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Unraveling the customer loyalty: Performance drivers of loyalty in low-cost airline business

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Article Info

Abstract

This study investigates the critical role of performance in low-cost airline businesses, focusing on its impact on perceived value and customer loyalty. Specifically, it aims to analyze factors influencing low-cost airline performance on loyalty and examine perceived value as a mediator in this relationship. Data were collected from 377 customers of low-cost airlines using a structured questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis and Process Model 4 were employed to analyze the data. The findings reveal that airline performance significantly influences customer loyalty, confirming the direct impact of core operations and service quality. Moreover, perceived value mediated this relationship, indicating that customers' perceptions of value play a crucial role in translating performance into loyalty. Hedonic value fully mediated the relationship between safety performance and customer loyalty, while utilitarian value partially mediated the effects of core and service performances on loyalty. The findings offer valuable insights that can inform the development of effective business strategies for low-cost airlines, enhancing their competitiveness and customer retention.

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Introduction

Low-cost airlines provide air travel services for short to medium-distance flights. These airlines aim to increase their market share by attracting more passengers and increasing their profits. Both objectives are achieved by creating customer value through convenience and performance (El Haddad, 2019; Shen & Yahya, 2021). Retaining a loyal customer base has been a critical long-term profit strategy for low-cost airlines (Pandey, 2020). However, the airline industry involves complex factors related to product consumption and service delivery during flights, leading to a declining customer retention rate in the low-cost airline business (Han & Hwang, 2017; Oliveira & Oliveira, 2018). Furthermore, customer retention rates in the low-cost airline sector are lower compared to other service industries (Han, 2013). Therefore, maintaining or increasing profitability requires airlines to find ways to increase retention in an increasingly competitive market.

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In the post-COVID-19 pandemic, the aviation industry, particularly low-cost airlines, has faced unprecedented challenges and transformations. Global air travel demand significantly decreased due to travel restrictions and reduced consumer confidence. However, as travel resumes, low-cost carriers are expected to play a crucial role in the industry's recovery by offering performance and value to customers.

The growth of low-cost airlines has led to significant expansion in the aviation industry. Understanding the factors contributing to competitive advantage and the ability to adapt to changing market situations is crucial (Lee et al., 2022; Truong et al., 2020). Literature associated with low-cost airlines frequently emphasizes the significance of product and service performance (Han et al., 2019), particularly regarding passenger service and safety (El Haddad, 2019). Competition and employee well-being are critical managerial concerns (Zhang et al., 2021). Strong performance enables airlines to operate efficiently and reap returns from appropriate investments (Albers et al., 2020). However, limited research has explored the relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty. Given that customer loyalty is a critical factor in developing a low-cost airline's business, there is a need for more research to generate a body of knowledge relevant to the aviation industry (Han et al., 2019). Despite industry efforts, a notable research gap exists in understanding how airline performance in the post-pandemic context influences customer loyalty, primarily through the lens of perceived value. This research addresses this gap by exploring the interplay between airline performance, perceived value, and customer loyalty in the current market dynamics. The study contributes to developing strategies that low-cost airlines can employ to enhance customer retention and gain a competitive edge.

Previous studies have extensively explored the roles of perceived value and loyalty as critical drivers of post-purchase decision-making and positive consumer behavior (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016; Soonsan & Somkai, 2021; Shiwakoti et al., 2021). The link between perceived value and loyalty is powerful in post-purchase contexts, where consumers' assessments of their purchase experiences significantly influence subsequent actions, including repeat purchases and brand advocacy (Shiwakoti et al., 2021). Perceived value is critical to customer loyalty, especially in the low-cost airline industry. Unlike premium carriers, which often rely on service excellence, low-cost airlines depend on perceived value to foster customer loyalty (Cakici et al.,

2019). Research indicates that customers who perceive high value are likelier to exhibit loyalty behaviors, such as recommending the airline and choosing it for future travel (Gallarza et al., 2019; Han et al., 2019). Given the pivotal role of perceived value in cultivating customer loyalty, understanding the underlying mechanisms that generate this value is crucial for enhancing competitiveness in the airline industry. Therefore, studying and examining the mechanisms that generate value and contribute to customer loyalty is essential.

The rapid expansion of the low-cost airline industry has dramatically transformed the global aviation landscape, making air travel accessible to a broader demographic. Despite significant growth, a notable gap exists in research addressing this sector's unique challenges and dynamics. Existing literature underscores the critical need to explore fundamental aspects such as airline performance, perceived customer value, and loyalty—key determinants of low-cost carrier success that have been insufficiently studied (Chanarpas, 2022; Pappachan, 2023). Bridging this gap is essential to comprehensively understand how these factors interact and influence consumer behavior within the low-cost airline context. However, given the industry's fiercely competitive nature, identifying customer loyalty drivers is crucial for sustained business success. While previous research has highlighted airline performance and perceived value as significant contributors to customer loyalty (Kartanegara & Keni, 2022; Ragb et al., 2024), the complex interplay among these variables remains under-explored, particularly within the low-cost airline sector. This study aims to dissect the interrelationships between airline performance, perceived value, and customer loyalty, providing a deeper understanding of their collective impact on the operational success of low-cost carriers.

Two primary objectives guide this research: first, to assess the influence of airline performance on customer loyalty within the low-cost airline sector, and second, to evaluate perceived value as a potential mediator in the relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty. By achieving these objectives, this study fills a critical research gap and emphasizes the importance of understanding these dynamics in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. The anticipated findings are expected to contribute to academic knowledge and provide actionable insights for industry practitioners, enabling the formulation of strategies to enhance operational efficiency and customer satisfaction, thereby fostering customer loyalty.

Literature Review

Airline Performance

Performance plays a crucial role in all businesses aiming to achieve their highest objectives by delivering efficient products or services to customers (Bitner et al., 1994; Han & Hwang, 2017). The appropriate products or services are pivotal factors that allow customers to have direct and indirect experiences and raise their expectations about the airline's products or services (Han & Hyun, 2017). Airline performance refers to the perceived results that customers gain from their experience with the features of the airline's products or services. (Bitner et al., 1990). Performance identifies fundamental factors that help airline companies penetrate the market and create value beyond competitors and service encounters (Han & Hwang, 2017). Service attributes are interpersonal and service quality factors that result from interactions between customers and employees; they include service delivery, skills, competence, kindness, etc. (Rashid et al., 2021). In addition, safety standards are integral to an airline's performance in attracting passengers. Further, Shiwakoti et al. (2020) suggested that understanding passenger behavior is crucial for safer flight management services, making safety a significant dimension for evaluating airline performance.

In the literature, recent evidence underscores the multifaceted nature of airline performance, encompassing core product offerings, service attributes, and safety standards. For example, Lee & Nicolau, 2020 and Ragb et al., 2024 studies show that customisable in-flight services and modernized cabin environments enhance passenger comfort and loyalty. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of technological advancements and environmental sustainability in airline performance. For example, Gössling & Humpe (2020) highlighted that airlines adopting sustainable practices improve their environmental impact and enhance customer brand perception. Additionally, Ravishankar and Christopher (2020) found that implementing digital technologies, such as mobile apps and online check-in systems, significantly improves customer satisfaction and loyalty. These findings underscore the evolving factors contributing to airline performance in the modern context. Similarly, Limberger et al. (2021) and Evler et al. (2021) found that continuous innovation in core products and consistent service quality is essential for airlines to maintain competitiveness and retain customers, even in a cost-sensitive market. Despite existing studies on airline performance,

there is a lack of comprehensive research integrating core competency, service performance, and safety performance to examine their combined effect on customer loyalty, particularly in the low-cost airline sector. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a holistic analysis of these performance factors.

Customer Loyalty

Establishing long-term relationships between airlines and customers requires customer loyalty (Singh, 2021). According to Oliver (1999, p.34), loyalty is a belief that customers will repurchase a product or use a service repeatedly in the future. Further, Shen and Yahya (2021) suggested that customer loyalty towards an airline is a critical aspect that demonstrates a deep commitment to repurchase the airline's products or services in the future. However, airline performance is a significant factor influencing customers' decisions when selecting an airline for travel. Recent research highlights several critical factors influencing customer loyalty within the airline industry. For example, Li and Petrick (2022) demonstrate that frequent flyer programs retain customers and amplify perceived airline performance through tangible rewards that foster positive travel behaviors. Recent research highlights the role of personalized services and customer engagement in fostering loyalty. According to Ali and Alfayez (2024), personalized marketing efforts and customized service offerings significantly enhance customer loyalty in the airline industry. In the context of airlines, applying relationship marketing principles can help airlines develop strategies that enhance customer loyalty. However, limited research examines how low-cost airlines can effectively utilize relationship marketing to improve customer loyalty, highlighting a gap in the current literature. Therefore, this study establishes the following hypothesis:

H1: Airline performance influences customer loyalty.

Perceived Value

The perception of value can be influenced by several factors, including changes in management practices, competitor dynamics, or shifts in consumer preferences (Caber et al., 2020; Oriade & Schofield, 2019). Each consumer may have a different perception of value, even for products or services of the same type, and will apply it when evaluating the perceived value received. Customers have different perceptions (Ahn & Thomas, 2020). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) define hedonic values as emotionally enjoyable products

and utilitarian values as products that offer practical benefits. Hedonic products are those consumers choose based on emotions and feelings, while utilitarian products are those consumers choose because they want the product to provide a physical benefit or satisfy a physical need. While both hedonic and utilitarian values are essential, consumers often prioritize utilitarian values over hedonic values, particularly in the context of low-cost airlines, where practical benefits and cost-effectiveness are vital considerations.

The study of Sharma and Nayak (2019) indicates that perceived value significantly and directly affects customer loyalty. Some scholars' studies identify perceived value as a mediating factor or mediator in increasing customer loyalty (Soonsan & Somkai, 2021; Touni et al., 2022). Fu's (2023) study examines the mediating role of perceived value from the perspective of airline passengers. Researchers show an increased interest in the pivotal role of perceived value in driving customer loyalty within the airline industry. Recent studies indicate that perceived value significantly affects customer loyalty. For instance, Hapsari et al. (2017) found that higher perceived value directly strengthens loyalty towards service providers in the airline industry.

Chen et al. (2019) identified perceived value as a critical mediator linking service quality to consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, Han et al., (2018) emphasized that hedonic and utilitarian values enhance customer loyalty, especially when airlines offer superior services and product performance. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of perceived value and its significant role in fostering customer loyalty, forming a comprehensive foundation for the current study. Additionally, while prior studies have addressed perceived value and customer loyalty in various service industries (Chen & Chen, 2010; Gallarza et al., 2011), there is a lack of comprehensive research focusing on the low-cost airline sector. This gap highlights the need for studies investigating the unique dynamics of perceived value in low-cost airlines and its impact on customer loyalty. Therefore, this study posits the following hypotheses:

H2: Hedonic value mediates the relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty.

H3: Utility value mediates the relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty.

Methodology

Participants and Data Collection

The population of the present study consisted of Thai customers traveling on domestic low-cost airlines. Six significant airports operated by Airports of Thailand Public Company Limited (AOT) were chosen based on their high passenger traffic for domestic low-cost airlines to select the population and sample accurately. These airports are Suvarnabhumi, Don Mueang International, Phuket International, Chiang Mai International, Hat Yai International, and Mae Fah Luang-Chiang Rai International. Quota sampling was used to determine the number of participants from each airport, ensuring proportional representation based on passenger volume statistics provided by AOT. The quotas were set to reflect the percentage of low-cost airline passengers at each airport relative to the total number across all selected airports.

Data collection at each airport involved convenience sampling at the departure areas. Researchers approached potential participants waiting in lounges, check-in areas, and boarding gates. The screening question posed was: "Have you ever used the services of a domestic low-cost airline?" Only those who responded affirmatively were invited to participate in the study. Convenience sampling was used within each airport due to practical constraints such as time limitations and participants' accessibility. The screening question ensured that only individuals with experience with low-cost airlines were included, aligning the sample with the study's target population.

Data collection occurred from November to December 2022, when all the airports were fully operational. A total of 377 valid responses were used for this study. The demographic profile of the 377 respondents showed the majority of respondents were female, approximately 68.20 percent. Regarding age distribution, the largest proportion of respondents was between 21 to 30 years old (64.70%). Educational attainment revealed that the majority held a bachelor's degree, approximately 62.10 percent. Income levels were also evaluated, with the largest group reporting a monthly income between 20,001 to 30,000 Baht (34.20%).

Research Instrument

The research instrument was a questionnaire developed based on relevant literature. Thirteen questions on airline performance were adapted from Su et al. (2021).

Seven items on perceived value were adapted from Kim (2015), and three items on customer loyalty were adapted from Han et al. (2021). The questionnaire was pre-tested with a pilot group of 30 participants to assess clarity, reliability, and validity. Feedback from the pilot test led to minor revisions for better comprehension. The questions used a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 represented "strongly agree" and 1 represented "strongly disagree." Data collection was conducted face-to-face, with researchers assisting participants if they had any questions while completing the questionnaire. Each questionnaire took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using a statistical software package commonly used in social science research. Descriptive statistics described the sample group's demographic data and the study's variables. The analysis followed the research framework and hypotheses. The initial data analysis stage involved conducting an Exploratory Factor Analysis on airline performance. Subsequently, the hypotheses were tested using both direct and indirect effects analysis through the Process Model 4 Method.

Results

Airline performance was analyzed by component. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.808, indicating that the variables in this set of factors were very suitable for the component analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity revealed a statistically significant relationship among the variables with a significance level of 0.000 (Chi-Square = 1767.579), indicating that the variables were appropriate for the component analysis. The exploratory component analysis used the orthogonal component rotation method through the Varimax method to test the eigenvalue. The results of orthogonal axis rotation through the Varimax method allowed all 13 variables to be loaded onto 3 components. These components could explain 60.2 percent of the variance of all variables. Furthermore, each factor contained between 3 and 6 variables. The analysis of all 3 components had sub-component weights of variables between 0.520 and 0.834, showing details of the weights of the sub-elements of the variables and the mean and standard deviation of airline performance as presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 Exploratory factor analysis

Rotated Component Matrix	Component			Communalities
	1	2	3	
I feel safe every time I use this airline.	.751			.586
I am confident about the safety management of this airline.	.755			.687
I am not worried about danger when using this airline.	.790			.754
Airlines have flight schedules that are suitable for travel.		.820		.668
Airline ground service is accurate and timely.		.834		.614
The airline's onboard service is modern and attractive.		.755		.525
You can reserve airline seats easily, conveniently, and quickly.		.520		.642
The airline staff were attentive to my request.			.551	.417
The airline staff understood my needs.			.582	.486
Airline staff are polite and friendly.			.652	.598
The airline's employees are truly willing to provide service.			.677	.579
The airline's staff provide a full service.			.816	.700
Airline employees value me as a customer.			.715	.571
Eigen	3.071	2.600	2.159	
% of Variance	23.620	19.997	16.604	
α	0.71	0.81	0.79	

Table 2 Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD	α
1. Airline safety performance	1						3.52	.91	0.71
2. Airline core performance	.311**	1					4.08	.75	0.81
3. Service performance	.265**	.503**	1				4.04	.69	0.79
4. Hedonic values	.231**	.347**	.369**	1			3.84	.81	0.70
5. Utility values	.448**	.505**	.381**	.430**	1		3.73	.77	0.70
6. Customer loyalty	.149**	.361**	.358**	.358**	.329**	1	4.30	.69	0.76

This study's indirect effect test was performed using Process Model 4 analytical methods for bootstrapping 5000 resamples and 95 percent conditionally corrected bias (CI) to calculate the indirect effect. This macro technique is important for analyzing the direct and indirect effects of variables in the transmission variables model. Table 3 presents the test results for the indirect effect of airline performance on customer loyalty.

The results show that hedonic value is a mediator factor in the relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty. Hedonic value was influential as a full mediator variable of the relationship between airline safety performance and customer loyalty (B = 0.047, CI = 0.019, and 0.082). Hedonic value was influential as a partial mediator variable on the relationship between airline core performance and customer loyalty (B = 0.074, CI = 0.036 and 0.117) and the relationship between service performance and customer loyalty (B = 0.078, CI = 0.032 and 0.132).

Regarding testing the utility value as a mediator variable of the relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty, the utility value was influential as a full mediator variable of the relationship between airline safety performance and customer loyalty (B = 0.075, CI = 0.038 and 0.114). The utility value was influential as a partial mediator variable of the relationship between airline core performance and customer loyalty (B = 0.054, CI = 0.001 and 0.109) and the relationship between service performance and customer loyalty (B = 0.059, CI = 0.019 and 0.100).

Previous research has consistently demonstrated a robust relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty. These studies have consistently found that airline performance directly influences customer perceived value and loyalty. Additionally, the mediating role of perceived value in the relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty has gained considerable attention in recent years. Research suggests that customers evaluate airline performance through both hedonic and utilitarian values. Both hedonic and utilitarian value dimensions have been shown to mediate the relationship between airline performance

and customer loyalty, suggesting that customers are more likely to remain loyal to airlines.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study significantly advances our understanding of the factors influencing customer loyalty within the low-cost airline sector, offering a more nuanced comprehension of how performance impacts loyalty in this fiercely competitive market. Our analysis delineates airline performance into three critical components: core competency, service performance, and safety performance. These factors are pivotal in shaping consumer experiences, directly or indirectly influencing loyalty. Notably, the study introduces a novel triadic model of airline performance, encompassing core competency, service performance, and safety performance, each contributing differently to customer loyalty. Unlike previous research that often emphasized only core competency and service performance (Han et al., 2019; Han et al., 2019), this study uniquely identifies safety performance as a critical component influencing customer loyalty through perceived value. This is a significant contribution, highlighting that while traditionally considered a basic expectation, safety performance plays an indirect yet essential role in fostering loyalty in low-cost airlines (Cho et al., 2018; Rajaguru, 2016).

A critical theoretical contribution of this research is identifying perceived value—both hedonic and utilitarian—as a mediator in the relationship between airline performance and customer loyalty. While safety performance indirectly affects loyalty through perceived value, it underscores the importance of how consumers derive emotional and practical value from their experiences with airlines. The findings reveal that hedonic and utilitarian values mediate the relationship between safety performance and customer loyalty, a unique insight not previously documented in the literature. This indicates that even safety aspects can enhance customer loyalty by contributing to customers' perceived enjoyment and practical benefits.

Table 3 Indirect effect of airline performance and customer loyalty

Independent (X)	Mediator (M)	Dependent (Y)	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Results
Airline safety performance	Hedonic values	Customer loyalty	0.047	0.016	0.019	0.082	Sig
	Utility values		0.075	0.020	0.038	0.114	Sig
Airline core performance	Hedonic values	Customer loyalty	0.074	0.021	0.036	0.117	Sig
	Utility values		0.054	0.028	0.001	0.109	Sig
Service performance	Hedonic values	Customer loyalty	0.078	0.025	0.032	0.132	Sig
	Utility values		0.059	0.021	0.019	0.100	Sig

Moreover, by distinguishing between hedonic and utilitarian values, our study provides a more transparent framework for understanding how diverse values contribute to loyalty. This differentiation is a novel finding that allows for a more targeted approach to enhancing customer experiences, acknowledging that emotional satisfaction and functional efficiency are vital in building loyalty. This differentiation allows airline managers to tailor their services more effectively, meeting diverse customer needs by enhancing emotional satisfaction and functional efficiency (Ryu et al., 2010).

Therefore, this research enriches the literature on airline performance and customer loyalty, especially within the low-cost sector. It demonstrates the need to integrate core competency, service performance, and safety performance into a unified model of airline performance. Furthermore, it underscores the critical role of perceived value as a mediator between performance and loyalty, offering new theoretical insights to guide the development of more effective customer loyalty strategies. Moving forward, we recommend that future research explores the intricate interplay between performance, perceived value, and loyalty, particularly as the low-cost air travel industry evolves.

This study shows that the competencies of low-cost airlines consist of three core competencies: core competency, service performance, and safety performance. Low-cost airlines should consider enhancing all three competencies to be ready to deliver a superior customer experience (Albers et al., 2020). In particular, low-cost airlines' core competency and service performance should be differentiated from full-service airlines, as these factors strongly influence customer loyalty (Han & Hwang, 2017). The airline must design flight schedules suitable for travel, ensure accurate and timely ground services, and modernize onboard services. Seat reservations must be easy, convenient, and fast. Furthermore, the airline must establish guidelines for its staff to pay special attention to customer requests, understand their needs, be courteous and friendly, be genuinely willing to serve, provide full service, and make customers aware of the value of the service provided (Han et al., 2011). Additionally, despite operating on a low-cost model, low-cost airlines must strictly comply with safety requirements set by relevant authorities and communicate this commitment to customers to build trust and meet baseline expectations (The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand, 2019).

This study focuses on perceived hedonic value as the mediating factor in the relationship between airline safety performance and customer loyalty. Therefore,

airlines must make their customers aware of the positive aspects of flying and create services that allow customers to enjoy new experiences, fostering a genuinely happy flying experience. Suppose service users are aware of the unique experiences offered by the airline and feel cared for with attentive service, in that case, those who perceive the airline's performance and hedonic value are more likely to increase their loyalty. The results suggest that utilitarian value is also a factor that helps increase customer loyalty to low-cost airlines. Low-cost airlines must make service users aware of the numerous benefits they receive by choosing their services. Airlines need to provide a user-friendly experience to increase the intent of service users to make repeat purchases. The influence of perceived utilitarian values can make a difference regarding hospitality, value for money, or speed (Cakici et al., 2019). If airlines can effectively leverage their core competencies, service, and safety performance, it will also increase customer loyalty.

Theoretical Contributions

Perceived value theory is essential for understanding consumer behavior, particularly in service industries like airlines. Perceived value is the customer's overall assessment of the utility of a product or service, determined by their perceptions of what is received and what is given (Zeithaml, 1988). According to Babin et al. (1994), perceived value is commonly characterized by utilitarian and hedonic values. Hedonic value is associated with consumption's emotional and experiential aspects, such as the excitement, satisfaction, and delight derived from using a service. Utilitarian value, on the other hand, refers to the practical and functional benefits, including cost reductions, efficiency, and convenience.

The airline industry can enhance overall perceived value and foster long-term loyalty by tailoring its services to meet the diverse needs of its customers. Airline performance is crucial, as it significantly influences consumer decision-making. Customers are more likely to choose an airline over its competitors when they perceive it to operate effectively, offering hedonic value through pleasurable experiences and utilitarian value through efficient services. This insight is particularly relevant for low-cost airlines seeking to attract consumers who might otherwise prefer full-service carriers. Low-cost airlines can influence consumer decisions even when faced with alternative options by delivering high perceived value and demonstrating strong performance. Therefore, aligning performance with perceived value in the competitive low-cost airline market is imperative to acquire and retain customers.

Practical implications

The findings of this study suggest that low-cost airlines should strategically enhance all three competencies: core competency, service performance, and safety performance to deliver superior customer experiences and foster loyalty. Specifically, airlines should focus on differentiating their core competencies and service performance from full-service airlines by offering unique value propositions that resonate with cost-conscious travelers. For instance, designing flexible flight schedules, ensuring accurate and timely ground services, and modernizing onboard amenities can significantly improve customer satisfaction. Additionally, simplifying the seat reservation process to be easy, convenient, and fast can enhance the utilitarian value perceived by customers.

Moreover, it is essential to invest in staff training to cultivate a service culture where employees pay special attention to customer requests, understand their needs, and display courteous and friendly behavior. Employees who are genuinely willing to serve and make customers aware of the value provided can enhance the hedonic value of the travel experience, leading to increased loyalty. Notably, despite operating under a low-cost model, airlines must strictly comply with safety requirements set by relevant authorities and communicate this commitment to customers to build trust and meet baseline expectations.

Airlines should also develop strategies to amplify both hedonic and utilitarian values perceived by customers. For hedonic value, introducing innovative in-flight entertainment options, offering personalized services, and creating a pleasant atmosphere can make the flying experience more emotionally satisfying. For utilitarian value, emphasizing practical benefits such as punctuality, reliability, and value for money can appeal to customers' functional needs. By effectively leveraging their core competencies, enhancing service performance, and ensuring safety performance, airlines can create a compelling value proposition that attracts new customers and retains existing ones by increasing their loyalty.

Limitation

This study examined the behaviors of Thai domestic airline passengers and suggests that the findings may not be directly generalizable to airlines serving a single market group within a specific country. Due to cultural differences, effective strategies in one country may not directly apply to another. Future research should incorporate a cross-cultural comparative approach to enhance the generalizability of the findings across various national contexts. Additionally, data collection faced temporal limitations, as participants who provided feedback after checking in were constrained by slow airport management processes and the urgency to proceed through immigration. This often resulted in hurried responses. Future studies should adjust the questionnaire to accommodate the limited time available to respondents, ensuring that the data collected is relevant and reflective of their experiences without undue pressure.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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