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2011

Online at <http://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/40686/>

MPRA Paper No. 40686, posted 17. August 2012 10:17 UTC

THE IMPACT OF TRUST AND CABIN CREW PERFORMANCE ON CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION

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©Ontario International Development Agency ISSN: 1923-6654 (print)

ISSN 1923-6662 (online). Available at <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

Abstract: In this research, the case of AIRBLUE has been taken to examine what people think about its performance, whether they trust this airline or not, and are they satisfied or not? Further, this study measures the impact of cabin crew performance and trust on customer satisfaction. The data was collected by distributing questionnaires to the domestic travelers of AIRBLUE. The sample size of the research was of 180 people. The result shows that majority of people are satisfied with the performance of AIRBLUE and they trust on its service, but at the same time they have positive expectation that AIRBLUE would improve its services. The results of this further explain there is positive correlation among the satisfaction, trust and cabin crew performance.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, Positive correlation, AIRBLUE, Performance, Trust

INTRODUCTION

Variability usually distinguished as one of the main characteristics of services. All services are inherently variable; which means that a service provider cannot be consistent in his performance all the time, it can be good at one time and bad at the other. This inconsistency put a negative impact on the performance of service provider, and leaves customers dissatisfied by damaging their trust. Service performance is strongly affected by trust and satisfaction. Trust act as a bridge between the effects of service performance on satisfaction. If customers have a strong trust on the service, it will somehow reduce the negative impact of variability. The increasing demand of traveling by aeroplanes has led many airline firms to come into

the market, which resulted into the increased number of airlines during last two decades. The services of airlines also have an element of variability in it. Customers don't get the same performance every time by the service provider, and sometimes they find the services below their expectation, which force them to switch the airline services with another one. As competition in the airline industry has become very intense, firms are giving more and more importance to customer relation management, as they are the key element toward their success. Now days, airline companies like other organizations are focusing on customer retention and there repeat purchases, for this building customer trust in the services is a major task for them.

Airblue is a private airline based in Karachi, Pakistan. It is Pakistan's second largest airline with over 30% share of the domestic market. Airblue operates scheduled flights operating 30 daily services linking four domestic destinations and international services to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Muscat and Manchester. The airline was established in 2003 and started operations on 18 June 2004 with 3 leased Airbus A320-200 aircraft serving Karachi-Lahore and Karachi-Islamabad with three daily flights in each direction. There are many internal and external problems, which exist within Airblue, which are not only affecting the performance but also putting negative effect of the profitability of the company. In this scenario, where company is being influenced by internal and external factors, it has become very difficult for Airblue to deliver standard services to its customers. Sometimes the company offers good services but at the same time the crewmember fails to give attention to their customers. If crewmember

attitude is good with their customers the quality of food becomes poor. This service variability affects the customer trust and satisfaction. Airblue is however working hard to overcome these problems so that they could reduce the variability in their services and come up to the expectations of the people.

This research aims to investigate customer satisfaction, trust by Airblue Airline and to determine the correlation among customer satisfaction, performance and trust. To identify and recommend the ways in which the problem can be minimized.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance variability refers to change in performance from one service encounter to another with the same service provider [1]. There are different attributes that can produce change in performance [2], but primarily it is the human element that introduces or brings variability in the services because it is impossible to control employees, customers, and their interactions at all times [3]. Therefore, service encounters that do not meet expectations should have a bigger impact on customers than service encounters that exceed expectations. Furthermore, if customers are concerned about the possibility of service encounters that do not meet expectations, then future sales and profitability may be negatively influenced [4].

Key service elements combine to create the service concept and its value proposition for customers. During service operations failures, employee interactions with customers are a critical service element in restoring customer satisfaction [5]. However, research in consumer psychology shows that customers seek reasons for service failures and their attributions of blame moderate the effects of the failure on the level of customer satisfaction [6].

Satisfaction is usually seen as a function of the customer's a) expectations prior to a purchase and b) perceptions of performance after a purchase [7]. As a point of departure, it is assumed that services are subject to a certain amount of variability [8]. In the analysis of personal relationships in the field of social psychology, trust is considered an inborn characteristic of any valuable social interaction [9]. The importance of trust in the service provider has been contrasted in numerous studies [10, 11]. Trust is usually defined as the feeling of security or faith that a customer has in his/her service supplier, based on the expectation that the company does not intend to lie, break promises or take advantage of the customer's weakness [12].

The intention to accept vulnerability based on the positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of the provider [13], and the extent to which there are

positive expectations about the provider's motives with respect to one's self in situations entailing risk [14]. Trust, then, can be seen as a global evaluation of a provider, but an evaluation that captures aspects other than those related to satisfaction and commitment [15]. Two particular aspects of trust should be observed. First, the trusting actor must be vulnerable to some extent for trust to become operational [16].

Performance perceptions after a service encounter, particularly attribute-level performance perceptions, have been shown to affect satisfaction in a vast number of studies, so this effect is well established [17]. Several empirical studies, however, show that post-encounter performance perceptions usually explain a much larger share of variance in customer satisfaction than differences between expected performance and perceived performance [18]. Therefore, it is expected that the perception of the performance of the supplier will have a direct effect on satisfaction. Moreover, as already indicated, trust is assumed to be an important variable in service encounters, and it has been shown that trust and customer satisfaction are positively related [15]. In this case, trust and performance would behave similar to expectations and performance in traditional confirmation/disconfirmation theory [7]. Indeed, several definitions of trust include an expectation component, in the sense that trust is a future-related construct. A high level of trust before an encounter, then, followed by violation of expectations (low performance), is likely to create confusion in the customer's mind [19]. Similarly, a low level of trust before an additional encounter that turns out to be very satisfying is also likely to create confusion. Presumably, a large gap between trust and performance signals that the customer has been deceived (in the negative disconfirmation case) or that she/he has been unfair in the trust assessment (the positive confirmation case), and it calls for a reaction in terms of the customer's satisfaction assessment. However, if the gap is minor, we expect a modest impact of trust. However, on the other hand, and given that trust and satisfaction are positively associated, it can be expected that consistency-related mechanisms [20] serve to keep the satisfaction judgements after an encounter reasonably in line with the pre-encounter level of trust.

The perception of the satisfaction has a direct effect on performance of the supplier. Moreover, trust is an important variable in service encounters, and it has been shown that trust and performance are positively related. The following hypotheses statements have been developed: (a) H1: Satisfaction and cabin crew performance are positively correlated to each other (b) H2: Trust and customer satisfaction are positively correlated to each other.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution W R T Variables (N=180)

Customer Satisfaction (Items)	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>
To what extent does AIRBLUE meet your expectations?	37	21	122
Imagine an airline that is perfect in every respect. How near or how far from this ideal do you find AIRBLUE	49	35	96
Trust (Items)	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>
AIRBLUE keeps its promises to me.	38	51	91
AIRBLUE does really care for me.	41	37	102
AIRBLUE is concerned about my well-being.	39	31	110
I feel confidence with regards to AIRBLUE.	55	33	92
Cabin crew performance (Items)	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Good</i>
Availability	25	21	134
Helpfulness	51	32	97
Personal attention	44	23	113
Personal approach	37	43	100

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Networking, Competence, Opportunity and Participation

		Satisfaction	performance	Trust
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	180		
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.198(**)	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	180	180	
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.181(**)	.450(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	180	180	180

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

METHOD

The sample size taken for this research was of 180 people who have traveled with AIRBLUE. The questionnaire was distributed among those consumers who use services of AIRBLUE for travelling within Pakistan. Data was collected from primary source. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for collecting primary data. The scale was adopted from a research paper [21] which helped in getting feedback from consumers regarding problem area. The data was collected through random sampling. The questionnaire consisted of different questions and was arranged in sequence. The types of questions being asked in the questionnaires were focused on the three variables of the research i.e. Performance, Trust, and Satisfaction. Internet articles and journals were also used for collecting literature. Information regarding selected company and other relevant information was taken from the Internet. The reliability of scale used for the research was 0.623, which shows it was a reliable scale for the research. All variables were measure by using a 5-point likert scale and SPSS was used to analyse the data. Correlation test was applied to test the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

The results of above table give the information of respondents' response about each statement of each variable. The responses about the first statement of more than two third respondents are satisfied and out of 180 customers 96 are also satisfied that airline that is perfect in every respect. The results of second variable trust almost two third of the subjects have the trust on AIRBLUE services as well as airline. The response regarding the cabin crew performance (availability, personal attention, and personal approach) response is in good side and out of total 180, only 97 passengers replied that they are helpfulness and 32 are neutral and 51 consider the poor in this regard.

The results of above table demonstrate that there is significant correlation among all variables by summarizing the values of Pearson's correlation coefficient. It is clear from the result that at 5% level of significance customer satisfaction is positively correlated with cabin crew performance as the value of the correlation coefficient 0.198. Customer satisfaction and trust of customer regarding to services is also positively linked and has statistically significant correlation coefficient 0.181 at 5% level of significance. Finally, we can say that customer satisfaction is positively and significantly correlated with both the variables. So, the results of this study validate the both hypotheses that there is a positive correlation between customer satisfaction, trust on company services and performance of the staff.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey has shown that consumers find it worthy to use services of AIRBLUE with some of the attributes like keeping the promise, concerned about well being, availability of the crew members, and their care for the travelers. Evaluating and sifting through all the survey results indicates one big thing, and that is AIRBLUE consumers are satisfied towards using their services. Majority of the respondents have shown satisfaction. Also majority of the respondents are satisfied regarded it as either far away or very far away from an ideal airline. Regarding crew members, there are consumers who have shown satisfaction in terms of their availability, and their care, in terms of personal approach and personal attention, little amount of consumers has shown a negative response with helpfulness. Therefore, this is an area to be considered that leads to the dissatisfaction for the AIRBLUE services. However, their expectations are still out there as the survey results show that they have still the positive expectations regarding the personal approach and personal attention served by the AIRBLUE crew members. Further, the results of this study validate the both hypotheses that there is a positive correlation between customer satisfaction, trust on company services and performance of the staff.

Following steps should be taken to increase the performance of AIRBLUE services and also to increase the trust and satisfaction level of the consumers; AIRBLUE needs to come up with the good publicity in terms of their approach. Therefore, by good publicity along with their genuine services they can boost the trust and satisfaction level of the consumers. AIRBLUE operates its flights in fewer cities as compared to PIA which is a disadvantage to AIRBLUE. PIA has another advantage over AIRBLUE that they have more number of planes than AIRBLUE. The crew members should be trained professionally in terms of personal helpfulness for the consumers of the AIRBLUE. The consumers still have positive expectations in this regard. Therefore with such efforts like professional training, the satisfaction of the consumers should be boost. AIRBLUE should also purchase new luxury class airplanes. This will make their services more near towards an ideal class airline. Since their customers still have positive expectations, therefore, by just having this procurement of new airplanes they can boost the satisfaction levels of their customers.

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