

Passenger Satisfaction in LCC in Don Mueang Airport, Thailand

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Abstract

The objectives of this paper derived from this paper's research are as follows: (1) to determine customer satisfaction towards service quality and company image offered by LCC Thailand. And (2) to determine the correlation and significance of the said correlation between company image and service quality (regarding customer satisfaction) delivered by low-cost carrier management. The research methods are divided into 2 major categories: quantitative research and qualitative research. The service quality of the ground staff Low-cost carrier by using qualitative research and quantitative by observing and interviews with crises arising from airline ground staff. The research questionnaire applied for Thai Lion Air, Nok Air, and Thai Air Asia 200 passengers. The applied theory research SERVQUAL which is divided into 5 areas which are 1) Responding to service recipients (Responsiveness) 2) Assurance to the clients (Assurance) 3) The tangibility of the service (Tangibles) 4) Understanding and empathy in the client (Empathy) and 5) Reliability (Reliability). The researches found that Ground staff services have 5 areas which are 1) plane ticket sales, 2) check-in services, 3) boarding services at the gate, 4) airport parking area services, and 5) airport services. When analyzed with SERVQUAL to measure the service quality of low-cost airlines, it has been found that service at the point ticket sales requires further improvement with respect to service quality provided to customers. From the survey of 200 passengers claims that some of This 'failure' lies in an inability to communicate in English to the fullest capacity for passengers. While providing services at the check-

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in point, staff should be better prepared when providing service recipients, the knowledge and understanding they require; attention to the passenger's needs is paramount, especially paying attention to the necessity and passenger benefits in the event of seat selection and providing assurance to clients. Although ground staff have quality service, high in reliability, empathy and responsiveness, they have low service quality when considering the provision of confidence towards the clients, assurance and tangibles. As stated, the purpose of this paper's findings is to ascertain passenger satisfaction and assess what passengers need. Airlines must collect the information to investigate the problem that the airlines may have caused the customer to experience, the expense of delayed service and avoid repeating it in the future.

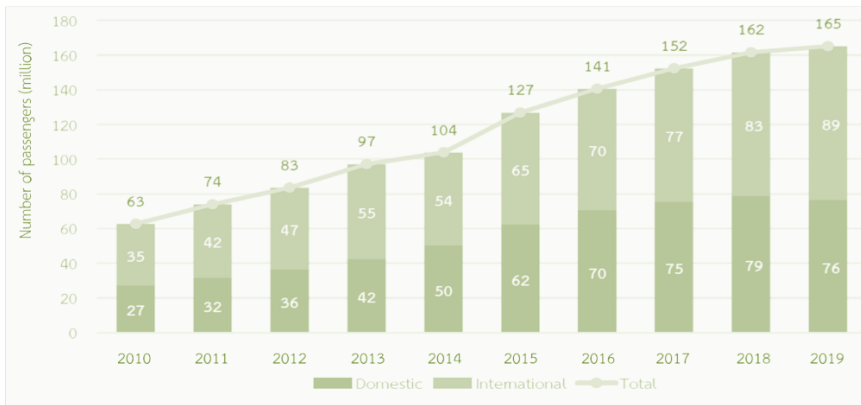
Keywords : Passenger, Satisfaction, Don Mueang Airport

Introduction

When ever we are looking for affordable transportation alternatives, anything that's cheap for everyone, then look no further than budget airline travel choices within Thailand. If you're on a quick ride or need to be faster than what a typical overnight bus journey would take, affordable flying is an alternative.

According to figures on the overall number of passengers around the world over the last 10 years (2010-2019), the number of passengers in Thailand has risen steadily per year since 2010, with the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of all passengers at 11,38% over the period 2010-2019, consisting of the compound annual growth rate of international and domestic passengers at 10,77% and 12,77% respectively. The number of passengers since 2016 has grown at a slower rate. Especially in 2019 which had a total of 165 million passengers, consisting of 88.82 million international passengers increased by 7.16% from 2018, and 76.25 million domestic passengers which decreased by 3.02% This is the first decline in domestic passengers in 10 years. In 2019, the proportions of domestic and international passengers accounted for 46.19% and 53.81% respectively.

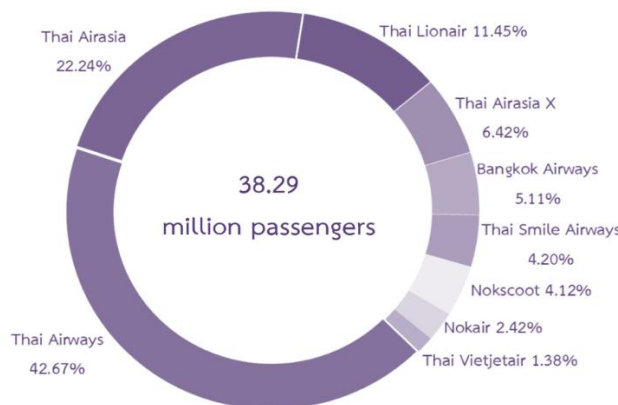
Overall number of passengers across the country during 2010–2019



Source : Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (2020)

Market share of Thai airlines on domestic routes

In 2019, Thai airline which showed the highest number of passengers on scheduled international routes was Thai AirAsia. AirAsia had 34 million passengers on domestic routes. Thai Vietjet Air showed the lowest number of passenger of 528,052 people, accounting for 1.38% of the total number of international passengers.



Source : Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (2020)

Research Objectives and Structure

For the purpose of this research, using customer satisfaction to determine passenger satisfaction and to evaluate what passengers need. In fact, airlines have the opportunity to improve the customer service system to meet the needs of travelers and consider the

customer's problems as passengers use this service. Once the reason that has been unnecessary cost causes the passenger service system has been delayed, the airlines must collect the information to investigate for a decrease the problem that the airlines waste the expense of delayed service.

The first section of the research is the analysis of the exiting literature on low - cost ASEAN airlines, Thailand accessible skies, which Airlines influence the Thai LCCs market? And that will give a better understanding of the research goals. Customer satisfaction and passenger problem when facing the prospects of low - cost airlines and passengers, and the performance measurements in the airline industry that will be discussed. After presentation of the literature review, the process and statistical 6 techniques used in this study to perform measurement of passenger satisfaction will be examined in the chapter on methods. In addition, the segment on methodology often defends types of data used, method of data collection and selection of samples in the study.

From the scenario mentioned above, the following research objectives for this scenario are:

1. Indicating customer satisfaction responses regarding quality of service and company offered by Low-cost carriers in Thailand.

2. Identifying the key contributors for improving customer satisfaction towards LCCs airlines management.

3. Determining the positive correlating components in LCCs management for customer satisfaction regarding company image and quality of services.

The research questions are summarized as follows:

1. How relevant customer satisfaction is to boost the decision of passengers in Thailand Low-cost airlines?

2. What is the issue in Thailand Low-cost airlines that affects passengers?

Outlines of Relevant Context

A major concern in the aviation industry is quality of service. Although aircraft are used primarily for transportation, other factors such as ticketing, checking, boarding and baggage handling procedures may have an important impact on travelers and their

perceptions of service quality provided to airlines (Feng-I, 2005). (Headley & Bowen, 1997) state that service quality is the contrast between customer's perception of what is expected and what they need from a service and their actual experience after receiving the product and service. (Mostafa, 2005) believes that the quality of service has become a common research subject as it is a key contributor to profitability, expenditure, customer satisfaction and customer retention, service guarantees and positive fiscal operation. (Parasuraman et al., 1991) perceives service quality as a customer-centered measure of performance. Additionally, quality of service is expressed in the overall excellence or superiority in operation from a global perspective or appraisal (Ugboma et al., 2004). Service providers must supply their customers with quality service for effective operation to happen. In past studies, analyses of customers' perceptions, expectations and desires regarding service quality and the impact of customer satisfaction levels on their potential behavior and repurchase behavior resulted in various strategies were proposed to companies for improving customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Research Method

Research Design and Approach: A quantitative approach towards this research was chosen as it is objective and can concentrate on measuring the variables within this research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Quantitative research allows for further understanding regarding social interaction components such as attitudes, behaviors, and processes. (Crossman, 2020). A quantitative approach to research potentially presents biased results from respondents who may favor LCCs more so than the average respondent. (Park et al., 1997). For this research, the researcher chose to use quantitative research to study the relationship between service quality and satisfaction with low-cost airline services. (Jia, Cheae, Pei & Yam, 2016). The survey research will be performed by distributing a questionnaire to LCC passengers at DMK International. Multiple regression analysis will be used to analyse the survey responses and evaluate the relationship as mentioned above. (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

Population and Sample: The main purpose of this article is to study the low-cost airline passenger's loyalty. As such, the target population in this study at Don Mueang Airport by the LCCs - Nok Air, Thai Lion Air and Thai Air Asia. A sample size 200 will be used. According to Lyons (2015) any poll selects a representative demographic from the entire population and then generalizes the findings to the entire population. Mostly as general rule, the sampling sizes of 200 to 300 respondents have a reasonable margin of error

Research Instrumentation: The Questionnaire Design: The instrument formed was separated into numerous parts with the principal page of the survey as the introductory letter. The survey gathered essential data about the respondents, e.g., inquiries concerning the recurrence of movement. The primary segment of the poll contained inquiries identifying with the different measurements of AIRQUAL. Altogether, 30 inquiries were adjusted from the past examinations directed on administration quality. The 30 things of the scale were partitioned into five unmistakable elements (Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, Confirmation and Empathy). The penultimate area of the survey was intended to gather information on respondents' degree of fulfillment and dependability. The last segment contained inquiries on the respondents' profile.

In this study, the research instrument use for collecting data is the questions of loyalty level of the passengers. It is comprised of three parts:

Part 1 A general questions that gathers the respondents' background information such as questions to with gender, flying frequency and flying experience for example.

Part 2 Service quality questions relating to the 5 dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles) that forms SERQUAL, using 15 items within the questionnaire.

Part 3 Passenger satisfaction which is measured by four items in the questionnaire.

Data Collection Process: Testing the questionnaire is the first step before carrying out the survey in order to prove the validity of questionnaire. Subsequently, pilot test is the next step in order to pretest the format and suitability of questionnaire as well as eliminate ambiguity. The collecting data will be carrying out by using questionnaire survey. It will be distributed to Thai passengers who experienced in in-flight service of low-cost carrier in Thailand.

Data Analysis: The Social Sciences Statistical Package (SPSS) program will be used to analyze the collected data statistically. It will analyze data gained from questionnaires. To explain the importance of each factor analysis in the motivation factors, the data will use descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics act as a tool to demonstrate the fundamental characteristics of the data in a study, which then enables basic summaries of the samples (Trochim, 2006).

A frequency and mean analysis will be presented. The mean value of 9 motivation variables will reflect the high or low value of the motivation variables. The attractive factor is the high mean value of motivational factors, while the low mean value of motivational factors is a factor that is not attractive in Thailand when selecting a low-cost carrier.

The regression analysis shall be based on the following equation:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + e$$

Where;

Y = customer satisfaction

a, b = population parameters

X = AIRQUAL dimension (X1 = airline tangibles; X2 = terminal tangibles;

X3 = personnel; X4 = empathy; X5 = image)

e = error term

Customer satisfaction (Y) is therefore a dependent variable, while the dimensions of service quality – airline tangibles (X1), terminal tangibles (X2), staff (X3), empathy (X4) and image (X5)–are independent variables. SPSS version 22.0 was used to do this regression

analysis. In this analysis, a step - by - step regression is carried out in order to include only important service quality variables and to rate them by their significance.

Analysis results Demographic of respondents

Analysis results Demographic of respondents shows that most of the respondents are 114 females, 57.00%, followed by 86 males, 43.00%

Service analysis results Quality: Service analysis results Quality is divided into 5 sides: airline tangibles, terminal tangibles, Personnel, Empathy and Image. With the average values and standard deviations shown in Table Average and standard deviation of Service quality

Service quality	\bar{X}	S.D.	Results
airline tangibles	3.93	0.69	Very
Terminal tangibles	3.76	0.68	Very
Personnel	3.65	0.71	Very
Empathy	3.89	0.63	Very
Image	3.70	0.71	Very
Total	3.78	0.53	Very

Customer satisfaction analysis results: Customer satisfaction analysis results with mean and standard deviation are shown in average and standard deviation of Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction	\bar{X}	S.D.	Results
I am satisfied with the airline I am using today	3.99	0.83	Very
This low-cost airline is a right choice when travelling.	4.04	0.84	Very
They provide satisfactory services.	3.96	0.83	Very
I usually have / had a good experience with this airline.	3.80	0.86	Very
Total	3.95	0.63	Very

Research Discussion

Research by (Parasuraman et al.,1985) mentioning 5 factors in evaluating service quality, also known as 'SERVQUAL' (Service Quality) which are 1) Responding to service recipients (Responsiveness) 2) Giving confidence to service recipients 3) Tangible in service 4) Knowing and understanding service providers (Empathy) and 5) reliability. (Reliability), which, if the service provider provides services to clients based on these factors It can be said that the service quality is high. The researchers have applied the model 'SERVQUAL' to measure the service quality of the employees from the perspective of the airline service staff and the critical events observed by the researchers. The results can be discussed based on service quality assessment factors as follows;

Responsiveness: This study found readiness and willingness to provide ground-based services for low-cost carriers to service recipients quickly. Ground staff can provide Information or procure equipment (such as pens) in a timely manner as requested by clients and points. These fast and equal passenger responses lead to the reduction of tension between service recipients and service providers. Quick responses helped to evaluate service quality, which has influenced most customers. (Minjoo et al., 2003)

Assurance: Passengers must pay the luggage weight onboard in the event of excess weight. The airline still lacking accuracy in checking travel documents. For passengers based on the service expectations of the arrivals at the airport domestic and the results are different from (Saha & Theingi, 2009) study which states that the confidence in the low-cost carrier of the carrier affects the perception of the service quality of the airline.

Materiality in services (Tangibility): From the study found that although the airline will allocate equipment to provide services to facilitate the passengers who come to receive the service but not enough and suitable as can be seen from the ticket office without a pen and suitable areas to fill form to request the ticket receipt. This is in accordance with this study of (Vincent C.S., et al, 2000). Which attach great importance to being concrete in providing restaurant business services at Hong Kong Airport Whether the cleanliness of the equipment and facilities in the restaurant Which is in line with the expectations of customers who come to use the service as well as the hotel business.

Knowing and understanding service providers (Empathy): It is observed that the cause of dissatisfaction in service may be caused by not understanding the rules and regulations of the airline disregard for giving information about passenger needs that may be limited the ground staff at the operational level can providing services by using opinions.

Reliability: The study found readiness of regulations, airline regulations, procedures and training that are clear and international. Creation the professionalism for operators can lead to the outstanding quality of low-cost airlines. The reliability of the ground staff is of high quality meets the expectations of clients (Bhat, 2012).

From the observation and interview it is found that although the nature of the service of the employees. There are 5 sides of the ground, but only 3 aspects of the service that are the point of direct interaction between ground staff and passengers, including ticket sales points in which passengers have contact to buy tickets and reserve seats through ticket sales services or flight reservations at ticket sales points.

Objective 1: How relevant customer satisfaction is to boost the decision of passengers in Thailand Low-cost airlines?

It was found that airlines use consumer perception increasingly to yield improved impressions and better brand image, so as to allow consumers to have a more satisfying experience with the LCC they use. The results correlate with findings by (Abd-El-Salam et al., 2013; Hussain, 2016). Brand image is an accumulation of personal experiences customers have and the experience of others (Hu and Huang, 2011); it can influence a consumers to accept the product prior to actual purchase, thus acting to minimise the purchase risk (Robertson and Gatignon, 1986). As such, brand image is a viable scheme used in marketing to appeal to and retain consumers. Companies with a positive brand reputation are more likely to survive, as they can maintain customer retention and attract trial users (Park et al., 2005). As such, image is thought to be one of the most powerful stimuli that affects customer satisfaction with LCCs.

There is an observed consensus in the process before providing the service (Pre-Service) at the ticket sales point, check-in point and the plane exit point Ground staff have a quality of service in the concrete tangibility with a focus on preparation and inspection, clean

equipment and dress code and post-service steps. There is a consensus on the ticketing point, check-in point and boarding gate that ground staff have quality, service in reliability and reliability from employees. The researchers observed the comparison with the views of the airline service staff. The research findings according to the model 'SERVQUAL' 5 dimensions as follows;

Responsiveness

Ground staff can't communicate foreign language substances as well as should be. Local staff use sign language and communication efforts to facilitate foreign passengers. The airline does not allocate appropriate space and equipment for service, according to the airline. The frequency of service leads to problems occurring in provide services at the operator level.

Assurance

Airlines have reduced professional competency in foreign language communication in order to build trust with clients. Even if the staff are accurate about luggage weight and prohibited items when travelling.

Tangibility

Passengers must request a pen to fill out the form and must stand to fill in the form in front. The airline will allocate equipment in providing services to facilitate the passengers who come to receive the service. Ground staff have been provided pens.

Empathy

From observing and in-depth interviews found that the cause of dissatisfaction with the service may be due to not understanding the rules and regulations of the airline.

Reliability

From the crisis that occurs from observation and in-depth interviews found that the rules, regulations, procedures and training of the airline.

Objective 2: What is the issue in Thailand Low-cost airlines that affects passengers?

As stated previously, brand loyalty arises as a result of customer satisfaction; consistent satisfaction with LCC services inspires further consumer loyalty to the brand.

Customer satisfaction is a premier motivator of brand-loyalty (Bloemer and Odekerken-Schroder, 2002). Airline companies obtain numerous benefits with the creation of customer satisfaction, including but not limited to: (a) strong company-passenger relationships; (b) consumer repurchase opportunities; (c) passenger loyalty, (d) word-of-mouth referrals, (e) improved corporate reputation; and (f) increased airline profit (Park et al., 2005).

Table 4.17: Results of multiple regression analysis of factors affecting and positive influence on customer satisfaction

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.767	0.244		3.147	0.002**		
Airline tangibles	0.138	0.066	0.149	2.076	0.039*	0.515	1.942
Terminal tangibles	0.059	0.071	0.063	0.826	0.410	0.458	2.182
Personnel	0.192	0.064	0.215	2.980	0.003**	0.512	1.955
Empathy	0.292	0.064	0.292	4.564	0.000**	0.648	1.544
Image	0.157	0.060	0.176	2.631	0.009**	0.591	1.691
R = 0.697, R ² = 0.486, Adjusted R ² = 0.472, F = 36.645, Sig. = 0.000							

The first variable with the best predictive power was Empathy, with the standard regression coefficient of forecasting equal to 0.292 followed by Personnel, with the standardized regression coefficient of forecasting equal to 0.215 Image with the standardized regression coefficient of forecasting equal to 0.176 Airline tangibles with the standardized regression coefficient of forecasting equal to 0.149 and Terminal tangibles with the standardized regression coefficient of forecasting equal to 0.063. Respectively, both variables 5 can explain the variance of the Customer Satisfaction is 0.486 percent with predictive power of 48.6 percent ($R^2 = 0.486$) which can create regression equations as follows;

Forecasting equation with raw scores regression coefficient as follows

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Customer satisfaction} = & 0.767 \\ & + 0.138\text{Airline tangibles} + 0.059\text{Terminal tangibles} + 0.192\text{Personnel} + 0.292\text{Empathy} \\ & + 0.157\text{Image} \end{aligned}$$

Forecasting equations with standardized regression coefficient, standard scores as follows Customer satisfaction = 0.149Airline tangibles.

+ 0.063Terminal tangible + 0.215Personnel+ 0.292Empathy + 0.176Image

Why are passenger's satisfied? All airlines work to out-compete one another in order to attract more consumers, using promotion strategies and different pricing strategies. Each of the three leading airlines are careful when making promotions. Between all 3 airlines, 'Thai Air Asia' is forward in terms of price promotions. For example, a 0-Baht promotion that pays only the airport tax and fee only, meaning plane tickets end up cheaper than eating at a department store. Additionally, most consumers choose to use the airline service that has the flight schedule when they want; if there is no scheduled flight at the consumer's desired time, that airline may be overlooked. Delays and no-pouring 'punctuality' of the customer also acts as one of the main factors that consumers use when deciding to travel with an airline.

Implications: Because passenger's satisfaction is the main vein for the airlines have to focus on, airline revenue is accounted from passengers nearly 100 percent for low-cost carrier (IATA, 2020). The problem with low-cost carrier is similar to other budget airlines in other regions. When I compared to Viet Jet from Vietnam from those who have flown with EasyJet in Europe, it seems that they share the same problem with regards to customer satisfaction. As such, I took it upon myself to find the real problem and solve why low-cost carriers are poor in customer satisfaction.

Research limitations and suggestions

The aim of this study was to make a start in defining any weakness(es) Thai LCCs may have in the customer service industry and their quality of service for customer satisfaction. The AIRQUAL model was used to assess the contributors or detractors for passenger satisfaction for international passengers regarding service quality. An additional limitation would be the current COVID-19 climate, which has had a devastating impact on Thai tourism and LCC operation. Some data is not up to date as LCC airlines have been busy lessening and working on the impacts on operation during this event. The researcher has

suggested the problems and potential solutions to increase the quality of service by low-cost airlines below.

Flight delays is the one of the most significant complain as indicated from finding. Therefore, flight operation department should prototype their punctuality time performance. Airlines need to consider started looking at other airlines like a flight buffering. For instance, add more extra time 15 minutes for arrival time such as flight period of flight operating 1-hour airlines should increase more 15 minutes more. If airlines arrived early nobody will not complain despite flight was late the extra time will cover it. Hence the results can solve the issue of the clients complain on the delay. Furthermore, Airlines should do better on coordinate with ATC and Airport company that is make delay will minimise.

Next, airlines need to communicate well with ground handling company to avoid luggage loss. Set a department for responsibility and reliability on lost baggage. Airlines should set insource or outsource for monitoring the process of baggage lost.

After that, airlines should have a system to create the impetus for efficient operations quickly and instantly by receiving a service evaluation.

Then, Airlines should build confidence in service by training staff with skills, general knowledge to demonstrate professional services. Reliable knowledge will be able to create confidence to clients.

Finally, low-cost airlines should pay attention to service quality in all 5 areas to build confidence and increase satisfaction among users and encourages users to tell others, good service quality will make users impressed and decide to use the low-cost aviation that exceeds expectations.

Suggestions for further research

This research is participatory observation and in-depth interviews provide do only 3 low-cost airlines. The further research should be analysis and comparison of service quality from the ground staff perspective that low-cost airline that provides services. For the other research should study the expectations of service quality regarding passengers or customers

using AIRQUAL to see whether expectations are consistent or different from service quality from a perspective ground staff.

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