

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Conclusions**

The following are the conclusions drawn from the data analysis and discussions furnished in Chapter 4.

##### *Service Features*

The 21 service features mentioned in this research correspond to all services as suggested by the literature and more closely with practices of the private sector. Of the 21 service features rated by airport service passengers to be important for them including “feeling safe in their transactions”, empathy features such as “give personal attention” and “to have passengers’ best interests at heart” received the lowest scores. They were not perceived to be important because passengers do not expect to get these features in a monopoly service industry or government managed organization. It is also possible that service passengers may not have fully grasped the significance of what was being asked.

Also concluded by this study is the excellent airport service performance in tangible cues like physical facilities and operations which achieved the highest SERVQUAL scores among the 21 features when performance was compared to expectations.

The emphasis should be placed on selection and training of service front line personnel. Airport service, as expected, in this study is more marketing oriented: To choose carefully the personnel who interact with passengers, to regularly collect information about passengers needs and ensure passengers satisfaction.

### ***Service Dimensions***

It was found that responsiveness and reliability were rated by passengers as of the lowest quality among the five dimensions. Only tangibles received a score below the total SERVQUAL mean. Based on (P-E) gap scores for items concerning these dimensions, the items relating to “providing service as they promise” and “prompt service” revealed the biggest gaps. With these data, airport service staff should understand better the deficiencies in order to improve services to passengers and improve their image in the eyes of passengers.

### ***Service Categories***

Overall, there was some variation in ranking service quality across different service passenger categories. The deficiency of performance occurred mainly in responsiveness and then in reliability dimensions. Airport service, based on these results, should include a certain procedure for reinforcement applications different from other applications for business class passengers.

### ***Gap 1***

The results identified the fact that more effort is needed to improve the staff perception of passenger's expectations especially in tangibles and empathy dimensions. Staff should spend more time with frontline employees to improve their knowledge of passenger requirements.

In addition, there is a need for "flattening out". This is to improve upward communication to allow clearer messages to be transmitted from frontline staff through a shorter path to the top.

Airport service staff should conduct several studies to identify passengers' needs and the degree of satisfaction with existing service levels.

### ***Gap 2***

Staff need to be more committed to service quality and set long-term goals for quality. This is needed to establish quality indicators and to target staff to improve those indicators.

### ***Gap 3***

The main goal for improvement is alleviating the distress experienced by passengers and the staff. The result will be better employee performance and hence a reduction of gap 3. As role conflict is related positively to feelings of job related tension and negatively to job satisfaction, airport service staff should use performance measurement systems that focus on the passengers and internal efficiency goals. They should tie the compensation to service quality delivery as measured by performance measures.

There also needs to be more staff focus on downward communication to clearly direct and influence personnel at lower levels in the organization.

The more frequently staff provide clear and unambiguous communication, the lower employees' role ambiguity will be. Several other improvements such as empowering frontline staff to make decisions should also be implemented.

#### *Gap 4*

Frontline employees need to be aware of all company communications before they occur as participation in any campaign would result in increased passenger expectations. Staff need to enforce the coordination or integration of different sections to achieve strategic objectives.

#### *Comparison of Gap Sizes*

The overall results of gap 5 is acceptable and passengers state that airport service staff are delivering a quality of service that closely matches their current perceptions (score of  $-0.65$ , where 0 is the reference when expectations and perceptions are met). While passengers seem pleased with the overall service quality, airport service staff cannot stand still as passengers' expectations are likely to increase over time.

Gap 3 is more critical than the other four gaps in affecting perceived service quality and in explaining service quality variations. Because airport services are provided at multiple sites and are labor intensive, applications are most likely to be experienced in this gap. This makes the main area of improvement the part of service delivery. Training and empowering frontline staff to respond to passengers is essential.

Airport service staff should also create a favorable Gap 4 by employing effective external communications to create realistic consumer expectations and to enhance consumer perceptions.

Maintaining a close relationship between airport service staff and passengers would reduce gaps between expectations and delivered service.

### **Problem Resolution**

Airport service staff should not focus only on complaining passengers, but also on dissatisfied passengers.

The non-complainers may be just as dissatisfied as complainers are and perhaps even more so. They may damage the airport by communicating their dissatisfaction to other potential passengers. Airport service staff should encourage their passengers to complain and make it easy for them to do so. Employees should also be encouraged to respond effectively to passenger problems. Service contact employees need specific training about how to deal with passengers and how to help passengers solve service problems quickly and personally.

### ***Passengers' Suggestions***

Several changes and recommendations were suggested by passengers when they were asked to list the changes they would make if they were members of airport service staff to improve the level of service quality. The list includes the following suggestions:

1. Strictly enforce all airport service rules and regulations in all service areas.
2. Improve procedures.



3. Improve communication.
4. Recruit employees specialized in passenger services.
5. Give authority to front line staff.
6. Create friendly relationships, cooperation, and trust between passengers and airport service employees.
7. Implement strict timetable schedules for passengers' departures and arrivals.
8. Implement energy conservation programs.
9. Speed up the process of solving passenger problems and complaints.

### **Recommendations**

The results of the empirical study identify a number of implications. They are as follows:

1. It is important to manage and control every service encounter to enhance overall perceptions of service quality.
2. Improving service quality is achieved through understanding the passengers' expectation forming process.
3. Service quality can be improved for all passengers, but there is considerable cost in doing so. The question which all must ask is whether the expenditure incurred is justified.

## **The Proposed SERQUAL Model**

### *The Model*

Results obtained in this study through application of the SERVQUAL GAP Model proposed by Zeithaml et al. (1996, p. 44) and insights from previous research showing the deficiency of the model led to the development of the proposed conceptual model of SQ shown in Figure 9.

The model is divided into three main sections or components:

(1) Service production, (2) Service delivery, and (3) Service standard index (SSI). The overall evaluation of the first two components determines the total perceived service (TPS). Service Quality (SQ) is the result of comparing the total perceived service:

(a) when  $TPS > SSI$ : Total perceived service of firm x is better than the average performance as perceived by the passengers.

(b) when  $TPS = SSI$ : Firm x is performing similar to the average expectations.

(c) when  $TPS < SSI$ : Performance of firm x is below expectations

The three components of the proposed model and its constructs and variables will be explained hereafter:

1. Service Production Component: It is the outcome or the technical aspect of the service. Because this component is the main goal of the service encounter, it has a great effect in the overall evaluation process of the total perceived service. It consists of two constructs: Service design and staff role.

(a) *Service design*: It constitutes the methodology, standards specification, procedures and policies concerning how the service outcome is to be produced. There are three main variables affecting this construct, namely: Organization policies and procedures, passenger's requirements and airport specifications.

(1) Organization policies and procedures: Contribute much to designing the service outcome. They include both the technical and staff guidelines in producing and submitting the services to the passengers.

(2) Passengers' requirements: Designs that take into consideration the feedback, complaints, wants and needs of passengers, are the ultimate designs.

(3) Staff Role: It is the responsibility of staff to keep service delivery (outcome) as specified in the service design. Staff role includes providing required resources and removing obstacles. Two variables make this construct:

(1) Staff commitment: This includes commitment to implementation of policies and procedures, monitoring and supervision.

(2) Problem solving decision making (PSDM): It is the staff's responsibility to provide quick actions for adjustment of service design when necessary to solve passengers problems.

2. Service delivery component: This is the method for transporting the service from the provider to the passengers. It is the functional aspect of the service. If the outcome of the service is standard, service delivery assumes a

major role in evaluating the total perceived service. Two constructs are of concern: Employee response and physical evidence.

**(b) *Staff response:*** These are tools to submit a service to the passengers. Variables affecting this response include:

(1) Skill: The ability of frontline staff to deal with passengers in an effective manner. Skills include communication, negotiation and listening. Skills may be obtained through training and experience.

(2) Knowledge: This is the technical information about all aspects of the delivered service. It can be attained through education and experience.

(3) Loyalty: The higher the employee loyalty to the company, the better the response and care with passengers. Loyal employees do not want to damage the firm's image or reputation through misbehavior with the company's passengers. Loyalty can be attained through recognition, compensation and job promotion.

(4) Organization policies and procedures: As stated earlier, this will affect employee response as it will set timings to complete a transaction and some other instructions for service delivery.

(5) High demand: The quantity of job loads assigned to employees to serve passengers.

**(c) *Physical evidence:*** It is the tangibles and physical appearance of all items related to the service. Variables determining this construct include: condition of facilities and buildings, reception halls, air conditioning and

lighting, employees dress and uniform, tools and equipment, communication facilities, etc.

3. Service Standard Index Component: This is the expected passengers' requirements from similar airports in the industry. It needs to be established and then updated.

### **Future Research**

In depth research will be necessary to determine the nature of service quality in the Saudi Arabian environment as the form of service quality may vary across service industries (public vs. private) and across countries/passengers. Some of these topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Establishing an expectation index for service industry in Saudi Arabia taking into consideration the types of passengers, regions and nature of industry.
2. Establishing an instrument to measure service quality suitable to the local culture.
3. Considering how the service features differ for various types of services.
4. Checking whether there are features other than the 21 identified which determine service quality.
5. Identifying the sources responsible for forming passengers' expectations: Word of mouth, past experience or others.
6. Defining the nature of service delivery across other airports.

## **Limitations**

A major limitation is the problem of having respondents complete a long questionnaire when they have just arrived or are leaving an airport.

The staff interviewed represented their particular domain, for example, shop staff would only know about their expectations and perceptions.

For the airports, there is the issue of who their customers are the airlines who pay landing fees or the passengers.