



The Effect of Cabin Crew Service Quality on Customer Loyalty

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Abstract

Purpose: This study analyzes how cabin crew service quality influences customer loyalty in the aviation industry. Specifically, it examines how the reliability, professionalism, and authenticity of cabin crew services affect cognitive loyalty and whether such effects affect emotional loyalty. **Design and methodology:** We surveyed passengers who had used aviation services in the past year. Structural equation modelling was used to test our hypotheses. To test model fit and assess reliability, validity was developed for the measurement items of each variable. **Findings:** The results support all four hypotheses. Reliability, professionalism, and authenticity of cabin crew services positively influence cognitive loyalty. Furthermore, cognitive loyalty significantly and positively affects emotional loyalty. These findings highlight the crucial role of cabin crew in fostering both rational preference and emotional attachment among passengers. **Conclusions:** This study provides insights into developing customer loyalty in the aviation industry. It demonstrates the need to invest in cabin crew training, which ultimately affects all three service quality dimensions. It also indicates that carriers can consider cognitive loyalty as a gateway to emotional loyalty and should pursue strategies accordingly. These results provide airlines with practical implications for improving customer loyalty and furthering their competitive advantage in the industry.

Keywords : Service Quality, Cognitive Loyalty, Emotional Loyalty, Aviation Service

JEL Classification Code : L80, L84, L89, L90

1. Introduction

Airlines face the continuous challenge of distinguishing themselves in the dynamic and fiercely competitive world of global aviation. As airline travel increasingly becomes a commodity, in-flight experience has emerged as one of the few remaining factors by which passengers can distinguish between carriers not only for their most recent flight but also their long-term loyalty (Chen & Chang, 2005). The pinnacle of this service delivery relies on cabin crew members, who are the most important assets for airline and customer communication during their journey.

This study aims to identify the relationship between

cabin crew service quality and customer loyalty in the airline industry. Specifically, it examines how different cabin crew performance dimensions affect passengers' cognitive and emotional loyalty. By gaining a deeper understanding of these dynamics, airlines can develop more targeted customer service and training initiatives to create unforgettable travel experiences that will keep passengers returning for the long haul (Manosuthi et al., 2021).

Examining cabin crew service involves considering multiple aspects. This study focused on three main aspects: reliability, professionalism, and authenticity. Reliability in cabin crew services denotes the uniformity and predictability of the services offered, ensuring customers

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can consistently expect good care during any flight (Chege, 2021). Professionalism encompasses the crew's know-how, experience, and behavior, showcasing their ability to manage diverse circumstances adeptly (Cheng & Wong, 2015). Additionally, it demonstrates authentic communication and meaningful actions, going beyond the limitations of scripted, cookie-cutter responses.

This study proposes that these three-cabin crew service quality dimensions significantly impact cognitive loyalty. Cognitive loyalty refers to a customer's rational assessment of an airline's attributes and its perceived value. It represents a necessary middle ground in the loyalty creation process as customers begin to build a rational allegiance with the airline.

Additionally, this study suggests that cognitive loyalty ultimately reduces consumers' emotional attachment to airlines (emotional loyalty). It transcends satisfaction or preference, representing a deeper bond that often leads to brand advocacy and an active defense against competitive offerings.

To ascertain this relationship, we conducted a detailed survey on customers who availed aviation services in the past year. As memories shift with time, this temporal scope allows participants to draw on recent and up-to-date experiences, ensuring the data collected is valid. This study explores passengers' perceptions of cabin crew service quality within the dimensions of reliability, professionalism, and authenticity, as well as their cognitive and emotional loyalty.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Reliability in Aviation Services

Reliability refers to the consistent and dependable provision of cabin crew services (Johnson & Nilsson, 2003). Reliability encompasses more than just operational aspects. However, in the airline industry, where safety and timing are critical, it also includes the quality of care passengers can reliably expect (Caruana et al., 2003). First, a consistent service standard is maintained across all flights, ensuring passengers receive the same high level of care regardless of their journey. Second, there is on-call responsiveness to passenger needs and requests, with crew members addressing issues promptly (Burns & Gross, 1990). Third, accurate information is provided about flight timings, transfers, and services, which is important for passenger convenience and travel planning. Finally, it includes strict adherence to airline rules and regulations, promoting order and professionalism (Galetzka et al., 2006).

From a passenger's perspective, cabin crew can make or mar their travel experience. This reduces fear and anxiety

when traveling, while increasing trust and confidence. Passengers can rely on quality service, leading to overall passenger satisfaction, potentially influencing their future airline choices. Reliability begets trust, which, in turn, forms the basis of a lasting relationship with customers, encouraging them to return time and again (Johnson & Nilsson, 2003).

2.2. Professionalism in Aviation Services

Professionalism during in-flight services refers to the knowledge, conduct, and grooming of cabin crew (Cheng & Wong, 2015). It is critical in the aviation industry, where safety is paramount and service excellence differentiates airlines from one another. Professionalism is also reflected in various cabin crew duties, starting with in-depth knowledge and implementation of safety procedures, ensuring passenger security in all circumstances. Moreover, cabin crew must showcase their ability to handle diverse in-flight scenarios, including medical emergencies and disruptive passenger situations, highlighting their extensive training (Callison & Seltzer, 2010).

Good communication skills are yet another hallmark of professionalism in aviation services (Chatzi et al., 2019). This includes making loud and clear announcements and effectively interacting with passengers from different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, conforming to airline grooming standards contributes to professionalism and reinforces the airline's branding. Given the increasing international competition, cultural awareness during international flights is now a necessary requisite for global aviation companies (Calzada & Fageda, 2014). Proficiency in time management and organizational skills further distinguishes the professionalism of cabin crew members.

Professional cabin crew not only ensure a smooth and safe flight experience but also represent the airline's brand and values. Their conduct can significantly influence passenger perceptions of an airline's overall quality and reputation, potentially affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2.3. Authenticity in Aviation Services

Authenticity in cabin crew services refers to a genuine and sincere approach to interacting with passengers (Song, 2016). In an industry where services often feel scripted or impersonal owing to standardized procedures, authentic service can create memorable experiences for passengers. Authentic service is characterized by genuine empathy and care for passengers' comfort and well-being, going beyond mere politeness to show real concern for the passenger experience (Kraak & Holmqvist, 2017).

Authenticity is expressed through personalized

interactions that go beyond a standard script, allowing cabin crew to relate more personally with passengers. This involves communicating truthfully and transparently, particularly during delays or service issues, as it provides an opportunity to demonstrate trustworthy behavior in less-than-ideal circumstances (Berman et al., 2019). Real service also requires flexibility in delivery, acknowledging that some travelers may expect or need more attention while others may need less.

Authenticity also boils down to cabin crew members who appear interested in representing their airline. From the captain to the newest recruit, the passion for performing their job may spread from one person to another, contributing positively not only to the work atmosphere on board but also to the quality of the passenger experience.

Against the background of growing competition and standardization in aircraft services, the authenticity of cabin crew service stands out. Authentic service can transform ordinary flights into exceptional experiences, elevating passengers' experience from mere satisfaction to delight, fostering loyalty to the airline. By building a strong emotional bond between passengers and the airline, authentic service breathes life into what would otherwise be an impersonal journey, transforming homo economicus (passengers as mere ticket numbers) into homo sentimentalibus (Grandey et al., 2005). Being an efficient employee gets the job done, but during long-haul flights or stressful travel circumstances, feeling truly cared for can significantly impact passenger comfort and satisfaction.

2.4. Cognitive Loyalty

Cognitive loyalty refers to the logical affinity a customer develops toward an airline based on their knowledge and beliefs about its brand in aviation services (Han et al., 2011). This form of loyalty arises from customers rationally assessing an airline's attributes such as service quality, punctuality, safety records, and value for money (Han et al., 2011). Through consistent fulfillment or surpassing of these expectations, passengers form cognitive loyalty toward an airline.

In the airline industry, cognitive loyalty manifests through the convenience and individual choices passengers make in selecting a particular airline (Omar et al., 2011). For example, passengers may prefer one carrier over another because of its wide reach (route network), convenient flight schedules, or competitive pricing. Moreover, the reliability and professionalism of the cabin crew can further contribute to cognitive loyalty, as passengers learn over time that an airline's service quality can be trusted and measured.

Cognitive loyalty refers to an active, conscious decision-making process where customers weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each airline before choosing their preferred

airline (El-Manstrly & Harrison, 2013). Dedication to a brand is necessary; it relies on the perceived benefits of flying with an airline. Although cognitive loyalty can generate repeat purchases, it may not shield the airline from competitors that offer more attractive features or benefits.

2.5. Emotional Loyalty

Emotional loyalty, in this context, represents a deeper and affective bond that customers develop with an airline (Han et al., 2011). It transcends rational choice, which may include decisions like "I always buy the store-branded pasta because it tastes just as good," to involve emotional decision-making, often encompassing a fuzzy feeling. In aviation, emotional loyalty is created when passengers form an individual connection with an airline, driven by consistently outstanding services or specific meaningful exchanges (Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2016).

Emotional loyalty is fostered at each touchpoint throughout the passenger journey—whether with passengers interacting with cabin crew, ground staff, or fellow travelers. Genuine interactions in service delivery can help generate emotional loyalty, as sincere and caring interactions create lasting positive impressions on passengers. Airlines tend to create stronger emotional bonds when customers perceive genuine value and care.

Emotionally loyal customers become brand advocates, recommending the airline to friends and family and even defending it against criticism (Yu & Dean, 2001). They are less price-conscious and more likely to overlook minor service shortcomings. Given that aviation is one of the most competitive industries, emotional loyalty can be a strong differentiator that competitors find challenging to replicate or easily quantify based on cognitive (rational) elements.

Based on these previous studies, this study seeks to examine the impact of cabin crews' service quality on customer loyalty in airlines industry and investigate how various performance dimensions of cabin crew affect cognitive and emotional trust among passengers. Although past research on airline service quality and customer satisfaction has been carried out in different perspectives, the literature is void of empirical studies that have explored cabin crew performance as a critical antecedent to cognitive and emotional loyalty.

3. Hypotheses Setting and Research Model

3.1. Reliability and Cognitive Loyalty

The first hypothesis of this study proposes that the reliability of cabin crew service, perceived by airline passengers, positively influences cognitive loyalty.

Reliability is defined in terms of the consistency and dependability of the service provided by flight attendants across various aspects of the cabin experience.

Passengers in the turbulent skies of aviation experience constant stress and risk. With no control over what comes next, their expectations of cabin crew services are significantly higher. After all, an airline's fare does include "peace of mind." Airline passengers will develop a rational preference for an airline if they consistently receive dependable service, accurate information, and prompt responses to their needs (Lee et al., 2015).

When passengers feel secure and comfortable, they perceive services as reliable. This will enable them to create a blueprint of what their travel experience should entail. If the airline consistently meets or exceeds these expectations, it is likely that many others will evaluate the airline based on these attributes. Cognitive loyalty is rooted in this rational evaluation (Cyr et al., 2009).

Additionally, in an industry where safety is the number one priority, a cabin crew's reliable implementation of procedures and consistent adherence to airline policies can impress upon passengers why they should trust a particular carrier to fly them safely. This plays a role in cognitive loyalty, as passengers are more likely to choose an airline, they believe will consistently deliver reliable service and prioritize their best interests (Han et al., 2011).

This aligns with the broader service quality literature, which indicates that reliability is often a core element in customer evaluations. The predictability of cabin crew service quality plays a crucial role in developing cognitive loyalty, particularly for in-flight services, where passengers have limited options once they board their flight.

H1: Reliability positively affects cognitive loyalty.

3.2. Professionalism and Cognitive Loyalty

The second hypothesis of this study posits a positive relationship between cabin crew professionalism and cognitive loyalty among airline passengers. In this context, professionalism encompasses the knowledge, skills, conduct, and appearance of flight attendants during their interactions with passengers and the execution of their duties.

In the aviation sector, where safety and efficiency are crucial, and customer satisfaction levels must be high, particularly on long-haul flights (over 3 hours), cabin crew professionalism is a key factor in forming passengers' opinions about an airline. Professionalism among flight attendants reflects an airline's dedication to its benchmarks and level of service, which can significantly shape how passengers rationally rate the carrier (Cruess & Cruess, 2016).

Professionalism in cabin crew performance is demonstrated in various ways throughout the service. This

includes an in-depth understanding of safety standards, ensuring on-time flights, and accurately announcing emergency procedures while complying with all airline standard operating practices for appearance and behavior. Such advanced levels of professionalism creates a powerful cognitive impression of the airline among passengers (Park & Hyun, 2021).

Additionally, trained cabin crew members are experienced in handling difficult situations like flight delays, medical emergencies, and passenger altercations. Their ability to handle these situations professionally and respectfully greatly contributes to maintaining passengers' confidence in the airline. This confidence is a critical aspect of cognitive loyalty because it solidifies passengers' choice of airline.

The service quality literature also reinforces the role of professionalism in influencing cognitive loyalty. Notably, staff competence, customer satisfaction, and loyalty are important to one another (Cockburn-Wooten, 2012), particularly in the context of air travel, where passengers spend hours in the company of cabin crew members who ensure their safety and satisfaction.

H2: Professionalism positively affects cognitive loyalty.

3.3. Authenticity and Cognitive Loyalty

The third hypothesis of this study proposes a positive relationship between cabin crew service authenticity and cognitive loyalty among airline passengers. Authenticity in this context refers to a genuine, sincere, and personalized approach to interactions between flight attendants and passengers.

In the aviation sector, where service interactions often appear scripted or impersonal owing to standardized processes and large passenger volumes, genuine service can greatly influence passengers' evaluations of an airline. Real human interaction involves going beyond mere politeness, following a specific service script, or superficial words that these customer-filled checks are seeking from us as an airline; it requires genuine empathy and an understanding of people's personal well-being (Fu, 2019).

Cognitive loyalty can be positively influenced by the way cabin crew deliver authentic service (Park et al., 2019). First, authentic service can improve passengers' perceptions of service quality. When passengers feel well-attended, they are more likely to perceive the service favorably and may develop a preference for an airline that offers such service.

Authenticity also fosters humility among airline employees. Open and sincere communication in difficult situations, like delays or service issues, generates passengers' confidence in the airline's integrity. This confidence is a major factor in rational decision-making, typically associated

with cognitive loyalty and affecting airline passengers' choices when selecting an airline for their next travel (Lindholm, 2013).

Authentic service can also convey to passengers that they are more than just a ticket number and valued as individuals. This acknowledgment can foster a sense of respect, depending on the airline and how customers perceive it. This may influence future airline choices, as customers will likely favor those that consistently deliver personalized, authentic service (Matthews et al., 2020).

Authenticity can serve as a powerful differentiator for increasing standardization in the aviation industry. Passengers who experience authentic interactions may rationally conclude that the airline offers a unique and more human-centric service than its competitors. This rational evaluation is at the core of cognitive loyalty.

H3: Authenticity positively affects cognitive loyalty.

3.4. Cognitive and Emotional Loyalty

The fourth hypothesis of this study proposes a positive relationship between cognitive and emotional loyalty among airline passengers. It suggests that as passengers develop a rational preference and attachment to an airline (cognitive loyalty), they are more likely to form a deeper emotional connection with the brand (emotional loyalty).

Emotional loyalty stems from cognitive loyalty, which signifies the rational judgement and selection of an airline based on its perceived image as expected tangible benefits (Omar et al., 2011). When passengers consistently experience reliability, professionalism, and authenticity in an airline's service, they will develop favorable attitudes as expected, leading to improved emotional attachment if exploited for a longer period (Yu & Dean, 2001).

The transition from cognitive to emotional loyalty may occur through multiple pathways. First, passengers are consistently reassured that their initial rational choice was the right one, as they can only take 100 flights before feeling a powerful sense of loyalty and trust toward any given airline. Over time, this trust can evolve into a sense of intimacy, eventually forming a bond with the airline.

Second, cognitive loyalty generally translates into increased touchpoints with the airline, which should lead to additional opportunities for positive moments and memorable interactions (Han et al., 2011). Furthermore, the authentic service offered by the cabin crew can evoke positive emotions among passengers, further strengthening their emotional connection to the airline.

Additionally, cognitive loyalty leads passengers to associate themselves more closely with the brand value and identity of airlines (Cohen & Houston, 1972). As they justify why their airline of choice is superior, consumers begin to

align the brand with themselves, integrating it into their personal identity/lifestyle.

H4: Cognitive loyalty positively affects emotional loyalty.

The research model based on these hypotheses is illustrated in Figure 1.

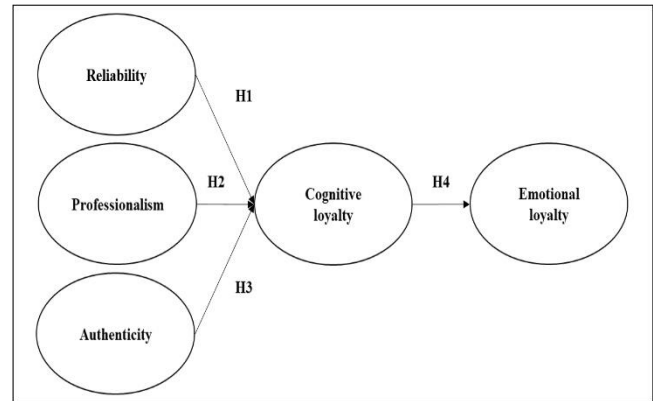


Figure 1: Research model

4. Methods and Analysis

4.1. Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

This study examined the impact of flight attendants' service quality on customer loyalty in the aviation service industry. To achieve this, a survey was conducted targeting individuals who had flown with airlines in the past year. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, content validity of the measurement items was ensured by consulting with three professors specializing in service studies.

Subsequently, the questionnaire was distributed via KakaoTalk, the most popular messenger app in South Korea, over a period of approximately 20 days starting in the third week of May. A total of 194 questionnaires were collected and used for statistical analysis. The characteristics of the study samples are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample characteristics

	Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	85	43.81
	Female	109	56.19
Age group	20s	35	18.04
	30s	64	32.99
	40s	41	21.13
	50s and above	54	27.84
Airlines frequently used	Korean Air	69	35.57
	Asiana Airlines	21	10.82
	Jin Air	27	13.92
	Jeju Air	36	18.56

	Air Busan	12	6.19
	T'Way Air	29	14.95
Number of flights taken in the past year	Less than 5 times	85	43.81
	5 times or more but less than 10 times	64	32.99
	10 times or more	45	23.20

4.2. Variable Definitions and Measurement

As previously mentioned, advice on measurement items was obtained from professors specializing in service studies to guide this research. Subsequently, the questionnaire items were created by referring to relevant previous studies. Each variable was measured using four items using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly negative, 4 = neutral, and 7 = strongly positive. Table 2 presents the measurement items for the variables used in this study.

Table 2: Measurement items of the variables

Potential variance	Measurement item	Reference
Reliability	1. The cabin crew consistently provides the service they promise. 2. I can depend on the cabin crew to respond to my requests in a timely manner. 3. The cabin crew provides accurate information about the flight and services. 4. The cabin crew's service is consistently good across different flights with this airline.	Johnson & Nilsson (2003); Galetzka et al. (2006)
Professionalism	1. The cabin crew demonstrates thorough knowledge of safety procedures. 2. The cabin crew maintains a polished and well-groomed appearance. 3. The cabin crew handles difficult situations with competence and grace. 4. The cabin crew communicates clearly and effectively with passengers.	Cheng & Wong (2015); Lee (2014)
Authenticity	1. The cabin crew's interactions with me feel genuine rather than scripted. 2. The cabin crew shows sincere care for my comfort and well-being. 3. The cabin crew adapts their service style to my individual needs. 4. I feel that the cabin crew's friendly attitude is authentic, not forced.	Värlander (2009); Matthews et al. (2020)

Cognitive loyalty	1. I believe this airline offers the best service compared to other airlines. 2. Choosing this airline is a rational decision based on my travel needs. 3. I prefer this airline because of its consistent service quality. 4. This airline meets my expectations better than other airlines.	Han et al. (2011); Omar et al. (2011)
Emotional loyalty	1. I feel a strong positive emotional connection to this airline. 2. I would be disappointed if I couldn't fly with this airline. 3. I feel a sense of belonging with this airline. 4. I feel proud to fly with this airline.	Han et al. (2011); Manzuma-Ndaaba et al. (2016)

4.3. Reliability and Validity Testing

This study examined reliability and validity before testing the hypotheses. Reliability involves verifying whether a concept is consistently measured. Various methods can be used to determine reliability. However, in social sciences, Cronbach's alpha values are calculated. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or higher indicates acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2010). All variables in this study had values above 0.7, confirming the accuracy of the measurement tools.

Subsequently, to decide whether to accept the theoretical model, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The fit of the measurement model met most of the criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Specifically, the fit results of the measurement model are as follows: CMIN/df=1.402, RMR=0.040, GFI=0.893, RMSEA=0.042, and CFI=0.974.

Furthermore, this study verified convergent and discriminant validity to ensure construct validity. To test convergent validity, construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values were examined. Generally, if the construct reliability value is 0.7 or higher and the AVE value is 0.5 or higher, convergent validity is considered to be secured (Hair et al., 2010). This study found no issues related to these criteria.

Moreover, discriminant validity confirms that the concepts being measured are distinct from one another. To confirm this, the AVE value of each variable must be greater than the square of its correlation coefficient. This study confirmed that discriminant validity was also achieved.

Table 3 shows the results of the reliability and convergent validity tests, and Table 4 shows the results of the discriminant validity tests.

Table 3: Results of reliability and convergent validity tests

	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Reliability	0.963	0.931	0.688
Professionalism	0.961	0.945	0.779
Authenticity	0.956	0.927	0.736
Cognitive loyalty	0.947	0.946	0.824
Emotional loyalty	0.944	0.932	0.800

Table 4: Results of discriminant validity tests

	Reliability (1)	Professionalism (2)	Authenticity (3)	Cognitive loyalty (4)	Emotional loyalty (5)
(1)	0.688	-	-	-	-
(2)	0.592	0.779	-	-	-
(3)	0.620	0.671	0.736	-	-
(4)	0.604	0.568	0.646	0.824	-
(5)	0.518	0.484	0.620	0.482	0.800

*Diagonal elements contain the AVE values for each variable, while the remaining values represent the squared correlation coefficients.

4.4. Empirical Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling. We examined the fit of the structural model using AMOS 18.0, yielding the following results: CMIN/df=1.421, RMR=0.040, GFI=0.982, RMSEA=0.043, and CFI=0.972. These values can be considered to satisfy the recommended criteria outlined by Hair et al. (2010), indicating that the model is suitable for path analysis. The hypotheses testing revealed that all hypotheses are accepted. Table 5 presents the results of the hypothesis testing.

Table 5: Hypothesis verification results

Hypothesis	Standardized coefficient	p-value	Result
H1	0.454	***	Supported
H2	0.418	***	Supported
H3	0.343	***	Supported
H4	0.186	0.014 (*)	Supported

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

5. Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

The results of our hypothesis testing, with all four hypotheses supported, provide valuable insights into the formation of customer loyalty in the aviation industry. These findings have significant implications for understanding the relationship between cabin crew service quality and customer loyalty, as well as the progression from cognitive to emotional loyalty.

Our findings strongly support the idea that soundness, professionalism, and authenticity of cabin crew service

impact cognitive loyalty (Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3). This suggests that passengers largely evaluate and choose an airline based on the rational assessment of their experiences with the cabin crew. The positive link between reliability and cognitive loyalty reinforces the idea that cabin crew who deliver reliable and dependable services are fundamental in building passenger trust and confidence in an airline. This reinforces the need for consistent service quality throughout flights and at every touchpoint.

The correlation between professionalism and cognitive loyalty underscores how cabin crew expertise, competence, and experience influence passenger perceptions. This underscores the importance of thorough training programs and enforcement of high professional standards for cabin crew members (Romzek et al., 2014). It also emphasizes that honest, individualized service delivery by cabin crew should be encouraged and fostered.

Together, these findings suggest that airlines should improve all three dimensions of cabin crew service quality to foster cognitive loyalty among passengers. By doing so, airlines can establish a loyal customer base rooted in a rational assessment of their services.

Hypothesis 4, which posits a positive relationship between cognitive and emotional loyalty, offers valuable insights into how the structural factors of customer accommodation influence the development of hotel customers' positively evaluated attachment to hotels (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). This suggests that as passengers mentally rationalize their preferred airline (cabin crew), they are more likely to develop a stronger bond with a specific brand. In the context of aviation, this transition between cognitive loyalty and emotional brand preference is particularly important. It demonstrates that if airlines can consistently provide good service through their cabin crew, they can foster a more dedicated and sustainably resilient emotional affinity with consumers.

The supported relationship between cognitive and affective loyalty strengthens cumulative customer loyalty in aviation. This indicates that the way cabin crew handle their services not only positively impacts current satisfaction but also helps form an emotional bond with the airline (Park et al., 2020). It is essential for airlines to strive for long-term customer relationships by learning and understanding this.

5.2. Implications

First, there is a pressing need for substantial investments in robust cabin crew training programs. Reliability, high standards for service performance, and authenticity are crucial components directly related to fostering cognitive loyalty among customers. Given the significance of these attributes in pleasing passengers, airlines should develop training interventions targeted at improving each of these

critical service aspects. Training should include a mix of simulations to ensure consistency in service, workshops on professionalism, and intensive interpersonal skills exercises. Airlines can train their cabin crew to excel in these areas to cultivate cognitive loyalty among passengers.

Second, airlines must foster a service culture that appreciates and incentivizes cabin attendants for their contributions during guest interactions. Our findings indicate that cognitive loyalty leads to emotional loyalty; authenticity remains a valuable asset for developing both types of customer loyalty. As such, airlines should introduce policies and practices that motivate cabin crew members to move beyond cookie-cutter dialogue and engage in personalized conversations with travelers. This could involve empowering the crew to exercise greater autonomy in their interactions or incentivizing exceptional service moments with a new standard of authenticity. It could also involve incorporating individual passenger feedback on the authenticity of their interactions as part of performance evaluations.

Third, customer loyalty should be analyzed as a continuum of feelings, ranging from cognitive to emotional attachment. According to the study's findings, cognitive loyalty serves as a precursor to emotional loyalty. Consequently, airlines need to think strategically and not only focus on satisfying today's passenger but also be patient in creating experiences that build long-term cognitive loyalty. Marketing strategies and customer relationship management programs should focus on nurturing this progression through personalized communication and loyalty programs. These initiatives should reflect cognitive loyalty, while programs specifically targeting frequent flyers aim to deepen their emotional connections with these customers.

Fourth, to increase customer satisfaction and effort, airlines should use data to personalize the in-flight experience by appealing together emotional loyalty with cognitive overall service quality. Airlines can achieve better visibility into personal preferences, itineraries and previous engagements by mining passenger data while ensuring all adequate privacy control in place. In turn, this knowledge can help to shape more tailored services and interactions on-the-fly, resulting in even more personalized-and-genuine-encounters for cabin crew.

5.3. Limitations

The limitation of capturing only a single time point offers a static snapshot, overlooking potential dynamic factors influencing customer loyalty in aviation. Over time, customers' perception of an airline or alliance may change owing to changes in airline policies, competitive offerings, or broader industry trends. Further research could include a longitudinal study to capture passengers' loyalty—both cognitive and emotional—over time.

Similarly, passenger loyalty may be affected by variables beyond the control of cabin crew. While this study focuses specifically on the impact of cabin crew service quality on passengers' overall experience, other factors such as ticket pricing, flight punctuality, comfort accessories, and even extra elements like weather conditions can be equally relevant. Therefore, we suggest that future research should not only examine cabin crew service quality as a predictor of customer loyalty in the air travel industry but also consider integrated additional variables like route density. It is essential to explore how these factors interact to either increase variability or ensure consistency in the results.

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