

## Behaviour of Traveler Fondness, and Fulfillment towards Economy Class Airlines at Coimbatore City

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### Abstract

The Indian aviation industry is one of the fastest-emerging airline industries in the world. Presently, India occupies the ninth position in the world's aviation market. The objective of the study is to ascertain the factors that impact customer satisfaction in low-cost airline industries. Several variables that influence the travelers, namely employee approaches, service environment, consumer behavioural intention, and efficiency of services, were explored in the study. The airline industry has constantly been known for managing fluctuating demand, cutting costs, and continuous challenges while possessing stiff quality criteria while trying to satisfy the desires of diverse customer groups and provide outstanding services.

**Keywords:** low-cost airlines, fastest-emerging airline industries, aviation market

### Introduction

The aviation sector is one of the principal economic drivers for development, prosperity, and employment in the country. The rapidly growing aviation sector in India manages about 2.5 billion passengers around the world in a year and transports 45 million metric tonnes (MT) of cargo via 920 airlines, operating 4,200 airports, and employing 27,000 aeroplanes around the world. Currently, 87 foreign airlines fly to India from 40 countries, and five Indian carriers fly to foreign countries.

The aviation sector has developed into a highly significant part of the economic growth of a nation. The airline industry has been reformed by low-cost airline carriers after liberalization, with substantial effects on full-service network carriers. Both low-cost and full-service airlines are constituted by a complex mix of intangibles of a nation. The airline industry has been reformed by low-cost airline carriers after liberalization, with substantial effects on full-service network carriers. Both low-cost and full-service airlines are constituted by a complex mix of intangibles. Customer satisfaction is regulated by intangible factors such as atmosphere, crew behaviours, the ambience of the cabin, etc.

The transportation sector performs a vital role in the development of a country's economy. In fact, 95 percent of tourist entrances into the country are by air, and 40 percent of the country's imports and exports take place through aerial routes. Coimbatore airport, formerly known as Coimbatore Civil Aerodrome is situated at a distance of 21 kilometers from the city center. It is the second largest airport in Tamil Nadu, after Chennai International Airport, and the eleventh biggest airport in India in terms of total passenger movement.

### Review of Literature

**Murugesan and Perumalsamy (2016)** have inferred that customers are satisfied with the safety measures and quality of service provided by airlines. Passengers are satisfied with cabin spotlessness, in-flight amenities, and seat luxury. Airlines must prioritise baggage check-in

counters, passenger wait times for boarding, and aircraft arrival and departure times. The study reveals that most of the customers are satisfied with overall courtesy, kindness, and obtaining significant value for their money.

**Amuthanayaki (2016)** aspires to examine the air passengers' level of expectation and satisfaction with airline services. The study has witnessed that a wide gap exists between passengers' level of expectation and satisfaction with the service characters. The problems encountered by passengers have been listed. The study recommends that private airlines concentrate on marketing strategies to match passengers' expectations and retain them as long-term satisfied customers.

**Kalaiarasan et al. (2015)**, in their article entitled "A study on service quality and customer satisfaction in low-cost airline industries," specified that the service environment is the core factor that contributes to establishing customer satisfaction. The study suggests that low-cost airlines must identify ways to improve service quality by delivering great service with the intention to keep a high level of customer loyalty and also to maintain their sustainability in the long term.

**Mohideen and Rajak (2015)**, in their research paper, examined passengers' perceptions with respect to airline services in Tiruchirappalli. The results validated the existence of two distinct markets, one consists of passengers who choose a low-cost carrier, and the other opts for a full-service airline.

**Malyadri and Satyanarayana, (2014)** intended to examine the perception towards domestic airline services in India. The study listed some verdicts with respect to the Indian domestic airline industry. The study underlined the customers' feelings about the company's services and its service quality. The elements like quality perceived and quality expected or experienced by the customer are examined. The study of the variables found matches with customers' perceptions at Indigo Airlines and Kingfisher Airlines.

**Punitha and Tamilchelvi (2013)** envisage that customer satisfaction is a broad approach to developing long-term customer relationships and enhancing business performance. Collecting information about customers helps the firm enhance customer interaction and develop customer insights. A few suggestions were made to the airline operators, like offering services that match the customer's perception, quick redressal of the customer's problem, etc.

**Venkatesh (2013)** reveals that in an international context, air transport has performed a vital role in economic and social growth. The entrance of low-cost carriers (Budget Airlines) made a transformation in the airline industry, with several ways of operating. The paper focused on comparing two main budget airlines, viz., Tiger Airways and AirAsia. Also, customer preferences and satisfaction at these airlines are studied. A comparison of public and private carriers with respect to passenger service is made from a global perspective.

**Archana and Subha (2012)** have assessed the primary forces of service quality that influence passengers' satisfaction with aircraft transport. The findings of the study discovered the elements—namely, cuisine provided, safety, and seat comfort—that are positively related to service quality perception in international air travel. Personal entertainment and online ticket booking are the most significant dimensions as perceived by airline passengers in in-flight service. Moreover, the findings specified the passengers' satisfaction with different airline companies on the basis of the services delivered.

### Objectives of the study

- To identify the key factors contributing to service quality of low cost airlines.
- To ascertain the relationship between demographic factors, service quality, employee approaches and customer satisfaction
- To analyze the socio-economic status of the airline passengers commuting from Coimbatore airport.
- To investigate the passengers opinion towards price and quality of service.
- To examine the level of satisfaction towards factors of airline service.

- To offer recommendations for enriching the satisfaction level of the customers.

## Research Methodology

### Research design

The main aim of this study is to comprehend the passengers' behaviour towards low cost airlines and find out the key factors influencing customer satisfaction. Hence descriptive research was adopted to find out the customer attitude and characteristics of consumers.

### Area of the study

The survey is conducted among customers who utilize low cost airlines at Coimbatore airport.

### Research approach

A structured questionnaire was used for collecting data from the respondents.

### Sample Size

Sample size taken in this study is 120.

### Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was employed in the study.

## Results and Discussion

It is inferred from Table 1 that the majority of respondents are male (65 percent), and nearly half of the respondents fall under the age group of 36 to 45, followed by 26 to 35. While studying the occupation of respondents, it was found that business persons (45 low-cost percent) opted for low-cost airlines, followed by employees (32 percent). The study reveals that 28 percent of respondents fall under the income category of Rs 25001–Rs 35000, followed by 22 percent of respondents having monthly incomes of over Rs. 45,000.

**Table: 1** Demographic Characteristics of Sample Respondents

S.no	Demographic variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	78	65
		Female	42	35
2	Age	Below 25	16	13
		26-35	34	28
		36-45	38	32
		46-55	18	15
		Above 55	14	12
3	Occupation	Student	16	13
		Business	54	45
		Employee	38	32
		Others	12	10
4	Level of Income (monthly)	Below 15000	14	12
		15001-25000	24	20
		25001-35000	34	28
		35001-45000	22	18
		Above 45001	26	22

**Source:** Field Study

**Table: 2** Type of Flights

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Spice jet	18	15
Jet Airways	16	13
Air India	26	22
Air Arabia	14	12
Indigo	34	28
Others	12	10

**Source:** Field Study

It is observed from Table 2 that 28 percent of respondents prefer Indigo Airlines, followed by 22 percent of respondents who prefer Air India.

**Table: 3** Purpose of Trip

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Education	8	7
Business	56	47
Holiday	34	28
Others	22	18

**Source:** Field Study

According to Table 3, the majority of respondents (47 percent) fly for business, while the remaining 28 percent fly for pleasure.

**Table: 4** Travelers type

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
First time traveler	36	30
Frequent traveler	84	70

**Source:** Field Study

Table 4 infers that the majority (70 percent) of sample respondents had frequent travelers, and the remaining 30 percent of respondents are first-time travelers.

**Table: 5** Frequency of travel

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Weekly	16	13
Monthly	34	28
On purpose	62	52
Occasionally	8	7

**Source:** Field Study

Frequency of travel by respondents was studied, it was learnt that majority (52 per cent) of respondents use the airlines purposefully, followed by 28 per cent of respondents use airlines on monthly basis.

**Table: 6** Mode of ticket booking

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Internet	26	22
Airline office	14	12
Agent	70	58
Others	10	8

**Source:** Field Study

It is witnessed from table 6 that 58 per cent of respondents book the tickets from agents, 22per cent of respondent's book ticket through online.

**Table: 7** Preference towards specialty seat

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Prefer	74	62
Not prefer	46	38

**Source:** Field Study

It is observed from table 7 that majority (62per cent) of respondent's prefer to take specialty seat, 38per cent of respondents do not prefer specialty seat.

**Table: 8** Problems faced by passengers at airlines- Garrett ranking method.

Problems	GS	AS	Rank
Non availability of flights on specified date	7912	79.12	V
Flight delays	8028	80.28	III
Passengers Complaints	7950	79.5	IV
Mishandled Baggage	7874	78.74	VI
Cleanliness	7859	78.59	VII
Non availability of refreshments	8809	88.09	I
Rescheduling / Cancellations	8052	80.52	II

**Source:** Field Study

**Note:** G.S – Garret score & A.S- Average score

It is witnessed from table 8 that among the seven common problems faced by the respondents at the low cost airlines, the problem “Non availability of refreshments” was placed in the first position with the Garrett score of 8809 points. It is followed by the problem “Rescheduling / Cancellations” which was ranked second position with the Garrett score of 8052 points. The problem “Flight delays” was placed in the third rank by sample respondents with the Garrett score of 8028 points. The problems like “Passengers Complaints” and “Non availability of flights on specified date” were placed in the fourth and fifth positions with the Garrett scores of 7950 and 7912 points respectively. Simultaneously, the problems like “Mishandled Baggage” and “Cleanliness” were placed in the sixth and seventh positions with the Garrett scores of 7874 and 7859 points respectively. From the analysis, it is identified that the “Non availability of refreshments” was the major problem at low cost airlines highlighted by sample respondents.

Resolution of passenger's complaints is ranked first by considering cumulative score. Most of the respondents (36 respondents) stated highly satisfied and 29 respondents stated satisfied. This indicates that customers are very much satisfied about resolution of passenger's complaints.

**Table: 9** Satisfaction towards airline service

Particulars	No of Respondents					Cumulative Score	Rank
	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied		
Flight schedules	24	26	32	18	20	374	8
Flight charges	18	30	22	34	16	378	7
Waiting time	12	24	38	21	25	333	13
Check in procedures	28	33	14	22	23	380	6
Comfort	8	31	27	42	12	371	9
Reservation procedures	33	14	13	22	38	326	14
Access to flight information	32	33	28	21	6	434	2
Baggage handling and safety	28	36	22	23	11	405	4
Entertainment	17	37	31	22	13	392	5
Courtesy of flight crew	34	27	28	21	10	425	3
Customer service	18	35	33	12	22	365	10
Promotions	13	25	18	41	23	342	12
Arrival of Flights On-time	22	31	22	19	26	357	11
Resolution of Passengers Complaints	36	29	25	22	8	437	1

**Source:** Field Study

Access to flight information is rated as second. Most of the respondents (33 respondents) stated satisfied and 32 respondents stated highly satisfied. From the cumulative score the courtesy of flight crew attribute has been ranked third. Baggage handling and safety has been ranked as fourth as majority of the respondents (36 respondents) stated satisfied and 28 of them rated highly satisfied. Entertainment at airlines was ranked as number fifth.

### Results and Discussion

Regardless of the declining trend in the overall airline industry, low cost airlines prosper with increased turnover and number of passengers. From the exhaustive study it has been witnessed that 60 per cent of air passengers' are middle aged people, belonging to the age group of 26-46 years, 45 per cent of passengers' are business people, whose monthly income ranges between 25000-35000. Hence, it has been determined that majority of the passengers belong to the middle income category, who largely prefer low cost airlines for convenience, easy & fast journey. The passenger encounters exertions while using low cost airline services due to non-availability of flights on specified date, problems like flight delays, passenger's complaints, mishandled baggage, cleanliness, non-availability of refreshments and rescheduling / cancellations. Majority of the customers are satisfied with resolution of passenger's complaints, access to flight information, baggage handling and safety, entertainment provided at the low cost airlines.

India's civil aviation industry is on progress stage. India intends to develop as third-largest aviation market by 2020 and the largest by 2030. The Civil Aviation industry has turned into new era of enlargement, steered by factors such as low-cost carriers (LCCs) and modern airports. India's aviation industry is generally untouched with enormous growth opportunities, considering that air transport is still costly for majority of the country's population. The airline operators must enhance their service quality and strive to shrink the existing gap between passenger's expectation and level of satisfaction received.

### Conclusion

Customer satisfaction is the principal slogan of any marketer. In the case of airline services, the majority of customers give prime importance to price. On certain occasions, customers wait to receive offer prices, while at the same time being ready to pay a high price for a good service. On the other hand, young customers are price-sensitive and tend to avail themselves of the service at the lowest price. The research reveals that price and service quality are the predominant factors having a massive impact on customer satisfaction in the airline industry.

Hence, at this competitive edge, it is essential to understand the passenger preferences of airline operators, and for a sustainable business, high-quality service needs to be delivered.

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