Air Travel Behavior and Attitude of Domestic Passengers toward Low Cost Airline Services

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to study the air travel behavior and attitude of domestic passengers toward low-cost airline services. The samples of the study were 400 Thai passengers selected by purposive sampling technique. The research instrument was a questionnaire. The data were analyzed by different methods as follows: percentage and frequency were used to analyzed basic data. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze attitude toward low-cost airline services. Pearson chi-square was used to analyze the relationship between demographic factors on behavior toward air travel, t-test was used to analyze passengers' attitudes toward low-cost airline services with different genders, and One-way-ANOVA was used to analyze passengers' attitude toward low-cost airline services by age, education, and occupation factors. The study indicated that the main objective for flying was leisure. The respondents came along with 2-3 companions. They used service 1-5 times yearly. Most of them traveled on Monday to Friday, reserved air tickets via airline mobile application. They, mostly, bought tickets 1 month in advance, and paid by credit card. Most of them checked in via checked-in counter. They searched and received the information about the airline services from the internet. The research findings revealed that personal factors; gender, age, education, and occupation were highly correlated with consumers' behavior of low cost airlines at the 0.05 level of statistical significance. The passengers had high level of satisfaction for check-in, boarding service, and baggage services. Results also showed that different gender, age, education, and occupation factors were not difference significantly to attitude of domestic passengers toward low-cost airline services. The information from this research can be used to set a plan for marketing mix strategy of low cost airline in order to increase the number of their customers.

Keywords : Air Travel, Behavior, Attitude, Low Cost Airline, Thai Passenger

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Introduction

In recent years, air travel has been one of the most popular services because it is convenient, safe, and saves time in traveling. Air transportation is related to economic, social development, tourism facilitation, and cultural exchange (Sakdaar and Poon-Ead, 2018) including contribution of value added to economic. There is a connection between districts and new markets resulting in investment and increased expansion from economic output. Services support the adjustment of the trade and tourism sectors as well as the expansion of the market share of low-cost airlines (Lertthaitrakul and Sangwipak, 2015).

Consumers' satisfaction and behavior in air travel and airline services play an important role in the aviation industry because they are parts of the service determinations and the marketing strategies of the airline. However, the number of passengers will fluctuate depending on the season that is difficult to control. Therefore, airlines should find marketing strategies and various methods to be in accordance with customer satisfaction, customers' needs in using service, and coming back to use the service continuously (Argkla, 2015). Jefferson and Lickorish (1988) claimed that age and occupation could be factors that affect the customers' needs of various products and services. Moreover, customers have different perspectives (Kandampully, 2002). Therefore, aviation operators and relating businesses should adjust operational plans, service, and have an appropriate marketing strategy to meet travel behavior, satisfaction, and the needs of passengers.

The Purposes of the Research

To study the air travel behavior and attitude of Thai passengers toward low-cost airline services.

Research Methodology

1. Population and Sample

1.1 The population was 38,299,757 Thai passengers who used domestic flights at the Don Mueang international airport.

1.2 The samples of the study were 400 Thai passengers. The purposive sampling technique was employed to collect the data from Thai passengers who used domestic flights at the Don Mueang international airport.

2. Instruments

The research instruments were the multiple choices and 5-point-rating-scale questionnaire with a .85 reliability index. The content and structural validity were determined by Item Objective Congruent (IOC) with 3 experts.

3. Data collection

The quantitative research was conducted by using questionnaire as a tool for data collection.

4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by different methods as follows: percentage and

frequency were used to analyzed basic data. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze attitude toward low-cost airline services. Pearson chi-square was used to analyze the relationship between demographic factors on behavior toward air travel, t-test was used to analyze passengers' attitudes toward low-cost airline services with different genders, and One-way-ANOVA was used to analyze passengers' attitude toward low-cost airline services by age, education, and occupation factors.

Results of the Study

The results of the study were as follows:

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	127	31.8
Female	273	68.2
Total	400	100.0
Age	Year	Percent
20-30 Years old	93	23.2
31-40 Years old	174	43.5
41-50 Years old	115	28.8
51-60 Years old	6	1.5
More than 60 Years old	12	3.0
Total	400	100.0
Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Vocational school level	13	3.2
Bachelor	212	53.0
Higher than Bachelor	175	43.8
Total	400	100.0
Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Farmer / fisher	77	19.3
Business owner	76	19.0
Employee	50	12.5
Government officers	129	32.2
Retired	12	3.0
Student	56	14.0
Total	400	100.0

From Table 1, the sampled respondents of this study were 400 Thai passengers. Of these, around two-third (68.2%) of them were female and around one-third were male. According to the age of the sample group, 43.5 % of them were at the age of 31 – 40. Regarding educational background of the sample passengers, more than half of them graduated with bachelor's degree, followed by the ones with higher degree and with vocational certificate respectively. Regarding occupation, the biggest group of the passengers were government officials (32.2%), whereas the smallest group were retied people.

Table 2. Travel behaviors

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Main reasons of traveling		
For attending conference, seminar, business	89	22.3
For relaxing	254	63.5
For visiting relatives/ going back home	57	14.3
Time of using air travel per year		
1-5 times per year	292	73.0
6-10 times per year	55	13.8
More than 10 times per year	53	13.2
Number of travelling companion		
Alone	136	34.0
2-3 people	222	55.4
4-6 people	31	7.8
More than 6 people	11	2.8
Day of using service		
Monday - Friday	195	48.8
Saturday - Sunday	136	34.0
Holiday	69	17.2
Booking channel		
Airline sales office	18	4.5
Call center	4	1.0
Travel agent	44	11.0
Airline website	158	39.5
Airline mobile application	176	44.0

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Time for ticket purchase		
Buy and travel immediately	10	2.4
1 week in advance	143	35.8
1 month in advance	146	36.8
At least 1-3 months in advance	89	22.3
At least 3-6 months in advance	5	1.2
More than 6 months in advance	6	1.5
Ticket payment		
Cash	52	13.0
Online banking	72	18.0
ATM	21	5.2
Credit card	119	29.8
Debit card	27	6.8
Counter service	109	27.2
Check-in channel		
Check-in counter	216	54.0
Check-in kiosk	16	4.0
Airline website	37	9.2
Airline mobile application	131	32.8
Sources of information		
Friends/ family	52	13.0
Television	9	2.2
Internet	339	84.8

From Table 2, the research results showed that the main objective for flying was leisure (63.5%). More than half of the trips (55.4%) were accompanied by 2-3 companions. Majority of the sample passengers (73.0%) travelled 1-5 times per year. Nearly half of them traveled on Monday – Friday. 44% of them reserved air tickets through airline mobile application, followed by 39.5%reserved air tickets through airline website. Nearly similar number of the sample passengers bought tickets 1 month and 1 week in advance (36.8% and 35.8% respectively). According to the method of payment, nearly one-third of them paid the ticket by credit card. Regarding check-in channel, more than half of them preferred to check-in at the check-in counter followed by using airline mobile application. Regarding the sources of information, the study revealed that more than 4 out of 5 sample passengers searched and received information about the airline services from the internet.

Table 3. Attitude toward low-cost airline services

Variables	Mean	S.D.
Check-in factor	4.01	0.57
Boarding service factor	3.89	0.61
Baggage service factor	3.75	0.67
Total	3.88	0.62

From Table 3, the results showed that the overall attitude of the respondents toward the low-cost airline services was at a high level ($\bar{x}$=3.88, S.D. =.62). The three high rated factors of the services were check-in ($\bar{x}$=4.01, S.D. =.57), boarding service ($\bar{x}$ =3.89, S.D. =.61), and baggage service ($\bar{x}$ =3.75, S.D. =.67) respectively. The service processes also included fast check-in procedures, preparation before departure with a short duration, luggage-waiting period, and punctuality of flights.

Table 4. Relationship between demographic factors on behavior toward air travel

Demographic factors	Behavior toward air travel	P
Gender	Time of using air travel per year	0.02*
	Day of using service	0.00**
	Booking channel	0.02*
Age	Time of using air travel per year	0.00**
	Time for ticket purchase	0.04*
	Ticket payment	0.00**
	Check-in channel	0.02*
	Sources of information	0.00**
Education	Day of using service	0.04*
Occupation	Main reasons of traveling	0.00**
	Time of using air travel per year	0.00**
	Day of using service	0.00**
	Booking channel	0.00**
	Ticket payment	0.00**
	Check-in channel	0.00**
	Sources of information	0.04*

Notes. *Significant Level at .05, **Significant Level at .01

From Table 4, the result showed that gender, age, education and occupation factors had the significant correlation with consumer behavior of low cost airlines (p<0.05). The study found that gender factor was related significantly to time of using air travel per year, day of using service and booking channel (p<0.05). Age factor was related significantly to time of using air travel per year, time for ticket purchase, ticket payment, check-in channel, and sources of information (p<0.05). Education factor was related significantly only to day of using service (p<0.05). Moreover, occupation factor was related significantly to main reasons of traveling, time of using air travel per year, day of using service, booking channel, ticket payment, check-in channel, and sources of information (p<0.05).

Table 5: Comparison of the passengers' attitude toward low-cost airline services by gender

	Male		Female		t-value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Awareness	4.56	0.42	4.49	0.43	1.558	.344

As illustrated in table 5, the results showed that male and female did not have the difference of attitude toward low-cost airline services with statistical significance at 0.05.

Table 6: Comparison of the passengers' attitude toward low-cost airline services by age, education, and occupation factors

Factors	Source of Variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Age	Between Group	1.101	4	. 275	1.525	.194
	Within Group	71.291	395	.180		
	Total	72.392	399			
Education	Between Group	1.101	2.	272	1.510	.191
	Within Group	71.141	397	.180		
	Total	72.392	399			
Occupation	Between Group	1.351	5	. 270	1.498	.189
	Within Group	71.041	394	.180		
	Total	72.392	399			

Notes. *Significant Level at .05

As exhibited in Table 6, the study found that there was no significant difference on attitude toward low-cost airline services among the passengers based on their age, education, and occupation ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings showed that around two-third of the passengers were female and around one-third of the passengers were male. 43.5 % of them were at the age of 31 – 40. More than half of them graduated with bachelor's degree, followed by the ones with higher degree and with vocational certificate respectively. 32.2% of the passengers were government officials. The main objective for flying was leisure. More than half of the trips were accompanied by 2-3 companions. Majority of the sample passengers travelled 1-5 times per year. Nearly half of them traveled on Monday – Friday and reserved air tickets through airline mobile application, followed by 39.5% reserving air tickets through airline website. Nearly similar number of the sample passengers bought tickets 1 month and 1 week in advance (36.8% and 35.8% respectively). Nearly one-third of them paid the ticket by credit card. Regarding check-in channel, more than half of them preferred to check-in at the check-in counter followed by using airline mobile application. More than 4 out of 5 sample passengers searched and received information about the airline services from the internet. This is consistent with the research of Urkarn and Udomprasert (2010)

and Lertkojchasie, (2015) mentioned that most of respondents were female and had education at bachelor level. Their main objective of travel is for relaxing. The group's most influential source of information when choosing low-cost airlines was the internet. Most of them booked tickets through airline websites and used credit cards to pay for tickets.

The passengers had high-level of satisfaction for check-in, boarding services, and baggage services. Service processes including fast check-in procedures, preparation before departure with a short duration, luggage waiting period which not too long, and punctuality of flights will encourage consumers' credibility and an impression which will lead to the decision on usage of the airline services. This is inconsistent with the research of Kankaew (2015) which revealed that the passengers had average-level of satisfaction for satisfaction in using the services depends on overall airport performance. It was, probably, passengers from full-service airline may have higher expectation than low-cost airline.

The result showed that gender, age, education and occupation factors had a significant correlation with consumer behavior of low-cost airlines. In order to make decision passengers would consider several issues especially date of travelling, channel for reservation and check-in, as well as sources of information. Hence, airlines should increase an efficiency of ticket sales through the internet, adjust the ticketing methods to be more convenient and quicker, improve the

ticket booking through the website to be more effective, more convenient and easier to use at all times. Airlines should also consider opening-closing hours of sales channels and check-in counter, and provide information services to cover all target groups which can attract and meet the needs of passengers. These things will make an individual airline stand out from other competitors (Lertkojchasie, 2015).

The study found that personal factors namely; age, education, and occupation were not significantly different in term of the effect on the attitude of domestic passengers toward low-cost airline services. This is consistent with the research of Endoo (2015) which claimed that, age, education, and occupation had no effect on passengers' decision-making on the usage of airline service. Lertkojchasie, (2015) also mentioned that demographic factors; gender, age, education, and career did not affect the choice of using the airline services.

Recommendations

Nowadays, the low-cost airline business is expanding throughout the world. At the same time, the growth rate of the economy is higher and the business competition is more intense because of popularity among air travel agencies. Therefore, aviation businesses have to adopt marketing strategies to suit the situation that occurs. The research found that most of the consumers of low-cost airlines are female. Hence, the airlines should carry out marketing activities for this target group, such as arranging flights that motivate female target groups and make alliances with hotels, tour companies, and spa businesses.

Consumers will mainly consider the travel time, which, if the low-cost airlines chosen during that period are full, they will choose to travel with other airlines even it is more expensive. Therefore, low-cost airlines must have a variety choice of times to travel or increase the number of flights.

Nowadays, consumers are looking for advertisements and travel information through the internet, therefore low-cost airlines should increase advertisements and a good publicity through the internet in order to maintain the old customers and increase the number of new customers who are interested in their airline services.

This research studied about low-cost airlines in Thailand without clearly specifying which airlines were the case studies, only examined the overall picture. Therefore, in the next study, researchers should conduct a specific study on a particular airline in order to create a strategy for the development of the most appropriate market strategy for that airline, whether it is a low-cost airline or not.

The next research study should study expectations, satisfaction, and marketing mix factors affecting the use of low-cost airlines of diversity groups of passengers because customers have different cultural lifestyles, preferences, and needs.

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