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A COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND
QUALITY PERCEPTIONS OF NORTHERN CYPRUS' LOW COST CARRIERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the services offered to passengers by airlines flying to the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) in terms of passengers. The absence of an airline based in the TRNC has caused two airlines to dominate the market, flying with the Turkey-based Low Cost Carrier model. An evaluation was made on the basis of the services provided by only these two airlines in the sector, and a survey was conducted on 400 passengers who had flight experience with these airlines. In the survey 44 questions were generated; 22 of these questions were designed to measure service expectation and the other 22 were designed to measure service perception. The service expectations and perceptions of the passengers were analyzed with the Servqual Scale method. According to the result, service perception of customers remained below customer expectations. Airlines need to review their service quality and take measures to improve service quality in order to make customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Low cost carrier, airlines, expectation, perception, Servqual Scale**Jel Kodları:** R40, R41, M16, M31KUZEY KIBRIS'IN DÜŞÜK MALİYETLİ TAŞIYICILARI İÇİN MÜŞTERİ BEKLENTİLERİ
VE KALİTE ALGILARI ÜZERİNE KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti (KKTC)'ye uçan havayollarının yolculara sunduğu hizmetleri yolcular açısından değerlendirmeyi amaçlamıştır. KKTC merkezli bir havayolunun olmaması, Türkiye merkezli Low Cost Carrier modeliyle uçan iki havayolunun pazara hakim olmasına neden olmuştur. Sektörde sadece bu iki havayolunun verdiği hizmetler baz alınarak bir değerlendirme yapılmış ve bu havayollarıyla uçuş tecrübesi olan 400 yolcuya anket uygulanmıştır. Ankette toplam 44 soru oluşturulmuş olup bu soruların 22'si hizmet beklentisini, diğer 22'si ise hizmet algısını ölçmek için tasarlanmıştır. Yolcuların hizmet beklentileri ve algıları Servqual Ölçeği yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuca göre müşterilerin hizmet algısı müşteri beklentilerinin altında kalmıştır. Havayollarının müşteri memnuniyetini sağlayabilmesi için hizmet kalitesini gözden geçirmesi ve hizmet kalitesini artıracak önlemler alması gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Düşük maliyetli, hava yolları, beklenti, algı, Servqual Ölçeği**Jel Codes:** R40, R41, M16, M31**Geliş Tarihi/Received:** 01.01.2020**Kabul Tarihi/Accepted:** 01.01.2020**Yayın Tarihi/Printed Date:** 30.06.2022**Kaynak Gösterme:** Umarbeyli, Ş., Gelirli N., (2022). "A Comparative Research On Customer Expectations And Quality Perceptions Of Northern Cyprus' Low Cost Carriers". *Nişantaşı Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2(10) 301-315.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, one can talk about the increasing of the race between airlines. Airlines perform diverse policies in order to adapt themselves into this fierce race. Most of them adjust renowned business approaches. Within the context of the airline market, Low-Cost Carriers (LCC), particularly, stand evolving as a robust contestant to traditional Full Service Network Carriers (FSNC) in terms of the race.

As Whyte, R. & Lohman, G. (2015) stated in their study, LCC' have been more active in short-distance, regional markets. In their study, they also give examples of achieving a market penetration of at least 25% in intra-Europe, South America and Asia-Pacific and local markets. Short range refers to approximately 1-2 flight hours, although some LCCs perform up to nine flight hours, which is called medium range (Umarbeyli., Gündüz. et al., 2020).

This Research is aimed at analysing and evaluating the service quality expectation of the LLC' customers being operational within the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (thereafter it will be referred to as TRNC) and the quality awareness of the customer concerning the service acknowledged by the Servqual method. The service quality expected by passengers and their perceptions differs which has been a research subject by many airlines for years. Today, this issue still maintains its importance. This research, which uses a survey conducted with 400 low-cost airline passengers, will provide data for the development of aviation policies of the country, as it will reveal the customer expectancy and insight of the service received.

Within the framework of TRNC economy, education and tourism sectors are prioritized in terms of the service business. Especially in the TRNC economy, 50% of the GDP consists of only these two sectors. These sectors have a direct relationship with the airlines. Especially for students, since the airline price phenomenon is important, they tend to the airlines that provide this type of service in terms of the advantageous prices of low-cost airlines.

Customer expectations have become even more important during the pandemic and quarantine period. It has gained importance to be able to respond quickly to changing health procedures and to provide comfortable and safe service to the passengers as much as possible.

As in the world, the aviation industry is developing rapidly in the TRNC. Although there is no registered airline in the country, the airlines serving the country need to constantly improve their aircraft fleets and technologies, apprise the probable risks arising from environmental factors try to keep up with a dynamic environment. They need also monitoring the market constantly and according to changing conditions dividing the customer profile and implement their strategy.

Differentiation is an inevitable reality and is also necessary to meet customer expectations. Market research for customers and following all kinds of innovations and technologies are essential in order to provide better service quality in different aviation cultures and varying conditions in the industry. Providing customer loyalty, which is the collective outcome of all researches, is more advantageous and profitable than acquiring a new customer. Therefore, in this sector where cultural diversity is intense, studies aimed at customer needs are important.

This study is also included information about the low-cost airlines sector in the TRNC, as well as its supports to the economy, development, financial situation and employment.

The airline industry is one of the most prominent factor of the service industry. With technology and digitalization, many innovations are entering the sector and it is important to be able to follow it at the same time. In addition, airlines need to implement all these developments in order to increase their market share; otherwise, the leader airlines will either demolish the smaller ones or the small airlines may have to merge with other airlines in the coming years to increase their market share.

Airlines determine their market target preferences according to their infrastructures and strategic structures in the markets. An airline's performance in commercial marketing is measured by their profitability. Technologies should be able to bring together the demands and requirements of customers in competition in the aviation industry in terms of fast transactions and timing with its technological infrastructure and investments, that constitutes a noteworthy place which have an important role in achieving the service quality in terms of level customers satisfaction and obtaining great effect and shares.

Owing to the race between airlines in the TRNC, service quality has turned out to stand a considerable one. This business area, which proposes relaxed and also inexpensive services and charges to deliver viable benefit contingent upon quality, is going to endure its efforts in order for making available healthier customer pleasure with the expansion of technology, communicating channels, telephone applications as well as web pages.

The aviation business, which varied in such a way, has begun to convert into a fresh mode. Moreover, they have been working for the continuity of mobile ads and also additional customer-centred marketing activities by dynamically benefiting from social media.

The services presented is able to similarly be varied consistent with the demographic variety of the customers. Airlines, which introduced to advance numerous goods, apparatuses and services, have correspondingly instigated the marketing designs and tactics in the aviation sector to diverge in the quickly evolving know-how within the digital world. Within the context of this swiftly shifting and stimulating world, the marketing means and models of airlines have likewise expanded fresh impetus and progressed intensively. Mobile applications and also original marketing possibilities have augmented. Thanks to the emergence of fresh ways, arrangements stand completed as stated by the demographic and characteristics feature of the clients and client prospects stand advance, and it stays confirmed that the client stays stretched more efficiently. LCCs are trying to reach more customers by promoting advantageous products and prices that are flourished through advertisements, customer call centres and social media frequently.

Parasuraman et al. first used Servqual Service Quality model, which were established to measure and analyze service quality, in their study in 1985 to obtain more reliable results. Considering the changing conditions since then, other questions have been added to the Servqual Service Quality model questions to make the information to be obtained more reliable.

The results of this study will be useful for future research, as there has been no previous study on passenger satisfaction in the aviation sector in the TRNC. Moreover, for academics and researchers, it is crucial to understand and comprehend the dynamics of the connection amid customer satisfaction, quality of service, behaviour intentions of clients (Hasan, M., Khan, M. N., & Farooqi, R., 2019).

1. Literature Review

The literature review dealt with the determining factors of service eminence in the aviation business, professed quality of service and purchaser hopes, and the linkage amid the perception of quality-of-service quality as well as client pleasure.

Within this milieu;

Gures, N., Arslan, S., & Tun, S. Y. (2014). In their article titled "Customer expectation, satisfaction and loyalty relationship in Turkish airline industry", they stated that several researches concerning client prospects, pleasure and trustworthiness relationship within Turkey is relatively in a lesser degree despite the developing airline industry and drew attention to the necessity of studies in this field.

Adeola, M.M., and Adebisi, S.O., (2014), In their study titled "Service quality, professed worth and client pleasure as a determining factor of airline choice in Nigeria" they have emphasized importance in terms of continuous research concerning the evaluation of the determinant of airline selection, since the success of the airlines will be the ability to identify and bring together the wishes and needs of the customers and to provide quality service that will meet customer satisfaction.

Parasuraman et al., (1988), defined "customer expectations" as the requests or wishes of clients, that is to say, what they deliberate a service supplier ought to deliver more willingly than what it offers. They stated that service providers have to meet expectations and recognize customer requirements so as to attain client happiness within the framework of service they provide.

David Mc A, B. (2013), in his study comparing the quality of service and client pleasure within the airline business with traditional airlines and low-cost airlines, revealed the values that consumers seek when choosing airline services from a passenger perspective and other influencing factors. He defined passenger dissatisfaction as a purpose of distinction amid anticipated and professed service, and stated that when the supposed service surpasses the anticipated service, the customer pleasure becomes advanced. He underlined that since quality-of-service pleasure happens when users' hopes stand encountered or surpassed, making additional genuine consumer hopes on the aptitudes made by airlines can upsurge the perceived service quality stage, so airlines should offer the services they can offer.

Mahmud, A., & Kamaruzaman Jusoff, SH (2013), with their article titled "The effect of service quality and price on satisfaction and loyalty of customer of commercial flight service industry", have shown that is not compatible with customers' perceptions of the quality of services presented by the aviation services industry within the context of customer satisfaction.

Tanomsin, P., & Chen, C. (2018) examined the relationship between passenger satisfaction and loyalty in low-cost airlines in Thailand. They proved that there is a important and affirmative affiliation with quality of service, client pleasure and trustworthiness in terms of Low Cost Airlines. They noted that low-cost airlines should emphasize each quality of service, such as empathy, responsiveness along with reasonable pricing. They pointed out that this enables Low-cost airlines to contend with alternative low-cost carrier, and that an appropriate considerate of client satisfaction and loyalty is of exceptionally high monetary value to the Thai aviation industry in a competitive environment.

Curry, N., & Gao, Y. (2012) in their study from a managerial point of view that more effort should be made to improve service quality levels of low-cost airlines and that front-line personnel should be more responsive to customers' needs. They mentioned about the need for training. While management studies suggest that low-cost airlines permanently change customer behaviour by enabling them to impose lower levels of service at lower prices, they also find customer satisfaction very important for marketing planning, as it influences customers' repurchase intentions. They also recommended that airlines regularly measure customer expectations and satisfaction, as customer expectations change over time.

2. Customer Relationships and Customer Satisfaction In the Aviation Industry

The Gap Models existed explain the service quality gaps and the difference between the understanding of improving quality and the services they provide" the differences amid the services that clients assume and take from the service, taking into account their customers. It is explained by the "Gap Model" contingent on the services' quality professed by the clients."

Parasuraman et al. described four gaps shortly defined those key motives as the breach sandwiched between anticipated service and professed service, and found the fifth break which

stands the foundation of the Servqual Model. Quality is when this break stands constructive, that stands, when perceived service equals or exceeds service expectation. When the professed service stays lower than hopes, this state of affairs causes to a decrease in quality.

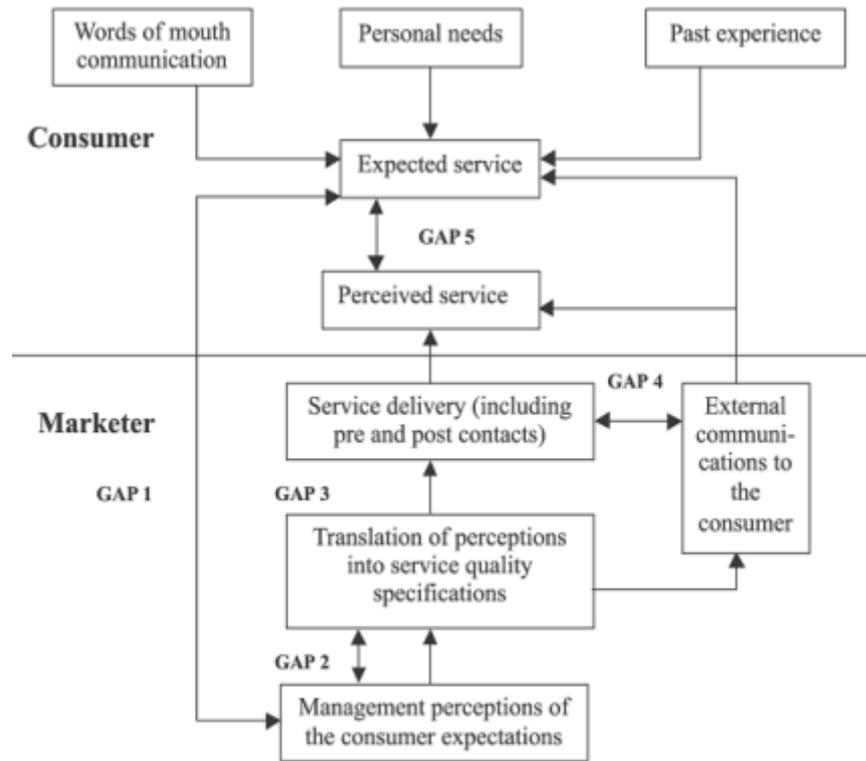


Figure 1. Service Quality Model (Source: Parasuraman et al.,1985).

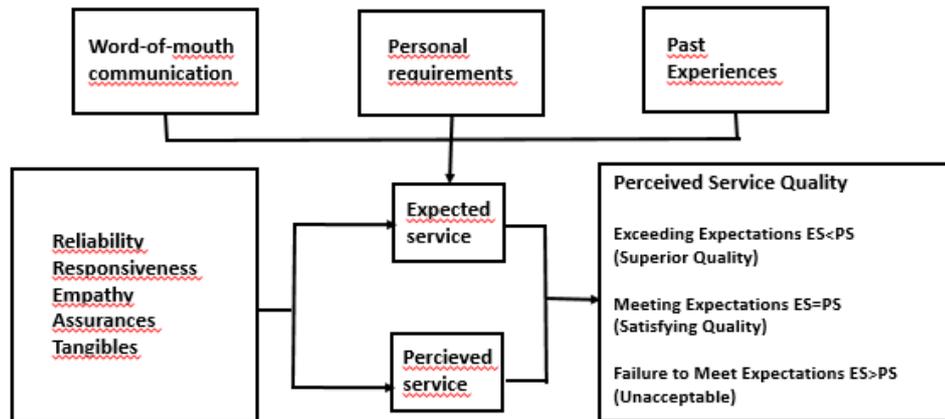


Figure 2. Analysis Model (Source: Eleren, Bektaş and Görmüş, 2007).

The factors affecting the expectations of customers from service quality, the impacts of quality of service dimensions concerning expected as well as perceived service, and also such results that can be obtained by measuring the perceived service quality are presented in Figure 2.

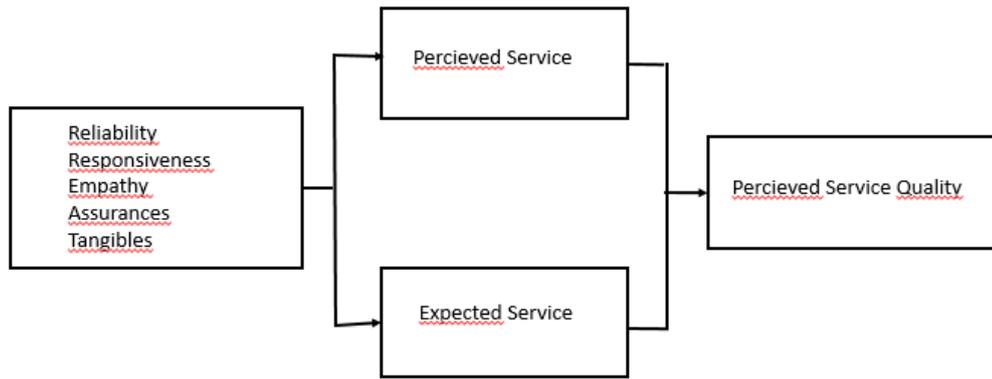


Figure 3. Measurement of the Servqual Model (Source: Brady, M. K., & Cronin Jr, J. J. 2001).

Due to their structure, airlines are the most significant interceders of the service industry. The notion of customer satisfaction is generally handled within the customer-oriented framework approach in the aviation industry, that is, within the customer relationship framework. In this content, customer satisfaction is considered as the only element and focused on providing the best service.

Service quality has 5 basic facets. These facets have excessive reputation when considered from the dissimilarity amid the hopes of customers and the services received by them. In brief, the personnel employed within the airlines may perhaps upsurge quality of service with attaching sui generis significance towards these dimensions.

Once the measurements stand employed prudently at the accurate time and in the accurate location, airlines will confidently achieve the finest service and preserve their satisfaction at the uppermost stage through marketing their products correctly and providing good service to their customers.

The five SERVQUAL aspects are:

1-Tangible Assets: View of personnel, physical equipment, communication supplies and facilities.

2-Consistency: Capability to achieve the assured service reliably and also truthfully.

3-Receptiveness: Inclination to assist clients as well as deliver rapid service.

4-Pledge: The information and politeness of staff and their communication capability ensure confidence and assurance.

5-Responsiveness: Precaution, the individual care that firm offers to its clients.

3. Methodology

According to which customer portfolio the airlines should serve; segmentation and demographic studies should be carried out, and airlines should determine which target policies they will follow within the context of market, where they are going to position themselves as well as wherein strategy they matter.

In order to obtain this informative data, measurable study stood directed vis-a-vis client pleasure, additionally there stand 22 questions with regard to client hopes and 22 questions over client observations within the SERVQUAL Scale questionnaire and survey including full 44

questions remained collected and examined for the fallouts uploaded to the SPSS program. SPSS remained benefited as the scrutiny database.

3.1 The Main Group and The Sample of the Research

The main group of the research is 400 people as a sample group to answer the questions chosen by completely random methods to all people that have who have voyaged with the low-cost airlines operating in TRNC.

Interviews were held with senior managers, and the ratios of services and needs in the sector were tried to be determined by using aviation data. It has been tried to be reliable, safe, open, clear and inexpensive in positioning

3.2. Measurement Methods and Analysis Used in the Research

The basic assumption of our research is to measure and make sense with the SERVQUAL scale, service quality dimension that will emerge with the expectation of positive or negative service quality by determining the variance amid the prospects of the clients about the service quality in general as well as service quality they perceive. There remain 3 variables in this study. Those have been the "SERVICE QUALITY" as a dependent variable, and "EXPECTED SERVICE" and "PERCEIVED SERVICE" as the additional two independent variables (Fig. 4). 22 queries remained benefited from measuring the quality of the services presented by low-cost airlines.

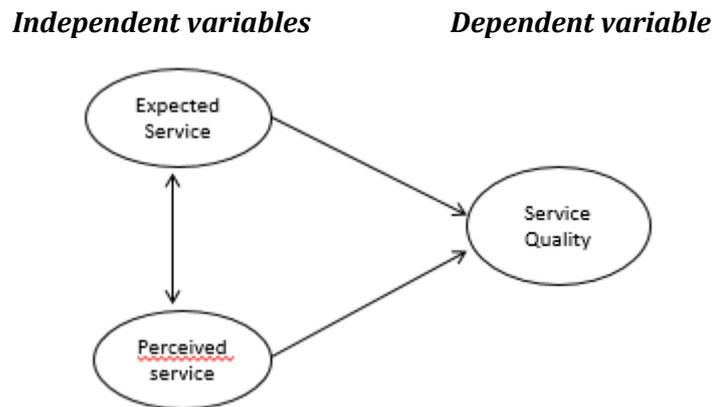


Figure 4. Conceptual Framework (Source: Compiled by the authors, 2022).

These questions were evaluated and scored with" a 5-point Likert scale. It was conducted as two separate surveys as "Perceived Service" and "Expected Service". Afterwards, the factors were analysed and their dimensions were calculated, their consistency and significance were measured and tested in various statistical analyses. The questionnaires were distributed by targeting people who had experience of flying with low-cost airlines. In addition, the Google Form survey method was also sent to people via e-mail.

The survey study was carried out to reach the result of measuring the perceived service quality depending on customer expectations and perceptions, taking into account the dimensions of the aviation service sector. Accordingly, the evaluation of aviation services examines the results of aviation and, accordingly, how these services reflect on customers and how they affect

perceptions, and reaches the expected service perception. Depending on the correlation and regression analysis, the relationship and effects were also examined using SPSS.

On account of these studies, it stands essential to acquire data concerning over what clients assume from airline workers and to increase consciousness in this course, for instance, to stand responsive, to identify with, to prioritize the client, etc. Researches stand perform to display that they had better concentrate on those subjects. Considering subjects for example spirits and opinions, client hopes stands one of the matters that has to be advanced in airline employees and remains a topic that has to be scrutinised (Ergun, 2010).

The propositions of the study remained shaped as:

H0 = There Remains Not any Important Variance Amid Low-Cost Airlines Customers' Service Quality Expectancy and Awareness Levels.

H1 = There Stands A Noteworthy Variance Amid Low-Cost Airlines Customers' Levels of Expectations and Perceptions Regarding Service Quality.

The data analysis within the milieu of the questionnaires was made with the SPSS program, and in descriptive analysis, techniques such as reliability analysis, frequency analysis and ANOVA were used.

3.3. Reliability Analysis

Consistency study stands examining the reliability between the substances within the measure and presents data with regard to the relationships between the objects. If there is no measurement error in the analysed data groups, the reliability coefficient is equal to "1", and if the variability in the scores is all due to the measurement error, the reliability coefficient emerges as equal to "0". Therefore, the reliability coefficient is always between 0 and 1. The most widely used internal reliability index for groups in questions is the Cronbach Alpha Test. Contingent upon the primary coefficient, the steadfastness of the measure was construed as the following:

"When $0.00 \leq \alpha < 0.40$, that measure stands defective,"

"When $0.40 \leq \alpha < 0.60$, that consistency of the measure stands little,"

"When $0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.80$, that measure remains moderately dependable,"

"When $0.80 \leq \alpha < 1.00$, that measure stays extremely steadfast."

Table 1. Reliability Analysis of Perceived Service Quality and Expectations

Number of Samples	C. Alpha Coefficient (Expectations)	C.Alpha Coefficient (Perceptions)
400	0,951	0,713

From the reliability analysis applied to the answers given to the SERVQUAL scale survey questions in our research, it has been revealed that the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (0.713) is quite reliable in the questions asked about the service quality perceived by the customers. In the survey questions asked about the expectations of the customers, it was revealed in the test that the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (0.951) was a highly reliable scale.

3.4. Determining Service Quality with SERVQUAL Scale

The servqual scale was applied to regulate the qualification of service within the low-cost airlines and the data obtained are presented in Table 2. In preceding SERVQUAL-grounded experimental researches with regard to the qualification of airline service, respondents' mean scores were constructed upon Likert scales (Aydin, K., & Yildirim, S. 2012).

Table 2. Expectation, Perception and SERVQUAL Scores

	N	PERCEPTION				EXPECTATION				SERVQUAL		
		Min	Max	Average	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	Average	Std. Deviation	Difference	Average	ServqualScore
Tangible Assets	1	93	2	5	4,302	0,791	1	5	4,570	0,839	-0,268	-1,0362
	2	93	2	5	4,367	0,743	2	5	4,435	0,844	-0,068	
	3	93	1	5	4,325	0,849	2	5	4,586	0,741	-0,261	
	4	93	2	5	4,312	0,807	1	5	4,521	0,802	-0,209	
Reliability	5	93	1	5	4,353	0,88	1	5	4,452	0,854	-0,099	-0,2015
	6	93	2	5	4,303	0,763	2	5	4,529	0,685	-0,226	
	7	93	1	5	4,302	0,918	1	5	4,338	0,97	-0,036	
	8	93	1	5	4,383	0,794	1	5	4,499	0,867	-0,116	
	9	93	2	5	4,482	0,716	1	5	4,538	0,815	-0,056	
Responsiveness	10	93	1	5	4,226	0,945	1	5	4,463	0,866	-0,237	-0,1066
	11	93	1	5	4,153	1,031	1	5	4,445	0,914	-0,292	
	12	93	1	5	4,171	0,939	2	5	4,591	0,74	-0,420	
	13	93	1	5	4,301	0,869	1	5	4,377	0,922	-0,076	
Assurance	14	93	1	5	4,406	0,81	1	5	4,463	0,973	-0,057	-0,2563
	15	93	1	5	4,408	0,837	1	5	4,423	1,086	-0,015	
	16	93	1	5	4,395	0,91	1	5	4,663	0,696	-0,268	
	17	93	1	5	4,441	0,786	2	5	4,673	0,574	-0,232	
Empathy	18	93	1	5	4,302	0,906	1	5	4,612	0,737	-0,310	-0,1430
	19	93	1	5	4,247	1,017	1	5	4,508	0,904	-0,261	
	20	93	1	5	3,774	1,43	1	5	4,238	1,219	-0,464	
	21	93	1	5	4,223	0,934	1	5	4,495	0,802	-0,272	
	22	93	1	5	4,227	0,968	1	5	4,564	0,84	-0,337	

Tangible Assets: Although the findings are examined in five dimensions, there are 4 questions for the tangible assets in the first dimension. In this dimension, the average of the answers given to the questions "the airlines are visually attractive" was -0.2015, and the physical aspect remained below the expectations, and customer satisfaction could not be achieved. All the propositions about tangible assets were realized as negative. "Airlines should have modern equipment," with the least satisfactory score of -0.268. has been.

Reliability: The reliability dimension consists of 5 questions. Considering the answers given to the questions, it was seen that the level of perceptions in customer expectations was again above the qualification of service. Accordingly, client pleasure could not be achieved in this dimension. The lowest score in the section was determined as "When the passengers have a problem, they should be willing and reassuring to solve these problems", which was found to be -0.226. The average of the servqual in this dimension is -0.1066, and the reliability dimension cannot be met according to perceptions, as expectations are not met.

Responsiveness: When the servqual scores consisting of 4 questions were examined, it was found that all of them were negative. The most unmet proposition of expectations was -0.420, "Airline employees do not always have to be willing to help passengers." has been a proposition. With an average of -0.2563 enthusiasm dimension, it could not meet the expectations in this dimension in the same way.

Assurance: Scores in the whole questionnaire in this group were also negative in relation to the analyses in other groups. The lowest score among the 4 question propositions in the dimension is -0.268, with "Airline employees should always be kind to their passengers." emerged as the servqual score of the assurance dimension was -0.1430, and the expectations were still not met.

Empathy: If it is looked at the analysis of the answers given to the 5 questions in the empathy group, the servqual scores of all propositions were again negative, as in all dimensions. With an average servqual score of -0.3288, it emerged as the group that did not meet the expectations most when all dimensions were examined. Thus, it has been observed that there is a problem with empathy. The lowest resulting score was -0.464, "Airline employees should not be expected to know what passengers' needs are." has been a proposition.

Customer Based on the Servqual scale, it has been concluded that the expectations of low-cost airlines and customers in all dimensions in the measurement of service quality have not been met, and Hypothesis 0 has been rejected depending on the available data.

CONCLUSION

According to the result, service perception of customers remained below customer expectations. Airlines need to review their service quality and take measures to improve service quality in order to make client happiness.

Competition is increasing and in-service marketing and it is important to think customer-oriented and provide quality service in accordance with customer behaviour and needs in a competitive environment.

Customers request their needs meet in a balance between suitable products and pricing, when this is provided, service and marketing will develop itself.

Accurate pricing is a crucial subject in marketing. In order to get a share from the competitive market, the pricing must be at an accurate and acceptable level.

While providing their services, the carriers should act quickly according to their performance and have an attitude that implements the decisions they take. Nowadays, it is important for the customer to achieve quick results. Therefore, being quick in feedback to the customer will remain advantageous for the carriers.

While responding the requests of their clients, LCCs should do their best to establish a long-term relationship with them. At the same time, they should seek innovative ideas to improve this relationship over time.

The physical factors (such as buildings, equipment, materials, and vehicles) that passengers encounter while receiving service are important.

For passengers, the principle of transparency, timely service and reliability are important. Carriers need to be very sensitive in this regard.

Employees should give confidence to their customers with their "knowledge and courtesy, and they should make customers happy by performing their services in the best possible way, completely and on time."

It is important for employees to empathize. Employees who can empathize are willing to find solutions and pay special attention to the customer. It helps to satisfy the customer and ensure their loyalty.

The attitude, behaviour, clothing and speaking style of the personnel also affect the customer's perception of the service provided.

Behaviours such as the staff not listening to the passenger and not paying attention to the passenger deteriorate the service quality.

Customers always expect special behaviour. The difficulty of meeting the expectations of an airline personnel due to the large quantity of clients also marks the qualification of service.

Profit margin is the critical issue for airlines. Airlines require high cost, high investments. This situation creates an obstacle to accomplish anticipated qualification of service.

Top management ought to analyse this carefully as well as consider the effects of such products and services on customers at the planning stage.

In the marketing approach shaped according to the principle of customer oriented, the customer decides the qualification regarding the goods or services. Therefore, the client remains the determining factor of the qualification of the service.

With this regard, airlines should create a strong, positive perception of quality at the cognitive level. Airlines are considered a service industry.

In recent years, airlines have determined strategies in order to keep their existing customers and add new customers, especially with the loyalty programs in the highly competitive sector. Being innovative and customer-oriented now seems like an inevitable necessity.

Unquestionably, in terms of strategies, the priorities must be set forth. When it comes to market segmentation, customer demands and expectations should be determined correctly.

Since only two airways were analysed, the study has some limitations. However, a unique result emerges as Northern Cyprus offers the first gap model for the aviation industry.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT*GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET***A COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND QUALITY PERCEPTIONS OF NORTHERN CYPRUS' LOW COST CARRIERS**

This study aimed to evaluate the services offered by the airlines flying to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in terms of passengers. Because the TRNC is an unrecognized country under international embargo. Since it is a country recognized only by the Republic of Turkey, the airlines flying here are also airlines based in the Republic of Turkey. The absence of an airline based in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) has led to the dominance of the market by two Turkish-based airlines flying the Low Cost Carrier model. An evaluation was made based on the services provided by only these two airlines in the sector. Because only these airlines provide regular service. A questionnaire was applied to 400 passengers who had flight experience using these airlines. A total of 44 questions were formed in the survey, 22 of which were designed to measure service expectation and the other 22 to measure service perception. The service expectations and perceptions of the passengers were analyzed with the Servqual Scale method. In general, the Servqual scale tries to measure the difference between the customer's expectations of the service and the level of perception. The questions are also evaluated in five dimensions: Physical Characteristics, Reliability, Responsiveness, Confidence and Empathy. According to the result obtained in this study, the service perception of the customers remained below the customer expectations. In order for the airlines to ensure customer satisfaction, it is necessary to review the service quality and take measures to increase the service quality.

Conclusion and recommendation;

- ✓ Customers request their needs meet in a balance between suitable products and pricing, when this is provided, service and marketing will develop itself.
- ✓ Accurate pricing is a crucial subject in marketing. In order to get a share from the competitive market, the pricing must be at an accurate and acceptable level.
- ✓ While providing their services, the carriers should act quickly according to their performance and have an attitude that implements the decisions they take. Nowadays, it is important for the customer to achieve quick results. Therefore, being quick in feedback to the customer will remain advantageous for the carriers.
- ✓ While responding the requests of their clients, LCCs should do their best to establish a long-term relationship with them. At the same time, they should seek innovative ideas to improve this relationship over time.
- ✓ The physical factors (such as buildings, equipment, materials, and vehicles) that passengers encounter while receiving service are important.
- ✓ For passengers, the principle of transparency, timely service and reliability are important. Carriers need to be very sensitive in this regard.
- ✓ Employees should give confidence to their customers with their "knowledge and courtesy, and they should make customers happy by performing their services in the best possible way, completely and on time."
- ✓ It is important for employees to empathize. Employees who can empathize are willing to find solutions and pay special attention to the customer. It helps to satisfy the customer and ensure their loyalty.
- ✓ The attitude, behaviour, clothing and speaking style of the personnel also affect the customer's perception of the service provided.
- ✓ Behaviours such as the staff not listening to the passenger and not paying attention to the passenger deteriorate the service quality.
- ✓ Customers always expect special behaviour. The difficulty of meeting the expectations of an

airline personnel due to the large quantity of clients also marks the qualification of service.

- ✓ Profit margin is the critical issue for airlines. Airlines require high cost, high investments. This situation creates an obstacle to accomplish anticipated qualification of service.
- ✓ Top management ought to analyse this carefully as well as consider the effects of such products and services on customers at the planning stage.
- ✓ In the marketing approach shaped according to the principle of customer oriented, the customer decides the qualification regarding the goods or services. Therefore, the client remains the determining factor of the qualification of the service.
- ✓ With this regard, airlines should create a strong, positive perception of quality at the cognitive level. Airlines are considered a service industry.
- ✓ In recent years, airlines have determined strategies in order to keep their existing customers and add new customers, especially with the loyalty programs in the highly competitive sector. Being innovative and customer-oriented now seems like an inevitable necessity.
- ✓ Unquestionably, in terms of strategies, the priorities must be set forth. When it comes to market segmentation, customer demands and expectations should be determined correctly.

Since only two airways were analysed, the study has some limitations. However, a unique result emerges as Northern Cyprus offers the first gap model for the aviation industry.

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