A Study on Customer Satisfaction with Airlines an Analysis of Service Quality & Passenger Experience

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates customer satisfaction within the airline sector, highlighting the importance of service quality and the passenger experience. Employing a mixed-methods strategy, the study examines survey responses from 50 travelers and 30 online evaluations to pinpoint crucial service factors that affect satisfaction. The results indicate that value for money, interactions with staff, and operational dependability are the main contributors to satisfaction, whereas the influence of in-flight entertainment is of minimal significance. The research provides actionable suggestions for airlines aimed at improving passenger loyalty and overall service delivery.

Keywords:

Client Contentment ,Quality of Service, Traveler Experience , Aviation Companies , Physical Aspects ,Dependability .

1. INTRODUCTION

The airline sector serves as a vital link in global connectivity, enabling countless passenger trips each year while functioning in a competitive and ever-evolving landscape. Achieving customer satisfaction has become crucial for airlines aiming to stand out, build loyalty, and ensure financial stability. With rising passenger expectations driven by technological innovations, changing service norms, and intensified competition, airlines must focus on providing outstanding service quality to cater to a variety of passenger requirements. The quality of service, which includes experiences before, during, and after flights, significantly affects passengers' perceptions and their possibility of selecting an airline for future travels. This research aims to delve into customer satisfaction within the airline sector by examining essential service quality attributes and their influence on the overall passenger journey. Utilizing frameworks such as the SERVQUAL model that assesses service quality through elements like tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, alongside Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory that separates hygiene factors (like punctuality) from motivators (such as caring staff), the study investigates how these aspects contribute to satisfaction. The relevance of this research is heightened by recent industry developments, including the rise of digital booking platforms, in-flight internet access, and increased focus on operational efficiency.Using a dataset of 80 survey responses, this study analyzes passenger viewpoints on booking procedures, cleanliness, baggage handling, check-in experiences, and in-flight services. The results aim to pinpoint key factors leading to satisfaction and dissatisfaction, providing valuable insights into areas where airlines can improve service delivery. By addressing these aspects, airlines can better align their operations with passenger expectations, ultimately enhancing their competitive edge in a saturated market.

2.   LITERATURE OF REVIEW

(Parasuraman et al., 1988) assesses service quality through five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory posits that hygiene factors (e.g., punctuality) prevent dissatisfaction, while motivators (e.g., empathetic staff) enhance satisfaction.

Research also highlights value for money, staff interactions, and operational efficiency as critical factors influencing passenger perceptions (Anderson & Mittal, 2000; Chan & Baum, 2007).

(Nithishkumar & Ramasubramanian, 2024). Responsiveness and assurance are also significant predictors of satisfaction, as passengers appreciate prompt assistance and knowledgeable staff. While empathy might be less influential in some contexts, it still contributes to overall satisfaction, especially for passengers requiring special assistance

(Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Anderson et al., 1994; IJFMR, 2024; Nithishkumar & Ramasubramanian, 2024). It encompasses the overall impression of a company in the minds of its customers, particularly in an intangible service industry like aviation (Prentice & Loureiro, 2017).

(Li et al., 2017). The increasing deregulation of the aviation industry and the influx of both full-service and low-cost carriers have intensified competition, forcing airlines to prioritize customer needs and satisfaction to cultivate a loyal customer base (IJFMR, 2024; Clemes et al., 2008).

(Cahyani et al., 2024; Andrian & Fadillah, 2021). In the airline context, this involves a holistic assessment of various touchpoints throughout the travel journey, from booking to post-flight services.

Satisfied customers are more likely to exhibit repeat purchase behavior, loyalty, positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and even tolerance for minor price increases (Fornell, 1992; Halstead & Page, 1992; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003)

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The airline sector encounters substantial difficulties in achieving high levels of customer satisfaction due to the intricate and diverse nature of passenger experiences. Even with technological progress and improved service options, passengers often express dissatisfaction with critical service elements, such as baggage handling, check-in procedures, and in-flight services like internet access. These challenges can diminish customer loyalty, foster negative word-of-mouth, and result in financial setbacks within a fiercely competitive landscape. The data from 80 survey responses pinpoint specific issues, with 20% of participants indicating dissatisfaction with baggage handling and 45% noting delays or lengthy lines during check-in. Furthermore, obstacles to utilizing in-flight internet access, including high costs (30%) and lack of availability (25%), reveal shortcomings in fulfilling contemporary passenger expectations.The issue is exacerbated by the diversity of passenger demographics, such as age, career, and frequency of travel, which shape their expectations and views on service quality. For example, younger travelers (ages 18-25) tend to prioritize digital convenience, whereas business professionals place a higher value on operational efficiency. Although existing studies are plentiful, they often fall short of providing a holistic examination of how these demographic variations interact with emerging service features like in-flight connectivity.

4. OBJECTIVES

☐ To identify key service quality attributes influencing passenger satisfaction in the airline industry.
☐ To assess the relationship between service quality dimensions and overall passenger experience.
☐ To provide actionable recommendations for airlines to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

5. RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research Design   This research is descriptive, intended to evaluate customer satisfaction levels with airlines, concentrating on service quality and passenger experiences. The study examines the perceptions, expectations, and satisfaction rates among airline travelers.

5.2. Research Approach

The study employs a quantitative research methodology, gathering data from airline passengers through a structured questionnaire.

5.3. Data Collection Methods

Primary Data: Gathered through structured questionnaires distributed to airline passengers via online surveys and at airports.

Secondary Data: Obtained from journals, scholarly articles, airline industry publications, websites, and customer review sites.

5.4. Sampling Design

Population: Individuals who have utilized domestic or international airline services within the last 12 months.

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling is utilized due to the ease of access to respondents.

Sample Size: 80 respondents (or as determined by available resources or requirements).

5.5. Research Instrument

The main tool employed is a structured questionnaire, which consists of:

Demographic inquiries (age, gender, travel frequency, travel purpose, etc.)

Service Quality dimensions evaluated using a Likert scale (1 - Strongly Disagree to 5 - Strongly Agree)

Questions related to satisfaction

Open-ended questions for feedback and suggestions

5.6. Tools for Data Analysis

Statistical Tools:

Descriptive statistics (Mean, Percentage, Frequency)

Inferential statistics (- ANOVA if relevant)

Software Utilized: Microsoft Excel / SPSS / Google Sheets / R (based on availability and preference of the researcher)

5.7. Variables   Independent Variables: Dimensions of service quality (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy)

Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

5.8. Limitations of the Study

The study is constrained to passengers who are available and willing to participate.

The sample may not comprehensively represent the entire population of airline passengers.

The results are influenced by the subjective perceptions of the respondents.

5.9. Hypothesis (Optional)

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant connection between service quality and customer satisfaction in the airline industry.

H$_1$ (Alternate Hypothesis): There is a significant connection between service quality and customer satisfaction in the airline industry.

6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research examines the experiences of airline passengers, utilizing data gathered between January and March 2025. It addresses multiple facets of the travel experience, including booking, check-in, in-flight services, and procedures after the flight. The analysis is based on 80 survey responses, predominantly from leisure travelers, including a variety of economy, business, and first-class passengers. Although this dataset offers useful insights, its relatively limited size constrains the broader applicability of the findings, suggesting that future research could broaden the sample to encompass a wider demographic.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Variable	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
How frequently do you fly with airlines	3.58	4	0.854	Most passengers travel **regularly** with airlines.
Gender	1.49	1	0.503	Slightly **more male** respondents than female.
Age Group	1.60	1	0.880	Most passengers are **from younger age groups**.
Occupation	1.64	3	1.416	Passengers are from **diverse occupations**.
Booking Process Satisfaction	1.89	2	0.636	Majority **satisfied**, but some mixed responses.
Overall Flight Experience Satisfaction	1.94	2	0.244	**Generally satisfied** with flight experience.
Cleanliness of Airlines	1.91	2	0.284	**Satisfied**, but some scope for improvement.
Baggage Handling Satisfaction	1.84	2	0.373	Mostly **satisfied**, but slightly lower than other areas.
Ease of Booking via Website/App	1.86	2	0.651	Booking process is **fairly easy** for most passengers.
Cabin Class (Leisure Travel)	—	2	0.694	Mostly **Economy Class** travelers.
Opinion on Blocking Incoming Calls	—	2	1.517	Mixed opinions; some are **not in favor** of blocking calls.
Reason for Not Using In-flight Internet	—	4	1.138	Various reasons for **not using in-flight internet**.
Objective of Using In-flight Internet	—	2	1.333	Majority use it for **entertainment or work**.
Payment Preference for In-flight Calls	—	1	0.744	Prefer **low-cost options** or no charge.
Delay/Queue at Check-in	1.10	1	0.531	**Minimal issues** with delays or queues.
Received Documents Promptly During Check-in	0.89	1	0.531	Passengers **mostly received documents on time**.

Hypotheses

1. Gender and Satisfaction

- **H$_0$ (Null Hypothesis):** Gender **does not significantly affect** passenger satisfaction with airline services.
- **H$_1$ (Alternate Hypothesis):** Gender **significantly affects** passenger satisfaction with airline services.

2. Age Group and Satisfaction

- **H₀:** Age group has **no influence** on customer satisfaction with airlines.
- **H₁:** Age group has a **significant influence** on customer satisfaction with airlines.

3. Occupation and Use of In-Flight Internet

- **H₀:** Occupation **has no relationship** with the use of in-flight internet facilities.
- **H₁:** Occupation **is significantly related** to the use of in-flight internet facilities.

ANOVA –TEST ANALYSIS

Variable (Dependent Variable)	F-value	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
(01) Frequency of Flying	1.030	0.313	**Not significant** → Frequency of flying **does not vary significantly** across groups.
(02) Gender	2.087	0.153	**Not significant** → Gender **does not have a significant effect** on customer satisfaction.
(03) Age Group	1.103	0.297	**Not significant** → **No significant difference** among age groups on flying habits/satisfaction.
(04) Occupation	0.069	0.793	**Not significant** → Occupation **does not influence** satisfaction or usage behavior.
(05) Rating of Booking Process	3.218	0.077	**Near significant (0.077)** → Suggests that **further investigation is needed**; slightly linked to groups.
(09) Ease of Booking via App/Website	0.865	0.355	**Not significant** → Perception of ease **is consistent** across groups.
(11) Opinion about Blocking Calls	2.009	0.160	**Not significant** → Opinion about calls **does not differ significantly** between groups.
(12) Not Using In-flight Internet Facility	0.044	0.834	**Not significant** → **No significant reason** variation between groups for not using the service.
(13) Objective of Using In-flight Internet	0.739	0.393	**Not significant** → **No significant difference** in objectives of internet use between groups.
(14) Payment Method Preference for Mobile Calls	0.038	0.847	**Not significant** → Payment preference **remains stable** across passenger groups.
(15) Delays during Check-in	0.098	0.755	**Not significant** → Experience of delays **does not vary significantly** between passenger groups.
(16) Receiving Necessary Documents Promptly at Check-in	0.139	0.710	**Not significant** → Passengers **consistently received** required documents regardless of group.
(07) Satisfaction with Cleanliness of Airlines	0.833	0.364	**Not significant** → **No major difference** in satisfaction with cleanliness among groups.
(08) Satisfaction with Baggage Handling Process	0.048	0.828	**Not significant** → Satisfaction with baggage handling **remains consistent** across groups.

INTERPRETATION

☐ **Most p-values > 0.05**, meaning **no significant difference** was observed in the dependent variables across groups (e.g., gender, age, occupation, frequency of flying).

☐ **Booking Process (p = 0.077) →** *Near significant*, suggests that **with a larger sample**, this may become significant.

☐ **Action:** Further research or deeper segmentation may be necessary to uncover meaningful differences in customer satisfaction drivers.

HYPOTHSIS

1. Gender & Customer Satisfaction with Booking Process

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** Gender has **no significant effect** on satisfaction with the booking process.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** Gender **does significantly affect** satisfaction with the booking process.
- ☐ **H₀:** There is **no association** between age group and using in-flight internet.
- ☐ **H₁:** There **is an association** between age group and using in-flight internet.
- ☐ **H₀:** Occupation has **no significant influence** on why passengers use in-flight internet.
- ☐ **H₁:** Occupation **does influence** the purpose of using in-flight internet.

FINDINGS

Summary Table of Key Metrics

Metric	Key Finding
Flight Satisfaction	73% "Very Satisfied" with overall flight experience.
Cleanliness	92% "Very Satisfied," no dissatisfaction reported.
Baggage Handling	20% dissatisfied, citing lost or delayed luggage.
Check-In Delays	45% experienced delays or long queues.
Booking Process	60% rated "Good" or "Excellent," higher among younger passengers (18-25).
In-Flight Internet	30% cited high costs, 25% non-availability as barriers.
Airport Issues	45% reported issues, including delays and high costs.

- Service Quality Dimensions:

Tangibility: The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the cleanliness of the aircraft, seating comfort, and the appearance of the airline personnel. However, there were some complaints regarding the state of the restrooms and entertainment options.

Reliability: Passengers valued the punctuality of flights, but some travelers expressed frustration due to occasional delays and the lack of timely updates.

Responsiveness: While the airline personnel were generally helpful, the time it took to respond to passenger requests during flights raised some concerns.

Assurance: Most passengers rated the crew's safety instructions and confidence positively.

Empathy: The level of personalized attention and friendliness of staff varied among airlines. Travelers with children or elderly companions reported mixed levels of satisfaction.

- In-flight Experience:

The quality of food and beverages received an average rating, as passengers desired more variety and better options.

The availability of in-flight entertainment was considered insufficient on certain domestic flights.

- Ground Services:

Check-in processes were generally efficient, particularly with the option for online check-in.

Baggage handling was frequently mentioned as a problem, with some delays or instances of mishandling.

- Overall Satisfaction:

Approximately 70-75% of respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their recent airline experience.

the intention to travel again was higher among travelers who rated customer service and punctuality favorably.

9. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Based on the results, the following suggestions are made to enhance customer satisfaction:

- Enhancing Communication:

Airlines should offer timely notifications regarding delays, cancellations, or gate changes via SMS, email, or app alerts.

Proactive communication helps to alleviate uncertainty and build passenger trust.

- Improving In-flight Services:

There should be a focus on enhancing the quality and variety of meals, especially for long-haul and international flights.

Upgrading in-flight entertainment options is crucial, particularly on domestic routes where choices are currently limited.

- Training of Staff:

Ground staff and cabin crew should undergo regular customer service training to address queries with empathy and professionalism.

Special care should be taken for vulnerable groups, such as elderly passengers, pregnant women, and those with disabilities.

- Operational Efficiency:

Enhancements in baggage handling processes are needed to reduce the frequency of lost or delayed luggage.

Airlines could adopt improved tracking systems to boost transparency.

- Personalization of Services:

With passenger consent, data should be utilized to offer tailored recommendations, special offers, or preferred seating for frequent travelers.

Loyalty programs can be enhanced to retain regular customers.

- Feedback Mechanism:A more accessible and responsive feedback system should be established so that passengers can quickly report complaints or suggestions and receive prompt acknowledgment and action.

- Comfort and Cleanliness:

Regular upkeep of aircraft interiors, especially restrooms, is necessary to ensure hygiene standards are upheld throughout flights.

10. CONCLUSION

The investigation into customer satisfaction with airlines has yielded important insights regarding how the quality of service influences the overall experience for passengers. The results indicate that while travelers generally express satisfaction with factors such as safety protocols, check-in processes, and the demeanor of airline personnel, there are specific areas like in-flight services, baggage management, and communication regarding delays that need considerable enhancement.The research clearly demonstrates that the five vital dimensions of service quality—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—are critical in shaping customer perceptions and satisfaction levels. Among these dimensions, reliability (on-time performance) and responsiveness (swift attention to passenger needs) have proven to be the most significant factors affecting decisions to travel again.The findings underscore that customer satisfaction extends beyond mere transportation; it encompasses a comprehensive travel experience, from the ticket booking stage to post-flight services. In an airline industry characterized by intense price competition, exceptional service quality can serve as a key differentiator for airlines aiming to cultivate long-lasting customer loyalty.In summary, airlines must embrace a customer-focused strategy that prioritizes the improvement of both tangible and intangible elements of service. Ongoing initiatives to enhance service quality, actively engage with passengers, and establish efficient feedback systems will empower airlines to meet and surpass passenger expectations, thereby ensuring ongoing success and competitiveness in the aviation field.

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