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EFFECTS OF THE SERVICE SATISFACTION OF FLIGHT INFORMATION SYSTEM ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND THE RATE OF RETURN CUSTOMERS IN KOREA -FOUCS ON LOW COST CARRIERS

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ABSTRACT

Today, airline industry is going through a very difficult period of time in the aftermath of hostile events, such as 9.11 terror, Avian Influenza, Jika Virus which one of spread of diseases, financial crises and protectionism for national interests worldwide. And it is low cost carriers that emerged as an alternative for competitive advantage using fright information system. Recently, many low cost carriers started to provide services for long haul flights where full service carries used to take a large share in the past, and low cost carriers have been successful in attracting a lot of people by providing competitive services, such as fright information system which are on-time departure and arrival service and various cabin services, with competitive prices, compared with full service carries. Now, low cost carriers have become active participants in Korean market together with five major Korean Airline companies and various airline companies from overseas. Low cost carriers are also making a lot of efforts to make more people interested and reduce cost in their services based on fright information system including mobile system. In this study, the factors that have big impacts on the profitability of low cost carriers are investigated based on the fright information system. Therefore this research suggest fright information system which are Operating Service, Customer Service, Flight Service, Reserve, Ticketing and Refund Service, and offline service which is Cabin Service have positive influence on Customer Satisfaction and Return Customer. As a results, online and offline service which are Customer Service, Cabin Service, and Flight Service have positive influence on Customer Satisfaction and Return Customer.

Keywords: *Fright Information System, Mobile Service, Fright e-Commerce, Low Cost Carriers, Service Quality, Business Performance, Customer Satisfaction*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today airline industry is under pressure due to hostile incidents, such as 9.11 terrors, and spread of diseases, such as avian influenza and Zika virus, and protectionism for national interests worldwide [9]. And it was when full service carries were under such pressure that low cost carriers emerged targeting a niche market with low costs structure of low airfare policy, and they are making impact on neighboring industries as well as overall airline businesses, with their importance increasing using fright information system and mobile service.

To survive competitions with existing full service carriers, low cost carriers try to improve their internal environments for low cost structure, such as labor cost reduction for cabin service, utilization of internet ticketing, while taking advantage of external environment at the same time, such as deregulation of airline industry, population density related issues, utilization of secondary airports and expansion of their own facilities, and increase in utilization of the Internet [11]. In Korea, the share of low cost carriers increased 27% in the areas of short- and long-haul services, compared with mere 2.2 % increase for full service carriers [14].

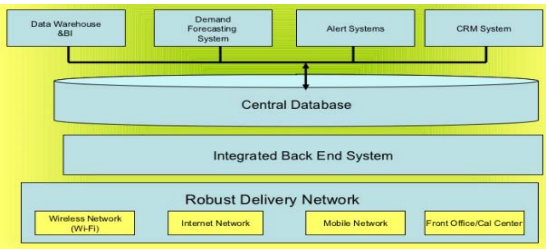

Figure 1: IT road map for Airline
Source: https://www.slideshare.net/siddharthatripathi /introduction-to-airline-information-system

Therefore in the case of short and long-haul services, such result is indicative of the fact that

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people are more sensitive to the airfare than to cabin services, and for this reason, full service carriers target securing competitive advantage by focusing their various services on long-haul fight service.

But it is also inevitable for existing full service carriers with such policy to have to navigate risky situations where more and more low cost carriers venture into long-haul service beyond their areas of short- and medium-haul services.

Korean domestic market is increasingly competitive as it was made easier to set up a new airline business in Korea following the deregulation in 2008 for charter flight license by Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, and as various low cost carriers from overseas are moving fast to take pair share in Korean domestic market as well. In such ever competitive environment, low cost carriers are looking for more active marketing such as brand alliance to increase their market share.

As with any other business, core part of the business is making people interested in their business otherwise they could face a lot of difficulties if they are unable to attract sufficient people to their business, and to this end, it is necessary for them to develop new business model that reflects customized level of market characteristics of local people of present time. In the case of Korean domestic low cost carriers, they took some foreign-sourced models such as from Southwest Airline, and applied them on their domestic business without critical mind, which resulted in 2 bankruptcies of the 6 low cost carriers in Korea [10].

In this study therefore, the effects of fright information system which are operation service, customer services, flight service, reservation & ticketing service & refund service, and in-flight amenities service- on customer satisfaction and the rate of return customers are investigated with the application of SERVQUAL, on the premise that Korean domestic low cost carriers need to develop their own business model that suits domestic market for low cost carriers to compete with full service carriers in Korean market using fright information system.

2. LITERATUIRE REVIEW

2.1 Sections and Subsections

Values are subjective experience with multi-dimensions [21]. And the investigation is to anticipate how the consumer consumption behaviors or patterns become different even for the same service or product when customers are looking for different values [20].

And one of the methodologies that use such customer characteristics is service quality which is considered an important method in various fields of corporate businesses these days, and this is an important factor for airline business as well, which requires a high level of customer contacts for competitive reason [17][24].

One of the representative studies on service quality is a study by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry [1]. They define service quality in terms of the extent and direction of discrepancy between the customer perception and expectation of services, and perceived quality tells the extent of difference and direction of the perception and expectation. Based on this concept, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry [2] propose five dimensions -tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy - and the 22 scales that constitute the seven dimensions. And this is because service quality is looked at from subjective perspective of consumer experience due to its intangibility, unlike the quality of general products [6].

Perceived quality can, therefore, be converted to some conceptualizable, quantifiable objective value to link perceived quality and consumer expectation and corporate performance together [16]. Especially, evaluation of service quality in airline business is to improve overall service quality by upgrading each service-related area, thereby culminating in customer satisfaction and higher rate of return customers through such marketing efforts [15]. That is, excellent quality airline service means not only quality service planning but also excellent delivery of customer expectation and perception.

2.2 Low Cost Carriers

A study on low cost carriers began to gain traction as resent as 2000s when various regulations on low cost carriers began to loosen. Although in early years the direction in study on low cost carriers has focused on the case studies on the development of low cost carriers, the scope of study, in recent years, started to expand into the empirical study on strategies to compete with full service carriers as well as other low cost carriers. One of the most popular methods in use is SERVQUAL based on the fright information system and it is because service quality is the most important source for competitive service quality [18].

Low cost carriers began to emerge, targeting niche markets in 1990s when deregulations on

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aviation laws and regulations started to accelerate, serving mainly for point to point services between cities, and they were able to reduce their service costs by reinforcement fright information system and minimizing additional services such as in-flight meals and entertainments (TV, movies etc.) and airport lounging services, and by reducing workforce through internet ticketing [23].

The priority for customers choosing transportation services are as follows: first, their choice is passenger car or express bus services for the distance of less than 200 km, high speed railway service for the rage of distance for 250km – 400km, and airline service for the distance of more than 400km [10]. Second, it is easy accessibility to airports, railway stations, etc. for transportation services. Third, it is transpiration costs, and fourth, it is safety, and for airline services providers, it is especially important because airline accidents are serious in nature [13].

As seen from existing studies on low cost carriers, there are many areas low cost carriers have to make more efforts to be able to compete with full services carriers, express bus service, and high speed railway service as well as other low coast carriers. But especially for Korean domestic low cost carriers, transportation costs saving through the reduction of ground workforce is a high priority.

But there is also limit in reducing the number of workers alone for low fare policy, and such policy can contribute to low service quality compared to other competitors, which can result in customer dissatisfaction and eventually poor business performance [17].

Lee [18] used SERVQUAL for recommendation of low cost carriers and explains each relationship between the five factors - reliability, respect, satisfaction, and attendees- based on their regression analysis. And all the five factors are found to affect recommendation of low cost carriers.

Kim and Yang [3] investigated causal relationships for potential customers in terms of the five factors of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and the 22 scales provided by Parasuraman et al. [2]. And the reason behind the use of the five factors is because there is lack of standardized quality factors and differentiation from other services. As a result, all the other factors except tangibility are found to affect expectation for and use of the services.

Based on the existing study of SERVQUAL, this empirical study is carried out to investigate how the service quality affects customer satisfaction and their marketing success at the same time as a consequence of its effect on the rate of return customers, in terms of 22 scales of five factors of customer service, operation service, cabin service, reservation & ticketing & refund service and in-flight amenities service.

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In this study, how the five factors of customer service, operation service, cabin service, reservation & ticketing & refund service and in-flight amenities service affect customer satisfaction and the rate of return customers for low cost carriers in terms of the 22 scales, and what is the most important factor for low cost carrier users to use Korean domestic low cost carriers is investigated. Especially, those who have experience of using low cost carriers are investigated for in-depth study on the rate of return customers. It can be said that low cost carriers have price advantages over full service carriers because they can reduce offering services, operation costs and total costs [9].

Nonetheless, service reduction can result in reduction of existing and new customers, and service reduction decision should be made carefully because service quality is found to be positively related to customer satisfaction and the rate of return customers [5].

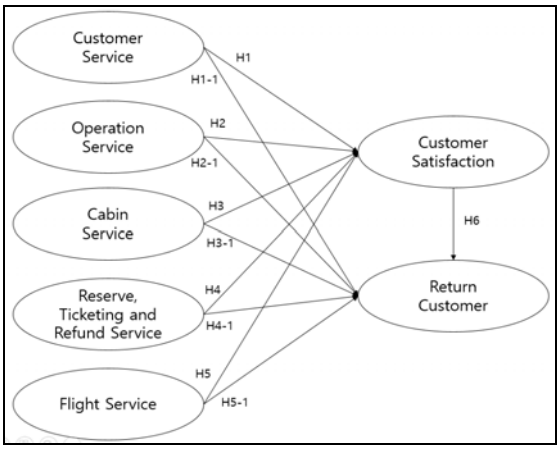

Figure 1: Research Model

And service quality is also found to have indirect impact on the rate of return customers for low cost carriers [7]. This study proposes the following hypotheses based on existing studies.

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H1: Customer service has positive effects on customer satisfaction.

H1-1: Customer service has positive effects on return customer.

H2: Operation service has positive effect on customer satisfaction.

H2-1: Operation service has positive effect on return customer.

H3: Cabin service has positive effect on customer satisfaction

H3-1: Cabin service has positive effect on return customer.

H4: Reservation & Ticketing & refund service has positive effect on customer satisfaction.

H4-1: Reservation &Ticketing & refund service has positive effect on return customer.

H5: Flight service has positive effect on customer satisfaction.

H5-1: Flight service has positive effect on positive effect on return customer.

H6: Customer satisfaction has positive effect on the return customer.

Thus, this research to analyze 11 hypotheses combine online and offline airline service. Four hypotheses which are H2, H2-1, H4, and H4-1 are based on fright information system and seven hypotheses which are H1, H1-1, H3, H3-1, H5, H5-1, and H6 are based on off-line service such as face to face aviation services from Airline Company.

Table 1: Results of Factor Loading and Reliability

Factors	Operation Service	Customer Service	Flight Service	Reserve, Ticketing and Refund Service	Cabin Service	Cronbach's α
Safe flight	0.715	0.170	0.120	-0.022	-0.046	0.831
Convenient flight schedule	0.704	0.189	0.211	0.120	0.006	
On time of departure and arrival time	0.669	0.252	-0.041	0.074	0.082	
Cleanliness inside the plane	0.636	0.196	0.141	0.296	0.272	
Baggage handling	0.621	0.087	0.181	0.222	0.277	
Flight attendants are very friendly	0.364	0.674	-0.139	0.095	0.098	0.781
Customer service	0.217	0.624	0.227	0.097	0.292	
In-flight service	0.106	0.603	0.325	-0.063	0.251	
Customer response	0.305	0.567	0.204	0.217	0.024	
In-flight storage space	0.196	0.049	0.752	0.091	-0.029	0.578
Seat comfort	0.116	0.307	0.702	0.014	-0.048	
Aircraft of the latest model	0.087	0.027	0.622	0.086	0.335	
Ticketing service	0.135	0.253	0.051	0.788	0.175	0.730
Reservation Service	0.077	0.284	0.057	0.780	0.083	
Quick boarding	0.317	-0.022	0.119	0.650	0.038	
Cancellation and delay compensation	0.140	0.203	0.166	0.028	0.775	0.671
Cancellation and refund service	0.179	0.163	0.172	0.274	0.738	

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4. RESULTS

4.1 Data

The collection of data for this study was carried out from 1 October 2009 to 1 March 2010 through questionnaires for those who have experienced low cost carriers. The investigator distributed 400 self-administering questionnaires through face to face meetings or visits and of 260 questionnaires collected, 245 questionnaires were used for this study, except 15 questionnaires that were unanswered or incorrectly answered.

The Gender ratio of the respondents is 123 (50.2%) for male and 122 (49.8%) for female, so there is not much gender difference between male and female respondents. The age distribution of respondents is as follows: 60 (24.1%) for their 20s, 97 (39.6%) for their 30s, 52 (21.2%) for their 40s and 31 (12.7%) is for their 50s or beyond. As for their academic backgrounds, university graduates are 101 (41.2%), college graduates are 76 (31%), and 35 (14.3%) are for graduate school or more. And their occupations are follows: 62 (25.3%) are self-employed, 46(18.8%) are salary man, 31 (12.7%) are sales/service individuals and 29(11.8%) are teachers/civil servants.

Average monthly income of the respondents is as follows: 90 (36.7%) is for 2,000,000-2,990,000 won, 69(28.2%) is for 3,000,000 - 3,990,000 won, 40 (16.3%) is for 4,000,000-4,990,000 won and 27(11%) is for 5,000,000 won or more.

4.2 Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

The exploratory factor and the confidence level were analyzed with the SPSS Windows 18.0, while Cronbach`s α > 0.7 was used for the assessment of the confidence level. The Principle Component Analysis was used for the factor extraction, while Varimax Rotation was used for the rotation method and the items were made suitable for the purpose of the investigation. The exploratory factor analysis was conducted with Factor Loadings: FL>0.6 which indicates the correlation between the assessment factors.

First, using the SPSS 18.0, seven items were deduced by the Exploratory Factor Analysis, and the factor loading of each item for all the factors were more than 0.6The Cronbach`s α (>0.7) of the confidence level appeared enough in between 0.774 and 0.922 that both the convergent validity and the discriminant validity were suitable<See Table 2>.

Table2: Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

Rank	Number of items		Cronbach α
	Before	After	
Customer Service	7	4	0.789
Operation Service	5	5	0.922
Cabin Service	5	4	0.845
Reserve, Ticketing and Refund Service	4	4	0.799
Flight Service	3	3	0.916
Customer Satisfaction	2	2	0.920
Return Customer	5	4	0.774

4.3 Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Using the AMOS 18.0, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was carried out to test the validity of the test tools on the items that were first tested through the exploratory factor analysis and confidence analysis. First, the fitness of the

Table 3: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

actors	Number of items		Cronbach α	CR	AVE	
	Before	After				
Operation Service	5	5	0.83	0.95	0.68	x^2=112.537;df=59; RMR=0.023; CFI=0.957;AGFI=0.903;RMSEA=0.061;TLI=0.943;GFI=0.937.
Customer Service	4	5	0.78	0.85	0.60	
Reserve, Ticketing and Refund Service	3	2(-1)	0.825	0.901	0.820	
Flight Service	2	2	0.671	0.804	0.674	

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concepts and measurement variables were tested with the Maximum Likelihood Method.

The methods used for the adequacy of the assessment items are Standardized Factor Loadings: FL>0.6), Squared Multiple Correlations: SMC>0.5), Standardized Residual Covariance; (-2.58<SRC<+2.58) [12][19], and the Construct Reliability; C.R.>0.7 and Average Variance Extracted: AVE>0.5 [5]. The methods used for the confirmation on the significance level of the study model were Goodness-of-fit-index>= 0.9 (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-fit-index>=0.9 (AGFI), Root mean square residual<= 0.05 (RMR), Normed fit index>=0.9 (NFI), Comparative fit index>=0.9(CFI) and Root Mean square error of approximation<=0.1(RMSEA). The results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis are <See Table 3>.

4.4 Statistical tests for Research Model

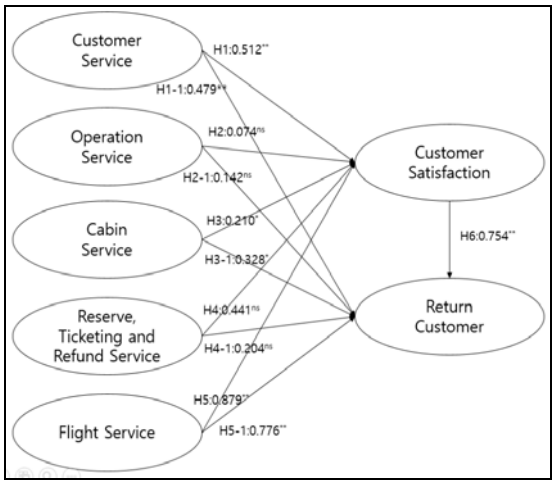

Figure 2: Results of Research Model

AMOS 18.0 is used to investigate causal relationships between all the factors, and the results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) are x2=64.247(d.f=7), p=0.000, x2/d.f=9.178, GFI=0.852, RMR=0.048, NFI=0.915, AGFI=0.876, CFI=9.770, all of which meet general model's goodness of fit. All the hypotheses except for H2, H2-1, H4, and H4-1 are accepted.

5. DISCUSSION

In this study, customer satisfaction and the rate of return customers are investigated for low cost carriers based on the 7 factors and 11 hypotheses using fright information system. And the results are as follows: Korean domestic customers are found to raise a lot of complains about Operation Service, Reservation, Ticketing and Refund Service. And complains about Reservation, Ticketing and Refund Service is found to be also high.

On the other hand, in the fright information system areas of ticketing, reservation and boarding services for which low cost carriers are considered strong, the results have been not encouraging. And such results are due to the fact that even though low cost carrier customers are satisfied with the basic airline services, they are not

Table 4: Statistical tests for Research Model

Hypothesis	Path	FL	T-value	P-value	Hypothesis Support
H1	Customer Service → Customer Satisfaction	0.521	3.447	0.000	**
H1-1	Customer Service → Return Customer	0.476	4.542	0.000	**
H2	Operation Service → Customer Satisfaction	0.074	0.749	0.311	ns
H2-1	Operation Service → Return Customer	0.142	1.115	0.210	ns
H3	Cabin Service → Customer Satisfaction	0.210	3.984	0.041	*
H3-1	Cabin Service → Return Customer	0.328	2.657	0.030	*
H4	Reservation, Ticketing and Refund Service → Customer Satisfaction	0.441	2.248	0.074	ns
H4-1	Reservation, Ticketing and Refund Service → Return Customer	0.204	3.564	0.062	ns
H5	Flight Service → Customer Satisfaction	0.879	10.254	0.000	**
H5-1	Flight Service → Return Customer	0.776	9.780	0.000	**
H6	Customer Satisfaction →Return Customer	0. 754	3.214	0.001	**
*: P<0.05, **: P<0.01, ns: not significant					

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positive about internet ticketing system launched to compete with full service carriers, internet reservation and ticketing system launched to reduce ground workforce, and about delay of reservation, ticketing and boarding at the window level, and about compensation and refund for service delay or flight cancelation.

In the case of Korean market, the result about customer services is the same between low cost carriers and full service carriers because the services provided by low cost carriers and full service carriers are similar due to short flight distance compared to USA, China, and Europe that has vast territories compared to Korea. Low cost carriers in Korea should have new business model suitable for Korean domestic market to improve their competitiveness.

Today, Korean overseas tourists are increasing many kind of tourist including school trip, backpacking and others. These tourists want to buy cheap flight ticket. These reason naturally lead to using low cost carries.

Flight service based on information system is found to be an important factor for low cost carrier customers. In particular, safe flight and convenient flight schedule and on-time departure and arrival are found to be also important. Low cost carriers should improve their reliability and the rate of return customers with on-time departure and arrival and replacement of old airplanes for safety.

This results show that information system, today, is growing day by day because almost customer is using fright information system such as reservation and issue airline ticket, and cancellation. In addition, customer post complaints on the fright information system.

Therefore, fright information system led management condition improvement to reduce expenditure and immediate solution of customer complaints. Fright information system have become not an option.

To this end, it is necessary for low cost carriers to secure airplane safety and reliability of on-time departure and arrival to improve customer satisfactions.

But there are also some limitations with this study. First, this study was done only for those who have experienced low cost carriers, therefore not considering factors for potential customers. Therefore it is necessary for future studies to look at what are important service quality factors for existing customers and potential customers, separately.

And this study focus on low cost carrier from Korea. Today, many companies from other countries manage low cost carrier. Therefore, to find out how fright information system and offline service as apply to customer satisfaction to need more countries low cost carriers information.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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