

DOI: 10.15276/ETR.02.2023.4
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8154926
UDC: 339.137.2:656.7
JEL: L15, L93, M20, R40

PASSENGER SERVICE ON THE AIRCRAFT BOARD AS A COMPONENT OF THE AIRLINE'S IMAGE AND COMPETITIVENESS

ОБСЛУГОВУВАННЯ ПАСАЖИРІВ НА БОРТУ ЛІТАКА ЯК СКЛАДОВА ІМІДЖУ ТА КОНКУРЕНТОСПРОМОЖНОСТІ АВІАКОМПАНІЇ

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Received 16.03.2023

Докієнко Л.М., Осмак В.Є., Трюхан О.М. Обслуговування пасажирів на борту літака як складова іміджу та конкурентоспроможності авіакомпанії. Оглядова стаття.

Стаття присвячена розгляду сервісного обслуговування пасажирів на борту літака як основи для формування іміджу та забезпечення конкурентоспроможності авіакомпаній. Визначено роль якості обслуговування пасажирів для авіакомпаній в контексті жорсткої світової конкуренції; здійснено аналіз бортового продукту провідних авіакомпаній світу та розглянуто найвпливовіші рейтинги оцінювання авіакомпаній за якістю обслуговування. Обґрунтовано ключові критерії оцінювання якості обслуговування пасажирів на борту літака у розрізі якості бортового продукту та якості обслуговування екіпажем борту. Надано рекомендації для бортпроводників щодо покращення сервісу у контексті очікувань пасажирів, а також визначено кроки, які повинні реалізувати авіакомпанії задля підвищення якості обслуговування пасажирів.

Ключові слова: обслуговування пасажирів, якість обслуговування, конкурентоспроможність авіакомпанії, імідж авіакомпанії, авіакомпанія

Dokiienko L.M., Osmak V.Ye., Triukhan O.M. Passenger Service on the Aircraft Board as a Component of the Airline's Image and Competitiveness. Review article.

The article is devoted to consideration of passenger service on aircraft board as a basis for forming the image and ensuring the airline's competitiveness. The role of passenger service quality for airlines in the context of fierce global competition is defined; an analysis of the on-board product of the world's leading airlines was carried out, and the most influential ratings of airlines for the service quality were considered. The key criteria for evaluating the passenger service quality on the aircraft board in terms of the quality of the on-board product and the efficiency of the cabin crew are substantiated. Recommendations are provided for flight attendants to improve service in the context of passenger expectations, and steps that airlines should implement to improve the passenger service quality are identified.

Keywords: passenger service, service quality, airline competitiveness, airline image, airline

The passenger transport market is constantly changing, and the future of airlines depends not only on modern technological solutions, adaptation to digitalization and operational efficiency, but also on how quickly the airline reacts to new competitive challenges, what values guide its activities, and how it takes into accounts the interests and needs of various categories of passengers. Airlines understand that in order to conquer the market, they need to explore new ways of satisfying customers. Fierce global competition in the air transportation field and challenges of recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, has prompted airlines to focus on improving the passenger service quality. At the same time, passengers have become more demanding in their needs and requirements for the service quality.

Accordingly, the passenger service quality has become critically important for airlines in the competitive global market, and the need for its constant improvement has led to a paradigm shift in the business strategy of leading airlines. In order to create and maintain a positive image and competitiveness in the global market, airlines must understand the concept of passenger service quality and implement it effectively. In this context, the passenger service quality on the aircraft board is a critical factor in choosing an airline among travelers, because high-quality service not only helps attract new customers, but also creates loyalty among existing ones. And this, in turn, creates a positive airline's image and increases its competitiveness level on the global air transport market.

Analysis of recent researches and publications

Issues of airline's competitiveness management, factors of its formation, key components and evaluation indicators are increasingly considered in the works of Ukrainian scientists. In particular, scientists have systematized the key factors affecting the competitiveness of air transport services, determined the features of intermodal competition and the importance of interaction between the world's airports and the leading strategic alliances of airlines in order to increase the competitiveness of their services [1]; it was determined that the development of the aviation sector competitive potential consists in strengthening the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the airport infrastructure, winning competitive positions in the network of international air transport corridors, developing and strengthening interaction between different types of transport, implementing effective transport technologies and implementing innovative projects [2]; substantiated that the airline's competitiveness is based on advantages in the external and internal environment, advantages in the quality and resource intensity of services and can be evaluated on the basis of indicators of the production activity efficiency, financial condition, efficiency of the organization of sales and promotion, service's competitiveness [3].

Foreign authors consider the airline's competitiveness more from the perspective of customer experience and actively research the impact of the passenger service quality on the airlines activities and prove that the service quality is the basis of customer satisfaction with air services [4, 5], a key factor in forming customer loyalty to the airline and its image [5, 6], critically important for airlines in the context of ensuring competitiveness [7, 8]. The authors from Taiwan substantiates that safety, convenience and service quality have a great influence on the choice of an airline by passengers, as passengers are very responsive to lower prices, increased safety, comprehensiveness and services quality, and increased convenience of air travel [9]; authors from South Korea focus on the passengers service on the aircraft board and establish empirically that the quality of on-board food is one of the most important conditions for passengers to have a pleasant flight experience and a key factor in choosing an airline [10]. A comprehensive study conducted in Australia is also interesting, in which the degree of influence of the factors: service quality, image, brand, innovation, technology, cost of service and perception of value on the behavioral intentions of customers was assessed and it was established that offering only low air fares is not enough – they need to be supplemented with a high level of service to ensure the airline's competitiveness [11].

In the Ukrainian scientific literature, some studies are also presented that reveal the relationship between the passenger service quality and the airline's competitiveness. For example, it is justified that the airline's competitiveness is determined, first of all, by the competitiveness of its services, and the value chain of an airline should include pre-flight, in-flight,

inter-flight and post-flight service [12]; it was established that the airline's competitiveness is affected by advantages in service, advertising, image, as well as the situation on the air transportation market and fluctuations in demand for air services [13]; it has been proven that the key factors in achieving competitive advantages in the aviation industry are not only the service cost, but also the quality of the services provided, meeting the passengers needs and expectations [14] and it is expedient to increase the airline's competitiveness based on the service quality management and revenues management [15]; attention is focused on the importance and necessity of forming the airline's image based on the use of marketing technologies, and it is established that the positive airline image is based on an associative series in the minds of consumers, which gives impetus to future development, increasing competitiveness and a high reputation of the airline [16].

At the same time, issues of the passenger service quality on the aircraft board are not given enough attention and they remain insufficiently disclosed.

The aim of this is to substantiate the need and determine the key criteria for quality passenger service on the aircraft board, as well as its impact on the formation of the airline's image and competitiveness.

The main part

More than half of the world's companies in various industries have been competing primarily on the basis of customer experience in recent years, and the air transportation industry is no exception. Today's aviation business is not just perfectly adjusted work with airlines, that is, within the framework of the "B2B" business model, but a high-quality "B2C" business model, because today the passenger is the center of the airport's activity, and customer orientation – is the basis of the activity in most modern airlines.

Excellent customer service in the air transportation industry includes several key elements: ease of booking tickets; the use of digital technologies in the delivery of tickets on a mobile device; simplicity and ease of the registration process; the time spent on the transfer of the boarding pass; behavior of the crew in relation to the passenger; the type and quality of food provided during the flight; delays in receiving luggage at the destination airport [17].

If we consider the airline's on-board product, then it is, for the most part, standard and includes a certain set of services, including food, which depends on the different service classes, and additional entertainment services on board for passengers (Table 1).

And although well-known airlines from different continents and with different activity indicators were chosen for comparison, the results show that airlines compete in terms of passenger transportation volumes according to key parameters, which are mostly the same. Accordingly, the main focus is on providing high-quality service along with ensuring the safety of passengers. That is, the main thing that makes one

airline significantly different from another in terms of on-board product is the customer service quality (service on board and at the airport), as well as its

"highlight" – a specific, innovative, original service on board.

Table 1. Components of passenger service on aircraft board from some world's airlines

	Lufthansa	KLM	SWISS International Airlines	Croatia Airlines	British Airlines	Ukraine International Airlines	American Airlines	Air India	Qatar Airways	Air New Zealand	Virgin Australia	China Airlines	Japan Airlines	Qantas Airways
1. Travel classes														
Economy class	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Premium Economy / Comfort	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+
Business	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
First	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
2. On-board meals														
Economy class	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Premium Economy / Comfort	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+
Business	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
First	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
Diet menu	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
3. Inflight entertainment														
TV, movies, serials	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Audio books and music	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
Games	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
Magazines	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	+
Shopping on board	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-
Wi-Fi / Fly Net	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
4. Travelling with kids														
Additional services for kids	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-
Entertainment for kids	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
Food for kids	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	+

Source: authors' own elaboration

For example, Emirates Airline uses the "starry sky" night lighting option in the interior of the cabin, Turkish Airlines offers a candlelit dinner by handing out small electronic twinkling candles in elegant paper bags, Air Malta, in the care of beauty, offered economy class passengers a therapeutic massage service in flight, Air New Zealand pleased economy class passengers with the opportunity to order a "Sky couch" – three standard seats that can be folded out and turned into a mattress. Food is a special feature of airlines. The leaders of the rating of airlines with the best on-board food are Air New Zealand, whose menu is based on national dishes, All Nippon Airways, which, in addition to European cuisine, offers traditional Japanese sweets, Emirates Airline, which for religious reasons does not serve pork, but is known for other excellent dishes and their wide selection [18].

Other airlines also seek to surprise and impress their passengers with additional services, for example,

the sommeliers of Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific select drinks for the airline's wine list once a month, testing the wines in flight; on long-haul flights Austrian Airlines, passengers are not offered instant coffee, but a whole coffee menu, and passengers receive drinks from the hands of a sky chef, because the company has introduced the concept of the "Chef on board" service.

Recently, airlines have been paying a lot of attention to the "Travelling with kids" option, and it is not only a special children's menu on board, but, for example, Lufthansa gives children under 6 years of age surprise box on the aircraft board, which includes sweets, a soft airplane toy, socks, toothpaste and brush; and on the flights of the Israeli "El Al" there is a clown who entertains kids during the flight. S7 Airlines, KLM, Hainan Airlines and Air Baltic even offer loyalty programs for passengers aged 2 and up, not just adults.

So, the role of passenger service quality is really big for airlines for many reasons, in particular [17]:

- the market is extremely competitive and customer service is becoming a key differentiator between airlines in this fiercely competitive environment;
- high-quality passenger service adds value (the scope of high-quality service nowadays goes far beyond simply escorting a passenger to his seat and providing him with on-board food on time; passengers expect the crew to take care of their in-flight needs and make the trip as comfortable as possible);
- the revenue of the airline company also directly depends on the passenger service quality (the increase in the volume of transported passengers

and their satisfaction testify to the positive image of the airline and the high quality of service provision);

- customer loyalty to the airline company is becoming increasingly important (when a passenger receives quality service at every stage of his journey with the airline, he feels satisfied and happy, and this creates a positive image, builds brand loyalty and, as a result, increases the competitiveness level of the airline).

Also, the relevant global ratings compiled by reputable companies can serve as a guide both for choosing one or another airline for future trips and for determining the quality of the on-board service provided (Table 2).

Table 2. Top 10 world's airlines by the passenger service level in 2022

Ratings and winners			
"World Airline Awards"	"AIR HELP SCORE"	"AIRLINE RATINGS"	"Avia Tickets Ratings"
1. Qatar Airways	1. Qatar Airways	1. Qatar Airways	1. Emirates
2. Singapore Airlines	2. United Airlines	2. Air New Zealand	2. Qatar Airways
3. Emirates	3. Qantas Airways	3. Etihad Airways	3. Singapore Airlines
4. ANA All Nippon Airways	4. Etihad Airways	4. Korean Air	4. Korean Air
5. Qantas Airways	5. LATAM Airlines	5. Singapore Airlines	5. Etihad Airways
6. Japan Airlines	6. Euro Wings	6. Qantas Airways	6. Cathay Pacific
7. Turkish Airlines	7. China Airlines	7. Virgin Australia	7. Air Astana
8. Air France	8. American Airlines	8. EVA Air	8. Virgin Atlantic
9. Korean Air	9. Japan Airlines	9. Turkish Airlines	9. Turkish Airlines
10. Swiss International Airlines	10. Austrian Airlines	10. All Nippon Airways	10. Air New Zealand

Source: compiled by authors on materials [19-22]

The "World Airline Awards" rating has been determined by the "Sky Trax" company since 2012 and is considered the most authoritative in the aviation industry. In 2022, he identified the best airlines in the world in the nominations: world's best airlines (Qatar Airways); best cabin crew (Singapore Airlines); best low-cost airlines (Air Asia); best regional airlines (Bangkok Airways); most improved airlines (Gulf Air); best airline cabin cleanliness (ANA All Nippon Airways); best in-flight entertainment (Emirates); best airport services (ANA All Nippon Airways); best in first class (Singapore Airlines); best in business class (Qatar Airways); best in premium economy (Virgin Atlantic) and best in economy class (Emirates) [19].

"Airline Ratings" determines the best airline in the nominations: airline of the year (Qatar Airways); cargo airline of the year (Korean Air); environmental airline of the year (Etihad Airways); most improved airline (Turkish Airlines); best first class (Singapore Airlines); best business class (Qatar Airways); best premium economy class (Air New Zealand); best economy class (Air New Zealand); best low fare carrier by region (Jet, easyJet, Southwest, Fly Dubai); best regional airline (Qantas); best long-haul airline by region (Jet Blue, Qatar Airways, Air New Zealand, Korean Air, Turkish Airlines); in-flight catering award (Qatar Airways); in-flight entertainment award (Emirates); best cabin crew (Virgin Australia) [20].

The "Avia Tickets" rating determines the best airline in terms of service level (Emirates); popularity (Ukraine International Airlines); ease of check-in (Korean Air); comfort on board (Emirates); the best staff (Korean Air); baggage storage (Turkish Airlines) [21].

If we talk specifically about the passenger service quality level, the "Air Help Score" rating evaluates it on the basis of three components: 1) punctuality (33.3%), i.e. how much a certain flight of the airline was on time; 2) customer opinion (33.3%) based on a survey on a 5-point scale according to parameters: cabin crew, comfort on the board, cleanliness of the board, quality of on-board food and entertainment; 3) work with claims (33.3%) by parameters: processing of claims, speed of consideration of claims, payment of claims and resolution of disputes [22]. More detailed is the 5-point evaluation scale of the "World Airline Awards" from "Sky Trax" in terms of the following elements: cabin crew service's quality (friendliness of service; attentiveness/promptness of service; level of languages knowledge by staff; timeliness and quality of announcements; assistance to families; problem-solving skills; staff attitude; well-groomed staff and others); on-board product (seat comfort, cabin and toilet cleanliness, cabin lighting and atmosphere, cabin temperature, comfort and amenities in the cabin, quality and selection of dishes, amount of food, choice of drinks, price-quality ratio, etc.) [19].

Undoubtedly, all services provided by an airline to passengers during a journey (flight) are interconnected, and the quality of their provision collectively forms the airline's image and competitiveness, therefore the airline's passenger

service quality should be considered from the standpoint of two components: passenger service on aircraft board and ground service for airline's passengers at airport (Fig. 1).

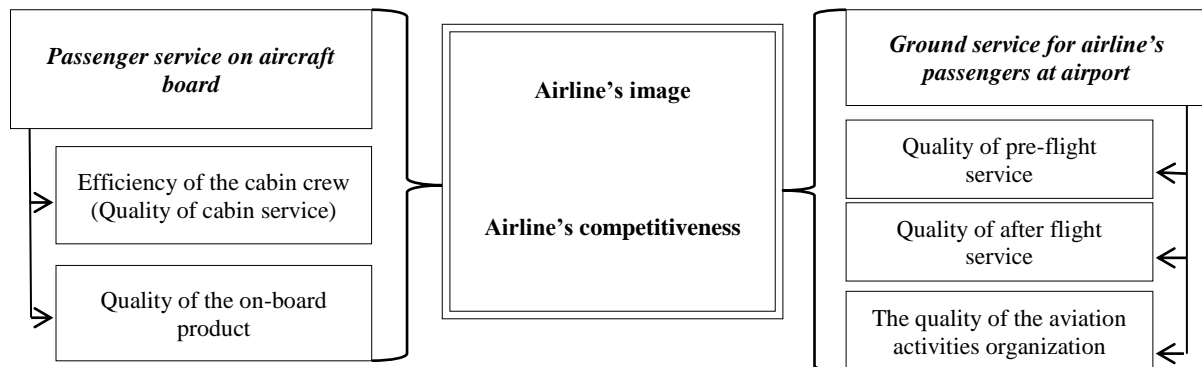


Figure 1. Formation of the airline's image and competitiveness due to the passenger service quality
 Source: authors' own elaboration

In order to evaluate the passenger service quality, the airline must develop its own evaluation system and conduct a passenger's corresponding survey (questionnaire) regarding the on-board service and

ground services at airport. Since this study considers only the passengers service on aircraft board, the authors suggest using the following system of criteria for evaluating its quality (Table 3).

Table 3. Criteria for evaluating the quality of passenger service on aircraft board

Efficiency of the cabin crew	Quality of the on-board product
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - friendliness service and hospitality - attentiveness and efficiency of service - assistance during boarding - knowledge of languages by the cabin crew - sensitive attitude of the crew and constant help - giving equal attention to all passengers - quality and accuracy of ads - sufficiency and timeliness of information on board - sufficient crew knowledge to answer passengers "questions - problem and conflict resolution skills - assistance to families with children, less mobile passengers - appearance of the cabin crew 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seat comfort - cleanliness of the interior, seats, toilet - cabin lighting / atmosphere on aircraft board - cabin temperature, air conditioner operation - comfort and convenience in the cabin - reading materials / airline magazine - Wi-Fi / Fly Net - on-board TV screen and interface - choice of inflight entertainment - quality and selection of dishes, menu variety - amount of food - selection of drinks - prices on board - value for money on board

Source: compiled by authors on materials [7, 19, 22]

Therefore, the passenger service quality on aircraft board is a key component that forms the airline's image and competitiveness, and the passenger is indirectly considered the boss. Accordingly, a flight attendant is in a unique position to make or break an airline's reputation based on the passenger's service quality on board. The service of flight attendants on the aircraft board begins from the moment the passenger boards and ends from the moment he disembarks, and the services should not be limited to meals, even if the airline is budget. Passengers expect a flight attendant to be technically competent, and the only thing they notice is the attitude of the flight attendant to his work and to each customer during the flight. The most important thing is a personal approach – "People serving people", and the ultimate

goal of on-board service is to encourage all passengers to travel with the airline again.

Usually, every passenger on the aircraft board expects that the flight attendants will serve him as perfectly as possible, namely: during each flight, a cheerful, friendly and smiling crew of flight attendants will meet them and guide them to their assigned seats; the passenger will always receive assistance on board as far as possible; the passenger will hear clear and legible announcements from the flight attendants on board; the flight attendant will professionally and politely offer drinks, meals and other services; the passenger will always travel in a clean environment; the passenger will have an alternative solution for their outstanding request; the passenger wants to receive answers to all questions, which should be polite and helpful; if possible, it is

desirable to receive help and special care for children; for peace of mind, the passenger must be assured that the flight crew pays particular attention to detail in all matters of safety; the passenger wants to receive information about delays, the occurrence of problems in flight and the reasons for these events, as well as to receive a friendly farewell when leaving the plane [23].

According to the authors, in order to improve the passenger service quality on the aircraft board, flight attendants should follow the following recommendations:

1. Great appearance of the flight attendants. The personal appearance of a flight attendants helps to make a good impression on passengers, so each airline has its own dress code, accordingly, flight attendants must have a professional appearance that demonstrates a good airline's image and represents it internationally.

2. Good knowledge of one's duties, work technology and passenger service on board. Passengers (e.g. frequent flyers) value a flight attendant's knowledge (skills and understanding of the job) and that is why flight attendants must show that they are professionals by following safety rules, enforcing these rules in the cabin, and providing quality service to passengers throughout the flight. That is, flight attendants must flexibly balance between safety requirements and passenger comfort.

3. Making a good first impression. When passengers aboard the plane, you need to set the tone for excellent service by greeting passengers warmly and pleasantly with a friendly smile, because a pleasant facial expression makes the passenger feel that the flight attendants and the airline are interested in him.

4. Effective communication with passengers: be an excellent and attentive listener; know when to listen and when to speak; use body language that conveys much more than the words we speak; evaluate the message, not the passenger; demonstrate appropriate command behavior when disagreeing, defending, providing information, apologizing, giving advice, and admitting mistakes; be careful not to give the passenger the impression that his presence interferes with something else; be aware of cultural differences and be able to politely end a conversation with confirmed satisfaction and the passenger's feeling that everything has been taken care of.

5. Accessibility to passengers, i.e. the flight attendant should be available to the passengers during the long flight, often walking around the cabin to help the passengers with their needs, because not all passengers prefer to call the flight attendant.

6. Excellent stress management. A flight attendant must be able to effectively carry out their safety and passengers service duties in emergency or adverse conditions.

7. Be strict when working with an uncontrolled passenger. A flight attendant must adhere to safety guidelines for unsafe behavior on board at an early stage, and an unruly passenger is the only passenger who is not always right.

8. To respond to passenger complaints, i.e. to take the initiative in responding to suggestions or complaints and to make efforts, as far as possible, to resolve any actual or perceived violations or service deficiencies that may be brought to the attention of passengers.

9. A positive attitude demonstration. Flight attendants must have a positive attitude when interacting with passengers face-to-face, which includes: a calming presence, keeping promises, being honest, friendly, flexible and patient.

10. The desire to constantly learn and improve.

Of course, the above instructions are just some recommendations for airlines and flight attendants to help achieve the goal of perfect passenger service on board. However, their implementation will allow the passenger to: understand his significance and the importance of his opinion; to make sure that the crew will ensure flight safety and quality service; evaluate the advantages of choosing this particular airline; to feel respect for himself, care for his interests, stability and confidence in providing maximum comfort and understand why and for what he pays the airline.

In order to ensure quality passenger service on the aircraft board, the crew must build relationships with passengers based on the following key principles: customer-oriented approach, professionalism, responsibility, partnership and team interaction. And also remember that the flight attendant is the representative of the airline, its face and business card, and, accordingly, the impression he makes on the passenger, the passenger will have an impression of the airline.

Both airlines and flight attendants must constantly work on improving the service quality on aircraft board in order to maximally satisfy the constantly growing needs and requests of passengers. In our opinion, an airline's policy for improving passenger service on the aircraft board should include the following components.

First, the "Game of anticipation", i.e. the constant anticipation of passenger needs in order to understand the customer, create a positive effect and remain a leader in the field of service, as well as constant implementation of innovations in passenger service – these are the main goals of any airline that seeks to maintain competitive positions on the airline market and create a positive image.

Secondly, the guideline for passenger experience and customer-oriented approach, which provides:

- know your passenger: forming a "passenger portrait"; examination of complaints; using passengers' wishes to try new ways of providing services; talk to your customers and listen to them sincerely; understand and satisfy the passengers needs; personalize the customer experience;
- understand passenger's needs: understanding what passengers consider good service; determine passengers' expectations and how they differ from reality; follow both positive and negative passenger's reviews and comments; constantly look for ways to improve the passenger service level on the aircraft board;

- assessment of passenger service quality: surveys and feedback forms; "mystery shoppers"; monitoring of comments in social networks and reviews on professional airline websites and the website of one's own airline;
- formation of a passenger service program (allows you to formalize the customer service level, which you aim to provide, and what practical actions you will take to achieve this and increase passenger loyalty and retain them) and a loyalty program for regular passengers (passenger retention depends on their loyalty and satisfaction with the service, because it is often more expensive to find a new client than to keep a current one), that is, to think about the long-term perspective from the standpoint that "a client is for all life".

Third, investment in the training and empowerment of flight attendants, because first-line employees play one of the most important roles in maintaining a high level of service, as they have the most contact with the passenger and are faced with the dilemma of performing both technical tasks and individual measures for passengers. And here the airline's task is to clearly understand that training is a necessity, not an opportunity; the basis of any service provision strategy; a critical component of the airline revenue chain and help all flight attendants reach their full potential. In this context, the experience of Singapore Airlines, the leader of the majority of service quality ratings for many years, which introduced the "40-30-30 rule" can be quite useful: 40% of financial resources is allocated to training; 30% for review of business processes and products/services; 30% for the development and introduction of new products/services.

Fourthly, the involvement of flight attendants in the development of airline's service policy and providing the opportunity to contribute to the passenger's service policy on aircraft board. In this context, it is worth: encouraging flight attendants to generate new ideas, suggestions and comments (some airlines, leaders of the world air transport market, even create an anonymous box for staff suggestions, if employees are uncomfortable sharing ideas openly); reward the positive behavior of the flight crew, which should be taken as a model and repeated; regularly check the work of flight crew members and determine what they are already doing to ensure quality passenger service.

Fifth, the development of values and standards of quality passenger service on the aircraft board, which are realistic, clear and achievable and include: regular evaluation of personnel using service standards; determining the needs that are most important for the maximum satisfaction of passengers on the aircraft board; staff training in accordance with service standards; teamwork; empowering the flight crew to take appropriate measures to solve passenger problems; assessment of service compliance and quality of delivery of promises (promotional materials reflect the nature of the service; informing flight attendants about advertising and promotion of services so that they understand exactly what customers expect; offering customers different levels of service at different prices and explaining the differences between them).

Conclusions

Observing the aviation industry's competitive orientations, airlines are increasingly concentrating on the passenger's needs and ensuring their quality service. Analyzing customer requests, providing services in accordance with their requirements and needs, retaining and supporting their passengers in the long term, constantly improving the service quality in order to form a positive image and ensure competitiveness are the main tasks of modern airlines. And, in this context, evaluating customer satisfaction with on-board service allows you to examine all points of interaction with passengers and the services quality level provided: actual, expected and ideal.

Accordingly, the main emphasis in the article is on consideration of passenger service on the aircraft board as a basis for forming the airline's image and competitiveness. On the basis of the composition's analysis of the world's leading airlines on-board product and the authoritative airlines global ratings for the service quality, the authors substantiated the key criteria for evaluating the passenger service quality on the aircraft board in terms of the efficiency of the cabin crew (quality of cabin service) and quality of the on-board product. Also developed the recommendations for flight attendants to improve on-board service in the context of passenger expectations and proposed some steps that airlines should implement in order to improve the passenger service quality on the aircraft board.

Abstract

Airlines understand that in order to conquer the market, they need to explore new ways of satisfying customers. Fierce global competition in the field of passenger air transportation and challenges of recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have prompted airlines to focus on improving the passenger service quality. At the same time, passengers have become more demanding in their needs and requirements for the service quality. Accordingly, passenger service quality has become critical for airlines in a competitive global market and in order to create and maintain a positive image and competitiveness, airlines must understand the concept of airline service quality and implement it effectively. Analyzing customer requests, providing services in accordance with their requirements and needs, retaining and supporting their passengers in the long term, constantly improving the service quality in order to form a positive image and ensure competitiveness are the main tasks of modern airlines. And the assessment of passenger satisfaction with service on aircraft board allows examining all points of interaction with customers and the services quality level provided: actual, expected and ideal.

The purpose of the article is to substantiate the need and determine the key criteria for quality passenger service on the aircraft board, as well as its impact on the formation of the airline's image and competitiveness.

The article defines the role of passenger service quality for airlines in the context of fierce global competition and analyzes the on-board product of the world's leading airlines. And although well-known airlines from different continents and with different indicators of activity and volumes of passenger transportation were chosen for comparison, as the results show, the airlines compete on key parameters, which are, for the most part, the same. Accordingly, the main focus is on providing high-quality service along with ensuring the safety of passengers. That is, the main thing that makes one airline significantly different from another in terms of on-board product is the passenger service quality (service on board and at the airport), as well as its "highlight" – a specific, innovative, original service on board.

The review of popular ratings for evaluation the airlines by the service quality made it possible to justify the list of key criteria for evaluating the passenger service quality on the board in terms of the quality of the on-board product and the efficiency of the cabin crew.

Recommendations were given for flight attendants to improve the service on the aircraft board in the context of passengers' expectations: excellent appearance of the flight attendant; good knowledge of one's duties, work technology and passenger service on the aircraft board; creating a good first impression; effective communication with passengers; accessibility for passengers; excellent stress management; be strict when working with an uncontrolled passenger; respond to passenger complaints; demonstration of a positive attitude; desire to constantly learn and improve. And its main principles were formed: customer orientation approach, professionalism, responsibility, partnership and team interaction.

The steps that airlines should implement in order to improve the passenger service quality on the aircraft board are also defined: constant anticipation of passenger needs, customer experience and customer orientation approach, investment in training and expanding the powers of flight attendants, involvement of flight attendants in the development of service in the airline, development of values and standards of passenger's quality service on the aircraft board.

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Посилання на статтю:

Dokiienko L.M. Passenger Service on the Aircraft Board as a Component of the Airline's Image and Competitiveness / L.M. Dokiienko, V.Ye. Osmak, O.M. Triukhan // Економіка: реалії часу. Науковий журнал. – 2023. – № 2 (66). – С. 26-35. – Режим доступу до журн.: <https://economics.net.ua/files/archive/2023/No2/26.pdf>. DOI: 10.15276/ETR.02.2023.4. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8154926.

Reference a Journal Article:

Dokiienko L.M. Passenger Service on the Aircraft Board as a Component of the Airline's Image and Competitiveness / L.M. Dokiienko, V.Ye. Osmak, O.M. Triukhan // Economics: time realities. Scientific journal. – 2023. – № 2 (66). – P. 26-35. – Retrieved from <https://economics.net.ua/files/archive/2023/No2/26.pdf>. DOI: 10.15276/ETR.02.2023.4. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8154926.

