

Selected Pre-Flight Expectations in the Air Transportation Industry-A Comparison Between South Africa and Malaysia

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Abstract: Most studies investigating passenger's expectations of the airline transportation industry focuses on service quality and satisfaction relating to only the airline industry. This paper deals with an overview of travellers' expectations of personal activities as part of their airline transportation experience. These aspects refer to expectations of South African and Malaysian travellers when at an airport that deals with aspects like a need for resting and entertainment when waiting for a flight. The two most important variables in Non flight related paid services category are the availability of ticket offices and banking facilities while in the Auxiliary airport services category, safety and security in the building and audio announcements were regarded as the two most important variables.

Key words: Airport transportation • Service • Service quality • South Africa • Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Research state that research into airline service quality has increased rapidly since it's relationship with passenger satisfaction and profitability has been established. During the last decade the airline transportation industry has gone through dramatic changes. The changes were due to ever changing customer demands and expectations as well as responding to amongst other the technological and political environmental demands [1]. The deregulation of the airline business is another reason for these changes [2]. Many airline companies have lost track of the true needs of the passengers and are trapped in outdated views of what airline services is all about [1,3-5]. Numerous papers [4,6,7] are focusing on service quality and service satisfaction relating to airlines This paper acknowledge the importance of these papers but simultaneously realize the lack of studies focusing on customer expectations throughout the travelling experience especially the so called personal activities that is indirectly very much part of the total airline experience.

These personal activities include aspects like making provision for customers to rest, work, to be entertained and personal care [5]. This paper provides an outline of the total airline transportation provision and will eventually focus on the personal activities prior to the flying experience.

Passengers' Expectations and Customer Satisfaction in the Air Transportation Industry: Literature in service marketing and management generally acknowledges that retaining customers and developing relationships with new ones is the key to business strategy. For any business, continuing support depends on repeat customers [4]. The most effective way to ensure repeat customers is to provide a product or service that continuously meets customer's expectations and to keep promises. In reality, endeavouring to deliver a service of continued quality is a formidable task [4,6,8]. Aksoy [3] however point out that most companies do not recognise the importance of this approach until driven to it by circumstances. Dissatisfied customers are significantly more likely to provide negative feedback than are satisfied

customers to provide positive feedback [1]. This leads to the thinking of long term relationships with customers' that does not happen by chance [4]. In fact long terms relationships are cultivated and grounded firmly in an organisation's approach to service and value-which are enhanced by an effective recovery system that can even strengthen customer loyalty in the sense that satisfied customers' can be less sensitive to the price being offered. Aksoy [3] suggests that passengers' expectations are among the factors influencing the service decisions of everyone involve in the air transportation industry and realised the success of customer focussed service development that relies on a deep understanding of customer needs, expectations and preferences. The principle law of a quality system is "do it right the first time". Therefore it is important to determine what customers expect and try to react to each aspect [4].

Service quality represents a critical success factor. Therefore it is particularly important, for every organisation, to define not only customers' satisfaction (measurable, in the context of quality, by the perceived quality) but also the factors that their clients consider most important for a service of high quality (expected service). When a pleasurable consumer experience is planned, a variety of consumers' expectations should be taken into consideration, especially expectations of convivial service [9]. One of the most used methods to gauge the level of satisfaction and the customers' expectations is the administration of questionnaires. This method has been used in this paper to try defining expectations of passengers using services offered by South African domestic airlines and to compare it with domestic airlines operating in Malaysia.

Satisfaction and the Air Transportation Industry:

Perceived service quality is defined as the consumer's judgement about an entity's overall excellence or superiority [10]. Dawes and Rowley [11] acknowledge the importance of measuring and enhancing service quality but also stress the importance of the overall service experience. According to these authors perceived quality results from a comparison of customers expectations with customer perceptions of performance. Satisfaction is seen as related to a specific transaction while incidents of satisfaction over time lead to perceptions of good service quality [12,13,14]. Service quality then stems from a comparison of what customer's feel an organisation should offer with their perceptions of the performance of

the organisation in providing the service. Perceived service quality is evaluated by the actual performance of the service in terms of particular service attributes in a specific context whereas customer satisfaction is assessed by customers' overall experience of the service of which service quality is only one aspect. It is further clarified that customer satisfaction then depends on various factors including perceived service quality, customers' mood, emotions, social interactions and other experience specific factors [1,15]. Gronroos [16] suggest that service quality in addition is made of two components-technical and functional quality. Technical quality refers to what the service provider delivers during the service provision while functional quality is how the service employee provides the service. This latter aspect will be elaborated on later. Finally an example is given to illustrate the relationship by stating that service quality in an airline as for example evaluated by timeliness of a flight schedule or individualised attention by a flight attendant might not necessarily produce high levels of satisfaction as if any negative aspects were perceived on the flight. Le Bel [9] states that customers' pre purchase expectations are a critical determinant of their satisfaction as well as their perceptions of service quality. It clarifies to some extent the explanation of Saha and Theingi [1] by stating that expectations act as a standard of comparison to judge the service providers performance. It is stated that a customer is satisfied when the service performance exceeds or met expectations [10]. Saha and Theingi [1] point out that those expectations are more than predictive beliefs about the performance of a service and that consumers normally have different types of expectations.

This study addresses aspects of service quality in the air transportation industry in general and then focuses on selected aspects thereof.

Air transport is a major role player that facilitates the movement of e.g. holidaymakers and business travellers. In South Africa this mode of transport became more important than any other means of transport compared to other parts of the world like various parts in Asia where rail transportation is a safe and economic option. Page [17] argues that owing to the choice of transport available and the competitive environment for travellers in free market economies, transport operators recognize the importance of ensuring that the travel experience is both pleasurable and fulfils consumers' expectations [18,4,19]. Clearly an investigation should include aspects that originate from the pre booking stage through to the

completion of the journey [5]. Several studies suggested that airline service quality is one of the most critical factors that are likely to influence travellers airline selection decision and significant relationships exist among reputation, service and retained preference [20,21]. Attributes that are related to service quality that are perceived as important by airline customers are price, safety, timelines, luggage transportation, quality of food and beverage, comfort of the seat, check-in process, inboard service and marketing promotion of airlines [2,3,19,21]. Chang and Yeh [22] and Park [6] however are of the opinion that one aspect only, *price*, was initially regarded as primary competition weapon. According to these authors, airline industries soon realized that competition on price alone represent a no win situation on the long run. Empirical studies of demand for airlines show that service quality is central to the choice of airline related demand for both business and leisure travellers. Rhoades and Waguespack [2] however warns that although surveys are a source of valuable information to consumers in order to determine customers' needs and wants, they have several weaknesses from a research perspective. In the first instance it is stated that it is difficult to compare different surveys because of the variation in factors considered within each survey. The second reason is that the cross-sectional nature and changing factors limits the ability to evaluate trends in the data. Lastly, these surveys normally do not provide an overall ranking of all the airlines included but a category-by-category ranking of the top performers.

As various studies could be found relating to service quality in the airline industry this study however only focuses on the passenger personal activities when exposed to the air transportation industry. Although the services offered by various airlines are probably the main reason why people show interest to airports, it is in fact the facilities that airports provide that enables airlines to perform their activities successful. This study will mainly focus on services supporting the functioning of domestic airlines in South Africa and to compare or benchmark it with domestic airlines in Malaysia. These activities are also referred to as passenger activities. The identification of these two countries was the result of a collaborative project between researchers at a university in South Africa and one in Malaysia to research service quality in the respective airline industries. Furthermore, these two countries share common competitive characteristics in terms of number of competing airlines. Yet, they provide

sufficient homogeneity relating to development status of the countries with both countries being labelled as developing countries.

Customer Loyalty, Passenger Activities and Air Transportation: A fundamental principle of marketing is that loyal customers enhance the performance of an organization. Organizations involved in delivery of air transportation and air transportation-related services might reasonably be expected to have customer loyalty as key target [4]. Prayag [15] support this statement by saying that service quality contributes significantly towards service differentiation, positioning and branding and further argues that success for various smaller airline companies has been through differentiation and airline positioning and that service quality has become a centrepiece of their corporate and marketing strategy. He adds that various mega carriers have pushed the boundaries of service quality to its limit through adding aspects of service personalisation and modern aircrafts amongst others. All of these aspects have customer loyalty and support as ultimate goal.

Very few studies were conducted about various activities that are conducted from when a person start to enquire about ticket prices or bookings till after the baggage were collected. Only one study could be traced focussing on a wide spectrum of activities from search and booking a flight till a pre determined destination is reached. The following discussion is based on the seminal work of Gustafsson [5]. Gustafsson [5] distinguish between a broad spectrum of passenger activities from arriving at the airport till claiming baggage at the final destination. All these activities are subjected to either service failure or satisfied customers and should consequently be managed by different role players. Some of these activities are voluntarily customer activities while other are prescribed by the travel system activities that are mandatory and results in an endless list of activities. The conclusions were based on Scandinavian Airlines system (SAS) study that focused on passenger behaviour and tried to systematize the different air transportation related tasks and focus on clusters of similar customer behaviour. A distinction between procedural activities, personal activities and planning and preparation activities were consequently made (Figure 1). While procedural activities takes the form of mandatory activities such as cueing for security purposes or to board the aircraft in an orderly manner, personal activities refer to aspects such

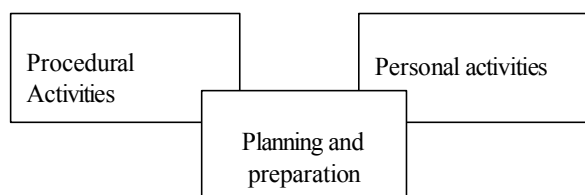


Fig. 1: Categories of Passenger activities

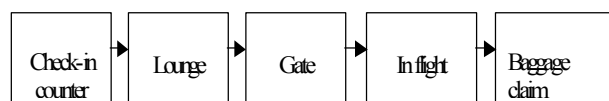


Fig. 2: Travel experience as service process

as keeping travellers busy while waiting for the actual flight to take place. For the purpose of this study, emphases are placed on personal activities. Lastly planning and preparation activities refer to making use of all kind of travel information in order to make the most out of the trip including waiting time and delays that also includes personal activities.

Various subcategories for personal activities can be identified. These activities are related to resting, working, entertainment, socializing and personal care [5]. Resting refers to passengers that might be in need for sleep or sitting in a relaxed atmosphere while waiting for a connection flight. Passengers might also have a need to perform some work related activities where the necessary facilities exist to enable the passenger to do so. This might include a suitable environment to the availability of computers to access the internet. A need to be entertained might be provided in the form of TV's for news watching or facilities to entertain children in various age groups or the availability of shops and restaurants. Le Bel [9] points out that designing memorable experiences requires a total re-examination of the physical evidence, including furniture, layouts and signage.

Figure 2 indicates the total travel experience. Personal activities at the airport are likely to take place before check-in after check-in and before boarding through the gate. This process continues after disembarking the aircraft and before and after claiming one's baggage.

Atalik [4] recon that airport transportation may be particularly susceptible to the problem of service failures because of the number of different providers involve in delivering the service, the high number of passengers and the people based nature of the service. He continues by stating that if service failures are an unpleasant fact for airlines, then all organizations involved should have a clear plan to deal with service failures as way of

minimizing the adverse affect of customers' complaints. This concern includes the involvement of employees at various levels of the service provision at will be discussed further.

Managing People Effectively to Deliver Sustained Service Excellence:

Various authors emphasise the importance of customer contact as a key consideration in the design and delivery of services including the air transportation service [21,23]. Prayag [15] emphasise that both poor and excellent service, has a strong emotional impact on the customer that create intense feelings about the organisation, its staff and service and influence loyalty to it. It is in this regard that staff can play an enormous role in turning a negative attitude around by providing excellent service quality. The important role of customer contact employees in creating and providing high quality service as well as the amount of recognition it received from various authors that specialise in this area [21]. Rhoades and Waguespack [2] mention that a fundamental aspect of service recovery includes appointing fully trained employees to resolve customer issues. In addition they should be empowered to do so while best practises should be studied for possible implementation where possible. Slatten and Mehmetoglu [24] recon that there is an enormous need for innovation in approaches to improving service delivery by frontline staff. They state that employee's positive emotional state assists the ability to be more creative when offering a service. According to these authors knowledge, no studies has linked employee engagement to employee' innovations behaviour. Babbar and Koufteros [21] recognises the important role of customer contact employees in creating and providing high-quality service and brought to the forefront the critical role which contact employees play in determining customer satisfaction. It has been argued that the management of moments of truths (when a customer comes into any contact with the services offered by a company) can indeed shape the quality of services rendered. Behaviours and attitudes of contact employees can significantly shape the customers' experience with the service provided and their assessment of its quality. Wirtz [23] concludes that continuous training and retraining has been vital to companies in sustaining service excellence by equipping staff with an open mindset, to accept change and development and to deliver new services that is introduces from time to time. The training should include aspects such as programmes focussing on

changing priorities and skills required at various levels of management; management skills development programmes which are functional or skills related, ranging from amongst others negotiating skills to cross cultural understanding; and finally self-development programmes in areas of social etiquette or counselling.

Research Problem: It is assumed that air transportation management are planning their business with sufficient knowledge about the expectations of passengers with regard to the services rendered to them. The problem under investigation in this paper is to investigate to what extent the selected services provided on domestic air transportation are being regarded important in South Africa and to compare or benchmark it with those offered by the domestic air transportation industry in Malaysia. The study focuses on services related to domestic air transportation offered before the aircraft is boarded and mainly exclude services being offered by airlines in particular. These services could be seen as auxiliary services related to the air transportation experience. The investigation should provide some extent of direction in order to satisfy client's need and consequently be profitable and to increase their market share. This is especially important where passengers have a choice in terms of airports to use. Gilbert and Wong [25] state that in the air transportation industry context, the problem is whether management can correctly perceive what passengers' want and expect.

This becomes increasingly important resulting from the financial difficulties the air transportation industry is experiencing since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America.

The need for the study results from a worldwide tendency of economic downturn and the public caution on air travel that is caused by the capacity of the airline industry to exceed demand substantially [20].

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this paper is to identify selected service quality elements related to aspects before flying that may contribute to the satisfaction of passengers when making use of domestic air transportation facilities in South Africa and to compare it with passengers making use of domestic air transportation facilities in Malaysia. This research identifies the most preferred service quality factors in selected categories in the domestic air transportation industry in South Africa and Malaysia. The research shall

result in improved management of service quality associated with the air transportation industry. The outcomes of the research will result in the sustainable management of pre-selected service quality elements associated with the air transportation industry with specific reference to airline passengers. This is preceded by a literature study addressing the need of assessing expectations, perceptions and levels of satisfaction of airline passengers. The study concludes with some suggested applications of some strategies to ensure loyal and satisfied passengers on board domestic airlines. The variables under investigation however mainly exclude services provided by domestic airlines but rather focus on other stakeholders in the air transportation industry.

Research Objectives and Methodology: The primary objective of the study is to identify the rate of importance with regard to pre selected service quality variables offered to passengers when making use of domestic air transportation in South Africa. As secondary objective, these results are then compared with the findings of a similar study that was conducted in Malaysia in order to see whether any similarities exist. The study follows a similar approach that was performed prior to the current study.

Research Hypotheses: With regards to the objectives of the study the researchers formulated the following hypotheses:

Ho: There exist no statistical significant differences regarding the level of importance of the selected service variables between South African and Malaysian passengers.

Ha: There exist statistical significant differences regarding the level of importance of selected service variables between South African and Malaysian passengers.

Sample Description: Passengers qualified to be part of the survey by answering confirmative that they have travelled by means of any domestic airline in the respective country during the last 12 months preceding the study. Potential participants were then approached for their willingness to participate to the survey.

The sample is composed of 401 respondents, 207 of them from South Africa and 194 from Malaysia. The profile of the respondents is given in table 1.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

	South-Africa		Malaysia	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Occupation				
Self-employed	22	11	26	13.4
Private sector employed	90	43	82	42.3
Public sector	51	24.6	54	27.8
Unemployed	1	0.5	1	0.5
Student	30	14.5	23	11.9
Pensioner	8	4	2	1
Other	5	2.4	6	3.1
Period of last flight				
Within the last month	76	36.2	59	30.4
Within the last three months	54	26	11	6
Within the last six months	42	20	41	21.13
Within the last twelve months	11	5.2	26	13.4
More than a year ago	19	9.0	57	29.3
Purpose of travel				
Business	87	41.1	69	35.9
Education	10	5	20	10.3
Vacation	28	13.3	49	25.5
Visit to family, friends or relatives	60	29	32	17
Other	8	4	22	11.5

The majority of the respondents in each category interviewed are in the category private sector employed. This is followed by respondents employed in the public sector. The third biggest South African group is students, while the third biggest Malaysian group is represented by self employed persons.

Characteristics of the sample are indicated in table 1.

The biggest group of both the South African and the Malaysian samples respectively has indicated that their last flight was within the last month. The second largest South African group has indicated that they have flown within the last three month while the second biggest Malaysian group has indicated that their last flight was more than a year before.

As can be seen from table 1, the main reason for the South African sample travelling is work related (forty one percent) while the largest percentage of Malaysian travellers did so due to holiday related reasons (fifty one percent). The biggest group in the South African sample has indicated that their main reason for travelling was for business purposes. The biggest Malaysian sample has indicated that their main reason for travelling was for holiday purposes.

Measuring Instrument: The questionnaire was constructed by various inputs from both primary and secondary sources. Primary inputs were generated by focus groups that had prior experience of domestic

airlines. Secondary inputs were collected from brochures and publications [3,26,27]. The full questionnaire dealt with aspects like demographic information, airline related service variables before purchasing a ticket, service variables before boarding, after boarding and after the flight came to an end. The latter was measured on a seven point scale ranging from very important (1), important (2), somewhat important (3), neither important nor unimportant (4) somewhat unimportant (5), unimportant (6) and not important at all (7).

The questionnaire has been adapted from a previous survey [3] and subjected to pilot testing. After a few adjustments to the questionnaire were made it was tested on over 200 travellers making use of domestic airlines living in the Cape Town region of South Africa and approximately 200 travellers in the Kuala Lumpur area of Malaysia. To determine the reliability of the results, a Cronbach Alpha test was performed which yielded results of above 0.88 for the different seven point scaled questions that was included in the questionnaire. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine a 95% of level of significance between the two groups under investigation and are indicated in the tables. The variables that were tested covered various stages of the air transportation experience. However for the purpose of this paper only the service variables related to personal activities prior to the actual flight are dealt with.

Table 2: Non flight related paid services

Item	South Africa		Malaysia		Total		DF	F	p-value
	MN	SD	MN	SD	MN	SD			
Short term: Less than 24 hours parking	2.32		2.0		2.13				
	6	1.18	5	.91	6	.97	384	11.507	.001
Medium term parking 1-7 days	2.6		2.02		2.2				
	8	1.42	7	.91	7	1.1	381	13.084	.000
Longer than one week parking	3.0		2.2		2.42				
	10	1.43	8	1.0	9	1.2	361	20.369	.000
Executive carport	3.31		2.6		2.9				
	11	1.11	10	1.1	10	1.14	367	18.463	.000
Restaurant	2.03		1.6		1.83				
	4	1.13	3	.75	4	.88	393	24.321	.000
Bars	2.74		4.0		2.91				
	9	1.36	11	1.21	11	1.12	357	47.332	.000
Curios/ gift shops	2.51		2.4		2.39				
	7	1.13	9	1.04	8	1.0	389	3.381	.067
News stands	2.24		2.0		2.09				
	5	1.1	5	.84	5	.92	384	5.457	.020
Banking facilities	1.66		1.4		1.53				
	2	.89	1	.60	2	.77	398	12.386	.000
Pharmacies	1.86		1.62		1.73				
	3	.98	4	.80	3	.88	391	9.401	.002
Ticket offices	1.43		1.4		1.4				
	1	.71	1	.54	1	.63	390	1.640	.201

• Lower case = ranking order

Sig = 0.95

Administration of the Measuring Instrument:

Personal interviews were conducted with the respondents by means of a questionnaire that was drawn up in English. In the case of the South African fieldworkers, they were capable to assist in translating some of the questions to especially African languages. All the respondents in Malaysia could read and write English fluently and no clarification was sought as in the case of the South African respondents.

Data Capturing: Data was captured by a trained assistant and analysed by using the SPSS version 18 statistical package.

Findings: Table 2: indicates services not related to the flight experience.

All of these services are rendered by private ownership as an extension of what the airlines are normally offering. Overall the most important variable in this category are ticket offices managed by the various airlines for mainly late reservations, ticket purchases, changes in existing flights and enquiries. This finding also applied to both samples as both countries samples has rated this item as most important variable. No significant

statistical differences were measured between the two samples. Banking facilities were overall rated as second most important variable, where it was also rated second by the South African sample but first by the Malaysian sample. The Malaysian sample rated it significantly more important compared to the South African sample. The overall third most important variable is pharmacies and was rated third by the South African sample and fourth by the Malaysian sample. The Malaysian sample however rated it significantly more important compared to the South African sample.

The overall fourth most important variable was restaurant facilities. It was rated fourth by the South African sample and third by the Malaysian sample. The Malaysian sample rated it significantly more important compared to the South African sample. The availability of newsstands was overall rated fifth in terms of importance. It was also rated in fifth place by the respective country samples. However the Malaysian sample rated it significantly more important compared the South African sample.

Overall bars were rated as least important variable. The Malaysian sample also rated it in last position while it was rated in ninth position by the South African sample.

Table 3: Auxiliary airport services

	South Africa		Malaysia		Total		DF	F	p-value
	MN	SD	MN	SD	MN	SD			
Drop off zone	1.74		1.51		1.62		1		
	7	.894	8	.65	8	.79	384	9.536	.002
Information desk	1.44		1.3		1.4		1		
	2	.78	3	.52	3	.68	398	6.939	.009
Amenities in building	2.15		2.1		1.99		1		
	11	.94	11	.81	11	.91	374	3.188	.075
Information display billboards	1.57		1.3		1.44		1		
	5	.924	3	.59	4	.80	397	13.185	.000
Audio announcements in departure hall	1.49		1.2		1.36		1		
	3	.854	1	.50	2	.72	396	14.260	.000
Front line staff	1.51		1.54		1.52		1		
	4	.80	9	1.8	6	1.38	398	.038	.846
Safety and security in building	1.25		1.2		1.21		1		
	1	.62	1	.53	1	.52	394	3.045	.082
Lock up facilities	2.14		1.5		1.73		1		
	10	1.3	6	.58	9	.94	383	38.509	.000
Departure rooms	1.78		1.5		1.61		1		
	8	1.0	6	.63	7	.80	392	10.426	.001
Trolleys	1.64		1.4		1.49		1		
	6	.88	5	.61	5	.74	395	12.504	.000
Porter services	2.06		1.7		1.87		1		
	9	1.1	10	.68	10	.92	389	20.111	.000

Lower case = ranking order

Sig = 0.95

The Malaysian sample rated it significantly less important compared to the South African sample. In conclusion, although similar trends were measured between the samples of the two countries, statistically significant differences between South Africa and Malaysia were characterized amongst almost all the variables except the importance of ticket offices and curios\gift shops.

Table 3 illustrates auxiliary airport services that are normally included in the air transportation experience and in most of the cases no additional fee is levied. In this category the overall most important variable was safety and security related issues. This variable was rated as most important variable by both samples. No statistical significant differences were measured. The overall second most important variable in this category is audio announcements in the departure hall. It was rated third by the South African sample but however most important by the Malaysian sample. The Malaysian sample rated it significantly more important than the South African sample. The overall third most important variable in this category was the information desk. Although it was rated in second position by the South African sample and third by the Malaysian sample, the Malaysian sample rated it significantly more important compared to the South African sample. Overall the information display billboards

were rated fourth in terms of importance. The Malaysian sample rated this variable third in terms of importance while it was rated fifth by the South African sample. In addition the Malaysian sample rated it significantly more important compared to the South African sample.

The variable rated overall as the least important in this category was the amenities in the building and was rated the same by the distinctive samples. A possible reason could be that these facilities are also available on the aircraft if necessary. This was followed by porter services that were rated significantly less important by the South African sample. Statistically significant differences between the South African and the Malaysian samples were characterized amongst almost all the variables except the amenities in the building, frontline staff and safety and security in the building. In these cases a certain extent of agreement between the two samples was measured.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study is to identify selected service quality elements that relate to personal activities at an airport that may contribute to the satisfaction of air travellers when making use of domestic airlines in South Africa and to compare it with a Malaysian sample.

For the purpose of this paper this research identifies the most preferred service quality factors in selected categories in the domestic air transportation industry in South Africa and to compare it with a sample in Malaysia. The investigation was limited to Personal activities and grouped into two broad categories namely Non flight related paid services and Auxiliary airport services. The two overall most important variables in the Non flight related paid services category are the availability of ticket offices and banking facilities. Although, ticket offices could be argued, are under the control of a particular airline, this facility is so important for travellers with specific needs that it was categorized here as probably the first haven to solve airline related or even other flight related queries. This facility should be functioning on a high level of efficiency (as travellers of both countries rated this variable first) in order to satisfy travellers' needs on short notice. This facility should be manned by highly skilled front line employees in order to solve potential problems regarding airline related queries or needs. The overall second most important variable (and rated second by travellers of both respected countries) in this category is banking facilities. In the case of domestic airlines it is assumed that this mainly refers to OTM's (automatic tellers). Although no human assistance is normally provided for standard procedures it is advisable to provide some kind of personal assistance (for example when international travellers need assistance) when at the domestic terminal.

In the Auxiliary airport services category, safety and security in the building were overall regarded as the most important variable as well as by the individual countries travellers. This is not different from what is offered by all airports in the world following the deadly 9/11 related acts of terror especially aimed at the air transportation industry. The second overall most important variable (and rated relatively high-1st the Malaysian sample and 3rd by South African sample) was audio announcements. Regardless of whether many airports stopped with the announcements of flight details through the audio system, it appears as if this service still remains important and the message should be conveyed to the applicable stakeholders for consideration. The question is however what type of messages should be conveyed as high tech flight related (boarding time, flight number and departure gate) information boards have mainly replaced the need for audio announcements. Even if only limited information is conveyed through the audio system it should be done by trained and knowledgeable employees.

All the findings and recommendations should be communicated with the relevant stakeholders that form part of the total product (service) offering provided by the airport. This does not only include the services provided by the various airlines but also all the other stakeholders including services offered by restaurants, other shops as well as services provided by the airport company (e.g. amenities). Adhering to the needs and expectations of passengers will result in offering high levels of service quality and consequently satisfaction but will also contribute to shaping emotions, attitudes and expectations. Considering the research findings and applying the recommendations should result in improved effectiveness in total management of service quality associated with the air transportation industry. Adhering to the findings and recommendations will ensure that airport companies are able to plan ahead to try to meet the expectations of air travellers when boarding a national air carrier.

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