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## A Pathmaking Journal



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# ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF AIRLINE SERVICE QUALITY ON IMAGE AND POST PURCHASE BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

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## ABSTRACT

*The present study aimed to investigate the effect of airline service quality on image and post-purchase behavioral intention among the passengers. The exploratory cum descriptive research design was adopted. The purposive sampling technique was chosen to select valid respondents. Four hundred questionnaires were considered valid, and SPSS 25.0 was used to feed and analyze the data. The data for the study was collected through primary as well as secondary sources. The present study's essential findings are that better service quality affects airline image and post purchase behavioral intention of passengers positively. Moreover, a favorable airline image too affects the behavioral intention of passengers positively. The present research revealed that it is a better service quality and sharp airline image in a highly competitive environment that helps the airlines survive and increase their share in the market. The essential*

*suggestions in terms of service quality dimensions have been put forth by the researcher to airline managers, which can surely improve passengers' memorable experiences.*

**KEYWORDS**

Service Quality; Satisfaction; Loyalty; Image; Behavioral Intention

**ECONLIT KEYS**

M30; M31; M39

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Service quality plays a pivotal role in today's world towering competition, even though the tourist passengers' needs and wants differ while consuming the purchased products/services. The acquisition of positive or negative experiences is an unavoidable phenomenon. It is by dint of competitive advantage that the particular airline can enhance its competitiveness as well as reducing the ticket costs (Gerardi & Shapiro, 2009; Stavins, 2001), simultaneously helping them in improving the relationship with travel-related agencies (Alamdari, 2002), participation in CSR activities (Ringham & Miles, 2018; Upadhaya et al., 2018), and strengthening the horizontal type of mergers in enhancing the productivity (Yan et al., 2019). As the airline industry is service-based, experiences' are the main attributes of these products/services. The service company's product is always experiential and is treated as the overall experience (Lewis & Chambers, 2000). Schmitt (1999) argued that the experiences which the companies offer to their passengers' are very much crucial to their success or failure. To retain the existing and attracting the new airline passengers, the companies had to create memorable experiences to increase their market share and profits (Yelkur, 2000). As per Go and Govers (2000), quality has become the most critical area of interest for private and public airline operators in the rising global market. The comparison of expected and performance is termed as service quality, i.e.,  $SQ=P-E$ . A better type of service quality is established if the overall performance is more than the expected one.

An excellent service quality helps in increasing the economic competitiveness of airlines.

Hossain (2012) revealed that the five service quality dimensions positively impact overall satisfaction, among which empathy is the strongest, followed by the rest of the dimensions. Minh and Ha (2015) stated that service quality is essential in attaining customer satisfaction, loyalty, and increasing business profits. It is the corporate image that acts as an imperative element in affecting loyalty among the customers (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001), positive repeat patronage among the clients (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998), and retaining of passengers (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001). Many researchers have depicted that passengers' critical determinant of satisfaction and loyalty is the corporate image (Wu, 2011).

It has been seen that service quality profoundly influences the passenger satisfaction and their loyalty. Better service quality helps develop a positive image in passengers' minds about the airlines that they travel and, in turn, positive post-purchase behavioral intention. The service providers' main task is to deliver better service quality to their clients in maximizing their satisfaction level. Earlier studies have mostly focused on studying the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction (Archana & Subha, 2012; Salam, Fayolle, Jaafar & Ayupp, 2018). Meanwhile, a single research study has been carried out to examine the link among the variables of service quality, satisfaction, image, and behavioral intention (Kuo & Tang., 2013). However, at the same time, there is a minimal application of high standard statistical techniques like SEM or PLS. Therefore, the present research is to assess Airline Service Quality on Image and Post Purchase Behavioral Intention.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES**

### **2.1) SERVICE QUALITY**

According to (Oxford University Press, 2013), quality means "the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind or the degree of excellence of something." Quality is a dynamic force for better competitiveness, guest satisfaction, and overall profitability (Edvardsson, 1992). Service quality assesses service outcomes and processes besides comparing service expectations and performance (Parasumaran et al. 1985). Thus, service quality is a fit between the expected service level and its performance. The overall feeling of efficiency and its services of an organization termed as service quality. A service quality model has been developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), with worldwide acceptance.

They stated that customer satisfaction is the difference between what customer expects and what customer experiences about the service. The expectation component is established by word of mouth, self needs, and external communication while as it is by dint of "moment of truth" that the experienced component is established. The customers become satisfied only when the experienced service quality exceeds the expected level, while as when the services offered are below the expectations, the customer becomes dissatisfied. Karunaratne and Jayawardena (2010) argued that the maximum number of customers articulate their satisfaction with the overall services they experience. Hossain (2012) stated that service quality substantially impacts customers' satisfaction level, the strongest being empathy, followed by the rest of the dimensions. To assess the service quality, Hussain et al. (2015) included security and safety, and communication attributes in the aviation industry. This indicates how essential items like security, safety, and communication enhance airlines' level of services. Minh and Ha (2015) stated that service quality leads to maximum customer satisfaction and loyalty and higher profits for the business organization. There exists a positive connection between the dimensions of service quality and repurchase intention (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Similarly, the impact of service quality and customer satisfaction on passengers' repeat intentions was thoroughly studied by Namukasa (2013) and Hussain (2016) in the context of the airline industry, while as the impact of

perceived service quality on intended customer repeat intentions was studied by Gotlieb et al. (1994) and Storbacka et al. (1994). All these research findings correlated with each other and, after validation, showed significant positive relationships.

Through the mediating variable (brand image), the service quality favorably impacts the repurchase intention; both variables share multiple familiar features (Kim & Kim, 2005; Ostrowski et al., 1993; Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016). Parasuraman et al. (1988) propounded a service quality model called SERVQUAL consisting of five dimensions (tangibility, assurance, empathy, reliability, and responsiveness). However, various researchers (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Culiberg, 2010; Hussain et al., 2015) have raised an argument about the less complete application of the SERVQUAL in measuring the various aspects of the service industry without any modifications. It is the multi-dimensional aspect of service quality that affects passenger satisfaction in airlines involving pre-flight, in-flight digital services, baggage handling mechanisms, and post-flight services (Archana & Subha, 2012). Pina et al. (2014) reported a high level of competition among the competitors; the better service quality must be maintained. This is to be done to sustain customer service quality as the critical determinant and component of its competitiveness. In airlines, the significance of service quality and demand for better service quality is a key trend among the customers (Farooq et al., 2018; Trischler & Lohmann, 2018).

Consequently, Namukasa (2013) argued that delivering better service quality in the airline industry, the customer is of prime importance because nowadays, airline passengers are more focused on the service quality they experience. Several researchers reported the same research finding (Hussain et al., 2015; Liou et al., 2016; Jiang & Zhang, 2016). Saei da Ardakani et al. (2015) have ranked the five dimensions of SERVQUAL, which strengthens the service quality level as presented by the airlines.

The passengers gave a good amount of importance to 'safety,' 'timeliness,' and 'variety and strengthening' in service quality factors. The service organization has a multi-layered characteristic, so it has to face severe difficulties in attaining customer

satisfaction (Li et al., 2017). Gupta (2018) has used the 'Best Worst Method' to grade a range of service quality attributes in airlines and has concluded that the "tangibility" dimension is the most vital element of service quality. The managers of airlines should lay more thrust on the attributes of tangibility to delight passengers. In the current study, service quality has been measured using five dimensions of SERVQUAL: responsiveness, reliability, tangibility, empathy, and assurance with many more new items added to it and, at the same time, its relationship with image and tourist passengers' post-purchase intention.

## **2.2) AIRLINE IMAGE**

The image is the critical asset of an organization. It is defined as "brand is reflected by the brand links held by in consumer memory". The strong association of a consumer with the organization builds up through service experience. Accordingly, they conclude by examining the past experiences with that of the company and how this consumer sets their associations. The organization has a better image that will sustain itself in a highly competitive environment and attract new and retain existing clients (Connor & Davidson, 1997). If the company enjoys a favorable image, the customers presume that that particular company's service quality is of high quality. The customers assume that they are getting the best value of their hard-earned money (Dowling, 1994). A well-planned brand image is one of the key marketing strategies to attract maximum customers towards the company. It has been seen that the company having a good and constructive brand image shines in the market and attracts both repeat clients and trial users (Connor & Davidson, 1997). Rhee and Haunschild (2006) established an argument that a service provider that enjoys an excellent market reputation has to suffer more adversely when committing a single mistake than the service provider with a bad market reputation. It is the brand image that acts as an imperative element in affecting loyalty (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001), repeat intention (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998),

and retaining of passengers (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001). The brand image does not directly impact the brand attitude only but also motivates and encourages the customers to re-buy (Park et al., 2004).

The number of researchers has reported almost matching research findings, confirming and validating that brand image is essential in influencing repurchase intentions (Ataman & Ulengin, 2003; Hsieh et al., 2004). Kotler and Keller (2012) also explored and established that brand image positively impacts repurchase intentions. There exists a strong relationship between brand image, loyalty, perceived quality, and value (Wang & Tsai., 2014), and indeed, a brand image enhances customer loyalty. For specific brands, the clients develop both cognitive and affective responses, by which they buy these brands repeatedly (Wu et al., 2011). The airline can build trust among the customers only after developing a better repute (Hussain et al., 2015).

### **2.3) BEHAVIORAL INTENTION**

There exists a positive relationship between the dimensions of service quality and repurchase intention (Cronin et al. 2000). Huang (2010) stated that customer perception of service quality is the critical success factor that positively influences customers after experiencing the services. The services which the customer has experienced in the past always come to his mind and direct whether to repurchase one more air ticket with a particular airline or not. It was established that by word of mouth, passengers share their both impressed and un-impressed attitude about the service quality they experience, which is termed as behavioral intention. The same argument was agreed by Park et al. (2004). Researchers found "that quality of services had a direct influence on customers' behavioral intentions." It was seen that customers consult their past experiences before deciding to repurchase.

The literature supports the fact that 'intention to buy the same airline service again' and 'willing to recommend it to other airline passengers' is positively affected by

satisfaction (Bigne et al., 2001; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). The variables like satisfaction and perceived value are the direct antecedents of behavioral intention (Tam, 2000; Petrick & Backman, 2002). Service quality profoundly impacts passenger satisfaction in airlines. When the airline passenger is highly satisfied, it shows positive behavioral intentions for the airline tickets' future purchase. It is the service quality that contributes to an organization's success by influencing customers' loyalty and behavioral intention (Lin et al., 2009). In the travel industry, satisfied customers usually go with the service provider that satisfies them, and they recommend the same service provider to others through WOM shortly (Zabkar et al., 2010). Dolnicar et al. (2011) established that loyalty programs are strongly correlated with the customers' behavioral loyalty towards business organizations. Service quality in airlines impacts customer loyalty positively and enhances WOM publicity. Singh and Nika (2019) stated a positive impact of service quality on brand image and repeat patronage. Both the researchers supported that brand image, too, has a positive effect on repeat patronage. This indicates how significantly the companies brand image can influence the passengers' behavior to repurchase the same services (Singh & Nika, 2019). Based on the above arguments and literature, the researchers proposed the conceptual framework (Refer to figure 1).

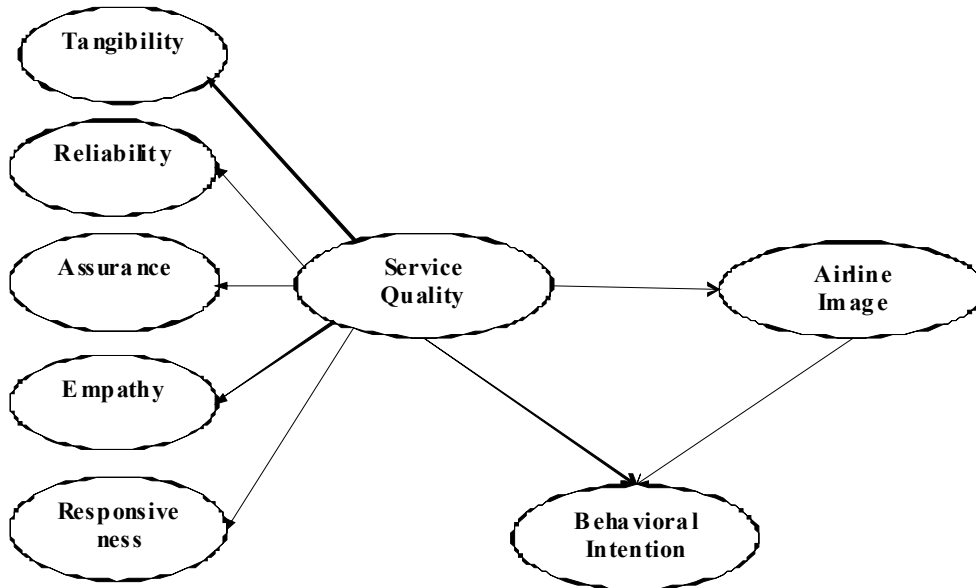


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study  
Source: Developed by Authors

## **2.4) DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

Park et al. (2005), “the dimension of in-flight service and the dimension of convenience and accessibility were each found to positively affect airline image, which was directly related to Australian international air passengers’ future behavioral intentions.” Geraldine & David U. (2013) proved a strong, statistically significant relationship between the service quality variables and the airline image. It indicates that the airline's quality of services has a positive relationship with the airline image, and the airline image also has a positive relationship with the passenger's repeat patronage.

**H1: Service quality factors affect airline image positively.**

“Passenger satisfaction with the service quality dimensions (flight schedules, flight attendants, tangibles, and ground staff) is paramount in explaining behavioral intentions. The schedule mostly influences satisfied passengers. Such customers engage in positive word-of-mouth communication and have high repurchase intentions (Saha & Theingi, 2009)”. Khraim (2013) stated that “significant effect of service quality was observed about customers' behavioral intentions at the level of ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).”

**H2: Service quality factors affect behavioral intention positively.**

Park et al. (2004) stated that "service value, passenger satisfaction, and airline image are each found to directly affect air passengers' decision-making processes." Khraim (2013) stated that “significant effect of airline image was observed about customers' behavioral intentions at the level of ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).”

**H3: Airline images affect behavioral intention positively.**

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS**

***3.1) DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING***

The research design is exploratory cum descriptive in nature. The service attributes representing the 22- existing item scale of Parasuraman (1988) of service quality were explored /borrowed, and 16 new items were added in context to the aviation industry. While checking the reliability of the instrument, three items were deleted, and a new scale of 35 variables was used, while two items for image and four items for behavioral intention were used in the study. The total sample size was taken

as 400 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The respondents of the study were being selected by using the purposive sampling technique. The judgment/purposive sampling technique helped make a choice-based selection of passengers whom the researcher thought would best provide the better responses necessary for the study. The purposive sampling technique was even used to give equal representation to both males and females, young and old, to make the study more rational. The present study was extended to all the domestic and foreign passengers arriving at the Srinagar International Airport (India).

Service quality dimensions (with 35 items) & image (with two items) were assessed using 1 for 'Strongly Disagree' & 5 for 'Strongly Agree' at the Five Point Likert Scale. Behavioral intention (with four items) was evaluated using 'extremely unlikely' and 'extremely likely' (Dagger et al. 2007; Gonzalez et al. 2007; Baker & Crompton 2000). The reliability test was performed by calculating the "Cronbach alpha" to measure the consistency of the measurement scales. The alpha values of all the factors were above the recommended 0.70 points, which indicated that the scale was reliable (Nunnally, 1978). Cronbach's alpha values obtained were 0.88 for airline service quality, image, and tourist post-purchase behavioral intention. Data was collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data collection tool was a research questionnaire. Data was analyzed using the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach using SPSS 25.0 and Amos 25.0. A total of 450 questionnaires were circulated among the respondents at the airports and the various hotels that had experienced the selected airlines' services. Out of the 450 questionnaires distributed, 410 were received, and a total of 400 (97.56%) were considered valid responses and were analyzed. The maximum number of respondents were males (59%), and simultaneously the maximum respondents were in the age group of 29 to 38 years (36%). 30% of respondents had their occupation as a business. Out of the total respondents, 68% were married, 30% of respondents were having their qualification as postgraduates. 30% of respondents had an income less than three lacs

annually, and a total number of 54% of respondents had traveled with no accompanist. It has been seen that 65% of respondents have travel frequency as rarely, and 64% were repeated visitors. 62% of respondents were having their passenger class as economy, 66% of respondents have their travel purpose as leisure, and 69.25% of respondents have their nationality as domestic. The overall demographic representation is shown in the below Table 1.

S. No.	Headings (N = 400)	Frequency	%	S. No.	Headings (N = 400)	Frequency	%
<b>1</b>	<b>Gender</b>			<b>6</b>	<b>Income per year</b>		
	Male	236	59.0		Less than 3 lac	120	30.0
	Female	162	40.5		3-6 lac	104	26.0
	Transgender	2	0.5		6-9 lac	72	18.0
	Total	400	100		9-12 lac	56	14.0
<b>2</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>				Above 12 lac	48	12.0
	18 up to 28	142	35.5		Total	400	100
	29 up to 38	144	36.0	<b>7</b>	<b>Accompanists</b>		
	39 up to 48	62	15.5		Yes	184	46.0
	49 up to 58	22	5.5		No	216	54.0
	Above 58	30	7.5		Total	400	100
	Total	400	100	<b>8</b>	<b>Travel frequency</b>		
<b>3</b>	<b>Occupation</b>				Frequent flyer	140	35
	Student	80	20.0		Rarely	260	65
	Employee	90	22.5		Total	400	100
	Businessman	120	30.0	<b>9</b>	<b>Earlier Visitor</b>		
	Professional	76	19.0		Yes	256	64.0
	Any other	34	8.5		No	144	36.0
	Total	400	100		Total	400	100
<b>4</b>	<b>Marital status</b>			<b>10</b>	<b>Passenger Class</b>		
	Married	272	68.0		Exec./1st class	80	20.0
	Un-married	120	30.0		Business Class	72	18.0
	Divorced	6	1.5		Economy Class	248	62.0
	Others	2	0.5		Total	400	100
	Total	400	100	<b>11</b>	<b>Purpose of Visit</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Educational Level</b>				Leisure	264	66.0
	Under Graduate	112	28.0		Education	16	4.0
	Graduate	112	28.0		Pilgrimage	72	18.0
	Post Graduate	152	38.0		Any other	48	12.0
	Any other	24	6.0		Total	400	100
	Total	400	100				
<b>12</b>	<b>Nationality</b>						
	Domestic	277	69.25				
	Foreign	123	30.75				

	Total	400	100				
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Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents  
Source: Developed by Authors

### 3.2) FACTOR ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The factor analysis technique applied to identify the underlying factors of airline service quality (independent variable), and the results presented in Table 2. The potential influences of these assumptions' violations are minimized when the data matrix has adequate correlations, and factor analysis becomes justified. The data matrix has been examined for sufficient correlations by computing the correlation matrix, inspecting the anti-image correlation matrix, conducting Barlett's test of sphericity, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy has been assessed. The statistical test for the correlations among the variables is termed as Barlett's Test of Sphericity. In the current study, the value obtained for Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.74, which is treated as commendable and, therefore, suitable for running the factor analysis (George & Malley, 2000).

The exploratory factor analysis was performed with the items of airline service quality to identify the various factors. The five factors identified using the SPSS software are tangibility, reliability, assertiveness, responsiveness, and empathy.

S. No.	Attributes	Factor Loading					Mean	S.D
		Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor		
		1	2	3	4	5		
<b>Fact 1</b>	<b>Tangibility</b>							
TAN1	Physical appearance, dress code and attitude of employees of the airline you traveled in	0.92					4.12	0.94
TAN 2	Variety and excellent quality of in-flight meals	0.92					4.07	1.06
TAN 3	Modern in-flight technology facilities	0.88					3.89	1.07
TAN 4	Hassle free check –in and	0.87					4.11	0.98

	boarding by the airline								
TAN 5	Entertainment facilities being provided in the Security Hold Area (SHA) or waiting area of the airline	0.87					3.86	1.09	
TAN 6	Efficient baggage handling mechanism of the airline staff	0.86					3.99	1.04	
TAN 7	Level of cleanliness of toilets inside the aircraft	0.80					3.91	1.07	
TAN 8	Refreshment policy of the airline for its passengers if the flight is delayed	0.72					3.93	1.08	
TAN 9	Seat space, leg comfort in the aircraft	0.57					4.34	0.90	
<b>Fact 2</b>	<b>Reliability</b>								
REL 1	Management of emergency by the airline		0.96				3.69	0.98	
REL 2	Employees in responding to your queries		0.96				3.64	1.02	
REL 3	Time commitments of the airline		0.94				3.79	.91	
REL 4	Sincerity and patience of employees in resolving your problems		0.92				3.67	1.00	
REL 5	Efficiency of the airline at the point of departure and arrival		0.91				3.84	0.89	
REL 6	Reliability of on-line assistance by the airline		0.83				3.82	0.84	
REL 7	Free accommodation in case of cancellation of scheduled flights		0.69				3.92	0.79	
<b>Fact 3</b>	<b>Assertiveness</b>								
ASS 1	Least flight break down as compared to its competitors			0.94			3.34	0.73	
ASS 2	Prompt attention towards passenger specific needs			0.92			3.47	0.73	
ASS 3	Professional approach of the employees in discharging their duties towards passengers			0.91			3.47	0.82	
ASS 4	Safety performance of the airline			0.84			3.33	0.68	
ASS 5	Ground staff in providing you the seat of choice in the aircraft			0.80			3.31	0.68	
<b>Fact 4</b>	<b>Responsiveness</b>								

RES 1	Toll free number				0.95		4.02	0.89
RES 2	On time paging call (announcements) alerts				0.94		4.14	0.85
RES 3	In-flight instructions given by the crew members				0.94		4.12	0.80
RES 4	Free SMS alerts given to customers when flights scheduled get canceled due to bad weather or any other technical faults				0.93		4.13	0.86
RES 5	Customer feedback policy				0.87		3.97	0.97
<b>Fact 5</b>	<b>Empathy</b>							
EMP 1	Updated website all the time				0.94		3.76	0.98
EMP 2	Tourism-related information				0.92		3.84	0.98
EMP 3	Are you satisfied with the care and concern taken by the airline staff for its passengers?				0.91		3.80	0.98
EMP 4	Discount, cash-back given by the airline on special occasions				0.89		3.87	0.96
EMP 5	Grievance redress cell				0.86		3.82	0.91
EMP 6	Tie-up of airline with travel related partners, car rentals, hotels etc				0.82		3.61	1.03
EMP 7	Compensation if anyhow baggage is lost or damaged				0.80		3.54	1.01
EMP 8	Frequent flyer programme				0.79		4.34	0.99
EMP 9	Pricing policy				0.77		3.69	0.99
	Eigen value	6.68	5.20	2.94	4.74	8.76		
	Total Variance Explained (%) = 80.95	19.09	14.85	8.41	13.55	25.03		
	Reliability Alpha (%)	0.94	0.96	0.93	0.96	0.95		

Table 2: Factor Analysis and Descriptive Statistics Results - Dimensions of Airline Service Quality  
Source: Developed by Authors

**Following are the factors along with their overall mean and standard deviations:**

**Tangibility:** The tangibility factor of service quality is defined as being perceived by touch. It is the attribute of being easily detectable with the senses. "*Parasuman*,

*Ziethaml & Berry (1988) have defined tangibility as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials*". The total variance explained by the factor is 19.09%, depicting that out of the five factors of service quality.

**Reliability:** It may be defined as an apparatus, machine, or system's ability to execute its required functions on demand without any failure consistently. It is concerned with a system's ability to carry out its necessary functions under fixed conditions for a particular time. "*Parasuman, Ziethaml & Berry (1988) have defined reliability as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately*". The total variance explained by the factor is 14.85%.

**Assertiveness:** It is the quality of being self-assured and confident without being aggressive. "*Parasuman, Ziethaml & Berry (1988) have defined assertiveness as the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence in the field of psychology; it is a learnable skill and mode of communication. The total variance explained by the factor is 8.41%, depicting that out of the five service quality factors.*

**Responsiveness:** Responsiveness means "being able to react quickly." It is the quality of people for being responsive, quickly reacting, and responding to people and events with emotion. "*Parasuman, Ziethaml & Berry (1988) have defined responsiveness as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately*". The total variance explained by the factor is 13.55%, depicting that of the five service quality factors.

**Empathy:** A wide range of experiences is termed as empathy. The people can sense the emotions of others and envisage what someone might be feeling or thinking. "*Parasuman, Ziethaml & Berry (1988) have defined empathy as the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers. The total variance explained by the factor is 25.03%.*

Among five factors of airline service quality, the highest overall mean achieved by the **responsiveness (mean=4.10), tangibility (mean=4.02), empathy**

(*mean=3.80*), *reliability (mean=3.76)*, and *assertiveness (mean=3.38)*, which indicates that the passengers are very much satisfied with attributes of responsiveness followed by tangibility, empathy, reliability, and assertiveness. Almost all the factors have mean values above three, revealing that the passengers are getting satisfactory services at the Srinagar International Airport. However, there is a need to improve the services further. The total variance explained by the service quality variable is 80.95%.

**Airline Image:** The variables in this factor got mean values as “you carry a good impression of this airline” (*mean=3.96*) and “how much you believe that airlines at the Srinagar International Airport have a better image” (*mean=2.61*).

**Behavioral intention:** It was found that the variables got their mean values as “how far you recommend the airlines operating at Srinagar International Airport to other people” (*mean=2.51*), “how far you would consider flying on this airline again shortly” (*mean=3.57*), “would you sign up for airlines’ frequent flyer membership” (*mean=3.75*), and “would you like to travel again through the airlines whatever the cost of travel” (*mean=3.86*).

### **3.3) CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (CFA) FOR SQ MEASUREMENT MODEL**

The Structural equation modeling assumptions (SEM) were confirmed. At the same time through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), measurement model analysis was performed to validate the constructs to confirm measurement properties.

Moreover, other than Chi-square values, the researcher used recommended goodness of fit indices to check the goodness of fit of the measurement model, like **CFI**, **IFI**, **GFI**, **AGFI**, and **RMSEA**.

The measurement model consisting of various dimensions of service quality depicted that data is very well fit to the model ( **$X^2 = 475.9$** ,  **$df = 416$** ; **CFI = 0.976**; **IFI = 0.974**; **GFI = 0.856**; **AGFI = 0.815** and **RMSEA = 0.035**). Moreover, the researcher also examined the reliability and validity of service quality dimensions by following

Netemeyer et al. (2003). Table 3 depicts that the value of composite reliability (**CR**) for the model constructs have been found more than the recommended threshold value of **0.80**. In all cases, values for average variance extracted (**AVE**) have been found more than the recommended threshold value of **0.50**. The findings of the present research supported the convergent reliability and validity of measured constructs. By dint of examining the square of all pairs of correlations with average variance extracted values, the discriminant validity of the constructs was examined. In all cases, results supported that values of average variance extracted were more than the correlation square, hence supporting the discriminant validity.

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	AVE	CR
Empathy	EMP 7	.82	0.747	0.919
	EMP 6	.81		
	EMP 5	.77		
	EMP 9	.76		
	EMP 8	.72		
	EMP 3	.68		
	EMP 4	.76		
	EMP 1	.69		
	EMP 2	.73		
Responsiveness	RES 5	.77	0.725	0.846
	RES 3	.81		
	RES 4	.66		
	RES 1	.71		
	RES 2	.61		
Assertiveness	ASS 3	.77	0.749	0.863
	ASS 1	.76		
	ASS 2	.83		
	ASS 5	.75		
	ASS 4	.66		
Reliability	REL5	.87	0.786	0.889
	REL 1	.67		
	REL 3	.77		
	REL 2	.69		
	REL 6	.71		
	REL 4	.65		

	REL 7	.77		
Tangibility	TAN 9	.77	0.732	0.889
	TAN 7	.79		
	TAN 6	.75		
	TAN 8	.76		
	TAN 1	.67		
	TAN 2	.69		
	TAN 5	.73		
	TAN 3	.76		
	TAN4	.69		

Table 3: CFA loadings, AVE, and CR  
Source: Developed by Authors

### 3.4) GOODNESS OF FIT INDICES

X <sup>2</sup>	Df	CFI	IFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
475.9	416	0.976	0.974	0.856	0.815	0.035

"X<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square; df = degree of freedom; CFI, comparative fit index; IFI =incremental fit index; GFI =goodness-of- fit index; AGFI, adjusted goodness-of-fit-index; RMSEA, root-mean-square error of approximation"

Table 4: Goodness of Fit Indices

### 3.5) HYPOTHESES TESTING

When the measurement model was confirmed, the present study tested the proposed hypotheses through Structured Equation Modelling. Refer to table 5.

Path	Structural Coef.	T	Test Result
H1: Service Quality → Airline Image	.75	2.02	Supported
H2: Service Quality → Behavioral Intention	.55	5.96	Supported
H3: Airline Image → Behavioral Intention	.74	7.93	Supported

Table 5: Hypotheses Testing  
Source: Developed by Authors

**H1: Service Quality factors affect airline Image positively.**

The results of structural model indicated that the data is very well fitted ( $X^2 = 436.799$ ,  $df = 375$ ; **Probability level = 0.015** **CFI = 0.976**; **IFI = 0.973**; **GFI = 0.843**; **AGFI = 0.807**; **RMR = 0.090** and **RMSEA = 0.034**). The study revealed that service quality factors explained 67.214 on the airline image. While examining the path of coefficients, the results revealed that passengers' favorable perception towards service quality predominantly influences the airline image ( $B = 0.75$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

### ***H2: Service quality factors affect Behavioral Intention Positively.***

The results of structural model indicated that the data is very well fitted ( $X^2 = 466.729$ ,  $df = 376$ ; **Probability level = 0.016** **CFI = 0.977**; **IFI = 0.972**; **GFI = 0.853**; **AGFI = 0.817**; **RMR = 0.091** and **RMSEA = 0.035**). The study revealed that service quality factors explained **66.365%** of behavioral intentions. While examining the coefficients path, the results revealed that passengers' favorable perception of service quality strongly influences behavioral intentions ( $B = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

### ***H3: Airline image effects behavioral intention positively.***

The results of structural model indicated that the data is very well fitted ( $X^2 = 456.763$ ,  $df = 373$ ; **Probability level = 0.015** **CFI = 0.979**; **IFI = 0.973**; **GFI = 0.855**; **AGFI = 0.816**; **RMR = 0.092** and **RMSEA = 0.036**). The study revealed that service quality factors explained **65.37%** on behavioral intentions. While examining the coefficients path, the results revealed that passengers' favorable perception of service quality influences behavioral intentions ( $B = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

The current study was an endeavor to assess the effect of airline service quality on image and behavioral intention from tourist passengers' perspective.

The first finding is that the constructs of service quality i.e., *empathy*, ( $\beta = 0.62$ ); *responsiveness*, ( $\beta = 0.77$ ); *assertiveness* ( $\beta = 0.70$ ); *reliability* ( $\beta = 0.59$ ); and *tangibility* ( $\beta = 0.72$ ) have a significant impact on airline image (Refer to Figure 2). All these dimensions have a positive beta ( $\beta$ ), thereby explaining the positive impact on the airline

image. The overall impact explained by the service quality is  $\beta=.75$ , which indicates that it positively impacts the airline image.

The second finding is that the constructs of service quality, i.e., *empathy*, ( $\beta =0.62$ ); *responsiveness*, ( $\beta =0.77$ ); *assertiveness* ( $\beta =0.70$ ); *reliability* ( $\beta=0.59$ ); and *tangibility* ( $\beta =0.72$ ) have a significant impact on behavioral intention (Refer to Figure 2). All these dimensions have a positive beta ( $\beta$ ), thereby explaining the behavioral intention's positive impact. The overall effect described by the service quality is  $\beta=.55$ , which indicates that it positively impacts behavioral intention.

The third finding of the study depicted that the airline image positively impacts behavioral intention (Refer to Figure 2). The airline image explains the overall impact ( $\beta=.74$ ) on behavioral intention, demonstrating that airline image positively impacts airline passengers.

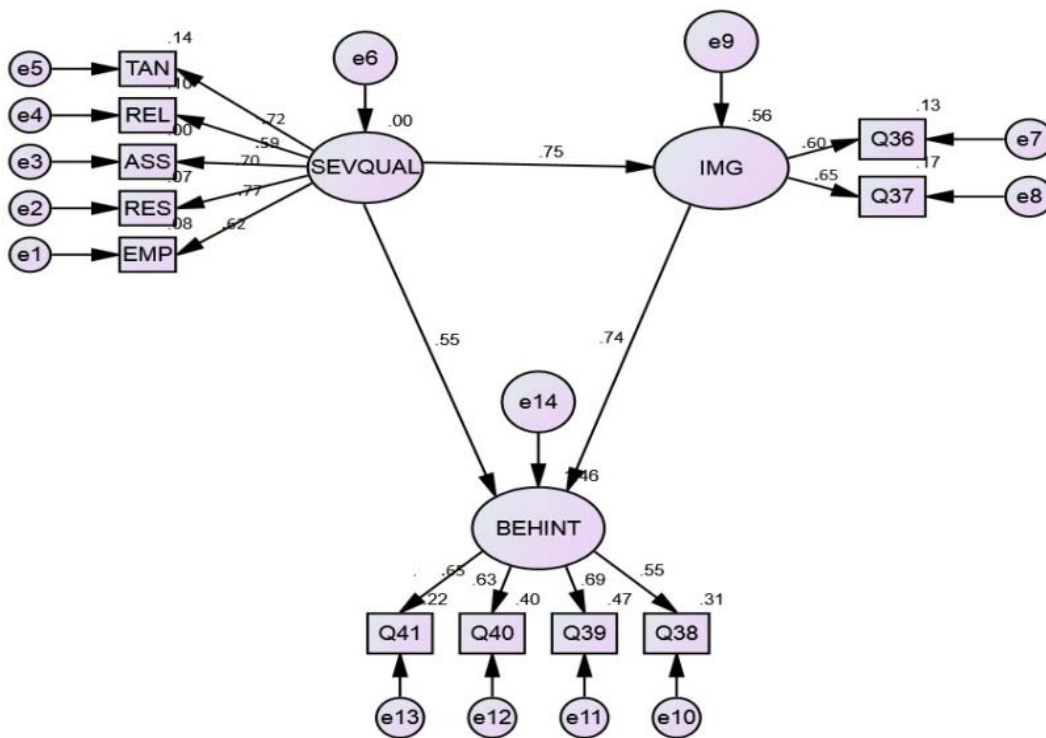


Figure 2. Structural Equation Model

Source: Developed by Authors

## **4. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **4.1) CONCLUSION**

This paper contributes to understanding passenger satisfaction by determining service quality dimensions, which helps airline managers with practical insights on enhancing airlines' service quality. It has been concluded that excellent service quality, excellent brand image, and perceived value leads to maximum satisfaction among passengers, enhancement in brand loyalty, and positive post-purchase behavioral intention. Post-purchase behavioral intention is beneficial to the stakeholders. Tourists' better-perceived service quality significantly influences both satisfaction and loyalty (Singh & Nika, 2019).

Further, tourist satisfaction has a more significant effect on loyalty. It has been established that better the service quality of an airline, the image created in the tourist passengers' mind directly influences its post-purchase behavioral intention. The research entails that airlines' marketing managers had to develop diverse strategies to provide excellent service quality to airline passengers because service quality affects airline image and behavioral intention positively. The failure to deliver better service quality may damage the airline's image and cause an antagonistic impact on the passengers' behavioral intentions. It has been seen that maximum airline passengers take the quality of services essential to retain their loyalty throughout the flight. To be competitive, all airlines need to improve their quality of services to maintain customer loyalty by enhancing their satisfaction level and creating a better picture in their minds. Better airline service quality increases the passengers' level of trust, further motivating them to repurchase airline tickets soon.

#### ***4.2) MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS***

The present research results have important implications for airline managers, particularly on the predominant influence that the satisfaction and image have on passengers' behavioral intentions. The researcher put forth the following suggestions and recommendations for the implications coming out of the current research:

1. To enhance the modern in-flight technology facilities, the airlines should prepare themselves for Data science, Biometric-enabled self-service, Windows 8.1 Tablets for Entertainment, In-Flight Wi-Fi, In-Flight Personal Televisions, and Airsickness Bag.
2. To have a better baggage handling mechanism, they should focus on innovations like the World Tracer Tablet and Bag Message System at the Srinagar International Airport.
3. To have a sound refreshment policy, the airlines should provide lunch packs to their passengers to increase service quality, including juices, fruits, snacks, cakes, sandwiches if the flight is delayed or canceled.
4. The management should give the airlines' employees proper training on how to work together during the time of emergencies.
5. The airlines should have well improved and monitored grievances redress mechanisms for its passengers where they can register their queries and grievances so that passengers' problems are reported and addressed on a fast track basis to build up the brand image. The employees working should be trained so that they behave in a friendly manner with the passengers. They should have congenial behavior towards the passengers or customers while responding to tear queries. There should be sincerity and patience among employees in resolving the queries and problems of the passengers.
6. The airlines should try their best to follow their aircraft's time commitments (apart from the weather and natural passengers' calamities) with full rigidity. That way, delaying in the airline operations could be minimized, and passengers can reach their destinations on time.
7. The airlines must work very hard to boost their quality of services and the approach by which services are being delivered to tourist passengers. Courtesy and patience of the ground staff employees can play a crucial role in passenger

satisfaction to provide them with a seat of their own choice if there is the same availability.

8. The airlines shall have to shun their philosophies that they have assured market and instead act as competitors to gain competitive advantages to provide extra comfort to their passengers.
9. Better e-commerce services shall be provided to make the technology savvy and become accessible to all the people across the globe's length and breadth. It can also help in meeting tourist passenger's specific needs that, too, in no time.
10. The airlines should use safety standards as prescribed by the IATA at the Srinagar International Airport. The researcher has the (mean value=3.33) for the Safety performance variable, significantly less. IATA's Six Point Safety Strategy' is a common-driven approach to identify organizational, operational and emerging safety issues.
11. No penalty shall be imposed for rescheduling the air ticket if the passenger has a sufficient cause.
12. The airlines should provide discounts, cash-back given to their passengers on special occasions.
13. The airlines should have grievances redress cell for the passengers to register their queries and grievances, which can be sorted out under single window clearance.

## **5. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

There were many limitations faced by the researcher in the present research. The research was conducted over four months, which allowed only summer airline tourist passengers to be surveyed. Thus, the respondents' responses would only be of a particular set of tourist passengers and not representative of year-round tourism. Ahead of time and financial constraints, the attributes selected as of the independent variable

were not exhaustive. There could have been other attributes, which were not used in the study, demonstrating the airline image and behavioral intention. The present study did not provide full information about the behavior of the particular tourist passenger group.

Moreover, it provided direction and essential information that may help an airline enhance satisfaction, trust, and passenger loyalty. The study was confined to tourist passengers only as of the perception of general passengers' regarding service quality. The behavioral intention might be dissimilar from that of tourist passengers, so in this regard, an empirical examination needs to be done to study all types of passenger groups. Such limitations would encourage future researchers to proceed further and give additional directions so that the study's results could be further enhanced to the optimal level to enhance service quality.

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