

A Study on Customer Perception of Service Quality in Aviation Industry

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 13

Special Issue: 1

Month: February

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Citation:

Jeiya Shivaani, KS, et al.
“A Study on Customer Perception of Service Quality in Aviation Industry.” *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 13, no. S1, 2026, pp. 28–32.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v13iS1-Feb.10083>

K.S. Jeiya Shivaani

*III BBA Aviation Management
Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore*

Joseph K

*III BBA Aviation Management
Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore*

V. Selvam

*Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor
School of Management, Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore*

Abstract

The aviation industry plays a significant role in global connectivity and economic growth. In a highly competitive market, delivering superior service quality has become essential for airlines to attract and retain customers. This study examines customer perception of service quality in the aviation industry based on five dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—proposed by A. Parasuraman and his associates under the SERVQUAL model. Primary data were collected from 120 airline passengers using a structured questionnaire. Simple percentage and ranking analysis were applied to interpret the data. The findings indicate that reliability and assurance are the most influential factors affecting passenger satisfaction, followed by responsiveness and empathy. Tangibility was perceived as comparatively less important. The study concludes that consistent service performance, safety assurance, and professional staff behavior significantly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty in the aviation industry.

Keywords: Aviation Industry, Service Quality, Customer Perception, SERVQUAL, Passenger Satisfaction.

Introduction

The aviation industry is one of the most dynamic and competitive sectors in the global service economy. With increasing globalization, rising disposable incomes, and expanding tourism and business travel, airlines are continuously striving to attract and retain passengers. In such a highly competitive environment, service quality has emerged as a critical differentiating factor. Unlike manufacturing industries where products can be inspected before purchase, airline services are largely intangible and are consumed at the time of production. This inseparability between production and consumption makes passenger perception and experience extremely important. As a result, airlines must focus not only on operational efficiency but also on delivering superior service experiences to gain a competitive advantage. Service quality in the aviation industry encompasses both tangible and intangible elements. Tangible aspects refer to

the physical components of the service, such as aircraft cleanliness, seating comfort, in-flight entertainment systems, cabin ambiance, and the appearance of airline staff. These elements create the first impression and significantly influence passengers' overall evaluation of the airline. For example, a clean and well-maintained aircraft cabin enhances passengers' comfort and confidence in the airline's standards. Similarly, comfortable seating and efficient check-in counters contribute to a smooth travel experience.

On the other hand, intangible aspects of airline services are equally, if not more, important. These include punctuality, safety standards, reliability of service, responsiveness to passenger needs, and the behavior and professionalism of airline staff. Since passengers entrust airlines with their safety and time, reliability and adherence to schedules play a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction. Delays, cancellations, or poor communication can negatively impact passenger perceptions and reduce loyalty. Likewise, courteous and empathetic staff behavior during boarding, in-flight service, and baggage handling significantly enhances the overall travel experience. Customer perception of service quality directly influences passenger satisfaction, repeat purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth recommendations. In today's digital era, passengers frequently share their travel experiences through online reviews and social media platforms, which can either strengthen or damage an airline's brand image. Therefore, understanding and measuring service quality has become essential for airline management to identify service gaps and implement improvement strategies.

The SERVQUAL framework provides a widely accepted model for assessing service quality. Developed to measure the gap between customer expectations and perceived performance, SERVQUAL identifies five key dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Tangibles relate to the physical facilities and appearance of personnel. Reliability refers to the ability to perform promised services dependably and accurately. Responsiveness reflects the willingness of staff to help customers and provide prompt service. Assurance involves the knowledge, courtesy, and ability of employees to inspire trust and confidence. Empathy focuses on providing caring and individualized attention to passengers. By applying the SERVQUAL framework, airlines can systematically evaluate passenger expectations and perceptions across these dimensions. This enables them to identify specific areas requiring improvement and enhance overall service performance. In conclusion, service quality plays a vital role in determining passenger satisfaction and loyalty in the aviation industry. Airlines that consistently deliver high-quality service across both tangible and intangible dimensions are better positioned to sustain long-term competitiveness and build strong customer relationships.

Statement of the Problem

The aviation industry operates in a highly competitive and dynamic environment where multiple airlines offer similar routes, pricing strategies, and promotional benefits. In such a scenario, service quality becomes a key factor influencing customer perception, satisfaction, and loyalty. However, passengers often experience service gaps related to flight delays, inadequate communication, inconsistent staff behavior, and unmet service expectations. Since airline services are intangible and directly experienced, negative perceptions can quickly impact brand image and customer retention. Therefore, it becomes essential to examine how passengers perceive different dimensions of service quality and identify the factors that most significantly influence their satisfaction. This study aims to analyze customer perception of service quality in the aviation industry and determine the key dimensions affecting overall passenger experience.

Importance of the Study

This study is important as it helps airlines understand customer expectations and evaluate their performance in delivering quality services. By identifying the most significant service quality dimensions, airlines can focus on areas that directly influence passenger satisfaction and loyalty. The findings assist management in improving operational efficiency, staff training, punctuality, and safety standards. Additionally, the study contributes to academic research by providing insights into the application of service quality dimensions in the aviation sector. Overall, the research supports airlines in developing customer-centered strategies to enhance competitiveness and build long-term relationships with passengers.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the demographic profile of airline passengers.
- To analyze customer perception towards service quality dimensions.
- To rank service quality dimensions based on passenger preference.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine passengers' perception of service quality in the aviation industry. A descriptive design is appropriate as it helps in systematically describing the characteristics, opinions, and attitudes of airline passengers without manipulating any variables. The objective of the study is to analyze how passengers perceive different dimensions of service quality and to assess their overall level of satisfaction. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to airline passengers. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions designed to capture demographic details and passenger perceptions regarding reliability, assurance, and other service quality dimensions. Secondary data were gathered from various sources such as academic journals, research articles, airline industry reports, and relevant publications. These sources helped in understanding the theoretical background and supporting the empirical findings of the study. A sample of 120 airline passengers was selected using the convenience sampling method. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen due to ease of access and time constraints. Respondents were approached at airports and requested to share their views regarding airline services. Although convenience sampling limits generalization, it provides useful preliminary insights into passenger perceptions. For data analysis, Simple Percentage Analysis and Ranking Analysis were employed. Percentage analysis was used to interpret demographic characteristics and response distribution, while ranking analysis helped identify the most significant service quality factors influencing passenger satisfaction.

Simple Percentage Analysis (Sample Size: 120 Respondents)

Simple Percentage Analysis was used to interpret the responses collected from 120 airline passengers. The formula used is:

Age Distribution of Respondents

Table No: 1

Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 25 years	30	25%
26–35 years	45	37.5%
36–45 years	25	20.8%

Above 45 years	20	16.7%
Total	120	100%

From the above table indicates that Majority (37.5%) of respondents belong to the 26–35 years age group, indicating that young adults form the major segment of airline passengers.

Purpose of Travel

Table No: 2

Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Business	40	33.3%
Leisure	60	50%
Personal/Family	20	16.7%
Total	120	100%

From the above table indicates that Half of the respondents (50%) travel for leisure purposes, showing tourism as a major contributor to airline travel.

Reliability (Flights Operate on Time)

Table No: 3

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	35	29.2%
Agree	55	45.8%
Neutral	15	12.5%
Disagree	10	8.3%
Strongly Disagree	5	4.2%
Total	120	100%

From the above table indicates that A majority of respondents (75%) agree that flights operate on time, indicating a positive perception regarding reliability.

Assurance (Feeling of Safety and Confidence)

Table No: 4

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	40	33.3%
Agree	53	44.2%
Neutral	12	10%
Disagree	10	8.3%
Strongly Disagree	5	4.2%
Total	120	100%

From the above table indicates that About 77.5% of respondents feel safe and confident while traveling, reflecting strong assurance and trust in airline services.

Finds of the Study

- The Simple Percentage Analysis reveals that most respondents perceive airline service quality positively, particularly in terms of reliability and assurance.
- Leisure travelers constitute the largest group of passengers, and young adults (26–35 years) form the dominant age category.
- The findings indicate that airlines are performing well in maintaining punctuality and ensuring passenger safety, which significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Implication of the Study

- The study implies that airlines must prioritize reliability and assurance to strengthen customer perception of service quality. Since passengers value punctuality, safety, and professional staff behavior more than physical facilities, airlines should focus on improving on-time performance and maintaining high safety standards.
- Regular staff training programs can enhance employee communication skills and service responsiveness. Airlines should also establish effective feedback systems to understand passenger expectations and quickly address complaints. Improving transparency in communication during delays or disruptions can further build trust.
- By concentrating on operational efficiency and customer-centric strategies, airlines can enhance passenger satisfaction, encourage repeat travel, and sustain long-term competitive advantage.

Conclusion

The study concludes that reliability and assurance are the most influential dimensions shaping customer perception of service quality in the aviation industry. Passengers give higher importance to punctuality, safety standards, and the professional behavior of airline staff rather than only focusing on physical facilities such as seating or in-flight amenities. Timely departures and arrivals, clear communication during delays, and consistent service performance significantly enhance customer satisfaction. Similarly, passengers value feeling safe and confident throughout their journey, which reflects the importance of well-trained staff and strict adherence to safety procedures. The findings suggest that airlines should prioritize operational efficiency and continuous staff training to maintain high service standards. Effective customer communication and prompt handling of passenger concerns also play a vital role in building trust. By strengthening reliability and assurance, airlines can improve overall service quality, enhance customer experience, and foster long-term passenger loyalty in a highly competitive market.

References

1. Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
2. Sultan, F., & Simpson, M. C. (2000). International service variants: Airline passenger expectations and perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14(3), 188–216.
3. Chen, C. F., & Chang, Y. Y. (2005). Examining airline service quality from a process perspective. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 11(2), 79–87.
4. Park, J. W., Robertson, R., & Wu, C. L. (2004). The effect of airline service quality on passengers' behavioural intentions. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 10(6), 435–439.