




Professional Training as a Catalyst for Business Growth: A Case Study in the Airline Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of professional training initiatives on business growth in the context of AirAsia, a major player in the low-cost airline industry. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 100 employees and 100 customers, complemented by document analysis. The aim of the study was to assess how training programs influence internal and external outcomes such as employee skill development, service quality, customer satisfaction, and overall operational efficiency. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, with multiple regression tests applied to determine the relationship between training quality and key business variables. The findings reveal that training quality significantly contributes to business growth by improving employee capabilities ($\beta = 0.514^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), service delivery ($\beta = 0.462^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), and customer experience ($\beta = 0.221^{*}$, $p < 0.05$). These results confirm that well-structured training enhances both workforce performance and customer satisfaction, ultimately strengthening AirAsia's competitive advantage. This research provides valuable insights into how strategic investment in human capital can drive sustainable growth in service-based industries, particularly in cost-sensitive markets.

Keywords: Airline Industry; Business Growth; Customer Satisfaction; Employee Training; Low-Cost Airline; Service Quality

INTRODUCTION

AirAsia is a low-cost airline headquartered in Malaysia. Since its inception in 2001, AirAsia has risen rapidly to become a globally recognized low-cost airline brand with its "Flying for Everyone" concept (AirAsia, 2024). The company is headquartered in Sepang, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur, and its main base of operations is Kuala Lumpur International Airport. AirAsia is known for its extensive route network, affordable fares, and efficient operation model (Nair et al., 2021). It adopts a low-cost airline operating model that offers flexible fare options by cutting unnecessary costs in traditional airline services, such as free meals and baggage check-in, enabling passengers to purchase additional services based on their individual needs (Song et al., 2024). This model has enabled it to cover key destinations in the Asia-Pacific region, including Southeast Asia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, and Australia, at lower fares. In addition, AirAsia's flexible business model has made it a success story in the airline industry's response to market changes and emergencies, such as the rapid adaptation of its business model and the launch of its logistics and digital services during the New Crown epidemic (AirAsia, 2024; Song et al., 2024).

Professional training refers to the process of learning and upgrading the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees or individuals in a specific field through a systematic and structured approach. Its purpose is to help trainees acquire professional skills, improve their work performance, and adapt to the latest development requirements of the industry or job. Professional training is usually provided by experienced trainers or organizations in the form of lectures, hands-on exercises, case studies, online courses, and workshops. Training content usually centers on a specific area, such as technical operations, management skills, customer service, language learning, or career development planning (Dirani, 2012; Nafiessa et al., 2020).

Specialized training plays a crucial role in enhancing the professional skills of employees, equipping them with the latest industry knowledge and practical capabilities necessary to meet evolving workplace challenges. For instance, technical training enables employees to efficiently operate new equipment or software, thereby boosting productivity (Timsal et al., 2016). Through such targeted learning, employees not only improve their individual competencies but also become more competitive in the job market. Furthermore, companies that invest in employee development often see improved organizational performance, higher staff retention, and enhanced overall efficiency, as employees become more adept at fulfilling their roles with reduced error rates and increased effectiveness (Ngozi & Edwinah, 2022). Beyond immediate productivity gains, professional training also supports career advancement and fosters a sense of loyalty among employees, contributing positively to the company's long-term growth (Shiri et al., 2023).

In this context, the current study aims to explore the impact of professional training programs on enhancing customer experiences and fostering customer loyalty within the low-cost airline industry, using AirAsia as a representative case. The primary research objective is to examine how targeted employee development initiatives—centered on skills enhancement, service excellence, and the alignment of staff behavior with customer-centric values—contribute to improved service delivery and long-term customer retention. As a major player in the highly competitive low-cost aviation market, AirAsia has invested in comprehensive training strategies that prioritize service quality and customer satisfaction (Falahat et al., 2024; Fickry et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2024). This commitment underscores the company's belief that well-trained employees are

instrumental in consistently exceeding customer expectations and creating positive service experiences across all touchpoints (Khan et al., 2023).

The significance of this study lies in its focus on a relatively underexplored area in the low-cost airline sector—namely, the strategic role of professional training in driving service excellence and competitive differentiation. While much of the existing literature emphasizes cost efficiency and pricing strategies in this sector, this research contributes a new perspective by highlighting the customer experience as a critical dimension of sustainable business growth. Through in-depth analysis of AirAsia's training practices and their influence on customer satisfaction, the study provides practical insights for industry practitioners and policymakers seeking to balance operational efficiency with high service standards.

The key contribution of this study is its empirical investigation into the link between professional training and customer loyalty in a low-cost airline context, a relationship that has received limited academic attention. By doing so, it addresses a gap in the literature and offers a model for how human capital investment can be leveraged to enhance customer-oriented outcomes. The novelty of the research lies in its focus on training as a strategic tool, not merely for internal efficiency, but as a means to build a strong brand reputation, secure customer loyalty, and drive sustainable growth within the resource-constrained framework of budget airlines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Requisite professional training is quite pivotal for enhancing business performance in any industry, and especially in the competitive aviation industry. Providing employees with relevant skills and knowledge can enable the airline to increase the quality of services rendered, customer satisfaction, and the efficiency of its operations (Agarwal & Gowda, 2021). Training programs develop employees who are not only skilled but also flexible, thus permitting companies to be competitive, inventive, and sustainable in the changing environment. In particular, this literature review assesses the connection between professional training and business performance with an emphasis on growth, operation within the industry, customer satisfaction, as well as a chain of competitive advantage activities (Klepić, 2021). It also discusses some of the key training models, including Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBTA), and how they respond to industry challenges such as skill shortages, staff turnover, and technology integration (Ziakkas et al., 2022). This literature review also highlights how ongoing investment in the training of employees has helped the airline in becoming operationally efficient and maintaining a competitive advantage in the international aviation market, using AirAsia as a case study.

Business Performance

It is important to note that professional employee training is one of the strategies employed in enhancing business performance and the expansion of the airline industry. It is evident that, by giving the employees the required tools and information, the airline companies can improve the quality of services offered, the satisfaction of customers, and their operational performance. Trained employees are best positioned to address customer needs and deliver solutions to problems in a swift manner, thus helping build the brand. This, consecutively, leads to increased customer retention, elevated status of the airline, and enhanced operational efficiency. In an era of fierce competition, recurrent commitment to the training of employees helps an organization remain innovative, flexible, and successful over time, hence making it a fundamental element for advancing business in the aviation industry (Mamadalyevich et al., 2021).

In Transportation Research Procedia, the CBTA approach and its impact on the manpower planning and operational management of the aviation sector are investigated. It is important to note that CBTA is a relatively new approach to training whereby specific skills and competencies are the primary concern rather than a traditional focus on flying hours, which provides solutions to both acquired skills and non-acquired skills (Ziakkas et al., 2022).

Recruitment and retention of new aviation personnel are challenged by two major concerns. The first is the steadily increasing average age of pilots and the increasing number of retirements, which is increasing the shortage of pre-existing skills. It is worth mentioning that the recent retirements are coupled with staffing shortages. Another problem is the competition from other industries for skilled workers. The absence of standardization of training courses conducted in different countries is worsening the situation even more, because the same regions are distinguished by different training styles and licensing requirements. Young people are also restricted in that the expensive cost of training and the fact that most training is not affordable also work as limitations. This results in many young aspiring pilots being suitable candidates but with limited opportunities (Russell, 2023).

CBTA proposes an inclusive method for pilot training by honing a comprehensive competency set, taking both technical skills (such as flight path management) and non-technical skills like communication, teamwork, and decision-making into account. This training accompanies pilots to be not only qualified but also to deal well with real-world situations (Sun et al., 2023). Through the restructuring of training that is no longer hours-based but competency-based, CBTA provides the essential skills, which are the influences of performance gaps, and a solution.

A further step is taken for the integration of Lean Six Sigma (L6s), besides the need to speed up recruitment and training, as the study points out. L6s gives a boost to the smooth running of processes by pointing out and getting rid of the non-valuable parts, like the limitations in training pipelines and the unutilized talent. It may be mentioned that applying a lean approach to airline operations, with the idea of minimizing costs and the duration of the pilot training process, while careful attention should be given to the overall business performance. Additionally, this integration guarantees that the recruitment process fits into a long-term strategy rather than a short-term goal, which will bring about a more stable workforce (Mizrak, 2023).

In operational terms, the leverage of CBTA and lean approaches has extensively borne fruit. Airlines have deployed these concepts, and due to them, reporting decreased expenses on training, less sluggish pilot readiness, and a more uniform recruitment process (Ziakkas et al., 2022). This uniformity and standardization create a reliable connection between the company and potential candidates, and the employers are assured that the newly hired employees have the necessary qualifications to successfully do their jobs. Moreover, digital platforms and social media, through recruiting, have opened up a larger pool of individuals to airlines and thus they are now able to attract highly qualified candidates from a greater national audience (Wandelt & Wang, 2024).

Research findings have revealed that the implementation of CBTA, along with a modern recruitment and training strategy, can boost the performance of companies in the aviation sector. Concentrating on the development of competencies and using lean methodologies, airlines can develop a more robust and reliable workforce (Ziakkas et al., 2023). The approach that constitutes personnel changes in the fact that not only are the

current problems solved, but also the future demands of industries are being met, is thereby achieved by airlines. Consequently, this in turn leads to consistent business maturing, increased efficiency, as well as customers being satisfied, which is desirable for the airlines.

Customer Satisfaction

Employee training is undeniably an important factor in increasing customer satisfaction, especially in service-oriented industries such as airlines. Employees trained with the right skills, and possessing knowledge and attitudes, applying these from customer service communications concepts can provide remarkable customer service that will meet or exceed customers' expectations (Hameed et al., 2024). Communication, problem-solving, and customer engagement improvement programs are the staff guiding focuses of these training sessions; therefore, the employees provide personal, efficient, and responsive service. Consequently, the employees of a well-trained institution are those who have the ability to create memorable experiences for customers, which means loyalty and satisfaction are among the vehicles for the company's steady growth in the competitive airline industry (Gibbs et al., 2017).

In navigating loyalty and trust in the skies, research shows that dimensions like assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility, which are indicative of service quality, thus increasing overall satisfaction with it, are shown as different ones here. How employees interact with customers is closely related to these dimensions of service and acts as either a strong augment or a cause of deterioration. Assurance is defined as the competence of personnel to instill confidence and trust in the customer, which is the main aspect of a successful customer journey (Law et al., 2022). Onboarding co-workers by means of modeling autonomous pilots together with demonstrating best practices, employees who are resourceful and confident in handling the inquiries of customers make travelers feel at home and important. Empathy is one of the key elements in customer service, which is the kind of individualized attention given by employees. Doing little things like listening, understanding, and then offering an appropriate service boosts customers' mood, thus more often satisfying no-nonsense needs (Chung & Tan, 2022).

Reliability means ensuring that services are rigorously and continuously monitored, and responsiveness is the readiness and assistance of employees to customers. Employees rise to the occasion when they show concern or solve related issues with speed that is impressive. It will not take long for passengers to notice and appreciate that you value their time and specific needs. Tangibles encompassing the physical appearance of employees and the neatness of facilities are also significant because opening like a professionally maintained institution will produce positive attitudes and impressions for customers (Yeong et al., 2022).

The study finds that the performance of employees has a direct impact on customer satisfaction levels. For instance, workers who display high levels of assurance, empathy, and responsiveness minimize customer frustration and are key components to having a good experience overall (Hameed et al., 2024). Thus, in order to maintain customer satisfaction at a high point and not to ruin their image, airlines need to improve their employee training, which focuses on these important dimensions of service quality.

Employees are key to driving customer satisfaction in air transport. By enhancing the people-related side of service, such as confidence, responsiveness, and empathy, airlines can significantly boost customer satisfaction (Brunett & Martínez, 2024). Professional training is, therefore, vital for increasing customer satisfaction and business

growth in the airline industry. Well-trained employees are the backbone of any high-quality customer service, which is crucial in building positive customer experiences. By focusing on key service quality dimensions such as assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility, airlines can ensure that their staff is equipped to meet and exceed customer expectations. They not only contribute to high levels of customer satisfaction when employees are trained to give personalized, efficient, and reliable service, but they also build loyalty, translating into repeat business (Neacșu, 2015).

Besides, professional training can prepare employees to shoulder responsibilities: dealing with complaints, being of valuable assistance, or whatever customers may require of them. This level of competence will definitely boost its reputation and trust customers, which will spur growth (Astono, 2021). While customer satisfaction is a longer-term benefit of investment in employee training, the wider business benefits include improvements in service quality, increased customer retention, and a competitive advantage in the market. Professional training is, therefore, a critical driver of long-term success and profitability within the airline sector.

Market Leadership

In a fast-moving and increasingly competitive global marketplace, companies are continually looking for ways to keep a competitive edge. Perhaps one of the most powerful- and least recognized- strategies is investment in professional training. The phrase "Training today drives market leadership tomorrow" captures the concept that developing a skilled and adaptable workforce is at the heart of a company's long-term success (Sonnino, 2013). As industries evolve, so do the skills and competencies required to stay ahead. Training programs, typically purposed to enhance knowledge, skills, and performance, go beyond improving individual employees and are catalysts for business growth, innovation, and market leadership. By investing in comprehensive training now, organizations can ensure a leading role in their industries, increase employee satisfaction and engagement, and contribute to the short and long-term success of the organization. The literature review will explain how training is a critical determinant of business growth, innovation, and market leadership by analyzing principles, impacts, and best practices of effective training (Sun et al., 2023).

Training programs in organizations are no longer a formality but an integral strategic tool for performance enhancement and long-term business success (Rosmelisa et al., 2024). Basically, market leadership is based on training, which provides the bedrock for developing skills to successfully work in an ever-changing business environment. This is quite important in today's technological world, where the digital transformation of business necessitates a continuously learning workforce. Training, according to Rodriguez and Walters (2015), is not only for upgrading present competencies but also an important way of equipping staff for future challenges. In so doing, companies offering training programs that focus both on technical skills and soft skills, such as leadership, communication, and teamwork, are better able to remain flexible, innovative, and competitive.

Training can develop and encourage an organizational culture by enhancing continuous learning behavior within organizations. A company that places strong emphasis on continuous training supports a working environment that invites growth opportunities by expanding employee potential (Timsal et al., 2016). Such career satisfaction leads to higher employee satisfaction and lower employee attrition with increased engagement of the workforce. If employees perceive that the organization is invested in them, they will be highly motivated, committed, and productive. According to Dirani (2012), this would then make the training programs a way of retaining talents and attracting the best

among those, which is crucial to sustaining competitive advantage in the market. In the final analysis, professional training is one of the important drivers of market leadership, and training plays a very key role in the continued success and market leadership of AirAsia within the highly competitive aviation industry.

As in Human Capital Development in AirAsia

The airline has consistently invested in professional development programs that build employee competencies in diverse areas, ranging from ground operations and customer service to flight crew training. In this aspect, AirAsia is genuinely committed to a culture of continuous learning to keep all employees relevant with changes in the industry, regulations, or technology (Song et al., 2024). For example, AirAsia focuses on digital transformation by training its employees in data analytics and artificial intelligence. This helps the airline run its operations more efficiently and provide better service to customers. In addition, AirAsia's leadership development programs support a strong organizational culture based on innovation and efficiency. This culture has played a big role in helping the airline stay competitive in the low-cost airline market. By giving priority to training and employee development, AirAsia is able to improve its performance and maintain its top position in the global aviation industry. This supports the idea from Fickry et al. (2020) that companies that invest in developing their employees are more likely to grow steadily and gain a competitive edge.

Hypotheses Development

- H1: Training quality has a positive and significant effect on business growth.
- H2: Service improvement mediates the relationship between training and business growth.
- H3: Improved employee experience resulting from training has a positive effect on business growth.

RESEARCH METHOD

AirAsia's effect on professional training initiatives has been measured through a blend of questionnaires and data reviews. This required the study of 100 employees and 100 customers, which aimed to look into what effects the training programs have on internal and external customers in the case of AirAsia. The questionnaires were structured to collect information on the employees' skill development, service quality, and customers' experiences, while the data reviews sought to assess performance measurements and customer satisfaction. The data that was obtained was then processed using the SPSS computer program with the help of multiple regression tests, which aimed at determining the extent of the relationship between training initiatives and the important parameters of strategies, which include operational efficiency, service quality, and customer retention. Such comprehensive methodological triangulation helped to explain the actual contribution of professional training programs deployed at AirAsia to the long-term objectives of the organization by creating a competent workforce, increasing the chances of achieving better customer satisfaction, and developing an edge over competitors in the airline industry.

Approach to Research

The study takes a qualitative and quantitative approach in order to obtain a holistic insight into the effect professional training has on the growth of AirAsia. It was important to use both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques in order to comprehend the subject adequately. The research involved the distribution of structured questionnaires to 100 employees and customers as a way of assessing the effectiveness of AirAsia's training programs. These questionnaires included the aspects of improvement of skills,

service, and satisfaction. Furthermore, performance measures, metrics reviews, and customer feedback were conducted in order to strengthen the findings after the study.

The data gathered was processed through the SPSS program, where statistical techniques like multiple regression analysis were used to assess the relationship between professional training taken and the business variables of operational cost, customer rank, and competitiveness. Insight from the family and employee feedback concerning the training programs also helped to deepen the study to include perceived benefits and challenges of the training programs.

Such in-depth research aimed to broaden the understanding of the role of professional training at Air Asia in terms of contribution towards the overall success, which has been in regard to the ability to enhance customers' value, quality of services, and ultimately, the capacity to keep competition at bay in an ever-evolving industry.

Measurement

In the case of AirAsia, the business growth is a function of the skill enhancement of their personnel, the satisfaction of the customers, and the efficiency of operations as well. Therefore, training initiatives and quality ratings lead to improved service provision and customer loyalty, thus creating a tangible gauge for the effectiveness of training programs. The information obtained regarding the practices of training within AirAsia includes the policies, manuals, plans, and coursework, and customer and employee feedback was also part of the evidence. Such an all-encompassing framework allows clarification as to the nature of effects that the training system has and therefore establishes the basis for further improvements of the business as a whole.

RESULTS

Table 1. Respondent Profile's Summary (N=100)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	40	40%
Male	60	60%
Age Group		
18-25	18	18%
26-31	32	32%
32-45	36	36%
46-55	14	14%
Education Qualification		
Secondary School	6	6%
Diploma	4	4%
Bachelor's Degree	15	15%
Master's Degree	17	17%
PhD	27	27%
Other	31	31%
Annual Income		
RM10,000-RM30,000	25	25%
RM30,000-RM60,000	33	33%
RM60,000-RM90,000	19	19%
RM90,000-RM120,000	18	18%
Above RM120,000	5	5%
Frequency of Travelling		

Weekly	16	16%
Monthly	28	28%
Quarterly	26	26%
Yearly	19	19%
Rarely	11	11%
AirAsia Staff Empathy		
Excellent	48	48%
Good	40	40%
Neutral	8	8%
Poor	4	4%
Improvement in Reliability		
Strongly Agree	45	45%
Agree	40	40%
Neutral	10	10%
Disagree	5	5%
Future Usage of AirAsia		
Very Likely	55	55%
Likely	30	30%
Neutral	10	10%
Unlikely	5	5%

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the respondents' demographic profiles and their perceptions related to AirAsia's services. The majority of participants were male (60%) and fell within the age range of 32 to 45 years (36%), followed by those aged 26 to 31 years (32%), indicating that most respondents were working adults likely to travel for business or personal reasons. In terms of educational background, a large portion held a PhD (27%) or reported having other qualifications (31%), suggesting a highly educated respondent base. Income distribution showed that most participants earned between RM30,000 and RM60,000 annually (33%), with 25% earning between RM10,000 and RM30,000, which implies a predominance of middle-income earners. Regarding travel frequency, monthly travel was the most common (28%), followed by quarterly (26%) and yearly (19%), highlighting that many respondents are regular flyers. Perceptions of AirAsia staff empathy were largely positive, with 48% rating it as "Excellent" and 40% as "Good." Additionally, a high level of agreement was observed concerning improvements in service reliability, with 45% "Strongly Agreeing" and 40% "Agreeing." When asked about their likelihood of using AirAsia services in the future, 55% responded "Very Likely" and 30% "Likely," reflecting strong customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Descriptive Analysis

This descriptive analysis includes data on respondents' gender, age, education, annual income, travel frequency, staff empathy, reliability of service, and future usage of AirAsia services. Collecting and analyzing these data provides insights into the behavior patterns and preferences of different customer groups.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of the Respondent Population (N =100)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile	Max
Gender	0.400	0.492	0	0	0	1	1
Age Group	2.460	1.022	1	2	2	3	4
Education	4.000	1.690	1	2	4	6	6
Annual Income	2.650	1.180	1	2	3	4	5

Frequency of Travelling	3.100	1.221	1	2	3	4	5
Staff Empathy	1.680	0.920	1	1	2	2	4
Reliability of Service	1.750	0.920	1	1	2	2	4
Future Usage	1.650	0.910	1	1	2	2	4

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

The descriptive analysis in Table 2 reveals several key insights about the respondent population. Gender, coded as 0 for male and 1 for female, has a mean value of 0.400, indicating that 40% of the respondents are female. The Age Group variable shows a median of 2, representing ages 26–31, with the majority of respondents falling between 26 and 45 years old. The Education variable has a mean of 4.000, suggesting that most respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher, while the broad range of responses highlights a variety of educational backgrounds. For Annual Income, the mean value of 2.650 indicates that most respondents are in the RM30,000–RM60,000 income range, though income levels vary widely from low (RM10,000–RM30,000) to high (above RM120,000). Regarding Frequency of Travelling, the mean value of 3.100 suggests that most respondents travel monthly to quarterly, reflecting a wide spectrum of travel habits, from weekly to rarely. Additionally, the variables for Staff Empathy and Reliability of Service show mean values of 1.680 and 1.750, respectively, indicating that respondents generally rate these aspects as "Good" to "Excellent." Lastly, the Future Usage of AirAsia variable has a mean of 1.650, demonstrating a strong likelihood that respondents will continue using AirAsia services, with most selecting "Very Likely" or "Likely."

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is a crucial step in ensuring the consistency and internal coherence of the various items within a survey instrument. It confirms that the questionnaire consistently measures the underlying psychological constructs across different contexts. This analysis is vital for assessing the reliability of responses and determining the stability of the measurements.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.634	15

In this study, the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. As shown in Table 3, the analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.634 across 15 questionnaire items, indicating that the internal consistency of the questionnaire is moderate.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis forms a crucial aspect of statistics with the objective of measuring the strength and direction of relationships that exist between variables. In the scope of this particular analysis of AirAsia, correlation analysis makes it possible to examine the relationship between professional training, business expansion, and customer loyalty.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Analysis of Professional Training as a Catalyst for Business Growth (N=100)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Business Growth	-						
Training improves	0.312**	-					

Noticing service improvement	0.385**	0.408**	-				
Rate training quality	0.285**	0.190*	0.334**	-			
Recommend AirAsia	0.354**	0.300**	0.422**	0.198**	-		
Continue flying with AirAsia	-0.105	0.002	0.214**	0.124	0.150*	-	
Satisfied with loyalty	0.412**	0.221**	0.371**	0.199*	0.478**	0.045	-
Mean	3.05	2.70	1.95	3.20	2.55	2.10	3.35
Std. Deviation	1.02	0.95	0.80	1.10	0.90	0.85	1.05

Note: N = 100; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

The correlation analysis in Table 4 reveals meaningful relationships between AirAsia's training initiatives, business growth, and customer loyalty. Significant positive correlations indicate that effective training programs contribute to noticeable improvements in service quality, customer satisfaction, and overall loyalty. Specifically, training improvements are strongly correlated with noticing service improvement ($r = 0.408$, $p < 0.01$) and business growth ($r = 0.312$, $p < 0.01$), underscoring the role of professional training in enhancing operational effectiveness and service delivery. Additionally, noticing service improvement is positively associated with recommending AirAsia ($r = 0.422$, $p < 0.01$) and rating training quality ($r = 0.334$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that customers who perceive improved service are more likely to endorse the airline and value its training programs.

The findings also highlight a strong relationship between satisfaction with loyalty programs and both business growth ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.01$) and recommending AirAsia ($r = 0.478$, $p < 0.01$). These results emphasize that satisfied customers are not only loyal but also act as advocates for the airline. However, the weaker correlation between continuing to fly with AirAsia and other variables, such as rating training quality ($r = 0.124$, $p > 0.05$), suggests there may be additional factors influencing customer retention that warrant further investigation.

The descriptive analysis supports these findings, with mean scores reflecting generally positive perceptions of training and its outcomes. For instance, noticing service improvement received the lowest mean score (1.95), indicating strong agreement among respondents that training has enhanced service quality. Similarly, the mean scores for recommending AirAsia (2.55) and satisfaction with loyalty programs (3.35) reveal favorable sentiments toward the airline's initiatives. The relatively small standard deviations for training-related variables indicate consistent positive perceptions among respondents, while larger variations in broader measures like business growth ($SD = 1.02$) suggest differing experiences and expectations.

In essence, this analysis confirms that AirAsia's training programs are effective at meeting customers and retaining them, with important consequences for business development. The findings point out the importance of continued investments in staff training and customer relationship management in order to maintain and improve these results. Another promising area of research that can be explored to improve future studies would be customers relying on less strong associations, such as customer retention.

Analysis of Regression

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between training quality, service improvement, and business growth, focusing on how these factors interact to enhance AirAsia's operational performance.

Table 5. Regression Analysis

Variables	Business Growth
Training quality	0.514**
Noticed service improvement	0.462**
Training improves experience	0.221*
R ²	0.327
F Value	9.852
Durbin-Watson Statistic	1.853

Note: N = 100; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Based on [Table 5](#), the regression model explains 32.7% of the variance in business growth, as indicated by the R-squared value of 0.327. The F-value of 9.852 indicates that the model is statistically significant (p < 0.01). The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.853 suggests no significant autocorrelation in the residuals.

Key findings include a strong positive effect of training quality on business growth ($\beta = 0.514^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), emphasizing the critical role of well-structured training programs in driving operational success and organizational development, confirming H1. Similarly, noticed service improvement positively impacts business growth ($\beta = 0.462^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that service enhancements, likely stemming from improved employee performance post-training, contribute significantly to organizational outcomes. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

Additionally, training improves experience, also showing a positive and statistically significant relationship with business growth ($\beta = 0.221^{*}$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that training programs that enhance employee capabilities and service quality indirectly influence organizational performance. Hence, H3 is confirmed.

The results of this analysis demonstrate the correlation between the quality of the training offered, the improvement in the service offered, and the growth of the business unit. Quality training programs enhance employees and their customer service delivery: such programs are self-instituted. The causative relations between training quality, service improvement, and business growth warrant the need to continue pouring resources into professional development to generate positive business results.

What these findings imply is that there is a need for Air Asia to put more focus on training programs that are of high quality and ensure that such programs are consistent with the organizational aspirations for improved service and business growth. As long as such training programs lead to improved service delivery tasks, Air Asia would be able to consolidate its competitive advantage and expand its growth.

DISCUSSION

This study underscores the crucial role that professional training initiatives play in supporting AirAsia's overall organizational success. The regression analysis provides strong empirical support for H1, which hypothesized a positive relationship between training quality and business growth. The results confirm this with a statistically significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.514$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that well-structured and strategically designed training programs contribute directly to improved operational performance and organizational development. This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the impact of training on business outcomes ([Agarwal & Gowda, 2021](#); [Gibbs et al., 2017](#)).

Similarly, H2 is also supported by the results, showing a significant and positive relationship between improved service delivery and business growth ($\beta = 0.462$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that investment in employee development leads to enhanced customer interactions and service quality, which are critical in a competitive and service-driven industry such as aviation (Chung & Tan, 2022). The positive service experience enabled by training appears to be a key differentiator for AirAsia.

Furthermore, the findings support H3, which proposed a positive link between training-enhanced employee experience and business growth. The analysis revealed a significant yet comparatively moderate effect ($\beta = 0.221$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that when employees feel more confident and capable as a result of training, this indirectly influences the quality of service they provide and thus contributes to broader business outcomes.

Correlation analysis further substantiates the regression results, showing that effective training initiatives are associated with higher levels of customer satisfaction ($r = 0.371$, $p < 0.01$) and customer loyalty ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.01$). These findings reinforce prior studies (e.g., Hassanein & Özgüt, 2022) that link employee competence and professionalism to customer retention in service industries. Notably, qualitative feedback from customers rated employee empathy and reliability as “Good” to “Excellent,” underscoring the importance of a customer-focused workforce in maintaining AirAsia’s service reputation.

However, a noteworthy insight is the relatively weaker direct correlation between training quality and customer retention. This implies that while professional training significantly enhances service experience, customer retention is also influenced by external factors such as ticket prices, route convenience, and competing airline offers (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017). Therefore, a more comprehensive customer loyalty strategy is needed—one that integrates service quality with value-added offerings and competitive pricing.

Overall, the findings validate the critical role of professional training in enhancing service delivery, employee experience, and organizational performance. For AirAsia, continuous investment in employee development that aligns with strategic service priorities can help solidify its market position and foster sustainable growth. Future studies could explore longitudinal effects of training and investigate additional variables impacting customer retention to provide a more holistic understanding of how training initiatives contribute to long-term competitive advantage (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that professional training initiatives at AirAsia significantly contribute to business growth through three key pathways. First, the quality of training programs (H1) has a strong positive impact on overall business performance, highlighting the importance of structured employee development. Second, training-driven service improvements (H2) also play a critical role in enhancing organizational outcomes, reinforcing the connection between employee capability and customer-facing service delivery. Third, training that enhances employee experience (H3) further supports business growth by boosting staff effectiveness and engagement.

As a leader in Asia's low-cost airline sector, AirAsia has gained market share through its efficient operations and excellent customer service. In the airline industry, employee skills and service quality are directly related to customer satisfaction, brand reputation, and company revenue. Professional training, as an important means to enhance

employee performance, has a profound impact on AirAsia's business growth, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency (Salo et al., 2024)

The airline industry is highly competitive, and employee performance is directly related to the company's overall operations and revenue. Specialized training enables employees to become proficient in their job skills, increase productivity, and reduce errors, which has a direct impact on business growth. AirAsia's frontline staff, such as ground handlers and flight attendants, are trained to handle check-in, baggage issues, and customer inquiries more quickly (Falahat et al., 2024). This increased efficiency not only reduces the probability of flight delays but also improves flight turnaround, which in turn improves overall operational capacity. Data shows that improved employee efficiency can significantly increase the number of flights and seat utilization, which in turn boosts a company's revenue. For example, trained sales and customer service teams can market additional services (e.g., seat upgrades, excess baggage fees) more efficiently, directly increasing additional revenue.

In the low-cost airline model, the customer's experience often determines the success or failure of the brand. Through specialized training, AirAsia can ensure that its employees demonstrate professionalism and flexibility in the customer service process, thereby increasing customer satisfaction. Well-trained employees can more quickly address customer issues such as lost baggage, flight changes, or special needs. This not only improves problem-solving efficiency but also reduces customer dissatisfaction. AirAsia ensures consistency in service quality through uniform training standards. This consistency helps build customer trust and reliance, and they enjoy the same high level of service regardless of which region they are traveling to on AirAsia flights (Wandelt & Wang, 2024).

Customer satisfaction is a key driver of AirAsia's success, and staff training is a core strategy to enhance the customer experience. Professional training covers not only basic service skills but also communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and emergency response capabilities. For example, when dealing with customers from different cultural backgrounds, trained staff can be more flexible in adjusting their service approach so that customers feel respected and valued. Training makes employees more familiar with operational and emergency procedures. For example, in the event of a delayed or canceled flight, trained employees are more comfortable providing solutions to customers, reducing the incidence of negative feedback (Hameed et al., 2024).

Customer loyalty in the aviation industry typically relies on two key factors: consistently high-quality service and a positive brand perception. Specialized training has enabled AirAsia to develop a pool of employees capable of delivering high-quality service, which has a significant impact on customer loyalty and brand image (Astono, 2021). Well-trained staff can recognize potential customer needs and proactively help, such as assisting elderly travelers or first-time flyers. This caring experience exceeds customer expectations and increases customer loyalty. AirAsia is committed to making the flying experience accessible to as many people as possible, under the brand slogan "Everyone Can Fly". The enthusiasm and professionalism of our professionally trained staff have a direct impact on customer perceptions of the brand, leading them to believe that AirAsia is not only affordable but also reliable.

High employee turnover in the airline industry has always been a challenge, especially among low-cost carriers. Continuous professional training not only improves employees' skills but also enhances their sense of belonging to the company, significantly reducing turnover. Professional training programs provide employees with career development

opportunities and growth paths (Klepić, 2021). For example, AirAsia provides flight attendants with promotional training to help them grow into senior flight attendants and even management. This investment makes employees feel valued and strengthens their loyalty to the organization. Reducing employee turnover directly reduces the cost of recruiting new staff and basic training. At the same time, experienced employees can do their jobs more efficiently, reducing additional operational stress (Mamadalyevich et al., 2021).

The impact of professional training on AirAsia is multi-faceted, from improving employee performance and productivity to enhancing customer loyalty and brand image to reducing employee turnover; all these positive effects work together to drive the company's business growth and sustainable development. By continually optimizing its professional training programs, AirAsia will not only continue to strengthen its position as a leader in the low-cost carrier market but also set higher industry standards in customer experience and operational efficiency.

LIMITATION

There are several limitations to this study. First, the sample size used in this study was small, and the backgrounds of most of the respondents were relatively similar, which led to the generalizability of the research results. Second, since this study was based on data from an online survey, this would greatly introduce bias. Therefore, to address these issues, future studies should draw samples from a more diverse population and use supplementary surveys such as interviews or observations. Third, this study only focused on AirAsia in the aviation service industry, which greatly limited the scope of the conclusions. Including other airlines and industries would provide a broader context. In addition, variables such as customer satisfaction and social media could be added to enrich the content of the analysis. Opinions from employees, operators, and the community could also be collected to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Finally, since this study was conducted in Malaysia, cross-cultural research is needed to understand the wider applicability of the research findings.

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The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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