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Service Quality Measurement Models: Comparative Analysis and Application in Airlines Industry

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Paper Nomenclature: Case Base Study (CBS)

Paper Code: V11N2AJ2019CBS1

Originality Test Ratio: 17%

Submission Online: 6-March-2019

Manuscript Acknowledged: 10-March-2019

Originality Check: 14-March-2019

Peer Reviewers Comment: 04-April-2019

Blind Reviewers Remarks 20-April-2019

Author Revert: 21-April-2019

Camera-Ready-Copy: 20-June-2019

Editorial Board Citation: 25-June-2019

Published Online First: 20-Sep-2019

EDITORIAL BOARD EXCERPT Initially at the Time of Submission (ToS) submitted paper had a 17% plagiarism, which is an accepted percentage for publication. The editorial board is of an observation that paper had a successive close watch by the blind reviewer's which at a later stage had been rectified and amended by the authors (Maltoob, Mohammad & Rahela) in various phases as and when required to do so. The reviewers' had in a preliminary stages remark with minor revisions which at a short span were restructured by the author. The comments related to this manuscript are tremendously noticeable related to the **Measurement of Service Qualities in Airlines Industry** both subject-wise and research wise by the reviewers during evaluation and further at blind review process too. The authors have crafted the paper in a structured manner. As in the age of competition and to increase their customers base it is mandatory for the industries to improve their service qualities to differentiate them from others. A very comprehensive review of literature is followed in the study to develop the base for it and to support the findings in context of airline industries.Overall the paper promises to open newer facets of studies. All the comments had been shared at a variety of dates by the author in due course of time and same had been integrated by the author in calculation. By and large all the editorial and reviewers' comments had been incorporated in paper at the end and further the manuscript had been earmarked and decided under "**Case Base Study**" as a plot study is conducted to measure the correlations between customer satisfaction and low-costairlines operating in India. The results are interesting and remarkable.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to assess the instruments that are used to measure service quality. The SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman et al. is a benchmark in the measurement of service quality across the industries for the last three decades. Many variants of this service quality instrument have been developed and applied by researchers and academicians, but the one instrument that has been gaining wider acceptance is the SERVPERF model, developed by Cronin and Taylor. The five-dimensional SERVPERF model, appreciated for measuring only the performance or perceptions and not expectations of customers, have been adopted in the present pilot study for measuring service quality and customer satisfaction of passengers flying in low cost airlines in India.

Design/Methodology Approach: Paper is empirical in nature. A Sample population of 128 persons who travelled in and out of Delhi through low cost airlines in the last one year were collected and118 samples were found to be complete and relevant. Data was collected through the questionnaire and was analysed using SPSS Statistics 21.

Originality/Value: The study has made a comprehensive literature review in the area of service quality in context of Airlines industries and used empirical data to support the findings.

Findings: The authors find that satisfaction of customers and reuse of services is dependent on the type of services provided by the airline industry. All the dimensions of the service qualities followed in the study tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy are found to have a strong correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction. Therefore, industries should focus more on increasing their service quality to retain as well as expand their customer base.

KEYWORDS SERVQUAL | SERVPERF | AIRQUAL | Service Quality | Customer Satisfaction

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https://doi.org/10.18311/gjeis/2019

Volume-11 | Issue-2 | Apr-Jun, 2019 | Online ISSN : 0975-1432 | Print ISSN : 0975-153X

Frequency : Quarterly, Published Since : 2009

Introduction

With the growth of services sector in every economy of the world, the significance of quality of services is also growing. For the last three decades, researchers have been trying to identify and assess service quality and one of the most important aspects of this assessment is to develop instruments to measure service quality. And in order to measure the quality of services, researchers have been developing instruments to measure service quality so that its relationship with customer satisfaction and loyalty could be established. Most researchers have come to the conclusion that the actual quality of service cannot be measured and that the quality of service should be assessed form the perspective of customers. The difference between the expectations of the customers from a service offered and the perceptions developed after the service is consumed or availed forms the core of the definition of service quality and is most widely accepted (Levis and Booms, 1983; Gronroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al, 1988).

Purchasing decision of customers are influenced by quality of goods or services (Anderson and Zeithaml, 1984). And service quality increases satisfaction of customers and satisfaction in turn leads to customer loyalty and brings in profitability for firms (Szwarc, 2005). However, service quality is itself a very subjective term and is used differently in different contexts and industries with no universal definition of service quality (Liou et al., 2011).

Literature on popular Service Quality began in the early 1980s and it has largely been dominated by two schools of thought: the "Nordic" school (Gronroos, 1984) and the American School (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, &Berry, 1994; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1988). Earlier, the quality literature focused on the manufacturing sector only, but the works of Grönroos (1982, 1984) adapted it to fit the service sector.

Measurement of Service Quality

The basic premise of the 'service quality paradigm' is centered on the gap between the perception of Service Quality evaluated by the consumer, and the level of Service Quality the consumer expects. The dichotomy between perception and expectation led to the development of the Gap Model by Parasurman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) that later led to the development of the more popular SERVQUAL scale.

The measurement of service quality in the airlines industry was first developed by the Civil Aeronautics Board (Douglas & Miller, 1974; Jordan, 1970) before the de-regulation of the industry. From the perspective of airline passengers, the assessment of service quality in the academic literature first reflected in the works of Kearney (1986). Gourdin and Kloppenborg (1991) developed a set of criteria for service quality to identify the service gaps in commercial airline travel by engaging both airline officials and airline passengers. They found statistical differences on many variables between passengers and airlines management.

Many academicians and researchers compiled a number of airlines-based service quality measures to predict customer satisfaction and their intention to take the same airlines for future travel. They compared them with SERVQUAL and found these measures equally strong as SERVQUAL to assess customer satisfaction and loyalty (Young, Cunningham, & Lee, 2004; Young, Cunningham, Lee, & Douglas, 2002).

A number of models have been developed in the past to assess and measure the expectations of customers from a service offering, the perception of the customers after receiving the service and their eventual satisfaction and loyalty to the service provider. The most prominent instruments or the models to assess and measure the service quality are SERVQUAL and SERVPERF. These methods are applied in different industries to assess the service quality. In the case of airlines industry also, these service quality measurement methods were applied (An & Noh, 2009; Parast&Fini, 2010; Park, Rodger, & Wu, 2009; Saha, 2009). Increasing competition in the airlines industry has led many airlines to adopt quality as a strategic tool (Rahim, 2016, Rose et al. 2016, Sandada and Matibiri, 2016).

Table 1: Service Quality Models

Model	Developed By	Year	Service Quality Dimension
GAP Model	Parasuraman et al.	1985	Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, Access, Courtesy, Communication, Credibility, Security, Tangibles Understanding/Knowing the Customer
SERVQUAL	Parasuraman et al.	1988	Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy
SERVPERF	Cronin and Taylor	1992	Reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness
Service Quality Attributes	Haywood-Farmer	1988	Physical facilities, processes and procedures; People behaviour and conviviality; Professional judgmwent
AIRQUAL	Ekiz et al.	2006	Airline tangibles, terminal tangibles, personnel, empathy, and image
Inflight Service Quality (IFSQUAL)	Rose et al.	2016	Personal Attributes, Inflight Service, Flight Safety, Customer Satisfaction

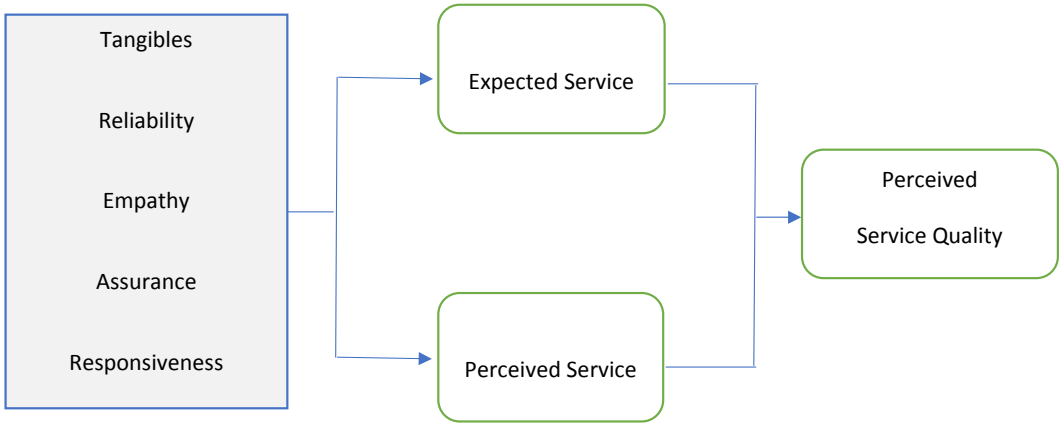
Source: Prepared by the Researchers

However, the perceptions of airline service quality varies and do not seem to fit any single existing quality model such as SERVQUAL or SERVPERF. This is because these are not completely exhaustive and does not take into consideration important aspects of service quality in airlines such as in-flight meals, comfort of seating and legroom. These are important parameters for assessing the service quality and should be selected to reflect the service environment examined in an airline (Haynes & Percy, 1994). Also, Bari et al. (2001) developed AIRQUAL model, designed specifically to assess the airlines service quality and their study was focused on Turkish customers who travelled with Turkish Airlines. AIRQUAL scale developed by Bari et al. (2001) has five distinct dimensions, namely, airline tangibles, terminal tangibles, personnel, empathy, and image. Another measurement model of service quality is IFSQUAL which specifically is focused on evaluating in-flight service quality. The model based on the parameters of personal attributes, inflight service, flight safety and customer satisfaction measures how much services that are being offered to passengers leads to their satisfaction. The model may gain major acceptance with airline companies competing for market share by improving their inflight services (Rahim, 2016; Rose et al., 2016; Sandada&Matibiri, 2016).

SERVQUAL

To measure the quality of services provided by organizations, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) came up with a model, which is commonly known as the GAP Model. The GAP model attempts to find the gaps between expectations of the consumer from the services being offered and the perceptions of the actual performance of the service. The GAP model was developed with ten dimensions, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, understanding the customers, access, communication, credibility, security, competence and courtesy. Later in the year 1998, Parasuraman et al. modified the GAP model, named it SERVQUAL and included only five dimensions, as presented in Figure 1 (Parasuraman andothers, 1988; Ataman and others, 2011).

Figure 1: SERVQUAL Model



SERVQUAL is one of the most relevant tools of service quality measurement, utilized to identify the gaps between service expectations and performance. The five dimensions of SERVQUAL scale include the physical condition of the facility and appearance of the staff (Tangibles); the trust that the organization will deliver what it promises (Reliability); the willingness of the organization and its employees to proactively address its customers' needs (Responsiveness); the ability of the organization and its employees to instill confidence among its customers (Assurance); and also the organization's philosophy and practice to care for its customers (Empathy).

The SERVQUAL Model is being applied across industries to measure service quality. With five dimensions, 22 items and presented in 7-point Likert Scale, SERVQUAL essentially measures the gaps in expectations and perception of the services offered to the customers in industries such as banking services, telephone services and repair and maintenance. Lately, the model has increasingly being adopted across industries and also by academicians and researchers in different countries with different cultural contexts (Butt and Run, 2010; Farooq, 2016; Lee-Ross, 2008). The concept, constructs and techniques of SERVQUAL has been applied across industries to assess the service quality provided by different organizations in the services sector. The measurement model has been applied in the healthcare industry (Woodside et al., 1989; Reidenbach and Sandifer-Smallwood, 1990; Babakus and Boller, 1992; Headley and Miller, 1993;Bebko and Garg, 1995), organized brick and mortal retail chains such as kMart, WalMart, and Target (Teas, 1994), online retailers (Siadat, Buyut and Selamat, 2008), commercial banks (Nair, Ranjith, Bose and Shri, 2010; Kumar, Tat Kee and TaapManshor, 2009) and many more segments of services sector.

The SERVQUAL model has been widely applied across different industries and also in the airlines industry (Gilbert and Wong, 2003; Park et al., 2005). SERVQUAL model is a ground-breaking work in the measurement of service quality and constitute the basics for all service quality measurements. Parasuraman et al (1995, 1998) has made a significant contribution in the area of service quality and it is for the future academicians and practitioners to improve upon the scale in different contexts and environments as and when required (Faked Salim Khatib, 1998).

Table 1: Research Studies - SERVQUAL as Measurement Model of Service Quality

Scholars (Year)	Country	Sample Size	Unit of Analysis	Method of Analysis	Airline Service Quality Dimensions
Fareena Sultan et al (2000)	US and Europe	1956	Passengers travelling between US and Europe	T-Test	Reliability, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy
Jin-Woo Park et al (2005)	Australia	501	Australian international passenger at T3 airport	SEM	Reliability, Customer service, In-flight service, Convenience, Accessibility
Clemes et al (2008)	New Zealand	428	Passengers of international flights	T-Test, ANOVA, Multiple Regression Analysis	Assurance, Convenience, Comfort, Timeliness, Meals, Security
Atilgan et al (2008)	Turkey	235	Passengers at Antalya airport	T-Test	Food and beverage, Cabin aesthetics, Convenience, In-flight activities
Nadiri, Hussain et al (2008)	Cyprus	583	North Cyprus national airline passenger	SEM	Airline tangibles, Terminal tangibles, Personnel, Empathy
Vinh Sum Chau et al (2009)	UK and Taiwan	263	Passengers from Taipei and London	T-Test	Reliability, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy
Gures et al (2014)	Turkey	821	Passengers at 4 Turkish airports	SEM	Reliability, Facilities
Korkmaz et al (2015)	Turkey	311	Passengers in Izmin airport	CFA, Multiple Regression Analysis	Reliability, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy
Reza Etemad-Sajadi et al (2016)	Germany	203	Passengers at Munich airport	CFA, Multiple correlation	Pre-flight service quality, In-flight service quality, Price fairness
Sandada and Matibiri (2016)	South Arica	148	Passengers at Harare International airport	SEM	Reliability and customer service, Convenience, Inflight service
Park and Others (2004)	South Korea	592	Korean international passengers	SEM	Service value, Satisfaction, Airline image
Nadiri, Hussain et al (2008)	Cyprus	583	North Cyprus national airline passenger	SEM	Airline tangibles, Terminal tangibles, Personnel, Empathy
Yu-ChiunChiou et al (2010)	China	2000	Passengers of Spring Airlines, China	SEM	Ticket prices, Service perception, Service value, Image, Behavioral intention
Ariffin et al (2010)	Malaysia	100	LCC passengers at Kuala Lampur airport	Multiple Regression Analysis	Caring, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Reliability, Affordability
YuKyoung Kim et al (2011)	Sourth Korea	300	Passengers at South Korean airports	AMOS 7.0, T-Test	Physical facilities, neat appearance, prompt service, sincere approach of crew members, willing to help, respond to requests
Yu Kyoung Kim, Hyung Ryong Lee (2011)	South Korea	244	Passengers at three major domestic South Korean airports	SEM	Physical facilities, Neat appearance, Prompt service, Willing to help, Respond to requests
Hwa-Kyung Kim (2013)	Asia	181	Passengers of a major international airline in the Asian region	SPSS, Factor Analysis	Staff attitude, Clean interiors, Comfortable seats, On time performance, Delicious food
Suki (2014)	Malaysia	300	Passengers in Labuan airport, Malaysia	SEM	Terminal tangible, Empathy, Word of mouth, Airline tangibles
Rahim Hussain et al (2015)	UAE	253	Passengers of a Dubai airlines	SEM	Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, Security and safety, Communications

Source: Prepared by the Researchers

However, critics point out that the model provides a general assessment of service quality and cannot be adopted across industries as it will not address industry specific issues. In the airlines industry also, critics note that the SERVQUAL model is not an apt service quality measurement instrument because it:

- Does not take into consideration airline specific aspects of service quality (Park et al.)
- Does not capture the 'Moment of Truth' as the customer directly interacts with reservation staff, boarding, airlines cabin crew, luggage handling and others (Archana and Subha, 2012; Saha and Theingi, 2009; Nadiri et al., 2008; Ekiz et al., 2006; Prayag, 2007)

AIRQUAL

A comprehensive model of service quality, AIRQUAL was developed by Ekiz et al (2006) and adapted from SERVQUAL model to measure service quality of airlines in The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The model was later validated by Nadiri et al (2008) to measure perceived service quality in Norther Cyprus, but Nadiri et al contended that the model should be used in different cultural settings. However, the development and application of AIRQUAL further cemented the belief that service quality measurement is culture and context specific. Also, the measurement methods earlier developed were not industry specific and AIRQUAL gained popularity on the context of being industry-specific, meant only for the measurement of service quality in airlines. (Ekiz et al., 2006; Nadiri et al., 2008 ; Babakus& Mangold, 1992).

The major reason for the development of AIRQUAL as a service quality measurement scale was that the existing scales of service quality were developed and applied in different countries and cultural setting. The quality of services perceived by customers differ in different cultural settings and hence the dimensions of service quality should be specific to particular cultures. As a result, most of the measurement scales developed to assess service quality are for individual cultural setting. Hence, relevant scales must be employed in research studies to bring new dimensions that are embedded within the cultural setting (Winsted, 1997). In the past, there have been a number of studies conducted on service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in low cost airlines across the world and most of the studies are concentrated in the United States, Korea, Turkey and Malaysia (Hasan, M., Khan, M.N. and Farooqi, R., 2019).

Table 2: Research Studies - AIRQUAL as Measurement Model of Service Quality

Scholars (Year)	Country	Sample Size	Unit of Analysis	Method of Analysis	Airline Service Quality Dimensions
Faizan Ali et al (2015)	Pakistan	498	Passengers of Pakistan international airlines	SEM	Airline tangibles, Terminal tangibles, Personnel quality, Empathy, Image
Sheik Mohamed et al (2016)	India	320	Passengers travelled by Air India	SEM	Airline tangibles, Terminal tangibles, Personnel quality, Empathy, Image
Muhammad Shoaib Farooq et al (2018)	Malaysia	460	Passengers travelled with Malaysian Airlines	PLS-SEM	Airline tangibles, Terminal tangibles, Personnel services, Empathy, Image

Source: Prepared by the Researchers

AIRQUAL model was developed mostly on the back of the general nature of SERVQUAL and SERVPERF scales that were

- process-based assessment of service quality and
- applied across industries.

AIRQUAL adopted the service quality dimensions of airlines only (Alotaibi, 2015) and consists of five industry-specific dimensions: airline tangibles, terminal tangibles, personnel, empathy and image (Ekiz, Hussain &Bavik, 2006).

SERVPERF

The SERVPERF model has been adopted from Parasuraman and Others' (1988) SERVQUAL model but it is a major deviation from SERVQUAL as it measures only the performance or perception of customers about the service quality and not their expectation from the services offered. The SERVPERF model holds significance because it

- Reduces the number of items in the measurement scale by 50 percent.
- Explains more variance in the measurement of service quality with the use of a single item scale.

The SERVPERF model was applied by Cronin and Taylor (1994) in four industries that included the banking industry, pest control, food services and dry-cleaning industry. The SERVPERF model explained more of the variation in the measurement of service quality. Later in 2004, Cunningham et al. applied the SERVPERF model successfully in the airlines industry to measure service quality. Since then, the model has been applied in many research studies to assess the quality of services provided by airlines. Hence, we intend to use the SERVPERF model to measure the service quality of low-cost airlines in India.

Although SERVQUAL has been widely used and implemented across industries, it has generally been criticized as an instrument with a number of measurement problems. The SERVQUAL model based on the perception minus expectation (P-E) theory of GAP model

The SERVPERF model has been applied in many empirical research studies and found to be more suitable and appropriate for use (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Brown, Churchill and Peter, 1993). The instrument as a simple

performance-based measure of service quality has found acceptability as a superior mode quality (Bolton and Drew 1991; Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Woodruff, Cadotte, and Jenkins 1983). It has been found to perform better in its applicability in the banking industry of emerging countries like India (Jain & Gupta, 2004; Adil M. Khan M. N., 2013). Hence, the SERVPERF model takes into consideration only the performance outcome of delivery of services and does not take into account the expectations the customers had before availing the service. The scale uses the same five dimensions of service quality as the SERVQUAL scale namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Leong et al., 2015).

Besides its application in these industries, the SERVPERF scale has been proven to be a better tool while measuring service quality in the airlines industry. However, the model has been criticized by many scholars for being too generic and not being capable enough to capture and measure industry specific dimensions e.g. the perception of service quality by airline passengers (Cunningham et al., 2004).

Table 3: Research Studies- SERVPERF as Measurement Model of Service Quality

Scholars (Year)	Country	Sample Size	Unit of Analysis	Method of Analysis	Airline Service Quality Dimensions
Festus Olorunniwo et al (2006)	US	311	Employees and MBA students in metropolitan area	Exploratory Factor Analysis	Tangibles, Recovery, Responsiveness, Knowledge
Gour C. Saha and Theingi (2009)	Thailand	1212	Passengers of low cost carriers	SEM	Tangibles, Schedule, Flight attendants, Ground staff
Alok Kumar Singh (2015)	India	526	Indian domestic full service passengers	SEM	Airline Image, Perceived Value
Ling and Lin (2005)	China and Taiwan	404	Passengers between Taiwan and China	ANOVA, SEM	Reliability, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance

Source: Prepared by the Researchers

Cronin and Taylor (1992) has strongly criticized the SERVQUAL model on the basis that it confuses the measurement of service quality with service satisfaction. The criticism was not only based on theoretical arguments, but Cronin and Taylor (1992) provided empirical evidence that the Expectation (E) component of the SERVQUAL model can be discarded and Performance (P) component can alone be used to assess service quality. The SERVPERF model suggests that higher the Performance (P) component, higher will be the service quality. The empirical evidence was provided by applying the Performance (P) only model i.e. SERVPERF to measure service quality across four industries that included banking, fast food, dry cleaning and pest control.

There have been severe criticisms on the SERVPERF scale fromOstrowski,O'Brien&Gordon (1993) and others calling it very generic for measuring service quality and failing to capture industry specific dimensions. A study by L. F. Cunningham, Young, and Lee (2002) incorporated the SERVPERF model to compare the satisfaction of the US and Korean airline passengers. The SERVPERF model measured the perceptions of airline passengers related to the service quality and also the risk these passengers have taken in the choice of the airlines. The results separately indicated the dimensions of service quality that resulted in the satisfaction of the US and Korean passengers. The study also suggested that the factors that could lead to re-flying on the same airlines for the US passengers are reliability and empathy and for the Korean passengers, the important factors are reliability and overall risk.

The supporters of the SERVPERF model (Babakus and Boller, 1992; Bolton and Drew, 1991b; Boulding et al., 1993; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Gotlieb, Grewal and Brown, 1994; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Mazis, Antola and Klippel, 1975; Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins, 1983) opines that the watered-down version of SERVQUAL is a better version as not only the number of items have been reduced by 50 percent but also the use of single-item scale explains greater variance in the measurement of service quality.

2.4 SERVQUAL versus SERVPERF

The essential difference between the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF measurement model is that the SERVQUAL model measures service quality in terms of gaps between customer's expectations of a service and actual perception about the service, whereas SERVPERF is focused only on the performance-based items. SERVPERF has been derived from the SERVQUAL model, but it's proponents, Cronin and Taylor (1992) strongly believes in the superiority of the performance-based approach of the SERVPERF model. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, the proponents of GAP and SERVQUAL model strongly advocates the usage of SERVQUAL model. And in this conflict, many researchers and academicians have supported or opposed any of the service quality measurement models.

However, academicians are also of the view that SERVQUAL and SERVPERF should be used in different contexts. They believe that SERVQUAL should be used more in measuring service quality of any industry in developing countries as it will be superior in providing adequate information about the areas where there is lack of service quality. And SERVPERF should be employed in instances where there is a need to explain variation in satisfaction of the customers and their usage of the services in future (Madhukar G. AngurPliD, 1998).

Both the SERVPERF and SERVQUAL instruments uses the constructs of tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy to measure service quality in airlines industry and this has been validated by many researchers in different studies.

Table 4: Airline Service Quality Dimensions and Sources

Service Quality Dimension	Description	Adapted from Source (Time)
Tangibles	Physical facilities like comfort of seats, clean interiors, food served (objects) and appearance of airlines crew (subjects)	Elliott & Roach (1993), Ostrowski et al. (1993), Truitt & Haynes (1994), Huang (1996), Tsai and Hsu (1997), Gourdin (1988), Disney (1999), Saha&Theingi (2009), Street (1994), Cronin et al. (2000), Gilbert & Wong (2003), Sultan & Simpson (2000), Lu and Tsai (2004), Park et al. (2006), Lin (2006), Chen (2008), Chou C-C et al (2010), Chen, Tseng & Lin (2011)
Reliability	Accurate and dependable service provider (safe traveling, punctual services)	Su (1995), Huang (1996), Lin (1997), Tsai and Hsu (1997), Disney (1999), Huang, Kung and Yu (2000), Yeh (2003), Liou et al (2007), Yu Kyoung Kim, Hyung Ryong Lee (2011)
Empathy	Personal and caring service to passengers (individual attention to passengers, assistance to elderly and infants, on-time arrival and departure).	Elliott & Roach (1993), Ostrowski et al. (1993), Truitt and Haynes (1994), Su (1995), Gourdin (1988), Yeh (2003), Gilberta and Wong (2003), David Wessels et al (2006), Clemes et al (2008),Chen (2008), Prakoso et.al (2010), Santorizki (2010), Zhang (2011), Chou et al. (2011), Purnama and Raditya (2011), Hidayat and Saptarini (2011), Shahin and Nekuie (2011), Soomro et.al (2012), Manivasugen& Nova (2013), Khuong&Uyen (2014), Lerrthaitrakul et al (2014)
Assurance	Features that instill confidence and trust among passengers (professionally trained crew, knowledge to answer queries, good communication skills).	Huang, Kung & Yu (2000), Chang & Chang (2000), Gilbert and Wong (2003), Park et al. (2004), Liou, Yen & Tzeng (2008), Chen (2008), Saha&Theingi (2009), Chou C-C et al (2010), Tseng Lin (2011)
Responsiveness	Willingness of the airlines crew to attend to passenger's needs (prompt service, handling complaints, genuine effort to improve services)	Sultan and Simpson (2000), Keating, Rugimbana, and Quazi (2003), Gilbert and Wong (2003), Park et al. (2004), Park et al. (2006), Saha and Theingi (2009), Chou C-C et al (2010), Yu Kyoung Kim, Hyung Ryong Lee (2011), Hyung Ryong Lee (2011), Erdil and Yıldız (2011)

Source: Prepared by the Researchers

In various research studies, SERVQUAL has been used in conjunction with the SERVPERF model and in most of the instances it has been found that SERVPERF outperforms SERVQUAL (Babakus and Boller, 1992; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Although SERVQUAL has majorly been applied across industries, SERVPERF is finding more acceptance lately. The SERVPERF scale found more credibility as Zeithaml, one of the proponents of the SERVQUAL scale stated in a research study that "…Our results are incompatible with both the one-dimensional view of expectations and the gap formation for service quality. Instead, we find that perceived quality is directly influenced only by perceptions (of performance)" (Boulding et al., 1993).

A research study conducted on the service quality and satisfaction of 679 patients from prosthetic dental procedures in the USA used both SERVQUAL and SERVPERF instruments to present which of the two instruments are more accurate in measuring perceived dental service quality. The utility and effectiveness of these measurement instruments were used with and without the importance weights (i.e. the difference between expectations and perceptions). The study found that the SERVQUAL instrument with the inclusion of importance weights is effective and is a statistically significant model whereas SERVPERF with the inclusion of importance weights demonstrated most variance in overall service quality. However, the study concluded that SERVPERF without importance weights (i.e. perception only measurement) is more practical to use because the length of survey reduces by one-third and it measure the performance of the service provider (Paul, David P, 2003). Also, in general service setting of dental procedures, SERVPERF as a measurement instrument has been more effective in measuring service quality (McAlexanderet al., 1994).

Research Methodology

As the main objective of this study to investigate the service quality attributes toward passengers' levels of satisfaction and re-flying intention, a self-reported experience through a questionnaire survey was chosen as the means of data gathering for the pilot study. The pilot study,used to test the validity of the questionnaire was conducted through online platform to collect data from respondents. This approach was opted to ensure that the information obtained be based upon actual experiences of travelling in the low-cost carriers of India. Sample population of 128 persons who travelled in and out of Delhi through low cost airlines in the last one year were collected and118 samples were found to be complete and relevant.

The demographics and travel information of the collected sample suggests that the respondents constituted 82% males and 18% females with 12% fallingin the age group of 18-30 years and 42% each in the age group of 31-40 years and above 40 years. Most airline passengers possessed graduate degrees (61%) with 33% being undergraduate and 6% holding higher degrees. The majority of respondents to the survey (50%) used air services more than five times in the last one year with 16% twice a year and 12% thrice and four times a year each. Only 3% of the respondents used air services five times a year and 7% only once a year. The distribution of the low cost airlines that the passengers flew with in the last one year suggests the maximum usage of Indigo (54%) followed by Spicejet (13.5%), Air India (10%) and Go Air, Air Asia and others each with 7.5%. Passengers with business purposes accounted for 57% of the total participants of the survey while 43% travelled for leisure purposes.

For the pilot study, a set of 35 items were used in the questionnaire, comprisingseven items for tangibles (TANG), 5 items for reliability (RELI), five items for responsiveness (RESP), five items for empathy (EMPA), and five items for assurance (ASSU). Customer satisfaction (CSAT) was measured using four emotion-laden items asproposed by Westbrook and Oliver (1991). A five-point Likert scale was used to reducerespondents' frustration and increase response rate and quality, as suggested by Prayag(2007).

Table 5: Descriptive analysis for Airlines Service Quality

Constructs/Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Tangibles (TANG)			.912
I found the interiors of the aircraft clean	3.97	.789	
I found the interiors of the aircraft fresh and visually appealing	3.75	.837	
Seats were very comfortable for me	2.97	1.050	
Food served in the aircraft was delicious	2.93	1.027	
Crew members appeared neat and well-dressed	4.03	.847	
Airline had magazines and other entertainment facilities	2.92	1.095	
Air condition in the flight was very comfortable	3.86	.876	
Reliability (RELI)			.903
Flying in this airline was always safe	3.89	.845	
I have never faced cancellation of flights of this airline	4.09	1.125	
Crew members always provide services on time	3.79	.941	
Crew members take immediate response of my needs	3.81	.945	
Air-condition in the flight was very comfortable	3.77	1.113	
Empathy (EMPA)			.907
Flights of this airlines have on time departure and arrival	3.43	1.033	
Crew members of this flight gives me individual attention	3.79	.959	
Flight schedule of this airlines is always at my convenient time	2.69	1.343	
The airlines give adequate attention to elderly and infants	3.35	1.057	
The airlines have the best interest for its passengers	3.51	1.076	
Assurance (ASSU)			.907
Crew members always answered my queries	3.86	.927	
I found the communication skills of crew members easy	4.09	.816	
Crew members of this airline attended me with a warm smile	3.98	.906	
I found the crew members polite, respectful and courteous	4.03	.852	
Crew members were professionally trained to handle queries	4.06	.850	
Responsiveness (RESP)			.895
Crew members promptly responded to my request	3.88	.818	
Crew members showed their willingness to help me	3.85	.939	
The airline handles complaints of passengers very well	3.58	.928	
The airlines make genuine efforts to improve their services	3.61	1.005	
The airlines announced when services will be performed	3.81	1.023	

Source: Prepared by the Researchers

Table 6: Correlation Matrix for Airlines Service Quality

	Tangibility	Reliability	Empathy	Assurance	Responsiveness	Satisfaction	Loyalty
Tangibility	1						
Reliability	.569**	1					
Empathy	.593**	.519**	1				
Assurance	.567**	.657**	.500**	1			
Responsiveness	.588**	.663**	.677**	.745**	1		
Satisfaction	.613**	.695**	.627**	.571**	.709**	1	
Loyalty	.562**	.643**	.608**	.504**	.645**	.820**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Prepared by the Researchers

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics 21. As this is a Pilot Study with 118 samples, the statistical analysis was limited to finding out the variances and the means of each item used in the survey questionnaire. The correlation matrix has clearly pointed out the strong correlation between the variables and the Cronbach alpha score was assessed for good reliability. The ideal level of reliability is achieved with Cronbach alpha scores found to be 0.881 i.e. over 0.70 and hence reliable (Raut & Veer, 2014:68; Sekaran & Bougie, 2013:228). The correlation matrix suggests that customer satisfaction and their loyalty are highly correlated. There is a strong correlation between responsiveness and satisfaction.

Conclusion

Airline companies in India are striving to retain their customers and to increase their market share in a highly competitive industry. As a result, they should focus on increasing their service quality to retain as well as expand their customer base.

The pilot study examined the measurement of service quality constructs using five dimensional (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy) SERVPERF scale and found strong correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction in the context of low cost airlines operating in India. The reliability measures for all the five dimension of service quality showed veryhigh Cronbach's Alpha value which is 0.881.

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Reviewer's comment 2:
The work is so relevant to be produced in today's time where the competitors have started to compete on non-price basis in service industry. It is a very clear and understandable paper on the subject concerned emphasising the linkages between the satisfaction of customers and type of services offered.

Reviewer's comment 3:
The review of literature done in the study on various scales SERVQUAL, AIRQUAL, SERVPERF&Airline Service Quality Dimension is very well done and remarkable including the widely accepted studies.

Citation

Matloob Hasan, Mohammed Naved Khan and Rahela Farooqi "Service Quality Measurement Models: Comparative Analysis and Application in Airlines Industry" Volume-11, Issue-2, Apr-June, 2019. (www.gjeis.com)

https://doi.org/10.18311/gjeis/2019
Volume-11, Issue-2, Apr-June, 2019
Online ISSN : 0975-1432, **Print ISSN** : 0975-153X
Frequency : Quarterly, Published Since : 2009

Google Citations: Since 2009
H-Index = 96
i10-Index: 964

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