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THE QUALITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE IN NIGERIA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE INDUSTRY AND IT's RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LEVEL OF PATRONAGE: A CASE OF AIR FRANCE AND LUFTHANSA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to provide insight into the Nigeria's international airline industry, the expectations and perceptions of the Nigerian air travelers with a view to enabling them position to better meet customers' needs. The survey method was adopted, with 520 questionnaire administered to passengers and 501 were correctly filled. In order to effectively determine the service gap of the airlines, a 5 point likert scale measurement was used to measure the customer satisfaction level. A correlation and regression analysis were carried out to determine if the level of patronage of respondents are dependent on the servqual index. The study revealed that most Nigerian airline passengers of Lufthansa do not consider customer service quality a major factor in determining their level of patronage. After a correlation analysis was carried out, service quality and patronage has a weak positive value of 0.132 revealing that service quality is not a major factor in determining the level of patronage. In the case of Air France, service quality and patronage has a strong negative value of -0.83 which reveals that most passengers that have a higher perception of the quality of customer service of Air France do not record a high patronage. However, international airlines under case study have relatively high quality of customer service in Nigeria where Lufthansa has an average of 0.59 while Air France has an average of 0.655.

KEYWORDS

quality, Customer service, International Airline Industry; Patronage, Satisfaction.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Aviation practice began in Nigeria in 1920, barely seventeen years after the Wright brothers' first flight in 1903.Though it started as a purely military operation with the landing of a British Royal Air Force aircraft on a polofield in Maiduguri. After the introduction of Royal Air Force in Nigeria in 1920, the Nigerian airline industry witnessed several introductions and collapse of various airlines and aviation bodies (Eze, 2010). In 1935, the operations of the Royal Air Force were replaced by those of the Imperial Airways that flew regular airmail and passengers from London to Nigeria. These services thus preceded commercial international operations in Nigeria, although it was not until 1936 that commercial aviation actually came to Nigeria (FAAN 2010). In recent times, various airlines (both international and Local) operate in Nigeria's airline industry. As a result, diverse airlines with diverse fare structures and operating conditions now operate in Nigeria. This has given rise to a substantial level of competition in the industry.

According to Turban et al (2002), "Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction, that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer's expectation". He further explained that customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase of goods and/or service. Customer service in the airline industry is not much different from the above definitions. In the airline industry, any service or action before, during or after the actual business of transporting the passengers that influences the level of satisfaction a customer derives from the service of transportation can actually be termed as customer service.

Nigeria's international airline industry is surrounded by myriad of problems one of which is the customer service quality. It is no doubt that the vision and mission statements of most international airlines in Nigeria aim at satisfying their customers. These international airlines have even seen the need to establish the customer service departments in their organizations.

The **objectives** of the study is to measure the quality of customer service presently available in the international airline industry in Nigeria and to what extent they are enjoyed by the customers and to provide Nigeria's international airline industry players with unbiased insights to the expectations and perceptions of the Nigerian air travellers with a view to enabling airlines position to better meet customers' needs. However, as a result of the wide distribution of airports in Nigeria, this study shall cover two airlines operating in Port-Harcourt International Airport. The airlines are Lufthansa and Air France. Although these airlines have reliable commercial cargo operations, this study wishes to investigate the commercial passenger services of the above airlines.

In other to achieve the stated objectives, the study sought answers to the following questions How satisfied are Lufthansa passengers with their service? How satisfied are Air France passengers with their service? And Is there a significant relationship between the quality of service offered by an international airline and the patronage from passengers?

1.1 HYPOTHESIS TESTED

H*0*1- Lufthansa does not have low quality customer service.
H*0*2- Air France does not have low quality customer service.
H*0*3- The quality of customer service offered by an international airline has no significant relationship with the patronage of passengers.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Rushton (2006), customer service could be seen as the positioning of resource at the right time, in the right place, at the right cost, at the right quality. He further explained that customer service can be classified in different ways. They may be seen as transaction-related elements, where the emphasis is on the specific service provided, such as on-time delivery, or they may be seen as functional attributes that are related to overall aspects of order fulfillment, such as the ease of order taking. Transaction elements are usually divided into three categories. These reflect the nature and timing of the particular service requirements (before, during and after delivery of the product/service).

2.1 PRE-TRANSACTION ELEMENTS

These are customer service factors that arise prior to the actual transaction taking place. They include all services that an airline offers a passenger directly or indirectly before the actual business of transporting the passengers, which could actually influence the level of satisfaction that a customer derives. They include: written customer service policy; accessibility of order personnel; single order contact point; organizational structure; method of ordering; order size constraints; system flexibility; transaction elements. In airline transportation, they also include services related to flight reservations, enquiries, up-to-date information from the airlines, fare structures (including promos, discounts, etc.).

The order personnel in the airline industry refer to the reservation/ticketing officers. Therefore, the accessibility of these reservation/ticketing officers, could go a long way in affecting the customer's satisfaction of the service yet to be rendered. The method of ordering entails the various options available to customers regarding flight reservations. The order size constraints and system flexibility refer to the various options, opportunities and limitations a customer has to flight reservations and its change.

2.1.1 TRANSACTION ELEMENTS

These are the elements directly related to the physical transaction. Under this heading would be included: frequency of flights; flight availability; flight alternatives; flight time; condition of aircraft; flight status information; flight safety; etc.

The above services determine the quality of service offered a passenger during the actual transit. The frequency of flights an airline is able to offer in a day, week, month and year could determine how frequent an airline is as a choice to customers. In addition, passengers/customers are most likely to consider the frequency of flight delays in determining satisfaction derived from an airline. More so, customers expect that flights are always available whenever needed on the counter or online (if possible). Flight alternatives explain the options regarding comfort ability, timing, mode of payment, etc. Needless to say that the conditions of the aircraft as well as safety of both the passengers and goods are paramount in the decision making of a passenger. No passenger would gladly patronize again any airline that has a record(s) of losing lives and or properties. Passengers would also welcome readily available information regarding their flight at the right time.

2.1.2 POST-TRANSACTION ELEMENTS

These involve those elements that occur after the delivery/service has taken place, such as: customer complaints and procedures; claims procedures.

Customer service elements can also be classified by multifunctional dimensions. The intention is to assess the different components of customer service across the whole range of company functions, to try to enable a seamless service provision. Time, for example, constitutes a single requirement that covers the entire span from order placement to the actual delivery of the order – the order cycle time. One of the main consequences of this approach is that it enables some very relevant overall logistics measures to be derived. The four main multifunctional dimensions are:

1. Time – usually flight time.
2. Dependability – this actually includes how guaranteed and trustworthy a flight is before the passengers.
3. Communications– this includes the availability of information before, during and after a flight to the passengers.
4. Flexibility – the ability to recognize and respond to a customer's changing needs.

2.2 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

In recent times all organization has increasingly come to understand the importance of customer satisfaction. It is widely understood that it is far less costly to keep existing customers than it is to wind new ones. For many organizations in the public sector, customer satisfaction will itself be the measure of success. According to Oliver (1997), satisfaction is defined as the customer's fulfillment. It is a judgment that a product or service feature provided a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. In customer relationship management, customer satisfaction is the measure of the degree to which a product/service meets a customer's expectations.

The study of customer satisfaction has become a paramount factor in the area of marketing as more organizations are trying to retain the customers for their business survival. As more than one airline is operating in the domestic and regional markets, the competition is getting stiffer among the airline companies.

2.3 SERVICE QUALITY

Service quality (Parasuraman et al. 1988; Gronroos 1984) is defined as a comparison between customer expectation and perception of service. Service quality is a consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services (Bitner&Hubbert, 1994). Service quality is like beauty in the eyes of the beholder and hence a matter of perception (Rhoades and Waguespack, 2004).However, it's measurement, plays an important role in assessing a service organization's performance, scrutinizing service problems, managing service delivery and determining corporate rewards (DeMoranville and Bienstock, 2003).

2.4 CASE STUDY AIRLINES AND THEIR OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA

2.4.1 LUFTHANSA AIRLINES'S OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA

Lufthansa has a long history in Nigeria having flown for 50 years in the country. Lufthansa's first flight to Lagos took off on March 4 1962 and was thus not only the inaugural flight to Nigeria, but also the first Lufthansa destination on the African continent. Nigeria was also among the first 25 countries the airline started flying to (before many European destination). Up to four years ago, Lufthansa operated only four flights a week to Nigeria; today there are 10 weekly flights, which is obviously an increase of 150 per cent. Presently, Lufthansa operates flights to Lagos, Abuja and Port-Harcourt (Global aviation, 2006)

Lufthansa airline to a great extent have recognized the need for customer service policies and its implementation. Lufthansa airline have developed strategies that would enable them meet the needs of their passengers. Some of these strategies include:

a) Offering the lowest fare available to passengers.
b) Notifying Customers of Known Delays, Cancellations and Diversions
c) Delivering Baggage on Time
d) Allowing Reservations To Be Cancelled Without Penalty For A Defined Amount Of Time
e) Providing Prompt Ticket Refunds
f) Properly Accommodating Disabled and Special Needs Passengers, including Tarmac Delays
g) Meeting Customers' Essential Needs During Long On-Board Delays
h) Handling "Bumped" Passengers in the Case of Over sales with Fairness and Consistency
i) Disclosing Travel Itinerary, Cancellation Policies, Frequent Flyer Rules, and Aircraft Configurations
j) Ensuring Good Customer Service from Code-Share Partners
k) Ensuring Responsiveness to Customer Complaints
l) Identifying the Services Lufthansa Provides to Mitigate Passenger Inconveniences Resulting From Cancellations and Misconnections.

This study aims at determining the actual service rendered by Lufthansa airline as perceived by the customers.

2.4.2 AIR FRANCE AND ITS OPERATION IN NIGERIA

Air France is one of the subsidiaries of the AIR FRANCE KLM Group, the world's leading airline group in terms of turnover. The equity of Air France is wholly owned by Air France KLM group. Earlier known as Societe Air France, Air France is a Paris based airline having its main hub at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport. Established on the 7th October, 1933, Air France is one of the leading carriers of the world, offering its services around the world. Owned by Air France- KLM Group, Air France offers its passenger and cargo flight services to over 185 destinations in 83 countries (including Nigeria). Air France operates on long- haul routes as well as short-haul routes. For its accomplished safety practices, IATA has accredited Air France with the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA). (www.makemytrip.com/international-flights).

3.0 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

In order to effectively determine the service gap of the airlines, a 5 point Likert scale measurement was used to measure the customer satisfaction level. The Likert items used to define the expectations and perceptions of the passengers of the quality of airline service include:

- **M.W**= Much more than expected,
- **W.E** = Worse than expected,
- **E.E**= Equal to expected,
- **B.E**=Better than expected,
- **M.B**=Much better than expected.

The above Likert scales were thus designed to effectively calculate the service gap amongst the airlines. It is assumed that the distance between each Likert item is equal. As a result, for a more effective and efficient analysis, M.W= 1, W.E= 2, E.E=3, B.E=4, M.B=5. As a result, the mean score for the answers to the questionnaire is 3; this means that answers below 3 are less than the passenger's expectation whereas answers above 3 are higher than the passenger's expectations. To calculate the servqual index for each respondent, Servqualindex =∑(perception – expectation) * 1/ number of questions.

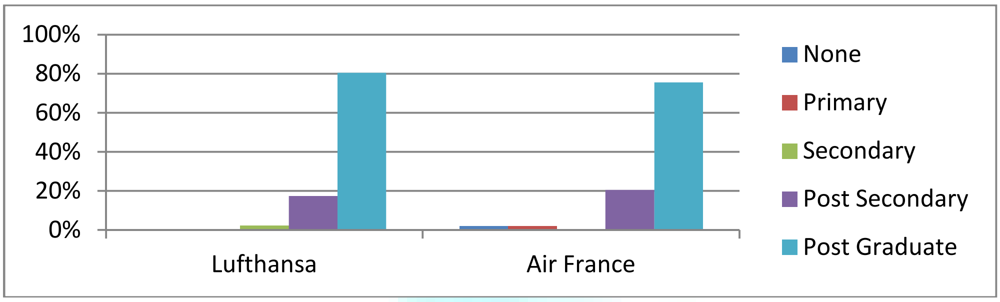
In order to determine the relationship between the service quality and the airline's patronage, a regression analysis was used to determine if the level of patronage of an airline is dependent on the service quality of the airline. Furthermore, a correlation analysis was done to determine if there is a relationship and to what extent between the patronage of passengers and their servqual index.

3.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

It was observed that a greater percentage of respondents for all airlines had post graduate educational background ranging from 80.4% for Lufthansa and 75.5% for Air France.

CHART 1A: DISTRIBUTION OF EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS.

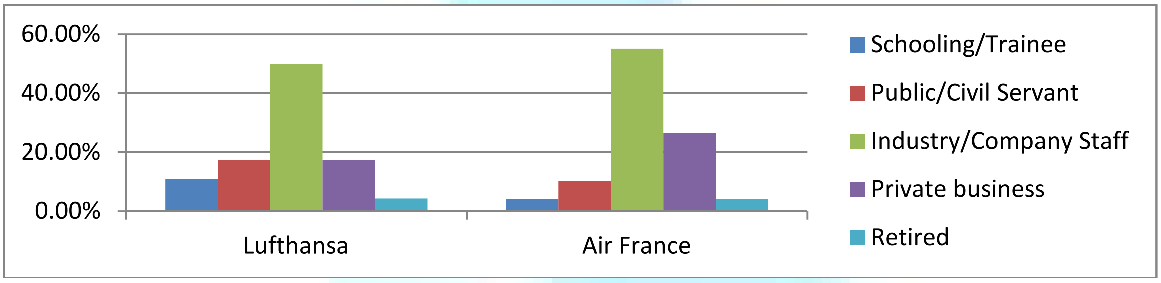


In general, educationally, 77.95% respondents had a post graduate background, 18.95% a Post-secondary background, 1.1% a secondary background, 1% a primary background and 1% of the respondents had no educational background whatsoever.

OCCUPATION

It is also noteworthy that a greater percentage of the respondents were industry company staff ranging from 50% for Lufthansa and 55.15% for Air France.

CHART 1B: OCCUPATION DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

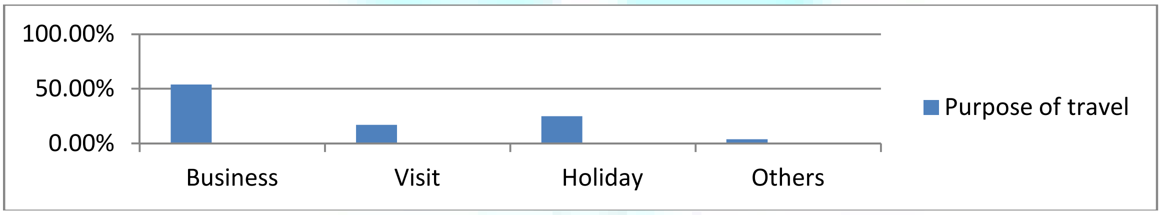


Generally, 52.6% of the respondents were industry/company workers, 22% engaged in private business, 13.8% were public/civil servants while 7.5% of them were scholars/trainees.

PURPOSE OF TRAVEL

When asked the purpose of their travel, 53.8% of the respondents frequently travelled for business purposes while 25.1% frequently travelled for holiday, 17.2% travelled for visitation purposes and 3.9% travelled for other purposes.

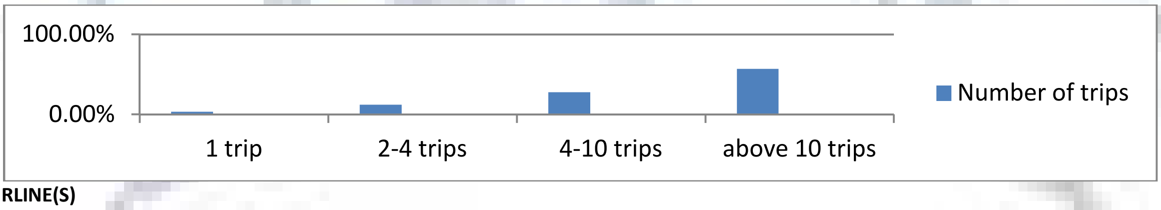
CHART 1.2: SHOWING PURPOSE OF TRAVEL OF RESPONDENTS



NUMBER OF AIRLINE TRIPS

In the course of analysis, it was discovered that 56.60% of the respondents have taken above 10 airline trips in the last twelve months. 27.8% have taken 4-10 airline trips in the last twelve months. 12.2% of the respondents have taken 2-4 airline trips in the last twelve months while 3.4% respondents have just taken a trip in the last twelve months.

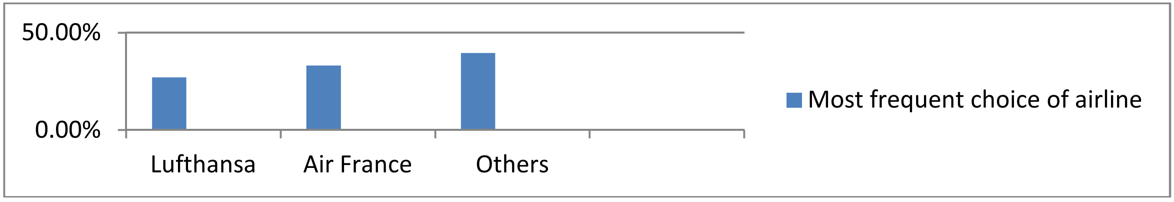
CHART 1.3: SHOWING THE NUMBER OF AIRLINE TRIPS BY RESPONDENTS



CHOICE OF AIRLINE(S)

When asked the international airline they use often for travel, 39.6% of the respondents used other international airlines outside Lufthansa and Air France for international trip. 33.2% used Air France more often while 27.1% used Lufthansa more often for international trips.

CHART 1.4: SHOWING MOST FREQUENT CHOICE OF AIRLINE OF RESPONDENTS



3.2 SERVICE QUALITY ANALYSIS USING SERVQUAL MODEL

This section interprets and analyses the results from the questionnaires distributed to airline passengers. The areas of concentration for analysis includes the number of questions answered by each respondent, the total score for each respondent, the mean score for each respondent, the gap scores for each respondent, the servqual index for each respondent, the remark and the stated level of patronage of each respondent. Where

Mean score = number of questions answered * 3 (the median value of the Likert scale)
Total score = Summation of the scores for each question
Gap scores = Total score – Mean score
Servqual index = Gap score / number of questions answered.
Patronage = Stated level of patronage of the airline by the respondent
Where 1= High patronage and 0 = Low/ no patronage.

3.2.1 LUFTHANSA AIRLINE

The respondents had varied expectations and perceptions of the services rendered by the various airlines. As a result, a gap (which is the difference between the expectations of the passengers and the perception of the service rendered) has been created. The servqual index for all respondents of Lufthansa airline is shown below, where:

🟥 = Very poor
🟧 = Poor
⬜ = Equal to expectation
🟨 = Good
🟩 = Very good
1= High patronage 0= Low patronage

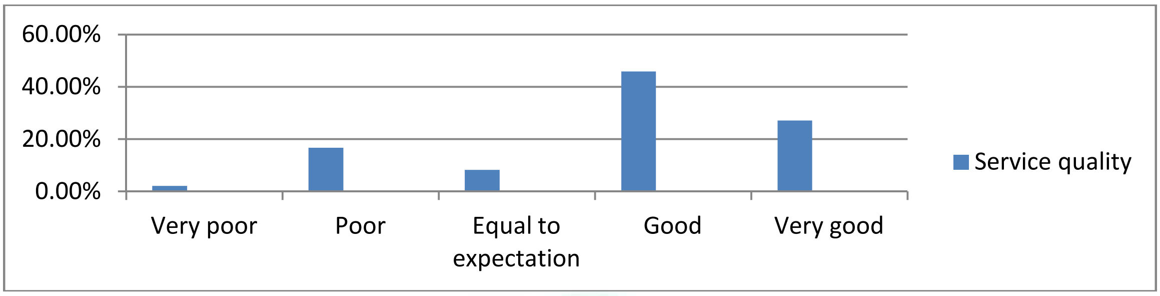
TABLE 1: SHOWING ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE FOR LUFTHANSA

Respondent	Total score	Question answered	Mean score	Gap score	Servequal index	Remark	Patronage
1	58	21	63	-5	-0.238095	Poor	1
2	86	22	66	20	0.9090909	Good	1
3	78	22	66	12	0.5454545	Good	1
4	90	23	69	21	0.9130435	Good	1
5	106	23	69	37	1.6086957	Very good	1
6	76	18	54	22	1.2222222	Very good	0
7	99	23	69	30	1.3043478	Very good	1
8	65	22	66	-1	-0.045455	Poor	0
9	77	22	66	11	0.5	Good	1
10	94	23	69	25	1.0869565	Very good	0
11	85	21	63	22	1.047619	Very good	1
12	76	23	69	7	0.3043478	Good	0
13	115	23	69	46	2	Very good	1
14	75	19	57	18	0.9473684	Poor	0
15	71	23	69	2	0.0869565	Poor	1
16	54	18	54	0	0	Equal to expectation	1
17	107	23	69	38	1.6521739	Very good	1
18	56	19	57	-1	-0.052632	Poor	0
19	56	22	66	-10	-0.454545	Poor	1
20	82	22	66	16	0.7272727	Good	0
21	81	23	69	12	0.5217391	Good	1
22	74	23	69	5	0.2173913	Good	1
23	110	22	66	44	2	Very good	1
24	93	22	66	27	1.2272727	Very good	0
25	78	23	69	9	0.3913043	Good	0
26	21	7	21	0	0	Equal to expectation	1
27	79	22	66	13	0.5909091	Good	1
28	58	21	63	-5	-0.238095	Poor	1
29	93	23	69	24	1.0434783	Very good	1
30	60	23	69	-9	-0.391304	Poor	1
31	68	21	63	5	0.2380952	Good	1
32	60	19	57	3	0.1578947	Good	1
33	70	23	69	1	0.0434783	Good	0
34	54	18	54	0	0	Equal to expectation	0
35	45	23	69	-24	-1.043478	Very poor	0
36	66	22	66	0	0	Equal to expectation	0
37	78	23	69	9	0.3913043	Good	1
38	86	22	66	20	0.9090909	Good	1
39	56	17	51	5	0.2941176	Good	1
40	91	22	66	25	1.1363636	Very good	1
41	107	23	69	38	1.6521739	Very good	0
42	77	23	69	8	0.3478261	Good	0
43	37	10	30	7	0.7	Good	0
44	79	23	69	10	0.4347826	Good	1
45	69	23	69	0	0	Equal to expectation	0
46	50	13	39	11	0.8461538	Good	0
47	106	23	69	37	1.6086957	Very good	1
48	78	22	66	12	0.5454545	Good	0
Total	**3684**				0.576864	Good	

Source: field survey, 2012.

The above table shows that the average service quality index for Lufthansa airline is **0.577** which is a good gap score and above the expectations of the passengers.

CHART 1.5: SHOWING PROPORTION OF REMARK BY RESPONDENTS FOR LUFTHANSA



The chart above shows that 2.1% of Lufthansa's respondents see the airline's service as very poor, 16.7% feel the airline's services are poor while 8.5% feel Lufthansa's services are equal to expectation. Majority of the respondents (45.8%) rate Lufthansa's services as good (greater than their expectations), while 27.1% are very much impressed by Lufthansa's services.

3.2.2 AIRFRANCE

Air France, being an international airline operating in Nigeria also has the following servqual indices from its respondents where;

🟥 = Very poor 🟧 = Poor ⬜ = Equal to expectation

🟨 = Good 🟩 = Very good, 1= High patronage, 0= Low patronage

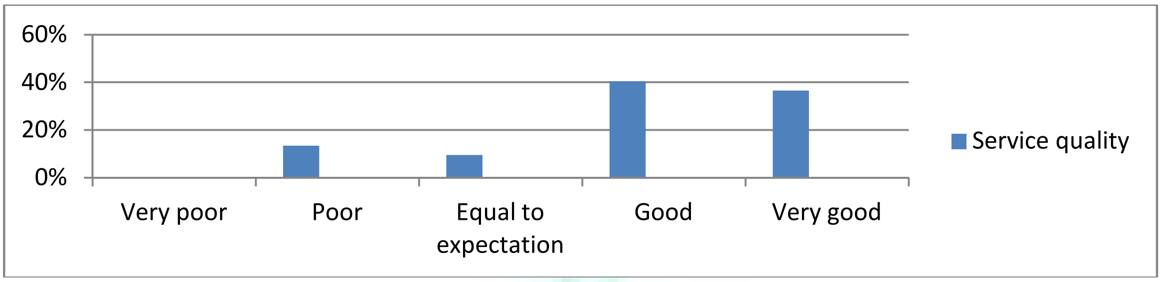
TABLE 2: SHOWING ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE FOR AIR FRANCE

Respondent	Total	Question answered	Mean score	Gap score	Serv qual index	Remark	Patronage
1	61	21	63	-2	-0.09524	Poor	1
2	79	23	69	10	0.434783	Good	0
3	61	20	60	1	0.05	Good	1
4	97	22	66	31	1.409091	Very good	1
5	92	23	69	23	1	Very good	1
6	100	23	69	31	1.347826	Very good	1
7	68	23	69	-1	-0.04348	Poor	1
8	96	23	69	27	1.173913	Very good	1
9	70	23	69	1	0.043478	Good	1
1	101	23	69	32	1.391304	Very good	1
11	72	23	69	3	0.130435	Good	1
12	92	23	69	23	1	Very good	1
13	53	21	63	-10	-0.47619	Poor	1
14	62	23	69	-7	-0.30435	Poor	1
15	80	20	60	20	1	Very good	1
16	94	23	69	25	1.086957	Very good	0
17	93	23	69	24	1.043478	Very good	1
18	80	23	69	11	0.478261	Good	1
19	67	14	42	25	1.785714	Very good	1
2	74	23	69	5	0.217391	Good	1
21	96	23	69	27	1.173913	Very good	1
22	70	23	69	1	0.043478	Good	0
23	78	23	69	9	0.391304	Good	1
24	66	22	66	0	0	Equal to expectation	1
25	106	22	66	40	1.818182	Very good	1
26	36	12	36	0	0	Equal to expectation	1
27	74	23	69	5	0.217391	Good	1
28	61	17	51	10	0.588235	Good	0
29	6	2	6	0	0	Equal to expectation	0
3	77	22	66	11	0.5	Good	0
31	90	23	69	21	0.913043	Good	0
32	87	18	54	33	1.833333	Very good	1
33	65	22	66	-1	-0.04545	Poor	0
34	94	23	69	25	1.086957	Very good	0
35	81	23	69	12	0.521739	Good	0
36	72	19	57	15	0.789474	Good	1
37	56	19	57	-1	-0.05263	Poor	1
38	79	23	69	10	0.434783	Good	0
39	89	23	69	20	0.869565	Good	1
4	95	22	66	29	1.318182	Very good	1
41	58	13	39	19	1.461538	Very good	0
42	95	23	69	26	1.130435	Very good	0
43	70	23	69	1	0.043478	Good	1
44	53	18	54	-1	-0.05556	Poor	1
45	66	22	66	0	0	Equal to expectation	0
46	70	22	66	4	0.181818	Good	0
47	73	23	69	4	0.173913	Good	1
48	61	10	30	31	3.1		0
49	79	23	69	10	0.434783	Good	0
50	69	23	69	0	0	Equal to expectation	1
51	54	13	39	15	1.153846	Very good	1
52	100	23	69	31	1.347826	Very good	0
53	84	23	69	15	0.652174	Good	1
Total	3939				0.6547	Good	

Source: field survey, 2012.

On the average, Air France has a servqual index of **0.655**, which is a good service quality and greater than the expectations of her passengers.As shown below, no respondent sees Air France services as very poor, although 13.5% of the respondents consider Air France services as poor. 9.6% of the respondents considers Air France services as equal to their expectations, a majority of 40.4% consider the services as good while 36.5% are much more satisfied with Air France customer related services.

CHART 1.6: SHOWING PROPORTION OF REMARK BY RESPONDENTS OF AIR FRANCE.



3.3 SERVICE QUALITY AND PATRONAGE

A correlation and a regression analysis were carried out in order to determine:

a) If the level of patronage of respondents is dependent on the servqual index of that respondent.
b) If there is any relationship between the level of patronage of respondents and their servqual index.

LUFTHANSA

TABLE 3: SHOWING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF PATRONAGE AND SERVQUAL INDEX

CORRELATION MATRIX				
		Servqual index	*Patronage*	
	Servqual index	1.000		
	Patronage	.132	1.000	
		48	sample size	
		± .285	critical value .05 (two-tail)	
		± .368	critical value .01 (two-tail)	

The table above reveals that the level of patronage of respondents and the servqual index has a very weak positive correlation.

TABLE 4: SHOWING THE REGRESSION ANALYSIS DETERMINING THE DEPENDENCE OF PATRONAGE ON THE SEVQUAL INDEX

REGRESSION ANALYSIS						
	r^2	0.018	n	48		
	r	0.132	k	1		
	Std. Error	0.495	Dep. Var.	**Patronage**		
ANOVA table						
Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p-value*	
Regression	0.2011	1	0.2011	0.82	.3699	
Residual	11.2781	46	0.2452			
Total	11.4792	47				
Regression output					*confidence interval*	
variables	*coefficients*	*std. error*	*t (df=46)*	*p-value*	*95% lower*	*95% upper*
Intercept	0.5479	0.0947	5.784	6.10E-07	0.3572	0.7385
Servqual index	0.0976	0.1078	0.906	.3699	-0.1193	0.3145

The table above reveals that there is no significant dependency relationship of patronage on the servqual index. This means that the service quality of Lufthansa is not a major determinant factor of the patronage of the passengers.

AIRFRANCE

TABLE 5: SHOWING RESULTS OF CORRELATION ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE SERVQUAL INDEX AND THE PATRONAGE FOR AIR FRANCE RESPONDENTS

CORRELATION MATRIX				
		Serv qual index	*Patronage*	
	Serv qual index	1.000		
	Patronage	-.083	1.000	
		53	sample size	
		± .271	critical value .05 (two-tail)	
		± .351	critical value .01 (two-tail)	

The above table shows that there is a strong negative relationship between patronage and the servqual index.

TABLE 6: SHOWING A REGRESSION ANALYSIS REVEALING THE DEPENDENCE OF PATRONAGE ON SERVQUAL INDEX

REGRESSION ANALYSIS						
	r^2	0.007	n	53		
	r	-0.083	k	1		
	Std. Error	0.481	Dep. Var.	**Patronage**		
ANOVA table						
Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p-value*	
Regression	0.0826	1	0.0826	0.36	.5528	
Residual	11.8042	51	0.2315			
Total	11.8868	52				
Regression output					*confidence interval*	
variables	*coefficients*	*std. error*	*t (df=51)*	*p-value*	*95% lower*	*95% upper*
Intercept	0.6980	0.0913	7.643	5.26E-10	0.5147	0.8814
Serv qual index	-0.0575	0.0963	-0.597	.5528	-0.2508	0.1358

The table shows that the patronage of respondents is negatively dependent on the service quality.

3.4 TESTS FOR HYPOTHESIS

NULL HYPOTHESIS 1

LUFTHANSA

The average servqual index for each indicator is tabulated below:

TABLE 7: SHOWING THE SERVQUAL INDEX FOR EACH SERVICE QUALITY INDICATOR FOR LUFTHANSA

Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy	Tangibles	Assurance	Technical	Average
0.669	0.635	0.457	0.771	0.541	0.851	**0.654**

From the above table, it can be seen that Lufthansa has a good service quality index for all the indicators of service quality and also an average of 0.654.

From the above analysis, the first null hypothesis (H01) which states that Lufthansa does not have a low quality of customer service, would be accepted while H1 would be rejected. This is so because on the average, Lufthansa has a high quality of customer service.

NULL HYPOTHESIS 2

AIR FRANCE

On the average, Air France has the following gap scores for the various service quality indicators:

TABLE 8: SHOWING SERVQUAL INDEX FOR EACH SERVICE QUALITY INDICATOR FOR AIR FRANCE

Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy	Tangibles	Assurance	Technical	Average
0.556	0.577	0.408	0.727	0.547	0.725	**0.59**

The above table shows that Air France has a good servqual index for all indicators of service quality and also an average of 0.59

From the table above, it can be seen that Air France has a good servqual index for Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance, Tangibles and Technical. On the average, Air France has a good servqual index of 0.59.

From the above analysis, the second null hypothesis (H02) which states that Air France does not have a low quality of customer service, would be accepted while H2 would be rejected. This is so because on the average, Air France has a high quality of customer service.

Null Hypothesis 3

The null hypothesis (3) which states the quality of customer service offered by an international airline has no significant relationship with the patronage of passengers would be rejected.

This is because from Table 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, it can be seen that there is no significant relationship between patronage of Lufthansa's passengers and their service quality index while there is a high negative relationship between the level of patronage of Air France passengers and the service quality index.

3.5 ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Lufthansa airline's passengers from table 1 are fairly satisfied with the level of customer service offered by Lufthansa airline.

More so, Air France passengers from Table 2 are more satisfied with the level of service offered by Air France.

In addition, there is no significant relationship between the quality of customer service offered by an airline and the level of patronage for Lufthansa while there exists a strong negative relationship for Air France.

3.6 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

After a critical analysis, it has been discovered that Lufthansa recorded 18.8% unsatisfaction from passengers while Air France recorded 13.5% unsatisfaction from passengers. Although a good record, Lufthansa had its lowest servqual index in assurance while Air France had its lowest servqual index in empathy. All indicators of service quality stated here can be improved upon and maintained inorder to compete favourably in the Nigeria's airline industry.

This research work has also discovered that although most passengers lament over poor service quality of airlines, they still patronize these airlines. This automatically explains that service quality is a not a major consideration in the choice of an airline in Nigeria. For instance, as at the time of this survey, August 2012, there were only two options of International airlines 0peratiing in Port Harcourt airport. This means that regardless of the quality of service offered other consideration such as the fare availability of airlines, number of options or even the time convenience of flights could be a major consideration in patronage.

Passengers of Lufthansa do not see service quality as a major consideration of patronage because Lufthansa airline is the only airline that takes a direct flight to Frankfurt Germany. As a result for convenience, regardless of the quality of service offered, Lufthansa passengers will more often than not patronize Lufthansa if their destination is in Germany.

Furthermore, most Air France passengers who have a bit low servqual index still patronize the airline while majority of those who have high servqual index do not patronize the airline most often.

Further analysis of the questionnaire shows that 45.1% of Air France respondents usually go on business trips, 22.5% travel for visitation, 31% go on holiday while 1.4% have other reasons for using Air France. From the above analysis, it could be deduced that most Air France travelers who go for business purposes say 2-4 times a year have been able to notice the lapses in the quality of the service offered by Air France but still patronize Air France because it is the only international airline that goes from Nigeria to Paris (where their business may be based).

Similarly, 53.5% others who travel for visitation and holiday purposes may not have enough experience to criticize Air France thereby considering their quality as high but at the same time have no need of patronizing Air France in the nearest future. This explains why there is a negative strong correlation between the level of service of Air France and the patronage of her passengers.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Nigeria's international airline industry which has experienced series of challenges and setbacks has come to stay as more international airlines now operate in Nigeria. This success has given rise to an increase in the level of competition amongst airlines and more choice options available to the Nigerians.

However, it is noteworthy that Nigerians are generally very fairly satisfied with the quality of service in the international airline industry in Nigeria (Lufthansa and Air France as case study). It cannot be over emphasized however that the reason of existence of any enterprise, organization or industry are its customers.

From the above analysis, it can be deduced that as a result of lack of competition, major consideration for the level of patronage of passengers have shifted from customer service quality to other factors such as fare structure, availability of flight, time convenience, e.t.c. Therefore, service quality can only play a significant role in determining the level of patronage in ideal situations. An ideal situation occurs where there is a high level of competition, a variety of options in airlines, routes, flight schedules, fare structures, etc. it is therefore recommended that Government should encourage the entrance of more international airlines into the airline industry in order to encourage variety and competition.

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I am sure that your feedback and deliberations would make future issues better – a result of our joint effort.

Looking forward an appropriate consideration.

With sincere regards

Thanking you profoundly

Academically yours

Sd/-

Co-ordinator

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

In this age of Commerce, Economics, Computer, I.T. & Management and cut throat competition, a group of intellectuals felt the need to have some platform, where young and budding managers and academicians could express their views and discuss the problems among their peers. This journal was conceived with this noble intention in view. This journal has been introduced to give an opportunity for expressing refined and innovative ideas in this field. It is our humble endeavour to provide a springboard to the upcoming specialists and give a chance to know about the latest in the sphere of research and knowledge. We have taken a small step and we hope that with the active co-operation of like-minded scholars, we shall be able to serve the society with our humble efforts.

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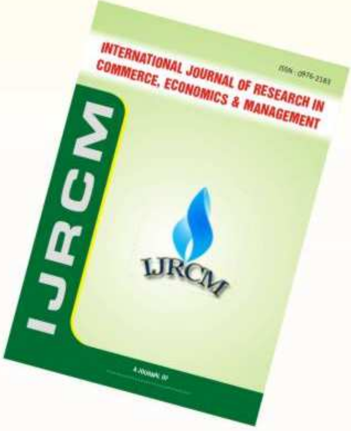
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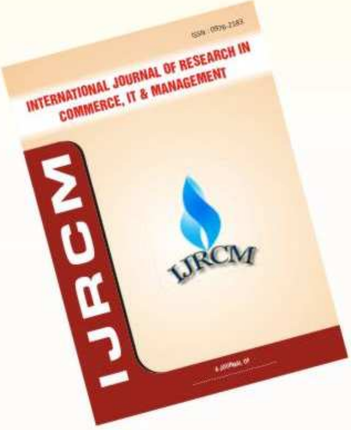
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