

# Cross-cultural perspectives regarding service quality and satisfaction in Chinese cross-strait airlines<sup>☆</sup>

Jin-Long Lu<sup>a,\*</sup>, Feng-I Ling<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Chang Jung Christian University, 396 Sec. 1, Changrong Road, Gueiren, Tainan 71101, Taiwan, ROC*

<sup>b</sup>*China Institute of Technology, 200 Zhonghua Street, Hengshan, Hsinchu 312, Taiwan, ROC*

---

## Abstract

Although the same culture and language pertains in Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, perceptions of service quality vary. Here notions of air service quality is examined in terms of passengers' backgrounds, and especially of those from cross-strait areas based on the perception data of Taiwan travelers and Mainland China travelers. Significant differences are found between cross-strait airlines and Taiwan and Mainland China travelers regarding service attributes.

© 2007 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

**Keywords:** Cross-strait airlines; Service quality; Cross-cultural

---

## 1. Introduction

Since 1978, when the Taiwan government lifted restrictions on visits to friends and relatives (VFR) in Mainland China, traffic between Taiwan and Mainland China has significantly increased. In 2006, Taiwanese tourists traveling to Mainland China was over 4 million persons almost 10 times the number in 1988 (Strait Exchange Foundation, 2007). Travel from China to Taiwan is still, however, regulated, and the number of Mainlanders visiting Taiwan was only around 270 000 persons in 2006.

Most traffic between Taiwan and China depends on air transportation. Due to the political climate, only indirect air travel is allowed, with at least one mandatory stop over. People traveling cross-strait, therefore, have the inconvenience of transfers but they have the opportunity to experience service quality performance from both Taiwan and Mainland China airlines. Service quality, passengers' satisfaction, and loyalty are normally considered to be highly correlated (Proussaloglou and Koppelman, 1995; Lee and Cunningham, 1996) and the situation on the cross-straits offers an opportunity to test this further. Additionally, given the international nature of the passengers

involved, national attitudes towards service quality can be examined, due to airline is often an international business, so passengers who come from different countries/areas may have different service quality perceptions and expectations toward the same airline. As such, providing consistent service quality to passengers having different cultural backgrounds and satisfying their needs are key issues of service management for international airlines.

Here we examine differences in perceived service quality between cross-strait airlines from the viewpoints of Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese travelers and to analyze whether the effects of perceived service quality on passenger satisfaction vary between airlines.

## 2. Theoretical background

Such things as trip purpose, whether children are involved, travel frequency, and cultural background may influence service quality perception. Regarding cultural backgrounds little work has been done. Sultan and Simpson (2000) investigated the service quality perceptions and expectations of European and US passengers for European and US airlines and found that passengers' nationality could be a critical factor influencing expectations and perceptions. Similarly, Cunningham et al. (2002) also found significant differences in service quality perceptions

---

<sup>☆</sup> This study is granted by Chang Jung Christian University.

\*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [jin@mail.cjcu.edu.tw](mailto:jin@mail.cjcu.edu.tw) (J.-L. Lu).

between Korean and US airline passengers. Van Pham (2006) found little cross-culturally differences in the relative importance of service quality perceptions in the trans-Atlantic corridor, US and European corridor.

These studies focused on the perceptions of passengers who came from two clearly distinct different countries or areas (i.e. US versus Korea, US versus European). Here Taiwanese and Mainlanders have similar language and cultural backgrounds, and are thus not so distinct. They do, however, live in different political and business cultures without much interaction until recently.

A number of hypothesis are examined:

**H1.** There are significant differences in service quality perceptions between cross-strait airlines from the viewpoints of Taiwan travelers.

**H2.** There are significant differences in service quality perceptions between cross-strait airlines from the viewpoints of Mainland China travelers.

**H3.** There are significant differences in the perceived service quality of Taiwanese airline between the viewpoints of Taiwan and Mainland China travelers.

**H4.** There are significant differences in the perceived service quality of Mainland China airline between the viewpoints of Taiwan and Mainland China travelers.

**H5.** The perceptions of good service quality would lead to significantly positive effects on passengers' satisfaction.

To test these SERVQUAL, as developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1985 (Grönroos, 2000), is used to measure service quality of airlines (Sultan and Simpson, 2000; van Pham, 2006). SERVQUAL contains five dimensions, including 'Tangibles', 'Reliability', 'Responsiveness', 'Assurance' and 'Empathy'. Usually 22 attributes are used to describe these five determinants and respondents are asked to state what they expect from the service and how they perceive the service. Respondents need to assess all attributes based on service expectations, followed by a second set of the same attributes, based on perceptions of service actually received. Hence, the attributes are evaluated twice by a respondent before service quality is calculated by comparing customers' expectations and perceptions over those 22 attributes (i.e.  $SQ = P - E$ ; where P is performance/experience and E is expectation).

Completing a SERVQUAL survey can be onerous and SERVPERF can offer an alternative (here we just have  $SQ = P$ ). SERVPERF was adopted by Cunningham et al. (2002) to investigate the service performance of both US and Korean passengers for US and Korean airlines. But Robledo (2001), however, argues that neither SERVPERF nor SERVQUAL are efficient measurement scales and proposes SERVPEX. This approach incorporates expectations and perceptions into a single scale, from "Much worse than expected" to "Much better than expected". Comparative analysis by Robledo suggests that SERVPEX is superior to the alternatives and it is used here.

### 3. Analysis

Initially, travelers from Taiwan and China assessed 44 items of service quality offered by the Taiwan and Mainland China airlines. Second, as it mentioned previously, SERVPEX incorporates passengers' expectations and perceptions into a single scale, it is believed that it's easier to be understood by passengers to evaluate the service quality both of cross-strait airlines according to their experiences and expectations.

Service quality is primarily based on the 22 attributes of SERVQUAL modified according to the specific characteristics of cross-strait flight trip and the specific features of airline industry. Service satisfaction of Taiwan and China passengers regarding cross-strait airlines is measured using a single-item construct, namely "I am satisfied with the services provided by Taiwanese/Mainland Chinese airlines". In addition, questions were added asking for particulars of the travelers' backgrounds and about the travelers' experiences of cross-strait flight trips. The survey was administered at Taoyuan International Airport (formerly CKS International Airport) and Kaohsiung International Airport.

#### 3.1. Sample

The sampling frame is very simplistic, takes no account of statistical significance, and is based Hair et al. (2006) who suggest that the ratio of the number of variables to the number of observations needs to be about one to 10. With 44 service attributes some 450 subjects were questioned with a 90% usable response rate. Of these, 262 were Taiwan traveling to Mainland China; 142 were Mainland China travelers traveling to Taiwan.

Of the Taiwan travelers, the ratio of male to female was around 1.9, with 80% of all travelers aged below 40. Personal monthly income of approximately 55% of the travelers was below \$1,800 per month and 20% was in the range \$1,800 per month to \$2,400. Less than 30% of Taiwanese were going to Mainland China for the first time, and 45% of respondents visit Mainland China two to five times each year; almost half of the Taiwan travelers were visiting the mainland China for business.

Regarding the Mainland Chinese, the male to female ratio was 2.3 with 75% aged 31–50. In terms of personal monthly income approximately 30% were in the range of \$375 per month–\$625 with nearly 20% was in the range \$625–\$875. Over half of the Mainland China respondents were on their first visit to Taiwan; almost 30% visited Taiwan two to five times per year.

#### 3.2. Differences in service quality

Respondents were asked to evaluate each service attribute by the gap between their experiences and expectations, using a five-point descending Likert scale starting with 'Much better than EXPECTED'. Factor

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1031427>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1031427>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)