

A STUDY OF PASSENGERS OPINION ABOUT AIRLINE SERVICES

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Abstract

Airline Industry is growing at a fast pace on one hand and other side the competition faced by the airlines to sustain in the market is getting difficult with the increase in fuel cost, airport taxes and along with more number of carrier came into market with different service motive. Customer's needs and wants are increasing day by day. Nowadays customers want best service at affordable rate with higher service quality. So to maintain the quality and better service and keep their ticket cost low to attract customer is not an easy task. Therefore the airline service providers do different marketing strategies to attract the customers and also to retain them. It is interesting to see that the passengers prefer airline services more comparatively in the previous past. Therefore, it is necessary to find the awareness level of passengers towards different airline services, their preferences and ideas, level of satisfaction towards the services both during travel and in the airport and also to find out the inconvenience caused to the passengers. Hence a study on marketing practices in airline services is identified as the problem of the study.

Keywords: airline service, affordable rate

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the fastest growing aviation markets in the world. With the liberalization of the Indian aviation sector, the industry had witnessed a transformation with the entry of the privately owned full service airlines and low cost carriers. As of May 2006, private carriers accounted for around 75 per cent share of the domestic aviation market. With a Compound Annual Growth rate (CAGR) of 18 per cent and 454 airports and airstrips in place in the country, of which 16 are designated as international airports. The sector has also seen a significant increase in number of domestic air travel passengers. Some of the factors that have resulted in higher demand for air transport in India include the growing middle class and its purchasing power, low airfares offered by low cost carriers, the growth of the tourism industry in India, increasing outbound travel from India, and the overall economic growth of India. In addition to these factors, the emphasis on modernization of non-metro airports, fleet expansion by airlines, service expansion by state owned carriers, development of the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) industry in India, opening up of new international routes by the Indian government, establishment of new airports and renovation and restructuring of the existing airports have added to the growth of the industry.

The history of the civil aviation industry in India can be traced back to the year 1912 when the first air flight between Karachi and Delhi was started by the Indian State Air Services in collaboration with the UK based Imperial Airways. The Government of India nationalized nine airline companies vide the Air Corporations Act, 1953. Accordingly it established the Indian Airlines Corporation (IAC) to cater to domestic air travel passengers and Air India International (AI) for international air travel passengers. The assets of the existing airline companies were transferred to these two corporations. This Act ensured that IAC and AI had a monopoly over the Indian skies. A third government-owned airline, Vayudoot, which provided services between smaller cities, was merged with IAC in 1994. These government-owned airlines dominated India's air travel industry till the mid-1990s. In 1994, IAC was renamed Indian Airlines (IA). In the same year, the Indian Government, as part of its "open skies" policy, ended the monopoly of IA and AI in the air transport services by repealing the Air Corporations Act of 1953 and replacing it with the Air Corporations (Transfer of Undertaking and Repeal) Act, 1994. Private operators were allowed to provide air transport services. Foreign direct investment (FDI) of up to 49 percent equity stake and NRI (Non Resident Indian) investment

of up to 100 percent equity stake were permitted through the automatic FDI route in the domestic air transport services sector. However, no foreign airline could directly or indirectly hold equity in a domestic airline company. By 1995, six private airlines accounted for more than 10 percent of the domestic air traffic.

Coimbatore airport first started operations in the 1940s as a civil aerodrome, with Indian Airlines. In its early days, services were mainly to Chennai and Mumbai. Later services to Cochin and Bengaluru were added. In the early 1980s, the airport was closed down for runway expansion, to accommodate modern jets like the Boeing 737 and the Airbus A320. Temporarily, airlines were using the nearby Sullur Airbase. In 1987, after completion of the runway expansion and a new terminal, the airport resumed services. In 1995, Indian Airlines started international services to Sharjah, and in 2007 operations were started to the international destinations of Colombo and Singapore. There are two hangars, one for private carriers and one for the Coimbatore Flying Club. The parking bays in the airport can accommodate a maximum of six aircraft, and the airport also has a fire station. The airport has one runway that is 9,760 feet (2,970 m) in length - previously the runway was 8,500 ft (2,600 m) in length. Because of this runway expansion, the airport can accommodate aircraft such as the Boeing 747 and Airbus A330. An Instrument Landing System (ILS) is also being installed. The Coimbatore airport is now with expanded and advanced infrastructure facility

The airport now can at a time accommodate 350 passengers arriving at the airport and 350 departing from there. There is a new building which is having all modern facilities - four lifts, four escalators and two aerobridges. A new parallel taxi track, laid at a cost of ₹ 31 crore; four state-of-the-art fire tenders; extension of runway; new fire station and a workshop are some of the other facilities added to the airport. Originally there was no air-conditioning facility at the Coimbatore airport. However, the expanded area is now totally air-conditioned.

With the expansion, the area of the building has been increased from 5,962 m to 14,673 m, having separate domestic and international arrival halls. The new arrival hall has been constructed with three conveyor belts with a loop length of 60 m each as against the two with 13.5 m length functioning in the old building. There is space for a VIP room, customs office, duty free shop, banks etc. Presently, domestic and international passengers are handled through common security hold. Soon, the existing departure lounge of the terminal building will be enlarged and modified. The AAI with the help of the state highways department has developed a four-lane approach road and two additional service roads.

Statement of the Problem:

Airline Industry is growing at a fast pace on one hand and other side the competition faced by the airlines to sustain in the market is getting difficult with the increase in fuel cost, airport taxes and along with more number of carrier came into market with different service motive. Customer's needs and wants are increasing day by day. Nowadays customers want best service at affordable rate with higher service quality. So to maintain the quality and better service and keep their ticket cost low to attract not an easy task. Therefore the airline service providers do different marketing strategies to attract the customers and also to retain them. It is interesting to see that the passengers prefer airline services more comparatively in the previous past. Therefore, it is necessary to find the awareness level of passengers towards different airline services, their preferences and ideas, level of satisfaction towards the services both during travel and in the airport and also to find out the inconvenience caused to the passengers. Hence a study on marketing practices in airline services is identified as the problem of the study.

Objectives of the Study:

- To study the passengers awareness of various airline services.
- To study the passengers ideas, opinion and preferences towards airline services.
- To study the level of satisfaction of passengers towards airline services.
- To study about the various problems faced by the passengers on airline services.
- To offer suggestions based on the findings of the study.

Methodology:

Description study also known as statistical research, describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. The area of the study refers to Coimbatore City. Through well structured questionnaire primary data was collected. It was collected from 300 respondents. The Secondary data was collected from the study related websites, journals and magazines. It

was collected through the library to facilitate proper understanding of the conceptual frame work about the study. For the purpose of the study 300 Questionnaire were collected from the airline passengers or customers. Stratified Random Sampling method is administered in this study. The collected data is then edited consolidated and subjected to suitable statistical test and the data is presented in the form of percentage and exhibits. Tools used for analysis Percentage Analysis, Graphical Representation, Chi-Square Analysis, Average Rank Analysis.

Findings of Percentage analysis:

Demographic profile	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Source of awareness of the product	Advertisement	31	30
	Magazine	4	4
	Newspaper	12	12
	Internet	16	16
	Family members	22	21
	Own interest	18	17
	Through this questionnaire	0	0
	Total	103	100
Level of satisfaction towards selected factors	Television	29	17
	Radio	13	8
	Newspaper	34	20
	Magazines	54	33
	Others please specify	36	22
	Total	166	100
Frequency of Travelling	Always I prefer	153	51
	Sometimes	41	14
	Rarely	23	8
	Need based	83	27
	Total	300	100
Purpose of travelling	Own Business	73	24
	Personal	111	37
	Official	39	13
	Tour	50	17
	Others please specify	27	9
	Total	300	100

The following are the findings of the study shows that, Majority (59%) of the respondents belongs to Male category, Most (42%) of the respondents belongs to the age group between 21 - 40 years, Most (36%) of the respondents are educated up to UG Degree/Diploma level, Most (44%) of the respondents are doing their own business, Majority (74%) of the respondents comes

under nuclear family, Most (37%) of the respondents comes under the family of 2 to 4 members, Most (48%) of the respondents have a monthly income of Rs. 40,001-Rs. 60,000, Majority (55%) of the respondents are aware through Advertisement, Most (33%) of the respondents out of those respondents who were aware through advertisements are aware through Magazines, Majority (51%) of the respondents always prefer Airways for their travelling, Most (37%) of the respondents prefer flight for personal purpose, Most (47%) of the respondents prefer Economic class for their travelling, Most (31%) of the respondent's travels more than 5 times in six months frequently.

Findings of Chi- Square Analysis

Personal Factors	Chi-squar Test	p-value	Signifi cant Value	S/NS
Gender	4.687	0.321	0.05	NS
Age	30.938	0.002	0.05	S
Education Qualification	20.189	0.017	0.05	NS
Occupation Status	61.458	0.000	0.05	S
Type of family	10.895	0.012	0.05	NS
Size of family	34.317	0.000	0.05	S
Monthly Income	28.426	0.005	0.05	NS

- Age, gender, educational qualification, occupation status, type of family, size of family and monthly income has significant influence on the respondents prefer airways for domestic travel.
- Age, gender, age, educational qualification, occupation status and monthly income have significant influence on the purpose of respondents flight travelling

Suggestions:

Provide Offers and Discounts:

It is essential to introduce offers, discounts and concessions for the passengers those who are travelling very frequently. As well as it is necessary to suggest that ticket fare concessions will also be given to senior citizens and differently-able people.

Provide Tour Packages & Reduce the Ticket Fare:

Still most of the passengers prefer rail transport for the purpose of tours. The passengers prefer domestic and international airline mostly for personal purpose. Even though the ticket fare is affordable the lower middle class people cannot able to afford.

Safety and Security:

The passengers' concern over assurance and safety, security and confidence building factors are very low. It indicates that they are not giving much importance to these aspects.

Improve the Pre-flight Services

The passengers' expectations of ticket bookings and flight scheduling and check-in and boarding are very high. The airlines service providers have to give perfect attention in these aspects which will fulfill the passengers' expectations of pre-flight services. airlines services providers.

Food Options

The passengers face problem in food options. Many of them prefer vegetarian food, Indian non-vegetarian, and continental food. Some of them prefer chat items also.

Post-flight Services

At the end of the travel destination, the passengers are looking for very quick check-out and settling and baggage reclaims. It is suggested that the airline services providers have to follow and implement a perfect mechanism in post-flight services.

Image Building:

Image building is an imperative aspect for the airline service providers. It should be possible by the way of providing right information about them. Providing right information will create good image of the airline service provider.

Conclusion

Today's generation passengers become very choosy in selection of airlines because they know how to spend their hard-earned money and they plan their trip, by exploring all the possibilities to get the best deal and they want to make sure every penny spend is worth it and to get the best. Now the key is with customers who are driving the aviation industry, so the airlines need to focus in their low price strategy to attract the passengers. Airlines can't able to retain their passengers who fly with them will always fly with them in near future as well; so more you provide better service the more the passenger will retain with your airlines. If any airlines need to survive in today's global competitive environment they need to get their act together with best program and see to that, what is expected from the passenger's perspective and their experience? To achieve the maximum passengers number for any airlines it is vital that they constantly do get feedbacks from them and act on it if the suggestion are good enough and it can be within affordable limits by the airline then they have to go with it; a saying goes "Customer is the King" so airlines have to satisfy them to keep them on board in their airlines whenever they want to fly they prefer your airlines over your competitors.

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