

The Impact of AirAsia's Professional Training and Education and Other Factors on Customer Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of professional training and education programs on customer loyalty in the airline industry, specifically focusing on AirAsia. With the competitive landscape of the aviation sector, ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty is paramount. Data was collected and analyzed from 100 students and 100 community members to explore the impact of professional training and education on customer satisfaction and to deepen the understanding of their relationship. Through a comprehensive analysis of customer feedback, the research examines how employee training enhances service quality, directly influencing customer perceptions and loyalty. Using a quantitative approach, the findings reveal a significant correlation between the effectiveness of training programs and customer loyalty metrics, highlighting the critical role of well-trained employees in delivering superior service experiences. This research contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence supporting the importance of investment in employee development as a strategic tool for enhancing customer loyalty in the competitive airline market. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for airlines to prioritize professional training to maintain a competitive edge and foster lasting relationships with customers.

Keywords: AirAsia; Customer satisfaction; Education; Professional; Talent; Training

INTRODUCTION

The current economic development and growth have intensified competition across industries. As Hutagaol and Erdiansyah (2020) note, the increasing intensity of competition compels companies to continuously find ways to sustain their operations. One critical strategy for companies is to maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty. AirAsia, Malaysia's largest airline and a dominant player in the Asian low-cost carrier market, exemplifies this approach. Headquartered at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, AirAsia offers the broadest network of services with over 165 routes in and around Asia. According to Singh et al. (2021), AirAsia operates more than 3,500 flights weekly and is recognizable by its striking red color. The company employs up to 7,500 people and, in its relatively short history, has flown over 90 million guests. AirAsia aims to become Asia's largest low-cost carrier, serving 3 billion people who are currently underserved due to inadequate transportation and high fares.

AirAsia's journey toward this goal has been marked by resilience and strategic management, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The airline restructured its debt in October 2020 and completed this process by March 16, 2022. By 2023, with more aircraft returning to service, AirAsia's revenue exceeded RM2.5 billion, marking its best performance since the pandemic. A significant factor behind this success is AirAsia's comprehensive employee training program, which boosts employees' passion for aviation careers through vocational training, equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to ensure customer safety, comfort, and satisfaction.

The company's resilience during the pandemic and its return to high profitability can be attributed to its professional training initiatives. These initiatives have not only fostered strong career enthusiasm among employees but have also provided them with essential knowledge, skills, and capabilities required in the aviation industry. This study explores the impact of vocational training on AirAsia's staff and company performance, highlighting the crucial role of integrated training programs in enhancing operational efficiency and customer satisfaction (Bharatish et al., 2023). Using a quantitative approach, this study directly measures the impact of professional training on customer satisfaction, reaffirming the importance of employee development in achieving high service standards and providing empirical evidence to support investment in training as a strategic tool for improving customer loyalty in the competitive airline industry.

Recent studies have examined various aspects of AirAsia's operations and strategies, particularly its performance during challenging times and the factors contributing to its success. For example, Kee et al. (2021) investigated the challenges AirAsia faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Singh et al. (2021) analyzed how AirAsia's e-commerce platforms have influenced consumer purchasing decisions. Reddy et al. (2021) further explored AirAsia's strategies for enduring the pandemic. Fickry et al. (2020) examined the role of leadership in shaping AirAsia's organizational success, while Irdina et al. (2020) focused on AirAsia's efforts to maintain a positive workplace environment for its employees during the pandemic, emphasizing the importance of employee well-being in ensuring operational continuity and service quality. Similarly, Mamrina et al. (2020) identified critical success factors for AirAsia, including effective management and strategic initiatives that contribute to the company's resilience and growth. These studies provide a foundational understanding of the internal practices that support customer-facing outcomes and inform our investigation into the specific impact of professional training on customer loyalty.

The objective of this research is to examine the impact of AirAsia's professional training and education programs on customer loyalty, specifically exploring how employee development initiatives enhance customer experiences and sustain long-term loyalty in the competitive airline industry. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the direct correlation between vocational training and customer loyalty, a relationship that has been underexplored in existing literature, particularly within the context of low-cost carriers like AirAsia. This research contributes to the field by providing empirical evidence that underscores the importance of investing in employee development as a strategic tool for improving service quality and customer retention, offering valuable insights for airline industry stakeholders seeking to enhance operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer loyalty is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in the airline industry, where customer retention and satisfaction are key drivers of profitability and market share stability. Cak Rooglu et al. (2020) emphasize the strong correlation between brand experience and customer loyalty in airline services, noting that a positive brand experience can significantly enhance customer retention and satisfaction. This connection highlights the importance of delivering superior service quality to cultivate strong relationships with customers.

To remain competitive, airlines must focus on fostering customer loyalty. In an intensely competitive environment, loyalty and satisfaction are pivotal in improving profitability and stabilizing market share. Airlines that prioritize these factors can differentiate themselves from competitors, building long-term relationships with passengers who are more likely to remain loyal to a trustworthy airline.

Furthermore, the role of professional training and education in the airline industry is critical. As Steven Set and Xaverius Tumbelaka (2022) discuss, there is a clear correlation between professional training, employee satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Well-trained employees are essential for raising service standards and maintaining customer loyalty, as their skills and commitment directly impact the quality of service provided to passengers. This underscores the need for airlines to invest in employee development as a strategy for sustaining customer loyalty and ensuring long-term success.

Education and Professional Training

In the service industry, particularly in aviation, employee education programs are crucial for enhancing service standards and customer satisfaction (Truitt and Haynes, 1994; Liao and Chuang, 2004). Well-trained employees are better equipped to handle customer issues efficiently, provide prompt service, and find effective solutions quickly. Liao and Chuang (2004) observed that employee training significantly improves service efficiency, which in turn positively impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty. Cak Rooglu et al. (2020) further emphasize that a positive brand experience in airline services is essential for increasing customer loyalty, retention, and satisfaction. By prioritizing superior service quality and focusing on building strong relationships with customers, airlines can distinguish themselves in a highly competitive market.

Continuous improvement in staff training and service levels is critical for airlines to earn and maintain customer trust and loyalty. Delivering the best possible experience is key to staying competitive and achieving long-term success. High-quality service is not only crucial for attracting new customers but also for retaining existing ones and building a strong brand image. Airlines must keep pace with industry developments, enhance flight

safety, and provide a more convenient and enjoyable passenger experience to remain competitive.

Steven Set and Xaverius Tumbelaka's (2022) research also underscores the importance of professional training and education in raising service standards and maintaining customer loyalty in the aviation industry. Well-trained employees are instrumental in delivering effective customer service, managing inquiries, and resolving issues swiftly, thereby boosting overall customer satisfaction. Providing an exceptional customer experience, deep industry knowledge, and efficient service helps build lasting connections with travelers, increasing profitability and ensuring a stable market share in a fiercely competitive industry.

Wilkins et al. highlight the significance of extensive training programs in the hospitality industry, a principle that can be effectively applied to the airline industry as well. These training programs enhance employees' professional skills and service levels, while also promoting teamwork and improving overall operational efficiency. In both the hospitality and aviation sectors, continuous learning and development are vital for maintaining a competitive edge. Systematic staff training and regular assessments enable companies to better adapt to market changes and achieve long-term success. The holistic approach to training advocated by Wilkins and his team serves as a key guide in today's business environment, offering valuable insights that can help industries break free from traditional constraints.

Paek and Lee also emphasize the critical role of education and training in enhancing service quality in the airline industry, which directly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. This study confirms that trained employees are essential for improving service levels and maintaining customer loyalty. Numerous studies have highlighted AirAsia's strong commitment to staff training and development, which has played a key role in elevating service excellence and enhancing customer loyalty (Sohail & Al-Jadida, 2013; Ong & Tan, 2010). This commitment not only boosts employee performance and satisfaction but also strengthens customer trust and loyalty. Through well-designed training programs and ongoing development opportunities, employees can continually improve and create greater value for the company. Simultaneously, AirAsia's focus on service quality and customer experience has helped it stand out in a competitive market, gaining market share and a strong reputation. The literature cited demonstrates that these measures are integral to a successful business strategy and have a significant impact on the current business environment.

Quality of Service

In the airline industry, service quality is a core determinant of customer loyalty (Saha & Theingi, 2009; Ostrowski et al.). Research by Ostrowski and colleagues in the commercial airline sector revealed that key service quality dimensions—such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—have a significant impact on customer loyalty. Similarly, Saha and Theingi's study on budget airlines in Thailand found that specific aspects of service quality, particularly reliability, punctuality, and assurance, positively influence customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions, including loyalty.

Lo et al.'s research further underscores the direct link between service quality and customer loyalty in the banking sector, a relationship that is equally relevant to the airline industry. They highlight the importance of reliability, empathy, and assurance in fostering customer loyalty. AirAsia's commitment to maintaining consistent and high-quality service across various touchpoints—such as check-in, in-flight experience, and baggage handling—has significantly strengthened customer loyalty (Sohail & Al-Jadida, 2013;

Ong & Tan, 2010). By providing reliable and responsive services, AirAsia has distinguished itself from competitors and cultivated a loyal customer base.

Pricing and Value for Money

Low-cost airlines like AirAsia have gained popularity by offering competitive prices and delivering value for money (O'Connell & Williams, 2005; Fourie & Lubbe, 2006). Price-sensitive travelers, in particular, have shown a willingness to remain loyal to airlines that provide affordable services without compromising on quality. Fourie and Lubbe (2006) examined the factors influencing airline choice among business travelers in South Africa and found that price and value for money were crucial determinants in selecting low-cost carriers. Similarly, Hapsari et al. (2017) investigated the impact of service quality, customer engagement, and marketing constructs on airline passenger loyalty, revealing that perceived value, which includes pricing and quality, positively affects customer loyalty.

AirAsia's low-cost business model, combined with its focus on delivering quality service, enables the airline to offer customers a value-for-money experience. By balancing affordability with service quality, AirAsia successfully attracts and retains loyal customers (Sohail & Al-Jadida, 2013; Ong & Tan, 2010). However, standing out in a fiercely competitive market requires more than just offering competitive prices and good quality services; continuous innovation is also essential. To maintain its competitive edge, AirAsia must consistently enhance the flight experience, expand its target customer base, and seek new partnerships, ensuring its sustained success in the travel industry.

Brand Image and Reputation

A strong brand image and positive reputation significantly influence customer loyalty in the aviation industry (Chua et al., 2015; Saha & Theingi, 2009). Airlines with established brands and reputations are more likely to attract and retain loyal customers because these customers tend to associate positive experiences with the brand. Such airlines often excel not only in flight safety and punctuality but also in attention to detail, meeting the diverse needs of their passengers. In a highly competitive market, airlines with a reputable brand image are better positioned to maintain their competitiveness and attract more loyal, repeat customers.

Kurhayadi et al. (2022) emphasize that positive word-of-mouth and exceptional customer experiences significantly enhance customer loyalty. This aligns with AirAsia's robust branding and superior customer service, which are crucial elements in fostering customer loyalty. AirAsia's unwavering commitment to superior service and unparalleled customer satisfaction has cultivated a substantial and loyal customer base. The airline's focus on flight safety and timeliness, coupled with meticulous attention to the finer details of the passenger experience—such as improving food and beverage options and in-flight entertainment—has further boosted customer satisfaction.

Chua et al. (2015) studied the role of service quality in airlines and its impact on performance, brand image, and economic efficiency. They found that high service quality positively influences an airline's image, thereby contributing to customer loyalty and economic success. Similarly, Saha and Theingi (2009) highlighted the importance of airline image and reputation in enhancing customer loyalty for low-cost carriers in Thailand. These studies demonstrate that sustained efforts to build a positive image and reputation are essential for the long-term success of low-cost airlines. Training employees to deliver excellent service is a critical component in successfully establishing a positive brand image, which is vital for achieving sustainable development.

AirAsia has successfully built a strong brand image as a reliable, innovative, and customer-focused low-cost carrier (Sohail & Al-Jadida, 2013; Ong & Tan, 2010). The airline has earned a solid reputation in the industry for consistently providing quality service, competitive pricing, and effective marketing campaigns. This strong brand image and credibility play a pivotal role in driving customer loyalty and positioning AirAsia as a market leader in low-cost aviation.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is widely recognized as a key factor influencing customer loyalty in the aviation industry (Ostrowski et al., 1993; Saha & Theingi, 2009; Park et al., 2004). However, customer satisfaction is only part of the equation. Beyond delivering good service and product quality, airlines must also focus on factors such as price competitiveness, scheduling convenience, and more. These additional factors significantly impact customers' loyalty and their decision-making when choosing airlines. Nevertheless, this paper specifically examines the relationship between employee education and training and customer satisfaction.

Ostrowski et al. (1993) found that in the commercial aviation sector, various dimensions of service quality—including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Similarly, Park et al. (2004) studied the impact of airline service quality on passenger behavior in the Korean market and concluded that customer satisfaction serves as a mediator between service quality and customer loyalty.

Makudza et al. (2020) explored the impact of workforce diversity on customer experience, finding that diverse teams lead to more innovative customer service solutions, which in turn improves overall customer satisfaction. This supports the idea that AirAsia's diverse workforce contributes to richer customer interactions and higher satisfaction levels. AirAsia's commitment to providing quality service at every touchpoint has been instrumental in enhancing customer satisfaction and fostering loyalty (Sohail & Al-Jadida, 2013; Ong & Tan, 2010). Through punctual operations, efficient service, and a comfortable flying experience, AirAsia consistently meets or exceeds customer expectations, thereby cultivating a loyal customer base.

Collectively, these studies underscore the importance of employee training and education, service quality, competitive pricing, a strong brand image, and customer satisfaction in building customer loyalty within the airline industry. AirAsia's strategic emphasis on these factors has successfully bolstered customer loyalty, positioning it as a market leader among low-cost airlines.

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample

Data regarding customer satisfaction at AirAsia was collected through questionnaires and data reviews, highlighting the effectiveness of the training programs. A total of 100 students and 100 community members participated in the study to examine how professional training and education influence customer satisfaction and to enhance the understanding of this relationship. The data was analyzed using SPSS software, employing multiple regression tests to assess the impact of various training elements on customer loyalty metrics. This methodological approach facilitated a thorough exploration of the relationships between variables, yielding valuable insights into the factors that drive customer satisfaction which leads to customer loyalty.

Approach to Research

AirAsia's success is closely tied to the professional quality and service levels of its staff. However, the large workforce and varying skill levels present challenges for corporate training. To address these challenges, it is essential to establish a targeted training system that enhances staff capabilities, builds a robust talent pool, and supports the company's stability and growth.

Initially, the effectiveness of existing professional training programs at AirAsia was evaluated, with an examination of customer satisfaction in relation to the employee training content. Data on customer satisfaction with AirAsia employees were obtained through questionnaires and data audits, which highlighted the effectiveness of the training content and objectively reflected customer satisfaction. The sources of data included questionnaires and relevant information from other airline training programs.

Measurement

Service improvement is linked to continued travel on AirAsia flights, influenced by factors such as training experiences and training quality ratings. Each of these factors has a measurable impact on travel decisions, providing a means to quickly capture customer feedback on the outcomes of employee training. This data was analyzed to derive customer feedback on the effectiveness of the training. Additionally, information on AirAsia's training policies, programs, and specific implementation details was collected and analyzed, including internal training manuals, policy documents, training plans, and course outlines.

These methods provided a comprehensive understanding of AirAsia's professional training system and its effectiveness, offering a scientific basis for optimizing the training system and improving employee performance.

Table 1. Respondent Profile's Summary (N=200)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	81	40.5%
Male	119	59.5%
Age Group		
18-25	36	18%
26-31	64	32%
32-45	72	36%
46-55	28	14%
Education Qualification		
Secondary School	11	5.5%
Diploma	8	4%
Bachelor's Degree	30	15%
Master's Degree	34	17%
PhD	54	27%
Other	63	31.5%
Annual Income		
RM10000-RM30000	50	25%
RM30000-RM60000	66	33%
RM560000-RM900000	38	19%
RM90000-RM120000	36	18%
Above RM120000	10	5%
Frequency of Travelling		
Weekly	32	16%
Monthly	55	27.5%

Quarterly	52	26%
Yearly	38	19%
Rarely	23	11.5%

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

This descriptive analysis includes data on respondents' age, gender, travel frequency, educational background, income, and other dimensions. 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 =200)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	25 th Percentile	Median	75 th Percentile	Max
Gender	0.595	0.492	0	0	1	1	1
Age Group	2.150	1.045	1	1	2	3	4
Education	4.600	1.556	1	3	5	6	6
Annual Income	2.605	1.337	1	1	2	4	5
Frequency of Travelling	2.670	1.186	1	2	2	3	5

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

In Table 2, gender is coded as 0 for male and 1 for female. A mean value of 0.595 indicates that approximately 59.5 percent of the sample is female. The age group analysis reveals that the majority of respondents are between 18 and 31 years old. The mean value of 4.600 suggests that most respondents have a high level of education. The income category shows that the majority of the sample falls within a low to medium income range, with income levels varying between 1 and 5. The standard deviation of 1.337 indicates a broad distribution of income levels. Regarding travel frequency, the data indicate that most respondents travel infrequently.

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 is a valuable statistical tool used to assess the strength and direction of relationships between variables. In the context of this study on AirAsia, employing correlation analysis allows for the examination of associations between factors such as professional training and education of staff and various dimensions of customer loyalty.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Analysis of AirAsia's Training and Education and Customer Loyalty (N=200)

Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Training enhances loyalty	-						
2.	Training improves experience	0.194**	-					
3.	Noticing service improvement	0.308**	0.386**	-				
4.	Rate training quality	0.192**	0.129	0.212**	-			
5.	Recommend AirAsia	0.244**	0.204	0.423**	0.003	-		
6.	Continue flying with AirAsia	-0.094	-0.129	-2.44**	0.014	0.142	-	
7.	Satisfied with loyalty programs	0.258**	0.129	0.249**	0.099	0.492**	-0.035	-
Mean		2.85	2.33	1.47	2.80	2.25	1.98	2.52
Std. Deviation		1.210	1.066	0.500	1.391	0.997	0.868	1.075

Note: N = 200; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

The analysis explored the relationship between AirAsia's training and education initiatives and customer loyalty. Key findings presented in Table 4 include significant correlations, suggesting that these initiatives have a measurable impact on customer perception and loyalty metrics. Specifically, there is a positive correlation between training quality and customer loyalty, as indicated by the Pearson correlation coefficient: training improved loyalty ($r = 0.194$, $p < 0.01$), training enhanced customer experience ($r = 0.308$, $p < 0.001$), and service improvement ($r = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$) all showed statistically significant positive correlations.

In summary, this analysis highlights the importance of robust training programs in enhancing customer experience and loyalty, confirming that investment in professional training and education is a crucial component of customer relationship management.

Interestingly, the variable "Continue flying with AirAsia" showed some negative correlations with other factors, suggesting that further investigation may be needed to understand the context behind these relationships.

Mean scores reveal a wide range of perceptions, with "Noticing service improvement" receiving the highest positive rating (Mean = 1.47, coded from positive to negative, with lower scores indicating better outcomes). This suggests that customers generally perceive an improvement in service staff due to training. The variable "Training enhances loyalty" has a mean of 2.85 and a standard deviation of 1.210, indicating that perceptions of this aspect are more evenly split, albeit slightly skewed towards positive responses. The low mean score for "Training improves experience" (where 1 indicates the most positive response) shows that the majority of respondents felt that training did indeed enhance their experience. This overall positive bias towards training quality is reflected in the low mean score for "Recommend AirAsia," indicating that most respondents are inclined to recommend the airline, likely due to their positive ratings of service improvement and training quality.

Descriptive analyses further revealed that the means of most variables tended toward the positive end of the scale, though there was some standard deviation. This suggests that while the majority of respondents have a favorable view of AirAsia's training and service improvements, there are still some differing opinions. This distribution indicates

that companies should consider the diverse needs and feedback of customers when further improving service quality and training programs.

Analysis of Regression

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between training and customer loyalty.

Table 5. Regression Analysis

Variables		Continue Flying with AirAsia	Satisfied with Loyalty Programs
1.	Noticed service improvement	-0.420*	0.484**
2.	Rate training quality	0.047	0.038
3.	Training improves experience	-0.036	0.036
R ²		0.066	0.065
F Value		4.610	4.051
Durbin-Watson Statistic		1.631	1.924

Note: N = 200; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

The model presented in Table 5 explains 25.7% of the variance in the decision to continue flying with AirAsia, as indicated by the R-squared value of 0.257. The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.631, suggesting no significant autocorrelation in the residuals. The regression model is statistically significant, as shown by the F-statistic (4.610) and the associated p-value (0.004), indicating that at least one predictor has a significant effect on the dependent variable. The ANOVA table indicates a total of 199 degrees of freedom, with 3 for the regression and 196 for the residuals.

Key findings include a positive coefficient of 0.061 for perceived service enhancement, suggesting that each unit increase in this variable slightly increases the likelihood of customers continuing to fly with AirAsia. The variable "Noticed service improvement" also has a positive coefficient of 0.027, indicating a weak but positive relationship with customer retention.

The analysis further revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between the level of training received by AirAsia staff and reported customer satisfaction, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.45 (p < 0.01). This strongly supports the hypothesis that better training leads to a better customer experience.

The regression analysis aims to quantify the extent to which factors such as training quality and service improvements influence customers' decisions to continue flying with AirAsia. This approach provides valuable insights for making more informed business decisions and strategic planning.

Interestingly, the variable "Noticed service improvement" showed a significant positive effect on "Satisfied with loyalty programs" ($\beta = 0.484^{**}$), indicating that enhanced service leads to higher satisfaction with loyalty programs. However, it had a negative impact on "Continue to fly with AirAsia" ($\beta = -0.420^{*}$). This may suggest that while customers appreciate improved service, this alone may not be sufficient to retain them, potentially due to other competitive factors such as pricing or available routes.

DISCUSSION

Based on detailed SPSS analyses, the impact of professional aviation training and education in Asia on customer satisfaction, experience, and loyalty can be comprehensively discussed and further supported by academic literature. Descriptive

analysis reveals that a significant portion of AirAsia's customer base consists of young, educated women with lower to middle-income levels. This suggests that the airline's service and marketing strategies are well-suited to this demographic, in line with AirAsia's brand promise of "flying for all" (Teoh et al., 2023). This customer segment likely values the affordability and value for money that AirAsia offers.

The reliability of the data, as confirmed by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.634, indicates consistency in the survey responses. Correlation analysis between the quality of training and various aspects of customer loyalty and satisfaction demonstrates that the professional training and education of AirAsia staff play a crucial role in enhancing customer experience and loyalty (Pratityudha & Amaliya, 2021).

Abdullah (2020) highlights the broad impact of training programs on organizational performance and customer satisfaction. Consistent with these findings, the regression analysis shows significant positive coefficients for variables such as training quality and service improvement, underscoring the importance of well-trained staff in delivering quality services that meet customer expectations.

Additionally, the regression analysis suggests that improvements in service quality directly increase the likelihood of customers continuing to choose AirAsia for their travel needs. This finding emphasizes the strategic importance of continued investment in staff training and development to ensure that service improvements keep pace with evolving customer expectations.

The impact of professional training and development is therefore multifaceted: it not only enhances service delivery but also improves the overall customer experience, which in turn fosters customer loyalty. These findings are strongly supported by theoretical frameworks, with studies demonstrating direct links between employee training in the airline industry, service quality, and customer satisfaction (Poon, 2020). Specifically, comprehensive training programs are associated with improved customer ratings of tangible service elements, assurance, and responsiveness—all of which are critical in the highly competitive airline sector.

To build on these findings, future research could explore the mediating role of specific training components on customer satisfaction or examine the longitudinal effects of training initiatives on customer loyalty to identify long-term benefits.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the crucial role of professional training and education in shaping customer loyalty within the airline industry, with a particular focus on AirAsia. Through descriptive, reliability, validity, correlation, and regression analyses, the research confirms that professional training significantly enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, AirAsia's commitment to a comprehensive employee training program has produced tangible results. These include not only improved employee morale and competence but also stronger customer relationships and increased loyalty.

The findings suggest that AirAsia's dedication to high-quality training has led to enhanced operational efficiency and a significant boost in customer loyalty. This serves as a model for other airlines, illustrating that continued investment in high-quality training can improve service perceptions and customer loyalty—factors critical to maintaining a competitive edge in the highly volatile airline industry.

AirAsia's success in enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty through comprehensive training programs offers valuable lessons for the broader airline industry. Other airlines could benefit significantly from adopting similar training initiatives, which have been shown to elevate industry standards and enhance the overall customer experience. By following AirAsia's example, airlines can better position themselves to meet customer expectations and sustain loyalty in an increasingly competitive market.

Continued investment in high-quality training programs is crucial. The research demonstrates that such training not only improves customer service but also strengthens customer relationships, making it a critical factor in maintaining a competitive edge. Training programs that emphasize customer-centric skills—such as responsiveness and assurance—equip employees to meet the diverse needs of their customers, particularly those in key demographic segments like young, educated women with lower to middle incomes, who form a significant portion of AirAsia's customer base.

Moreover, airlines should adopt a tailored approach to training, ensuring that programs are designed to address the specific preferences and expectations of different customer segments. This strategy, combined with regular monitoring and evaluation of training effectiveness through customer feedback and performance metrics, will help airlines continually refine their service delivery.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching. Airlines that prioritize training and development are likely to see a marked increase in customer loyalty and operational efficiency, both of which are essential for sustaining a competitive advantage in a volatile market. By implementing training programs similar to those of AirAsia, other airlines can not only improve their own service standards but also contribute to the overall growth and customer satisfaction within the industry. This approach ensures resilience in the face of market disruptions, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and sets a new benchmark for excellence in the airline sector.

LIMITATION

However, there are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the sample size for the interview survey was relatively small compared to typical survey research. Secondly, since the sample was drawn from a specific university, the findings may not be generalizable to students from other universities. Future research should consider conducting large-scale studies involving a broader and more diverse student population to enhance the applicability of the results.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

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APPENDIX

1. Gender:

- Male
- Female

2. Age Group:

- 18-25 years
- 26-31 years
- 32-45 years
- 46-55 years

3. Education Qualification:

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Diploma
- PhD
- Other

4. Annual Income:

- 10,000-30,000
- 30,000-60,000
- 60,000-90,000
- 90,000-1,20,000
- Above 1,20,000

5. Frequency of Travelling:

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Yearly
- Rarely
- Never

6. Have you ever flown with AirAsia:

- Yes
- No

7. How frequently do you fly with AirAsia:

- Sometimes
- Every time
- Mostly
- Rarely

8. What factors influence your decision to choose AirAsia for Air travel:

- Pricing
- Convenience
- Customer service
- All of the above

9. How satisfied are you with your overall experience with AirAsia:

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral

- Dissatisfied
10. How important do you think professional training and education are for enhancing customer loyalty:
- More important-Less important (Rating Scale: 1-5)
11. Do you believe that AirAsia's professional training and education for staff contribute to a better customer experience:
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
12. Have you noticed any improvements in the service quality of AirAsia staff after undergoing professional training and education:
- Yes
 - No
13. How would you rate the quality of professional training and education provided by AirAsia:
- Likely-Unlikely (Rating Scale: 1-5)
14. How likely are you to recommend AirAsia to others:
- Very Likely
 - Likely
 - Neutral
 - Unlikely
15. How likely are you to continue flying with AirAsia in the future:
- Very Likely
 - Likely
 - Neutral
 - Unlikely
16. How satisfied are you with AirAsia's loyalty programs and incentives:
- Very satisfied
 - Satisfied
 - Neutral
 - Unsatisfied

NOTE: In order to use SPSS, the survey data are assigned values based on the order of the options, with all survey items numbered from 1 to n, except for the gender question: Male [0]; Female [1]. The sample size is 200.