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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TOWARDS SERVICE QUALITY AND COMPANY IMAGE OFFERED BY AIR ASIA

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ABSTRACT

Recently, the term satisfaction has been extensively used in tourism. In general, service provider sectors are striving to meet their customer's satifaction by delivering the best hospitality for their business. The importance of customer satisfaction can never be ignore especially when working in tourism industry. In fact, delivering good customer service experience are essentials for most businesses especially service provider. World Tourism Organization has proposed to Governments to establish National Certification System for Sustainable Tourism and among the suggested criteria in social indicator is guest feedback system and customer satisfaction. Failure in delivering good customer service has brought so many negative impacts especially in terms of customer loyalty and sustainability of the businesses. The objective of this research is to point out the reactions on customer satisfaction regarding service quality and company image offered by Air Asia by using Parasuraman SERVQUAL Model. This study has highlighted four components of service quality which is, caring, reliability, tangibility, and responsiveness. The second objective is to recognize the significant issues that can influence the progression of customer satisfaction on Air Asia management and the last objective is to verify the importance relationship of company image and services quality toward customer satisfaction of the Air Asia management. By understanding customer satisfaction, the authorities for service provider in tourism sector could take actions that will enhance local Airlines Industry image and brand as well as ensuring the sustainability of the business. The research will be conducted in Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), Sepang, Selangor.

Keywords: Airlines, Customer Satisfaction, Company Image, Service Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

According to statistic by global air traffic – anual growth of Passenger demand 2006 to 2019, reported that in 2018, global air traffic passenger demand is estimated to increase by 7.4 percent on the year before. By 2019, traffic is projected to grow with another five percent. This proof that airline industry has become important in helping world trade, international asset, and tourism activities due to globalization. Thus, resulted for the airlines industry becoming the focus of globalization of other industries. Business entities in the aviation industry has gained benefits from the growing of this industry such as provides opportunities and challenges to their company. Strong competition between airlines is one of the factor that has caused hardship to the companies due to many consumers that demands for better service keep getting higher. Government around the world has taken the decision to release the industry by allowing companies to form private airlines. Moreover, the strict rules on safety flight is currently applied in almost all countries.

These require all industry player especially in the airlines to update both services and technology endlessly for the betterment of consumers especially in terms of safety. According to Lawton (2002), in line with the efforts to continuously innovate service, the airline industry previously dominated by traditional airlines providing full service is currently enlivened also by the low-cost airlines. Low cost airlines is define as promoting low fares with basic services and no additional services are provided by full services airlines.

When doing business, the major goal is to satisfy customer needs and wants. Especially in airlines industry passenger satisfaction is important to today's competitive environment. Moreover, the issues of passenger satisfaction arise when there are other companies that can gives same benefits or beyond passenger's expectation and it is considered value-added. In most cases, the customers tend to become loyal to the company if they are satisfied with the product services offered. Hence, Airlines company are putting extra efforts on their improvement of services as well as products offered to distinguish themselves from other competitors. In addition, many factors can provide pathways to Airlines company to improve their customer satisfaction as well as determining the factor of the success in all operations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW Customer Satisfaction

Based on Kumar (2012), Lombard (2009), Santouridis and Trivellas, (2010) they defines customer satisfaction in services as the degree to which service performance meets or exceeds the customer's expectations. However, Hui and Zheng (2010) claimed satisfaction as an evaluative judgment of a specific transaction resulting from perceived quality. It is considered as an emotional post-purchase evaluation or post-use as the result of processing relevant information Emir Hidayat, Sutan and Rafiki, Ahmad & Fouad, Nawar. (2016). Moreover, Hussain, Naseer & Hussain (2015) believes measuring customer satisfaction in the airline industry is becoming ever more frequent and relevant due to the fact that the delivery of high-quality service is essential for airlines' survival and crucial to the competitiveness of the airline industry. Hussain, Naseer & Hussain (2015) also stated in his study, considering the intense competition in the Airline industry, just satisfying customers is

not enough because one should make sure the satisfaction level is until maximum level which able to move towards brand loyalty and good relationship with customers.

However, Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004) argued customers who is dissatisfied with the service, will show their feelings through their behavior. These will somehow give negative behavioural responses on firm's profitability. Lastly, due to advancement in digital communication, consumers can express negative feelings rapidly or by word-of-mouth, which affected a business's performance either in a positive, or, negative way Babin and Harris (2012). For example, negative Word-of-mouth can effect the firm's status and productivity. However, firm can still continue doing business again if they managed to resolve customer's problems and gain their satisfaction back. Suchánek, Richter, Králová (2015) stated that customer requirements are met determined customer satisfaction and the degree of meeting them then becomes the degree of product quality and every company should struggle to reach the optimal level of quality to its products to meet the expectations of their customers.

Company Image

Johnson M., Zinkhan G.M. (2015) defines corporate image as the perception being created is an overall or total impresión and the image to be reflected is one that encompasses all of the company functions and roles, thus company image is multidimensional. In addition to their study company image includes information and inferences about the company as an employer, as a seller, as an investment and as a corporate citizen. Based on readings from Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science (2015) book series, information about a company's products, management, financial structure, employees and position within an industry can be communicated to various groups through advertisements, press releases, news stories, the demeanour of its employees and other forms of communication.

However, (Shamma, H. M. 2012; Ponzi et. al., 2011) has found during a series of some detailed interviews, company feeling, admire and respect, company confidence and overall reputation is the dimensions for corporate image. Keller (1993) argued that corporate image can be seen as a set of perceptions about a brand the consumer forms as reflected by brand associations. According to Ngyun and Lelanc (2001) corporate image is related to the different physical and behavioral attributes of the company, like; business name, architecture, variety of goods or services, tradition, ideology, and to the feeling of quality communicated by each person interacting with the clients of the company. The corporate brand is intangible in nature and invaluable for the organization. Robert and Dowling (2002) argued that the corporate brand is a valuable intangible asset, that is hard to impersonate, and which may help corporation in achieving sustained superior financial performance. Good brand image not only indicates that the brand has a positive image but also exhibits a higher level of brand image strength in comparison to other brands (Kim and Kim, 2005).

(University of Pretoria etd – Le Roux, JRJ 2003; Richardson and Bolesh 2002) suggested that highly regarded organisations protect their corporate images by maintaining high standards of practice, no matter what the circumstances. They further explained the most admired

organisations use a combination of corporate social responsibility, vision and leadership, financial performance, products and services, etc., to build and maintain their image. Lastly, (Nikou, S., et al 2016; Normann 1991), image is considered to influence customers' minds through the combined effects of advertising, public relations, physical image, word-of-mouth, and their actual experiences with the goods and services

Service Quality

Zahari, Salleh, Kamaruddin and Kutut (2011) defines service quality as the essence of airline companies which makes their image differentiate from others and keep their image in the minds of passengers. Many Airlines operators decided to go for the same path of higher service quality through on ground and off ground service. For instance, inboard meal plays major roles in many airline operation and has upgrade marketing strategy into a new level. Therefore, this paper portrays the reaction of customers through inflight meals to see the satisfying level and re-flying intention. This can be concluded that food also have an effect on flying intention as well as sacrifices the inboard customers.

The airline industry is inherently unstable (Doganis 2006) and highly competitive, where all airlines have comparable fares and matching frequent flyer programs. SERVQUAL is one of the best models for evaluating customers' expectations and perceptions (Pakdil and Aydm, 2007; Chen, 2008). Service quality can be measured in terms of customer perception, customer expectation, customer satisfaction, and customer attitude (Sachdev and Verma 2004). This is supported by Ekinci (2003) that the evaluation of service quality leads to customer satisfaction.

Providing excellent service quality is widely recognized as a critical business requirement (Voss et al, 2004; Vilares & Coehlo, 2003; Van der Weile et al, 2002). It is 'not just a corporate offering, but a competitive weapon' (Rosen et al, 2003). Furthermore, this study decides to categorize along 4 factors, namely caring, reliability, responsiveness and tangibles.

Caring is the service dimension that focuses on individualized attention or care, such as providing the seat a passenger prefers or meals through a pre-order system or having a Frequent Flyer Program (Bloemer, Ruyter, & Wetzels, 1999; Cunning, Young, & Lee, 2004; Park et al., 2004).

Reliability is the ability to perform the service in an accurate and dependable manner. Reliability can be described as the ability to perform service dependably and accurately, such as punctuality, efficiency of the check-in process, and convenience and accuracy of reservations and ticketing (Kim and Lee 2011).

Responsiveness refers to the willingness to provide help and prompt service to customers. According to Kim (2010), responsiveness is related to the willingness to help passengers solve service problems (flight cancellation and baggage loss), response to emergency situations, as well as prompt and accurate baggage delivery.

Tangibles are defined as the physical facilities of the aircraft: seating comfort, seat space and legroom, in-flight entertainment service (books, newspapers, movies, games, and

magazines), appearance of the employees, and meal service that is freshness, quantity, and appearance

3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to understand the customer satisfaction in low-cost airlines from the customer perspective. More specifically, this study attempts to identify how service quality and company image affect customer satisfaction in Air Asia company.

To achieve this objective, quantitative data was collected from customers who choose Air Asia as their air transportation. Respondents in this study amounted to 169 respondents from Air Asia customers were selected based on non-probability sampling method in Kuala Lumpur International Airport KLIA. The data was collected by using survey questionnaire.

Service quality construct was measured based on instruments developed by Parasuraman et.al., (1988) consisting of reliability, responsiveness, caring, and tangible dimension. The measurement of the study is using SERVQUAL method. Customer satisfaction was anchored by satisfaction with the service and quality company image offered by Air Asia. All of these variables were measured with six Likert scale: strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Prior to data collection, all of the items to measure the constructs have been consulted to academicians to ensure the validity. In addition, reliability test of service quality and customer satisfaction variable has satisfied the reliability requirement as the value of Cronbach Alpha is above 0.80.

4. RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondents

Of 37 respondents which are proof useable, 16.2% were male, 83.8% were female, 97.3% were single, and 2.7% were married. In terms of income, 16.2% respondents of earn less than RM 1,000.00/month. While the majority of low-cost airlines respondents (67.6%) has no monthly income. These figure indicates difference segment of income, low cost airlines customers tend to be lower income segments.

Customer Satisfaction on the Airline Service Performance

Customer Satisfaction on the Airline Service Performance on the airline is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Overall Mean Score on the Research Variables

NO.	ITEM	MEAN SCORE	E	
	1Caring		4.58	
	2Reliability		4.19	
	3	Responsivenes	4.41	
	4 Tangibility		3.95	
	Ę	Company Image	4.39	

From the overall mean, it shows the highest value of mean is caring elements which covered about 4.58 out of 6 Likert Scale. Followed by the second highest, responsibility with has total mean is 4.41. The other elements such as customer satisfaction, company image, reliability and tangibility have a total mean 4.19, 4.39, 4.12 and 3.95 with the neutral level in the scale of measurements. From the overall section, the distribution of the mean value is between 3.95 and 4.58

What is the customer satisfactions towards Air Asia Management

Item Statistics						
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ν			
I like flying with Airasia	4.43	.835	37			
My expectations toward Airasia were met	4.19	.811	37			
My satisfaction with Airasia has increased from time to time	4.03	.833	37			
My impression toward Airasia has improved	4.05	.848	37			
I have a more positive attitude towards Airasia	4.27	.871	37			

Table 2: Descriptive analysis for Customer Satisfaction

The first research question was answered by finding on what is the customer satisfaction towards Air Asia management. Based on the result the highest mean of the statement is "I like flying with Air Asia" with mean value 4.43. While the second highest is referred to the statement "I have more positive attitude towards Air Asia" with mean value 4.27. The lowest feedback from the customer is "My satisfaction with Air Asia has increased from time to time" with mean value 4.03. This finding is consistent with studies by Gures et, al. (2014). The findings of studies that satisfaction is the customers' evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met their needs and expectations. Moreover, one of the comments in open ended said "I love Air Asia" hence indicates that the respondent like flying with Air Asia because the service delivery by Air Asia can satisfy the customer's need. In Addition, studies by Chandrashekaran (2007) also proves that customer satisfaction represents the resulting overall affective response after consumption and can range from dissatisfied to satisfied. Therefore, the comments by the respondents reveal the actual practice of service delivery by the Air Asia management has fulfilled the customer's satisfaction. One of the respondents gives good review on the food that is prepared by Air Asia in the open-ended question hence contribute to overall mean for customer satisfaction.

Is there a positive relationship of company image and services quality toward customer satisfaction of the Air Asia Management?

	Coefficients ^a									
Model				ed Coefficient	t Sig.	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF	
	(Constant)	.564	.601		.937	.356	663	1.790		
	CI	.705	.165	.676	4.267	.000	.368	1.042	.484	2.067
1	CRG	111	.134	133	829	.414	384	.162	.468	2.135
	RLB	.072	.152	.076	.474	.639	238	.382	.468	2.139
	TNG	.158	.091	.236	1.727	.094	029	.345	.652	1.533
	RSP	.027	.176	.024	.150	.881	333	.386	.466	2.145

 Table 3: Results for Multi Regression analysis on variables conducted

a: Dependent Variable: CS

Company image also is important for customer's satisfaction. Image tells customer everything about the company. It is more into the reputation, brand name of the company. Image can be positive and negative for the company. It based on how the company shows the image towards customers. In researcher study, airline must have a good image, to attract customers to using their services. The image was also connected with comparison with other competitors in airline industry. Therefore, they must build a good relationship between their customers to ensure reputation of company in mind of customers. The communication through the media, magazine, promotion, will support to build better company image at present and future. The image includes colors, symbols, words, and slogans that convey a clear, consistent message and not simply the name (Berry et al., 1988). Gronroos (1982) tried to improve this model by focusing on what customers perceive. Therefore, they see service quality as three dimensions which include functional and technical quality and image.

To determine the significant relationship of company image and services quality toward customer satisfaction of the Air Asia management, multiple regression analysis had been done to achieve the outcome. Based on the result, it shows the independent variables, namely company image has significant influence on the customer satisfaction as the result of significant value is less than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis between company image and customer satisfaction is accepted. This is the same with the findings by LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996) and Yoon et al. (1993) studies that reputation and image are closely linked together as it influences customer's expectations (Nejati et al., 2009). With the result also, the researcher can determine how far the influencing of the independents variables affect the performance of customer satisfaction on Air Asia management. It also shows that the independents variable company image a positive influence on the customer satisfaction of Air Asia management.

For the independent variable of service quality, the result shows that there is no significant values between service quality and customer satisfaction in Air Asia this is because the p value is greater than 0.05. This study is consistent with (Noor, 2005) shows this insignificant effect is most likely due to customer expectations to low cost airline services such as low physical factors. In addition, study by Suhartanto, Dwi and Noor, et,al. (2012) shows as a consequence, low cost airlines customers do not have a high expectation on physical element of airline. The researchers further explain as a result, the use of relatively old aircraft will less likely affect customer satisfaction in low cost airlines.

H1, p<0.05 shows result is significant therefore hypothesis one is accepted. H2, p>0.05 shows insignificant result therefore hypothesis is rejected

5. CONCLUSION

The study adopted the service process system of airline service quality delivery such as from check-in process to in-flight services on to post-flight services such as on-time arrival, baggage handling system and customer relationship management. Generally, the study has established that Air Asia airline passenger value in-flight services, reliability of airline services, staff responsiveness and efficient baggage handling services. To this end, it can be inferred that on-time departure and arrival, dependable flight schedule, the responsiveness of the staff towards the customer also the conditions of the airplanes and the reputation of company image play a major role in determining customer satisfactions. In the light of this development, it can be stated that airlines stand to lose their customers if they fail to improve the reliability of their operations. Consequently, it is recommended that low cost airlines should provide continuous training on good customer relations, remain responsive and proactive to their customers demand as well as ensuring on-time departure and arrival in their flight operations. The study also suggests that to improve service reliability and company image airlines should consider forming strategic flight standard of procedures in order to improve and standardize the quality of service and delivery thus adequate market coverage.

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