



# A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SERVICE QUALITY, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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## ABSTARCT

The purpose of this article is to investigate theoretical framework for service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and develop conceptual framework for it. Even though service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers, the existing research in this area is focused on concept of service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. There is need to develop model which incorporate the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The present article act in response to this need by providing a conceptual framework for this purpose. The researcher created this article based on extensive literature. The proposed model shows the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Keywords: Service quality, Customer satisfaction, Customer loyalty.

## INTRODUCTION

The global airline industry gives administration to for all intents and purposes each side of the globe, and has been a fundamental piece of the formation of a worldwide economy. The airline industry itself is a noteworthy monetary power, both as far as its very own activities and its effects on related ventures, for example, air ship assembling and the travel industry, to name however two. Hardly any different businesses create the sum and power of consideration given to aircrafts, among its members as well as from government arrangement producers, the media, and nearly any individual who has an account about a specific air travel involvement. (Fariuz Romli et al.,2018)

During quite a bit of its advancement, the worldwide aircraft industry managed major mechanical advancements, for example, the introduction of Jet planes for business use during the 1950s, trailed by the improvement of wide-body "kind sized planes" during the 1970s. In the meantime, aircrafts were vigorously directed all through the world, making a situation in which mechanical advances and government arrangement outweighed benefit and rivalry. It has just been in the period since the financial deregulation of carriers in the United States in 1978 that

inquiries of cost proficiency, working productivity and aggressive conduct have turned into the prevailing issues confronting aircraft the board. With the US driving the way, airlines deregulation or possibly "progression" has now spread to a significant part of the industrialized world, influencing both local air travel inside every nation and, maybe more critically, the proceeding with development of a profoundly focused universal aircraft industry. (Klophaus, Conrady and Fichert, 2012)

### THE CONCEPT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW COST CARRIERS

The aviation industry was regulated until 1978, there has been increase in the large number of low cost airlines with low price to create a center of attention among the passengers (Belobaba, odani, & Barnhart, 2015). Airline industries is faced with lot of problems like cost, rise and fall in demand and to meet with service quality necessities (Baker ,2013). Adding to this point today aviation sector is in competition to improve the service quality. Lot of research has been undertaken on market share , revenues, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Forges, Moliner, Sanchez & Palau, 2010).

There is an exhaustive research on low cost carriers and Full cost carriers in recent times. Numerous discrepancy prevails between Low cost carriers and Full cost carriers. Low cost airlines reduces the expenses by removing many traditional services. (Rout ledge, 2006). Saha and Theingi (2009) point out that low cost carriers has brought up the concern on how much the traveler feel satisfied with various services. Anderson, Gong,& Lakshmanan, (2005) explains that discrepancies in the price prevails among the passengers. Passenger who book in advance will pay low fare and Non-Discrepancy customer pay higher fare at last minute. Low cost carriers has no Frills, Low fare, operate point to point from secondary airport ,one type of aircraft (Ciou& chen, 2010; Loureiro & Fialho,2016). The point to point method concentrates on short distances, regional, non-stop between departure and arrival rather than connecting flights at hub and spoke.(Francis, Humphreys, Ison & aicken, 2006). Low cost carriers capture passenger son the basis of value for money, Creating better relationship with customers. (Rajaguru, 2016). Coming out of low cost carriers, price of the fare has been reduced and Air travel has become more affordable and comfortable.(dewit&Zuidberg,2012). Huge Low cost airline turns into hybrid carriers which blend low cost carriers characteristics (Klophaus, Conrady & Fichert,2012)

### CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW COST CARRIERS

Characteristics	Low cost carriers
Brand	Single
Price	Low fare
Distribution	Online & Direct Booking
Check-in	e-tickets
Network	Point-to-Point
Class	Economy
Flight	No frills
Aircraft type	One
Services	No frequent lyer program

Source:Holloway(2008)andO'Connell&Williams(2005)

### THE CONCEPT OF SERVICE QUALITY

Bitner & Hubbert,(1994) explains that service quality is considered to be overall performance of an organization and its services. Service quality is very important for customer satisfaction, customer loyalty preference of airlines. Service quality have influence on market share and profitability (Morash & Ozment, 1994) Kotler and Keller(2009) defines Service“ Any intangible act or performance that one party offers to another that does not result in the ownership of anything”.

Airline industry is different from other service industry in the aspect of services. An airline services contains both tangible and intangible characteristic. Intangible services are it carries the passengers to their desired destinations and other intangible benefit enjoyed by the passengers is on- time performance, in- flight

services and flight frequency. Shostack (1977) mentions that Airline services are intangible in nature. It does not have physical possession of goods.

Sasseret al.,(1978) explains the different stage of service quality which consist of consistency, attitude, Completeness, condition, availability, and training of service provider. Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982) provides several factors that affect service quality are physical quality, interactive quality and corporate quality. Gronroos (1984) was first person to develop service quality model based on qualitative method. He used Technical quality, Functional quality and corporate image as dimensions of service quality.

Service quality is the difference between service expectation and the actual service realization. (Parasuraman et al.,1985).He analysed the service quality dimensions and GAP model for defining service quality. Parasuraman et al.,1985; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011 provides GAP Relations. The following are the GAP

1. Knowledge Gap–Customer expectation-Management perception gap
2. The policy gap –Management perception-Service quality gap
3. The delivery gap– Service quality specifications-Service delivery gap
4. The communications gap–Service delivery-External communication gap
5. The service quality gap–Expected service-perceived service gap.

(Parasuraman et al.,1998) developed a instrument to measure the service quality in the dimensions of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Review on several research indicates that there are two types of service quality concepts: Nordic and American Approach. Nordic approach comprises of Technical and functional quality. Technical quality is what customers get after sales services and Functional Quality means interaction between employee and customer during service delivery. (Lau, Akbar & Fie 2005). The American approach consist of five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibility. It is called as SERVQUAL (Zeithaml et al 1996). This is based on Expectancy- Disconfirmation Theory.

Aydin and Yildirim, 2012; Fick and Ritchie 1991; Sultan and Simpson, (2000) analyses the airline service quality and its effect on customer satisfaction. Park et al., (2005) explains that service quality can be divided into three dimensions “Reliability and Customer service”, Convenience and Accessibility”, In-flight services”. Saha and Theingi (2009) evaluate airline service quality in the proportions tangibility, schedules, service provided by ground staff and services provided by flight attendants. Airline service quality is measured on the basis of performance, Comfort, service, food and website by Zagat, an research firm.

Shanka (2012) measures airline service quality with following five dimensions: Tangibility, Reliability, Assurance, Empathy and Responsiveness. He found that assurance has highest impact on customer satisfaction. Kotler and Keller (2012) examines that Customers satisfaction can be increased only when the organizations provide better services to the customers. The study reveals that service quality influencing the customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Cheng and Rashid (2013) reveals that service quality leads to customer satisfaction and finally it results in the customer loyalty.

Vein Lovelock and Wirtz (2010) reveals that Service quality is the basic for customer satisfaction and developing customer loyalty. Cronin and Taylor (1992) investigate the relationship between the service quality and customer satisfaction. Parasuram, Zeithaml and Berry (1994) Says that service quality and customer satisfaction are interchangeable.

## **THE CONCEPT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

Tse and Wilton (1998) defines customer satisfaction as “ Consumer response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectation and the actual performance of the product as perceived after its consumption”. Customer satisfaction is explained by several theories such as expectation-Disconfirmation, Equity theory and comparison- level theory (Skogland & Sigaw, 2004) Gu and Ryan (2007) and Barsky and Nash (2003) classifies customer satisfaction into two categories. The first category measures the satisfaction level and find out discrepancy in service delivery. The second category reveals customer satisfaction in a

multivariate model which contains service quality; perceived value, brand image and customer loyalty.

Chen,( 2008);Zeithamal,(1998) mentions that customer satisfaction is an holistic approach ,it represents overall response after consumption, it may vary from Dissatisfied to Satisfied. Chen (2011) mentions that customer satisfaction is evaluation made by consumers after their purchase and experience of services. Denet (2000) reveals that customer satisfaction gained important context in the international business. Nadiri, Hussain, Ekiz& Erdogan(2008) explains that customer satisfaction leads to continuous purchases and recommendation to others. Anderson et al.,(1994) mentions that customer satisfaction result in increased market share and profit of the organization.

Gronroos (1984) states that satisfactions can gains from the passengers by better airline services. It is clear that providing good services will lead to customer satisfaction. Gour(2009) explains the passengers are satisfied with airline service quality dimensions like flight attendents; flight schedules; tangibles ; ground staff. Passengers are satisfied with flight schedules. The satisfied passengers involve in the Word of mouth. Kim and Lee (2010) examines that important measures for customer satisfaction are tangibles and responsiveness.

Rust and Oliver (1994) concludes that there is a positive and strong correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction. Emerson and Grimm (1998) describes in his model that satisfied customer will turn to be loyal customers. This will lead to customer retention and improve customer purchasing behavior. Looy et al., (2003) describes perceived and expected service presentation is customer satisfaction. Archan .A .R and Subha M.V reveals that the factors of service quality that influences the passenger's satisfaction in air transport. The study discloses three dimensions that are correlated with passenger's satisfaction. Cuisines, seating Safety are the first dimensions. The second dimension is in-flight digital service quality. Back office operations is another dimensions. In addition to it the study also explains satisfaction is based on different airlines service offered.

Yeon and Chan (2011) reveals that customer satisfaction is more related with Repurchase intention than service quality attributes. Neeraj Kausik, V.K. kausik and Girish Taneja reveals that Customer satisfaction is based on the airline ticket the customer is choosing for the travel. Usman Khan and Noreen Khan(2014) reveals that Airlines with highly satisfied passengers are getting more customers. Stank et al(1999) examines that customer satisfaction can increase profit of the organization because it influences repurchase intention. Yee et al.,(2010) found that employee loyalty affected service quality and service quality affects customer satisfaction. Dresner et al.,(1995) reveals that there is a link between customer satisfaction and financial performance.

## **THE CONCEPT OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY**

Customer loyalty is first element for success and profit of the organization because loyal customer will purchase the service again and again. Jacoby and Kyner(1973) defines loyalty as “behavior that is assessed in a variety of re-buy , Word of mouth and developing dimensions with the possibility of a relation.(Dehghan and shahin, 2011).Kotler and keller(2008) defines customer loyalty as” a deeply hels commitment to re-buy or repatronize a preferred product or services in the future despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior”.

Gomez ,Arranz and Chillan (2006) found that are less price sensitive and it is easy to communicate with them. Kottler and Keller (2012) reveals that Frequent flyers for every airline are succeed by retaining customers. Dehghan and Shahin (2011) found five dimensions of loyalty: repurchase, resistance to switch, word of mouth, identify services and preference for a service provider. Olsen (2007) that there are different variable that strengthen the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. The variables includes trust, commitment and level of consumer involvement. Luo and Bhattacharya(2006),repurchase intention was a measure of online consumers and experience. Kim and Kim (2004) states that consumer repurchase intention can affect if the company provides detailed product information, consumer feedback and quality image can increase customer satisfaction.

Meyer- Waarden (2008) identifies method to develop loyalty using frequent flyer program to repeat purchase. Park, Robertson and Chung- Lung(2005) found that service quality leads to customer loyalty through

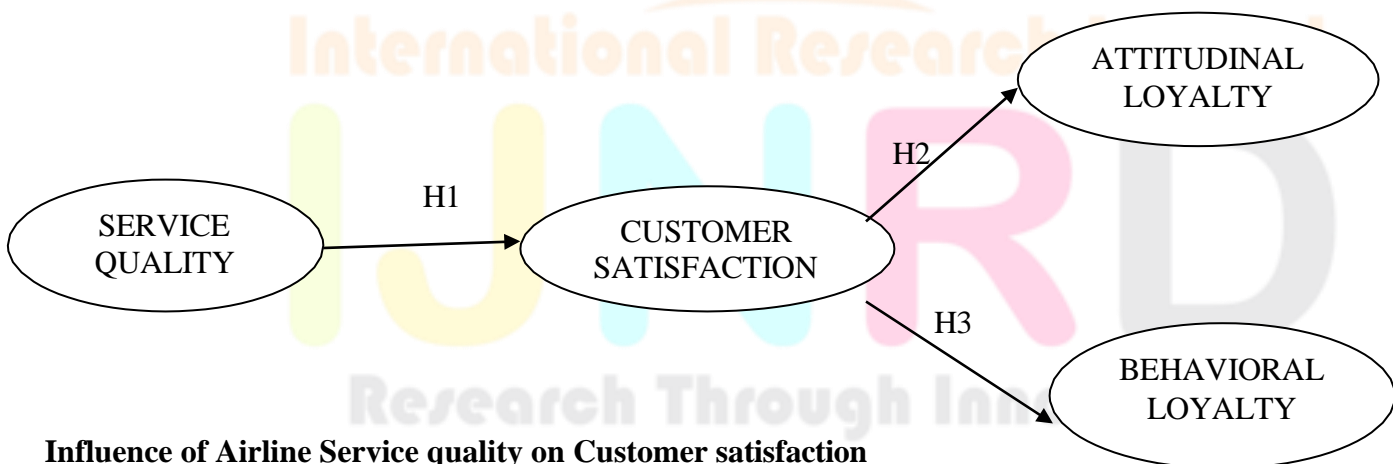
direct or mediating effect of customer satisfaction. Han, Kwortnik and Wang (2008) concludes that important determinant of loyalty is service quality, service fairness, customer satisfaction, commitment and trust. Zhaohua, Yaobin, Kwok and Jinlong (2010) identifies that customer satisfaction have an impact on customer loyalty through number of factors. Andrian Gunawan (2015) examines that marketing mix has direct influences on customer loyalty.

Wang and Tsai (2014) found that there is a positive and direct effect between brand image, perceived value, perceived quality and loyalty. Customers expect better services which result in a habitual buying behavior. Jones and Sasser (1995) reveals that customer loyalty comprises of recent purchase activities, re-purchase intention, and recommendations intention. Oliver (2014) found that customer loyalty comprises of following division: Attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty is the degree of favorable disposition to a particular company and Behavioral loyalty refers to recommendations and re-purchase of brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Reinartz and Kumar (2000) found that Loyal customer are those who strongly believe airline will satisfy their present and future wants and they don't book competitors airlines. This loyalty will create long relationship between customers and airlines. Gronroos (2000) reveals that is longer interest and willingness of customers to buy the product and use it and recommend the airlines to other. Therefore loyalty means not only the loyal behavior but also the positive feelings towards the airlines.

Chang and Hung (2015) states that low cost carriers can increase customer loyalty through frequent flyer program and convenient channel of booking in Asian countries. Curry and Gao (2012) found that LCC passengers are suspicious and due to internet they are getting "Value for Money". There is trade-off, customers use low cost carrier's offer price savings with service quality improvements. Chung and Hung (2013) used behavioral loyalty to evaluate repurchase intention in low cost carriers. Behavioral loyalty is the real loyalty of passengers to purchase.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Based on the review of literature studied above, a conceptual model framework is created and figured. This model represents the Hypothetical relationship between the constructs of airline service quality, customer satisfaction, attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty.



### Influence of Airline Service quality on Customer satisfaction

Abundant research shows a positive influence of service quality on customer satisfaction. Cronin and Taylor (1992) reveals casual relationship exist between service quality and customer satisfaction. Raditha et al., (2015) investigates the positive and significant relationship exist between service quality and customer satisfaction. It means that higher the service quality, higher the customer satisfaction. Therefore it is important to study the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Based on the review hypothesis is framed as follows:

H1: Airline service quality has positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction.

### **Influence of Airline customer satisfaction on Attitudinal loyalty**

Forges et al.,(2010) investigates the loyalty of airline passengers who flown from London to Barcelona. The result exposed that customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty strongly. C.K.M. Lee et al.,(2018) inspect the attitudinal loyalty influences by customer satisfaction. It is found that airlines maintain better relationship with customer through loyalty programme. Considering above studies the hypothesis is framed as follows:

H2:Customer satisfaction positively influences the attitudinal loyalty of airlines.

### **Influence of Airline customer satisfaction on Behavioral loyalty**

Behavioral loyalty is important from airlines point of view which is influenced by customer satisfaction. Mateja Kos Koklicetal.,(2017) reveals that customer satisfaction positively influences behavioral loyalty. It is clear from the study that customer satisfaction strongly determines intention to purchase and recommend the airline to others. Yu- chiou et al.,(2010) investigates the relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioral loyalty. Based on previous studies it is evident to study the influence of customer satisfaction on behavioral loyalty.

H3: Customer satisfaction influences positively behavioral loyalty.

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