

Service Marketing Mixes Affecting Chinese Undergraduate Passengers' Airline Satisfaction for the Route to Thailand

Natetip Surasirikul
(*natetip@rsu.ac.th*)
Rangsit University

Krit Witthawassamrankul
(*krit.wit@kbu.ac.th*)
Kasem Bundit University

Abstract

This research aimed to study service marketing mixes affecting satisfaction of Chinese Students in a private university. The research instrument was questionnaire consisting of 3 parts as 1) personal information and behavior 2) service marketing mixes affecting the satisfaction and 3) additional suggestions. The instrument used a 5-rating level (Likert's Scale). The questionnaires' content validity was from 3 experts in the field of airline business and then translated into Chinese language. The reliability of the questionnaire from 40 sets of tryout from Chinese students in other private university was 0.88. The sample size based on Krejcie & Morgan table was 175 Chinese students out of 320 Chinese students from International College, Kasem Bundit University. The results of the study found that the highest scored factors affecting the satisfaction was product (mean = 4.11) and the lowest scored factor was process (mean = 4.70). Though, every factor was rate at a high level.

Keywords: *Satisfaction, Airline, Service Marketing Mixes, Chinese*

Introduction

Due to insufficient university and high competition in Chinese universities, Thailand is considered as a country for higher education or universities for the middle-class Chinese family whose children could not study in the Chinese universities. The reasons that Chinese parents send their children to study in Thailand are because they can afford the tuition fee for international colleges in Thailand, diverse business administration courses and possibility to do business in Thailand after graduation. In addition, Southern part of China is closed to Thailand. It is easier to come to Thailand within 1.5-2 hours from Yunnan with low cost airlines and national flags. Therefore, Chinese parents in Southern part of China, send their children to study in Thailand due to cultural similarity. Furthermore, there are numbers of high schools in Yunnan and Kunming providing Thai language and cultural knowledge for Chinese students before coming to Thailand. The parents expect that their children can adapt themselves in Thailand easily. In 2018, it estimated that there was around 8,000-9,000 Chinese students in Thai university in popular faculties such as Business Administration, Communication Arts, Hotel and Tourism (Manager Online, 2018).

Objective

To study service marketing mixes affecting Chinese undergraduate passengers' airline satisfaction for the route to Thailand.

Significance of the Study

To gain the knowledge of service marketing mixes affecting Chinese undergraduate passengers' airline satisfaction for the route to Thailand and used the information for the further study

Concept, Theory and Related Researches

The researcher included the concept of satisfaction, service satisfaction and service marketing mixes theory and related researches as:

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is important for marketing since it determined the service marketing mixes to use or to emphasize. Satisfaction of one may be different from another, based on experience, perception, values, expectation, and personal factors such as gender, age, income level, etc. However, the satisfaction must be fulfilled after consuming product or service. The repeated satisfaction causes repeated purchase and loyalty to product or services (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014).

Thought, service is much difficult to be fulfilled with satisfaction due to the characteristics of service as intangible, perishable, inseparable, variable, etc. Service satisfaction, unlike product depends on the situation of users. Service will be evaluated or satisfied based on holistic or personal evaluation (Lovelock, Patterson and Wirtz, 2014).

Service Marketing Mixes

Service Marketing Mixes are extended traditional marketing mixes or 4P's which is used as a tool to respond and increase the needs of customer. Three additional service marketing mixes are people, process and promotion. The service marketing mixes are used to deliver and respond service satisfaction of customers.

1. Product and Service can be service of the airline, meal, brand name, etc.
2. Price determined values appeared on ticket. Pricing can be based on promotion; pricing can be based on cost such as oil price, etc.
3. Place can be distribution of ticket selling, such as website, online, agent.
4. Promotion includes communication tools such as media, advertisement, public relation, salespersons. It can increase or encourage sales volume.
5. People are persons who provide service such as ground service officer, flight attendants, and reservation officers. People who provide service are expected to be punctual, polite, informative and responsive to passengers.
6. Process can be check-in, loading, in-flight service, etc. Some process can be done by passengers or customers such as website reservation, etc.
7. Physical Evidence is the environment encouraging using service. It can be in form of atmosphere, decoration, or factors affecting 5 human senses.

Related Researches

Namfon Channual (2013) did the research titled "Factors Influencing the Decision making of Chinese tourists travelling in Thailand. The researchers used 400 sampled Chinese tourists who used Thai Air Asia. The research instrument was questionnaires. The results of the study found that the most respondents were females whose age between 25-30 years old, earned diploma with salary of 5,001-7,000 Yuan or about 25,000-35,000 Baht. The results of service marketing mixes were at high level. Based on the behavioral analysis, it found that the first travellers prefer agencies service

since they do not have prior information to travel in Thailand. They were told to visit the popular natural attractions in the Southern Part of Thailand.

Jiao (2016) did the research titled “Chinese tourist behavior affected to use full service airlines and low cost airlines in Thailand” The researcher used in-depth interview with 8 Chinese tourists who used Thai full service and low cost airlines. The samples live in the Southern Part of China such as Shanxi Province, Yunnan Province and Guangdong Province. The results of the study found 10 factors from Chinese tourists to make decision for using Thai airlines as 1) Safety 2) Ticket fare 3) flight schedules 4) punctuality 5) on-board comfort 6) airline staff service 7) on-board food and beverage service 8) amount of weight of luggage, 9) travel companions and 10) journey convenience. The study also showed that the Chinese tourists would like have easier payment channel and they would like to gain more information in Chinese language from the Chinese online social network such as WeChat, Sina blog.

Research Method

Population and Sampling

Population in the study was 320 Chinese students who are currently studying at International College, Kasem Bundit University. They are from 6 different majors as Business Administration, English for Communication, Aviation Industry Management, Hotel Management, and Thai Language for Foreigners. The samples size referred by Krejcie & Morgan table was 175. Convenience sampling was applied to the Chinese students.

Research Instrument

The research instrument is questionnaires consisted of 3 parts as:

Part 1: Personal factors included the questions of genders, ages, year, major, revenue per month, province (domicile) and behavior included most frequently used airline, frequency per year, influencer, cost for ticket and payment type.

Part 2: Service Marketing Mixes for Airline included product (service), price, place (channel of distribution), promotion, people, process and physical evidence. Likert's Scale in part 2 indicated 5 ranges as below:

4.20 – 5.00	Highest
3.40 – 4.19	High
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate
1.80 – 2.59	Low
1.00 – 1.79	Lowest

Part 3: Additional Suggestion

In order to construct the good quality of questionnaire, content validity by three experts from airline business were invited. After checking the content, the questionnaire was translated into Chinese language and then 40 sets of the questionnaires were pre-test or tryout by the similar groups of samples, which are the Chinese students from a private university. The reliability was 0.88.

Data Collection

The researcher collected the data from 175 samples from 6 majors at International College, Kasem Bundit University, from 18-22 February, 2019

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage were used in the questionnaire part 1: demographic profiles and mean and standard deviation were analyzed in the questionnaire part 2: service marketing mixes and Part 3 content analysis.

Results of the Study

Personal Factors and Behavior	Frequency	Percentage
1. Gender		
Male	82	46.9
Female	93	53.1
2. Age		
Less than 20 years old	14	8
20-23 years old	64	36.6
More than 23 years old	97	55.4
3. Year		
First Year	16	9.1
Second Year	53	30.3
Third Year	52	29.7
Fourth Year	42	24
More than Fourth Year	12	6.9
4. Major		
Business Administration	35	20
English for Communication	39	22.3
Aviation Industry Management	30	17.1
Hotel Management	70	40
Thai Language for Foreigners	1	0.6
5. Revenue Per Month		
Less than 10,000 Baht	49	28
10,001-20,000 Baht	57	32.6
20,001-30,000 Baht	62	35.4
More than 30,0001	7	4
6. Province (Domicile)		
Yunnan	65	37.14
Guangxi	101	57.71
Shandong	3	1.71
Shanghai	4	2.29
Beijing	2	1.14

7. Most Frequently Used Airline		
Thai Airways	57	32.6
Thai Air Asia	55	31.4
Bangkok Airway	59	33.7
Others	4	2.3
8. Frequency Per Year		
1-2 times per year	66	37.71
3-4 times per year	66	37.71
5-6 times per year	38	21.71
More than 6 times per year	5	2.86
9. Influencer		
Myself	45	25.71
Friend	58	33.14
Parents	61	34.86
Sales Point	11	6.29
10. Cost for Ticket		
2,500 Baht	41	23.43
2,500-5,000 Baht	73	41.71
5,000-7,500 Baht	55	31.43
More than 7,500	6	3.43
11. Payment Type		
Cash	43	24.6
Credit Card	69	39.4
Money Transfer	57	32.6
Web Pay	6	3.4

Table 1: showed frequency and percentage of personal information and behavior

The result of personal factors showed that the respondents are 93 females (=53.1%) and 82 males (=46.9%), the highest age range was 97 students whose age more than 23 years old (=55.4%), most respondents were from second year (=30.3%) and third year (=29.7%), the students from hotel management were highest (=70%), revenue per month were about 20,001-30,000 Baht (=35.4%) and 10,001-20,000 Baht (=32.6%), the provinces or domiciles of the students mostly were from Guangxi (=57.71%) and Yunnan (=37.14%).

The results of the behavior showed that the samples frequently used 3 airlines as Bangkok Airways (=33.7%), Thai Airways (=32.6%) and Thai Air Asia (=31.4%), frequency of flying per year was 1-2 times per year (=37.71%) and 3-4 times per year (=37.71%). The influencers of buying tickets are parents (=34.86%), friends (=33.14%). The cost of ticket were around 2,500-5,000 Baht (=41.71%) and payment type were by credit card (=39.4%) and money transfer (32.6%).

Service Marketing Mixes Affecting Satisfaction	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1. Flight time period meets your needs	4.28	0.84	Highest
2. Flight punctuality	3.96	0.88	High
3. The taste of on-board dining	4.26	0.86	Highest
4. Airline reputation and credibility	4.18	0.85	High
5. Existing aircraft conditions	3.94	0.84	High
6. High quality ground service	4.10	0.92	High
7. High quality on board	4.26	0.82	Highest
8. Convenience of onboard entertainment and onboard activities	3.86	0.84	High
9. The fare matches the service you enjoy	3.82	0.84	High
10. The fare matches the flight fare	3.94	0.82	High
11. The fare matches the meal on board.	3.88	0.89	High
12. Convenient booking	3.94	0.85	High
13. Reservation office information service is helpful.	3.66	0.85	High
14. Easy to pay fare.	3.88	0.86	High
15. Air ticket promotions to stimulate consumption	3.88	0.85	High
16. Ticket benefits, and other special rights can be obtained through points and activities	3.64	0.84	High
17. Be able to see airline advertisement on major social media	3.70	0.81	High
18. The airline provides attractive public relation.	3.90	0.81	High
19. Sales staffs are helpful and informative.	3.94	0.89	High
20. Airline has some offline activities that attract consumers	3.86	0.91	High
21. Airline organization activities that are meaningful to society and the environment	3.90	0.88	High
22. Ground staff is good	3.80	0.84	High
23. Ground staff give good service	3.78	0.87	High
24. Ground staff can serve Chinese well	3.66	0.81	High
25. Flight attendants have good personality and disciplines	3.60	0.80	High
26. Flight attendants provide excellent service	3.74	0.83	High
27. Flight attendants can serve Chinese well	3.66	0.84	High
28. The pilot has enough experience and is able to operate the aircraft well.	3.78	0.79	High
29. The ticket ordering system is easy to operate and has simple steps	3.62	0.82	High
30. Have enough ordering and payment channels	3.86	0.87	High
31. Provide ticket change and refund service	3.78	0.89	High
32. Check-in and ticket checking process is convenient and fast	3.62	0.84	High

33. The security process is convenient and rapid	3.64	0.83	High
34. The airline's counter decoration is eye-catching and easy to be discovered by customers.	3.74	0.84	High
35. Counter service has a very friendly atmosphere	3.74	0.88	High
36. Airlines have unique and obvious signs that are easy for passengers to remember	3.74	0.84	High
37. Check-in counters are clean and tidy	3.72	0.77	High
38. The cabin environment is clean and tidy	3.66	0.88	High

Table 2: showed mean and standard deviation of service marketing mixes

Overall, the service marketing mixes gained high level (the range from 3.40 – 4.19). However, there are highest levels (range from 4.20 -5.00), flight time period meets the needs (mean = 4.28), high quality on board (mean = 4.26) and the taste of on-board dining (mean = 4.26), respectively. When considered the service marketing mixes in each factor, product was ranked as the first high (mean = 4.11).

Service Marketing Mixes Affecting Satisfaction	Mean	Meaning
1.Product	4.11	High
2.Price	3.88	High
3.Place	3.83	High
4.Promotion	3.83	High
5.People	3.72	High
6.Process	3.70	High
7.Physical Evidences	3.72	High
Total Service Marketing Mixes	3.83	High

Table 3: showed mean and meaning of service marketing mixes

Part 3 Additional Suggestion

The results of the written part in the questionnaire concluded that the airline should developed diverse communication channel for Chinese student passengers in Chinese language and through the media that they could access online such as WeChat, Sina Blog since there are numbers of Chinese students from Southern Part of China would like to use the airline service and many would like study in Thailand due to cultural similarities. Besides, some Chinese students suggested that aircrews for Route to China should be able to speak Chinese since they would like to ask about the airline service process and some information about Thailand. The Chinese students recommended that the check-in process and ticketing should be faster.

Conclusion and Discussion

Overall, the highest service marketing mixes was product (mean = 4.11) whereas other service marketing mixes were also not different. The Chinese students preferred punctuality, on-board service and meal provided by Thai airlines. This similar with the related research titled “Chinese tourist behavior affected to use full service airlines and low cost airlines in Thailand (Jiao, 2016) that Chinese tourists from

Southern part of China preferred Thai airlines because of safety, punctuality of flight and on board service and they would like to know more information of airline in Chinese language from the on-line channels such as WeChat, Sina blog since they do not access some on-line tools such as facebook and line. From the in-depth interview, Chinese travellers preferred easier approach.

Recommendation

1. In order to gain more information, the research should have in-depth interview as a qualitative research in the study.
2. The choices of Chinese airlines should be named in the study. Therefore, some other topics can be explored such as comparison of Thai and Chinese airline service marketing mixes, for example.

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