

# Service Quality of Airlines: An Empirical Study

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## ABSTRACT

In India service sector is one of the most crucial sectors and it is the largest contributor in Indian economy. With growing competition in service sector, service quality plays an important role in not only retaining customer but also to attract prospective ones. Providing quality service is a mandate for surviving in the long run. With the growth of service sector in Indian economy especially in the aviation sector, it is crucial for the airline service providers to understand their customers, design offers and deliver the desired value to their customers. The present study is an attempt to analyze the perception of passengers about service quality of airlines. The sample size for the present study is thirty (30). Convenient sampling technique has been used to select the sample. Statistical tools, such as, mean and coefficient of variation have been used for the purpose of analysis of data to arrive at the findings of the study.

**Keywords:** Reliability, Tangibility, Responsiveness, Competence and Empathy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the fastest growing aviation markets in the world. With the liberalization of the Indian aviation sectors, the industry has witnessed a transformation with the entry of the privately owned full service airlines and low cost carriers. 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 fares offered by low cost carriers, the growth of the tourism industry in India, increasing outbound travel from India and the overall economic growth of nation. Indian aircraft market is the world's second largest commercial aircraft market (Baby, 2012). The essence of success in airlines services is greatly influenced by the variety of facilities, amenities, tariff structure, on the ground service, in-flight services, ease and comforts of travelling (Murugeswari,

2018). Delivering high-quality service to passengers is important for airline survival, thus airlines need to recognize and satisfy the passenger's expectation, in terms of services (Murugeswari and Kanagaraj, 2017).

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Murugesan and Perumalsamy (2016) conducted a study to find out the customer satisfaction in airways in various objects like, quality, service, fare etc. In order to carry out the study a sample of 200 respondents comprised of all travelling passenger using the Airline service was considered. The study revealed that customers are satisfied with quality of service, safety measure provided by airline. Passengers also fulfilled in-flight amenities, cabin spotlessness and seat luxury.

Mohideen and Rajak (2016) conducted a study to investigate the levels of satisfaction and the importance attributed to overall airline service quality and select attributes of air passengers of Tiruchirappalli Airport. In order to carry out the study a sample of 200 respondents from Tamil Nadu was considered. The study concluded that the dominant variables in respect seven determinants of service quality in Airlines sector as per the perception of passengers were; staff uniforms and appearance, food choices, getting boarding pass without delay, Possibility of technical fault plane, Awareness and knowledge to answer travelers' questions, Variety of children's entertainment content, Easy accessibility of the Airlines Website.

Goyal and et.al (2016) carried out a study to understand the customer perception of service quality components in domestic airlines industry in India. In order to carry out the study a sample of 342 domestic bound air passengers at Chandigarh, Delhi and Amritsar Airport was considered. The study revealed that the services available are the most important factor in forming the customer perception regarding service quality in domestic airlines industry. The next important factor is

employee's responsiveness followed by in-flight services, Service Personalization and Reliability.

Singh (2014) conducted a study to evaluate the underlying forces of service quality influences on passenger's satisfaction in domestic Airline, with special reference to Indian Airlines. The study revealed that Airline service dimensions were found to have direct and positive influences on airline image and passengers' satisfaction intentions. The passengers are satisfied with the services quality delivered in in-flight services.

Usha and Kusuma (2017) conducted a study to examine the underlying forces of service quality influences on passengers' satisfaction in aircraft transport and also to examine which dimensions have a positive influence on service quality. The study revealed that maximum number of the passenger was satisfied with service quality of Air India Ltd and only a few of the passengers were not satisfied. Personal entertainment is the most important dimension as perceived by airline passengers in In-flight digital service quality.

Gilbert and Wong (2003) conducted a study to identify the dimension that matters the most in airline industry. In order to carry out the study a sample of 336 passengers departing from Hong Kong International Airport was considered. The study revealed that passenger consistently rank 'assurance' as the most important service dimension indicating that passengers are concerned about safety and security aspect.

Abdullah and et.al. (2007) conducted a study to examine the perception of Malaysian consumers about the quality of airline services using the SERVQUAL measurement. The study revealed that the most significant factors in Malaysian customers' perception of service quality are Empathy, Tangibles and Assurance. In addition, the respondents indicated that the airlines surveyed performed better than expected on the Responsiveness dimension of service quality.

Huang (2009) carried out a study to understand air passengers' decision-making processes by testing a conceptual model that considers service value, airline service quality, satisfaction, perceived sacrifice, and behavioural intentions. The study found that, the service value, satisfaction, and perceived sacrifice have positive effects on behavioral intention. Furthermore, service value not only has direct effect on behavioral intention, but also indirect effect on behavioral intention by satisfaction.

Ariffin and et.al. (2010) conducted a study to determine the relationships between the dimensions of service quality and passengers' satisfaction in low-cost airlines. The study revealed that caring and tangible was the most important dimension of service quality for low-cost carriers, followed by reliability, responsiveness, affordability and visual attractiveness.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To assess the perception of passengers of Cachar district of Assam about select service quality dimensions of airlines.
2. To assess the perception of passengers of Cachar district of Assam about the components of service quality dimensions of airlines

### **Research Methodology**

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on primary data. For this present research, population includes airline passengers who at least once travelled from Silchar airport during last five years. The sample size for the present study is thirty (30). Convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample. The questionnaire is comprised of close ended questions and four-point rating scales ranging from 1 (= Not Important) to 4 (= Highly Important) was used to measure the perception of the respondents. Statistical tools, such as mean and coefficient of variation have been used for the purpose of analysis.

### **Scope of the Study**

1. The scope of the present study is confined to select dimensions of service quality, Assam.
2. The present study is confined to 30 respondents from Silchar who have travelled from Silchar Airport

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. The study is based upon the perception of the respondents & hence it is subject to all the limitations that are inherent in any perception-based study.
2. Convenient sampling method has been used & hence the possibility of sampling error cannot be completely ruled out.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Relative Importance of Dimensions of Service Quality**

Service Quality Dimensions	Mean	CV (%)
Reliability	3.800	8.417
Tangibility	3.593	10.789
Responsiveness	3.800	12.020
Competence	3.558	19.235
Empathy	3.617	10.698

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 reveals the relative importance of dimensions of service quality. Based on mean scores, the highest degree of importance has been observed with respect to the dimensions “Responsiveness” and “Reliability” (3.80) followed by “Empathy” (3.617), “Tangibility” (3.593), and “Competence” (3.558).

As far as values of CV is concerned, least variation in the responses of passengers has been found with the dimension “Reliability” while highest degree of variation has been observed with respect to the dimension “Competence”.

**Table 2: Relative importance of components of Reliability Dimension of Service Quality**

Components of Reliability Dimension	Mean	CV (%)
Delivery of services within the promised time frame	3.77	16.621
Providing of correct services at the first instance	3.73	15.624
Providing of accurate and complete information to its passengers	3.87	8.942
Trustworthiness of cabin crews in handling passengers’ problems	3.77	16.621
Dependable baggage handling mechanism	3.79	12.953
Providing of intimation at proper time regarding flight cancellation/delay	3.87	8.942

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 reveals the relative importance of components of Reliability dimension of service quality. Based on mean scores, the highest degree of importance has been observed with respect to the component “Providing of accurate and complete information to its passengers” (3.87) and “Providing of intimation at proper time regarding flight cancellation/delay” (3.87) followed by “Dependable baggage handling mechanism” (3.79), “Delivery of services within the promised time frame” (3.77), “Trustworthiness of cabin crews in

handling passengers’ problems” (3.77) and “Providing of correct services at the first instance” (3.73).

As far as values of CV is concerned, least variation in the responses of passengers has been found with the component “Providing of accurate and complete information to its passengers” while highest degree of variation has been observed with respect to the component “Delivery of services within the promised time frame”.

**Table:3 Relative importance of components of Tangibility Dimension of Service Quality**

Components of Tangibility Dimension	Mean	CV (%)
Modern and well-maintained aero planes	3.7	12.597
Visually appealing physical facilities	3.1	27.254
Tidy appearance of employees	3.33	22.743
Comfortable seats for passengers	3.9	7.824
Maintenance of cleanliness inside the flight	3.93	6.450

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 reveals the relative importance of components of Tangibility dimension of service quality. Based on mean scores, the highest degree of importance has been observed with respect to the component “Maintenance of cleanliness inside the flight” (3.93) followed by “Comfortable seats for passengers” (3.9), “Modern and well-maintained aero planes” (3.7), “Tidy appearance of

employees” (3.33) and “Visually appealing physical facilities” (3.1).

As far as values of CV is concerned, least variation in the responses of passengers has been found with the component “Maintenance of cleanliness inside the flight” while highest degree of variation has been observed with respect to the component “Visually appealing physical facilities”.

**Table: 4 Relative importance of components of Responsiveness Dimension of Service Quality**

Components of Responsiveness Dimension	Mean	CV (%)
Swiftness of cabin crews in delivering service to the passengers	3.8	12.743
Readiness of cabin crews to address passengers’ problems	3.83	13.844
Willingness of cabin crews to respond to requests of passengers	3.77	13.381
Promptness of employees to deal with passengers at the check in counter	3.8	14.496

Source: Field Survey

Table 4 reveals the relative importance of components of Responsiveness dimension of service quality. Based on mean scores, the highest degree of importance has been observed with respect to the component “Readiness of cabin crews to address passengers’ problems” (3.83) followed by “Swiftness of cabin crews in delivering service to the passengers” (3.8), “Promptness of employees to deal with passengers at the check in counter” (3.8) and “Willingness of

cabin crews to respond to requests of passengers” (3.77).

As far as values of CV is concerned, least variation in the responses of passengers has been found with the component “Swiftness of cabin crews in delivering service to the passengers” while highest degree of variation has been observed with respect to the component “Promptness of employees to deal with passengers at the check in counter”.

**Table 5:Relative importance of components of Competence Dimension of Service Quality**

Components of Competence Dimension	Mean	CV (%)
Knowledge of cabin crews to meet the queries of passengers	3.6	23.75
Possession of acumen of cabin crews to handle passengers’ problems	3.6	18.741
Ability of cabin crews to instill confidence in passengers’ mind	3.43	27.241

Ability of employees to make effective communication to the passengers	3.6	20.11
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Source: Field Survey

Table 5 reveals the relative importance of components of Competence dimension of service quality. Based on mean scores, the highest degree of importance has been observed with respect to the component “Possession of acumen of cabin crews to handle passengers’ problems” (3.6), “Ability of employees to make effective communication to the passengers” (3.6) and “Knowledge of cabin crews to meet the queries of passengers” (3.6) followed by “Ability of cabin

crews to instill confidence in passengers’ mind” (3.43).

As far as values of CV is concerned, least variation in the responses of passengers has been found with the component “Possession of acumen of cabin crews to handle passengers’ problems” while highest degree of variation has been observed with respect to the component “Ability of cabin crews to instill confidence in passengers’ mind”.

**Table 6: Relative importance of components of Empathy Dimension of Service Quality**

Components of Empathy Dimension	Mean	CV (%)
Individual attention to its passengers	3.53	24.35
Convenient flight schedule	3.73	12.048
Personal attention by cabin crews in dealing with passengers	3.5	20.888
Realizing the exact needs of specific passenger by cabin crews	3.7	12.597

Source: Field Survey

Table 6 reveals the relative importance of components of Empathy dimension of service quality. Based on mean scores, the highest degree of importance has been observed with respect to the component “Convenient flight schedule” (3.73) followed by “Realizing the exact needs of specific passenger by cabin crews” (3.7), “Individual attention to its passengers” (3.53) and “Personal attention by cabin crews in dealing with passengers” (3.5).

As far as values of CV is concerned, least variation in the responses of passengers has been found with the component “Convenient flight schedule” while highest degree of variation has been observed with respect to the component “Individual attention to its passengers”.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In today's market, service quality is a priceless asset for modern airline businesses. In order to expand and protect a profitable airline business, improving the passengers’ experience is now a critical component of acquiring new passengers and retaining existing passengers. In the present study it has been found that majority of the passengers have attached maximum importance to reliability dimension and responsiveness dimension of service quality. Therefore, airlines are expected

to provide maximum attention to convince the passengers through various components of reliability dimension and responsiveness dimension of service quality.

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