



EASYJET REPORTS PASSENGER BOOST AS RYANAIR CHASES UK DOMINANCE

News / Airlines



Budget airline easyJet has reported a 6.1pc increase in passenger numbers but a slip in the number of occupied seats on its flights.

The FTSE 100 airline flew 6.37 million customers last month, up from 6 million in April 2015.

EasyJet's load factor - an industry measure of the percentage of seats that were actually occupied - fell from 90.8pc a year ago to 90.4pc last month.

The results follow a testing few months for easyJet, which was forced to cancel 611 flights in March because of striking French air traffic controllers.

The company, which reports half-year results on Tuesday, also came under further pressure from rival Ryanair this week, after the Irish airline's boss declared the two carriers "were neck and neck" in the UK.

Michael O'Leary, Ryanair's chief executive, said he expected Ryanair to overtake easyJet on British routes by 2017, adding that it was "only a question of time".

"As we open up a new base in Belfast, we're adding more aircraft this winter in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester and Stansted continues to grow strongly, we should overtake them by the end of this year," he said.

Ryanair chief executive Michael O'Leary

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"I don't get too hung up on whether we overtake them or not. It's only a question of time, when we'll overtake them. It doesn't really make a lot of difference."

In its own numbers for April, released earlier this week, Ryanair reported a 10pc increase in passengers to 9.9 million, and a 2pc rise in load factor to 93pc.

Earlier this year, Ryanair said its passenger numbers had been bolstered by its decision to cut

fares in the wake of last year's terror attacks in France and Egypt.

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