

PHD RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Maximizing customer satisfaction is the basic premise of any business that is based on marketing concepts and which strives for long-term and viable business performance. Numerous empirical studies confirm that the level of quality of the delivered products and services is directly related to the level of customer satisfaction. A high level of quality and satisfaction also encourages mechanisms that build customer loyalty toward the company, the intention of future purchases, but also the actual purchase in a future period. From this it follows that companies offering high quality products and services and having a high degree of customer satisfaction can expect a more profitable stop. Firms operating in a dynamic and competitive market environment characterized by gradual liberalization and market globalization must face the issues of the quality of their products and services, and customer satisfaction becomes one of the prerequisites not only for profit growth but also for the survival of the company in the market. Due to all the more insignificant influence on business performance, quality of services has been the focus of many managers, researchers and scientists in the last two decades, which have been inspired by the desire to understand the perception of consumers about the quality of services, undertook numerous attempts at its conceptualization.

However, the specificities of the service sector and its outputs (e.g. intangibility, indivisibility of production from consumption, etc.), this conceptualization in many respects is a much more abstract and more demanding task than the case in the manufacturing sector and due to various possible approaches to the problem, the model number is growing steadily. From the mid-eighties of the last century to the development of the technical and functional quality models and the model of the gap, to date, numerous models have been developed, both of a general nature and are applied to specific sectors. All models have a common goal, namely to operationalize the quality of service, i.e. to create a framework for quality service management and its metrics. Measurement of consumer demand with regard to service quality is one of the most critical

elements in the relationship between the companies that "produces quality and consumers who perceive quality."

Market saturation, globalization and intensified international competition have not bypassed any traditionally highly regulated air traffic sector. The deregulation of air traffic at the end of the 1970s in the United States and the liberalization of the mid-eighties in Europe have influenced the change of business philosophy of air carriers. The rush of competitive competition between carriers has traditionally focused on the cost of its services.

However, focus increasingly focuses on dimensions such as quality of service and end-user satisfaction. Modern, market and consumer-focused air carriers do not focus solely on the introduction of new lines and flights, but are developing more and more benefits for their users, such as frequent flyer programs, various bonus programs, special waiting rooms at airports, etc. Identifying the limitations of such marketing activities, many air carriers see a chance to differentiate themselves from competition in improving their quality. It is empirically confirmed that a higher level of quality influences the perceived quality of passengers, overall satisfaction and ultimately the profitability of carriers' business, and further encouraging the fact that all services are closely related and often dependent on the air traffic infrastructure with which it is integral and a complete system. Due to the evident need for a better understanding of the ways in which air carriers with different policy instruments can affect the level of perceived quality of service and the overall satisfaction of its users, the main objectives of this paper are as follows: 1. Qualitative analysis of the applicability of existing quality service models in the conceptualization and operationalization of the quality of air carriers. 2. Identification of the key factors of satisfaction, i.e. the elements of the service of air carriers that have a dominant significance for the overall user satisfaction, under the prism of nonlinear and asymmetric relations between individual service components and overall satisfaction. 3. An analysis of the impact of the key satisfaction factors and

overall satisfaction of air carrier service users on giving recommendations (positive word-to-mouth promotion) and the intention to re-purchase (i.e., re-flying with the same air carrier). 4. Creating a platform for prioritizing improvements in the area of quality of service and making decisions on resource allocation and reallocation in order to maximize the satisfaction of air carrier user service. 5. Convergent validity analysis and qualitative valorization of recommendations derived from the matrix of importance and performance analysis constructed by (i) explicit importance, (ii) implicit importance, and (iii) explicit and implicit importance (3D matrix). 6. Quantify the Potential of Certain Elements of Air Carrier Services to Increase Overall Customer Satisfaction. 7. Development of airworthiness service user satisfaction index, which allows for comparison across different time periods, evaluation of the effects of intra-domain activity activities policy services and comparison with competing carriers.

Methodology to be used to (i) conceptualize and operationalize the quality of air transport services, (ii) analyze asymmetric effects in satisfaction of the users of air carrier services, (iii) create the basis for decision-making on resource allocation and reallocation in the service policy domain, and the construction of the satisfaction index of the users of the services of air carriers consists of several units: In the first part of the dissertation, a detailed analysis of the scientific and professional literature is carried out with the aim of determining the theoretical concepts and theories from the field of service quality, user satisfaction and relevant related areas with a special focus on the quality of air transport services. After a detailed analysis of the present knowledge, it is synthesized and integrated, which is the basis for any further methodological procedures needed to accomplish the goals of this PhD dissertation. In the second part of the thesis the primary research findings are presented. The first step in the implementation of primary research consisted in defining the variables, i.e. the elements and characteristics of the air transport service, which were subject to assessment by their users. For the selection of variables, a

preliminary exploratory characterization was carried out, which included: (1) analysis of the synthesized findings from the first part of the work, (2) exploration of previous experience on a sample of experts in the subject area, and (3) implementing focus groups with existing and potential users. The second step in conducting primary research consisted of collecting primary data by a questionnaire survey method. A deliberate quota pattern was used (n = 412). The control variables were the nationality of the respondent and the air carrier. At the end of the collection of primary data, a greater number of statistical analyzes and analytical instruments were applied in their processing according to the objectives set and the hypothesis of the doctoral dissertation.

The doctoral dissertation provides a systematic and comprehensive overview of existing knowledge in the area of quality of service and relevant areas and the quality of air transport services. By analyzing and critically evaluating the existing instrument for measuring service quality and synthesis of existing theoretical insights from these areas, a basis for an empirical analysis of the quality of air transport services, which is the subject of this PhD thesis research, is being developed. Aspect of nonlinearity and asymmetry of the relationship between the effects of the particular dimensions of the service and the satisfaction of the user is current in the scientific literature but is still insufficiently explored and hence it is the guiding idea that goes through the research part of the work. In the area of air quality research, but also in general, this aspect is largely neglected, and there are only a few scientific papers dealing with this issue. However, the number of scientific papers on the quality of service and satisfaction of the users of air transport services is relatively small. The theoretical contribution of the work on the one hand is the development of a satisfaction index of the users of the service of air carriers that is applicable in the specific business of the carrier. On the other hand, theoretical contribution is to the modification of existing methods for measuring multifactor satisfaction, and to the modifications of methodological

procedures in carrying out the analysis of importance and performance, with the modifications predominantly based on the possibility of the existence of nonlinear and asymmetric effects. Furthermore, in the dissertation, analytical instruments adapted to the specific needs of air carriers are applied in the dissertation, based on the data from the primary investigation, thus creating a potential information base for business decision-making within the domain of the services of the analyzed air carriers. This is reflected in the basic practical value of this doctoral dissertation.

REFERENCES:

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