

ABSTRACT

Airlines increasingly have been setting up customer relationship departments in order to meet the expectations of their passengers. When something goes wrong, listening to the complaints of customers and taking appropriate recovery actions can help airlines to stay in business. This study uses the concept of service encounters as well as service failure in the airline business to identify the significant effect of airline passengers' nationality and attitudes towards complaining on passengers' complaining behavioral intention and service recovery.

The data was gathered by a set of questionnaires distributed to 384 airline passengers, who recently experienced in-flight services before landing at Suvarnabhumi Airport Bangkok, Thailand during the months of February to April, 2012. Descriptive statistics as well as Pearson's Co-relation and One-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data of this study.

The findings reflected that airline passengers' nationality and their attitudes towards complaining have a significant effect on their complaint behavioral intentions and service recovery. When service failures happen in airlines, Asian passengers usually choose not to complain because of their highly respectful traditions, to fulfill social obligations, as well as save "face". Middle Eastern and African passengers are more likely to share their complaints with their relatives and friends, while passengers from Europe, United States of America and Other countries are ready as well as willing to take third-party action, in the form of complaining to airline consumer

agencies, writing complaint letters to local newspapers or even taking legal action.

The hypotheses testing established the relationship in airline passengers' complaining behavior and their attitudes towards complaining is significant as well as the differences in airline passengers' complaining behavior and their preference on service recovery with regards to nationality is significant.

Therefore, managers of airlines can train their employees on how to deal with passengers from different countries following unsatisfactory service episodes. It is critical for airlines when serving Asian and Middle Eastern passengers to do their best to offer a satisfactory service every time as Asian and Middle East passengers might not give a second chance to them. When serving African passengers, apologizing first can let African passengers feel better and forgive the fault of the airline in the event of service failure. However, when serving American, European and Other countries passengers, a fast response by the airlines' highest possible person in terms of seniority can retain the passengers from American, European and Other countries.

Keywords: Suvarnabhumi Airport, Passengers, Nationality, Attitudes towards complaining, Service recovery.