

Air Passengers Level of Expectation and Satisfaction towards Airlines Services (With Special References to Coimbatore City)

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Abstract: The study aims to analyse the air passengers' level of expectation and satisfaction towards airlines services. This study is primary confined to Coimbatore city. A small sample of thirty respondents was chosen as sample populations. The study is primary based on primary data sources. The study observed that 46.67 per cent of air passengers' are very young that is they fall under the age group of 21-30 years, 66 per cent of passengers' are salaried employees, who's monthly income ranges between `20001- `40000.. Further, the study has observed that they exists wide gap in passengers' level of expectation and satisfaction with the service features. The passenger faces difficulties while using private airline services due to: lack of Non- stop flight services ,inconvenient flight schedule, less safety of Flying, no cost concession of ticket reservation, inconvenience of reservation and ticketing, delayed and inaccurate reservation and ticketing services, inefficiency in functioning of check-in at the counter, poor baggage handling, lack of baggage security, no facilities for on-board meals, negligence in reservation of flights delay, poor availability of information, poor behavior of crew, poor check-in-services, poor compensation, no value for money, poor FF programmes, improper information on flight rescheduling / cancellations, unpunctual flights timing, noise inside the cabin and poor overall flight infrastructure. The study suggests the private air lines to focus their marketing strategies fulfill the passengers' expectation and retain them as satisfied long term customers.

Keywords: Airlines, Indian Aviation Sector, Passengers, Expectations, Satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

A country's transportation sector plays an integral role in the growth and development of an economy. According to the Indian Aerospace Industry Analysis report, in terms of passenger traffic, India is currently the ninth largest aviation market in the world. With regards to air cargo tonnage, India leads the ASEAN region: consisting of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka Currently, India has 132 airports; it includes 24 International Airports, seven Customs Airports, 78 Domestic Airports and 26 civil enclaves at Military Airfields. India's civil aviation sector has evolved over time. India's dynamic aviation market is being redefined by changing regulation policies, increased privatisation of airports and growing infrastructure developments. And the major development was the emergence of the domestic airline industry. It has changed the definition of airlines that air travel is a luxury and it is only for the upper segment of the population.

In a highly competitive environment the provision of high quality services to passengers is the core competitive advantage for an airline's profitability and sustained growth. In the past decade, as the air transportation market has become even more challenging, many airlines have turned to focus on airline service quality to increase service satisfaction. Passenger satisfaction service arises when a company can provide passengers with benefits that exceed passengers' expectation and this is considered value-added. If customers are satisfied with the product or service, they will buy more, and do so more often.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A brief summary of reviews are presented in this section of the study.

DipaMitra (2010) study focused to identify the most important factors in passenger service both in public as well as in private low cost airlines, to compare and contrast the services of airlines. The study found that there exists significantly and positively influencing factors related to passenger's satisfaction and image of both the airlines'. Wang et al. (2011) determines nine evaluation criteria of service quality in the airline companies and found that passengers are more concern with comfort, internal decoration and services of airline companies. In addition, on-time flights, ticket prices and schedules are important evaluation criteria. Archan .A .R and SubhaM.V (2012) study examined the underlying forces of service quality influences on passengers' satisfaction in aircraft transport. The study findings revealed that these three dimensions are positively related to perceive service quality in international air travel and of these dimensions, Cuisines provided, seat comfort safety are the most important dimension in in-flight service quality. Personal entertainment is the most important dimension as perceived by airline passengers in In-flight digital service quality. Online ticket booking is another dimension in back-office operations. In addition, the findings indicated that passengers' satisfaction on different airline companies on basis of the services delivered.

Bhuvanewaran.R and Vijayarangam (2013) aimed to analyse the Service Quality towards Domestic Airlines Passenger Perception in Tamil Nadu. The survey results confirmed that there exists two distinct markets, one comprising those passengers who choose a full service airline and the other those that select a low cost carrier. Malyadri .Pand Satyanarayana .P (2014) empirical study aimed to analyse the perception towards domestic airline services in India. The study findings showcased some of the findings in this direction with respect to Indian Domestic Airline Industry. The study highlighted how the customers are feeling about the company's services and its service quality. The two main constituents are the "quality expected or experienced" and "quality perceived" by the customer. As study on these variables, the Airlines best conforming to customers' perceptions are Kingfisher Airlines and Indigo Airlines. KhaderMohideen and Abdul Rajak (2015) research paper analysed passengers' perception towards airlines services in Tiruchirappalli. The survey results confirmed that there exists two distinct markets, one comprising those passengers who choose a full service airline and the other those that select a low cost carrier.

The reviews provided a clear outline of the differences in customers perception or expectation towards airline services, the major factors that influences customers satisfactions and importance of enhancing customers satisfactions for the profitability and growth of airline services in India. The above discussed reviews motivated the author to analyse the air passengers' level of expectation and satisfaction towards airlines services. This study is primary confined to Coimbatore city.

Statement of Problem:

An air passenger experience different thing during their journey, which is a consumer, takes along a series of encounters: they become aware of a brand, consider what's on offer, make enquires, make a purchase and use the service. Customers may choose to stay with the current service provider or may even choose to opt for a different set of services. Passengers this decision is purely influenced by their level of satisfaction derived by them during a travel and while availing a particular private air carrier services. A high quality service is the cornerstone of any successful service industry which is why marketing strategies implemented by airlines to expand internationally must take into account the different expectations and perceptions of passengers. This study aimed to analyse the air passengers' level of expectation and satisfaction towards airlines services with references to Coimbatore city.

Objectives of the Study:

The following are the primary objectives, say

- To study the demographic and socio-economic status of the airline passengers living in Coimbatore city.
- To identify the prevailing gap between air passengers' level of expectation and satisfaction towards airlines services.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study has applied both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. The area of the study is restricted to Coimbatore. As per the information provided by the Coimbatore Airport authorities at present seven private and one public owned airline services are offered at this airport. All the eight airlines were chose as the sample. A small sample of thirty respondents was chosen as sample populations. The study is primary based on primary data sources.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of the study briefly outlines the demographic profile of the airline passengers' in Coimbatore city.

TABLE: 1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender			
1.	Male	23	76.67
2.	Female	7	23.33
	Total	30	100
Age			
1.	21-30 years	14	46.67
2.	31-40 years	11	36.67
3.	41-50 years	3	10.00
4.	Above 50 years	2	6.66
	Total	30	100
Educational Status			
1.	School Level	3	10.00
2.	College Level	17	56.67
3.	Professional Level	10	33.33
	Total	30	100
Occupational Status			
1.	Employed	20	66.66
2.	Business	6	20.00
3.	Professional	2	6.67
4.	Homemaker	2	6.67
	Total	30	100
Monthly Income			
1.	Upto ` . 20000	8	26.67
2.	` . 20001 - ` . 40000	12	40.00
3.	` . 40001 - ` . 60000	9	30.00
4.	` . 60001 - ` . 80000	1	3.33
	Total	30	100

Source: Primary Data

The data presented in the above table clearly indicates that, majority i.e., 76.67 per cent of respondents' are male and remaining 23.33 per cent of the sample populations' are female. Followed by it has been inferred that, 46.67 per cent of air passengers' are aged between 21-30 years and 36.67 per cent of respondents' fall under the age group of 31-40 years. Similarly 56.67 per cent of sample populations' have studied up to college level and 33.33 per cent of respondents' have pursued professional courses.

It is evident from the above data analysis that, majority i.e., 66.66 per cent of passengers' are salaried employees and 20 per cent of the respondents' are engaged in business. Further it has been observed that, 40 per cent of the sample populations' have opined that their monthly income ranges between ` .20001- ` .40000 and 30 per cent of the airline passengers' earn between ` .40001 - ` .60000 per month.

**TABLE: 2 (A) AIR PASSENGERS LEVEL OF EXPECTATION AND SATISFACTION TOWARDS AIRLINES SERVICES
 (Value in Weighted Arithmetic Mean)**

Variable	Expectation	Satisfaction	MD
Flight Selection			
Single connecting Flight	4.00	4.26	0.26
Non – stop flight	3.90	3.86	-0.04
Convenient flight schedule	4.00	3.86	-0.14
Safety of Flying	4.03	3.75	-0.28
Cost Concession of Ticket Reservation	3.90	3.71	-0.19
Reservation Procedures			
Convenience of reservation and ticketing	4.07	3.72	-0.35
Promptness and accuracy of reservation and ticketing	3.97	3.91	-0.06
Efficiency of ticketing staff	3.73	4.07	0.34

Behavior of ticketing staff	3.87	4.07	0.20
Providing seat that passengers prefer	3.77	3.87	0.10
Boarding			
Ease of obtaining boarding pass	3.63	3.87	0.24
Efficiency of check-in at the counter	3.87	3.77	-0.10
Baggage waiting time	3.57	3.73	0.16
Queue time a check in counter	3.50	3.87	0.37
Baggage handling	3.97	3.93	-0.04
Baggage security	3.83	3.70	-0.13
Hot seat priority	3.80	4.13	0.33
In – flight Entertainment			
In bound & out bound theatres	3.67	4.24	0.57
Personal Entertainment appliances	3.63	4.30	0.67
Audio –video on demand newspapers, Magazines etc	3.70	3.98	0.28
In – flight Facilities & Comfort			
In – Flight services	3.93	4.10	0.17
Safety & Security	3.87	4.26	0.39
Comfort	3.77	4.12	0.35
On board meals	3.80	3.65	-0.15

Source: Primary Data

TABLE: 2 (B) AIR PASSENGERS LEVEL OF EXPECTATION AND SATISFACTION TOWARDS AIRLINES SERVICES
(Value in Weighted Arithmetic Mean)

Variable	Expectation	Satisfaction	MD
Information			
Reservation of flights delay	4.13	3.61	-0.52
Availability of Info	3.87	3.40	-0.47
Behavior of crew	3.97	3.46	-0.51
Check – in – services	3.97	3.33	-0.64
Compensatory			
Refreshments of Flight Delays	3.80	4.09	0.29
Compensation	3.77	3.50	-0.27
Value for money			
Value for money	3.93	3.69	-0.24
FF Programmes	3.83	3.37	-0.46
Time Value			
Rescheduling / Cancellations	3.87	3.44	-0.43
Flights on time	3.77	3.39	-0.38
Cabin Crew Services			
Cordial welcome by in-flight crew	3.87	4.07	0.20
Efficiency of check – in at the counter	3.73	4.17	0.44
Attitude of in-flight service crew	3.93	4.03	0.10
Cabin cleanliness	3.97	4.03	0.06
Cabin Quietness	4.13	4.07	-0.06
Cabin temperature on ground	3.93	3.93	0.00
Cabin temperature during flight	3.70	4.03	0.33
Seat are comfort	4.00	4.30	0.30
Provide pillows and Blankets	4.07	3.80	-0.27
Sky sales on Board	4.00	4.17	0.17
Rest room Cleanliness	4.13	4.03	-0.10
Food & Beverages			
Onboard catering services	4.10	4.03	-0.07
Price (If Paid by the passenger)	3.97	4.13	0.16
Quality of meals	3.83	4.03	0.20
Variety of Meal	3.70	4.05	0.35

Source: Primary Data

From the above Tables: 2 (A)-(B) it has been observed that the air passengers' exhibit high degree of satisfaction towards the features such as: Single connecting Flight, Efficiency of ticketing staff, Behavior of ticketing staff, Providing seat that

passengers prefer, Ease of obtaining boarding pass, Baggage waiting time, Queue time a check in counter, Hot seat priority, In bound & out bound theatres, Personal Entertainment appliances, Audio –video on demand newspapers, Magazines etc., In – Flight services, Safety & Security, Comfort, Refreshments of Flight Delays, Cordial welcome by in-flight crew, Efficiency of check – in at the counter, Attitude of in-flight service crew, Cabin cleanliness, Cabin temperature on ground, Cabin temperature during flight, Seat are comfort, Sky sales on Board, Price (If Paid by the passenger), Quality of meals and Variety of Meal as their satisfaction levels on these services are higher than their expectations.

Whereas it has been observed that the respondents' have stated that private airline services like: Non– stop flight, Convenient flight schedule, Safety of Flying, Cost Concession of Ticket Reservation, Convenience of reservation and ticketing, Promptness and accuracy of reservation and ticketing, Efficiency of check-in at the counter, Baggage handling, Baggage security, On board meals, Reservation of flights delay, Availability of Info, Behavior of crew, Check – in – services, Compensation, Value for money, FF Programmes, Rescheduling / Cancellations, Flights on time, Cabin Quietness, Provide pillows and Blankets, Rest room Cleanliness and Onboard catering services are not very satisfactory and have to be enhanced in the future for the betterment of the passengers'.

5. FINDINGS AND /IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

From the detailed study it has been observed that 46.67 per cent of air passengers' are very young that is they fall under the age group of 21-30 years, .66 per cent of passengers' are salaried employees, who's monthly income ranges between `20001- `40000. Thus, it has been concluded that majority of the air passengers fall under the middle income class category, who generally prefer low cost private air carriers for easy and conveniently travel. Further, the study has observed that they exists wide gap in passengers' level of expectation and satisfaction with the service features. The passenger faces difficulties while using private airline services due to: lack of Non– stop flight services ,inconvenient flight schedule, less safety of Flying, no cost concession of ticket reservation, inconvenience of reservation and ticketing, delayed and inaccurate reservation and ticketing services, inefficiency in functioning of check-in at the counter, poor baggage handling, lack of baggage security, no facilities for on-board meals, negligence in reservation of flights delay, poor availability of information, poor behavior of crew, poor check–in–services, poor compensation, no value for money, poor FF programmes, improper information on flight rescheduling / cancellations, unpunctual flights timing, noise inside the cabin and poor overall flight infrastructure.

The study realise that the airlines have to adopt efficiency in their overall operations to stay competitive in the domestic airline market. The study suggest the private air lines to focus their marketing strategies fulfill the passengers expectation towards airline safety, offer value for money, adopt ease of reservation and repayment practices, install more entertainment facilities inside the flight, enhance efficiency in baggage handling, train their staff to be courtesy and maintain the airline cleanliness both at the passenger seating sites and inside the cabin in general. It is believed that enhancing airline services will ensure them that their passenger time and again will use their services.

6. CONCLUSION

India's civil aviation industry is on a high-growth trajectory. India aims to become the third-largest aviation market by 2020 and the largest by 2030. The Civil Aviation industry has ushered in a new era of expansion, driven by factors such as low-cost carriers (LCCs), modern airports. Over the next five years, domestic and international passenger traffic is expected to increase at an annual average rate of 12 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively. India's aviation industry is largely untapped with huge growth opportunities, considering that air transport is still expensive for majority of the country's population, of which nearly 40 per cent is the upwardly mobile middle class. It is the right time that the private airline operators functioning in India realising the opportunities available to them have to enhance their service quality and try to reduce the prevailing gap between air passengers expectation and final level of satisfaction.

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