are vocal about their experiences. It's time for travel brands to embrace digital-first strategies that raise the bar for quality to ultimately deliver richer customer experiences across customer journeys.

A note on transparency:

ARC from Applause authored this report to:

- Help travel brands understand how U.S. consumers perceive their flagship Android and iOS app quality.
- Service the travel industry in a good faith effort to recognize its achievements while also identifying its shortcomings.
- Raise awareness that app quality companies like *Applause* exist to help brands deliver digital experiences that travelers love by testing them through the eyes of actual customers and monitoring ongoing sentiment.
- Provide thought leadership on digital experience best practices in an industry that has room to improve.



## Complementary Onsite Workshops

*Applause* is making this report's author available for onsite workshops that will enhance understanding of touchpoints across your customer journey, share insight into the best practices that industry-leading brands have embraced to win and determine how your company can get to market faster with a rich digital presence.

Interested? Contact [bgray@applause.com](mailto:bgray@applause.com) today.

## About ARC

ARC from Applause is a research group dedicated to providing insights on the apps economy. ARC leverages data from a variety of sources, including proprietary Applause data, to provide a 360° view of app quality. ARC combines this with analysis into reports to help brands and developers understand what's happening in the apps economy.

Learn more at <http://arc.applause.com>.

## About Applause Mobile Sentiment Analysis

Combing through nearly a billion star ratings and user reviews submitted across more than 30 million apps in the Android and iOS app stores, Applause Mobile Sentiment Analysis closes the gap between developers and their customers, generating actionable insights and quantifiable metrics based on what users are actually saying about their app experiences.

Learn more at [www.applause.com/analytics](http://www.applause.com/analytics).