



SERVICE QUALITY ACCEPTANCE ON LOW COST CARRIER

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Abstract

Perceived service quality is the foundation for comprehending transportation needs, as it influences consumers' selection of the numerous types of services that are continuously evolving. A company's success is determined on its ability to please its clients. This study's objective is to examine the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and Perceived Service Quality from Low-Cost Carrier on Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, and Loyalty. Explanatory research employing a quantitative methodology will be used by the author for this study. This study used a non-probability sampling strategy with a purposive sampling method, meaning the selection of samples is not random but rather based on specified criteria, notably prior experience with LCC (Low-Cost Carrier) or low-cost airlines. Using an adapted SERVQUAL scale, 249 participants who were domestic travelers from Indonesia were contacted. SmartPLS 3 utilized Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate the research data. Perceived service quality was a significant predictor of customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.877$, $p = 0.000$), corporate image ($\beta = 0.607$, $p = 0.000$), and customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.456$, $p = 0.000$), as indicated by the results. EWOM will increase consumer loyalty to low-cost carriers ($\beta = 0.182$, $p = 0.028$). On the basis of these results, LCCs should develop future strategic plans that significantly emphasize the enhancement of service quality metrics.



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1. INTRODUCTION

As a developing country, Indonesia has a service industry component of 45% of Gross National Product (GDP). Air transportation is one of the important elements of Indonesian tourism [32]. The development of aviation sector services in Indonesia continues to increase from year to year, attracting the interest of the broader society [33]. Any company operating in the aviation industry must be adept at managing marketing and service initiatives to boost client acquisition and retention.

Low-Cost Carriers (LCC) have had a considerable impact on the world's domestic aviation sector, which was formerly dominated by Full-Service Network Carriers (FSNCs) [34]. Understanding and achieving the expectations of consumers is important for the aviation industry,

especially LCC because it can provide a competitive advantage and can survive in market competition. Currently, consumers are very concerned about the Perceived Service Quality provided by service companies, especially the aviation industry. Perceived Service quality is an advantage or perfection that can be provided by a service [35]. As a service company, LCC should always pay attention to perceived service quality to maintain customer satisfaction so that repeat purchases can occur [21].

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is an online review and recommendation or opinion given by consumers [15]. The expansive reach of eWOM and the simplicity of accessing reviews can have a significant impact on a company's performance. Hence, firms are attempting to comprehend the factors that motivate the utilization of eWOM as well

as its outcomes [24]. Low-cost carriers (LCCs) are likely to be the most affected by eWOM in the aviation business.

Most marketers view loyalty as an ideal circumstance in which consumers have a good opinion toward a product or service and exhibit a consistent pattern of repeat purchases [36]. Customer loyalty can also be defined as the strength of the connection between customer attitudes and repurchase behavior [37]. Customer loyalty is essentially the company's relationship with its customers. A good firm constantly places the consumer at the core of its operations.

In order to comprehend transportation requirements, the perception of service quality is the fundamental premise that can influence consumers' selection of the many sorts of services that are currently evolving. In a time of significant population growth, individuals tend to prefer economical and quick modes of transportation. The success of a business depends on its ability to satisfy its clients.

If a company is able to give customer satisfaction, it will not only have repeat customers but also people who will promote it to others. In contrast, if the offered service quality deteriorates, it will have a substantial impact on the level of passenger satisfaction, causing them to finally migrate to a different airline [33]. Recommendations given from one customer to another is a form of word of mouth information which also has a considerable impact on a product.

In the twenty-first century, the quality of air transportation services has always been one of the most important determinants of a nation's economic development [18]. The Customer Loyalty Program is one of the most effective methods for increasing brand awareness and securing long-lasting, strong relationships between brands and consumers [22]. The characteristics of perceived service quality are Tangibility, Responsive, Reliability, Assurance, and Empathy [12]. The greater client happiness, the greater the perceived service quality [40].

Among the many studies on Customer Loyalty, one reveals that customer loyalty benefits firms by reducing marketing expenses, trading leverage, attracting new customers, responding to competition threats, and enhancing the cumulative value of a sustainable business [38]. Low-Cost Carrier (LCC) managers must have an understanding of the aspects that can significantly influence customer loyalty, such as perceived service quality, customer satisfaction, and perceived business image [12].

There is a correlation between Electronic Word of Mouth and Perceived Service Quality from Low Cost Carrier to Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, and Loyalty, according to numerous sources of prior study. So, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of word-of-mouth and perceived service quality from low-cost carriers on brand image, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Perceived Service Quality

According to [7], a service is an activity or a collection of intangible activities that take place through contacts between customers and workers of the service and/or service provider system to solve customer problems. Increasing flying passengers result in increased demand for the level of service provided by airlines. [7]. To survive the pressure of fierce competition, the airline sector has adopted the supply of high-quality service as a marketing strategy. Objective quality is described by [35] as product/service excellence or technical superiority, whereas perceived quality is defined as the entire perception of a product or service by consumers.

The perception of service excellence increases consumers' faith in businesses. It has aided organizations in capitalizing on new opportunities given by the competitive landscape [39]. The importance of service quality in gaining a competitive edge in the aviation industry by boosting customer loyalty, controlling market share, and generating profits [7] cannot be overstated. According to [42], perceived service quality is one of the most concentrated competitive variables and a driver of consumer perceived value, airline image, and airline customer loyalty.

2.2. Corporate or Brand Image

According to [10] that the hidden trust in the minds of consumers as a form of association or company and persists in one's memory is called Brand Image. A strong brand image can increase consumer confidence in a product or service. Brand image affects the company's long-term profit by increasing customer trust. Brand image is the perception of brand results from the reflection of brand associations that have been embedded in consumers (Imbayani and Gama, 2018:146). Consumer trust arising from a strong brand image will lead to repurchase interest in consumers.

According to prior study [23], Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Repurchase Intention, but Juwariyah's (2019) research indicates that Brand Image has no significant effect on Repurchase Intention. These two investigations have varied outcomes, resulting in a research gap between the two studies, which lends credence to the phenomenon investigated in this study. The more favorable the brand image, the more favorable the attitude towards the branded product and its qualities, according to [2].

2.3. Customer Satisfaction

[11] stated: "For public organizations client satisfaction is the new criteria in order to measure the organizational performance." Customer satisfaction applies to all organizations, including public organizations. Client satisfaction is based on organizational performance measurement.

Meanwhile, [43] & [11] define satisfaction as a state felt by a person who has experienced performance or an outcome that fulfills his or her expectation. Customers are considered to have satisfaction when a statement is made by someone who has felt the performance or outcome to meet customer expectations. Customer satisfaction is a dependent variable based on the high and low customer expectations and the results of the evaluation of the performance provided by the company.

According to [35] in [25], satisfaction is defined as: The customer's opinion of whether a product or service meets their requirements and expectations constitutes satisfaction. According to this opinion, contentment is the appraisal of a product or service by a consumer who is already satisfied with the product or service. Customer satisfaction is a crucial technique used by the service industry to promote client loyalty and, ultimately, organizational success and profitability [18]. Satisfaction implies an appraisal of product acquisition and/or use [6].

2.4. Electronic Word of mouth (eWOM)

Dellarocas (2003) in [11] states: "In commercial situations, WOM involves consumers sharing attitudes, opinions, or reactions about businesses, products, or services with other people. WOM marketing is influential, multifaceted, and typically hard to influence". This opinion explains that in business, WOM involves sharing behavior, opinions, reactions to a business, product, service with others. WOM has an important role to influence and has strong characteristics to be able to influence a person's behavior.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), also known as online reviews, online recommendations, and online opinions, is gaining significance as new technical methods develop. eWOM is defined by [15] as "any informal communications directed at customers via Internet-based technology regarding the usage or qualities of certain goods or services, or their suppliers." During the new digital era, traditional WOM has developed into eWOM. The primary distinction between WOM and eWOM is the scope of the review's influence (the number of individuals who can be affected) and the pace of engagement. About this comparison, [26] stated that "online WOM is more impactful than conventional WOM because of its speed, convenience, one-to-many reach, and lack of face-to-face human pressure." The breadth of eWOM's coverage and the accessibility of its reviews can have a significant impact on a company's performance. Thus, businesses are attempting to comprehend the elements that drive the use of eWOM, as well as the effects of its use.

2.5. Customer Loyalty

Consumer loyalty is the propensity of a client to choose a particular company, brand, service, or

product whenever the need to purchase arises [22]. According to [8], the concept of loyalty is as follows: "Loyalty is defined as a non-random purchase represented over time by a decision-making unit" Loyalty is the propensity of decision-making units to make repeated purchases of a company's goods or services. Then, according to [25], define loyalty (service loyalty) as the degree to which a consumer exhibits repeat purchase behavior from a service provider, has a disposition or tendency to have a positive attitude toward service providers, and only considers using this service provider when the need arises.

In the ever-increasing corporate competition, client loyalty has been demonstrated to be a crucial factor in achieving a lasting competitive advantage [18]. The psychological commitment of a customer to the company's goods or services is referred to as loyalty. Even if he or she does not frequently utilize the company's products or services, a customer with a loyal disposition can suggest it to others [22].

2.6. Perceived Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction, Corporate Image and Customer Loyalty

Perceived Service Quality is related to Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, and Repurchase Behavior, according to [17]. Perceived service quality has a favorable and statistically significant effect on the loyalty of cell phone consumers, according to [9]. Perceived Service Quality does not always have a significant impact on Customer Loyalty. Perceived Service Quality in the Islamic bank industry can have an impact on Customer Satisfaction but not too significantly on Customer Loyalty [1]. In addition to having an impact on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty, Perceived Service Quality can also have an impact on the brand image of a company. [12] found that increasing Perceived Service Quality can increase Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty and strengthen Brand Image. Thus, the hypothesis proposed for this research are:

H1 : Perceived Service Quality has a good impact on Customer Loyalty in the LCC industry in Indonesia

H2 : Perceived Service Quality has a good impact on Customer Satisfaction in the LCC industry in Indonesia

H3 : Perceived Service Quality has a good impact on Corporate Image in the LCC industry in Indonesia

2.7. Customer Satisfaction and Corporate Image

The image of airlines, including LCC, is regarded as a valuable asset [5]. Indeed, client contentment appears to alter airlines' brand perception. China's consumer pleasure has a significant effect on brand image, as seen by the data in [3]. Moreover, satisfied passengers at Dubai International Airport have a positive impact on the image of the airline [13]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed for this research is:

H4 : Customer Satisfaction has a good impact on the Corporate Image of the LCC Industry in Indonesia

2.8. Customer Satisfaction and EWOM

Prior study has demonstrated a positive association between a satisfactory travel experience and a favorable intention to suggest or WOM [16], [20], and [28]. Nevertheless, the outcomes of other studies are not necessarily the same; some studies suggest that customer pleasure does not always lead to eWOM. For instance, [27] concludes that delighted customers do not necessarily desire to advocate or convince others to utilize a certain service provider. In the case of restaurant services, [30] found no correlation between customer happiness and the propensity of customers to spread positive eWOM. In [4] survey of the setting of tourist locations, the relationship between contentment and intention to supply WOM was also addressed. The relationship between customer happiness and eWOM deserves additional research, especially in the context of airline services, where no such research has been undertaken. Thus, the hypothesis proposed for this research is:

H5 : Customer Satisfaction has a good impact on EWOM in the LCC Industry in Indonesia

2.9. EWOM and Customer Loyalty

When examining the consumer impact of eWOM, it has been discovered that interpersonal influence and WOM are the most influential information sources when consumers make purchasing decisions [15]. Positive online reviews can greatly enhance a hotel's bookings, according to their research [31]. But these results are not always the same as other studies. As in the findings found by [24] that the impact of EWOM on Customer Loyalty is not too significant when compared to the relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty and the relationship between Company Reputation and Customer Loyalty. In general, previous studies have shown that eWOM can affect loyalty, although the impact varies. So the hypothesis proposed for this research is:

H6 : A positive EWOM can have a positive impact on Customer Loyalty in the LCC Industry in Indonesia.

2.10. Corporate Image and Customer Loyalty

Corporate Image plays an important role in the aviation industry. [41] conceptualizes that corporate image is the result of how customers perceive the company. In airlines, airline image is an additional factor that affects brand loyalty [19]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed for this research is:

H7 : Corporate Image can have a good impact on Customer Loyalty in the LCC Industry in Indonesia

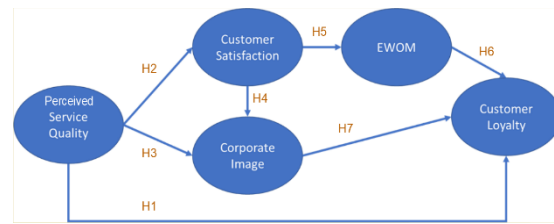


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

III. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Elements of Research Design

[44] defines research methods as basically a scientific way to obtain data with specific uses and purposes. The type of research that will be used by the author in this research is explanatory research using a quantitative approach.

The methodology utilized in this study is quantitative, as numerical data are presented. This is consistent with the opinion of [45], who noted that quantitative research is a study method that requires the use of numbers, beginning with data collection, interpretation of the data, and presentation of the results.

3.2. Proposed Sampling Method and Process

According to [45], quantitative research is a research methodology that requires the use of numbers, beginning with data collection, data interpretation, and the presentation of results. In this research, purposive sampling is proposed as the sampling method and procedure. Purposive sampling is a form of sampling technique that is frequently employed in scientific research. Purposive sampling is a sample approach in which specific criteria are determined [44].

Purposive sampling, commonly referred to as assessment or expert sample, is a sort of non-probability sample. The primary goal of purposive sampling is to obtain a sample that may be considered representative of the population. This is typically accomplished by employing expert knowledge of the population to select a non-random sample of elements that is representative of a cross-section of the population. In probability sampling, each element of the population has a non-zero probability of being selected using a random selection technique with known probability.

This study used a non-probability sampling strategy with a purposive sampling method, meaning the selection of samples is not random but rather based on specified criteria, notably prior experience with LCC (Low Cost Carrier) or low-cost airlines.

Study participants included a sample of people that has been used LCC airlines service. Data were collected from domestic travelers in Indonesia during the period of August 2022.

3.3. Proposed Data Collection Technique

In this study, a survey with an electronic questionnaire was used for data gathering. The

questionnaire consists of demographic and travel characteristics adopted by [12], notably passenger age, gender, travel companion, airline name, departing airport, number of previous journeys through national airports, number of previous trips with LCC, and reason for visit. final. Further questionnaire items, such as measures of Perceived Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Corporate Image, EWOM, and Customer Loyalty, were also arranged to alter the variables of the research hypothesis. The questionnaire items for Perceived Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Corporate Image, EWOM, and Customer Loyalty are adapted from SERVQUAL [47], [12] & [48].

Seventeen items were adapted from the SERVQUAL scale for the service quality construct [47], [12], and [48]. The responses were graded using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly Agree.

Regarding customer satisfaction, three items were used to assess post-purchase self-evaluations and the passengers' reactions to their experience with LCCs. In general, the available responses ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly Agree. The image of an airline corporation was evaluated based on three factors: the status of the airline's image in the minds of passengers, its competitive image, and its corporate reputation. Self-review at Social Media for the LCC was evaluated using four EWOM items. Two items were used to assess customer loyalty: self-recommendations and willingness to pay higher prices for the LCC. Customer loyalty, EWOM, and airline image responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly Agree).

3.4. Statistical Analysis

PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling) was utilized for the analysis. Categorical data (frequencies and percentages) and numerical variables (means and standard deviations [SDs]) were expressed using descriptive statistics. Multiple-response analysis was performed on items with more than one valid response. To ensure the convergence, dimensionality, and discriminant validity of the employed questionnaire, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. Using a correlation matrix displaying the Pearson's correlation coefficients, the correlation between various constructs was investigated. Utilizing the structural equation modeling (SEM) technique, the interdependent dependence relationships between latent constructs were explained. Last but not least, multiple linear regression analysis models were fitted to investigate the independent associations between perceived service quality (as independent variables), customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, EWOM, and corporate image (each variable was used as a dependent variable in a separate model). The outcomes of the regression models were expressed as

coefficients without standardization (β). At $p < 0.05$, statistical significance was determined.

IV. RESULTS

4.1. Demographic and Travel Related Characteristics

The responses of 249 participants were analyzed. The majority of respondents were females (54%) and aged 25 – 34 years old (44%) in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the Sample

	Number of Sample = 249	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	115	46%
	Female	134	54%
Age	18-24 years old	77	31%
	25-34 years old	109	44%
	35-44 years old	42	17%
	> 45 years old	21	8%

4.2. Result of PLS-SEM Analysis

The measurement model identifies the corresponding latent variables for each variable [7]. Prior to PLS-SEM estimation, the validity and dependability of the variables were assessed [46]. To be considered reliable, cronbach's Alpha values must be at least 0.70; each variable was evaluated and plotted to assure dependability [6]. As demonstrated in Table 2, Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables utilized in this study were greater than 0.70. Hence, all numbers fall inside the allowed range, allowing us to conclude that the data is trustworthy. Validity of variables requires demonstration of their convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is determined using the Average Variance Extracted when two or more items measuring related constructs agree (AVE). When each variable's AVE value reaches 0.50, convergence validity is reliable [7]; Table 2 illustrates that the AVE values of variables exceed 0.5, with a range of 0.788 to 0.897. The convergent validity of each item in this study has therefore been demonstrated.

Table 2. Correlations Of Variables, Cronbach's Alpha and Convergent Validity

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Corporate Image	0.883	0.895
Customer Loyalty	0.885	0.897
Customer Satisfaction	0.862	0.879
EWOM	0.927	0.822
Perceived Service Quality	0.946	0.788

The discriminant validity can be demonstrated using the correlation matrix of the AVE square root value in Table 3. Since a construct shares more variance with its associated indicators than it does

with other constructs, the square root of the AVE value of a variable should be bigger than the squared correlation with any other variable [6]. The correlation matrices of the constructions with diagonal values are shown in Table 3. Indeed, the squared correlation between any two variables was bigger than the squared correlation between any two variables. Hence, the discriminant validity of the variables has been proven, and the variables can be declared legitimate.

Table 3. Correlations of Variables and Discriminant Validity

	Corporate Image	Customer Loyalty	Customer Satisfaction	EWOM	Perceived Service Quality
Corporate Image	0.946				
Customer Loyalty	0.871	0.947			
Customer Satisfaction	0.851	0.838	0.937		
EWOM	0.855	0.836	0.839	0.907	
Perceived Service Quality	0.887	0.887	0.876	0.85	0.888

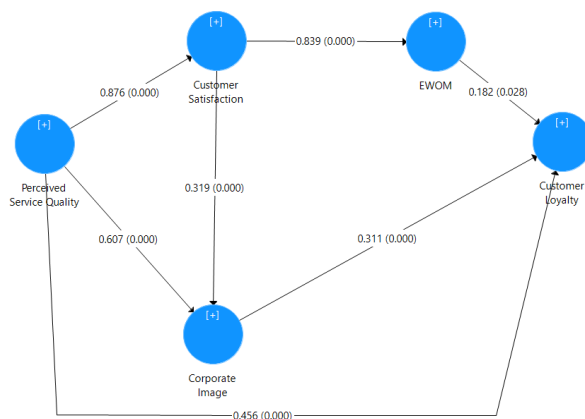


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Model

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Beta Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Results
H1	0.456	0.09	5.092	0.000	Supported
H2	0.876	0.014	63.236	0.000	Supported
H3	0.607	0.062	9.774	0.000	Supported
H4	0.319	0.065	4.951	0.000	Supported
H5	0.839	0.021	39.156	0.000	Supported
H6	0.182	0.083	2.2	0.028	Supported
H7	0.311	0.07	4.459	0.000	Supported

The assessment of hypothesis 1 revealed a positive and statistically significant association between perceived service quality and customer loyalty (p-value = 0.000 and beta coefficient = 0.456). (see Table 4). Higher perceived service quality will increase consumer loyalty to the low-cost carrier,

according to the research. The first hypothesis was supported.

The assessment of hypothesis 2 revealed a positive and statistically significant association between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction (p-value = 0.000 and beta coefficient = 0.877). (see Table 4). Higher service quality will boost customer satisfaction with low-cost carriers, as evidenced by the findings. The second hypothesis was supported.

The assessment of Hypothesis 3 revealed a positive and statistically significant association between perceived service quality and corporate image (p-value = 0.000 and beta coefficient = 0.607). (see Table 4). The findings suggest that a low-cost carrier's business image will be enhanced by a higher service quality. The third hypothesis was supported.

The assessment of hypothesis 4 revealed that customer satisfaction had a positive and statistically significant link with corporate image (p-value = 0.000 and beta coefficient = 0.319). (see Table 4). The findings imply that a low-cost carrier's business image will benefit from a higher level of customer satisfaction. The fourth hypothesis was supported

The assessment of hypothesis 5 revealed that customer satisfaction had a positive and statistically significant link with EWOM (p-value = 0.000 and beta coefficient = 0.839). (see Table 4). Results indicate that greater customer happiness will result in more favorable EWOM for low-cost carriers. The fifth hypothesis was supported

The assessment of hypothesis 6 revealed a favorable and statistically significant association between EWOM and customer loyalty (p-value = 0.028 and beta coefficient = 0.182). (see Table 4). More positive EWOM will increase consumer loyalty to low-cost carriers, according to the research. The sixth hypothesis was supported

The assessment of hypothesis 7 revealed a positive and statistically significant association between corporate image and customer loyalty (p-value = 0.000 and beta coefficient = 0.311). (see Table 4). Customers will be more loyal to a low-cost carrier if it has a more favorable corporate image, according to the data. The seventh hypothesis was supported

V. CONCLUSION

The results of this research confirm that each variable had a positive and significant relationship. The outcomes of the present study provide important information that could be utilized in the managerial aspects of airlines. Since passengers' satisfaction with service quality would occur when passengers' expectations are addressed, the levels of the perceived service quality might be augmented by creating realistic expectations regarding the promises that LCCs make. As such, the provided services should be inherently developed based on the capacity of airline corporates to effectively handle these services.

Actually, LCCs which would be able to create a meaningful balance between service quality and costs would better differentiate themselves in a high demanding environment. Finally, LCCs should tailor dedicated strategies that support positive behavioral intentions; these strategies include dealing adequately with dissatisfied passengers, exceeding the prospecting expectations and confronting passengers' complaints positively. However, these managerial implications would be best applicable in Indonesia, and the generalizability of these suggestions might be limited.

This study provides the Indonesian LCC with the following recommendations: First, the questionnaire for this study is based on adaptation of the SERVQUAL scale; this is one of the study's most important contributions. It is designed in this study and is suited for usage by Indonesian LCCs in loyalty surveys. Second, the perceived service quality demonstrate the loyalty of passengers. Staff must be trained to be more empathetic. The cost of service and level of service must always be in line with consumers' expectations. LCC must emphasize the upkeep of their physical evidence and service environment. They must consistently look in good shape. The layout and design of aircraft cabins, the appearance of flight attendants, and even the tickets should be suited to the requirements of the LCC market. The quality of service offered by LCCs across all service procedures, including check-in, in-flight, landing, and after-services, is still accountable for fostering customer loyalty. Additionally, the airline should do additional service training, enhance the knowledge and abilities of all front-line staff, and promote measures to standardize service. Every staff worker deserves praise and compensation. The airline should develop key performance indicators (KPI) for all personnel to guarantee that they adhere to the service level at which low-cost carriers may achieve passenger satisfaction.

Future research should take into account the limitations of this study. This investigation was conducted in Indonesia alone. The majority of data and analytical outputs in Indonesia represent client behavior. This study only utilizes perceived service quality as an independent variable and does not examine all five dimensions of Service Quality. The author suggested conducting the research in multiple nations in order to collect a sample that is representative of the global population and with consideration of the 5 Dimensions of Service Quality. The second disadvantage of this study is that it only examines the connection between perceived service quality and passenger loyalty. In the LCC market, there may be additional major factors that impact consumer loyalty.

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