

Passengers' Satisfaction Factors of Vietnam Airlines' Inflight Services

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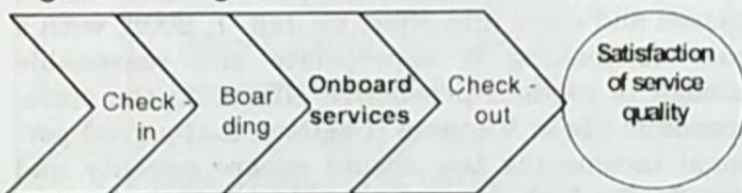
Introduction

Service quality is an important factor to satisfy customers and promote the airlines' competitive strengths. As a result, the survey on customers' satisfaction of inflight services will be basis for taking measures to enhance service quality. This article aims at studying results of a survey of customers' satisfaction of Vietnam Airlines' inflight services, making analyses and overall evaluations of Vietnam Airlines' inflight services and decomposing the correlation of factors and service quality. The study results will be used as policy suggestions to enhance the service quality of Vietnam Airlines as well as other carriers.

1. Customers' satisfaction of inflight service quality

Nowadays many researches say that in services customers' satisfaction is rated with two main factors as service value and quality which customers have received in comparison with the price or charge they have paid. As for the air transport sector, the service value is to carry passengers from a place to another and the service quality is that of overall inflight services provided for passengers and customers. The service scope of various carriers is not totally the same due to their different strengths and orientations of product development. However, basic services are catered for a short time and attached to the carrier's legal responsibilities. That is the process from check-in to check-out. It includes the following stages: Check-in → boarding → check-out (see Figure 1). These stages are divided into two groups as onboard services and airport services (check-in, boarding, and check-out).

Figure 1: Inflight services



2. Results of surveying customers' comments on Vietnam Airlines' inflight services

To measure its service quality, Vietnam Airlines makes quarterly surveys on passengers for most of their routes. The scale to measure the Vietnam Airlines' service quality includes 7 rates from very bad

(1) to very good (7), for airport and onboard services.

- Airport services (V10): including check-in and boarding services [1]. Respondents are suggested to give comments on the following factors:

- Check-in services at the airport (V1): waiting time at check-in, self-serve check-in options, efficiency of check-in staff (courtesy, attentiveness, skill, guiding)

- Boarding services (V2): Notice of boarding, staff's courtesy and attentiveness, boarding convenience.

- Onboard services (V11): onboard facilities; cabin staff attendance; notice and information; food and beverage standard, newspapers, magazines and entertainment services. Respondents are suggested to give comments on the following factors:

- Onboard facilities (V3): seat comfort, cleanliness, and equipment, cleanliness and comfort of cabin and toilets

- Staff attendance (V4): friendliness, and sincerity, politeness and courtesy, helpfulness and attentiveness, seriousness and readiness, appearance and grooming, professionalism, regular presence and information supply when requested.

- Notice and information (V5): language fluency and adequacy of the aircrew's notice and information by words or on video monitor.

- Food catering (V6): amount, options, meal arrangement and food flavor.

- Beverage catering (V7): types, satisfaction rate, beverage quality and after-meal beverage.

- Newspaper, magazines (V8): Amount and satisfaction rate

- Inflight entertainment (V9): film options, quality of sound and picture and options of video games.

In the first quarter of 2007 Vietnam Airlines conducted a survey on 10,910 passengers for 35 international and domestic routes (HÀ NỘI – ĐÀ NẴNG – HCMC). The proportion of flights and structure of survey samples is based on market regions. (See Table 1). The survey result of customers' satisfaction is indicated in Table 2.

3. Overall rating of Vietnam Airlines' service quality

Based on survey data from Vietnam Airlines' routes, the overall rating of its service quality is shown in Table 3. Accordingly, the service receiving

Table 1: Structure of survey samples

Markets	According to routes	According to respondents		
	Number	%	Number	%
Vietnam and Indochina	5	14.3	3,371	30.9
International region	21	60.0	1,839	16.9
Transcontinental region	9	25.7	5,700	52.2
Total	35	100.0	10,190	100.0

Source: Vietnam Airlines (2007)

the highest rate from passengers is cabin staff attendance (5.82/7), followed by check-in services

(5.64/7). The lowest-ranking service is inflight entertainment (4.57/7), and above is onboard newspapers and magazines (5/7). In overall rating, Vietnam Airlines' service quality is fairly good (5.32/7), in which customers' satisfaction for airport services (5.41) is higher than that for onboard services (5.23). The analysis also shows less deviation in passengers' evaluation of rating for check-in and boarding services by route (standard deviation as 0.14) but great discrepancy in inflight entertainment services (standard deviation as 0.61) and onboard facilities (standard deviation as 0.43). This reflects the role of onboard facilities and inflight

Table 2: Passengers' rating for Vietnam Airlines' service quality by route

Route	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12
HAN-BKK	5.67	5.55	5.64	6.02	5.25	5.32	5.50	5.22		5.31	5.42	5.37
HAN-CDG	5.40	5.33	5.66	5.92	5.23	5.44	5.34	4.93	5.09	5.40	5.34	5.37
HAN-HKG	5.51	5.42	5.45	5.79	5.25	5.23	5.28	5.22		5.31	5.30	5.30
HAN-KMG	5.75	5.76	5.49	6.09	5.44	5.28	5.20	5.17		5.53	5.46	5.50
HAN-NRT	5.52	5.45	4.50	4.87	4.58	4.73	4.73	4.34	3.80	5.08	4.34	4.77
HAN-PEK	5.38	5.39	5.88	6.33	5.67	5.58	5.72	4.45		5.31	5.64	5.45
HAN-ICN	5.48	5.33	4.74	5.33	4.75	5.42	5.12	4.67	3.40	5.00	4.79	4.91
HAN-TPE	5.52	5.55	5.46	5.89	5.57	5.52	5.52	5.30		5.44	5.44	5.44
HAN-SGN	5.51	5.36	5.70	5.96	5.52	5.23	5.20	5.37		5.37	5.28	5.33
HAN-REP	5.57	5.62	5.52	6.00	5.05	5.26	5.47	5.17		5.08	5.32	5.21
HAN-SIN	5.61	5.49	5.27	5.61	5.03	5.27	5.41	5.25		5.11	5.01	5.06
HAN-KUL	5.46	5.48	5.63	6.03	5.52	5.49	5.48	5.22		5.52	5.28	5.40
SGN-CAN	5.64	5.33	5.65	6.09	5.56	5.46	5.34	5.24		5.49	5.47	5.48
SGN-NRT	5.65	5.42	4.99	5.20	4.74	5.04	4.78	4.54	4.04	5.16	4.84	4.95
SGN-FUK	6.01	5.76	4.23	5.54	4.97	5.15	5.10	4.43		5.46	4.74	5.11
SGN-ICN	5.61	5.30	5.43	5.76	5.23	5.41	5.62	4.93		5.28	5.02	5.15
SGN-TPE	5.65	5.52	5.77	6.15	5.68	5.51	5.55	5.36		5.52	5.42	5.47
SGN-KHH	5.64	5.33	5.36	5.85	5.20	5.16	5.18	4.98	4.00	5.67	5.29	5.44
SGN-KUL	5.59	5.45	5.44	5.62	5.31	5.33	5.42	5.21		5.20	5.10	5.14
widctIparSGN-SIN	5.74	5.46	5.18	5.64	5.11	5.15	5.45	5.22		5.37	5.17	5.27
SGN-MEL	5.78	5.62	5.53	5.82	5.27	5.38	5.41	5.03	4.40	5.87	5.16	5.50
SGN-SYD	5.69	5.55	5.77	5.83	5.51	5.59	5.68	5.12	4.58	5.69	5.30	5.53
SGN-CDG	5.53	5.30	5.55	5.73	5.09	5.09	5.20	5.23	4.87	5.43	5.25	5.34
SGN-KIX	5.64	5.33	4.85	5.51	4.79	5.24	5.08	4.80		5.13	4.92	5.03
SGN-HKG	5.64	5.39	5.01	5.53	4.96	4.85	5.01	4.79	4.50	4.99	4.97	4.97
parSGN-PUS	5.64	5.33	4.79	5.60	4.93	5.24	5.49	4.69		5.01	4.90	4.95
SGN-FRA	5.79	5.48	5.37	5.67	5.33	5.53	5.32	4.89	5.25	5.57	5.49	5.54
HAN-DAD	5.57	5.53	5.86	6.01	5.57	5.23	5.20	5.14		5.58	5.35	5.47
SGN-DAD	5.70	5.50	5.97	6.20	5.62	5.23	5.20	5.25		5.48	5.39	5.44
HAN-VTE	5.52	5.55	5.22	5.79	5.03	4.88	5.04	4.84		5.58	5.11	5.37
SGN-PNH	5.80	5.32	5.22	5.79	5.03	4.88	5.04	4.84		5.58	5.11	5.37
SGN-NGO	5.80	5.57	5.14	5.62	4.84	5.17	4.92	4.32	4.55	5.42	5.01	5.22
SGN-DME	5.98	5.76	5.83	6.33	5.38	5.64	5.71	5.26	4.64	6.20	5.80	6.00
HAN-DME	5.85	5.79	6.36	6.45	6.00	5.89	5.84	5.33	5.54	5.62	5.94	5.77
HAN-FRA	5.66	5.33	5.64	5.99	5.50	5.34	5.60	5.15	5.28	5.42	5.60	5.54

Source: Vietnam Airlines (2007)

Notes: V12: Overall satisfaction rating for Vietnam Airlines' services by route.

V9: Inflight entertainment: Survey on only routes provided with this kind of service.

entertainment services has different importance between routes. This factor is directly proportional to the route length. In the meantime, it also shows Vietnam Airlines' inflight services have not yet been professionalized in accordance with routes and market regions.

4. Analysis of correlation between factors of service quality

The analysis result of correlation between factors of tested service quality is indicated in Table 4. Accordingly, in airport and onboard services, constituents have rather close correlation with the

services, especially for staff attendance, followed by onboard facilities. In the meanwhile, constituents of airport services have no fully close correlation with the quality of airport services (all have rates under 0.5). This shows there remain others factors affecting the quality of airport services as services at the waiting room, check-out services which have not yet been surveyed by Vietnam Airlines.

The correlation between airport and onboard services with the service quality is tested and indicated in Table 5. Accordingly, the estimation value of correlation between airport services and the ser-

Table 3: Overall satisfaction rating of Vietnam Airlines' inflight services

Services	Number	Highest	Lowest	Mean	Error
Check-in	35	5.38	6.01	5.6411	.14399
Boarding	35	5.30	5.79	5.4737	.14186
Onboard facilities	35	4.23	6.36	5.4029	.43437
Efficiency of cabin staff	35	4.87	6.45	5.8161	.32355
Inflight information and notice	35	4.58	6.00	5.2431	.32252
Food catering	35	4.73	5.89	5.2903	.24184
Beverage catering	35	4.73	5.84	5.3186	.26670
Newspapers and magazines	35	4.32	5.37	4.9971	.30778
Inflight entertainment	14	3.40	5.54	4.5671	.61234
Satisfaction of airport services	35	4.99	6.20	5.4051	.25660
Satisfaction of onboard services	35	4.34	5.94	5.2277	.31403
Overall satisfaction of inflight services	35	4.77	6.00	5.3189	.25247

overall quality, but those of onboard services have closer ones. Constituents of onboard services have rather close correlation with the quality of onboard

Table 4: Test result of correlation between service quality factors of Vietnam Airlines

Correlation	Correlation coefficient	Significance (Sg.)
Airport services « Service quality	.873	.000
Onboard services « Service quality	.904	.000
Check-in services « Airport services	.489	.003
Boarding services « Airport services	.473	.004
Inflight facilities « Onboard services	.879	.000
Cabin staff efficiency « Onboard services	.918	.000
Inflight information « Onboard services	.855	.000
Food catering « Onboard services	.706	.000
Beverage catering « Onboard services	.712	.000
Newspapers, magazines « Onboard services	.636	.000
Inflight entertainment « Onboard services	.786	.001

vice quality is 0.51 (se = 0.016. Sg. = 0.00) and the figure of correlation between onboard services and the service quality is 0.48 (se = 0.013. Sg. = 0.00). Both of them have statistical significance. The linear correlation between airport and onboard services and the service quality are indicated in Equation [1]. The analysis also shows factors for passengers' satisfaction are more important in onboard services than in airport services due to bigger correlation coefficient (0.904 against 0.873), part correlation coefficient (0.988 against 0.985) and partial correlation coefficient (0.482 against 0.421).

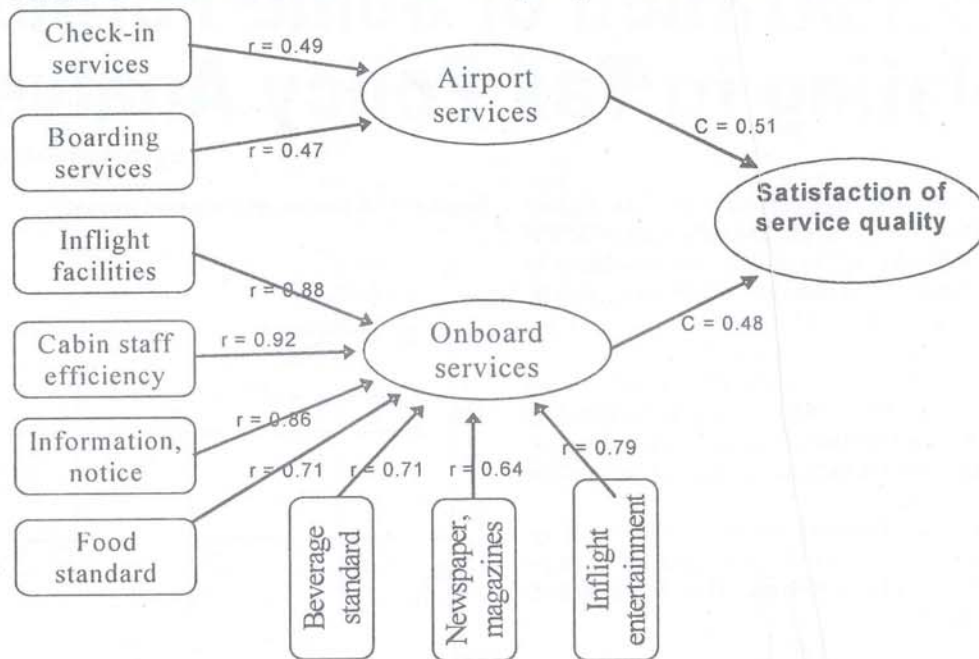
Service quality = 0.39 + 0.51 * Airport services + 0.48 * Onboard services⁽¹⁾

Figure 2 showing correlation between factors of the service quality is drawn from the analysis of correlation between service quality factors and correlation between airport and onboard services and the service quality. Accordingly, there is correlation between constituents and airport and onboard services, and at the same time, directly proportional correlation between airport and onboard services and the service quality.

5. Significance and suggestions

The above survey data show passengers' satisfaction for air transport services depends upon the

Figure 2: Correlation between factors and service quality of Vietnam Airlines



quality of airport and onboard services. In which onboard services play more important role, especially on long routes. Therefore, air carriers are required to enhance the quality of both airport and onboard services, especially for onboard services on long routes.

As mentioned above, the Vietnam Airlines' service quality is considered fairly good. Nevertheless, Vietnam Airlines should continue to improve inflight entertainment services, especially on long routes and the quality of newspapers and magazines as requested by passengers.

To reflect enough customers' satisfaction factors for airport services, Vietnam Airlines should make an additional survey on services in waiting rooms and check-out services. In which, it have to pay attention to such aspects as equipment and facilities in the waiting room, settlement of delays or cancellations, and flight notice and informa-

tion. Regarding check-out services, the aspects requiring surveys are arrival assistance and transfer services. ■

Notes:

[1] Services in the waiting room and check-out services are provided by airports, so they are not surveyed by Vietnam Airlines.

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