

An overview of Customer Service in Travel Industry - special reference to Yemenia Airline

¹Mosleh Abdu Mosleh AL-Najjar & ²Ishwara. P

¹Research Scholar, Mangalore University, Mangalore, Karnataka (India)

²Prof., Chairman and Dean, Faculty of Commerce, Mangalore University, Mangalore, Karnataka (India)

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*Corresponding Author

Email: [muslem560\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:muslem560[at]gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

Customer services concept is directly related to travel industry because it is based on customer expenses and without the customer, there is no Income. Good customer service is required at every part of the travel industry as well as it is essential to the success every company either it is flight, hotel, travel agency, restaurant, etc. In the travel industry, customers today expect more than they did in the past so we must always try to continually improve the level of the service to enable us to keep up with customer expectations and leads to excellent customer service in the travel industry.

This theoretical study is based on secondary data where it includes the information published on the theme of the travel industry in various internet sites. This paper aims to provide a conceptual framework for customer service in the travel industry as well as to identify the types of customer services provided on board the Yemenia airlines. Finally, this study highlights major findings that give the suitable suggestions to improve the customer service in Yemenia airlines.

1. Introduction

Industries in the past use to offer products to the customers and their job are done. Unlike now that the customers becoming more increasingly informed with the vast amount of information available to them from different sources, it as well has boosted their needs and expectations from service providers have dramatically increased. Customers choose the service provider according to what they want their vacations to be like, of which is very important how they will spend their money and time. Therefore, it's very crucial for all service providers to pay attention to customers and never try to ignore the aspect of customer service unless the customers will consider their products poor and that is failing the industry positive impression, in the end, leads to the reduction in repeated business and ultimately affects the profitability of the industry. It is up to the industry to take the necessary steps towards the achievement of excellent customer service for its survival not to be threatened. Excellent customer service should be developed and performed as well as communicated with two goals: customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. In this paper, it outlines the method of customer service in the travel industry and the means that could be adhered to in order to achieve excellent customer service in the travel industry. Alongside to identify the types of customer services provided on board the Yemenia airlines.

2. Research Objectives and Methodology

The theoretical objective of this paper is first to discuss a concept of the travel industry and customer service. The discussion then continues to customer service applied in a case study of the Yemenia airline. The second theoretical objective of this paper is to find out how Yemenia airlines committed to providing a minimum safe and comfortable service like any

other airline in the world. Finally, this paper highlights major findings that give the suitable suggestions to improve the customer service in Yemenia airlines.

To sum up, the theoretical objectives of this paper are:

- To study the concept of travel industry
- To discuss the customer service in travel industry
- To gain the knowledge about customer service in Yemenia airline

The scope of this paper is limited to the following themes

- Introduction to travel industry
- Customer service in travel industry
- Customer service in Yemenia airline

The data collection of this paper mainly depends on secondary data where it includes the information published on the themes of travel industry, customer service and about Yemenia airline in various internet sites with depends on statistics and reports issued by official site of Yemenia airline.

3. Travel Industry

The travel industry is made up of a number of individual sectors including the tourism, hospitality and visitors services sector, within each of these sectors there are a number of an individual that have attempted to measure customer satisfaction as part of their quality assurances programs.(Foster, D. 1999).

The travel industry is the companies that provide different types of travel services, including airlines, cruise lines, travel agencies, tour operators, and online reservations and services. The travel industry serves all types of customers whether it is a

recreational, leisure and business purpose and covers the following services:

- Transportation services such as airlines, tourism ships, and taxis
- Hospitality services including accommodation in hotels and resorts
- Entertainment services in casinos, tourist parks, theatre and shopping malls.

4. Customer Service

It is difficult to define customer service, this is partly because to the customer who will decide what it is. However, the Institute of Customer Service in Colchester, United Kingdom, has defined the customer service as follows: "The total of everything an organization does to meet the expectations of its customers and get their satisfaction." Therefore, all employees within an organization (whether they have direct contact with the customer or not) must target to satisfying the customer. However, if your services only "meet" customer expectations, they may feel the customer that the service is fine but it is not something special. What you need do is get the satisfaction of your customers and always they will remember you, enjoy dealing with you, will come back to you again and tell other people about you.

So, According to the above defines issued by Institute of Customer Service (ICS). We can more accurately understand customer service definition as follows: Is the process by which customers' needs and expectations are met by providing high-quality service leading to customer satisfaction.

5. Customer Service in Travel Industry

Any activity in any business has both external and internal customers. Customer external to travel organizations includes client: is someone who uses company's products or services but is not part of the organization. Internal customer includes staffs and other professionals, trains, departments, and committees, who are valued partners in business success. Customer service a part of organization philosophy with the ability of the industry to constantly and consistently give the customers what they need and meet their expectations by means of product differentiation and as market protocol that involves the task-oriented activities other than proactive selling, that involve interactions with customers either in person by communications, or by any other forms.

6. Objectives of customer service programme in travel industry

- To achieve degree of zero % in customer complaints one year after implementation of the service and its standards within the industry
- To achieve an overall increase in the level of customer satisfaction as to be measured by questionnaires, surveys and mystery customers.
- To increase repeat business by high percentages over a certain period e.g. for 5 years.
- To develop a caring image in the eyes of the public.

- To achieve improved levels of employees satisfaction as measured by the attitude surveys.
- To achieve the improved levels of staff retention
- To develop a standardized approach to managing customers experience in order to promote optimum levels of customer satisfaction.(Kaino N. Haiping,2014)

7. The Basic Needs for Customer Service in Travel Industry

A. Supplier: Means of getting to the destination and getting around once there is (transportation)

B. Intermediation: Accommodations (somewhere to stay)

C. Content services: Something, to do. E.g. Attractions festivals, shops, tourist's attractions, cultures, and entertainments, recreation activities

D. Information

- Tour guides and operators
- Local area maps and Attraction leaflets

One of the basic needs to be met is to improve customer services by giving relevant information to the customers. Good communication can hugely benefit the travel and tourism industry business, in the end, gain lots of new customers to their service. If the industry is to work well, information must be communicated throughout. Poor communication is usually symptomatic of an underlying problem in the industry or in the relationship between the people concerned [customers]. (Kaino N. Haiping, 2014)

8. Who Enjoys the Benefits of Good Customer Services in the Travel Industry?

A. Customers

A customer (sometimes known as a buyer, client, or purchaser) is any individual or group that ever purchases goods and services from this organization. In another word, a customer is any individual or group that purchases goods and services from this organization on a regular basis

A customer enjoys the experience and has a good time, meeting individual needs, safe and secure environment [external and internal].

B. Staff in the industry

- **Job satisfaction:** Employees would work in such a manner that they are well-taken care off since there are fewer complications in the industry resulted in providing excellent customer service to their customers.
- **Happier working environment:** Employees are more exposed to the active environment since customers are left with nothing to stress the employees in the industry.

- **Job security:** Employees are certain that their employee benefits are all in places and they are encouraged to work, good wages and health benefits they would not want to look for any new job elsewhere.

C. Business

- **Satisfied customers, increase customers:** The industry is increasing the number of customers to use its products by meeting the customers need.
- **Fewer complaints to deal with:** If the service is good, all aspects are in their perspective places with good applied standards customers are left with nothing much to complain about.
- **Word of mouth recommendations:** The business will get various recommendations from customers physically.
- **Enhanced reputation, loyalty:** The industry is increasing its faithfulness to its clients and the image is consistently maintained.
- **Increased revenue, repeat business:** As the number of customers is increasing so the increase in business and growing revenue with leads to job security and content employees and customers themselves.
- **Increasing sales and usage by attracting new customers, staff and organization:** As the number of customers is increasing, the industry is forced to increase its sales and be more creative to attract even more customers and at the same time the industry improves on its staff level of customer care and the way the standards and principles set could be met.

D. The Industry

- **Increased competitiveness:** It helps the industry to increase its competitiveness among the rest.
- **Financial security:** The customers are confident that the money spends will be worth their expectations.
- **Resources to maintain and develop the tourism products:** If good reputation is built, the industry is likely to have more resources in place and they can easily develop new tourism products within the industry.

E. The local and national economy

- **Jobs for people:** If the industry products are in demand, there will be a need for more staff, so more employment are advancing and reduce the unemployment among the youths in the country.

- **Foreign currency revenue:** Increased business means more customers from across the world, it then in return enhance the chance of foreign currency exchange which shows that foreign travelers can exchange their currencies any time.

- **Spending increase in local shops, hospitality, and travel department:** As the number of travelers increases, the greater they are spending on local business, hospitality and travel sector and much more that can attract their eyes. .(Kaino N. Haiping,2014)

9. Travel Industry: Related Industries

The travel sector includes the following industries:

- **Tourism Industry:** The international tourism industry is a multi-million dollar source. It contributes approximately 10% of the world GDP. The tourism industry has seen great prosperity with growing the economic level of citizens and the affordability of travel abroad.
- **Hospitality industry:** The hospitality industry is a service industry in the first class.It includes services provided by the tourism that includes restaurants, hotels, event planning, parks, transportation, food sectors, cruise line, and additional fields within the tourism industry.
- **Aviation industry:** The global aviation industry has generated revenues of \$ 754 billion serving to more than 4 billion passengers in 2017.
- **Shipping Industry:** The global shipping is the worldwide network of maritime traffic.It involves the transportation of various goods (cargo) through specific maritime routes. The global shipping industry is organized by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). It is considered a motivation for global economic development, as it accounts for approximately 90% of world trade, where estimated traffic of global shipping on water 90% of world trade.
- **Transportation Industry:** This industry includes the provision of transport and related services through a wide range of modes. The industry is vital for economic development, as it aids in the production and distribution of goods and services.
- **Logistics Industry:** It involves the delivery of freight. This industry is governed by various factors such as technology, legislation, globalization, and confederations. According to 2017 Global Logistics Report, the company's annual revenue of Logistics Service Provider was approximately 37.5%. (Andrew Kirkwood, 2017)

10. Yemenia Airline

Yemenia - Yemen airways is the national airline of Yemen, based in Sana'a. The airline was established on 4 August 1961 as Yemen airline and started operations in 1962. The government of Yemen own (51%) and the government of Saudi Arabia (49%).

It operates scheduled domestic services as well as international services to more than 30 destinations in Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. Its main base is Sana'a International Airport, with a hub at Aden Airport. While the domestic destination network includes (ranked by a number of passengers) (a) Sana'a, (b) Aden, (c) Al Mukalla, (d) Seiyun, (e) Taiz, (f) Hodeidah, and (g) Al-Ghaydah. (Charles E. Schlumberger. 2009)

11. Customer Service in Yemenia Airline

Yemenia airways such as any airline in the world provide a range of services to its passengers /customers, although it has a few aircrafts and a limit trip to abroad destinations it provides full services from and to the airport. And these services are included:

11.1: Transportation: Transfer from airport to hotel & from hotel to airport

Cars: 4 wheel drive with driver and fuel included from (2 - 4) person per car

Bus: (mini and big) 4 wheel drive with driver and fuel included from (12-31) person per car

11.2: Flights: Based out of the Sana'a International Airport, Yemen airways connect with 29 destinations, Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the UAE receives flights from Yemen airways. Some of the popular destinations served by Yemen airways include Mumbai and Kochi in India. Addis Ababa in Ethiopia is served by Yemen airways. It also flies to Paris and Frankfurt in Europe.

In the domestic sector, it operates flights to:

- Sana'a - Seiyun - Sana'a
- Sana'a - Rayan (Mukalla) - Sana'a
- Sana'a - Aden - Sana'a
- Aden - Sana'a - Aden
- Sana'a - Al-Ghaydah (Mahra) - Sana'a
- Sana'a - Al-Ryan - Socotra - Sana'a
- Aden - Al-Ryan - Socotra - Aden
- Sana'a - Socotra - Aden
- Aden - Socotra - Sana'a

11.7: Food and beverage services:

▪ **Drinks Service**

Table (2) Drinks Service

Kinds of Juice	Soft Drinks	Mineral Water	Hot Drinks
-Mango Juice	-Sprite	-Natural Mineral Water	-Coffee
-Grape Juice	-Pepsi Diet		-Tea
-Orange Juice	-Miranda Orange		-Nescafe
-Tomato Juice	-Fruit Flavor		
-Pineapple Juice	-7 UP		

In the following table (1) shows the airports operated by the Yemenia airline in these domestic and international flights from it.

Table (1) Yemenia operates these domestic and international flights from the following airports

Airport Code	Country	Airport Name	Flight Count
SAH	YE	Sana'a Intl.	24
ADE	YE	Aden Intl	12
CAI	EG	Cairo Intl.	6
JED	SA	King Abdul-Aziz Intl.	5
RIY	YE	Riyan	5
TAI	YE	Ganed	5
DXB	AE	Dubai Intl.	4
GFX	YE	Seiyun	4
AMM	JO	Queen Alia Intl.	3
AUH	AE	Abu Dhabi Intl	3
JIB	DJ	Ambouli	3
RUH	SA	King Khalid Intl	3
BAH	BH	Bahrain Intl.	2
BEY	LB	Rafic Hariri Intl.	2
BOM	IN	Chhatrapati Shivaji Intl	2
DOH	QA	Doha Intl	2
HOD	YE	Hodeidah	2
KUL	MY	Kuala Lumpur Intl.	2
KWI	KW	Kuwait Intl	2
NBO	KE	Jomo Kenyatta Intl	2

Source: Ministry of Transportation. Yemen

11.3: Air cargo: Yemenia cargo has recently launched cargo spot system which fully integrates the processing of all cargo management activities. Yemenia cargo carries every type of cargo and covering many networks around the world such as Gulf Region, Indian Sub-continent, the Middle East, East Africa, and Europe. It has a very highly trained staffs to ensure reliable services to the Yemenia cargo customers

11.4: Online Booking: As known the online booking is the online service operated on the worldwide web, the Yemen airways (The Company) offers the online booking services and other related content provided online by the company.

11.5: Luggage services: Yemen airways offer Luggage services involving luggage on board, cabin luggage, hand luggage with safety conditions of luggage on arrival.

11.6: Entertainment services: In-flight entertainment Yemenia - during a flight the service in some cases may be free of charge and in other cases offered by Yemenia airline such as in-flight video screen, individual screens, earphones, and magazine

-Apple Juice -Peach Juice -Fruit Juice -Apricot Juice	-Coca-Cola -Apple -Strawberry		
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Source: Sourced by researcher

▪ Breakfast

Table (3) Breakfast

Juice	Appetizers	Main Course	Bread
-Fresh orange juice. -Yoghurt. -Fresh Milk.	-Fresh seasonal fruit Salad.	- Mushroom omelet. -Plain omelet. -Crepe polognaise. -Chicken kofta on Skewers. -Vegetable Pie. - Beans with a veggie.	-Selection of fresh bread. - Danish Pastry and Croissant

Source: Sourced by researcher

▪ Lunch / Dinner

Table (4) Lunch / Dinner

	Juice	Salad	Hors D'oeuvre	Main Course
First Sector	-Fresh Orange Juice	-Waldorf salad.	-Caviar, Smoked Salmon, Russian Salad.	-Lamb Meat Mandi. -Chicken Curry. -Paella
Second sector	-Fresh Orange Juice	-Fresh Green Salad.	-Hommons ,tabolah ,labneh ,Olive Salad	-Beef Steak with mushroom. -Chicken With Garlic Sauce. -Fish Coo
Accompaniment	Food -Mixed saute get. -Okra cooked with tomato. -Potato.-Lentil rice.-White rice.	Bread Selection of fresh assorted bread.	Desert Chocolate cake/date tart.	Fruit Choice of fresh seasonal fruits

Source: Sourced by researcher

11.8: Shopping

The shopping service provided by Yemenia airline to its customers at Sana'a International Airport, including perfumes, Makeup, electronics, gifts, tobacco, sunglasses, and toys.

9. There are no waiting places for an accompanying families passengers, and some of them have to stay in the parking lots until they arrive or leave
10. Most of the luggage checker asks money from passengers.

12. Discussion and Recommendation

The present paper dealt with the topics of the travel industry and customer service (either in the travel industry or Yemenia airline).No doubt that Yemenia airlines offer many services to their customers like any other airlines in the world but there are many problems facing customers service whether in the Yemenia airline or at Sana'a International Airport, both in terms of service itself or the way/method of service provided. These Problems can be clarified as follows:

Officials in Yemenia airlines should take into account their responsibility to address the problems faced by passengers/customers on board, and regularly they have to do a survey to know the point of view of customer and their feedback about airlines services which may be good to help in addressing problems or improving the airline customer services. Despite the above-mentioned problems, the researcher finds that there are very important points that Yemenia airline should take into account and work on its development

1. Sana'a international airport is very small
2. The waiting room is small and dirty
3. Most airport staff don't speak English
4. Irregular the flights and change in the date of flights
5. Dining options onboard aircraft are limited
6. There is no good care on domestic flights compared with international flights
7. Entertainment system during the flight is limited
8. Headset doesn't work in most seats

1. The need to make new partnerships and sign travel insurance agreements with international insurance companies
2. Establish a customer service center to provide services all the time through a free unified telephone line and across all local telephone companies
3. To take a series of preventive measures to prevent any future accidents
4. The Yemenia airline must work to the application the best international standers in terms of air safety and security including aspects related to the

performance of pilots, flight crews, and ground services maintenance and other.

13. Conclusion

In this paper, customer service in the travel industry with special reference to Yemenia airline was discussed. Customer service in the travel industry has particular significance by officials in various sectors of this industry and this reflects the importance of customers primarily as a major goal of the travel

organizations. It can be said that the services provided on board the Yemenia airline and Sana'a international airport are unsatisfactory to many customers, In order to improve services officials requires to reconsider in order to improve and develop the services provided, also strive to achieve the highest level of customer service starting with booking tickets and through airport and on board to the end of the flight and even after-flight services

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