

## Performance Measurement and Evaluation of Tourists' Perception: Implications for the Aviation Industry

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### ABSTRACT

The tourism industry in many countries of the world has been profoundly shaped by the development of air services. The exponential growth of international tourism in the last decade from 25 million tourists in 1950 to over 1 billion in 2017 is very much due to the advances in air transport. The growth of air transport networks has allowed small, low-populated places like Singapore and Dubai to become major international tourism destinations. Being a mountain area, the Valley of Kashmir remains cut off from rest of the world through road connectivity because of heavy snowfall and the landslides around the road sides, which has threatened the sustainability of tourism industry in the area. In these circumstances airways is the only source of connectivity with other parts of the world. Under such geo-climatic environment, airways can play a very vital role in the development of tourism. The present study aims to highlight the scope of aviation industry in tourism development of Kashmir in light of tourists' perception. The findings of this study are based on the responses of a sample of 380 tourists. Only those tourists who had travelled by air were interviewed in various tourist spots and at the airport. Tourist perception was gathered on the 5 dimensions of the SERVPERF model proposed by Cronin and Taylor (1992), i.e. Assurance, Reliability, Tangibility, Responsiveness and Empathy.

**KEYWORDS:** *Tourist Perception, Aviation, Tourism Development, SERVPERF*

### Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as the world's largest industry (Hall, C.M and Page, S.J. 1999). It is a growing phenomenon in the world today, both in terms of its penetration into new parts of the world and in terms of the number of people participating in travel and holiday making (Burton, R., 1991). Tourism has long been a major foreign exchange earner for many countries, and is now recognised as a major global industry (Dwyer and Forsyth, 1997; Hassan, 2000; Pearce, 1989). Many countries look towards tourism as a key source of income generation,

particularly international visitors who bring foreign exchange to the region (Lafferty and Fossen, 2001). In India, the direct contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP was USD 71.7bn, i.e. 3.3% of the total GDP in 2016 and is forecast to rise by 6.9% in 2017, and to 6.8% pa, from 2017-2027 (USD 148.2bn) i.e. 3.5% of total GDP in 2027. While as the total contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP was USD 208.9bn, i.e. 9.6% of GDP in 2016, and is forecast to rise by 6.7% in 2017, and to rise by 6.7% pa to USD 424.5bn, i.e. 10.0% of GDP in 2027 (WTTC 2017). In 2016 Travel and Tourism directly supported 25,394,500 jobs (5.8% of total employment). This is expected to rise by 2.1% in 2017 and to rise by 2.1% pa to 31,910,000 jobs (6.1% of total employment) in 2017. While as in 2016, the total contribution of travel and tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 9.3% of total employment (40,343,000 jobs), this is expected to rise by 18% in 2017 to 41,074,000 jobs and rise by 2.0% pa to 49,868,000 jobs in 2027 (9.6% of total) (WTTC, 2017). Such a huge contribution in the GDP was not and will not be possible without an efficient transport system.

A tourist cannot make use of tourist resources unless they are accessible: a transport system of some sort must link the tourists' home to their desired destination (Burton, R., 1991). Transport is a key element of the tourist experience (Pearce, 1989). Transport provides the essential link between tourism origin and destination areas (Sinha, P.C., 1999). Leiper, (1990), identified transport as an integral part of the tourism system. Thus, an adequate transport infrastructure is a prerequisite for receiving, accommodating and processing these visitors and a well-designed infrastructure can be the basis for the development of a tourism destination (Lohmann, G., Albers, S., Koch, B., Pavlovich, K., 2008).

Air transport is an essential element in world tourism development (Sinha, P.C., 1999). The tourism industry in many countries of the world has been profoundly shaped by the development of air services (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997). The growth of air transport networks and deregulation have allowed small, low-populated places like Singapore and Dubai to become major international tourism destinations (Lohmann, G., Albers, S., Koch, B., Pavlovich, K., 2008). Without it present day tourism would be unimaginable and would have been unable to achieve the dimensions which have made it the preponderant factor in the economic growth of a large number of countries (Sinha, P.C., 1999). The advances in aircraft technology, improvements in communications and information technology, and marketing strategies have improved the quality of air travel and reduced the price of air tickets, so that the volume of traffic, particularly on longer routes, has doubled in each of the past three decades (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997). The aviation industry supports tourism and international business by providing the world's only rapid worldwide transportation network. Airlines transported 2.8 billion passengers and 47.6 million metric tonnes of air cargo in 2011, connecting the world's cities with 36,000 routes (ATAG, 2012). The contribution of airlines to tourism expansion goes far beyond providing essential transportation links. During the 1970s and 1980s, vertical integration strategies with accommodation and tour operating sectors, as well as other activities such as restaurants and rental cars, were frequently assisted by the aviation industry (Lafferty and Fossen, 2001). Kashmir is one of the most beautiful tourist destinations of the world. Characterized with young folded mountains, deep

Georges, waterfalls, cascades, scenic beauty and alpine pastures, the state of J&K provides great opportunities for the domestic and international tourists. Tourism, however, is a dominant economic activity in the state (Hussain, M. 2000). It is estimated that almost 13 million tourists visited J&K in 2012 which placed J&K on 17<sup>th</sup> position in the list of major tourist destinations of India (Ministry of Tourism, GOI).

After agriculture, tourism is the second most important sector in Kashmir in terms of GDP as well as employment. The main subsidiaries of tourism in the state are transport, communication, hotels - providing accommodation and food services, labour, houseboats, guide services, fruit industry and handicrafts (Khan, A. R, Ganai, G. R, Bhat, S. A, 2001).

About 20% of the workforce of the state is directly or indirectly dependent on Tourism (Hussain, M, 2000). The state has a mountainous topography and the development of roads and railways is difficult and expensive. Under such a hostile geo climatic environment, air transport can play a very vital role. (Hussain, M, 2000). All the three divisions of the state are connected by air routes, with Airports at Jammu, Srinagar and Leh. There is a regular air service from Srinagar and Jammu. Aeroplanes fly direct from Delhi, Amritsar and Chandigarh to Jammu and Srinagar. From Srinagar and Jammu, aeroplanes fly to Leh as well. During winter, helicopter service is in operation from Srinagar to far flung and cut off areas of Gurez, Tangdar, Kargil, Nobra and Zanskar (Khan, A.R. Ganai, G.R. Bhat, S.A, 2001).

Transport within the valley is predominantly by road. Kashmir valley is connected to Jammu and Ladakh regions by road. Because of the long and dangerous land journey into Kashmir, the safest and easiest way to reach Kashmir is by plane. Srinagar International Airport is the main airport in Kashmir valley and has scheduled flights from Jammu, Leh, Mumbai, Chandigarh, New Delhi, Goa, Bangalore, Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Amritsar. It also has chartered Hajj flights to Jeddah.

### **Review of Literature and Research Gap**

The present paper tries to highlight the scope of Aviation Industry in Tourism development of Kashmir Valley in light of Tourists' perception. The SERVPERF scale proposed by Cronin and Taylor, (1992) was used to measure the service quality of Srinagar International Airport. To achieve a high level of customer satisfaction, most researchers suggest that a high level of service quality should be delivered by the service provider, as service quality is normally considered an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Cronin, Brady, and Hult, 2000; Anderson et al., 1994; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Models have been developed to assess the determinants of service quality. The works of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988, 1991, and 1994) led to the development of a service quality model- SERVQUAL, which compares expectations and perceptions of customers regarding a particular service. Since Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL instrument, many researchers have used, extended and developed this 22-item scale to study service quality in different sectors of the services industry (Avkiran, 1994; Babakus and Boller, 1992; Buttle, 1996; Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Fick and Ritchie, 1991; Newman, 2001; Smith, 1995). Cronin and Taylor modified the gap-based SERVQUAL scale into SERVPERF, a performance-only index.

### Srinagar International Airport: A Case Analysis

Srinagar International Airport, also known as Sheikh ul Alam Airport (after a 15th-century Kashmiri mystic Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali), is an international airport in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. The airport was granted international status by the Union Cabinet on 27 January 2005 and the work on its up-gradation and refurbishing of the terminal building started soon after. The distance of the Airport from Srinagar city is Approx. 12 Km. Spread over an area of about 20,000 sq. meters, the building has central heating and air conditioning, besides flight information display system, CCTV for surveillance, checking counters, baggage carousals, public address system, departure conveyor system and capacity to handle 500 domestic and 450 international passengers. The building has 16 check-in counters, 8 baggage scanners, 16 immigration and 8 custom counters besides four conveyor belts. The expansion of the apron has been designed to cater for parking of nine aircraft and strengthening it for parking B-747- type aircraft. The airport had undergone extensive renovations, including improving the runway, a new terminal for departure and arrival, air bridges and other operational facilities (AAI, 2014). Following is a list of various airlines operating to different destinations:

**Table 1: Airlines and Destinations**

Airlines	Destinations
Air India	Delhi, Goa, Jammu, Leh, Mumbai, Jeddah
Go Air	Delhi, Jammu, Mumbai
IndiGo	Bangalore, Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Jammu, Mumbai
Jet Airways	Delhi, Jammu, Visakhapatnam
Spice Jet	Amritsar, Bangalore, Chandigarh, Delhi, Goa, Jammu, Mumbai
Vistara	Delhi, Goa, Jammu

Source: AAI

### Research Objectives

1. To study the tourists' perception of Aviation Industry based on their Socio-demographic characteristics.
2. To study the Tourists' perception of Aviation Industry based on their reasons of travel to study area.

### Hypotheses Formulation

**H1:** Tourists' perception of aviation industry differs according to their socio-demographic characteristics (gender, income, nationality).

**H2:** Tourists' perception of aviation industry differs according to their reasons of travel.

### Data & Methodology

#### Survey Instrument

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first sections asked respondents to evaluate their overall experiences they received from their airline flight at the Srinagar International Airport. Perception was collection on the five dimensions of the SERVPERF scale i.e. Assurance, Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangibles, Empathy. The Assurance dimension included four indicators: Safety,

Behavior of employees, Knowledge of employees, Credibility of employees. The Responsiveness was also measured with the help of four indicators: Efficient baggage handling services, willingness of employees to help, prompt service by employees, prompt handling of complaints and requests. Reliability was measured with the help of six indicators: Convenient flight schedules and enough frequencies, consistent ground/ in flight services, direct flights, perform services right the first time, Ease in booking air ticket, On-time Departure and Arrival. Empathy had three main indicators: Availability of travel related partners, Individual attention to passengers, Understanding of Passengers' specific needs. The Tangibility dimension had five indicators: Food and Beverages, Entertainment facilities and programmes at the airport, Availability of waiting lounges, In-flight internet/email/fax/phone facilities, Clean and comfortable waiting lounges.

The questions were phrased in the form of statements scored on a 5-point Likert type scale, ranking from 1 "Very Poor" to 5 "Very Good". The second section contained questions regarding respondents' socio-demographic characteristics including gender, nationality, reasons for travelling by air, income, likely revisit by air. The third section asked the tourists to give suggestions for improvement of the Aviation industry.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. A survey was conducted in various tourist spots of the Valley and at the Airport. Perception of tourists was collected through a questionnaire on the five dimensions of the SERVPERF model. Sample size of 380 tourists was considered adequate for this study. Secondary data was collected from the Department of Tourism (J&K), Survey reports, Tourism Literature published by various organizations, and the Annual Report published by the Airport Authority of India.

### **Research Methodology**

For carrying out the present study, a modified **SERVPERF** scale relevant to measure the level of tourist satisfaction of aviation industry was used. The SERVPERF scale — developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992) — is one of the important variants of the SERVQUAL scale. Cronin and Taylor (1992) were amongst the researchers who levelled maximum attack on the SERVQUAL scale. They questioned the conceptual basis of the SERVQUAL scale and found it confusing with service satisfaction. They, therefore, opined that expectation (E) component of SERVQUAL be discarded and instead performance (P) component alone be used. They proposed what is referred to as the 'SERVPERF' scale. Besides theoretical arguments, Cronin and Taylor (1992) provided empirical evidence across four industries (namely banks, pest control, dry cleaning, and fast food) to corroborate the superiority of their 'performance-only' instrument over disconfirmation-based SERVQUAL scale. Being a variant of the SERVQUAL scale and containing perceived performance component alone, 'performance only' scale is comprised of only 22 items. A higher perceived performance implies higher service quality (Jain, S. K. and Gupta, G).

Methodologically, the SERVPERF scale represents marked improvement over the SERVQUAL scale. Cronin and Taylor argued that SERVPERF was an enhanced means of measuring the service quality construct. Their study was later replicated and findings suggest that little if any theoretical or empirical evidence supports the

relevance of the E-P= quality gap (i.e. SERVQUAL) as the basis for measuring service quality (Adil, M., 2013). Cronin & Taylor's (1992) SERVPERF scale has been empirically tested and proven to be a better measure of service quality (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Brown, Churchill and Peter, 1993).

In equation form, SERVPERF service quality can be expressed as:

$$SQ_i = \sum_{j=1}^k P_{ij}$$

where: SQ<sub>i</sub> = perceived service quality of individual 'i'

k = number of attributes/items

P = perception of individual 'i' with respect to performance of a service firm on attribute 'j'

The items chosen for the questionnaire were modified and rephrased in terms of both wording and contextual applications to suit the present research purposes. Level of satisfaction was measured on a five point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = Very Poor to 5 = Very Good) using 22 questions and all questions were phrased positively as suggested by Parasuraman et al., 1994. The data was then put into the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 13.0 and analyzed using reliability tests.

## Survey Findings

**Table 2: Dimensions of Tourists' Satisfaction**

Element	Mean score	St. Dev.	Rank	Variance
<b>Assurance</b>				
Safety	4.02	.728	2	.530
Behaviour of employees gives confidence	3.73	1.038	4	1.077
Employees have knowledge to answer questions	3.96	.926	3	.858
Credible and courteous employees	4.08	.830	1	.689
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.95</b>			
<b>Responsiveness</b>				
Efficient check - in/ baggage handling services	3.48	.900	3	.810
Employees are willing to help	3.89	.826	1	.682
Prompt service by employees	3.57	.987	2	.974
Employees handle complaints/ requests promptly	3.44	1.187	4	1.409
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.59</b>			
<b>Reliability</b>				
Convenient flight schedules and enough frequencies	2.71	1.025	5	1.051
Consistent ground/ in-flight services	3.53	1.172	3	1.374
Non-stop/direct flights to various destinations	2.35	.937	6	.877
Perform service right the first time	3.57	.962	2	.926
Ease in booking air ticket	4.34	.671	1	.451
On time Departure and Arrival	3.25	1.037	4	1.076
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.29</b>			
<b>Empathy</b>				

Element	Mean score	St. Dev.	Rank	Variance
Availability of travel related partners e.g hotels, car rentals etc.	2.34	.859	3	.738
Individual attention to passengers	3.74	.934	1	.873
Understanding of Passengers' specific needs	3.51	1.129	2	1.274
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.19</b>			
<b>Tangibles</b>				
Food and Beverages	4.17	.879	3	.772
Entertainment facilities and programmes at the airport	3.05	1.103	5	1.216
Availability of waiting lounges	4.07	.824	4	.679
Internet/email/fax/phone Facilities at airport	4.28	.828	2	.686
Clean and comfortable waiting lounges	4.48	.656	1	.430
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.01</b>			
<b>Overall Tourist Satisfaction (Average)</b>	<b>3.61</b>			

**Table 3: Tourist Satisfaction Scores Averaged on all Dimensions**

Mean Score/ Rank	Dimensions of Tourism Services					Over-all Tourist Satisfaction
	Assurance	Tangibility	Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy	
Mean Score	3.95	4.01	3.29	3.59	3.19	
Rank	2	1	4	3	5	3.61

**Table 4 : Demographic & Travel Experience Variables**

Variable	Category	%age of Response
<b>Gender</b>	Male	52
	Female	48
<b>Reasons for traveling by Air</b>	Time saving	47
	Convenience	31
	Safety	14
	Distance of Destination	5
	Any other	3
	<b>Nationality</b>	Indian
	Foreigner	36
<b>Income</b>	0-19999	8
	20000-29999	9
	30000-39999	20
	40000-49999	45.2
	50000+	17.8
<b>Desire to revisit</b>	Yes	76.25
	No	23.75

## Descriptive Analysis

A profile of the sample respondents' travelling experiences are presented in Table 4. Among these 52% tourists were males and 48% were females. The main reason of traveling by air was time saving, chosen by 47% tourists, followed by Convenience (31%), Safety (14%) and Distance of Destination (5%). Majority of the tourists (45.2), came from the income group of 40000-49999; while only 8% and 9% tourists were from 0-19999 and 20000-29999 group, respectively. 64% tourists were from India and 36% tourists belonged to countries outside India.

## Analysis of Findings

### Dimension wise Analysis

Table 2 shows a SERVPERF score of 3.95 on **Assurance** dimension which indicates that the tourist are satisfied with the competence of employees of the Srinagar International Airport and also have a positive perception of the safety dimension. Its element-wise analysis reveals higher satisfaction score on "Credible and courteous employees" (4.08), followed by "Safety" (4.02). However, least score was reported on "behaviour of employees gives confidence" (3.73), followed by "employees have knowledge to answer questions" (3.96). Scores of all items under assurance were above average.

**Responsiveness** shows a SERVPERF score of 3.59, which indicate that the Airport is providing prompt services to tourists. The element wise analysis of the said dimension clearly shows higher mean score on "employees willingness to help" (3.89), followed by "prompt services by employees" (3.57), whereas relatively lower scores (3.48 & 3.44) were reported on "efficient check-in/baggage handling services" and "employees handle complaints requests promptly", respectively.

Table 2 shows further lower SERVPERF score (3.29) on **Reliability** dimension which implies that the airport needs to improve the promised services dependably and accurately. Item-wise analysis reveals relatively lowest score on "non-stop/direct flights to various destinations" (2.35), followed by "convenient flight schedules and enough frequencies" (2.71). The said dimension shows comparatively highest score on "ease in booking air ticket" (4.34), followed by "performing the service/s right the first time" (3.57), "consistent ground/ in- flight services" (3.53) and "on-time departure and arrival" (3.25).

However, the SERVPERF score on **Empathy** dimension is 3.19 which implies that the Srinagar International Airport lacks in providing personalized services to the tourists. Its element-wise analysis brings to light higher levels to tourist satisfaction on "Individual attention to passengers" (3.74), followed by "understanding of passengers specific needs" (3.51) and "availability of travel related partners" (2.34).

Of all the five dimensions of the SERVPERF scale, the **Tangibility** dimension scores the highest i.e. 4.01. Its dimension wise analysis shows highest scores on "clean and comfortable waiting lounges" (4.48), followed by "Internet/ email/ fax/ phone facility" (4.28) and "food and beverages" (4.17). Comparatively lower score was reported for "Availability of Waiting Lounges" (4.07) and "entertainment facilities and programmes" (3.05).

Over-all SERVPERF score for the Aviation Industry in Kashmir was above average i.e. 3.61.

**ANOVA Results****Table 5: Differences by Nationality**

Service Dimension	Significant Items	F	Sig. F
Empathy	Availability of Travel Related Partners	3.927	.048
Empathy	Individual Attention to Passengers	10.258	.001
Tangibles	Internet, e-mail, fax, phone facility	4.774	.029

**Table 6: Differences by Reasons of Travel**

Service Dimension	Significant Items	F	Sig. F
Assurance	Safety	2.617	.035
Tangibles	Availability of waiting lounges	2.803	.026
Reliability	Perform services right the first time	4.134	.003
Reliability	Ease in booking air tickets	2.831	.025
Reliability	On- time Departure and arrival	9.170	.000
Empathy	Individual Attention to Passengers	8.514	.000
Empathy	Understanding of Passengers' specific needs	2.911	.022
Tangibles	Internet, e-mail, fax, phone facility	4.246	.002

**Hypotheses Testing**

For testing the hypothesis, ANOVA was carried out on three demographic variables, i.e. Gender, Nationality and Income. ANOVA was also carried out to check if tourists with different reasons of travel have any difference in perception. However, significant difference was not found in most items of the various service dimensions. Table 5 shows that in terms of nationality, only one item in Empathy dimension, i.e., individual attention to passengers, has very high significance level. The other two items, i.e., Availability of Travel Related Partners, Internet, e-mail, fax, phone facility are also significant. However, since most of the items do not show significant difference, the aviation industry does not need to consider the nationalities of the tourists in terms of its service quality.

Table 6 shows significant items in case of tourists with different motives of travel. Eight items gave significant difference. This means that Reliability and Empathy dimension of the SERVPERF scale are affected by purpose of travel. But again, since majority of items are not significant, we reject the  $H_0$  that there exists difference of perception among Tourists with different traveling purpose. Gender and Income groups also don't have any significant item.

The overall results portrayed that tourists of different demographic structure and reasons of travel had an almost similar perception of the Service Quality at the Airport. Thus, both hypothesis 1 and 2 were rejected.

**Conclusion**

Analysis of the various dimensions of the SERVPERF model indicates that tourists visiting the Valley of Kashmir had an above average perception of the Aviation Industry. The overall SERVPERF score was 3.61 on the 5-point Likert scale. The Tangibles Dimension scored the maximum 4.01, followed by Assurance and Responsiveness with 3.95 and 3.59, respectively. However, tourists' perception

score of Reliability and Empathy was only 3.29 and 3.19, respectively. It means that the airport needs to consider giving more personalized services to the Tourists and also increase their Reliability. Also, the ANOVA results show that there is no significant difference in the perception of tourists in terms of socio-demographic characteristics.

It can, thus, be concluded that the Srinagar International Airport can become a factor for attracting more and more tourists to Kashmir Valley and making it a hub of Domestic as well as International tourists. However, the Airport needs to improve on various fronts, as demonstrated by the results of the SERVPERF model, e.g.,

- The frequency of flights needs to be increased.
- The flight schedules should become more convenient.
- Non-stop/Direct flights to various destinations must be increased.
- Entertainment facilities and programmes should be increased.
- Personalized services and attention must be provided to the travellers.

In conclusion, this research has attempted to provide some useful information, i.e. the perception of services among passengers of different market segments. Future research may want to expand on this study.

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