



Impact of Airline customer service on Passenger satisfaction post-COVID

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ABSTRACT :

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered passenger expectations in the aviation sector, emphasizing health safety, flexible policies, and empathetic communication. This study evaluates how Indian airlines adapted to these changes through a mixed-methods analysis of 45 travellers. Findings reveal strong approval for hygiene standards (mean = 3.93/5) and staff professionalism (mean = 3.93/5), but dissatisfaction with refund processes (mean = 3.16/5) and communication during disruptions (mean = 3.18/5). Open-ended feedback stressed the need for transparency and emotional reassurance. The research underscores the importance of balancing operational efficiency with passenger-centric strategies to restore trust.

Keywords: Airline service quality, post-pandemic travel, health protocols, refund policies, emotional engagement.

1. Main text

The airline industry, a cornerstone of global connectivity, faced unprecedented turbulence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre-pandemic priorities like in-flight comfort and loyalty programs were overshadowed by urgent demands for stringent hygiene, flexible booking, and empathetic service. In India, airlines such as IndiGo and Vistara rolled out initiatives like contactless check-ins and "Flexi-Plus" fares to address these evolving needs. However, gaps remain in understanding how effectively these adaptations align with passenger expectations. This study investigates the interplay between customer service practices and satisfaction levels in India's post-COVID aviation sector, offering actionable strategies for sustainable recovery.

Nomenclature

A – Airline service attributes (e.g., hygiene, communication)
 B – Passenger Satisfaction Metrics (e.g., NPS, CSAT)
 C – SERVQUAL dimensions (tangibles, Reliability, Empathy)

The aviation industry faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in India's domestic market. This study investigates post-pandemic shifts in passenger expectations, focusing on hygiene, communication clarity, and policy flexibility. Data were gathered via a structured online survey (Google Forms) and analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic coding to ensure depth and reliability.

1.1. Tables

Table 1 - Passenger Satisfaction Metrics (n=45)

Service Aspect	Mean Score (1-5)	Median
Cabin Cleanliness	3.93	4.0
Staff Courtesy	3.93	4.0
Refund Processing Efficiency	3.16	3.0
Communication During Delays	3.18	3.0

1.2. Construction of references

References adhere to APA style, with in-text citations (e.g., Van der Geer, Hanadas, & Lupton, 2000). For instance, Ostrowski et al. (1993) applied SERVQUAL to aviation, while IATA (2021) emphasized hygiene as a critical post-COVID priority.

1.3. Section headings

Pre-Pandemic Service Standards

Before 2020, airlines competed on amenities like in-flight entertainment and loyalty rewards. The SERVQUAL framework highlighted reliability and empathy as key drivers of satisfaction (Ostrowski et al., 1993).

Post-COVID Expectations

post-pandemic travellers prioritized:

- **Health Safety:** 80% of passengers chose airlines based on visible hygiene (IATA, 2021).
- **Digital Solutions:** 70% preferred self-service kiosks to reduce contact (SITA, 2022).
- **Emotional Support:** Airlines like Vistara trained staff in crisis communication (Deloitte, 2021).

1.4. General guidelines for the preparation of your text

Variables such as *NPS* (Net Promoter Score) and *CES* (Customer Effort Score) are italicized. Measurements avoid non-SI units unless explicitly required.

1.5. File naming and delivery

Files titled procedia_aviation_amisha.docx and procedia_aviation_amisha.pdf..

1.6. Footnotes

Footnotes are minimized. Critical annotations use superscript letters.

2. Illustrations

Section 1: Respondent Profile What is your age group?
45 responses

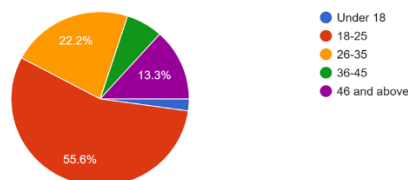


Figure 2.1 Age Group Distribution of Respondents.

Which type of airline do you mostly use?
45 responses

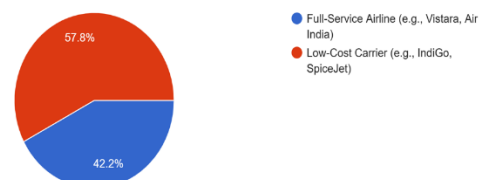


Figure 2.2 Airline Preference

3. Equations

Customer Satisfaction Index (*CSI*) is derived as:

$$CSI = \frac{\sum (\text{Individual Satisfaction Scores})}{N} \quad (1)$$

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Appendix A. Survey Evaluation

Section 1: Respondent Profile

1. What is your age group? ☐ Under 18 ☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36–45 ☐ 46 and above
2. What is your gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to say
3. What is your occupation? ☐ Student ☐ Working Professional ☐ Business Owner ☐ Homemaker ☐ Retired ☐ Other
4. How frequently do you travel by air? ☐ Once a year ☐ 2–3 times a year ☐ More than 3 times a year ☐ Rarely/Never
5. Which type of airline do you mostly use? ☐ Full-Service Airline (e.g., Vistara, Air India) ☐ Low-Cost Carrier (e.g., IndiGo, SpiceJet)

Section 2: Travel Experience pre and post COVID

6. Have you traveled by air before COVID-19? ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Have you traveled by air after the COVID-19 pandemic? ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Compared to your pre-COVID flight experience, how would you rate the change in airline customer service post-COVID? ☐ Much worse ☐ Slightly worse ☐ No change ☐ Slightly better ☐ Much better

Section 3: Evaluation Of Airline Customer Service

Rate each of the following aspects from 1 (Very Unsatisfied) to 5 (Very Satisfied)

Service Aspect	1	2	3	4	5
Hygiene and cleanliness of the aircraft	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff courtesy and professionalism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of check-in and boarding process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication about flight changes/delays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refund and cancellation flexibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enforcement of COVID-19 protocols (masks, sanitizers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall satisfaction with the airline experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4: Evaluation Of Airline Customer Service

15. Would you choose the same airline again in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe
16. Would you recommend this airline to your friends or family? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

Section 5: Open-Ended Feedback

15. What did you appreciate most about your last airline experience?
16. What suggestions would you give to improve customer service in airlines post-COVID?

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