

IDENTIFICATION OF SERVICE QUALITY COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR THE LOUNGE ATTENDANTS: A CASE OF A PRIVATELY-OWNED AIRLINE IN THAILAND

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Abstract

Service quality is a critical competitive differentiator, particularly for A airways, which cannot compete with low-cost carriers (LCCs) based on price; the airport lounge service has been identified as a critical aspect of overall airline service quality. However, an established competency framework for airline lounge staff, and clear understanding of the competencies that contribute to service quality in airline lounges are currently lacking. This research was conducted to determine whether staff competencies influence the service quality ratings for airport lounges, and to identify the most important staff competencies for providing exceptional service. A airway's customers (n = 419) were surveyed, and supplemental qualitative data was also collected via a series of interviews with airport lounge staff and passengers (n = 20), as well as focus groups with industry experts (n = 18). Multiple regression analysis of the survey data indicated that five competencies influence service quality ratings; these were efficiency, helpfulness, communication skills, the ability to maintain a neat and professional appearance, and knowledge (which was negatively related to service quality ratings). Content and thematic analysis from the interviews and focus group transcripts highlighted the importance of additional competencies, including problem solving and conflict resolution skills, attention to detail, situational awareness, service-mindedness, friendliness, the ability to maintain a positive attitude, a caring approach, and general customer service and hospitality skills.

Keywords— Airport lounge, Airport service, Service quality, SERVQUAL, Staff competencies

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