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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/19994

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/19994>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PASSENGERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS SERVICE QUALITY OF INDIGO DOMESTIC AIRLINES

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 05 October 2024

Final Accepted: 07 November 2024

Published: December 2024

Key words:-

Service Quality, Passenger Perception, SERVPERF Model, Low-Cost Airlines

Abstract

Service quality assesses how effectively a service organization delivers its offerings in comparison to customer expectations. It is important to measure service quality to understand the needs and wants of customers and to know whether they are satisfied after the service delivery. The study aims to evaluate the passengers' perception towards the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. It also compares the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines with the demographic details of passengers. SERVPERF model was used for measuring service quality of IndiGo airlines. The study found that the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines is good and the passengers have good perception regarding the same. Here, assurance and empathy factors have highest mean score and hence these factors are highly contributing to ensure the service quality of the airline. There exists significant difference in the perception of different age group passengers. Passengers in the 41-60 age group have perceived low level of service quality on assurance and empathy as compared to other age group passengers.

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Introduction:-

One of the fastest growing industries in India was the civil aviation industry during the last three years. Despite the challenges faced by the airline industry during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has now fully recovered. As a result, the air traffic movement has increased tremendously from 188.89 million in FY22 to 327.28 million in FY23. Domestic traffic contributes around 69% of the total airline traffic in South Asia and India's airport capacity had increased to handle around 1 billion trips annually in 2023. India has become the third-largest domestic aviation market in the world and is expected to overtake the UK to become the third-largest air passenger market by 2024. India's largest passenger airline is IndiGo with highest market share. 61% of India's domestic market share is handled by IndiGo airlines. It is one of the fastest growing airlines in the world and it is operating services to 85 domestic destinations and 32 international destinations with more than 2000 flights a day.

Service quality measures how well a service organization delivers its service as per the customer's expectations. It is important to measure service quality to understand the needs and wants of customers and to know whether they are satisfied after the service delivery. Service quality contributes directly towards customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. In Indian domestic aviation market, there is cut throat competition particularly among the low cost airlines such as Air india Express, IndiGo, spiceJet and Akasa Air. To remain competitive in the market and to

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attain the objectives, a thorough understanding about the service quality of IndiGo domestic airlines is essential. The research aims to evaluate the passengers' perception towards the service quality of IndiGo domestic airlines.

Objectives of the Research:-

1. To evaluate passengers' perception towards service quality of IndiGo domestic airlines
2. To compare the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines with the demographic details of passengers

Literature Review:-

Jiang et al., (2017) examine the gap between passenger expectations and perceptions of the service quality of China's four major domestic airlines. The findings of the study indicated that there exists significant gap between passengers' expectations and perceptions for all four airlines. The Chinese passengers perceived high service quality on the dimension 'assurance' among various SERVQUAL dimensions. Cheaper airfare and flight schedule & frequency are the priority factors of passengers while choosing an airline in China. Further, the study concluded that service quality of airline should be improved in China rather than offering cheap airfare in order to retain in the competitive market.

Rahman & Rahman (2023) Investigated service quality of Bangladesh domestic airlines and tried to identify the influencing variables of the service quality of domestic airlines. The findings of the study revealed that pilot skill, technical safety, comfort level, aircraft fitness and physical condition are the most influencing factors of airline service quality. Also the results showed that customer satisfaction with toilet condition at airport, cleanliness of airport and luggage handling is very low in case of Bangladesh domestic airlines.

Ganiyu (2016) explored the service quality dimensions of airlines in Nigeria by using SERVQUAL model. As per the findings of this study, all dimensions of service quality were positively correlated and interrelated. At the same time, the service quality of Nigerian domestic airlines found to be very poor. The study also mentioned that flight pattern, reliability, facilities, assurance, responsiveness, employee and customization are the factors with which customers were highly dissatisfied.

Biswakarma & Gnawali (2021) analysed the impact of service quality dimensions on the overall quality of domestic airlines in Nepal during covid 19. The study found out that all dimensions of service quality have a positive impact on the overall services of domestic airlines. But the dimensions of reliability, tangibility and responsiveness have more importance and need to focus more during pandemic period.

Khanh Giao & Vuong (2021) evaluated the effect of service quality on passenger loyalty. The findings of the study demonstrated that service quality has a significant influence on passenger loyalty. Furthermore, the result indicated that perceived value, passenger trust and satisfaction have mediating roles in between service quality and passenger loyalty.

Previous researchers studied the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. But no study was conducted to evaluate the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines from the perception of passengers who have travelled from Kerala Airports. This study aims to evaluate the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines from the perception of Kerala passengers by using SERVPERF model of service quality.

Research Methodology:-

Cronin & Taylor (1992) developed SERVPERF model to measure service quality of various industries. The research used SERVPERF model for measuring service quality of IndiGo airlines. Unlike SERVQUAL model, SERVPERF model only measures customers' perceptions not expectations. It is a performance based model and measures service quality based on five dimensions namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Customer perceptions were measured on 5 Point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The study used survey method for collecting primary data. Convenience sampling was adopted to select the samples. The data was collected from the domestic passengers of IndiGo Airlines from the Cochin international Airport, Kerala. The period of study was from April 2024 to August 2024. Email addresses of respondent were collected from the passengers at the airport as well as from the travel agents. Questionnaires were sent through emails. 200 questionnaires were distributed to passengers and completely answered 135 questionnaires were chosen for analysis. The study is limited to the domestic passengers of IndiGo Airlines in Kerala.

Different statistical techniques were used in the study to analyse the data. The passengers' perceptions were analysed by using mean and standard deviation. One sample t- test was applied for measuring the level of service quality. In order to compare the service quality with the demographic details of passengers, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test has been employed.

Results and Discussions:-

Objective No.1

To evaluate passengers' perception towards service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines.

This section of analysis deals with the evaluation of passenger's perception towards the IndiGo Domestic Airlines. In order to do so, descriptive statistics and One-sample 't' test are applied. Former is used to describe the service quality with the help of different factors/ statements. Later test is applied to check the level of service quality. The proposed results are given below.

Table 1:- Descriptive Statistics of Service Quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines.

Dimensions	Code	Factors/ Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tangibility	TA1	Aircraft looks modern and new	135	3.503	.968
	TA2	Physical facilities of airlines is good	135	3.540	.952
	TA3	Employees are professional looking	135	3.185	1.134
	TA4	Aircraft material are good	135	3.970	.854
Reliability	RE1	On time performance	135	3.622	.904
	RE2	A sincere interest in solving customer's queries	135	3.711	.960
	RE3	Flight cancellation and reschedule	135	3.148	1.162
	RE4	Insist on error free records	135	3.563	.974
Responsiveness	RES1	Employees updated right information at right time	135	3.614	.791
	RES2	Employees provided prompt service at check in point	135	3.770	.984
	RES3	Employees provided prompt inflight services	135	3.525	.836
	RES4	Employees not too busy to respond to requests.	135	3.763	.848
Assurance	AS1	Feel confidence in travel with the airline	135	3.644	.926
	AS2	Feel safe in transactions	135	3.725	.867
	AS3	Feel happy with employees courteousness	135	3.911	.823
	AS4	Feel happy with employees knowledge to answer questions	135	3.822	.921
Empathy	EM1	Received personalized attention	135	3.696	.908
	EM2	Operating hours convenient to me	135	3.429	1.004
	EM3	Have customer's best interests at heart	135	3.807	.988
	EM4	Understand the specific needs	135	3.888	.959

Source: Primary Data

The above table describes the passenger's perception on service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. Regarding 'tangibility' factor of service quality, the passengers have good level of perception on 'aircraft material' with the mean score of 3.970 (SD = 0.854). In the case of 'Reliability' factor of service quality, the passengers' have good level of perception on 'sincere interest in solving the queries' with mean score of 3.711 (SD = .960).

Similarly, with respect to the 'Responsiveness' factor of service quality, the passengers' have good level of perception on 'prompt services of the employees' with mean score of 3.770 (SD = 0.984). Likewise, in regard to 'Assurance' factor of service quality, the passengers' have good level of service quality on 'happiness with employees courteousness' with the mean score of 3.911 (SD = 0.823). Further, relating to 'empathy' factor of service quality, the passengers' have good level of perception on 'understanding of their specific need' with mean score of 3.888 (SD = 0.959).

Overall, there is good level of perception among passengers of IndiGo Domestic Airlines with the mean score of above 3.5. It means, this airline provides good services for their passengers regarding their tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy factors of service quality.

The level of Passenger's perception towards service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines

In order to check the level of Passenger's perception towards service quality, One-sample 't' test is applied. Following hypothesis is formulated and tested accordingly.

H₀₁: There is an average level of Passenger's perception towards service quality.

H₁₁: There is no average level of Passenger's perception towards service quality.

The results are presented below:

Table 2:- Level of Service Quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines.

One-Sample Statistics				One-Sample Test (Test Value = 3)		
Dimensions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Tangibility	135	3.5500	.79516	8.037**	134	.000
Reliability	135	3.5111	.75302	7.886**	134	.000
Responsiveness	135	3.6685	.64850	11.978**	134	.000
Assurance	135	3.7759	.70066	12.867**	134	.000
Empathy	135	3.7056	.77138	10.627**	134	.000

Source: Primary Data

**Significant at 1% level of significance

The above table discusses the One-sample Statistics and test result of the level of service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines regarding the factors of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. As evident from the table, there is good level of perception on service quality of all the factors with mean score of above 3.5. More specifically, the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines is good and the passengers have good perception regarding the same. Here, assurance and empathy factors have highest mean score and hence these factors are highly contributing to ensure the service quality of the airline.

The result of One-sample 't' test reveals the significance values are less than 0.01, and hence the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level of significance. Accordingly, with respect to the mean score of above 3.5, there exists good level of passengers' perception on service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. IndiGo Airlines give due attention on on-time performance of flights. Airline employees provide prompt services to passengers and employees' courteousness towards passengers is also good.

Objective No.2

To compare the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines with the demographic details of passengers (Gender, Age & Occupation)

Here, the comparative analysis of passengers' perception on service quality according to the demographic details is carried out. In order to do the same, Independent sample 't' test and One-way ANOVA/ Welch test are applied. Prior to that, Levene's test for Equality of Variance is carried out to check the homogeneity assumption of the population variance. Regarding the homogeneity assumption, One-way ANOVA is followed or otherwise Welch test is applied. Further, Post-hoc analysis is conducted for the significant result of mean difference. Accordingly, Tukey HSD post-hoc test for One-way ANOVA and Tamhane's T2 test for Welch test is employed. The results are presented below.

Gender-wise comparison of passengers' perception on service quality

Here, gender is considered as the demographic variable for measuring the significant mean difference in the passengers' perception on service quality. In order to do the same, 'Independent Sample 't' test is applied. Following hypothesis is formulated and tested accordingly,

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the perception on service quality between male and female passengers.

H₁₂: There is significant difference in the perception on service quality between male and female passengers.

Table 3:- Gender – wise comparison of passengers’ perception on service quality.

Group Statistics					Independent Sample ‘t’ test		
Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	df	Sig. value
Tangibility	Male	102	3.5343	.76837	.402	133	.689
	Female	33	3.5985	.88375			
Reliability	Male	102	3.6779	.72619	.899	133	.370
	Female	33	3.6536	.83407			
Responsiveness	Male	102	3.6618	.64930	.212	133	.832
	Female	33	3.6894	.65560			
Assurance	Male	102	3.7770	.66926	.030	133	.976
	Female	33	3.7727	.80128			
Empathy	Male	102	3.7059	.73577	.009	133	.993
	Female	33	3.7045	.88489			

Source: Primary Data

The above table discloses the result of gender-wise comparison of perception of passengers on service quality dimensions. From the descriptive statistics it is clear that, male and female passengers have same level of perception regarding all the factors of service quality. In order to prove the significant difference in the mean score, Independent Sample ‘t’ test is carried out. The result indicates that there exists no significant difference between male and female passengers regarding the perception level on service quality dimensions. Since the ‘p’ value are greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is failed to reject at 5% level of significance. Hence, they have no different perception on service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines.

Age-wise comparison of passengers’ perception on service quality

Age is considered as another factor variable of demographic profile of the passengers to compare their perception level on service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. The age group is divided in to four categories namely, less than 21, 21-40, 41-60 and Above 60. In order to check the age-wise comparison of service quality, One-way ANOVA/ Welch test is applied according to the homogeneity assumption of the population variance. This assumption is tested by applying Levene’s test of Equality of Variance.

Following hypothesis is formulated and tested.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perception of passengers on service quality according to their age groups.

H₁: There is significant difference in the perception of passengers on service quality according to their age groups.

Table 4:- Age-wise comparison of passengers’ perception on service quality.

Dimension	Descriptive Statistics				Levene’s Test		One-way ANOVA/ Welch test	
	Age groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene’s Statistics	Sig. value	F Value	Sig. value
Tangibility	Less than 21	11	3.7727	.68424	.343	.794	1.318	.271
	21-40	75	3.6300	.79309				
	41-60	47	3.3777	.81739				
	Above 60	2	3.3750	.53033				
	Total	135	3.5500	.79516				
Reliability	Less than 21	11	3.5455	.61051	1.495	.219	1.618	.188
	21-40	75	3.6233	.72290				
	41-60	47	3.3191	.81877				
	Above 60	2	3.6250	.17678				
	Total	135	3.5111	.75302				
Responsiveness	Less than 21	11	3.7727	.70227	.784	.505	1.282	.283
	21-40	75	3.7400	.65171				
	41-60	47	3.5213	.63166				
	Above 60	2	3.8750	.17678				
	Total	135	3.5500	.79516				

	Total	135	3.6685	.64850				
Assurance	Less than 21	11	3.8636	.77753	.877	.455	4.991**	.003
	21-40	75	3.9533	.62018				
	41-60	47	3.4734	.72276				
	Above 60	2	3.7500	.70711				
	Total	135	3.7759	.70066				
Empathy	Less than 21	11	3.8182	.73392	1.306	.287	3.793*	.012
	21-40	75	3.8733	.64903				
	41-60	47	3.4096	.89447				
	Above 60	2	3.7500	.00000				
	Total	135	3.7056	.77138				

Source: Primary Data

*Significant at 5% level of significance

**Significant at 1% level of significance

The above table reveals the age-wise comparison of perception of passengers regarding the service quality dimensions. From the values of mean and standard deviation, it is understood that all age group passengers have same level of perception towards the service quality dimension namely, tangibility, reliability and responsibility. On the other hand, there is mean difference in the perception of passengers on assurance and empathy factors of service quality.

In order to check the statistical difference, One-way/Welch test is applied. Before that, there is a need to prove the homogeneity assumption of population variance by applying Levene's test for Equality of Variance. Here, regarding all the factors of service quality, homogeneity assumption is proved with the insignificant test statistics. Accordingly, One-way ANOVA is applied for the mean comparison between two variables.

The result of One-way ANOVA discloses that there exists no significant difference in the perception level of passengers regarding the tangibility, reliability and responsiveness factors of IndiGo Domestic Airlines according to their age groups. Since the 'p' value is insignificant, the null hypothesis is failed to reject at 5% level of significance.

On the other hand, there exists age-wise significant difference in the assurance and empathy factors of service quality. Here, the 'p' values are less than 0.01 (.003) and 0.05 (.012) respectively for assurance and empathy, then the null hypothesis is rejected. Accordingly, there exists significant difference in the perception of different age group passengers.

Table 5:- Multiple Comparisons of age on service quality.

Tukey HSD				
Dependent Variable	(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Assurance	41-60	Less than 21	-.39023*	.015
		21-40	-.47993**	.001
		Above 60	-.27660*	.041
Empathy	41-60	Less than 21	-.40861*	.010
		21-40	-.46376**	.006
		Above 60	-.34043*	.022

Source: Primary Data

*Significant at 5% level of significance

**Significant at 1% level of significance

The above table exhibits the result of Tukey HSD post-hoc test for multiple comparisons of age groups of the passengers towards the assurance and empathy factors of service quality. Both the cases, 41-60 age group passengers have only neutral level of perception towards the assurance and empathy factors of service quality. All other age group passengers have good level of perception towards the same. Accordingly, 41-60 age group passengers are significantly different from other age group passengers regarding the perception level on assurance and empathy.

Occupation-wise comparison of passengers' perception on service quality

Occupation is selected as another factor variable of demographic profile of the passengers to compare their perception level on service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. The Occupation Status is divided in to six categories namely, Self Employed, Private Sector Employee, Govt./Public Sector Employee, Professional, Homemaker and Student. In order to check the occupation-wise comparison of service quality, One-way ANOVA/ Welch test is applied according to the homogeneity assumption of the population variance. This assumption is tested by applying Levene's test of Equality of Variance.

Following hypothesis is formulated and tested.

H0₄: There is no significant difference in the perception of passengers on service quality according to their occupation status.

H1₄: There is significant difference in the perception of passengers on service quality according to their occupation status

Table 6:- Occupation-wise comparison of passengers' perception on service quality.

Dimensions	Descriptive Statistics				Levene's test		One-way ANOVA/ Welch test	
	Occupation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Statistics	Sig. value	F Value	Sig. value
Tangibility	Self-Employed	11	3.754	.992	1.812	.115	1.336	.253
	Private Sector Employee	73	3.520	.727				
	Govt./Public Sector Employee	10	3.750	.816				
	Professional	11	3.559	.846				
	Home Maker	16	3.568	.811				
	Student	14	3.642	.560				
	Total	135	3.550	.795				
Reliability	Self-Employed	11	3.772	.711	.805	.548	1.397	.230
	Private Sector Employee	73	3.545	.693				
	Govt./ Public Sector Employee	10	3.850	.724				
	Professional	11	3.527	.726				
	Home Maker	16	3.546	.832				
	Student	14	3.517	.592				
	Total	135	3.511	.753				
Responsiveness	Self-Employed	11	3.701	.750	.542	.744	1.789	.120
	Private Sector Employee	73	3.637	.609				
	Govt./ Public Sector Employee	10	3.750	.637				
	Professional	11	3.509	.808				
	Home Maker	16	3.593	.651				
	Student	14	3.589	.609				
	Total	135	3.668	.648				
Assurance	Self-Employed	11	3.827	.840	1.352	.247	1.911	.097
	Private Sector Employee	73	3.780	.613				
	Govt./ Public Sector Employee	10	3.975	.671				
	Professional	11	3.609	.875				
	Home Maker	16	3.625	.821				
	Student	14	3.714	.634				
	Total	135	3.775	.700				
Empathy	Self-Employed	11	3.812	.741	1.557	.177	1.535	.152
	Private Sector Employee	73	3.736	.638				

Govt./ Employee	Public Sector	10	3.625	.891				
Professional		11	3.573	.970				
Home Maker		16	3.531	.978				
Student		14	3.678	.723				
Total		135	3.705	.771				

Source: Primary Data

The above table explains the result of occupation-wise comparison of service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. According to the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), there is no significant difference in the mean score of different occupation status of the passengers. Hence, they have almost same perception towards the dimensions of service quality. In order to prove the mean difference statistically, One-way ANOVA/ Welch test is applied according to the homogeneity assumption of equal variance. Levene's test for Equality of Variance is used to test the assumption. The result presents that there is homogeneity in the population variance with the insignificant test statistics of 1.812, .805, .542, 1.352, and 1.557 respectively for tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Therefore, One-way ANOVA is employed to measure the mean difference among different occupation status of the passengers regarding service quality dimensions.

The test result of One-way ANOVA depicts that, there is no occupation-wise significant difference among passengers regarding the perception on service quality dimensions namely, Tangibility ($f = 1.336$, $p = .253$), Reliability ($f = 1.397$, $p = .230$), Responsiveness ($f = 1.789$, $p = .120$), Assurance ($f = 1.911$, $p = .097$), and Empathy ($f = 1.535$, $p = .152$). Since all the 'p' values are greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is failed to reject at 5% level of significance. Hence, it can be conclude that there exists no significant difference among passengers of different occupation status regarding the perception on service quality dimensions.

Overall, the passengers from different occupation status have almost same level of perception towards the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines.

Conclusion:-

The research evaluates the passengers' perception towards service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. It also compares the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines with the demographic details of passengers. SERVPERF model was used for measuring service quality of IndiGo airlines. The results of the study revealed that passengers perceived good level of service quality on all dimensions. There exists no significant difference between male and female passengers regarding the perception level on service quality dimensions. The passengers from different occupation status have perceived same level of perception towards the service quality of IndiGo Domestic Airlines. Whereas, there exists age-wise significant difference in the assurance and empathy factors of service quality. Passengers in the 41-60 age group have perceived low level of service quality on assurance and empathy as compared to other age group passengers. Despite the passengers feel good about employees courteousness, the airlines should give proper training to the staff for improving their professionalism while dealing with the customers. Also the airlines should take proper steps to reduce flight cancellations and rescheduling to have competitive advantage in the market.

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