

Service Quality Influence on Customer Satisfaction & Purchase Intention: A Study from the Indian Airline Industry

Uday Sankar Das¹, Mihir Kumar Shome²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Management & Humanities, National Institute of Technology Arunachal Pradesh, Jote, Arunachal Pradesh – 791113 India udaysankar2011@gmail.com

² Professor, Department of Management & Humanities, National Institute of Technology Arunachal Pradesh, Jote, Arunachal Pradesh – 791113 India mihir@nitap.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to investigate the interrelationship of service quality experience with customer satisfaction, purchase intention and also test the mediating role of customer satisfaction. Specifically, it intends to examine the direct relationship of service quality with customer satisfaction & purchase intention. The purpose of this study is to test this relationship in context of the domestic civil aviation market in India. The SERVPERF scale was adapted, and modified using scale development procedures for simultaneously measuring customer satisfaction & purchase intention. This modified self-reporting questionnaire was distributed to flyers of various domestic airlines, waiting inside the domestic terminals using convenience random sampling technique. Thus, a total of 864 samples were collected from various airports geographically dispersed across the country.

The data collected was computed for analyzing the factor structure using exploratory factor analysis and, the measurement model was analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis. Similarly, the hypothesized relationships, were tested using a structural equation model (SEM). The findings supported all the hypotheses, confirming the interrelationship of service quality experience with customer satisfaction & purchase intention along the mediating role of customer satisfaction. Finally, it provides theoretical and practical implications of the findings on the business sustainability of the domestic scheduled commercial airlines.

Keywords: service quality experience; customer satisfaction; purchase intention; civil aviation; India.

Introduction

Civil Aviation Industry in India saw a steady growth with the reforms of post economic liberalization introduced in the year 1991 and several private fleet owners started operating alongside the national airline. However, the domestic aviation industry got a comprehensive policy level overhaul in the form of '*National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016*' aimed at addressing the contemporary needs, and achieving a phenomenal growth of the Civil aviation Sector in India (AAI, 2016). This new aviation policy enforced a growth in the aviation infrastructure and consequently the number of operating airports grew to 148 in the year 2023 for the first time since independence. The domestic civil aviation industry in India also made a robust recovery with 159 million passengers (both domestic and international) in the year 2023 was able to surpass the passenger growth trends of the pre COVID19 levels (MoCA, 2023). Despite these positive growth trends, the domestic aviation industry saw bankruptcy of prominent airlines like '*Jet Airways*', '*Go Air*' and '*Air India*', subsequently falling under the hammer of NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal). *Jet airways* was acquired by the *Jalan Kalrock consortium* and *Air India* was won over in a competitive bid by the *Tata Sons group*. The acquisition of *Air India* assets by the *Tata groups* essentially created two major domestic air fleet operators. '*InterGlobe Enterprises*' with its fleet operating under the banner of '*Indigo*' is a *low-cost carrier (LLC)* services and offers only budget class travel products and has captured over fifty percent of the domestic market share, while *Tata groups* under the banner of

'Air India' (Vistara – now merged) is a *full-service carrier* & also offers budget travel products under the 'Air India Express' banner. Domestic fleet operators in the Indian civil aviation sector face a constantly volatile scenario, with a multilayered hefty tax regime, price fluctuations of Aviation turbine fuel in the international market and competition imposed by the international market players offering similar service products and service quality at par with an extremely competitive pricing. Thus, an investigation into the factors that contribute to the service quality, resulting in customer satisfaction or shapes the purchase intention becomes imperatively important from the market research perspective in context of Indian culture.

Literature review

Service quality literature generically distinguishes perceived service quality and satisfaction as distinct constructs, where perceived service quality is an attitude, not equivalent or related to satisfaction. Moreover, service quality is considered as antecedent of satisfaction, while satisfaction exerts significant influence on purchase intention (Cronin & Taylor, Measuring Service Quality: A Reexamination and Extension, 1992) (Lee, Lee, & Yoo, 2000) (Brady & Robertson, Searching for a consensus on the antecedent role of service quality and satisfaction: an exploratory cross-national study, 2001) (Brady, Cronin, & Brand, 2002) (Lai T. L., 2004) (Kang, Okamoto, & Donovan, 2004) (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006) (Pérez, Abad, Carrillo, & Fernández, 2007) (Rigopoulou, Chaniotakis, Lymperopoulos, & Siomkos, 2008) (Rajaguru, 2016) (Su, Swanson, & Chen, 2016) (Jandavath & Byram, 2016) (de Oña, de Oña, Eboli, Forciniti, & Mazzulla, 2016) (Agyapong, Afi, & Kwateng, 2017) (Qin & Prybutok, 2008) (Khoo, Ha, & McGregor, 2017). However, (Spreng, Shi, & Page, 2009) exerts that service quality effects intentions more than satisfaction (Taylor, Nicholson, Milan, & Martinez, 1997) (Huang, Li, & Yang, 2011) (Moutinho, Albayrak, & Caber, 2012). Some degree of difference exists among marketing researchers on agreeing to observing service quality and satisfaction as distinct constructs nonetheless considers customer satisfaction as a mediator between service quality and purchase/behavioral intentions (Taylor & Baker, An assessment of the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the formation of consumers' purchase intentions, 1994) (Baker & Taylor, 1998). Again, according to (Suh, Lee, Park, & Shin, 1997) there is causal relationship among the variables of service quality, consumer satisfaction, & purchase intention, and service quality influences purchase intention both directly & indirectly through mediators such as satisfaction (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000) (Zeithaml, 2000) (Bou-Llusar, Camisón-Zornoza, & Escrig-Tena, 2001) (Karatepe, Yavas, & Babakus, 2005) (González, Comesaña, & Brea, 2007) (Lai & Chen, 2011)

Therefore,

H1: Service Quality Experience Influences Purchase Intentions.

H2: Service Quality Experience Influences Customer Satisfaction.

H3: Customer Satisfaction acts a Mediator between Service Quality Experience and Purchase Intentions.

Research, focused on investigating the simultaneous impact of quality prediction of purchase intention or repurchase behavior indicate that quality and satisfaction constituted in the formation of loyalty; indicating a strong interrelation between product & service quality leading to purchase intention, while satisfaction or dissatisfaction (expectancy disconfirmation theory) is a function of expectations of perceived service quality, positively influencing purchase intention, with value as an intervening construct (Devaraj, Matta, & Conlon, 2001) (Choi, Cho, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2004) (Hume & Mort, 2010). Similarly, service quality dimensions influence behavioral intention of loyalty & disloyalty, and customer satisfaction mediates these relation (Slack, Singh, & Sharma, 2020). Again (Chongsanguan, Trimetsoontorn, & Fongsuwan, 2017) states service quality directly influences values, satisfaction & purchase intention while influence of service quality is mediated through value and satisfaction on purchase intention simultaneously (Slack N. J., et al., 2021). Moreover, customer satisfaction perceptions enhance through service recovery. Post failure, service recovery strategies help the firm maintain customer satisfaction, retention, loyalty, positive word of mouth & purchase intention (Maxham III, 2001). Customer satisfaction significantly influence word of mouth as well as repurchase intention (Kitapci, Akdogan, & Dortyol, 2014) (Li & Liu, 2018). However, customer satisfaction & behavioral intentions don't align with predictable antecedent outcome of service quality particularly in services scenarios involving outdoor setting (Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005). Tangible factors (Ismail, Haron, Ibrahim, & Isa, 2006), particularly personnels dress code (Shao, Baker, & Wagner, 2004) and the influence of gender shapes the formation of customer expectations of service quality transactions. Factors such as price, service quality, value & satisfaction has significant direct or indirect influence on future behavioral intentions (Tarn J. L., 1999) (Chen C.-F., 2008) & word-of-mouth communications of the service firm (Tam, 2004) (Lee, Park, Park, Lee, & Kwon, 2005) (González

& Brea, 2005) (Park, Robertson, & Wu, 2006) (Hu, Kandampully, & Juwaheer, 2009) (Saha & Theingi, 2009) (Chang, Wang, & Yang, 2009) (Kuo, Wu, & Deng, 2009) (Kassim & Abdullah, 2010) (Clemes, satisfaction, & quality, 2011). e-business environment particularly website-based business services, where multiple underlying factors such as perceived risk, website content, website revisits, value, attitude, skill, word-of-mouth (WOM) plays a decisive role in the formation of e-service quality. Moreover, e-service quality positively influences e-customer satisfaction, while e-service quality also influences online behavioral intentions (site revisits, & word-of-mouth, purchase intentions) directly as well as indirectly through e-customer satisfaction (Udo, Bagchi, & Kirs, 2010) (Wen, 2012) (Gounaris, Dimitriadis, & Stathakopoulos, 2010) (Carlson & O'Cass, 2010) (Lin, Wu, & Chang, 2011) (Ha, Akamavi, Kitchen, & Janda, 2014) (Sharma & Lijuan, 2015) (Lin, Luo, Cai, Ma, & Rong, 2016) (Rita, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019) (Kaya, Behraves, Abubakar, & Kaya, 2019) (Khatoon, Zhengliang, & Hussain, 2020) (Demir, Maroof, Khan, & Ali, 2021). Service quality dimension extends beyond the original five factor dimensions proposed by (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), and more emerging service quality factors (Saravanan & Rao, 2007) like (employee loyalty, customer service, pricing structure) have been seen to influence both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, whereas, customer satisfaction acts as a mediator between service quality & customer satisfaction (Carrillat, Jaramillo, & Mulki, 2009) (Yee, Yeung, & Cheng, 2010) (Ha & Jang, 2010) (Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010) (Dahiyat, Akroush, & Abu-Lail, 2011) (Wu & Chan, 2011) (Srivastava & Sharma, 2013) (Choua, Lub, & Chang, 2014) (Shi, Prentice, & He, 2014) (Orel & Kara, 2014) (Thaichon & Quach, 2015) (Murali, Pugazhendhi, & Muralidharan, 2016) (Tandon, Kiran, & Sah, 2017). Again, post-purchase & pre-purchase satisfaction are distinctively different and, perceived service quality linkages of pre-purchase satisfaction influences both purchase intention & loyalty intention (Huang & Dubinsky, 2013). Similarly, various quality dimensions like product quality, system quality, delivery quality, information quality including service quality are the antecedents of customer satisfaction for e-commerce business (Lin, Wu, & Chang, 2011) (Hsu, Chang, & Chen, 2012) (Zarei, Nuri, & Noroozi, 2019). Service quality exerts influence on the firm's image, that in turn exerts influence on customer satisfaction and outcomes of behavioral intentions, moreover, satisfaction is a mediator of the relationship between corporate image and behavioral intention (Kuo & Tang, 2013) (Liat, Mansori, & Huei, 2014), but (Yu & Ramanathan, 2012) did not find any relationship between service quality & behavioral intentions. Perceived service quality and purchase intention are directly related, factors such as brand image, customer satisfaction acts as a mediator between service quality and purchase intention, while brand love is a moderator between brand image and customer satisfaction (Liao, Hu, & Chou, 2022).

Methodology

This research is investigative in nature and utilized a deductive approach to examine the influence of service quality experience on customer satisfaction, purchase intention and the inter relationship of service quality experience on purchase intention, mediated through customer satisfaction in the domestic airlines operating in Indian civil aviation industry.

Hypothesized Model

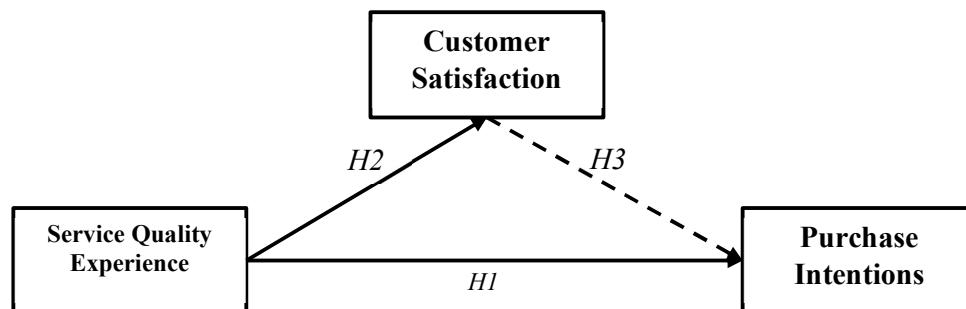


Figure 1: Inter relationship between Service Quality Experience & Customer satisfaction influences on Purchase Intentions of Domestic Flyers in India.

Note: The dashed line denotes the mediating effect between the construct.

Scale Adoption, Modification & Measures

The constructs for the study were service quality experience, customer satisfaction & purchase intention. The service quality experience dimensions, 'tangibility (4 items), reliability (5 items), responsiveness (4 items), assurance (4 items), & empathy (5 items)' were directly adopted from the performance scale of (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), the scale extension to measure customer satisfaction & purchase intention were modified with the scheme & wordings adapted from expectation & performance of (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) in context of Indian culture. Moreover, the customer satisfaction dimensions, 'expectations (4 items), quality (5 items), value (4 items), complaints (4 items) & loyalty (5 items)' were adopted from the 'American Customer Satisfaction Index' (Morgeson F. V., Hult, Sharma, & Fornell, 2023) and the dimensions of purchase intention 'intention (4 items), future behavior (5 items), attitude (4 items), norm (4 items), & behavioral control (5 items)' were adopted from the theory of planned behavior given by (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2009). Finally, for testing face validity, a version of the draft questionnaire was presented to five experts & frequent flyers from the India and, a final version was created after refining the wordings based on their feedback. All the three construct was measured using a 7-point Likert scale between (1 = strongly disagree) to (7 = strongly agree), without any verbal labels for scale points between 2 to 6, were presented with each item statement. A pilot study was conducted with 25 samples. The results indicated that passengers were able to comprehend the wordings and respond, without any struggle. All the scale items are presented in Appendix A.

Survey & Data Collection

Airports operating scheduled commercial flights in India were listed from the website of 'Airports Authority of India'. Then, approximately, 40 airports located across all the five airport zones of 'Airports Authority of India' were requested for permission seeking to conducting the survey among passengers waiting in the departure areas of domestic terminals of those airports.

Finally, data was collected from 17 airports (Table 1) geographically dispersed across all over India that allowed to conduct the survey. Following a convenience random sampling process, passengers waiting at different boarding gates assigned to different domestic airlines were visually scouted inside the departure terminals and were requested to complete the survey questionnaire. First time flyers, flyers with no past history of flying with the airline on that boarding day & non-domestic passengers were excluded from the survey. Participants were asked to rate their perception of service quality experience & customer satisfaction that resulted in the purchase intentions for that particular airline they were flying that boarding day. A total of 864 participants responded to the questionnaire from various demographic backgrounds as depicted in (Table 1)

Table 1: Final List of Airports

	Name of Airport(s)	IATA Code	Respondents
1	Sri Guru Ram Das Jee International Airport, (Amritsar)	ATQ	92
2	Shaheed Bhagat Singh International Airport, (Chandigarh)	IXC	251
3	Jolly Grant Airport, (Dehradun)	DED	166
4	Maharana Pratap Airport, (Udaipur)	UDR	37
5	Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport, (Agartala),	IXA	45
6	Shillong Airport, (Umroi)	SHL	22
7	Dibrugarh Airport	DIB	10
8	Pasighat Airport	IXT	14
9	Tezu Airport	TEI	11
10	Lilabari Airport, (North Lakhimpur)	IXI	21
14	Raja Bhoj Airport, (Bhopal)	BHO	21
15	Surat International Airport, (Surat)	STV	48

16	Chennai International Airport, (Chennai)	MAA	83
17	Cochin International Airport, (Kochi)	COK	43
Total			864

Results & Interpretations

The aim of this research was to investigate the relationship of the constructs proposed in the research model. Hence, covariance based structural equation modeling considered appropriate for its ability to determine overall model fit of was applied (Collier, 2020). The composite variables were computed and factor loadings were determined using exploratory factor analysis in SPSS Ver.23, followed by confirmatory factor analysis & structural equation modeling in AMOS Ver.23 in order to determine the measurement model, path structure & relationship of the constructs for hypothesis testing.

Demographic profile of the respondents

The respondents demographic profile consisted of 864 samples, the participants gender, age, education, income, marital status and purpose of travel are shown in (Table 2). Among the 864 respondents, 630 (72.9%) were male and 234 (27.1%) respondents were female. The age profile consisted of 19 (2.2 %) below 18 years, 481 (55.7%) between 18 to 35 years, 226 (26.2%) between 36 to 49 years, 107 (12.4%) were between 50 to 60 years and 31 (3.6%) were above 60 years of age. Again, majority of the participants 414 (47.9%) reported master's degree followed by 335 (38.8%) participants stating education up to bachelor's degree. Besides, majority 451 (52.2%) respondents were married and 342 (39.6%) were of unmarried. The income profile consisted of high-income group 386 (44.7%), middle-income group 219 (25.3%), low-income group 168 (19.4%) and 91 (10.5%) economically weaker section. Majority 324 (37.5%) were on leisure trip, followed by 196 (22.7%) on business trip, 212 (24.5%) on official assignment and 132 (15.3%) were regular commuters traveling from point to point.

Table 2: *Demographic Distribution of Survey Respondents' (n = 864)*

Item Attributes	Distribution	Frequency (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	630	72.9
Female	234	27.1
<i>Age</i>		
Below 18 Years	19	2.2
18 to 35 Years	481	55.7
36 to 49 Years	226	26.2
50 to 60 Years	107	12.4
Above 60	31	3.6
<i>Educational Qualification</i>		
Elementary Education (Below 10th Pass)	6	.7
High School (10th Pass)	19	2.2
High School Graduate (12th Pass)	63	7.3
Bachelor's Degree	335	38.8
Master's Degree	414	47.9
Other Technical School (ITI, Tradesman Diploma etc.)	27	3.1
<i>Average Monthly Income</i>		
EWS (Below Rs.25,000)	91	10.5
LIG (Rs.25,000 to Rs.50,000)	168	19.4
MIG (Rs.50,000 to Rs.75,000)	219	25.3
HIG (Above Rs.75,000)	386	44.7
<i>Marital Status</i>		

Married	451	52.2
Divorced	11	1.3
Separated	3	.3
Widowed	11	1.3
Unmarried	342	39.6
Don't want to say	46	5.3
<i>Travelling Purpose</i>		
Leisure	324	37.5
Business	196	22.7
Official	212	24.5
Regular Commute (from point A to B)	132	15.3

Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed using principal component analysis with varimax rotation with a minimum factor loading criterion was set at 0.50. Moreover, the communality of the scale, representing the variance explained by each dimension, was measured to confirm the acceptable levels. The results showed that all communalities exceeded 0.50. The measure of statistical probability to check, the overall significance of the correlation matrix having significant correlations among the components was determined using ‘Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity’. The results derived were significant, $\chi^2(n = 864) = 7794.190$ ($p < 0.001$), along with Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) of (0.853.) indicating appropriateness for factor analysis. MSA values above 0.800 are generally considered suitable factor analysis. Finally, the data analysis, produced four factors for the scale, with (73.497%) variance explained.

However, during the initial EFA, two items (i.e. “V3_RESP: *Responsiveness*” of the employees & “V5_EMP: *Empathy*” of the employees in ‘*Service Quality Experience*’ dimension) did not load on the underlying factor. Hence, these two items were excluded from further analysis.

EFA was repeated excluding these items. The results of this new EFA analysis confirmed the dimensional structure fitting into three dimensions, theoretically defined in the research (see Table). The ‘Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin’ MSA was 0.875 along with ‘Bartlett’s Test of sphericity’ was significant and all communalities were over the required value of 0.500. The total variance explained among the items by the three dimensions was (72.312%). The three factors revealed by this EFA associated with the theoretical proposition in this research. Factor 1 included items ‘Intention (V11_INT), Future behavior (V12_FUBH), Attitude (V13_ATT), Norm (V14_NRM) & Behavioral control (V15_BCTL)’, denoting *Purchase Intentions* (PI), Factor 2 gathered items ‘Expectations (V6_EXPE), Quality (V7_QUL), Value (V8_VAL), Complaints (V9_COML) & Loyalty (V10_LOYL)’, which represents *Customer Satisfaction* (CS). Finally, Factor 3 includes items ‘Tangibility (V1_TAN), Reliability (V2_REL), Assurance (V4_ASSU)’, referring to *Service Quality Experience* (SQE). Factor Loadings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *EFA Results*

Scale Item & Sub-Components	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Communalities
Service Quality Experience (SQE)				
Tangibility (V1_TAN)			.860	.798
Reliability (V2_REL)			.854	.838
Assurance (V4_ASSU)			.722	.656
Customer Satisfaction (CS)				
Expectations (V6_EXPE)		.761		.596
Quality (V7_QUL)		.792		.682
Value (V8_VAL)		.751		.576
Complaints (V9_COML)		.854		.743

Loyalty (V10_LOYL)		.789		.643
Purchase Intentions (PI)				
Intention (V11_INT)	.822			.778
Future behavior (V12_FUBH)	.871			.842
Attitude (V13_ATTI)	.888			.825
Norm (V14_NRM)	.885			.842
Behavioral Control (V15_BCTL)	.694			.581
<i>Eigen values</i>	5.662	2.520	1.218	
<i>% of Variance</i>	43.555	19.384	9.372	

Measurement Model

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was computed for evaluating the measurement model. Prior to finalizing the model, outliers determined using 'Mahalanobis distance', resulted in the deletion of 64 cases exceeding the ($p < .001$), specified by (Collier, 2020). Additionally, factors with standardized residual covariances greater than (2.9) were removed based on the threshold criteria suggested by (Byrne, 2010), resulting in deletion of two factors 'Quality (V7_QUL)' and 'Behavioral Control (V15_BCTL)'.

Model Fit

Acceptable thresholds of model-fit indices (CMIN/df, GFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA) suggested by (Bentler, 1990) (Hu & Bentler, 1998) (Hu & Bentler, 1999) were used to determine the overall goodness of fit for the model. The three-factor model (Service Quality Experience, Customer Satisfaction, & Purchase Intention) demonstrated an overall good fit (Table 1) for the data: CMIN/df = 3.669, GFI = 0.967, CFI = 0.983, TLI = 0.976, SRMR = 0.039, and RMSEA = 0.058.

Table 4: CFA - Model Fit Measures

Fit Indices	Recommended Values	Sources	Obtained Values	Interpretation
CMIN/df	3 - 5	(Schumacker & Lomax, 1996)	3.669	Acceptable
GFI	>.90	(Hair, Babin, Black, & Anderson, 2019)	0.967	Excellent
CFI	>.90	(Bentler, 1990)	0.983	Excellent
TLI	>.90	(Bentler, 1990)	0.976	Excellent
SRMR	<.08	(Hu & Bentler, 1998)	0.039	Excellent
RMSEA	<.08	(Hu & Bentler, 1998)	0.058	Acceptable
PClose	>.05	(Hu & Bentler, 1999)	0.097	Excellent

Construct Reliability, Convergent validity & Discriminant validity

Construct reliability was assessed using recommended, Cronbach's Alpha values above (0.70) (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and composite reliability was measured using values above (0.70) recommended by (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2010). Cronbach's Alpha values for all the constructs were above the set cutoff criteria and composite reliabilities ranged between (0.856) to (0.945). Hence, construct reliability & composite reliability was confirmed for each of the construct in the study.

Convergent validity of scale items was estimated using threshold value of average variance extracted above 0.50 suggested by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The values of average variance-extracted for each construct were above the recommended cutoff. Therefore, establishing the convergent validity of the scale required for the study.

Table 5: Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Standardized Factor Loading	t-value	Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Service Quality Experience (SQE)			.850	0.856	0.667
Tangibility (V1_TAN)	0.795	***			
Reliability (V2_REL)	0.908	25.561			
Assurance (V4_ASSU)	0.738	21.772			
Customer Satisfaction (CS)			.833	0.839	0.569
Expectations (V6_EXPE)	0.659	***			
Value (V8_VAL)	0.678	16.32			
Complaints (V9_COML)	0.865	19.152			
Loyalty (V10_LOYL)	0.796	18.459			
Purchase Intention (PI)			.949	0.945	0.813
Intention (V11_INT)	0.885	***			
Future behavior (V12_FUBH)	0.935	39.512			
Attitude (V13_ATTJ)	0.888	34.844			
Norm (V14_NRM)	0.897	36.76			

Model Fit Statistics ($\chi^2=143.093$, $df=39$; CFI=0.983, TLI=0.976, RMSEA=0.058).

*** = Items constrained for identification purposes.

Discriminant validity ensures that different constructs within the study are indeed distinct from each other. Discriminant validity was assessed using (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) criterion and Heterotrait - Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). The square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for the constructs were greater than its correlation with other constructs in the study according to (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) criterion. Moreover, Heterotrait - Monotrait (HTMT) ratio were also above the required cutoff of (0.85) of (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Hence, discriminant validity of the constructs was established through both the popular methods.

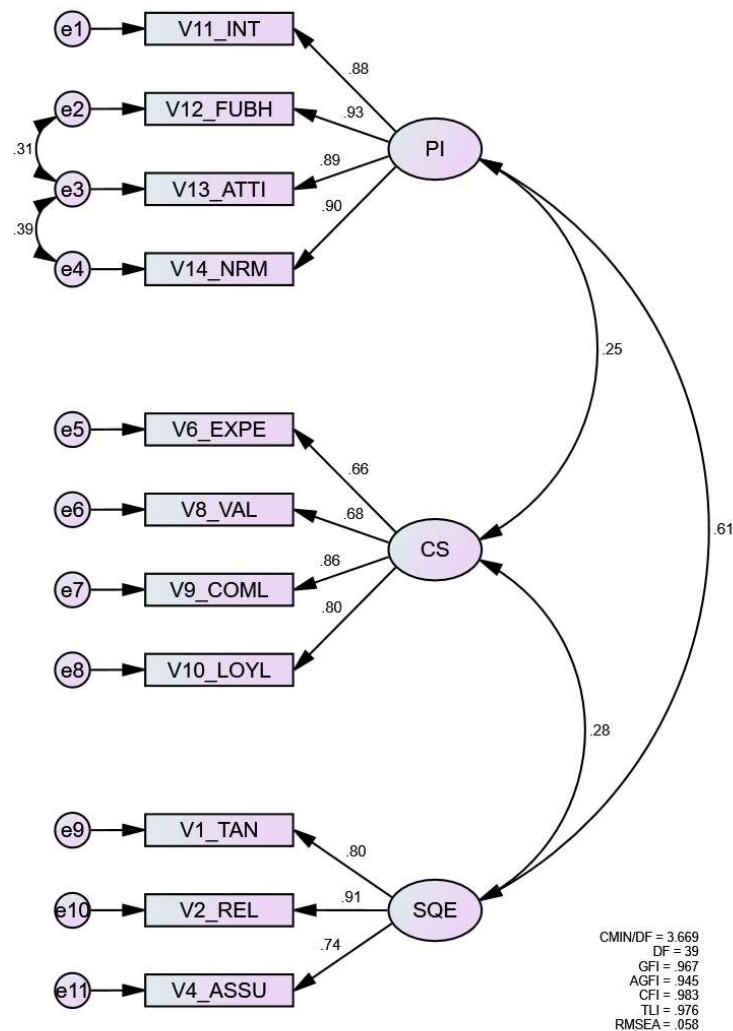
Table 6: Fronell-Larcker criterion

	CR	AVE	MSV	Fronell-Larcker criterion		
				PI	CS	SQE
PI	0.945	0.813	0.368	0.901		
CS	0.839	0.569	0.081	0.250***	0.754	
SQE	0.856	0.667	0.368	0.606***	0.285***	0.817

Table 7: HTMT ratios

Monotrait Correlations		Heterotrait Correlations		HTMT ratio		
				SQE	CS	PI
SQE	0.659	SQE-CS	0.173	SQE		
CS	0.558	SQE-PI	0.444	CS	0.286	
PI	0.833	CS-PI	0.168	PI	0.599	0.247

Figure 2: Standardized CFA Model



Normality

Values of skewness & kurtosis for each observed variables were within the suggested limit set by (Collier, 2020). The largest value for skewness, within the variable was (-1.146) & kurtosis (.788), within the prescribed limit of (-2 to +2) for skewness and (-10 to +10) for kurtosis.

Structural Equation Model

The relationships were tested using a structural equation model generated in AMOS. The model fit indices generated for the model were: CMIN/df = 3.669, the goodness-of-fit (GFI) = 0.967, TLI = 0.976, CFI = 0.983, SRMR = 0.039, and RMSEA = 0.058, all the values were within the acceptable ranges recommended by (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2010) (Bentler, 1990) (Tucker & Lewis, 1973), indicating adequate model fit.

The study evaluates the influence of service quality experience, on customer satisfaction and purchase intention, as well as the mediating role of customer satisfaction. The squared multiple correlation (R^2) for customer satisfaction was (0.081) and purchase intention was (0.374) indicating a (8%) variance in customer satisfaction and (37%) variance in purchase intention is accounted by service quality experience. The influence of service quality experience on customer satisfaction was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.285$, $t = 6.825$, $p < .001$), supporting hypothesis (H1). Similarly, influence of service quality experience on purchase intention was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.583$, $t = 14.975$, $p < .001$), supporting hypothesis (H2). The hypotheses result along with the model fit indices are reported in Table 9

Table 9: *Structural Equation Model Test Results*

Hypothesized Relationships	Standardized Estimates	t-values	p-values	Hypothesis Supported
H1: Service Quality Experience → Customer Satisfaction	0.285	6.825	<.001	Accepted
H2: Service Quality Experience → Purchase Intention	0.583	14.975	<.001	Accepted
Squared Multiple Correlation (R²):				
Customer Satisfaction	0.081			
Purchase Intention	0.374			

Model Fit Statistics:

(CMIN/df = 3.669, df = 39; CFI = 0.983, SRMR = 0.039, TLI = 0.976, RMSEA = 0.058).

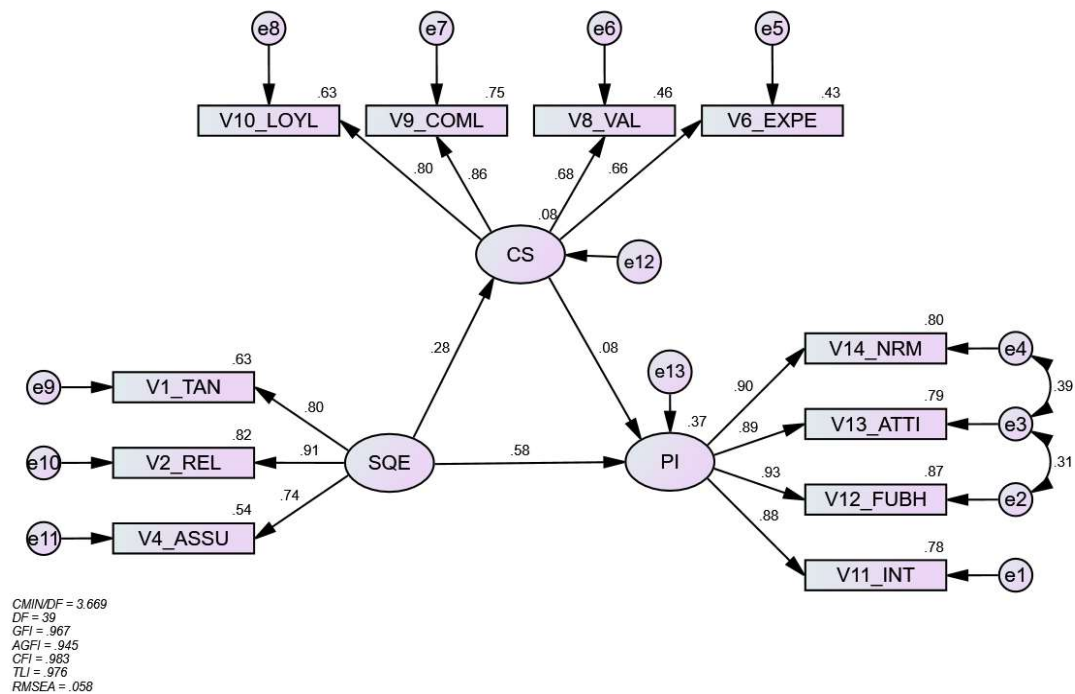
The mediating role of customer satisfaction, between service quality experience and purchase intention was assessed using mediation analysis. The results indicated a significant partial mediation between service quality experience and purchase intention (Table 10), with significant indirect effect (H3: $\beta = 0.026$, $t = 2.36$, $p < .05$). The total effect of service quality experience & purchase intention was also significant ($\beta = 0.652$, $t = 12.78$, $p < 0.001$), direct effect of service quality experience & purchase intention with the mediator included was still significant ($\beta = 0.626$, $t = 12.03$, $p < .001$). This signifies that customer satisfaction partially mediates between service quality experience and purchase intention. Hence (H3) was supported.

Table 10: *Mediation Using Bootstrap Analysis With 95% Confidence Interval*

Relationships	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		Conclusion	Hypothesis Supported
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
H3: Service Quality Experience → Customer Satisfaction → Purchase Intention	0.626	0.026	0.005	0.049	Partial Mediation	Accepted
	<i>t-value</i>					
	(12.03)	(2.36)				
	<i>p-value</i>					
	(.000)	(0.015)				

Note: Unstandardized coefficient estimates reported. Values in parentheses are t-values & p-value. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with 95 % bias corrected confidence interval.

Figure 3: SEM with standardized regression parameter constants.



Discussion

The aim of this study was to test a model for evaluating the relationship of service quality, customer satisfaction and purchase intention and, whether customer satisfaction moderates the relationship between service quality & Purchase intention. The results of the SEM analysis is consistent with the previous findings of (Khatoon, Zhengliang, & Hussain, 2020) (Rita, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019) (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006) (Bou-Llusar, Camisón-Zornoza, & Escrig-Tena, 2001) conducted in different service sector scenarios across different nations, particularly empirically reaffirming the conclusions of (Taylor & Baker, 1994).

Service quality studies of (Taylor, Nicholson, Milan, & Martinez, 1997) (Bou-Llusar, Camisón-Zornoza, & Escrig-Tena, 2001) (Qin & Prybutok, 2008) (Huang, Li, & Yang, 2011) (Khoo, Ha, & McGregor, 2017) (Khatoon, Zhengliang, & Hussain, 2020) highlights the antecedent role of service quality in the formation of purchase intention with the mediating role of customer satisfaction. However, (Bou-Llusar, Camisón-Zornoza, & Escrig-Tena, 2001) (Qin & Prybutok, 2008) states that there is lack of significant interaction between service quality and customer satisfaction, while (Taylor, Nicholson, Milan, & Martinez, 1997) (Kitapci, Akdogan, & Dortyol, 2014) (Khatoon, Zhengliang, & Hussain, 2020) positions satisfaction as a prime contributor to purchase intention.

The evaluation of the inter relationship of service quality experience, customer satisfaction and purchase intention were conducted in Indian culture context. Moreover, the study also inspects the mediating link of customer satisfaction on purchase intention. The findings reveal a significant interrelationship and influence among the constructs (Chen H.-K., 2015). The study identified the key dimensions of service quality experience were the variables of tangibility, reliability and assurance (Arora & Arora, 2015). Again, key dimensions that formed customer satisfaction were expectations, value, complaints & loyalty, adequately constructing the satisfaction component (Awwad, 2012). Similarly, convenience, utility, attitude & norm were the key dimension that shaped the behavioral outcome of purchase intention. The results indicating the influence of service quality experience along with the mediating role of customer satisfaction show that service quality has the capability to significantly influence behavioral outcome of purchase intention both directly and indirectly. Moreover, service quality acts as an antecedent of attitudinal outcome of customer satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Thus, reaffirming the theoretical conclusions, that behavioral outcome such as intention, loyalty or word of mouth, are directly

associated with positive expectancy disconfirmation of service encounter (Tarn J. L., 1999) and customer satisfaction resulting out of that disconfirmation of service consumption (Rust & Oliver, 2000). The study also provides new insights for the interrelationships and workings of service quality experience, customer satisfaction and purchase intention expanding the existing body of present literature, for the domestic scheduled commercial flight operators in India.

Implications of the Study

Generally, this research extends contribution to existing knowledge of service quality experience on customer satisfaction & purchase intention. The study highlights dimensions borrowed from the ACSI, forms the customer satisfaction construct. Similarly, dimensions borrowed from theory of planned behavior potentially forms the purchase intention construct. First, the findings highlight that positive disconfirmation of service quality experience is a catalyst of customer satisfaction and purchase intention of service products. Interestingly, this research is an ice breaker that empirically establishes, the presence of this trend in the domestic transport consumer segment in equitable proportions.

Second, the research shows consumers in emerging economies, like India with dominant cultural traits of 'uncertainty avoidance' along with 'power distance' (Hofstede, 1984), tend to be particularly sensitive to reliability, assurance & tangibility aspects of a service products reflected by the factor loadings of service quality. Third, the investigation empirically tests the mediating role of, customer satisfaction, confirming the partial mediation displayed through results. Finally, the most important contribution of this study is retesting of the performance based SERVPERF scale (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) and revalidating the conclusions of (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) (Cronin & Taylor, 1994) though empirical testing in Indian culture context.

Conclusion

Service quality is a diver of customer satisfaction & purchase intention for any service-oriented organization. The goal of this research was set to examine the direct influence of service quality experience on satisfaction & purchase intention. In addition to the direct effects, the study also intended to inspect the moderating role of customer satisfaction between service quality experience & purchase intention. The findings highlighted the presence of direct relationship of service quality with customer satisfaction and purchase intention along with the presence of moderating role of customer satisfaction between service quality & purchase intention. The presence of these significant direct influences and significant mediating influence simultaneously, depicts that positive service quality experience, is a percussor for altitudinal outcome of satisfaction, and also consequently results in behavioral outcome of purchase intention, both directly & indirectly. These, findings corresponding to the conclusion of (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) (Cronin & Taylor, 1994), specifying that, service quality experience is a crucial component in maintaining the business sustainability of service firms.

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Appendix

Service Quality Experience

The following statements are associated with your feelings about the service quality experience, you have encountered with the airline that, you have chosen to fly. Please rate each statement with the number that best correspond to you're feeling about the perception of service quality performance experienced with the airline.

Tangibles

- SQE1. The Airline has up-to-date aircrafts & equipment's.
- SQE2. The Airline's physical facilities, aircrafts are visually appealing.
- SQE3. The Airline's employees are well dressed and appear neat.
- SQE4. The appearance of the physical facilities of the Airline is in keeping with the type of service provided.

Reliability

- SQE5. When the Airline promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.
- SQE6. When you have problems, the Airline is sympathetic and reassuring.
- SQE7. The Airline is dependable.
- SQE8. The Airline provides its services at the time it promises to do so.
- SQE9. The Airline keeps its records accurately.

Responsiveness

- SQE10. The Airline's does not tell its customers exactly when services will be performed.
- SQE11. You do not receive prompt service from the Airline's employees.
- SQE12. Employees of the Airline are not always willing to help customers.
- SQE13. Employees of the Airline are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly.

Assurance

- SQE14. You can trust employees of the Airline.
- SQE15. You can feel safe in your transactions with the Airline's employees.
- SQE16. Employees of the Airline are polite.
- SQE17. Employees get adequate support from the Airline to do their jobs well.

Empathy

- SQE18. The Airline does not give you individual attention.
- SQE19. Employees of the Airline do not give you, personal attention.
- SQE20. Employees of the Airline do not know what your needs are.
- SQE21. The Airline does not have your best interests at heart.
- SQE22. The Airline does not have operating hours convenient to all their customers.

Customer Satisfaction

The following statements are associated with your feelings about the customer satisfaction, level you have experienced with the airline that, you have chosen to fly. Please rate each statement with the number that best correspond to you're feeling of customer satisfaction.

Expectations

- CS1. I am satisfied with the airline's capability to meet my expectations.
- CS2. I am satisfied with my expectation of overall experience of services offered by this airline.
- CS3. I am satisfied with my expectation of services received from this airline in the past.
- CS4. I am satisfied with the airline meeting my expectations of amenities.

Quality

- CS5. The overall quality of the aircrafts & other tangible items of the airline is satisfactory.
CS6. The overall quality of neatness & cleanliness of the airline's amenities are satisfactory.
CS7. The overall quality of reliability, & dependability of the airline are satisfactory.
CS8. The overall quality of skills & politeness demonstrated by the airline staff is satisfactory.
CS9. The overall approachability & willingness demonstrated by the employees of the airline to resolve grievances are satisfactory.

Value

- CS10. My feelings towards services offered by the airline are good value for money.
CS11. My feelings towards services provided by the airline are a good buy.
CS12. My feelings towards the price offered by the airline are economical.
CS13. My feelings towards the service offered by the airline are worthwhile.

Complaints

- CS14. I am satisfied with the airline's overall capability to resolve my complaints.
CS15. I am satisfied with past experiences of the airline employees, resolving my complaints.
CS16. I feel satisfied with, virtual & in person grievance redressal mechanisms of the airline.
CS17. I feel satisfied, with skill & ability of the airline's crew, resolving my inflight complaints.

Loyalty

- CS18. I would continue to use the services of this airline.
CS19. I would recommend this airline to anyone who seeks advice.
CS20. I would encourage friends & others to pick this airline over others.
CS21. I would say positive things about this airline to other people.
CS22. I would post positive messages about this airline on sites like TripAdvisor.

Purchase Intention

The following statements are associated with your feelings around the purchase intention, behind selecting the airline that, you are flying today. Please rate each statement with the number that best correspond to that intent over that feeling of Purchase intention.

Intention

- I intend to fly this airline regularly.
I intend to buy services from this airline as it is a good choice.
I intend to pick this airline service as my first choice.
I don't feel hesitated to provide my personal for purchasing services from this airline.

Future behavior

- In my next purchase of airline services, I will stick to this airline.
I would pick this airline service over others airlines in all future purchases.
My purchase of airline services from this company should increase in future.
I would encourage my family & friends to choose this airline service in their future purchase.
Overall, I will mention this airline service to anyone seeking recommendation for their future purchase.

Attitude

- I believe, this airline provides best quality services in the available in the market.
I believe, this airline has the best intention towards their consumers.
I believe, the employees of this airline have the ability to help the passengers.
I believe, selecting this airline is an appropriate choice suited to my travel requirements.

Norm

- Most people who are important to me prefer flying in this airline.
Most of my family members would want me to fly in this airline.
Most of my close colleague, prefer flying in this airline.
People whose opinions I value would prefer this airline.

Behavioral control

- Whether or not I choose to fly this airline instead of any random airline is entirely up to me.
I am confident that, if I want, choosing any other airline wouldn't be difficult.
I have enough money to select an airline beyond this company, if I want.

I have enough time to pick or find an airline beyond this, if I want.

I am confident that, quality & satisfaction assured by this airline, prevents me from switching.