



Customer Service and Satisfaction in the three main Airports of the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

The United Arab Emirates is considered a relatively young country; nevertheless, both its aviation and tourism industries are rapidly growing to an extent that it can fairly be compared to more developed countries.

The ultimate aim of the paper is to study the customer satisfaction in the aviation industry within the United Arab Emirates, but to properly do that both UAE's airlines and UAE's airports need to be studied. While this paper only focuses on studying the customer service at UAE's 3 main Airports (Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport) the same model created can be tailored and actually serve to study the airlines in future studies.

Moutinho (2001) indicates that air travel has become even more accessible to all classes of people like never before. The middle class can take its pick from the competitive rates of hundreds of airlines. Besides, no-frill airlines are making a big debut in the aviation industry. Targeting the wealthier, top airlines are being over backwards to come up with new and exotic incentives to attract a larger customer base. First Class, business class and premium economy are some of the classifications available in the seating arena on airlines today. Moutinho (2001). This indicates that Airport travelers are only going to increase going forward.

To begin with, the UAE's environment is studied to test the main needs, demands and necessities of the country's aviation industry. Based on that, 5 main criteria were set that had to be met and continuously achieved by the aviation industry in the UAE.

Having set the criteria needed for UAE's airport customer service, a thorough literature review is conducted to learn more about what customer service and customer satisfaction models are available by scholars through papers, articles, studies... etc. and which will best suit the UAE and the criteria set. This paper will develop a new model, which is actually an amalgamation of parts of three other models discovered and discussed within the literature review. The new model will serve all set criteria and will act as a benchmark against which UAE's airports will be tested, and should prove better.

The study was made based on surveys, distributed on a sample of various passengers through the airports under study, coming from different backgrounds to obtain the results. One main question was assigned to each of the 5 criteria, and then another 15 questions were asked to follow up and explore the reasoning behind the results achieved.

A hypothesis is assigned to every criterion, and all null hypotheses proved to be negative when tested using the T-Test.

For further analysis, the results were run through a Chi-Square statistical test, using a program called 'Statistical Program for Social Sciences' to prove that there actually exists some differences between the results achieved from the main Airports in the UAE, namely Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport.

These differences are further explored through the feedback of follow interview session, to explain why and where the differences occurred, and detailed examples of them.

The study proved that the three main Airports in the UAE comply with the 5 criteria set in this paper. The statistical analysis also proved that Dubai International Airport is doing significantly better than the other 2 airports in 3 of the criteria set, while there was no clear difference between the three airports on the remaining 2 criteria.

Finally the paper sets some recommendations which are basically further emphasis on the criteria set within the paper and the model developed to serve UAE's aviation sector. The main recommendation was to apply the same model and tailoring the survey questions to the three main Airlines which are UAE based, namely Etihad Air, Emirates, and Air Arabia.

In conclusion, the airports in the UAE happen to have more of a positive nature. They all comply with the five criteria set. However, there is quite some room for improvement and betterment of customer satisfaction within the aviation industry in the United Arab Emirates, specifically in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah Airports.

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1 Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

Customer satisfaction is given top priority by all service-oriented industries. The civil aviation industry is no exception. It is one of the most prominent service industries in the world today. Due to its nature, customers, passengers and travelers expect the implementation of the highest levels of technology and safety. (Appelbaum and Fewster 2003). The high competition in the global aviation arena causes various airlines to vie for the top position with lots of importance being given to the customer service department. Prestigious awards and number games are causing airlines to fall over each other in order to create the best impression on the customer.

Two fundamental forces that drive the strategy in the aviation industry are safety and customer service. (Appelbaum and Fewster 2003). Around the world, concerns for safety measures have only increased in relation to the aviation industry. New technology and continuous exhaustive scientific research has given rise to faster airplanes traveling around the planet like never before. Hence, safety measures have the utmost priority. The other driving force is customer service. Customer's expectations of service excellence are unparalleled today. So many departments in the industry need to coordinate and work in a systematic way to ensure maximum consumer satisfaction. Poor quality of work from any sector, be it management, training and development or communication will reflect on the final service offered to the customer. (Appelbaum, Steven H. and Fewster, Brenda M., 2003)

Customer service is a key aspect of any business and eventually determines the overall profits and sales of an organization. Every organization and business must pay heed to the demands and suggestions of the customers in order to better their services and quality so as to not only satisfy existing customers, but to also attract a large number of new customers as well. This is a policy, which is being very well adopted by the aviation industry today in conjunction with the governments and the municipalities across the

country. The aviation industry is built on customer service and the objective of satisfying the needs and wants of the customers.

1.2 Statement of Dissertation

This dissertation will analyze the methods and tools used by the UAE's federal government and the various local governments in the country to improve the customer satisfaction with regard to the aviation industry in the country. Through the use of interviews, statistical information, customer feedback and other forms of information, this paper will be able to study and learn more about the view of the public with regard to the innovations and ideas implemented by the government of the UAE and the acceptance of these new reforms in the aviation industry which are expected to see a larger volume of traffic through the airport on a daily basis.

An important component of this dissertation will be the analysis and comparison of the three main airports in the UAE, based on the feedback of passengers that have passed through the respective airports. Also, the services and offers being provided by the various airports in the country will also be scrutinized with the aim of determining how competition in the country is promoting healthy growth of customer support and satisfaction in the country. By using quality control models and methodologies and analyzing the current trends of customer support in the UAE with that of existing models being used around the world in other businesses and organizations, we will get a better understanding of the business standpoint of the aviation industry and the impact that customer support is having on the industry today.

The aviation industry of the UAE will be compared to the major aviation industries around the world to determine where exactly the UAE stands today in terms of customer services in the aviation industry. The conclusion of this will analyze all the points put forth and take into consideration the results of the comparison made so as to be able to draw out recommendations and ideas for the betterment of customer service in the aviation industry in the UAE today.

1.3 Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five main chapters.

Chapter 1 states the aims and objectives of the dissertation and the study. It then defines the environment in which the study takes place. Finally, this chapter discusses the expectations of the aviation sector, and in conclusion this chapter sets the main criteria on which the model will be based.

Chapter 2 is a detailed literature review in which work of scholars is studied and discussed. Different customer service models and customer satisfaction models are placed under focus to know which of them best suits the purpose of the study and meets the intended criteria for this paper.

The second part talks about the choice of the models to chosen out of those discussed in earlier. This part details the reasoning behind the choice and the expectations of the newly created model.

Chapter 3 then discussed the implementation of the study and steps and measures taken to approach the study. It also states the main and follow-up questions of the surveys to be conducted.

Chapter 4 includes the results of the study, and the outcome of the criteria set within each of the main airports in the UAE (Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport, and Sharjah International Airport). This chapter also includes a descriptive analysis of the airports.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter, constitutes of three major sections which are: a summary of the entire dissertation, recommendation based on the study findings, and finally a conclusion of the study.

Chapter 1

1 Aim and Objectives

1.1 Aim of Dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze on the various aspects of the customer service programs and models being adopted across the globe, to explore the current standards of customer services and satisfaction levels in UAE airports, in comparison to other international airports through the reviews of passengers. To properly do that, this paper will found the needed criteria to be studied for UAE airports, and create a new model to assess and serve that aim.

By studying the business ethics and the attitudes adopted towards customers and customer relations programs, the dissertation will try to determine areas of customer service required by the UAE's aviation industry, and lacking in the airports, to recommend their improvement. This in turn will improve existing customer relations plans in place so as to increase the volume of passengers and travelers passing through the UAE and increasing the profits and sales of the aviation industry. By studying the impact of customer relations on the profits and sales of an organization, the dissertation will aim to analyze the significance of adopting a strong customer relations' model in the aviation industry to suit the needs of the industry and to cater to the varying demographics of the country.

Anderson, Fornell , Rust (1997) have a thorough study concluding that there is a strong relationship between customer satisfaction, and productivity which in terms is translated to profitability which is the aim of every profit making business. This implies the ultimate aim behind this paper to enhance customer satisfaction is not only the customers benefit, but actually the business profit sustainability.

1.2 Objectives of Dissertation

The major objectives of this dissertation are as follows:

1. To clearly define the term ‘Customer Service & Satisfaction’ based on literature review.
2. To study and tailor criteria that is needed by the UAE’s aviation industry.
By studying various customer service business models, a main objective is to create a model that is based on the criteria of the UAE, to serve as a benchmark for UAE’s 3 main airports.
3. To understand and determine the levels of customer service being implemented in the aviation industry in the UAE today, through interviews with passengers.
4. To apply the new model on the UAE’s main airports to assess them based on the study of this dissertation, and be able to compare the 3 main airports with each other based on the new model which eventually is based on the UAE’s criteria.
5. To recommend actions and changes for the betterment of each of the 3 main airports in the UAE, this will eventually lead to the betterment of the entire aviation industry in the country.
6. To draw the link between the Airline and the Hub Airport, and open the door for future studies to tailor and apply this dissertation’s model on UAE’s Airlines, for a wider and clearer picture of the Aviation industry in the United Arab Emirates.

2 Defining the Environment

This study is commenced in the United Arab Emirates, and the main purpose is to assess and enhance the customer service levels of the three main airports, which are Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport.

For 200 years, trade of some sort or the other has always taken place on the shores of the UAE mainly because of its central geographic location. It is seen as link between the East and the West, thus it still serves as a connecting point.

The population of the United Arab Emirates is very diverse. According to the Governments official website, and based on the most recent demographic poll, the

population of the UAE by the end of 2005 was approximately 4 million consisting of 20% Emaratis, 21% Other Arabs, 48% Asians, and 11% Westerners.

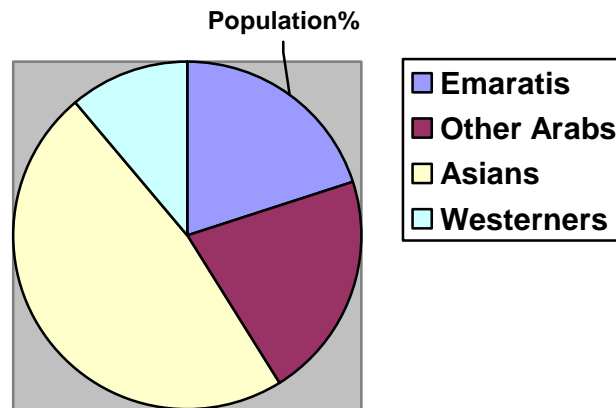


Figure 1: www.tedad.com the official website of the UAE 2005 Consensus

Mcluhan (1964) had a vision, in which he predicted the evolvement of a global village that he saw coming. (Mcluhan 1964). Today, with the evolution of globalization, especially in fast developing countries like the United Arab Emirates, we are closer to his vision of the global village, if not there already. Kalliny (2007) indicates that in business, efforts ought to be made to cater to the fact of this multicultural environment, since it is proven to have more positive reaction from the customer. (Kalliny 2007)

According to the 'International Tax Review' (2005), UAE is still a tax haven, which is a reason above all other reasons behind attracting foreign investments. The foreign investments and employment in turn plays a big role behind the pretty diversified demographics in the UAE. Mark Stevenson (2005) also supports the argument in essence that Dubai's role for multinational business is expanding from a strategic trading centre to encompass more and more head-office service function (international human resources, information technology, treasury, finance, intellectual property, marketing and advertising). This update examines the tax drivers that are contributing to this trend. And this trend feeds more and more in the diversity of the population of the UAE.

Kalliny (2007) highlights an important note. His study indicates that the understanding of cultural differences is actually considered a prerequisite for successful international business, because consumers, whichever background they come from, grow up in a particular culture and become aligned with that culture's value system, beliefs and perception processes. (Kalliny 2007)

Obviously, this diversity of cultures, races, backgrounds and religions in the United Arab Emirates, ought to be an integral element of this dissertations model, in order to specifically cater to the customer services of UAE's aviation, and so is to be highlighted as one of the criteria on which the new model will be built upon.

2.1 Aviation and Tourism Industry

2.1.1 The Middle East Region

The Middle East has for long been a very strategic location for travelers around the world. This is due to the fact that it is geographically centrally located between the distant Western hemisphere and the mysterious Eastern hemisphere. Strategically positioned close to the equator and almost equidistant from the countries of the West and the East, the Middle East has long been sought after as a means of access to connect either side. As a result of this, the Middle East has gained a significant reputation as being a strong trade route.

Today, despite the political tension, the Middle East, particularly the Gulf and UAE, has still held onto its position as being the most ideal location for thousands business to relocate, and furthermore a growing attraction point to tourists. Rao and Atteia (2007) indicated that the diversification in the economy has led to expansions in the service sector which includes tourism. (Rao and Atteia 2007)

With the discovery of oil in the region, the Middle East has come into prominence in the eyes of the world. The wealth derived by the countries of this region has led to the social and economic emancipation of many of the countries in the Middle East, like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. (Rao & Atteia 2007)

Farmer (1977) has indicated about 3 decades ago, the need of the gulf oil rich countries to study and reach for alternative sources of wealth. Farmer strongly believed that even though oil was sufficient for a long time of prosperous wealth, it will definitely drop dry one day, which the gulf has to be prepared for. (Farmer 1977)

Ali Darrat, also indicates that the United Arab Emirates, and the other GCC countries have matured enough to realize that it is not feasible any more to depend on one single source of income, oil, but rather explore other sources. (Darrat A & Shamsi F. 2005)

While most of the above mentioned countries have managed to develop their economies to a great extent, the most notable efforts with regard to developing their economies and becoming one of the fastest developing nations in the world is the UAE, having Abu Dhabi master a comparative advantage over the region in large-scale capital and energy-intensive downstream industries, while it's neighbor, Dubai, followed an openness strategy and applied a strict trade facilitation policy to create a favorable business environment which in turn enhanced the growth and diversification. (Rao & Atteia 2007)

The United Arab Emirates and its fellow member of the GCC, Bahrain, have invested heavily in boosting their tourism industries, and tourism is expected to grow at a spectacular rate. Middle Eastern airlines and airports are gearing up to annex more of the transit traffic between Europe, US and Asia and also between Europe and Australasia. (Unnikrishnan 2007)

According to Unnikrishnan (2007), huge investments of \$38 billion are being poured into airport expansions which are currently underway. With such major expansions in progress, the region's airlines must make certain to always offer attractive products to its customers in order to keep demand strong. Middle East airlines are buying new aircrafts at phenomenal rates, Western analysts say. This, to the regions airports in general and

specifically to the UAE's airports, only mean more potential business in the pipeline, which they should be ready for in terms of infrastructure and customers services.

The regions' geographical position is greatly in its favor to be the world's leading transit hub. This strategic position can also cause a drop in Europe's airline market. Simultaneously, it can also affect Asian and US Carriers. UAE's open-skies agreement has worked hugely in its favor. The Middle East can recover its historical position as the crossroads between Europe and Asia, though the political instability of the region may not allow it to reach its full potential at this point of time. (Unnikrishnan, M., Feb 2007)

International Air Traffic Association (IATA) announced that in the first nine months of 2005, while global air traffic grew by 8.3%, the Middle East air traffic saw a jump in air traffic by 15.3%.

Kien-Quoc (2006) confirms, service quality leading to customer satisfaction is well thought-out to be an attitude resulting from a comparison of actual performance with built in expectations. (Kein-Quoc et. al. 2006) These built in expectations are either based on one's past personal experience, or others' experiences that were shared with this person. (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988).

Even though few scholars may challenge that assessment of service quality should be based on performance assessment only (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Teas, 1993), the prevailing majority view supports the contrary model (Oliver, 1980), i.e., clients judge against the perceived service with their presumed expectations of service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988; Parasuraman, A., L. Berry, and Valarie A. Zeithaml, 1985; Brown and Swartz, 1989; Grönroos, 1984; Congram, 1987).

This concludes that in order to satisfy the international passenger, UAE airlines need to offer services that, in this customers' eye, at least meet or at best exceeds his or her expectation, which in turn is based on his past experience. In other words, it is not enough to compare airline services with those of the region solely, as they might, and will be assessed by passengers from outside this region, who have tried other international carriers, passing through other International airports. Therefore, another main criterion in the model to be created by this dissertation is to incorporate the world's highest customer

satisfaction levels indicators and models, and to allow comparison with nationwide as well as worldwide competitors and industry leaders, in the perception of the customers.

2.1.2 The United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates, UAE, was created in 1971 after gaining full independence from Great Britain. (Eric 2005). UAE was formed by uniting neighboring emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah, and Fujairah that came together to form a single nation. Today, the UAE is one of the most sought after destinations in the world in terms of tourism, business and trade. Soon after the discovery of oil in the country, the rulers of the UAE decided to develop the infrastructure of the country and push the envelope of every industry to new heights which had only been dreamt about before. As a result of their far-reaching thoughts, ideas and efforts, the UAE is today considered to be a benchmark in innovations and will soon become the hub for trade and commerce across the globe. The development and growth of the city in the previous ten or fifteen years has been stupendous.

In the midst of all this fantastic growth, one industry that has taken a giant leap forward is the aviation industry. Tourism is one of the largest contributors to the local economy and also feeds a number of other industries in the country, which by themselves, are large contributors to the economy. According to World Trade Organization (2006) the government of UAE and the various local municipalities has strongly focused their efforts on growing both the transportation and tourism industry. In order to boost those industries, the government felt the need for a strong aviation sector in the country, through funding public money into enhancing the infrastructures of airports.

Hence began the aviation revolution in the country, which has today taken the world by storm and is often considered to be one of the most organized and systematic aviation industries in the world.

2.1.3 Emergence of the Aviation Industry in the UAE

Long before the aviation industry had been established; UAE had strong sea transportation links established with the subcontinent. Even today, there are many people in the UAE who have come and settled here more than 30-40 years ago. These people were mainly laborers, merchants and tradesmen who reached the shores of UAE in their small boats with the main purpose of trade and job security. With the formation of the country in 1971, and the amazing economic growth over the last 35 years, people from all over the world come to the UAE today by sea, land and air.

The international airline industry is described by Kien-Quoc as chaotic and few airlines are able to successfully execute strategies resulting in profitable operations while truly “satisfying” the flying public. Kien Quoc (2006). This vividly shows the challenge a young country like the UAE, has to face in order to enhance its aviation customer service levels.

Emirates Airlines is UAE’s international airline. It is run by the Emirates Group, which is completely owned by the Dubai Local Government. The Emirates Group comprises of Emirates airline and a travel organization, called Dnata. Dnata was set up by the government of Dubai in 1959 in order to provide ground-handling services at the Dubai International Airport, which was just newly set up. In 1985, Emirates was established. Today, the Abu Dhabi Local Government owns Etihad Airways (which has won international awards as leading new airline), the Sharjah government founded Air Arabia (a no-frill low-fare airline), and fast-growing aviation sector with Dubai aiming to have the world’s largest airport, are all examples of the leaps and bounds taken by the UAE’s civil aviation industry.

UAE’s in general and specifically Dubai’s prominence in the aviation industry is strongly being noticed around the world. Dubai ranks as one of the best-organized air shows in the world. (Morrison, M, 2007)

The aviation industry in the United Arab Emirates, is gaining the attention of world day by day. The three airlines in the UAE, Ittihad, Emirates and Air Arabia are gaining

international awards one after the other, with the aid of their respective airports and, of course, the support of the UAE Civil Aviation authority. A very strong example of the development of the Aviation industry in UAE is having one of UAE's Airports' Directors, Dr. Ghanem Al Hajri, elected as President of Airports Council International. (Published by WAM, 29th August 2007)

At present, Dubai's aviation industry has reached boom time with passenger numbers soaring and airlines placing multi-billion dollar orders for new aircraft and infrastructure. In Nov 2005, Dubai Air Show witnessed intense competition between the world's two largest aircraft manufacturers; US based Boeing and Europe's Airbus. The rivalry grew as both fought to land the biggest order at the Dubai Air Show, eventually both companies published record sales in 2005 the show.

This evidences that the aviation industry in the UAE is no more limited to passengers and transportation, but is rather growing to the extent of imprinting UAE's name visibly in the international aviation industry.

Al-Tamimi and Al Amri (2003) have strongly indicated that service quality in the major service industries in UAE is all about meeting customers' needs and requirements. (Al Tamimi and Al Amri 2003). It goes even further, to be a one to one journey with each customer to meet, and exceed each individuals wants, needs demands, expectations and requirements, and furthermore sustain that position. This was evidenced by their study on the banking sector in the UAE which happens to be one major player in the service sector in UAE, other major industries in the service sector are the aviation and health.

Beyond satisfaction, Birud, Jonna, et al. (2006) further argue that service fairness is a crucial factor of customer satisfaction, which is only achieved by pro-activity and ongoing efforts to maximize customer service levels. They define fairness as "perception of the degree of justice in a service firm's behavior" (Birud, Jonna, Amy, Phanni and Louis (2006).

Therefore, customer satisfaction of UAE's aviation industry must be impressive, proactive and benchmarked against the world's best aviation industries. This is another criterion that needs to be incorporated in the dissertations model.

3 Expectations from the Aviation Sector

3.1 Defining and exploring the expectations

3.1.1 Customer Service, the term and meaning

Business feuds are shifting to a new battleground. With every passing decade, the point of focus matures. Customer satisfaction is said to be the crucial factor that measures a firm's profits and gives it its competitive edge in the market today and in the future. Customer satisfaction has consequences that show in various sectors of a company, like improvement in firm's reputation and image, reducing customer turnover, increase attention to customer's needs in TQM planning, reduce marketing costs and lower transaction costs, reduce costs dealing with product or service failures etc. All these consequences automatically lead to increased satisfaction among staff and higher stability of the workforce. (Muffato and Pannizolo, 1995). Customer satisfaction also creates extremely strong and prospective bonds in the business to customer relationship. Further, it also strongly enables business-to-business relationships. The quality mantra of the decade is customer satisfaction.

(Muffato, Pannizolo, 1995)

So to begin with the term 'customer service' is to be clearly defined. Asher (1989) defines customer service as a relationship rather than mechanical process or a transaction. It is good, helpful relationship between a customer and a company that retains the customer loyalty. (Asher 1989).

'Customer Service' and 'Customer Satisfaction' are two sides of the same coin. One cannot thrive without the other. The real demand or need of the customer is the prime focus in maintaining and providing good quality customer service. Hence, evaluating customer service is a continuous process. There are no written rules to indicate how to provide excellent service. Many aspects of customer service are just about showing human respect and values. To maintain the competitive edge, firms must quickly move to identify and then converge on customer satisfaction. Complete customer satisfaction is

only possible when there is absolute information about the needs and requirements of the customer in the hands of any and every member of the organization who holds influence on how they are met. (Asher, 1989)

Gorst (1998) argues that customer satisfaction is rather defined as a cyclical process that can increase or decrease over time. Each cycle begins with what the customer thinks or expects. As the customer avails the service over time, the dimension changes title and becomes a 'past experience'. (Gorst 1998). A customer's past experience decides the customer's future expectations. This further emphasizes the criterion chosen for the model, which is to be proactive to an extent that experience with UAE aviation industry is always positive.

The main ingredients that determine a good service are the 'quality' of the service, how well the customer is treated and the 'value for money' that the customer may obtain. These aspects should be taken into consideration from the customers' perspective. The business' perspective is not of that high an importance as the customers'. (Gorst, Kanji & Wallace, 1998)

On last note to the importance of customer service, and even the importance of the customers' perception of those services, Gerson is quoted: "If the customer feels that the quality and value are low, then the quality and value are low." (Gerson, 1993)

3.1.2 Defining Customer Service in an Aviation context

3.1.2.1 Customer Satisfaction through Continuous Pleasure

When a person is asked about his flying experience, the response is usually, either pleased or displeased with the experience. Dr. Kien-Quoc. (2006) have intensely elaborated on the need of pleasing the aviation customers by all means required before possible.

Pleasing the customer is not as easy as it first sounds. The pleasure of the traveler includes each and everything he/she is in stake of and this list is just about infinite.

Kien and Merlin (2006) have given a set of dimensions that an airline ought to please the traveler with, as an example to what is meant by pleasing the customer.

Further literature review will be conducted to reveal what senses are to be pleased and how. For the purpose of this section, it is to be concluded that customer continuous pleasure is very important and has to be noted within the criteria of this paper. Below are some of the dimensions given by Kien and Merline with a brief definition of each.

Dimension	Definition
<u>Reliability</u>	The airline's/airport's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
<u>Assurance</u>	The knowledge and courtesy of airline/airport's employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
<u>Tangibles</u>	The appearance of the airline/airport's ground facilities, aircraft, personnel and communication materials
<u>Empathy</u>	The caring, individualized attention the airline/airport provides its customers.
<u>Responsiveness</u>	The airports'/airline's willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Reliability

Table 1: Kien-Quoc and Merlin (2006) SERVQUAL Dimensions & Dimension Definition

3.1.2.2 Customer Satisfaction leading to loyalty

According to Kien-Quoc Van Pham and Merlin Simpson (2006), customer loyalty, irrespective whether frequent flier or not, to the airline industry is never overemphasized. There are many forms on which marketing and marketers are now anchoring the airline travelers to hook their loyalty. (Whyte 2004) and (Webster 1991)

Whyte (2004) discussed in his paper how many of the huge airline collapses were due to many contributing factors, within which the main being failure to create customer loyalty and trust. The same also applies to airports. Whyte also presents the importance of FFP (frequent flier program) in today's international aviation. He also compares a number of FFPs showing the basic differences highlighting the pros and cons of each. FFP services

are split between the airline and the airport which identifies the importance of both to work together in order to enhance aviation customer service.

His conclusion is that even though it is of great business value to create and sustain customer loyalty, the current programs still need more attention and development. (Whyte 2004)

Thus, 'Customer Loyalty' is highlighted and will be incorporated within the criteria to develop the new customer service model for the UAE.

3.2 Developing Criteria of UAE's Aviation Model

Based on the discussions throughout this chapter several criteria were highlighted. These criteria will be the foundation, to create a new customer service model picked up from various customer services and relation models and specifically tailored to the aviation industry in the United Arab Emirates. A set of questions reflecting the new model will serve in assessing the airports in the United Arab Emirates according to the reviews and thoughts of passengers and travelers through those airports.

Below is a summary of the Criteria set above throughout the chapter, there are two sets of criteria, generic and UAE specific.

UAE's specific Criteria:

1. To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment, as was concluded in Chapter 1, section 2 "Defining the environment"
2. To meet and exceed international standards and expectation (in travelers' perspective) due to the fact that passengers from all over the world use UAE's aviation doors. This was concluded in section 2.1.1 of Chapter 1, "Middle East Region".
3. Customer service levels in UAE ought to be innovative and proactive, as the UAE now is viewed by the international aviation industry as a focal point. This was concluded in section 2.1 and emphasized in 2.1.3 of Chapter 1.

Generic Criteria:

4. To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure. This is very important to achieve the goal of high levels of customer service, as was concluded by its definition. (Refer to 3.1.2.1 of Chapter 1)
5. To create customer loyalty, through managing and meeting customers' expectations, as was concluded above. (Refer to 3.1.2.2 of Chapter 1)

4 Concluding Remarks of the Chapter

This research is a study is conducted in the United Arab Emirates. It aims to develop a customer satisfaction model, out of existing customer service models, which will be tailored to the aviation industry in the UAE. The new model is to be based on a set of criteria that serves UAE in particular, Aviation, and customer service in general.

This model will set the required standards of customer service applicable to the UAE aviation industry, and then assess each of the local main airports (Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport) accordingly based on reviews from passengers and customers of the three airports.

Chapter 2

1 Literature Review

Based on the identified aims and objectives of this research, a literature review will be conducted to find out the available customer service and customer satisfaction models in airline industry specifically and in the services industry and businesses in general, that would cater to the criteria this paper has set for the study in chapter 1.

The literature review will conclude by choosing the appropriate models to serve in the new model created for the United Arab Emirates.

1.1 Introduction

The behavior of customer complaints and managing customer complaints are two areas of significant importance for businesses, and business firms, especially that organizations are currently gradually recognizing the value of pursuing long-term relationships with clients and customers. (Simon 2006)

The airline industry is all about repeat customers rather than new, which reflects on the need to win the customer and build a long term customer relationship.

Rust (1993) created a mathematical framework of the optimal amount of investment of companies on their customer service; Rust sees this investment as necessity, up to the optimal level which can be determined through his mathematical framework. Within the paper, Rust saw the need of quantifying the impact of customer satisfaction in terms of real profit and money. (Rust 1993). He also corroborates on that by details of costs of retaining a customer vs. attracting a new one, with clear favor of maintaining existing relationships through long term vision. Rust even argues that customer satisfaction can be directly linked to market share, and sees it of not lesser importance of that of sales and marketing. (Rust 1993)

It is very necessary to start the literature review with clearly defining the term customer satisfaction, or customer service. For the purpose of this paper, a literature review of the definition is conducted in section 3.1 of chapter 1.

1.2 Measuring Customer Satisfaction

Corporations and organizations can achieve high standard of customer service and/or customer satisfaction through different ways or models. Different scholars tend to emphasize different aspects to reach the same aim, better customer satisfaction levels. For instance, Miller and Robbins (2004) shed more light on the importance of negative feedback on the organization and its importance in terms of helping organizations develop recovery strategies. In today's market, recovery strategies are very important as they allow the firms to keep track of the various feedback received and effectively be able to move to a previous state where the acceptance and success rate of the service was higher than the present situation (Robbins & Miller, 2004). Should that negative feedback not be received and dealt with appropriately by the management, most likely the consequence would be both, loss of current customer as well as loss of other potential customers due to negative communication and poor reputation. (Robbins & Miller, 2004) LeBouef (1987) wrote, "...a customer who complains is my best friend", which also supports the initiative of negative feedback importance adapted by Miller and Robbins. A customer who complains is very likely to come back if you solve his complaint, while a customer who faces an issue and never complains is not likely to come back ever. At the same time this complaint that is brought to the company's attention might be genuine and of great importance that might as well affect other customers negatively. Special focus will highlight customer complains and feedback later within the literature review.

Furthermore, knowledge is a resource and is increasingly becoming a product in the 'new economy' (Drucker, 1993; Arthur, 1996; Schneider, 1996) today. With best practices being the unique selling proposition, companies gain a competitive edge through continuous innovation and better targeting consumers and providing additional services. Customer relations have become equally important as any other physical asset of a company and should be monitored constantly. Mostly, measurement of customer

relations is expressed in sales, satisfaction and reputation. If the company finds out consumer preferences, then it can provide customized products and superior service to current customers that will not only boost sales but also boost the company's image and make garnering new customers easier. Improvement in performance can be attained by continuously studying customer feedback. (Kennedy, Schneider, 2000)

According to Arthur the formula for business success is as follows:

“Business Success = Capability to provide services + Availability of customers who want those services + Profitability of pricing or fees” (Arthur Bell, 2000)

Most often, businesses tend to overlook the second element of the above formula, i.e., what factor keeps customers available to a business? Customers are the key contributors and they will be available to a business as long as they are satisfied with the business and its operations. The higher the customer satisfaction, then the greater is the chance for the business to maintain success. (Bell, 2000)

To understand customer satisfaction, Martin (1992) has introduced seven areas of customer research, which explains how a customer service culture can be created and maintained.

1. Critical service factors – are all the factors that play a role in the customer's perception of service and quality
2. Customer priorities – are those priorities related to investigation and action that will have optimum impact on customer's perception.
3. Parameters of performance – establishing level in different levels of customer's operation in order to provide the most appropriate one.
4. Current performance standards – the trading relationship's current status
5. Competitive performance standards – compare company's standards with its competitors
6. Benchmark suppliers – quality and effect on performance of suppliers that work to meet the business' requirements
7. Service opportunities – improve service oriented aspects, like service delivery etc

Apart from price and product, a company should also give importance to customer satisfaction. Only then can it achieve market dominance by delivering value beyond the product. (Martin, 1992)

“When a customer recognizes quality, it is reflected in customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction, in turn, can lead to increased revenue. Customers are an economic asset. They’re not on the balance sheet, but they should be.” (Fornell, 1992)

Fornell and his team members developed a method of measuring customer satisfaction that is used all over Sweden and USA. Over the entire economy, a structural equation model is used to compute an index for customer satisfaction. This is a very powerful approach (Gorst et al., 1998). One of the main advantages of this approach is that it allows comparison of customer satisfaction across companies, industries and entire economic sectors. The index produces a whole number – a single digit – making the comparisons very straightforward and transparent. Another big advantage is that this tool also allows comparisons to be made over time. (Gorst et al., 1998)

1.3 Customer Satisfaction Models

Customer satisfaction and service quality are commonly recognized as critical factors of long-term business success. Good customer satisfaction leads to excellent customer loyalty, which in turn influences profitability and future revenues. It has been noted that customer satisfaction is concerned with several aspects of service quality. Hence it is imperative and necessary to design service packages with attributes that would maximize customer satisfaction.

1.3.1 Mathematical Measures to Customer Service:

Literature review revealed plenty of methodologies, models and approaches to measuring and assessing customer service levels, and customer satisfaction altitudes. Some use managerial equations, ones that involve no math but managerial theories like Bell (2000), and plenty others that use mathematical approaches. Bell created the following non-mathematical formula:

$$\text{Business Success} = \text{Capability to provide Services} + \text{Availability of Customers who want those Services} + \text{Profitability of Pricing or fees}$$

And in order to ensure customer, Bell urges companies to avoid what he calls measurement myth, and that includes:

1. I can tell when my customers are satisfied. (Bell 2000)
2. My customers would tell me if there is a problem. (Bell 2000)
3. My staff keeps me informed about customer satisfaction. (Bell 2000)

Bell also urges companies and managers to create various sources of feedback, like promotions to feedback givers, e-mail, carrying phone or regular survey... etc.

As said earlier, many of the scholars use mathematical approaches to measure and test customer satisfactions. For exmple, Calaes Fornell (Fornell 1992) discusses the Customer Satisfaction Barometer (CSB), which is a tool that measures customer satisfaction in more than 100 corporations spread over more than 30 industries. (Fornell 1992). The CSB is an index based on annual survey data collected from customers of the involved companies. It also rates the relationship of customer loyalty to the products' and services' performance. (Fornell 1992). Having such a barometer in this region of the world (GCC) will make the rating of customer service in the aviation industry in general, and in the airports specifically much more accurate and specific. However this is a large scale project usually conducted on a country or regional level, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Kennedey & Schneider (2000) have specifically aimed in their paper to raise awareness of the difficulties involved when measuring customer satisfaction, and the risks involved in basing strategic managerial decisions on the results of those measures. (Kennedey & Schneider 2000) It is true that gather data and information is a major part when aiming towards better customer service, but it is even more critical to interpret the data correctly, as misinterpretation could lead to absolutely opposite results.

On the contrary, Rust & Zahorik (1993) present a sophisticated mathematical framework for assessing the value of customer service and the customer satisfaction levels. The framework is claimed to enable managers to determine which elements have the greatest impact on their respective companies, and will also determine how much to spend in improving each particular satisfaction element. (Rust & Zahorik 1993)

Bell & Luddington (2006) also present another mathematical model to measure customer satisfaction, which uses controlling variables (such as training) and requires statistical inputs like correlations, means, standard deviation and reliabilities.

Over all this paper will not adapt any of the mathematical frameworks, not questioning their reliability, but solely because there is hardly enough statistical data and most importantly consistent data (same measures and measurers) for the different airports in the UAE available at this point of time.

1.3.2 Shirley and Willie Hopkins – Inter-Cultural Model

The other model which is of considerable interest to the study of the aviation industry of the UAE is the inter-cultural model proposed by Shirley and Willie Hopkins which deals with the various cultural aspects of a business and the various ethnicities that exist among the customers which need to be paid attention to. This is of particular interest to the aviation industry as a result of the existence of the large expatriate population in the United Arab Emirates, which makes active use of the aviation industry. The UAE today is home to over 100 nationalities and becomes home to many others on a daily basis. As a

result, this ensures that there is a steady flow of traffic through the airports of the country and usage of the airlines of the country. For this reason, it is very important to develop a customer relations program, which is in tune with a number of different cultures and caters to the various unique characteristics of these cultures.

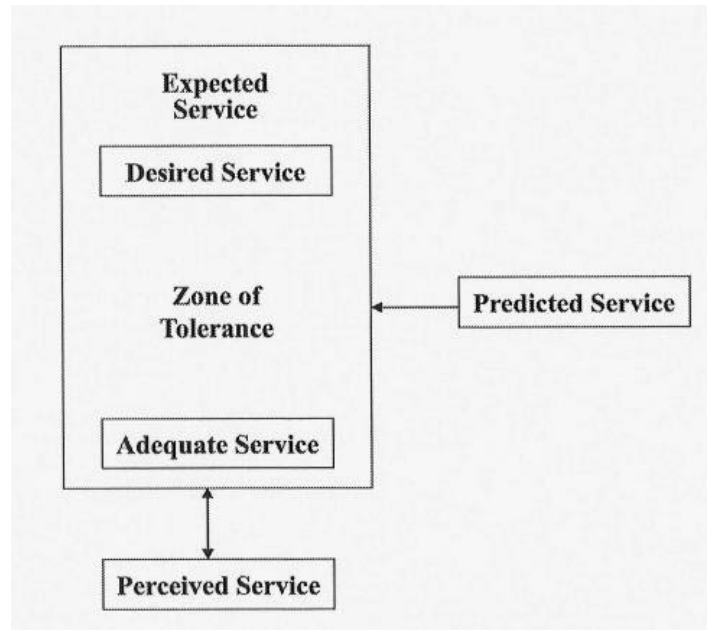


Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Customer Expectations (Hopkins 2005)

The Hopkins' have identified physiognomy as one of the main aspects of the customer relations' plan, which needs to be addressed. Physiognomy deals with the understood and pre-determined assumptions made about the physical appearance or other aspects of certain cultures. (Hopkins, W., Hopkins, S. & Hoffman, 2005)

Having a certain understanding of the main cultures and ethnicity making use of the services of the firm is an important aspect of any organization as it allows the firm to better connect with the customers. By understanding the basic difference and unique aspects of the major cultures and ethnicities making use of the service, the firm will be able to make other pre-determined models for these clients. Other important aspects for consideration are the language and demeanor of the customers, which need to be understood, by the employees and the organization in order to be able to service the customers. Language barriers are one of the key problems faced by many organizations,

and especially in the aviation industry. It is for this reason that it is necessary for the various airlines to be able to communicate effectively with the customers in a language in which the customers are comfortable. Language is a key influencing factor, which impacts the customer relations as it a very strong motivating factor for many customers with respect to the aviation industry. (Hopkins, W., Hopkins, S. & Hoffman, 2005)

Shirley and Willie Hopkins' inter-cultural impact on customer service provides an insight into the impact that a wide variety of cultures can have on a service. This is particularly important with respect to the aviation industry where a large number of cultures and nationalities come together in a single flight and hence the airlines need to be able to cater to the individual needs of these customers. Hopkins et. al. bring our attention to an interesting example, which is that in many scenarios in the service industry, the customer does not really get to select his 'end' service provider, for example an airline traveler although choosing the airline and the airport, does not get to select his or her flight attendant or, for instance, does not get to choose his customs officer. (Hopkins et al.) Therefore the respective airline and airport should pay tremendous attention to that these end service providers, and try to a degree to make them come from diverse cultural backgrounds to be able interact to varying degrees of different cultures and to complete the service exchange process. (Hopkins et al.)

This dissertation aims to analyze and show the main aspects of cultural diversity that should be considered by every business. The Hopkins et. Al. illustrate that one of the most salient features of any service which caters to varying cultures is the linguistic features which greatly influence and impact customers and their initial impression about the service being provided. (Hopkins, et. al., 2005)

The Hopkins et. al. put forth three major factors which put distance between the various cultures and hence which need to be addressed by the various organizations. These factors are as follows (Hopkins, et. al., 2005):

Physiognomy – Physiognomy is the general appearance or opinion that people possess about a certain culture or nationality. Based on this factor a number of firms make decisions and plans, which cater to the specific needs of these customers based on their

knowledge of these communities and cultures. A pre-defined customer relations' model exists for the various cultures which are changed to cater to new cultures thereby addressing the facets of various nationalities which make them different from other cultures. (Hopkins, et. al., 2005)

Language – Language is one of the most important motivating factors for customers when using a service. If the service is easily understandable by them and is in a language that is native to the customer, the customers will be better able to relate to the service being provided. The modes and means of communication selected by an organization when interacting with the customers, is often defined by the type of language used. In order to provide the customer with a more wholesome customer experience, it is important for the staff and the organization to be able to communicate with the customers in a language with which the customer is most comfortable. Since language is one of the strongest motivating factors for many customers, many airlines and airports around the world have opted to choose staff and cabin crew who are conversant in more than just a single language. (Hopkins et. al., 2005)

Demeanor – The outward perception or the physical interaction with the customers is another aspect of inter-cultural customer relations that needs to be analyzed. A number of gestures and physical actions are different in different cultures and hence need to be understood by the organization and the staff. It is often believed that by conforming to a stereotype behavior with respect to certain cultures may aggravate the customers thus having a negative impact on the overall business of the firm. (Hopkins et. al., 2005)

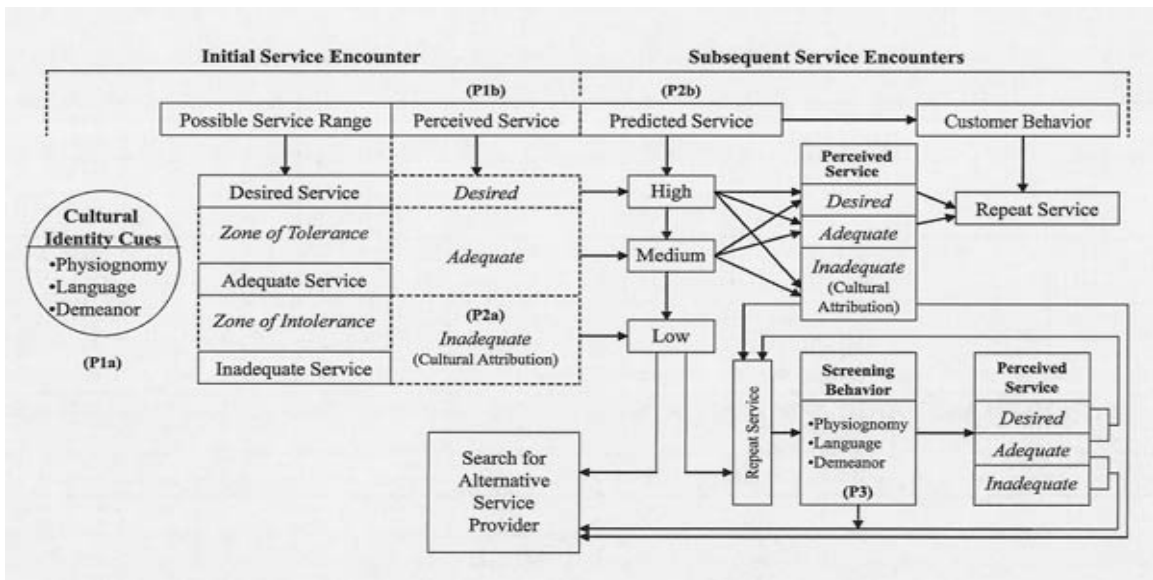


Figure 3: Flow of Cultural Identity Cues (Hopkins et. al. 2005)

In summary, the Hopkins et. al. model is of significant relevance to the UAE in general and it's aviation industry specifically. Thus parts of it, which pertains to the ways businesses and firms should cater to different cultures, will be incorporated in the new model formed in this paper, that will be used for our study on UAE's aviation industry.

1.3.3 Quinn – Boomerang Model

Another customer service and satisfaction model which can have a very strong influence on the shaping of customer services and customer relations in the UAE today is that which depends on being proactive in serving the customer. The model concept has many forms and different presentation, and is widely spread between scholars under many names with different various degrees of details, but Feargal Quinn, the owner and operator of Super Quinn Limited, heavily applied it and he named it Boomerang Model. (Partch, 1996)

Despite the various naming, the concept remain the same, the main scenario behind the boomerang model is that the firm, the decision makers, the customer service

representatives, and all staff members ought to be proactive and vigilant when applying any customer service model. This can be achieved in different ways, as will be discussed below.

Franklin Stein (2001) demonstrates the need for adopting a proactive customer service model, and gives examples of many customer service departments that are rather reactive than being proactive, with main reason being that customer service staff have no authority. (Stein 2001). Being a good delegate, and passing authority to customer service representatives, or floor managers is a good step towards creating the culture of proactive customer service.

Franklin also advises companies not to, unintentionally, turn the customer service department to an “everything else” department, whereby all departments and/or staffs facing things they don’t really know or understand pass it on to customer service. (Stein 2001) There should be clear aims, objectives and duties sketched for those departments and must not be mixed with unrelated issues.

The second most important thing to have a truly proactive customer service department, second to authority, is to have people skills in the department. (Stein 2001)

Franklin sees a proactive customer service, as that which keeps on top of developments and keeps their customers informed of developments, even before the customer would normally find out. (Stein 2001)

Most practitioners, marketing researches and scholars share the opinion that service quality perceptions result from contrast of expectations with what actual performance of that service ends up to be. (Webster 1991). So basically it is good customer service if the expectation is met, but proactive customer service is even exceeding the expectations, and this is what Boomerang Model is based upon.

Many scholars also believe that the service industry is highly vulnerable to and significantly influenced by word of mouth. (Webster 1991). This point is a value added instrument that comes along with proactive customer service. Exceeding the expectations of few customers a day, are good enough to provide you with free marketing through the word of mouth spread. However, the vice-versa is also true, not being able to meet a customer’s expectations will sure end up as a negative publicity.

By modifying the outlook of the employees towards the adoption of new customer relations programs will aid the firm in not only improving the current customer services and relations being adopted, but will also urge the employees to put their best foot forward.

The boomerang principle focuses on making the employees strong marketing forces so that each employee begins to think and take decision from the point of view of a businessman and entrepreneur. When staffs who interface with customer step into the shoes of the customers, and/or the senior manager or business owners, they tend to take decisions and actions in favor of the customer and the business without unjustified delays.

While the aim of the business is to increase profits and sales of the firm, the primary motivating factor should be to make the customers feel more comfortable in the store so as to cause them to return to the company to make use of the service repeatedly, to deter competitors from establishing market share. (Whyte 2004) This helps ensure that customer loyalty is developed thus maintaining a growing customer base with increasing loyalty. Moreover, through the boomerang model, one of the primary objectives is to make the customers work for the firm instead of treating them merely as customers. By giving importance to the customers and listening to what they have to say, the firm can gain a lot of knowledge regarding the expectations of these customers and their wants and needs. (Kennedy & Schneider 2000) The central idea of this model is to make the customers feel like they are in-charge of the businesses and let them decide how the business operates in terms of the services being provided. By listening to the ideas of these customers, the firm should then be able to implement the ideas and make a business plan which caters to the requirements of these customers.

Being proactive, as required by the boomerang model, is based and solely an effort of the respective employee. Therefore, frontline staff and customer service agents ought to be continuously motivated. (Simon 2006). This could be in forms like the implementation of a profit sharing system; more employees would be spurred on to participate in the decision making and brainstorming sessions taking place in the firm. (Simon 2006)

Another factor, that plays a major role in staffs motivation and willingness, is the amount and the way negative feedback is communicated to the staff, as research findings on employees' responses to feedback are mixed and many have concluded it has negative impact on performance and job attitude. (Simon 2006). This reminds entrepreneurs and senior decision makers to protect their staff from any kind of abuse, while still serving the customer in best means possible.

Moreover, in what he calls 'the boomerang model', Quinn sees (through his business) the need of distribution of information throughout the organization and complete transparency to exist in the firm in order for all the employees to be well informed about the developments taking place in the firm. (Feargal, 1996) Each department within a firm should provide reports to the other departments so as to keep each other updated with the happenings in the firm. Thus in this way, all the employees of the organization are informed about the ups and the downs in the organization.

Another interesting aspect of the boomerang model is the importance of rewarding customer loyalty. Quinn makes it very clear that customer loyalty should be rewarded and not bought. This makes the customers feel special and does not cause the customers to change their spending and purchasing habits for the sake of achieving a reward. As a result, the employees can spend the same amount of money as they normally do and can be rewarded for their frequency of use of the service being provided. Moreover, by rewarding instead of selling loyalty rewards, tracking customer-purchasing patterns can also be analyzed more easily. (Feargal, 1996)

One of the most important principles with regard to the implementation of a customer service plan and one of the most widely adopted plans today is that of the "boomerang" technique which is used to maintain loyal customers and attract a number of new customers to the firm. Feargal Quinn, managing director of the Irish supermarket chain Superquinn, puts forth his ideas on customer support and the ideas that need to be implemented and introduced in an organization so as to retain the loyalties of customers. Quinn puts forth three main criteria for developing a strong customer-centric organization so as to improve the customer relations of the firm and increase customer loyalty. The three tasks outlined by Quinn are as follows (Feargal, 1996):

1. Encourage all the employees of the firm to work towards satisfying the needs of the customers and develop plans to meet the needs of the customers
2. Create a better and bigger marketing department and plan than the competitors so as to entice the customers.
3. Reward customer loyalty through a number of incentives and offers.

On a final note, besides having empowered staff members, who are well trained, it is also very important to have the right number of staff in each function to guarantee the customer service levels. Anderson, Fornell and Rust (1997) state that even if the business is improving its productivity through ‘downsizing’, productivity might increase in the short term, but the future sustainability of those profits are on stake. (Anderson, Fornell & Rust 1997). Especially in businesses that are highly dependant on personnel effort, there are potential tradeoffs between customer satisfaction and productivity in service industries like banking, education, airlines, restaurants and hotels. (Anderson, Fornell & Rust 1997).

1.3.4 Customer Satisfaction Question Scales

Many service industries ranging from dentists to airlines are increasingly administering customer satisfaction surveys. This increase has been stimulated by the increase in the number of service industries when compared to other sectors like manufacturing etc and also the increase in demand for total quality management for both industries. An increase in customer satisfaction research has taken place, which shows an increase in diversity of measurement scales used in customer satisfaction surveys. Over all customer satisfaction ought to be a more sophisticated indicator of the firm’s performance due to its links to economic and behavioral consequences beneficial to the firm. (Anderson, Fornell & Rust 1997)

There are two types of scales used in customer satisfaction surveys. There are single and multi-item scales. Single item scales are extremely simple to use, reflecting all ranges from “very satisfied” to “very dissatisfied”. But this scale has two faults. The single-item scale cannot capture the complexity of customer survey, as the information cannot be broken down into further components. The second fault is low reliability. (Danaher 1996) Recent studies tend to go for the multi-item scales. In this case, not only are the people undergoing the survey asked to make an overall evaluation, but they also have to rate the individual components of the service process. There are many different types of multi-item scales like verbal, graphic, semantic differential, Likert and inferential scales. On an average, the semantic differential scale has been found to be the most reliable. Overall, multi-item scales are found to be more reliable than single-item scales. (Danaher 1996)

There are many criteria for evaluating measurement scales

- o Reliability – “extent to which a measurement is free of variable errors”
- o Validity – “the extent to which difference in scores on it reflect true differences among individuals on the characteristic we seek to measure, rather than constant or random errors.”
- o Skewness – regularly used performance ratings gave skewed distributions. Hence a scale is needed which can discriminate customers properly to assess their true loyalty
- o Relationship to open-ended responses – respondents taking the survey gave comments of their service experience which is a good test of a scale’s face validity
- o Managerial value – input from the management is essential to improve service standards.

The various methods used to conduct customer satisfaction surveys are:

- o Questionnaire development
- o Scale and response order effects
- o Sample

(Danaher, Haddrell, 1996)

Even though this paper will adopt the single item scales in the survey conducted, it will try to avoid and overcome both its drawbacks by introducing further follow up questions and having an interview session rather than a straight forward survey.

1.4 Customer Complaints and Feedback

Apart from learning about the impact of developing a sound customer relations and service model, it is also important to be able to provide solutions to various customer feedback and complaints regarding the service received and experienced. These complaints allow the firm to determine flaws and errors in the current business plan being adopted thus allowing the firm to iron out any service issues which may cause problems in the future.

Extensive researches exist on employee responses to feedback, negative in particular. The results are mixed (Kluger and Angelo 1996); however, majority has concluded that negative feedback has an unconstructive impact on job attitudes and performance. Negative feedback seems to create negative moods in the receiver (Kluger and Angelo 1996), which restrains flexibility and consequently reduces performance in most tasks (Murray et al. 1990). It is believed that providing a high level of customer service is not an easy straight forward job, but rather complex undertaking as service personnel attend to the various technical and functional elements of service quality (Grönroos 1983; Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml 1993). Therefore, special attention has to be placed on how feedback (specially negative) is received from the customer, who is to receive it and it has to be previously decided as through what routes or channel this feedback should go.

According to Patrick McCole (2004), he states in his article “Dealing with Complaints in services”, that one of the most important aspects of any customer relations program is to be able to answer and provide feasible and sound solutions to queries and complaints of the consumers. McCole states that there are two types of relationship breakdowns which may occur – an unavoidable breakdown and an avoidable breakdown. The unavoidable breakdown may be due to the customer being bored by the service, moving away or other factors. There is very little that can be done about this form of relationship breakdown.

However, avoidable breakdown is something that organizations need to be concerned about as poor management of avoidable breakdown can lead to customer switching which can see the customers of a firm switching to other firms and services. Customer switching is often associated with the following eight points (McCole, 2004):

1. Price increases or high pricing of the services rendered.
2. Inconvenience caused to the customers as a result of long wait times, improper service, location of the service and other related factors.
3. Failure of the core functionality of the service such as poor service conditions, problematic billing and mistakes in the service.
4. Poor customer support as the staff may be unknowledgeable in the operation of the service, rude or misunderstanding support staff and poor customer support.
5. Lack of support for customer feedback or negative responses given to problems of the customers using the service.
6. Better services being offered to customers by competing firms in terms of price and service.
7. Ethical problems such as cheating of the customers or a conflict of interest on part of the customers and their own beliefs.
8. Unavoidable breakdown.

McCole insists that the above mentioned points need to be identified by the managers and the higher management in any firm so as to be able to provide better service to the customer and help maintain strong customer loyalty. With respect to the airlines industry this is very important due to the large scale competition which is available in the industry today. It is very important for the staff to be courteous to the passengers and take their problems seriously so as to avoid customer switching. (McCole, 2004)

Gordon Fullerton provides a further insight into the importance of customer relationships to the overall service being provided by the firm. While it is common belief that customer relations helps develop and facilitates the growth of strong marketing relations, it is

important to first understand the various facets of customer commitment and its importance in order to get a better understanding of customer loyalty. (Fullerton, 2005) Through his article, Fullerton attempts to shed light on the two forms of customer commitment – active commitment and continuance commitment. Through a number of empirical models and analytical calculations, Fullerton is able to put forth some very interesting observations and results which provide us with an insight into customer relations and services. (Fullerton, 2005)

Fullerton begins with a review of what makes service quality very important and the need for service quality. Fullerton states that service quality is very similar to an attitude possessed by people. Service quality is a summation of positive or negative views held by customers and consumers of a service. While scholars in the field of service quality have attempted to draw relations between service evaluations and decisions made by consumers with regard to the adoption of these services, it has been determined that service quality makes a strong impact on the consumers.

However, to give us a better understanding of the true nature of service quality, Fullerton delves further into determining what exactly commitment is and why it is very important for service quality to succeed. Commitment is defined as the explicit pledge of continuity between relational partners which entails mutuality and the forsaking of alternatives. (Fullerton, 2005)

Fullerton then states that one of the most important aspects of the commitment between the service providers and the consumers is the development and emergence of switching intentions and advocacy intentions. Switching intentions refers to the intentions of the consumers to switch their brands or services for a number of reasons which are unfavorable to the continuing support of the brand by the consumer. (Fullerton, 2005) There are a number of reasons as to why a consumer may switch his service, some of which are avoidable while others are unavoidable.

On the other hand, advocacy intentions occur when the customer or consumer of the service is pleased with the quality of the service being provided and acts a reference for the service to other consumers. This trend of advocating a service or a brand is generally

seen to have a very positive impact on a service being provided as it shows a bond of trust and commitment which has been established between the consumer and the service. So basically, the view of Fullerton behind maximizing customers' satisfaction is to reach 3 main goals. First is boost of sales and profits, second is gaining customer loyalty and continuity and finally employing the customers as marketing agents through word of mouth. (Fullerton, 2005) Furthermore, Fullerton proves some statement through study, thus changing them from general belief to facts.

The diagram below depicts the relation between commitment, switching intentions and advocacy intentions. (Fullerton, 2005)

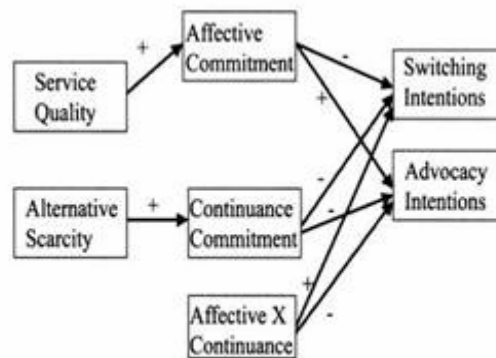


Figure 4: Service Relationships Integrated Model (Fullerton 2005)

Through his attempt to show that the service quality and attitude proposition is consistent, Fullerton puts forth ten important observations made from direct analysis of the customer attitudes with respect to the future behavior of the customer to the service provider. (Fullerton, 2005)

1. There exists a negative relation between service quality and switching intentions. (Fullerton, 2005)
2. There exists a positive relation between service quality and advocacy intentions. (Fullerton, 2005)
3. Positive service quality reinforces strong and effective customer commitment. (Fullerton, 2005)

4. Lack of other service alternatives is a strong supporting factor for continuance customer commitment. (Fullerton, 2005)
5. There is an interaction between affective and continuance customer commitment such that the negative relationship between affective customer commitment and switching intentions becomes less negative at higher levels of continuance customer commitment. (Fullerton, 2005)
6. There is an interaction between affective and continuance customer commitment such that the positive relationship between affective customer commitment and advocacy intentions becomes less positive at higher levels of continuance customer commitment. (Fullerton, 2005)
7. Affective customer commitment is negatively related to switching intentions. (Fullerton, 2005)
8. Affective customer commitment is positively related to advocacy. (Fullerton, 2005)
9. Continuance customer commitment is negatively related to switching intentions. (Fullerton, 2005)
10. Continuance customer commitment is negatively related to advocacy intentions. (Fullerton, 2005)

1.5 Aviation Customer Service Models

1.5.1 Le Bel – “Pleasure” Model

The “pleasure” model put forth by Jordan Le Bel (2005) is very interesting in terms of studying the aviation industry as a whole and with a keen interest in the aviation industry in the UAE. By taking the example of British Airways, Le Bel has stressed on a number of points and aspects of aviation and the customer relations stance adopted by major firms within the industry, so as to put forth the main points which need to be understood in order to provide a better experience to the customers. Le Bel has stressed the active use of hedonistic psychology as it is the study of the aspects of human nature that fathom and understand the various forms of pleasure and happiness. Ideally, this is the main aspect of

any service being used by the customers as customers wish to make use of a service in order to gain benefits and reduce their own work. As a result, the main objective of every service providing firm should be the provision of quality service which allows the customers to relax and be happy with the final service provided. Le Bel highlights the sensory, social, intellectual, and emotional aspects of pleasure as being the main facets of every customer which need to be catered to in order for the customer to have a better experience. The pleasure model proposed by Le Bel is very apt for the aviation industry due to the fact that the aviation industry is based on the principle of not only providing an efficient means of travel for the customers, but to also allow them to enjoy quality service such as entertainment, food and drinks thus allowing them to have a very relaxing time during the flight.

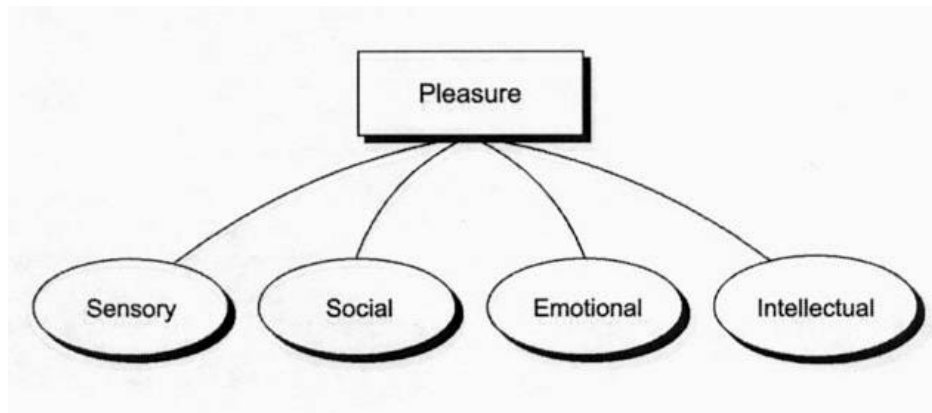


Figure 5: Different Aspects of Pleasure (Le Bel 2005)

One of the key aspects of the “pleasure” model put forth by Le Bel is the breakdown of pleasure segments, or phases of travel, which is illustrated in figure 2. Through this model, he shows the various stresses and states the customers may go through and also provides details regarding the task which need to be carried out by the staff and the airlines in order to address all the needs of these customers. It is important for the service providers to provide reassurance to the customers, orient them with their surroundings so as to make them more comfortable with their environment and also familiarization so as to make the customers feel more welcome on the airlines. While there are a number of aspects of the traveling experience which cannot be completely in control of the airlines and airports, there are a number of other aspects listed out by Le Bel which are in control

of the airlines and airports. Convivial services, communications and physical evidence are all aspects under the control of the airlines and airports which need to be catered to properly and addressed accordingly to ensure that these aspects do not interfere and degrade the customer experience of flying with the airlines through the airport.

This model proposed by Le Bel is very interesting for the customer relations industry as a whole and in particular for the aviation industry as it stresses on the importance of the customer as a key source of business and hence there is the need to appease the customer and all feasible wishes. The “pleasure” model aims to improve the customer relations by allowing the customers to feel freer in the airlines/airports and hence feel more comfortable. As a result, this involves listening to the needs of the individual customers and developing a customer relations strategy centered on the suggestions and the feedback of the customers. Since the aviation industry is a very customer-centric industry, the need of the pleasure model is felt and caters very strongly to the industry. (Le Bel, 2005)

1.5.2 Dietz Need Model:

Janis Dietz (2005) has also carried out a review of Joby John’s Fundamental of Customer-Focused Management which reviews the various techniques and ideas that go into packaging and providing a service to customers. An interesting point stated by Dietz in her review is that while products can be pre-packaged and created without much customer interaction, any service first needs to understand the market opinion and the views of the customers before launch so as to cater specifically to the needs of the customers. (Dietz 2005)

There is no point developing a service which is not needed by the customers. As a result, hearing and listening to what the customers have to say is important for the development

of the service and to cater to the specific needs of the customers. Dietz argues for the sake of aviation customer service, when airlines started introducing telephones and fax machines on board of their craft, if the customers really needed those and to what extent. (Fullerton, 2005) There are several arguments made, to various industries including the aviation, that overall seemed interesting.

The review analyzes the various aspects of the book by John and provides a summary of each chapter. This overview touches upon some very interesting aspects of customer services such as the importance of customer relations management and the need to service and provide full support to long time customers and to maintain excellent relations with these customers; as such customer relations can have a very positive impact on the overall business of a firm. (Dietz, 2005)

1.6 Customer Service Hinderers in the Aviation Industry

In the US specifically, and world generally, over the last 20 years, frequent-flyer programs, supersaver fares and price wars has completely changed the way people travel. All of that has dramatically increased air traffic and simultaneously passenger complaints have gone up too. Most of the complaints received by airlines falls within the boundaries of airport congestion and airport customer service issues. (Koch, 1999)

Airports face globalization and competitive pressure due to various forces and factor, and as they do so, airports explore innovative funding approaches for their infrastructures development. (Chee Mee, Adam & Mary 1998).

Moreover, Stean Lengell (2006) states a good number of Airlines that have reported increases in passengers over past history. (Lengell 2006)

This massive surge in air travel could be attributed to many factors such as the availability of low fares carriers, and increased affordability by people who couldn't

dream of flying a couple of decades ago. An economic boom also justifies increase in leisure and business travel.

However, this increase in air travel has brought the system into a gridlock today with not enough infrastructures to support the immeasurable growth, and this pressure on infrastructure development needs to be managed and financed through various sources. (Chee Mee, Adam & Mary 1998).

According to Kotch, airport infrastructure development is lacking the much-needed attention and causing discomfort to thousands of air travelers. Airlines are not doing enough to provide quality customer service. In spite of all this, the aviation industry is going through its best phase ever. Many major international airlines have been earning record profits. (Koch, K, 1999)

Clearly, the airline customer service is directly linked to the customer service of the airports it is traveling to, and the respective airports infrastructure. This brings our attention to a very important point which is, in order to study entirely study the aviation industry in the United Arab Emirates, further study should be made on UAE based airlines. The aviation industry's customer service stands on both airports' and airlines' customer service, and neither can be assessed in isolation.

Even though this paper will be focusing on airports of the UAE, we urge a further study to be implemented on customer service of UAE's airlines, inline with the study made for the airports.

Due to the emergence of many airlines from near bankruptcy, airline service has declined due to deregulation. Customer expectations have also nose-dived along with the poor service. Some of the common and increasing discomforts associated with air travel today are delays, poor communication protocol, policies of slashing services and overcrowdedness. Hence many of the economy class passengers opt for no frill flights due to their attractive rates and reasonably good service for the price being doled out. (Hunter, 2006)

Environment friendly and green lobbyists are insisting on some severe action to be taken before the CO2 emissions caused by air travel reaches a point beyond repair. Despite the

efforts made by airlines being greener and using engines that are climate friendly, the emissions remain significant (Makower 2007). Makower warns that the current rates of emissions are significantly increasing, with increasing effects on the environment. Environmental regulations and taxes, along with the investments made in this respect to make aircrafts greener, are seen as one of the hinderers of aviation around the globe.

The last, and currently the most critical hinderer of aviation industry today is terrorism and the precautions and measures taken to avoid it. According to Wes Irvin (2004), the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, back in the 11th of September 2001 have caused harm to every imaginable area including economy, personal lives, business, and on top of all the aviation industry. (Irvin 2004).

The friendliness of airports and their staff sort of deteriorated and became more of aggressive search and strict regulations, which scared off people from flying and traveling.

High fuel prices, rising insurance costs and added costs of ensuring security are also related factors contributing to the already troubled condition of the aviation industry. (Irvin 2004)

2 Models Chosen and Analysis

Due to the various dynamics that exist in the aviation industry of the UAE today, and based on the criteria identified in chapter 1 section 3.1, and having commenced the literature review and market study, this dissertation will create and adopt a new customer service model, which is actually an amalgamation of the following three customer service models: **(1) Intercultural Model, (2) Pleasure Model, (3) Boomerang Model**. The new model will pick elements from each model which satisfy the 5 criteria set in Section 3.1 of chapter 1.

2.1 Analysis behind choosing each model:

2.1.1 Intercultural Model

As was identified through the criteria set in chapter one for this study, the aviation industry of the UAE is very unique in the sense that there are a number of different cultures living in the country which have a significant impact on the volume of traffic passing through the airports and using the airlines in the country. Moreover, since the UAE is today promoting itself as a tourist destination and as the commercial hub of the Middle East, it is important for the country to be able to provide not only the residents, but the international passengers using the various airlines of the country, and other international airlines to pass through the cities of the UAE with the best amenities and services during their stop-over in the country's airports.

As a result, it is necessary to develop a customer relations program which caters to the individual cultures passing through the country in addition to providing the best services to these passengers. In order to develop such as customer relations program, it is important to first consider the various changes which need to be made in the functioning of the aviation industry of the UAE and the various administrative departments responsible for the various functions. This is precisely supported by Hopkins Inter-Culture Model, and is the best way to assess UAE's airports with regards to their multicultural awareness and customer service dedicated not to one race or culture but to melting pot of cultures.

Bearing in mind the varied ethnicity of the UAE and taking into account the fact that around 80% of the population (tedad.com), which is even higher considering the adult population which consists of the working class, are expatriates, it is necessary for the aviation industry in the country to be in-tune with the various cultural aspects and characteristics of the various ethnicities residing in the country. In this regard, it is necessary for the industry to adopt a plan and customer relations program which not only provides general customer support and aid, but also caters to the various individual characteristics of each culture so as to make the customers feel more comfortable.

This model meets criteria number 1, 4 and 5 of the criteria set in chapter 1 section 3.2, which are the following:

- To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment.
- To reach and sustain continuous pleasure.
- To create customer loyalty.

What we precisely are taking out of this model includes but not limited to the following:

1. Language: The airport under study should, to the furthest extent possible, aim to have available staff to speak all possibly spoken languages by customers at a point of time.

E.g.: It is not acceptable to have a passenger who only speaks Russian, without any Russian speaking staff onboard, in the terminal at the airport, or in the check-in area.

2. Gestures in different cultures: Airport staff should be educated about the various cultures and backgrounds of the customers they would possibly be interacting with. This is to avoid humiliating or insulting a certain culture without previous intention.

E.g.: Men should avoid and refrain from shaking hands with women from the GCC countries as many of the GCC women would find that very insulting.

3. Expect various specific cultures' needs and queries: Staff should sort of expect and be educated with the various cultures they could be interacting with, and be prepared to answer their questions and queries.

E.g.: Airport and airport staff should expect and be ready when in a transit flight from a place like India to, to be able to serve vegetarian food to specific customers, as some cultures and religions in India forbid non-vegetarian food.

4. Word Choice: Staff should be extremely cautious and diplomatic when choosing words for conversation and words could mean totally different things in different cultures.

5. No Discrimination: Discrimination of any kind under any circumstance is absolutely prohibited, and must be continuously educated to all staff.

6. No Stereotypes: It is the airlines and the airports responsibility to refresh all staff regularly, and assure that no stereotypes of any kind exists.

Having incorporated the above into the new model, it will be able to emphasize and analyze the cultural gap which exists between the various cultures which an airport needs to cater to. The questions in the survey which pertain to this part of the model will also reveal the impact of the initial impression on the customers and the chance of a possible return of these customers to the service depending on their initial experience. Moreover, the entire customer service model eventually has implications for the customers, employees and the service organizations. These various aspects need to be considered by every organization before developing a service so as to be able to service not only the customers, but also the intermediate players of the process. (Hopkins et. al., 2005)

2.1.2 Boomerang Model

Out of all the models studied in the literature review, the boomerang model seems to be the simplest and the easiest. It could actually be the simplest and easiest; however, the value it intends to generate is great.

Instead of simply studying and monitoring the wants and demands of customers, staff are urged to take a step forward and offer what customers did not ask for ‘YET’ .

Instead of waiting for a supervisor’s decision, or looking back to corporate manual and procedures, it advocates front liners to actually step into the customers’ shoes and see from their eyes what could be their immediate wonders or wishes.

All this model requires, and/or assesses is whether the front-end staffs are quick customer service related decision makers or not. It urges them to be so, and for a very simple example, in case of a flight delay that the ground service is not at all to be blamed for, they can still offer drinks and refreshments which will be favorably seen by customers, despite the fact that their work manuals do not say so. As simple as this model might seem, it is still of such great impact for the UAE market because of the large volumes of passengers passing through its three major airports combined. Ultimate objective is making every customer a repeat customer. If this model is properly implemented, the entire aviation customer service levels will definitely sky rocket, thus it is seen as very important to be part of the new amalgamated model.

The main factor out of this model that should be incorporated in the new model is the fact that Airline and Airport staffs actually can and do take the extra mile to reach the customers needs and wants that are not explicitly asked for. By incorporating this model, our new model will mainly meet criteria numbers 2 and 3, along with numbers 4 and most importantly criterion number 5, as per *section 3.2 of chapter 1*, which are:

- To meet and exceed international standards and expectations in the perception of travelers.
- To create innovative and proactive customer service standards.
- To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure.
- To create customer loyalty.

2.1.3 Pleasure Model

The pleasure model, which is created by Le Bel, is a sophisticate scientific model, constructed purely based on and for the aviation industry. Therefore, to maximize the output of this dissertation, it is important to include such a scientific model in our study.

Le Bel sheds light on how scientific research is also adding a new flavor to the field of customer services and relations. Similar to how the advent of popcorn for cinema goers started an industry which has today become the mainstay of a movie-going experience, today's marketers are paying attention to pleasure not just as a key motivator for customers but also as a key success factor. (Le Bel 2005)

Even though Le-Bel's model was based on the British Airways, it is also applicable to airports, and even to almost any other business. This proves to be very beneficial for this thesis as it allows us to make use of the findings of the model and the report based on an airline which is often considered to be one of the best in the world today.

With respect to the model proposed, one of the key characteristics of the model will be the interaction of the staff and the cabin crew with the customers in order to improve the pleasure aspect of the service provided. The pleasure model is of particular significance in the aviation industry of the UAE primarily due to the large markets and nationalities

that the market caters to. As a result, it is important to take into consideration the various aspects of the various ethnicities that reside in the local market before implementing the pleasure model.

The model selected for consideration, focuses on the tangible and intangible pleasure elements. Many of those elements are to be achieved within the airport boundaries and thus it will be incorporate in the new model to asses the aviation industry of the UAE in terms of pleasing the passengers.

The factors that lead to the overall pleasure passenger extend from people like staff and management, going up to the facilities within the airport like cleanliness, restaurant availability, toilets ... etc.

Parts of this model will be incorporated in the new model and that will test 3 criteria set initially (2, 4 and 5 of *section 3.2 of chapter 1*) which are:

- To meet and exceed international standards and expectation based on passengers perception.
- To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure.
- To create customer loyalty.

The parts of this model which will be incorporated in the questionnaire, are to assess, but not limited to, the following:

- 1. Sensory Pleasure:** such as over all relaxation and travel experience, within the facilities and the various areas of the airport. There should be no rush at any point of the passengers' journey within the airport, and/or no pressure or unnecessary waiting time. Boarding starts at a time enough for all to be seated just at departure time. Even the distance to be driven from the city to the airport and the available means of transportation is an important element within the sensory pleasure.
- 2. Social and Emotional Pleasure:** Such as staff hygiene, appearance and, pretty importantly, gestures like smiles and greetings. Soft tone, tolerance and patience to customer questions and needs. Overall appearance of staff, and tidiness of airport and craft. Pleasure with regards to quality of food, entertainment, drinks & beverages within the airport.

- 3. Intellectual Pleasure:** By having clear rules and regulations rather than last minute panic. Well managed check-in queues, and boarding queues. Clear direction signals.

2.1.4 Overall

Having chosen parts of different models, a new model that is specifically tailored to the United Arab Emirates' aviation industry is formed. This new model will reflect the 5 criteria set in chapter 1, and will assess how well the UAE airports are achieving those criteria, based on reviews from passengers.

As mentioned earlier, Airlines and Airports both equally share the aviation industry, thus to properly assess and evaluate the aviation industry of a country both its airlines' customer service levels and its airports' customer service level should be evaluated. However for the purposes of this paper, the study will only focus on the three major airports of the country which are Abu Dhabi Airport, Dubai Airport, Sharjah Airport. The same model can still be tailored and implemented on UAE's airlines.

2.1.4.1 Methodology

Oliver (1980) states that satisfaction may not be a unidimensional concept, and is better measured using a sequence of questions to tap different forms of satisfaction. (Oliver 1980)

Therefore, this paper will study the airports of the United Arab Emirates through a set of 20 questions. The first five questions, are the main questions that will be reflecting the five criteria set in Chapter one. The remaining fifteen questions are follow-up questions to justify the results obtained from the five main questions, and reflecting the parts of the customer satisfaction models chosen earlier in section two of chapter two.

Following is a table with the five main questions and the criteria they tend to test.

Criterion	Question to test the criterion
Criterion number one:	How satisfied are you with the airports treatment with regards to

To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment	cultural/race/background/color tolerance, adaptability, hospitality and all related issues or discrimination, of any kind or nature?"
Criterion number two: To meet and exceed international standards and expectation (in travelers' perspective) due to the fact that passengers from all over the world use UAE's aviation doors.	Based on your past experience with international airports, and your expectations of UAE in general and UAE's airports specifically, how satisfied are you with the overall infrastructure and upkeep of the airport?
Criterion number three: Customer service levels in UAE ought to be innovative and proactive, as the UAE now is viewed by the international aviation industry as a focal point	How do you rate the extent to which the airports' staffs proactive / innovative at identifying and assisting you in any problems/issues that you have faced?
Criterion number four: To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure. This is very important to achieve the goal of high levels of customer service, as was concluded by its definition.	How do you rate extent to which the airport staffs and facilities made you feel comfortable and attempt to improve your overall experience, by keeping you pleased and satisfied, rather than bored, worried, lost, confused... etc.?
Criterion number five: To create customer loyalty, through managing and meeting customers' expectations, as was concluded above.	From your experience in the Airport, (whether you are a frequent flier or not), How well does the airport recognizes frequent fliers and provides them with better and faster service, or any further assistance of any kind?

Table 2 Table of Criteria and Relative Survey Question

All of the questions have the following range of choices for the panel to choose from:

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

The results of the 5 main questions will determine how well UAE airports are meeting the identified criteria, based on the reviews of passengers.

A set of hypothesis, one for every criterion, are to be tested, through the results of the above five question pertaining to the three main airports in the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport. Following is a table with each of the criteria and the reflecting hypothesis that is to be tested:

Criterion	Hypothesis for T-Test
<p>Criterion number one:</p> <p>To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment</p>	<p>The first Null hypothesis $H_0 = \text{UAE Airports do not adapt to a diversified customer base.}$</p>
<p>Criterion number two:</p> <p>To meet and exceed international standards and expectation (in the travelers' perspective) due to the fact that passengers from all over the world use UAE's aviation doors.</p>	<p>The second Null hypothesis $H_0 = \text{UAE Airports do not meet international standards in customers perspective}$</p>
<p>Criterion number three:</p> <p>Customer service levels in UAE ought to be innovative and proactive, as the UAE now is viewed by the international aviation industry as a focal point</p>	<p>The third Null hypothesis $H_0 = \text{UAE Airports are not regarded as innovative and proactive when it comes to customer service.}$</p>
<p>Criterion number four:</p> <p>To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure. This is very important to achieve the goal of high levels of customer service, as was concluded by its definition.</p>	<p>The fourth Null hypothesis $H_0 = \text{UAE Airports do not sustain the pleasure of their customers.}$</p>
<p>Criterion number five:</p> <p>To create customer loyalty, through managing and meeting customers' expectations, as was concluded above.</p>	<p>The fifth Null hypothesis $H_0 = \text{UAE Airports are not capable of winning customers' loyalty.}$</p>

Table 3: Table of Criteria and Relative Null Hypothesis.

The T- test will be used to test the validity of the hypothesis; more details of the test will be discussed in the coming chapter. This test will indicate if the UAE airports, hence the aviation industry in the UAE, are successfully implementing the criteria set or not. This will be the basis of the study and the recommendations made.

Having done that, another set of hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Criterion	Hypothesis for Chi-Square test
<p>Criterion number one:</p> <p>To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment</p>	<p>H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to adapting to a diversified environment.</p>
<p>Criterion number two:</p> <p>To meet and exceed international standards and expectation (in the travellers' perspective) due to the fact that passengers from all over the world use UAE's aviation doors.</p>	<p>H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to meeting and exceeding international standards and expectation in the eyes of the passenger.</p>
<p>Criterion number three:</p> <p>Customer service levels in UAE ought to be innovative and proactive, as the UAE now is viewed by the international aviation industry as a focal point</p>	<p>H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to being innovative and proactive when servicing the customer.</p>
<p>Criterion number four:</p> <p>To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure. This is very important to achieve the goal of high levels of customer service, as was concluded by its definition.</p>	<p>H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to reaching and sustaining continuous customer pleasure.</p>

<p>Criterion number five:</p> <p>To create customer loyalty, through managing and meeting customers' expectations, as was concluded above.</p>	<p>H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to creating customer loyalty and meeting customers' expectations.</p>
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These hypotheses will be tested using the chi-square statistical test, to prove whether or not there is a difference between the three individual airports of the UAE or not when reflecting the criteria of the paper. If the test proved that there is a difference then the means of the results will be considered to conclude whether the difference is better or worse.

As discussed earlier, another set of fifteen follow up questions will also test and reflect the parts chosen from the various customer service models as indicated in section two of chapter two. These follow up questions will be asked in the interview to try and reveal the exact areas which each of the airports need to focus on. Three questions will be used to follow up each criterion. Following is the list of the fifteen questions, and the models they tend to reflect.

Model	Question
<p>Boomerang</p>	<p>1. How would you rate the cooperativeness of the ground staffs at the airport, with the requirements, needs, queries, issues faced by passengers through the airport?</p>
	<p>2. How would you rate your experience with immigration section, with regards to any related concern, whether it was delay because of long queues, or visa issuance issues, or staff with limited respective knowledge, or any other issues?</p>
	<p>3. How would you rate how receptive airports were to passengers feedback, were there clear adequate means of</p>

	<p>feedback, is feedback and complaints put forth by the customers recorded and looked into properly?</p>
	<p>4. How would rate the extent to which the airport staff is informed and helpful when it comes to finding out about the timings, locations, counters, gates of arrivals or departures of different Air Lines taking place at the airport?</p>
	<p>5. In the event of flights being late or delayed by large times, rate the extent to which the airport supports provisions for allowing the passengers to make use of the services of the airport while waiting for their flights?</p>
Pleasure	<p>6. How adequate was the seating arrangements made for the passengers to sit and rest while waiting for their flights to arrive and board? Where necessities provided within (Coffee, toilets, prayer) or once accessed no stepping out to the other facilities?</p>
	<p>7. From your experience within the airport, what would you rate the extent to which the Airport is equipped with facilities to support and counteract and security threats which may arise? e.g. enough security personnel, fire exits that are clearly marked, enough fire extinguishers within sight, instructions in case of threat... etc.</p>
	<p>8. How would you rate how proper are the facilities supported for carrying heavy baggage and luggage until the check-in point? Weighting systems, baggage rappers, and means of payment for excess luggage?</p>
	<p>9. Please rate the extent to which the airport is equipped with clear indicators and signs regarding the various facilities and services, like terminals, gates, restrooms, restaurants, prayer rooms... etc. and their reliability (reliability means do you need to ask staff despite existing signs because of confusion?)</p>
	<p>10. How would you rate accessibility to the airports from</p>

	where you come, is it easy to commute to and from the airport for arrival and departure whether during peak or off-peak hours?
	11. How would you rate the provisions made for the passengers in transit to cater to the needs of the passengers, especially in cases of long transit periods?
	12. Other than ones private car, how would you rate the availability of transportation from and to the airport, whether cabs or public transport or airport shuttles?
Multicultural	13. How would you rate the ease of communication with Airport staff? Are they proficient in more than a single language so as to converse with passengers in a language that they are more comfortable in?
	14. How would you rate the extent to which the Airport equipped and tailored to handle the special needs of ailing passengers, elderly, children, and physically disabled who may need special and sometimes constant attention?
	15. How would you rate the quality of services such as food, shopping and other activities in the Airport, taking into consideration the variety of choices for different religions and cultures (e.g. Vegetarian, Halal food, different religion prayer rooms, magazines in varied languages)

Table 4 Table of Survey Follow up Questions.

These questions will be formulated in a form of interview sessions, to build up a descriptive analysis in the hope to explain the results that would be obtained from the five main questions. Three questions will follow up each criterion; clear details will be given in the analysis section in the next chapter.

The coming chapter will discuss the implementation of the study, along with the results obtained and conclusions reached.

Chapter 3

1 The Study

The customer service model created within this paper can be tailored to both airlines and airports, and that is actually necessary to accurately assess the aviation customer service in UAE. However, for the purposes of this paper, the model will be implemented to study customer service levels in the three major airports of the UAE, leaving the doors open for future studies to implement the same model on UAE's airlines to have a clear view of UAE's aviation industry.

The model suggested in the previous chapter takes into consideration the various factors and motivational props that affect airlines travel and the aviation industry as a whole in the UAE. They model a number of important factors including the varying ethnicity of the region, price considerations and the overall experience enjoyed by the passengers and the amount of pleasure derived by these passengers from traveling through the airports.

So basically, the new model created, supported by the criteria set and the market study, will identify the standards set, that the local airports (UAE airports) should be assessed based on.

Because the main aim in aviation is to ensure a growing customer base and to ensure renewed customer satisfaction, it is important to take notice of and give importance to the various customer feedback, complaints and suggestions that the customers may have. These suggestions and feedback should be looked into by the airlines and airports carefully and an earnest attempt should be made at incorporating these suggestions into the overall flight plan and the service plan of the firm if it is feasible. This is supported by the findings of the literature review, specifically section 1.4 of chapter 2.

The importance of customer feedback and its methods have been realized by this paper earlier. A set of question covering all the standards set by the models chosen, and the criteria identified are generated, as indicated in section 2.1.4.1 of chapter 2.

These questions will then act as a guide in the individual interviews with random candidates. Based on the finding, it is better to have an open discussion to absorb as much

as possible rather than just distributing surveys that might or might not reach the answers and information this paper is actually looking for.

Pre-Implementation

Implementing the new model will determine the effectiveness of the existing customer relations program being used in the major airports round the country. On the basis of the results of these answers, we can establish the levels of customer satisfaction in UAE's main airports based on the travelers' reviews. Furthermore, the study will be able to set a value above which, based on the new model, UAE airports must hold and maintain an increased satisfaction level with the customer relations and services being offered.

The sample chosen for the assessment of the existing customer relations program must be a unique mix and blend of ethnicities which are observed to travel through the various airports of the country annually. This will help to judge the existing system better as it will take into consideration the opinions and views of people with various frequencies of flying, a mixture of people of society coming from a culturally diverse group so as to analyze the customer relations with respect to various cultures as well.

This existing program will be judged on the basis of a 5-point program which will vary from a scale of very unpleasant (Very Bad) which is the lowest on the scale, to very pleasant (Excellent), the highest rating on the scale. Several statistical methods will be used to analyze the performance of the aviation industry in the UAE with respect to the service provided by the three major airlines and airports in the country.

Using the results of the previous surveys and questionnaires, the new model can be a guide and a torch with respect to the areas of the customer service which are not considered to be very pleasant. Since one of the key selling points of the aviation industry is that of providing pleasure in addition to timely and safe travel, it is important to take into consideration the various feedbacks, suggestions and complaints as made by the customers and aim to address these issues through the new model being implemented.

1.1 Implementation

1.1.1 Study Sample

The study behind this dissertation aims to study the views of frequent fliers and other passengers with respect to the service provided by the three main airports in the country. The views of passengers on the three prime airports of the country, namely – Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport – will be studied to determine how each of these airports differs from the other and what each of them has achieved since their inception. Moreover, by comparing the quality of service offered by these firms with those of other international airports, again based on the past experience of travelers, will give us a better insight into the position of these airports with respect to the international aviation industry.

This research is conducted on a random group of seventy eight (78) residents in the United Arab Emirates. Some candidates have answered for more than an airport, based on whether or not they have flown through those airports. This group consists of frequent, normal and infrequent fliers in order to provide more reliable results. The study was commenced through question and answer sessions with each of the candidates, hence interviews. This would have stimulated inner thoughts and some reasoning behind choices. The views of these passengers were studied and analyzed in order to come up with a steady conclusion regarding the pros and the cons of the aviation industry in the UAE today.

The sample of passengers was selected keeping in mind the actual traveling and passenger demography expected across the airports in the UAE today. Not all who have answered for a particular airport actually live in the same emirate where the airport is located, and it is quite interesting to know that demography. Following is a table with the demography detail:

Airline/Airport	Number of panelists living in that emirate	Number of Surveys filled by panelists for this Airport
Sharjah International Airport	15	33

AbuDhabi International Airport	28	31
Dubai International Airport	35	56
Total	78	102

Table 5: Breakdown of Panelist Sample and the Emirates they live in

It is an interesting aspect to know that, only 45% of the panelists who answered for Sharjah International Airport actually live in Sharjah, and 62% of those who answered for Dubai International Airport lived in Dubai, while 90% of those answering for Abu Dhabi International Airport lived in Abu Dhabi. This sort of indicates that people are less willing to travel from other emirates through Abu Dhabi International Airport, keeping in mind the size of the over all sample.

The cultural demography was dispersed amongst Asians, consisting primarily citizens of India, Pakistan, Philippines, and Westerners including Americans, Australians, French and British; among the panelists also were members of the Middle East community consisting of the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Kuwait, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Palestine. A few members of the surveyed passengers also came from African countries, namely Kenya, Sudan and Nigeria.

As indicated earlier, the study maintained a reasonable focus of flying frequency as loosing track of that might skew the results either way. The survey of this study defined three types of frequencies: Frequent Fliers, Normal Fliers, and Infrequent Fliers. The above categories were defined as follows:

Frequent Fliers: those who travel at least five trips a year or more.

Normal Fliers: those who travel between two to four trips a year, inclusive.

Infrequent Fliers: those who travel maximum once a year.

In terms of frequency of flight, 27 members flew infrequently with maximum one flight a year and primarily to their home countries. Another 30 members fell between the infrequent and frequently flying passengers, hence normal fliers, making between two to four trips a year, to their home country and/or to another country every year. The

remaining 21 members of the sample belonged to the frequent fliers category, which is 5 or more trips a year, and generally people under this category indicated that they traveled around 10 times or more within a year, with a number of these trips being to countries apart from their home country.

While the distribution of the sample selected is overtly in favor of Dubai, the results of the research and the questions posed were very interesting.

1.1.2 Introducing the candidates to the interview

Each candidate was interviewed alone, in order to make sure no influence of any kind between the candidates existed, to provide a fair result with no skewness. Each interview began with a brief discussion to inform the candidate of the purpose of the interview.

Then members of the panel were shown a short documentary about the history of aviation in the Middle East and the UAE and were given a brief introduction into the development of the aviation industry in the UAE since its inception in the early 1970's. The documentary touched upon the development and the initiation of the aviation center in Dubai and the further development of the Dubai International Airport, which was soon followed, by the development and construction of the International Airports at Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. The documentary also followed the development of the UAE in terms of trade and commerce and the importance of the tourism industry to the local economy and the importance that foreign trade and tourism had on the economy of the UAE. The development of the Cargo Village and the large influx of foreign labor and expatriates was also analyzed and studied in order to provide the members of the sample more information regarding the advancements made by the airports in the UAE today and the improvements made in terms of the services provided.

The main purpose of this video is to stimulate the inner brain of the candidates' past incidents and experience. Another pretty important reason is to demonstrate to them the seriousness of this study to avoid the tendency to act in favor and say good things only, or to answer in careless random manner.

After the documentary finished, the panel were asked what their view regarding the documentary was and whether it had a positive or negative impact on their previous

impressions of the services provided by the aviation industry in the country. The impressions of the panel varied with many still harboring the same feelings and views regarding the aviation industry as before. Some members of the panel believed that the documentary showcased the improvements made over the years by the aviation industry but did not impact their own decisions and ideas regarding the industry as their personal experiences stands as active proof for the quality of service provided.

1.1.3 Interview Questions

As indicated in the previous chapter, following the documentary, a survey consisting of a total of 20 questions regarding the services provided by the airports and the ease of travel and commuting through the airports was conducted in order to get a better understanding of the views of a varied strata of passengers traveling through UAE's airports, and to understand the mindset and the potential areas where the services provided could be improved.

The main aim of these questions was to get a general impression of the customers with regard to the overall services and customer relations policies being adopted by the aviation industry in the UAE today in comparison to the standards that we have drawn by the new model. Areas with negative response will determine which aspects needed attention. The 20 questions were derived out of the 3 models chosen to be adopted by this paper, which in turn reflected the on the criteria set initially. [In *section 2.1 of chapter 2*, the paper has identified each of the criteria (set earlier in *section 3.1 of chapter1*) was met by which of the models adopted.]

First, to clearly asses the five main criteria that were set, one main question directly reflecting on the respective criteria was asked. Following are the 5 main questions on which the 5 criteria were judged based on:

The first criterion identified was *'To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment.'* and in order to test this, the candidates were asked:

How satisfied are you with the airports treatment with regards to cultural/race/background/color tolerance, adaptability, hospitality and all related issues or discrimination, of any kind or nature?”

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

This question was derived to satisfy Hopkins model standards of multiculturalism. The candidates will answer according to their past experiences with cultural issues when passing through the various airports. We will be able to rate each airport’s adaptability to various cultures accordingly.

Moving on to the second criterion identified, which is: *‘To meet and exceed international standards and expectation due to the fact that passengers from all over the world use UAE’s aviation doors’*. The question to measure this criterion is:

“Based on your past experience with airports, and your expectations of UAE in general and UAE’s airports specifically, how satisfied are you with the overall infrastructure and upkeep of the airport?”

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

This question is built upon Le Bels pleasure model, and how UAE’s aviation passengers are pleased with the respective airports they have traveled through. Infrastructure here includes walking distances, queues and delays, check-in counters... etc. Candidates will refer to their past experiences, and expectations, and compare with other airports that they have flown through.

The third criterion that was recognized is: *‘Customer service levels in UAE ought to be innovative and proactive, as the UAE now is viewed by the international aviation industry as a focal point.’*

How do you rate the extent to which the airports’ staffs proactive / innovative at identifying and assisting you in any problems/issues that you have faced?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

The question used to explore criterion number three is built upon the need for boomerang model in the over all model created for UAE's aviation industry. It is used to urge staff in UAE airports to be proactive, and better serve customers and passengers.

Coming to the fourth criterion, which is 'To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure' which was measured by the following question:

"How do you rate extent to which the airport staffs and facilities made you feel comfortable and attempt to improve your overall experience, by keeping you pleased and satisfied, rather than bored, worried, lost, confused... etc.?"

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

The experience and the pleasure of the flight pretty much depends on the ground staffs' attitudes and efforts, as concluded by Boomerang Model. They also depend on the facilities of the airport like restrooms, restaurants, prayer rooms, duty free... etc. as concluded by Le Bel's pleasure model. The question stated above aims to explore more of how UAE airports are doing with regards to the fourth criteria.

Last, but not least, is the fifth criterion: *'To create customer loyalty, through managing and meeting customers' expectations'*

A straight forward question was asked to rate the above criterion, which is:

"From your experience in the Airport, (whether you are a frequent flier or not), How well does the airport recognizes frequent fliers and provides them with better and faster service, or any further assistance of any kind?"

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

The above 5 questions were first set to explore the direction in which UAE's aviation industry is heading. These questions' results were used for the statistical analysis in the coming chapter. Further follow up questions were asked to build upon the information

received so far, and to better attribute the facts. The main questions' results, along with the follow up questions will later built up a descriptive analysis of the three main airports in the UAE in the eyes of the passengers. The list of the follow-up questions is put forth earlier in section 2.1.4.1 of Chapter two.

These 20 questions aimed to obtain the customers' view regarding the services offered by the airports. This questionnaire was used to guide the interviews with the members. The intention is to have an interactive discussion in order to reveal further information rather than simply direct answers intended by the questions.

As indicated earlier in the chapter, some members of the sample have traveled through two or more of the country's airports. As a result, some members were interviewed more than once, with the maximum number of interviews being three, corresponding to the three respective main airports. The main motivation behind allowing each participant to answer more than one survey was to gain an informed opinion regarding each airport and to hence use the information obtained to get analyze better the customer opinions of the services provided by these airports.

The above mentioned questions are pivotal to determining the success and satisfaction of customers with the aviation industry in the UAE today as it allows us to analyze various factors such as language barriers, customer support and services provided by the airports for the various needs of the passengers. These factors are very important in determining customer satisfaction and effectively whether the customers return back to these airports and choose to continue flying through the same airports.

While the support and services provided by the airport is very important in shaping passenger opinions and views, it is effectively the service and customer relations offered by the airlines which determine the success of the aviation industry in a country. This is no different in the UAE and in fact, is a more vital aspect considering the factors which make the aviation industry in the UAE different form the aviation industries around the world.

One of the most important aspects of any international airport is to be able to overcome the language barrier which may exist between the cabin crew, airports staff and the

passengers. Most members of the panel viewed the ability of the crew being able to speak more than just a single language as a very important characteristic of the airlines in terms of making the passengers feel more comfortable. This was an evidently important question to be asked considering the multitude of ethnicities making use of these airlines and hence a large diversity of languages being spoken by the passengers. The frequent fliers who often travel to other countries primarily for business were asked questions related to the services provided to them by the airlines during transit and whether the service was satisfactory during stopovers which lasted for more than 18 hours. Frequent fliers are very important to any airline/airport as they form part of the loyal customer base which returns to the airlines frequently and helps promote the business of the firm. As a result, it is important for the various airports to cater to the needs of these passengers and aim to make their journeys and trips very satisfactory.

Chapter 4

1 Findings

1.1 Introduction

The views and the ideas put forth by the members of the panel regarding the airports and the aviation industry in the UAE today are very interesting and have posed very potent questions regarding the future development and advancement of customer services and relations in the aviation industry of the UAE today. The results of the surveys and the interviews generally have more of a positive outlook on the aviation industry of the UAE with a particular emphasis on the satisfaction achieved by the customers with respect to the various airports of the country.

However, while the general outlook at the aviation industry is very positive, a number of members of the panel also brought to light the shortcomings and fallacies in the various customer relations programs being adopted by the three main airports across the country which would require further research and delving into. This paper will consider the results of the views of the panel with respect to the respective airports across the country and, hence, get a better understanding of the policies and customer relations programs being adopted by these airports. By analyzing the policies of each airport in the country, we will be able to put forth a comparative study of each airport thereby determining which airport is currently more favored for air travel and preferred by passengers across the country. This will also give us a chance to determine the main factors which aid customers to determine their airport of choice while flying and how other airports can learn from the preferred one. These results will incorporate a comparison with airports around the world, based on customer experience, so as to be able to determine where the aviation industry of the UAE stands in comparison with the aviation industries of other countries. Also, this will help us learn about which areas and aspects of the aviation industry of the UAE can be improved and bettered to meet international standards thus making the aviation industry of the country truly world class.

The aviation industry around the world is today governed by the satisfaction of customers and passengers. Customer satisfaction is very important in the aviation industry as word of mouth and viral marketing are important marketing mix factors which help airlines and airports see an increasing number of passengers and travelers using the services available. While the overall flying experience is generally governed by the quality of service provided to the customers during flight-time, the facilities and the overall customer support provided by the airports is also of paramount importance and is a strong motivational factor for customers to choose flying by different airlines. The airports generally stand as the first impression that a passenger or a tourist gets about a country and hence the quality of the service provided by the airports should be at par with international standards. Hence, and as mentioned earlier, this paper will analyze the results of the surveys taken with respect to the three major airports of the country to determine what the pros and the cons of the customer relations program adopted by each airport are. Moreover, this analysis will also help us understand what each airport can learn from the others and from other international airports so as to become truly world class.

2 Statistical Results

It was clear out of the survey averages that people were rather satisfied with UAE based airports than many other world wide airports.

In order to obtain a clear statistical record of each criterion, every criterion is assigned a hypothesis that will be tested through a two-tail T-Test with a 95% confidence. This will prove or disprove whether or not the aviation industry in the UAE, resembled in the three main airports, are paying attention to the five criteria set in the paper or not.

After that, the chi-square test will be used to determine, whether or not, there is a difference between the three airports when implementing each criterion. Looking at the means and the chi-square results, we will be able to compare the three airports and tell if any airport is doing better or worse than other.

In section 2.1.4.1 of Chapter two, the ten hypotheses raised and are to be tested within the paper were discussed and presented; following is the test results and interpretation.

2.1 Testing the First set of Hypothesis

2.1.1 Criterion number One

“To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment”

As UAE is considered a young country with a very young aviation industry the Null hypothesis to be tested is:

H0 = UAE Airports do not adapt to a diversified customer base.

The question asked to test the Hypothesis is:

“How satisfied are you with the airports treatment with regards to cultural/race/background/color tolerance, adaptability, hospitality and all related issues or discrimination, of any kind or nature?”

As indicated earlier, to test the hypothesis the 2-tailed T-Test is used. To begin with, some number crunching was required to produce the mean, standard deviation and the standard error mean. Then the t-test was used to figure out the intervals, the following tables will summarize the results.

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	4.23	.603	.081
Sharjah	33	3.30	.883	.154
Abudhabi	31	3.23	.884	.159

Table 6: Sample Statistics for T-Test

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper

Dubai	40.128	55	.000	3.232	3.07	3.39
Sharjah	14.977	32	.000	2.303	1.99	2.62
Abudhabi	14.026	30	.000	2.226	1.90	2.55

Table 7: T-Test Result for Hypothesis Number One

To test the hypothesis, the calculated value of ‘t’ for Dubai (Dubai International Airport), Sharjah (Sharjah International Airport) and Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi International Airport) should fall within their respective interval ranges to be accepted; otherwise, if it is out of the upper and lower range of values, then the null hypothesis is rejected.

As indicated in the table 7 above, the t values for all three airports fell out of their respective lower and upper confidence intervals.

Hence, our Null hypothesis for criterion number one for the UAE Airports is rejected. Accordingly, we conclude that all UAE Airports are aware of fact that the population in general and travelers specifically are well diversified culturally, and therefore UAE airports are seen to actually adapt to a diversified customer base.

2.1.2 Criterion number Two

“To meet and exceed international standards and expectation due to the fact that passengers from all over the world use UAE’s aviation doors.”

This is an important criterion as it is people’s personal judgment and comparison of UAE’s airports with their experience of other airports globally that will decide whether the airport is good or bad, and whether or not people will fly through it or not.

The Null Hypothesis is:

H0 = UAE Airports do not meet international standards in customers perspective

The question chosen to test this hypothesis is:

“Based on your past experience with airports, and your expectations of UAE in general and UAE’s airports specifically, how satisfied are you with the overall infrastructure and upkeep of the airport?”

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	4.02	.726	.097
Sharjah	33	3.12	.740	.129
Abudhabi	31	2.97	.983	.176

Table 8: Sample Statistics for T-Test.

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	31.111	55	.000	3.018	2.82	3.21
Sharjah	16.471	32	.000	2.121	1.86	2.38
Abudhabi	11.149	30	.000	1.968	1.61	2.33

Table 9: T-Test Result for Hypothesis Number Two.

Studying the results of criterion number two, the calculated value of ‘t’ happens not to be within the interval (lower and upper value). As indicated in the table 9 above, the t values for all three airports fell out of their respective lower and upper confidence intervals.

The t-value being out side the interval indicates that the Null hypothesis for criterion number two is rejected. Hence we can conclude here that the three main airports in the United Arab Emirates actually meet international standards when compared to other major international airports in customers’ perspective.

2.1.3 Criterion number Three

“Customer service levels in UAE ought to be innovative and proactive, as the UAE now is viewed by the international aviation industry as a focal point.”

Null hypothesis to be tested it:

H0 = UAE Airports are not regarded as innovative and proactive when it comes to customer service.

The question asked to test this hypothesis is:

“How do you rate the extent to which the airports’ staffs are proactive / innovative at identifying and assisting you in any problems/issues that you have faced?”

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	3.57	.657	.088
Sharjah	33	2.73	.517	.090
Abu Dhabi	31	3.29	1.039	.187

Table 10: Sample Statistics for T-Test

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	40.702	55	.000	3.571	3.40	3.75
Sharjah	30.317	32	.000	2.727	2.54	2.91
Abudhabi	17.632	30	.000	3.290	2.91	3.67

Table 11: T-test Result for Hypothesis number three

The same test is applied again. As indicated in the table 11 above, the t values for all three airports fell out of their respective lower and upper confidence intervals. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected again.

We conclude that, based on the survey conducted, the three main airports in the UAE are seen innovative and proactive when it comes to customer service.

2.1.4 Criteria number Four

“To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure.”

The Null hypothesis that is to be tested is:

$H_0 =$ UAE Airports do not sustain the pleasure of their customers.

The following question was asked to test the hypothesis:

“How do you rate extent to which the airport staffs and facilities made you feel comfortable and attempt to improve your overall experience, by keeping you pleased and satisfied, rather than bored, worried, lost, confused... etc.?”

Results are as follow:

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	4.14	.672	.090
Sharjah	33	2.45	.506	.088
Abudhabi	31	3.06	.772	.139

Table 12: Sample Statistics for T-Test

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	34.984	55	.000	3.143	2.96	3.32
Sharjah	16.525	32	.000	1.455	1.28	1.63
Abudhabi	14.893	30	.000	2.065	1.78	2.35

Table 13: T-Test Result for Hypothesis Number Four

As indicated in the table 13 above, the t values for all three airports fell out of their respective lower and upper confidence intervals., in other words out of the acceptance area. Therefore, this hypothesis as well will be rejected. Hence we can conclude that the three main airports in the United Arab Emirates actually aim to and are successful in sustaining the pleasure of their customers.

2.1.5 Criterion number Five

“To create customer loyalty, through managing and meeting customers’ expectations”

Finally, the last criterion identified for this study, was given the following null hypothesis:

“H0 = UAE Airports are not capable of winning customers’ loyalty.”

It was tested by the results of the coming question:

“From your experience in the Airport, (whether you are a frequent flier or not), How well does the airport recognizes frequent fliers and provides them with better and faster service, or any further assistance of any kind?”

The results are as follows

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	4.11	.731	.098
Sharjah	33	2.97	.585	.102
Abudhabi	31	2.65	.661	.119

Table 14: Sample Statistics for T-Test

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	31.826	55	.000	3.107	2.91	3.30
Sharjah	19.326	32	.000	1.970	1.76	2.18
Abud	13.863	30	.000	1.645	1.40	1.89

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Table 15: T-Test Result for Hypothesis number five.

As indicated in the table 15 above, the t values for all three airports fell out of their respective lower and upper confidence intervals. The hypothesis of the last criterion, number five, is rejected as well.

Therefore, it is concluded that UAE airports are capable of winning customers' loyalty.

2.1.6 Overall

Within this statistical section of the study, the hypothesis set for the five criteria is tested using the 2-tailed t-test. The results of the hypothesis tests have identified that all null hypothesis set (five, one for each criterion) are rejected. This is quite an interesting finding, as it indicates that three main airports in the United Arab Emirates are aware and adopting to all of the criteria set in the paper, with various degrees of customer preferences. In the coming section, the Chi-square test is applied to identify any major differences between the three main airports results.

3 Chi Square Test

To further explore the statistical relativity between each of the UAE's main Airports (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah International Airports) and the respective criteria, the Chi Square test was applied to the data obtained. Chi Squared is believed by several statistical books to be "the most widely used theoretical probability distribution in inferential statistic" (retrieved from wikipedia.org).

The aim behind applying the Chi Square test was solely to explore if, regardless of average differences between UAE airports, one of the airports was doing much better or much worse in a specific criteria when compared to the other two airports.

SPSS, ‘Statistical Program for Social Sciences’ was used to calculate the Chi Square results. Data obtained for each criterion per airport was compared to same of the other two airports, and below are the results and analysis.

3.1 Chi – Square Results

The chi-square test is one of the simplest and most widely used non-parametric tests in statistical work. Here we applied chi-square test to test the significant difference between the UAE airports, within each criterion.

To get the chi square results several statistical steps and formulas are to be applied, such as frequencies, and frequency tables, percentages, valid percentages, cumulative percentages, min & max per sample, means, and Standard deviations, observed sample, expected sample and residual sample... etc. All of these tables and details are available in the appendix, for reader’s reference. For the purpose of this section, only tables showing the chi-square results, the means and their interpretations.

The significance of a result is also called its p-value; the smaller the p-value, the more significant the result is said to be.

Significance is usually represented by the Greek symbol, α (alpha). Popular levels of significance are 5%, 1% and 0.1%. The test this paper will use is a 5% level of significance. If the test of significance gives a p-value lower than the α -level, the null hypothesis is rejected. Such results are informally referred to as 'statistically significant'. The significance level of the test is not determined by the p-value; therefore, where ever statistical significance is found, the means of the results will be studied to identify which airport is significantly better or worse based on the reviews of the panel.

3.1.1 Criterion number 1

“To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment”

Null hypothesis to be tested it:

H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to adapting to a diversified environment.

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abu Dhabi
Chi-Square (a,b,c)	21.036	25.939	21.742
Degree of Freedom	2	4	4
p - value		0.072	

Table 16: Chi- Square result for Criterion number one.

When observing the Chi-Square results for the three airports under criterion number one, the p-value happens to be 0.072, which more than 0.05, hence, no significant difference in the patterns of the results obtained. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

This concludes that all UAE airports are paying good attention to their multicultural tolerance and adaptability. No one specific airport in doing drastically better or worse when it came to this criterion.

Three follow up question were directly related to this criterion, which is to cater to a multicultural environment:

1. *How would you rate the ease of communication with Airport staff? Are they proficient in more than a single language so as to converse with passengers in a language that they are more comfortable in?*

This reflects on one of the elements set by the multicultural model, which is the language barrier. Passengers were satisfied with three airports when answering this question.

Even though this study was done among a pretty good number of nationalities, there was almost complete satisfaction when it came to language barriers. Most importantly, at any point of time there will be a staff member who speaks English, and few other common major languages at least. On call, people speaking all needed languages were available. Thus people were satisfied with this aspect. Some have communicated their demands to have signs and signals in the airport, and the calling system for flights in certain languages; however, it is neither possible nor practical to have signs and calling systems in all languages.

2. *How would you rate the extent to which the Airport equipped and tailored to handle the special needs of ailing passengers, elderly, children, and physically disabled who may need special and sometimes constant attention?*

As one of the elements taken from the multicultural model is not to discriminate, airports should be able to cater to people with special needs. To this end, people explained that there were no issues obtaining wheel chairs and golf-carts in Dubai Airport, however, unless if the airport is given a prior notice, it is more difficult in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah Airports. People have indicated that they usually have such requests done through the airline they are traveling with, and the airline cooperates with the airport to provide the passenger with such facilities. Panelists have also expressed that even though Dubai Airport provides such needs, the walking distance remains the longest when compared to the other two main airports in the country, and even many other airports around the world. This does not serve groups of people with infants or with people with special needs.

3. *How would you rate the quality of services such as food, shopping and other activities in the Airport, taking into consideration the variety of choices for different religions and cultures (e.g. Vegetarian, Halal food, different religion prayer rooms, magazines in varied languages)*

Part of catering to a multicultural environment, is to provide facilities, products and services to the various religions and cultures passing through the airport.

Non-Muslims interviewed articulated their appreciation to the three main local airports in catering to their needs by selling spirits and alcoholic beverages. People thought that Dubai International airport fully supported the needs for magazines, books, and food that are tailored to almost every culture and religion. However, that was lacking in Sharjah and Abu Dhabi Airports, as one of the passengers have indicated, in his way to Umrah (Muslim ritual in Mecca) he was looking for prayers books that are very common everywhere, but failed to find them in Sharjah Airport. Even the food choice was not as wished for in both Abu Dhabi and Sharjah Airports especially for those with vegetarian, of other specific food requirements. Muslim prayer rooms in Dubai Airport were clearly marked and were continuously clean. However, many of those who flew through Abu

Dhabi and Sharjah International Airports, did not even know if prayer rooms existed or not.

Overall Dubai Airport was seen to be better in catering to the various needs of different people.

3.1.2 Criterion number 2

“To meet and exceed international standards and expectation due to the fact that passengers from all over the world use UAE’s aviation doors.”

Null hypothesis to be tested is:

H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to meeting and exceeding international standards and expectation in the eyes of the passenger.

Test Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
Chi-Square(a,b,c)	5.607	18.515	15.613
df	2	3	4
p-value		.01	

Table 17: Chi- Square result for Criterion number Two.

The observation of the results of the Chi-Square results pertaining to criterion number two indicate that the p-value is 0.01 which is less than 0.05, indicating that there is quite a difference in the pattern of results pertaining to the three Airports of the UAE. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dubai	56	3	5	4.02	.726
Sharjah	33	2	5	3.12	.740

Abudhabi	31	1	5	2.97	.983
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Table 18 Means of results of Criterion number 2

Now that a difference was proven, we had to look at the means of the airport results to figure out which is doing better or worse. As seen in the above table, Dubai Airports mean is 4.02, while Sharjah and Abu Dhabi stood at 3.12 and 2.97 respectively.

Therefore, we can conclude that Dubai International Airport is meeting and exceeding international standards and expectation in the eyes of its passengers, better than the other two main airports in the UAE. Sharjah Airport was next, and Abu Dhabi Airport last.

Despite that the hypothesis testing earlier proved that all the three main airports in the United Arab Emirates have acceptable infrastructure compared to other international airports, the chi-square results signifies that the facilities and the infrastructure of Dubai International Airport significantly exceeds that of Abu Dhabi International Airport and Sharjah International Airport.

The follow up questions asked to reflect this criterion are the following:

1. *From your experience within the airport, what would you rate the extent to which the Airport is equipped with facilities to support and counteract and security threats which may arise? e.g. enough security personnel, fire exits that are clearly marked, enough fire extinguishers within sight, instructions in case of threat... etc.*

A very important element, in the eye of a passenger, of comparison with international airports is the safety and security of the airport.

People have answered very positively in favor of Dubai International Airport specifically, and the other two airports in general. Few of the members recalled the chaos and interruption caused by ‘SARS’ disease couple of years ago, and how Dubai airport quickly installed ‘SARS’ Disease detectors, that caused no interruption but as well did not compromise safety of the airport, passengers and the country.

Several points were made under this question. Fire exit doors were clearly marked in Dubai International Airport. They are also attached to an alarm system whereby if pushed

the alarm will go off. A disappointing note made about Sharjah airport is that the fire exit is clearly marked in the new departures terminal, but the doors are locked with chains in a way that will prevent its usage in an emergency evacuation event. Fire extinguishers and hoses were clearly seen in all three airports. Abu Dhabi airport is seen to have much more porters than security personnel, a comment made by one of the panelists, hinting the lack of security personnel.

The general view is that UAE based airports are much more friendly when compared to other international airports in terms of security checks and security personnel attitudes.

A nice comment said by one of the panelist is, 'I would be very relieved if I knew that what I can see is not all the security and safety precautions taken by the airport'.

2. *Please rate the extent to which the airport is equipped with clear indicators and signs regarding the various facilities and services, like terminals, gates, restrooms, restaurants, prayer rooms... etc. and their reliability (reliability means do you need to ask staff despite existing signs because of confusion?)*

It could be very irritating to get lost in an airport, or to be timely constrained and no one is available to guide to the check-in counter, money exchange booth, restroom, restaurant... etc. and part of being an international airport is complying with such.

Abu Dhabi International Airport, and Dubai International Airport were seen by the passengers who flew through them to have a good number of clear indicators to the directions of things that they are looking for.

Some members confessed that, despite that they have used Dubai Airport many times, they usually simply follow the crowd through the check-in counters to the customs officers on to the duty free, only then they searched for signals to their respective gates.

Passengers were fond of the signals at Abu Dhabi Airport, they were clear and precise specially that the airport is not in the size of Dubai, whereby someone could get lost. However, all passengers in Sharjah airport expressed that no signals of any kind existed. Even though the airport is under construction at least temporary signals should've been used. Some passengers indicated that there are plasma screens in Sharjah Airport, yet they were not helpful. One of the panelist insisted that no one passenger can know which

check in counter to go to without asking one of the staff members in the airport, because of the complete lack of signals.

Many of the panelists agreed that Sharjah Airport was very confusing due to the lack of proper directions and guides available to help the passengers find their way around the airport. Although the airport at Sharjah is small in comparison to the airports at Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the unavailability of proper directions makes it confusing for the passengers to determine which counter is for which airlines and how to get to the immigration check point. Some of the panelists have also stated that determining the point of entrance for the airport is very confusing. Moreover, with the new developments and construction taking place at the airport as part of the expansion, it has become even more confusing and misleading for the passengers as when the passengers move to the new wing for arrivals, they are told to use the other entrance. In the absence of directions or indicators, the ground and flight staff should have knowledge of directions or should be in a position to guide the passengers to the right ground staff personal. However, this is also a vital component of the customer relations mix which seems to be missing at the airport.

3. *Other than ones private car, how would you rate the availability of transportation from and to the airport, whether cabs or public transport or airport shuttles?*

It is very important for arriving and departing passenger to have easy access to transportation to and from the airport. Mainly arriving passengers, expect to have cars with various sizes, and luggage capacity to be able to carry passengers whether individuals or groups.

Abu Dhabi Airport is seen to be lacking in this issue by the members. Some have indicated that at points there were no taxis available. Other members indicated that the taxi arrangement was absolutely disorganized, and the taxis that were available were of very low quality and cleanliness.

On the other hand, some passengers said that there are no rent a car companies at the arrivals terminal, as this could solve the transportation issue for many especially businessmen.

Sharjah Airport sort of had the same review from passengers referring to the times before the taxi company agreement was signed. Some people indicated that the taxi services were not as adequate as required. They believed that taxi queue required the passengers to wait for long periods in order to find a taxi. This issue is worse in the case of passengers who have a large amount of luggage to carry with them as they have to keep track of their luggage at all times while waiting for a taxi in a size that would allow carrying that amount of luggage. The airport has not made any arrangements for a taxi service or for taxi's to be made available at a pick up point for the benefit of the passengers or to aid them in their journey to their destination. As a result, a number of passengers have to rely on transportation services ebbing provided by the hotel in which they are staying or in the case of residents, have to rely on friends or family in order for them to travel to their destination. This is an issue that has been brought to the airport authorities; solutions have been studied and are currently implemented. A good evidence is that between the time the survey was conducted and the report was written, a contract with a new taxi company was in its final stages during the study, and was announced later, that to a great extent would solve this issue.

Sharjah Airport gives a choice between few rent a car companies which favorably seen by the passengers who are able to afford it.

Dubai International Airport exceeded both airports reviews' by far. People praised the queue of taxis available on arrival, and the variety of car sizes as well. Panelists also favorably rated the cleanliness of the taxis and their drivers, plus their knowledge of the direction and locations of hotels. The system and organization by which people take the taxis was seen to be very efficient and effective.

Moreover, plenty of international rent a car service providers are available with a variety of cars available immediately on the customers request.

It is also noted that the local airlines are playing a big role in this issue, whereby Emirates and Ittihad provide private cars with chauffeurs to their first class and business class passengers. Air Arabia services shuttles free of charge from Sharjah to Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

3.1.3 Criterion number 3

“Customer service levels in UAE ought to be innovative and proactive, as the UAE now is viewed by the international aviation industry as a focal point.”

The null hypothesis to be tested is:

H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to being innovative and proactive when servicing the customer.

Test Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
Chi-Square(a,b,c)	16.321	20.182	10.129
df	2	2	4
p- value	.050		

Table 19: Chi- Square result for Criterion number three.

The p-value for criterion number three is 0.05, which means there exists no evident difference in the range of results of the three airports. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Again three follow up questions were asked to explore and find out more about this criterion. The questions and the findings are as follow:

- 1. How would you rate the cooperativeness of the ground staffs at the airport, with the requirements, needs, queries, issues faced by passengers through the airport?*

This question and the following question are very closely related. The main difference is that the first measures the ‘willingness’ of the staff to help, and the next measures the ‘ability’ of the staff to help.

In general people were very satisfied with the attitudes of staff in the three main airports in the UAE, when compared to other international airports in Europe and Asia. Specifically speaking the security checks were seen favorably in all airports, with a highlight on the fact that security policemen and policewomen were educated and courteous in Dubai International Airport.

The availability of porters was clearly noticed in Abu Dhabi and Dubai Airports to help with the luggage from the car to the check-in counter. People were also satisfied with the system in place for the porters and the standard fares especially in Dubai. Such services

were not observed in Sharjah International Airport, mainly because of the relatively small size of it.

Due to the fact that Sharjah Airport lacked signals, staffs were used to being asked and received all questions warmly. Most of the panelists thought that the staff members in Sharjah were very friendly and helpful (with exception of customs and immigration), despite that they are not as knowledgeable as required. One of the panelists elaborates saying, the staff member is willing to help, but simply does not know how, so he or she takes the passenger to another staff member to get the issue resolved. This was revealed by question asked next.

Sharjah airport has dedicated ground staff members to help and assist passengers with all needed and required, they also help organize the check-in queues and managing the crowds. This is a very strong step towards being proactive in servicing the customer.

- 2. How would you rate the extent to which the airport staff is informed and helpful when it comes to finding out about the timings, locations, counters, gates of arrivals or departures of different Air Lines taking place at the airport?*

The over all results show that all UAE airports are successfully proactive in servicing their customers, despite that, some panelist had issues with Sharjah Airport in that regards. Even though Sharjah airport staff where seen to be friendly and available, their knowledge of the gates, timings, locations were sort of narrow. They were rather focused and knowledgeable in their respective fields.

Furthermore, some members stated that besides the ground staff and immigration officials possess knowledge of only their jobs, they are not fully equipped to handle the doubts and questions of the passengers with regards to customers. This opinion is very shocking as more than 50% of the panelist who have flown through Sharjah Airport in the past have voiced the same complaints. This negatively affects the comfort that the passengers feel at the airport as they are not guided properly or provided with the information which they seek which could help make their entire flying experience much better. And is directly touching on one of the criteria of this paper, which is set as a standard for UAE based airports.

Passengers reviewing Dubai International Airport were very positive about the staff attitudes and help. A good number of customer service, security personnel and other staff were available at almost every location. People have also indicated that the signals and signs available at the airport were clear enough to guide people around without the need of someone's help. Staff seemed to know everything going on around the airport from gate numbers, gate locations, to facilities like restaurants, down to flight schedules and so on. Another very practical and proactive factor was that each of the staff had a radio on had to be able to communicate quickly with other staff members to ask or to seek further information.

3. *In the event of flights being late or delayed by large times, rate the extent to which the airport supports provisions for allowing the passengers to make use of the services of the airport while waiting for their flights?*

The reviews were not so many when answering this question, as not every flight gets delayed to an extent that requires an action from the airport staff. However, some people have been through such incidents. For a technical reason a flight was delayed in Abu Dhabi Airport and was dealt with very positively by the Airline staff rather than the airport.

Another incident took place in Sharjah whereby a flight got delayed. Passengers were told that for security reasons they cannot be sent back to the waiting hall, but rather had to wait in the aircraft, till it was able and allowed to take off. The airport ground staffs were soon available on board to offer services for those in need. Despite that what was offered was as simple as cold water and refreshers; it was seen very favorably by the passengers.

The major issue under this question is an issue tapped within another question, and it is the lack nearby hotels. It is not uncommon for a flight to get cancelled, for technical, weather, political and many other reasons. It is absolutely a disaster if this happens, especially if it was a big family or a group, due to the lack of nearby hotels, as is the case with Sharjah Airport. Only Dubai International Airport gives a very wide choice of surrounding airports.

3.1.4 Criterion number 4

“To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure.”

And the hypothesis to be tested is:

H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to reaching and sustaining continuous customer pleasure.

Test Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
Chi-Square(a,b,c)	12.036	.273	15.839
df	2	1	3
p – Value	.000		

Table 20: Chi- Square result for Criterion number four.

Chi-Square results for criterion number four reveal strong difference in patterns between the three main airports in the United Arab Emirates, as the p-value is .00 which is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dubai	56	3	5	4.14	.672
Sharjah	33	2	3	2.45	.506
Abudhabi	31	1	4	3.06	.772
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Table 21 Means of results of Criterion number 4

Looking at the means, Sharjah airport scored 2.45, while Dubai and Abu Dhabi Airports scored 4.14 and 3.06 respectively. Hence Sharjah Airport is not reaching continuous

customer pleasure as the other airports. Abu Dhabi is doing a little better but Dubai airport is reported to be the best in meeting the customers' satisfaction.

The results show that Dubai International Airport, followed by Abu Dhabi International Airport are more successful than Sharjah Airport in pleasing and satisfying their customers. The means and reasons by which Sharjah International Airport is seen less successful in satisfying their customers are further explored by the follow up questions. Some have already been revealed through the questions posed earlier.

The follow up question are:

- 1. How adequate was the seating arrangements made for the passengers to sit and rest while waiting for their flights to arrive and board? Where necessities provided within (Coffee, toilets, prayer) or once accessed no stepping out to the other facilities?*

Dubai Airport received the best feedback when it came to customer pleasure arrangements. Passengers rather saw the Duty free in Dubai Airport as a shopping mall with various shops and a range of restaurants for fast food high class restaurants. One point was that if a person steps into the boarding waiting room, and for some reason had to leave to other facilities like bathroom for instance, that was not possible for security purposes.

The duty free service in Sharjah was not really satisfying the travelers needs. There are very limited items available, and almost no choice for tastes. Even though Sharjah airport barely has a duty free lounge, it provides a good quality coffee booth (Costa) by the boarding waiting room for coffee, water and/or snacks.

Abu Dhabi and Sharjah International Airports were seen to be lacking much behind Dubai Airport when it came to the facilities, and the means of pleasing the customers that are provided. Dubai gave more and better choice to the passengers. And therefore was seen well.

- 2. How would you rate how proper are the facilities supported for carrying heavy baggage and luggage until the check-in point? Weighting systems, baggage rappers, and means of payment for excess luggage?*

A general feedback under this question was that many of the trolleys in Abu Dhabi International Airport were either broken, or too old that they can not be used properly. What made up was that vast amount of porters who usually fetch a proper trolley or most of the times have their own.

The trolleys issue did not appear in Dubai and Sharjah Airports.

With regards to payment for excess luggage, people were satisfied with Dubai and Abu Dhabi, but many have indicated that in Sharjah airport, one has to leave the queue to go pay at a specially designated counter and come back. This either meant the delay of the entire queue or the passenger had to wait in queue once again.

All three airports had good and precise weighting machines, and bag rappers for extra safety and security of the passengers' bags. Dubai took an extra step by providing a weighting scale before standing in queue, to know whether or not a passenger is over weighted in advance.

Baggage in the three airports was seen to be handled with care, which pleased many of the interviewed passengers.

3. *How would you rate accessibility to the airports from where you come, is it easy to commute to and from the airport for arrival and departure whether during peak or off-peak hours?*

The location of Dubai International Airport is reported to be ideal to many of the passengers. It is located in the heart of the city giving easy access not only to people from Dubai but people coming from the other various emirates as well. Some people have expressed that the location is now becoming further and further from people living in Jumeirah, Jebel Ali, Greens, and Al Barsha. Yet, the government of Dubai has announced the construction of the Dubai's new airport, Jebel Ali Airport. This will give passengers a choice of travel.

Surprisingly, when travelers through Sharjah International Airport were asked about how they felt about the location of the airport, and the ease of travel, there were answers on both extremes. Five of the panelists have answered that the location was excellent, and

another five believed in was extremely bad. It was odd to see such a huge gap; however, there was a clear explanation as to why it existed. Sharjah roads are very well known to be crowded and jammed throughout the daytime, and especially during peak hours. This makes the commute very difficult for people coming from inside the city of Sharjah. Say for instance, those coming from Al Nahda Area, Al Khan Area, Hamreyah Area, Al Wahdah Street or Al Oroobah Street find it extremely difficult to commute to the airport, especially during peak hours. This also applies to people coming from Ajman, and some parts of Dubai like Gusais and Al Hamreyah. Nevertheless, on the other extreme students and professors living in the University City of Sharjah and the surrounding areas, plus the families living near to the Airport Road and Emirates Road strongly believed the Sharjah International Airport is ideally located.

As a matter of fact, an airport to be located on a highway is a very positive thing, giving easy access to commuters; however the roads within the city leading to that highway need not be congested. So rather than changing the location of the entire airport, other solutions are to be approached like the intervention of the government to solve the traffic issues.

Abu Dhabi International Airport was seen to have the worst location according to the reviews made. Even people who are living in Abu Dhabi city find the Abu Dhabi Airport far from them, which requires a time and effort consuming trip. This could be a reason behind having very little people coming from other emirates traveling through Abu Dhabi Airport.

3.1.5 Criterion number five

“To create customer loyalty, through managing and meeting customers’ expectations”

The Null Hypothesis to be tested is:

H0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to creating customer loyalty and meeting customers' expectations.

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
Chi-Square(a,b,c)	5.286	16.545	7.
df	2	2	2
p – value	.000		

Table 22: Chi- Square result for Criterion number five.

P-value is 0.00 which is lower than 0.05, thus when the chi square results of criterion number five is studied, it is revealed that a significant deviation exists between the airports of the United Arab Emirates. This rejects the null hypothesis stated above.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dubai	56	3	5	4.11	.731
Sharjah	33	2	4	2.97	.585
Abudhabi	31	2	4	2.65	.661
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Table 23: Means of results of Criterion number 5

Since a significant deviation is proven, we need to see the means of the results of the individual airports in order to see to what direction is this deviation. The mean of the results pertaining to Dubai International Airport is 4.11, while Sharjah and Abu Dhabi International Airports stood at 2.97 and 2.65, which is lower than that of Dubai.

This proves that Dubai actually recognizes and promotes frequent flying to build up their loyal customers' base better than the other two airports are doing.

The three follow up questions to explore criterion number five are:

- 1. How would you rate your experience with immigration section, with regards to any related concern, whether it was delay because of long queues, or visa issuance issues, or staff with limited respective knowledge, or any other issues?*

Concerns about immigration at Sharjah Airport were revealed earlier through previous questions. Sharjah Airport faces a lack of strong immigration policies and facilities to help passengers with immigration problems. 10 frequent fliers through Sharjah Airport complained that despite flying very often, some on a weekly basis for business, they are questioned and quizzed about their journeys and instead of being given better service are asked more questions than infrequent fliers. The airport seems not to have any records of any of their passengers.

The same question reflected an important fact. Many panelists indicated that the immigration counter at Sharjah Airport is very small and consists of only 5 booths, of which only 4 are occupied at any one time. This is fine at normal hours, but not at peak hours. As a result, at points where more than an aircraft lands around the same time, passengers are made to wait in long queues before the immigration staffs are able to clear the lines. Thus, as passengers from a number of different flights come to the airport, the queues become longer and making the passengers wait even longer.

When it came to immigration counters, besides being not able to serve in adequate time during peak, the immigration counter is seen by travelers as not properly equipped to handle problems related to visa, like those resulting from expiry of visas, transit visas or so on. Hence, in situations where the passenger may have a problem with his visa being expired or not suitable enough to allow the passenger to travel, he/she must wait for a long time till the respective authorities can determine what the problem is. This puts the passengers at a severe inconvenience, especially in the case of business trips and emergencies.

Point in the case, the authorities of Sharjah airport have ordered complete renovation of the immigration counters, which is supposed to change the above mentioned issues.

Even though people were not completely satisfied with the immigration counters in Abu Dhabi Airport, it is rather seen well than that of Sharjah. Many have indicated that

immigration staffs in Abu Dhabi sort of did not care about the passengers' urgency. They would rather finish their conversation before serving a passenger.

Unfortunately this is completely the opposite of the criterion intended.

Dubai Airport faced no issues with immigration, specially having installed the e-gate. Travelers find it easier and faster passing through Dubai Airport's immigration rather than the other two airports, despite the fact that Dubai carries much more passengers and will be more crowded than the other two airports

2. *How would you rate how receptive airports were to passengers feedback, were there clear adequate means of feedback, is feedback and complaints put forth by the customers recorded and looked into properly?*

All three airports seemed to be receptive to feedback according to travelers. Many have used their websites to feedback either positive or negative reviews and in both instances replies were made. This indicates that all three airports are caring to the customers' thoughts, ideas, and reviews.

Some passengers have indicated that they were interviewed at Sharjah International Airport. The interview was all about taking feedback of the passengers with regards to the services of the airport, and the wished, wants and demands of the passengers.

3. *How would you rate the provisions made for the passengers in transit to cater to the needs of the passengers, especially in cases of long transit periods?*

Dubai International Airport has made arrangements for these transit stops and has housed a hotel with a number of facilities for the visitors. The hotel provides guests with a wide variety of facilities including infrastructure support for sports activities. For those tourists interested in staying outside of the airport, passengers are put up in the airport hotel or in other hotels, ranging from 3 to 5 starts, with which the airport is tied up.

However, the Sharjah International Airport does not have facilities to support transit traffic and hence acts as a major minus point for the airport.

Sharjah airport lacked all means of transit reception, especially transits between 24 and 48 hours. There are no hotels at the immediate vicinity of the airport putting transit passengers in a very awkward position. Even within the airport, the choice of food and services available are seen by passengers as not really suitable for transit passengers.

Abu Dhabi airport had a slightly better review than that of Sharjah. A transit lounge and hotel is present at the Abu Dhabi international Airport, though not on such a large scale as in the case of Dubai. However, no other nearby hotels are available, and the services within the airport are not up to the expectations of transit passengers. Therefore, both Sharjah and Abu Dhabi International Airports should study this issue and find solutions to it.

4 Further Descriptive Analysis of UAE's Airports

As indicated throughout this dissertation more than once, the customer service of every airport the airlines lands on is an integral part of the assessment of its overall customer service levels. Together, airline and airport, they play the full role in the aviation customer service in a country. When airlines are in the process of choosing which airports to land in, other than the monetary factor, customer service and infrastructure of that airport is studied as well. This proves that the upkeep of airports' infrastructure and customer service is not only necessary to win the passengers as customers but also the airlines as customers as well.

The descriptive analysis builds upon the findings of the interviews conducted, side talks with panel members, and finally on the aggregate total of averages or the relative questions to the criteria chosen.

4.1 Sharjah International Airport

(In all fairness, the study was conducted just before the finish of the expansion project in Sharjah airport, hence, the new terminals are not evaluated and the project operation might have had a negative impact on passengers' reviews)

When studying Sharjah International Airport, it was interesting to know that more than 50% of the interviewees came from other emirates than Sharjah. Specifically speaking, only 15 out of the 33 people who filled surveys for Sharjah Airport live in Sharjah. This

indicates that people did take the effort to drive down, from other emirates, to Sharjah International Airport, preferring it over other airports.

The interview sessions tapped on this point to figure out what might be the reason for this preference and the findings were interesting. To most of those fliers, the airport itself was not as much of attraction as was the choices of flights through it, the ease and value. For instance, many have indicated they used Sharjah Airport to fly to Keesh Island for “Visa Change” purposes, and to locations like Russia, Kazakhstan... etc. because cheaper rates were offered. Another woefully good number of people indicated that the only reason they drove down to Sharjah from other emirates was to fly Air Arabia, the first low cost carrier in the region, flying exclusively from Sharjah International Airport.

This indicates that Sharjah Airport has a particular lure to it in terms of financial benefit or customer satisfaction. This also proves the belief that one of the most attractive factors for the significant rise of traffic through Sharjah Airport in recent years is the fact that the U.A.E’s and the region’s first budget airline, Air Arabia, flies exclusively from Sharjah. This shows that the cost benefit afforded to the customers entices them to fly through Sharjah Airport.

It has been discovered through the follow up questions that the location of Sharjah Airport was a debate, whether it’s ideal or extremely bad. Main reason behind people not liking it the continuous and endless traffic jam in the roads of the emirate.

It was also revealed through the follow up questions that staffs in general in Sharjah airport were polite, but continuously there have been comments on the immigration staffs.

At some points, a number of the panelists have even stated that the immigration staffs at the airport tend to be very rude at times and at times not even paying attention to the queries of the passengers. Again, this is another fact stated as main criteria and focus of this paper. This is a very grave problem since it casts a negative light on the services provided by the airport as a whole. It is a fact that many of the travelers through Sharjah airport are labors, with difficulties in communication skills, but this is never an acceptable excuse for ground staff to mistreat travelers, or lower their customer service levels. It is important for the airport authorities to advice and conduct workshops and

programs to make the ground and service staff aware of the importance of customer satisfaction and the need to make the customer and the passengers more comfortable with the airport. The staff of the airport should be educated and trained in how to handle the needs of the passengers tactfully and make sure that they have a pleasant journey from the moment of their arrival in the airport.

Moreover, additional provisions must be made by the airport authorities to provide the immigration staff with additional powers so as to take important decisions regarding issuance of temporary visas or to solve certain visa problems which may delay or disrupt the flight schedule of the passengers. The staffs of the airport also need to be advised about the duties and responsibilities of their co-workers and other departments so as to guide the passengers in the right direction when asked for assistance. The staff also needs to be aware of the flight schedule and the boarding gates for the flights in order to better serve the passengers and to save them time from having to ask a particular flight enquiry desk.

It has also been seen that a large number of passengers passing through the airport are from the Eastern European countries and from Asia. In this regard, the panelists have agreed that a language barrier does not exist at the airport as the basic language requirements of the passengers are being met. The staffs of the airport are fluent in Arabic, English, Hindi, Urdu and even Russian. This shows that the airport is paying close attention to the target audience and attempting to dispel any language barriers which may exist. It must be noted however, that as the airport grows and a larger fleet of international flights arrives at the airport, the staff should be well versed in a wider array of languages to meet the growing spectrum of nationalities passing through the airport.

With respect to the overall infrastructure of the airport, 22 panelists agreed that for the size of the airport and for the scale of traffic coming through the airport, the facilities provided were adequate. However, the remaining 12 believed that further improvements are required in this airport. The Duty Free consists of a single cafeteria and a single shop which sells a number of goods ranging from food items to electronics and even clothing at subsidized rates. Since a large volume of traffic passing through Sharjah Airport is due

to the budget airlines, Air Arabia, many passengers purchase food and beverages from the Duty Free before the flight. This has proved to be very lucrative for the airport as sales at the Duty Free have contributed to a higher revenue growth for the airport.

The overall impression of the panelists with regard to Sharjah International Airport was one of general satisfaction as most of the passengers flying through the airport were satisfied with the low air fare provided by Air Arabia. However, there are a number of concerns raised by the panel with regard to the attitude of the ground and airport support staff with regard to customer relations. Many members of the panel believe that the staff needs to be more well informed about the flight schedule and should also be knowledgeable with regards to providing information and guiding passengers to the correct ground staff personal with regards to any inquiries that the passengers may have. The development of the new airport wing to handle arrivals and departures more efficiently is a step in the right direction and should be aptly supported by a strong customer relations program which makes the passengers feel more fulfilled and satisfied by the entire flying experience.

On a final note, H.H. Ruler of Sharjah has already given his orders with an approved budget to commence an expansion plan, which actually is currently undertaken and expected finish in the second quarter of 2007. This builds on his highness's vision on the current and future increase in flight and passenger traffic at the airport, and to solve all the above mentioned issues.

4.2 Abu Dhabi International Airport

Abu Dhabi is the capital of the UAE and the largest oil producing emirate in the country. However, until a year ago, the emirate did not have its own airlines. Today, Etihad Airways, Abu Dhabi's premiere airlines is considered to be the national airlines of the United Arab Emirates. The development of Etihad Airways has seen many positive developments for the Abu Dhabi International Airport as there has been a sudden increase in the volume of traffic passing through the airport.

It is interesting to know that about 90% of the people who filled surveys for Abu Dhabi airport actually live in Abu Dhabi. In real numbers, out of the 31 filled surveys, 28 lived in Abu Dhabi and only three came from other emirates.

The low passenger turn out, from other emirates, at Abu Dhabi airport may be attributed to the fact that a large population of the UAE chooses to fly from Dubai or Sharjah due to the large volume of flights passing through these airports as opposed to the Abu Dhabi International Airport. Though passenger traffic has steadily increased at Abu Dhabi over the years, it does not yet rival the volume of passengers passing through either Sharjah or Dubai on a daily basis. Thus, it is evident that lack of easy access to Abu Dhabi airport is one of the prime deterrents that keep passengers away from using this airport. Estimated to be a 40 minute drive from the heart of Abu Dhabi and more than ninety minutes drive from the center of Dubai, the travel time required to reach the Abu Dhabi International Airport from Abu Dhabi or from other emirates is much more than the time required reaching the airports at Dubai and Sharjah.

In addition to this, the variety of destinations that could be flied to, and the frequency of those flights from the airports in Dubai and Sharjah as opposed to the number of flights which fly from Abu Dhabi airport. As a result, a large segment of the customers of the aviation industry in the UAE today chooses to fly through the airports at Dubai and Sharjah as opposed to flying through Abu Dhabi.

When analyzing the results of the surveys and questions with regard to the services and the customer relations programs being adopted at Abu Dhabi International Airport, the analysis of the results shows a very positive response by the panelists. In comparison to the views shared by the panelists regarding the customer relations program adopted by the staff at the Sharjah International Airport, the panelists believed that the services offered by the Abu Dhabi International Airport are very good and makes one feel very comfortable and satisfied. The panelists were unanimous in their voicing of praise for the services and customer relations program being adopted by the Abu Dhabi International Airport. The survey results show that the panelists were satisfied by the level of support received from the ground and airport staff in terms of knowledge of the flight schedule and in directing passengers to the parties responsible for different tasks and duties in the

airport. Instructions and direction are clearly laid out at the airport and even road signs are available to guide passengers to the airport. Members of the panel believe that the development of a new zone system has helped streamline the traffic passing through the airport and has helped the airport authorities to deal with the customers and passengers in a much more efficient and better manner. The Pearl and Diamond Zone passengers are provided with exclusive services and facilities that are not available to the Coral Zone passengers. However, the service provided to all the passengers is in accordance with the customer relations program of the airport and the needs of all the passengers are taken care of. The exclusive services of the Pearl and Diamond Zone are provided to first and business class passengers providing them with a wide variety of services and even a special check in facility to allow these passengers to move through the entire check-in process much faster than the other passengers. The panelists also seem to be very impressed by the high levels of competence of the staff at the airport in terms of helping the passengers. Moreover, almost all 31 panelists were of the opinion that the immigration and passport regulations officers are very efficient and can take instant decisions in matters related to visa delay or over stay of visas.

The expansion plan of the airport is currently taking place in stages and does not put the passengers at an inconvenience at any stage during their passage through the airport. Many of the panelists regarded this as a strong factor which helped develop a stronger and more positive opinion about the Abu Dhabi International Airport. All in all, the general opinion of the panelists who have traveled through the Abu Dhabi international Airport was one of high satisfaction with the amenities and the services made available to the passengers. Moreover, the attitudes and the high sense of responsibility of the airport and ground staff further improved the opinions of the panelists with regard to the airport. The major point which goes against the airport is its proximity from the heart of Abu Dhabi and the greater distance between the airport and the other northern emirates.

4.3 Dubai international Airport

Dubai is often considered to be the commercial capital of the Middle East and is easily one of the busiest tourist destinations in the world. With a booming economy and an ever growing industrial sector, the business and leisure markets of Dubai are attracting a large number of tourists and businessmen from all around the world on a daily basis. As a result there is a large influx of people from around the world flocking to the city on a daily basis to get a taste of the city. Moreover, the city is also home to a large immigrant population which constitutes a large proportion of the population of Dubai today. While all the above mentioned details spell more growth for the economy of the city and UAE as a whole, it also means that the aviation industry of Dubai is very important to the overall economy of the UAE and hence needs to be developed and maintained at international standards so as to satisfy the needs of all the passengers and travelers passing through the city. The aviation industry is one of the prime revenue generating industries for Dubai today as the emirate relies heavily on the profits and income generated through tourism.

Out of the 102 panelists, a whopping 78 have traveled through Dubai airport in the past on more than 2 occasions. This staggering proportion of the panelists of which have flown through Dubai International Airport tells us that there is something about the airport which lures passengers and travelers to pass through this airport as opposed to flying through the airports of Sharjah and Abu Dhabi.

Dubai International Airport has received rave reviews from passengers around the world and is one of the most important airports on the international airlines circuit. Considering the importance of the Dubai on the airlines circuit and the growing importance of Dubai in the global market and economy, the government of the UAE in coordination with the local authorities of the emirate, have decided to step up the investment in the aviation industry in the city and have embarked on a program to develop and improve the overall infrastructure and standard of the aviation industry of Dubai.

The introduction of Emirates Airlines into the aviation industry of the UAE has had a very positive impact on Dubai and the service sector which has witnessed staggering

development and growth taking place at the Dubai International Airport. When questioned about which airport they felt was the most comfortable and most appealing to them, the panelists were unanimous in their support for the Dubai International Airport and believe that it is one of the best airports that they have traveled through. One of the most appealing factors for the passengers was the ease of transport available to the airport and back.

Dubai airport has a large fleet of taxis queued outside the airport in a queuing area where travelers can easily find transport to their desired destination. Moreover, the airport plays host to a number of car-rental services whereby which tourists and visitors to the city can rent vehicles in order to make their commuting in the city much easier. For travelers traveling from Dubai to another country on short periods, the airports also facilitates long and short term parking so as to allow passengers to leave their vehicles within the designated parking area of the airport and use their vehicles on return from their trip. The frequently flying members of the panel have found this facility to be very helpful for their needs and are more than satisfied with the service provided by the airport.

The development of a separate check-in wing for Emirates Airlines has been a very welcome development for the passengers as 46 members of the panel who have traveled with Emirates Airlines before believed that the greater number of baggage check in counters and shorter waiting lines adds much value to the entire flying experience. The security check is shorter and much faster and the traffic for various simultaneous flights is very well divided amongst the available counters thus allowing passengers to finish their baggage check in quickly.

An interesting service provided by the Dubai International Airport is a wrapping booth where passengers can get their baggage and fragile luggage wrapped in plastic to prevent any accidental breakage of goods at no cost.

The panelists also agreed that the staff at the baggage counters of the Emirates Airlines check-in area and the international flight check-in are very professional and courteous and look into the passengers problems very well assuring them that any problems occurring will be taken care of and that the passenger will be assisted in every way possible. Moreover, the ground and airport staff is well versed in a number of languages

and are able to communicate with the passengers properly to understand their problems and pay instant attention to their woes so as to make them feel more comfortable.

While English is the primary mode of communication used, the staff also speaks Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, French and Russian. As a result, the airport staff manages to bridge any communication gap which may exist and help make the passengers feel more comfortable with their surroundings.

4.4 Descriptive Comparative Analysis of Airports

The study above shows a very interesting result which were obtained through interviews and surveys with members of the panel. It is evident that the panel supports the Dubai International Airport completely. Abu Dhabi International Airport and Sharjah International Airport overtook each other on different aspects, and it could be argued that Abu Dhabi International Airport received a more favorable review.

After studying and analyzing the comments and input of the members, it is clear that for a number of reasons Dubai International Airport has found favor with the passengers of the UAE.

One of the main reasons for this is the large number of international flights which pass through the emirate. Many of the world's leading airlines pass through Dubai International Airport as a result of the importance of the airport on the global air travel map. This not only provides passengers with easy access to flights to a number of destinations around the world, but also gives the airport staff further exposure to customer service related issues, and is their opportunity to explore the expectations of international travelers hence steeping their learning curves and experience.

Moreover, the Dubai international Airport is more widely developed than the other airports in the country and supports facilities and services which are a cut above the rest. As a result of the services provided at the Dubai Airport, passengers are keener to take flights from Dubai rather than taking flights from the other emirates.

While Dubai International Airport has managed to put itself into one of the world's best airports, Abu Dhabi airport is not far behind and is aiming to rival the airport at Dubai in terms of services provided to the customers. With the development of a separate lounge for frequent fliers, a food court and even a hotel for travelers in transit, the Abu Dhabi International Airport is expected to attract a larger number of customers and passengers to the emirate. Moreover, with the growing popularity of Etihad Airways, Abu Dhabi is expected to be the next hotbed for travelers looking for a comfortable and enjoyable experience in the skies while traveling to their destination.

In comparison to the Dubai International Airport and the Abu Dhabi International Airport, the Sharjah International Airport needs to undergo a considerable make over. Improvements need to be made in the overall administration of the airport and in the management of the customer service plans and strategies being implemented. The airport is currently undergoing a process of development and enhancement which is expected to bring a wave of positive change to the airport. The introduction of new security equipment and faster immigration check lines along with better amenities and services for the passengers seems to be a few of the changes expected in the remodeling and revamping process taking place at the airport today.

While these changes all signify an upward trend in the development of the aviation infrastructure and the improvement of the airports across the country, the airports must eventually reach an international standard so as to be able to be compared with airports across the world. Today, only Dubai International Airport is truly in a class of its own and is even considered in comparison or even to be better than the world's most famous airports like London's Heathrow Airport by some of the panelist. Since the UAE is promoting itself as the top tourist destination in the Middle East today, attention must be paid to the services being provided by the airports across the country. Many believe that the first impression a person gets about a country is from the port of entry. As a result, it is important for the government to pay heed to this matter and attempt to develop the remaining airports of the country in a much better manner so as to be considered as world class airports.

Chapter 5

1 Summary Recommendations and Conclusion

1.1 Introduction

Chapter 5, the final chapter of this dissertation, will basically be a summary of the entire paper, followed by the recommendations made based on the findings, and a conclusion of the customer service and satisfaction in the three main airports of the UAE.

1.2 Summary

This dissertation was commenced in the United Arab Emirates to study the customer service and satisfaction levels in the three main airports of the country, namely: Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport.

The dissertation began by setting seven main objectives. These objectives are as follows:

1. To clearly define the term ‘Customer Service & Satisfaction’ based on literature review.
2. To study and tailor criteria that is needed by the UAE’s aviation industry.
3. By studying various customer service business models, a main objective is to create a model that is based on the criteria of the UAE, to serve as a benchmark for UAE’s 3 main airports.
4. To understand and determine the levels of customer service being implemented in the aviation industry in the UAE today, through interviews with passengers.
5. To apply the new model on the UAE’s main airports to assess them based on the study of this dissertation, and be able to compare the 3 main airports with each other based on the new model which eventually is based on the UAE’s criteria.

6. To recommend actions and changes for the betterment of each of the 3 main airports in the UAE, this will eventually lead to the betterment of the entire aviation industry in the country.
7. To draw the link between the Airline and the Hub Airport, and open the door for future studies to tailor and apply this dissertation's model on UAE's Airlines, for a wider and clearer picture of the Aviation industry in the United Arab Emirates.

The definition of the term 'customer service' was explored through literature review commenced in section 3 of chapter 1. Then, and based on the second objective, a set of criteria was set to be the basis of the study. The criteria set are as follows:

1. To address, adapt and cater to the fact that UAE is a very strongly diversified environment, as was concluded in Chapter 1, section 2 "Defining the environment"
2. To meet and exceed international standards and expectation (in travelers' perspective) due to the fact that passengers from all over the world use UAE's aviation doors. This was concluded in section 2.1.1 of Chapter 1, "Middle East Region".
3. Customer service levels in UAE ought to be innovative and proactive, as the UAE now is viewed by the international aviation industry as a focal point. This was concluded in section 2.1 and emphasized in 2.1.3 of Chapter 1.
4. To reach and sustain continuous customer pleasure. This is very important to achieve the goal of high levels of customer service, as was concluded by its definition. (Refer to 3.1.2.1 of Chapter 1)
5. To create customer loyalty, through managing and meeting customers' expectations, as was concluded above. (Refer to 3.1.2.2 of Chapter 1)

A thorough literature review was commenced to study customer service and customer satisfaction models. Keeping the above mentioned criteria in a mind, parts of the models studied were chosen to create a new model which eventually was formed and was used to assess UAE airports' customer service.

The new model reflected the assessment of the above criteria through a series of surveys and interviews. Each criterion was assigned one specific question, which then was followed up by three descriptive questions to have a clearer picture.

Two sets of hypothesis were formed to be tested using the data gathered. The first set was to find out, to what extent were the three airports complying with the criteria set. Following is the first set of hypothesis:

1. H₀ = UAE Airports do not adapt to a diversified customer base.
2. H₀ = UAE Airports do not meet international standards in customers' perspective.
3. H₀ = UAE Airports are not regarded as innovative and proactive when it comes to customer service.
4. H₀ = UAE Airports do not sustain the pleasure of their customers.
5. H₀ = UAE Airports are not capable of winning customers' loyalty.

This set of criteria was tested using a two-tail T-Test with a 95% confidence. The test proved that all criteria were rejected, and hence that all three airports of the UAE are actually aware and, to an extent, implementing these criteria in their current customer service and satisfaction programs.

The second set of hypothesis was formed to test how the three main airports in the United Arab Emirates are doing in comparison with each other. To do this the chi-square test with a level of significance of 5% was used. The hypotheses are as follows:

1. H₀ = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to adapting to a diversified environment.
2. H₀ = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to meeting and exceeding international standards and expectation in the eyes of the passenger.
3. H₀ = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to being innovative and proactive when servicing the customer.

4. H_0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to reaching and sustaining continuous customer pleasure.
5. H_0 = There is no difference between the three main airports in UAE when it came to creating customer loyalty and meeting customers' expectations.

The chi-square test accepted criteria numbers one and three. Criteria numbers two, four and five were rejected indicating a difference between the airports of the country in implementing those criteria. Having another look at the means of the respective criteria indicated that Dubai International Airport proved to be significantly better in them.

Occasionally, the paper tends to draw the link between Airports and Airlines as they both formulate the aviation industry and passengers cannot utilize and experience the customer service of one without the other. Therefore, and in order to have a clearer picture of the aviation industry as a whole in the United Arab Emirates, it is important to study the three main airlines in the United Arab Emirates.

The following two sections will contain the recommendations and the conclusions of this dissertation.

1.3 Recommendations

The aviation industry of the UAE is one which seems to be moving in the right direction and breaking new ground each year in terms of expansion and development plans. The efforts of the Federal Government of the United Arab Emirates in conjunction with the local authorities and the airport councils of the individual emirates has helped spiral the aviation industry of the country to new heights. Today, due to the continuous efforts of the country to promote tourism and introduce new business ideas in the country, infrastructures and structures such as the Dubai International Airport have received critical acclaim for the service that these institutions provide to their customers. Quality of service and customer relations is a large part of the development process being adopted by the UAE and the aim to satisfy the needs of customers is being seen as a major priority and objective across the country.

While great strides have been made by the aviation industry to constantly better the services provided and put the customer first in all aspects of business, there are still a number of aspects of the aviation industry of the UAE that need to be looked at closer so as to develop new ideas to improve certain areas.

Even though the study proved that all three airports are successfully adapting to the criteria set for UAE's airports, it is very highly recommended that all three airports put down the five main criteria set earlier in this paper as standards to be continuously achieved, and a point of focus by all departments of the airport. UAE airports are urged to monitor those criteria always and develop them with time accordingly.

Recommendations will start the more generic requests posed and explored through the interviews. One of these areas is related to the visa issuance and the handling of immigration checks and passport control. This is a major source of concern for many passengers and tourists traveling to the United Arab Emirates in general. Several issues are related to visas, which have significant impact on the aviation and tourism industry in UAE. The issue was more faced in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah Airports. First is the issuance of visit visas in general are time consuming and a complicated process, and could be argued to be impossible in the case of a single female of young age, especially to countries like Armenia, where UAE tourism is being aroused on daily basis. This in turn affects the tourism industry which in turn is directly connected to the aviation industry.

Airport immigration and customs should have clear and direct procedures for immediate issuance of visas at the airport. Moreover, a responsible decision maker should be available as of when needed.

At most of the airports across the country, the immigration officers have a basic understanding of the laws governing the immigration policies and execute their jobs to the best of their abilities. However there are many situations in which these officers are incapable of making informed decisions and hence have to consult with higher officials thus wasting the time of the passenger. This is specifically highlighted at Sharjah International Airport. In order to bring about a change in such situations, it is important for the staff to have complete knowledge of the laws and the policies which can be

applied so as to help sort out any visa or passport issues which may hinder the immigration process. An example at hand is that of Sharjah International Airport, wherein the immigration staff are not completely knowledgeable about what to do in situations where the visa or passport of the passenger does not seem to be in order. A young Egyptian man was interviewed separately to stimulate this issue; he shared that he stayed in the country for about 2 weeks through a visit visa till he found a job, and as per the visa procedures, he had to leave the borders and come back in order to issue his residency visa. Everything was in order, till after his short flight back to Sharjah International Airport, where he was stopped by immigration for visa verification procedures. He was kept in the airport for 10 days before telling him that everything is actually in order and he may proceed into the country!

Another aspect of the aviation industry of the UAE which needs to be addressed is the fact that apart from the three primary emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah, the other airports are not equipped with grounds and terminal which can support commercial travel. The emirate of Fujairah, for instance, has an airport which is currently being used for cargo and freight purposes. As a result of the country having only three main airports the residents of the country who stay in the other emirates are put at a considerable inconvenience. It is important for the government to make provisions to support the travel and the transport of these customers. This is a particularly important problem which needs to be addressed as airports across the country tend to lose potential customers due to the distance which is needed to be covered by the passengers while commuting to the airport.

It is advisable to develop smaller national airports which facilitate the transfer of passengers within the country so as to allow the passengers to save time. Moreover, the cargo airports should be further developed so as to support commercial flights. This could see an increased number of passengers flying in and out of the country. Having other airports that absorb commercial flights are also necessary in emergency occasions of airport closure, for different reasons such as weather (extreme fog) which is common in Sharjah, or mini accidents like the one occurred early 2007 in Dubai International Airport.

Elaborating in the issue of Airports' locations, and specifically speaking about Sharjah International Airport, which had reviews on both extremes, reasons need to be explored and solution designed. As indicated by the study, traffic jams in the city of Sharjah are the main cause for the negative location review received. So instead of planning of moving the airport to a new location, the Airport Authority should get in connection on the governmental level with the respective authorities such as traffic departments, municipality and urban planning department so as to set strategies and solution to the helpless traffic jams that are not only affecting the aviation industry in Sharjah but other industries as well.

The UAE has been built by the efforts of a myriad nationalities and cultures which have flocked to the country from before the discovery of oil. The varied ethnicity of the country has helped give the country a unique flavor and cultural mix. This cultural mix is what has given the UAE a very unique personality as a country and is today attracting people from across the world to set up business and seek residence in the country. Considering the importance of this segment of the population, it is important for the aviation industry to effectively target this segment of society. Many of the local airlines have realized the potential of the large Asian community in UAE and in particular the importance of the citizens of the Indian sub-continent. As a result, a number of airlines have now started to implement and introduce cheaper and better rates for flights to these locations. Moreover, airlines such as Emirates Airlines have increased their frequency to these countries in an attempt to satisfy the growing needs of the passengers to make trips to these destinations. Airports could exploit this fact not only to service the customers better, but also to explore new streams of income. An interesting mix that could be added to improve the overall experience of the passengers is to introduce cuisines and food which caters to the tastes of the majority customers on the flight. This would make the passengers and the customers feel more at home and more relaxed with the service being provided.

It is important to remember the boomerang model while considering the impact of rendering excellent services to the customers. Good service can be a very strong marketing tool which should be used by the airports. Word of mouth marketing coupled with viral marketing is effective tools which can also act as strong indicators to determine the success levels of the airports. The aviation industry is dominated by word of mouth marketing and hence this needs to be a strong consideration made by the aviation industry of the UAE when considering marketing strategies. In order for the viral marketing strategy to be successful the services being provided by the firm should be outstanding and customer suggestions need to be taken into consideration.

Another aspect of the aviation industry which has only been considered at the Dubai International Airport and not been given due importance at the other airports of the UAE are the capacity to support transit travel and short-stop stays for passengers.

It is recommended that Abu Dhabi and Sharjah Airports invest in creating a more hospitable environment for transit passenger. A good start would be by providing near by hotels and facilities, with options to passengers coming from different segments and spending capabilities. Moreover, the Sharjah International Airport is located far away from the main city and hence does not have easy access to hotels in order for the guests to lodge during their period of transit. The government and local authorities need to recognize the urgency of building a transit lounge in the airport, keeping in mind the growing traffic which passes through Sharjah Airport on a daily basis. This potential has been identified by Air Arabia, and Sharjah International Airport, by an announcement in the second quarter of 2007 of building a three star hotel at the airport in collaboration of both parties.

A large number of international airlines pass through the UAE on a daily basis and bring with them a greater volume of passengers. However, a number of these airlines fly to only select airports in the country, thereby restricting the choice of airline that passengers can choose from when deciding to come to the country or when passengers from the country have to depart from a particular airport. While the airport of embarkation is a choice which eventually falls under the business plan and strategy of the individual airlines, it is

important to note that by expanding the reach of the airlines and making stops at the different airports across the country, these airlines would be accessible to a larger audience. For example, Emirates Airlines flies only from Dubai and does not fly from or to Sharjah or Abu Dhabi. As a result, residents or customers living in these emirates do not have easy access to the airline and hence must travel to Dubai in order to take the flight. The inclusion of the three primary airports of the country, namely – Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport – and even the other small airports such as Fujairah and Ras Al Khaimah Airports, will help increase the volume of traffic on each flight and will help improve the overall customer experience as the customers will be spared traveling long distances and to different emirates in order to catch a flight. As this is considerably difficult to be implemented in the real world, it is not impossible to study it, and meanwhile providing shuttles and transport to the meant destinations by the related airport will be well appreciated by the dispersed travelers.

The statistical study earlier has indicated that Dubai International Airport is seen by travelers to be inline with the major international airports in terms of infrastructure and customer service. Surveys have also pointed out that Abu Dhabi and Sharjah International Airports are not really up to the level of comparison and Dubai is. Therefore, it is recommended that Sharjah and Abu Dhabi Airports aim towards improving the infrastructures, terminals, facilities and services in order to improve their customer service quality and pleasure.

The survey also indicated that Abu Dhabi International Airport is better off raising their customer service levels, by urging the staff members to be more proactive, as it was lacking behind the other two airports.

On the other hand Sharjah International Airport needs to undergo major changes in order to improve the customer pleasure and experience. This, to a lesser extent, also applies to Abu Dhabi International Airport. Both should aim towards providing better duty free shopping areas, wider choices of restaurants, enhancing the facilities including the waiting areas and so on.

These recommendations being put forward are a mere indication and plan as to how the aviation industry of the UAE can be improved and bettered. The customer relations program being adopted by the various airlines across the country today are at very satisfactory levels as is evident from the results of the surveys and the interviews conducted of the sample of panelists. Yet, as indicated earlier, airports within the country should focus on the criteria set in this paper each in the respective area that it is lacking.

The on-board services offered and the lower priced rates of tickets on airline such as Air Arabia have enticed more and more travelers to come to the country and even more to make frequent trips out. Thus while the individual airlines of the country have managed to satisfy the needs of the customers and maintained a steady growth in the volume of traffic seen over the years, the primary concern is the development of airports across the country, barring Dubai. In this point, it is finally recommended to take over this study and tailor it and apply it on the three main Airlines of the country in order to clearly study the aviation industry as a whole.

1.4 Conclusions

Tourism is one of the most important industries in the UAE today and is a large contributor to the local economy of the country. In this regard, the aviation industry plays a very significant role in enticing and inviting more tourists to the country.

In the past, Dubai was considered to be the only port of entry and exit for the country even though the airports at Sharjah and Abu Dhabi were in full operation. Today however, the trend is changing and traffic at the Sharjah International Airport and the Abu Dhabi International Airport has increased tremendously. The federal government in conjunction with the local authorities of the individual emirates has made considerable efforts towards moving forward with the development of the airports and the airlines of each of these emirates.

The UAE is the commercial hotbed of the Middle East today with a large number of international companies and businessmen flocking to the country in order to get a piece of the pie and invest in what is considered to be the safest and most beneficial investment in the world today. As a result, the government has realized the need for the development of the aviation industry in the country in order to support the growth of all the other industry sectors in the country.

Dubai has always been the centre of attraction for most people in the Middle East and for people from around the world and as a result, sees a large volume of traffic coming into the country on a daily basis. Due to the high volume of traffic flowing in the emirate on a daily basis, the government has undertaken an expansion and development plan which aims to handle the increasing traffic in a much better manner. Dubai has already managed to put itself on the global air traffic map in a big way. The positive image of Dubai has also been bolstered by the introduction of Emirates Airlines and the maintenance of an extremely high standard of service by this airline. Emirates Airlines has today set benchmarks in excellence which other international airlines are now attempting to rival. However, while the aviation industry of Dubai has been well developed and maintained at international levels, there is still much work to be done with respect to the aviation industry of Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. The development of Air Arabia as the premier airlines of Sharjah has been a step in the right direction and as a result has seen a large number of passengers and travelers passing through Sharjah International Airport. Being the Middle East's first budget airlines, Air Arabia has managed to provide travelers looking to travel to nearby locations at cheaper rates with a very feasible solution. This has been looked upon very positively by the residents of the country who have longed for a cheaper alternative for flying. In response to the increased traffic at the airport, the airport authorities of Sharjah have also undertaken a process of development and improvement of the Sharjah International Airport in order to support the needs of the customers better and to provide them with previously unavailable services. In the same light, the airport authorities of Abu Dhabi have also taken an apposite step with regard to the development of the aviation industry of the emirate. One of the most positive aspects of the improvement of the aviation industry is the introduction of the UAE's

national airlines Etihad Airways, which is today being touted as the strongest competitor to Emirates Airlines. The aviation industry of the UAE is developing very well and is moving in the right direction. However there are still a number of aspects of the industry which need to be worked on and improved in order for the country to boast of a truly world class aviation industry and experience which makes the passengers and travelers coming into and leaving the country feel more comfortable. UAE needs to develop a world-class airlines network whereby which international airlines move to different parts of the country and are available in all the emirates of the country apart from the three main emirates of the country.

The study of the three airports proved that all of the three main airports in the United Arab Emirates are meeting the five criteria studied and set for UAE's airports. It also proved that Dubai International airport is significantly better than the Abu Dhabi International Airport and Sharjah International Airport when it came to criteria number 2, 4 and 5. Overall, the available room for improvement is rather looked at as an opportunity to the UAE aviation, for further and better customer service and customer satisfaction levels.

The UAE is today becoming one of the most important countries in the Middle East and in fact, the world as a result of its booming and growing economy. As a result, this growth should be complemented with the subsequent growth of the aviation industry and improvement in the current standards and policies being employed. The development of strong customer relations programs and plans is very important for the further development of the aviation industry to truly help put the UAE on the global market in a big way. Recent developments in the airlines coupled with strong monetary support from the government seem to be strong factors which will help propel the aviation industry of the country to newer and greater heights. At the current rate of progress and development in the aviation industry in the country today, even the sky doesn't seem to pose any limit to the wonders that can be achieved by this quickly expanding industry in the UAE.

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Appendix 1 (Sample Details)

- Sample Size: 78 (Candidates may have filled surveys for more than 1 Airport.
- Nationalities of Sample: Australia, France, Great Britain, India, Kenya, KSA, Kuwait, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, United States of America.
- Distribution of Candidates
 - 35 live in Dubai
 - 15 live in Sharjah
 - 28 live in Abu Dhabi

Airline/Airport	Number of panelists living in that emirate	Number of Surveys filled by panelists for this Airport
Sharjah International Airport	15	33
Abu Dhabi International Airport	28	31
Dubai International Airport	35	56
Total	78	102

- Flying Frequency:
 - 27 In-frequent (Max once a year)
 - 30 Normal Frequency (2 to 4 trips a year)
 - 21 Frequent Flyers (5 or more a year)

Appendix 2 (Hypothesis Testing Results)

Criterion number 1

T-Test

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	4.23	.603	.081
Sharjah	33	3.30	.883	.154
Abudhabi	31	3.23	.884	.159

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	40.128	55	.000	3.232	3.07	3.39
Sharjah	14.977	32	.000	2.303	1.99	2.62
Abudhabi	14.026	30	.000	2.226	1.90	2.55

Criterion number 2

T-Test

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	4.02	.726	.097
Sharjah	33	3.12	.740	.129
Abudhabi	31	2.97	.983	.176

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	31.111	55	.000	3.018	2.82	3.21

Sharjah	16.471	32	.000	2.121	1.86	2.38
Abudhabi	11.149	30	.000	1.968	1.61	2.33

Criterion number 3:

T-Test

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	3.57	.657	.088
Sharjah	33	2.73	.517	.090
Abudhabi	31	3.29	1.039	.187

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	40.702	55	.000	3.571	3.40	3.75
Sharjah	30.317	32	.000	2.727	2.54	2.91
Abudhabi	17.632	30	.000	3.290	2.91	3.67

Criterion number 4:

T-Test

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	4.14	.672	.090
Sharjah	33	2.45	.506	.088
Abudhabi	31	3.06	.772	.139

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	34.984	55	.000	3.143	2.96	3.32
Sharjah	16.525	32	.000	1.455	1.28	1.63
Abudhabi	14.893	30	.000	2.065	1.78	2.35

Criterion number 5:

T-Test

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Dubai	56	4.11	.731	.098
Sharjah	33	2.97	.585	.102
Abudhabi	31	2.65	.661	.119

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dubai	31.826	55	.000	3.107	2.91	3.30
Sharjah	19.326	32	.000	1.970	1.76	2.18
Abudhabi	13.863	30	.000	1.645	1.40	1.89

Appendix 3 (Chi Square Results)

Question to test Criterion number 1

How satisfied are you with the airports treatment with regards to cultural/race/background/color tolerance, adaptability, hospitality and all related issues or discrimination, of any kind or nature?"

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Frequencies

Statistics

		Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
N	Valid	56	33	31
	Missing	0	23	25

Frequency Table

Dubai

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	5	8.9	8.9	8.9
	4	33	58.9	58.9	67.9
	5	18	32.1	32.1	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Sharjah

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1.8	3.0	3.0
	2	3	5.4	9.1	12.1
	3	17	30.4	51.5	63.6
	4	9	16.1	27.3	90.9
	5	3	5.4	9.1	100.0
Total		33	58.9	100.0	
Missing	System	23	41.1		
Total		56	100.0		

Abudhabi

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1.8	3.2	3.2
	2	4	7.1	12.9	16.1
	3	15	26.8	48.4	64.5

	4	9	16.1	29.0	93.5
	5	2	3.6	6.5	100.0
	Total	31	55.4	100.0	
Missing	System	25	44.6		
Total		56	100.0		

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dubai	56	3	5	4.23	.603
Sharjah	33	1	5	3.30	.883
Abudhabi	31	1	5	3.23	.884
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Chi-Square Test

Frequencies

Dubai

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
3	5	18.7	-13.7
4	33	18.7	14.3
5	18	18.7	-.7
Total	56		

Sharjah

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
1	1	6.6	-5.6
2	3	6.6	-3.6
3	17	6.6	10.4
4	9	6.6	2.4
5	3	6.6	-3.6
Total	33		

Abudhabi

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual

1	1	6.2	-5.2
2	4	6.2	-2.2
3	15	6.2	8.8
4	9	6.2	2.8
5	2	6.2	-4.2
Total	31		

Test Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abu Dhabi
Chi-Square (a,b,c)	21.036	25.939	21.742
Degree of Freedom	2	4	4
p - value		0.072	

Question to test Criterion number 2

Based on your past experience with airports, and your expectations of UAE in general and UAE's airports specifically, how satisfied are you with the overall infrastructure and upkeep of the airport?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Frequencies

Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
N Valid	56	33	31
Missing	0	23	25

Dubai

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 3	14	25.0	25.0	25.0
4	27	48.2	48.2	73.2
5	15	26.8	26.8	100.0
Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Sharjah

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2	6	10.7	18.2	18.2
3	18	32.1	54.5	72.7
4	8	14.3	24.2	97.0
5	1	1.8	3.0	100.0
Total	33	58.9	100.0	
Missing System	23	41.1		

Total	56	100.0		
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Abudhabi

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	2	3.6	6.5	6.5
2	7	12.5	22.6	29.0
3	14	25.0	45.2	74.2
4	6	10.7	19.4	93.5
5	2	3.6	6.5	100.0
Total	31	55.4	100.0	
Missing System	25	44.6		
Total	56	100.0		

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dubai	56	3	5	4.02	.726
Sharjah	33	2	5	3.12	.740
Abudhabi	31	1	5	2.97	.983
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Chi-Square Test

Frequencies

Dubai

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
3	14	18.7	-4.7
4	27	18.7	8.3
5	15	18.7	-3.7
Total	56		

Sharjah

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
2	6	8.3	-2.3
3	18	8.3	9.8
4	8	8.3	-.3

5	1	8.3	-7.3
Total	33		

Abudhabi

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
1	2	6.2	-4.2
2	7	6.2	.8
3	14	6.2	7.8
4	6	6.2	-.2
5	2	6.2	-4.2
Total	31		

Test Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
Chi-Square(a,b,c)	5.607	18.515	15.613
df	2	3	4
p-value		.01	

Question to test Criterion number 3

How do you rate the extent to which the airports' staffs proactive / innovative at identifying and assisting you in any problems/issues that you have faced?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Frequencies

Statistics

		Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
N	Valid	56	33	31
	Missing	0	23	25

Frequency Table

Dubai

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	29	51.8	51.8	51.8
	4	22	39.3	39.3	91.1
	5	5	8.9	8.9	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Sharjah

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	10	17.9	30.3	30.3
	3	22	39.3	66.7	97.0
	4	1	1.8	3.0	100.0
	Total	33	58.9	100.0	
Missing	System	23	41.1		
Total		56	100.0		

Abudhabi

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1.8	3.2	3.2
	2	6	10.7	19.4	22.6
	3	11	19.6	35.5	58.1
	4	9	16.1	29.0	87.1
	5	4	7.1	12.9	100.0
Total		31	55.4	100.0	
Missing	System	25	44.6		
Total		56	100.0		

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dubai	56	3	5	3.57	.657
Sharjah	33	2	4	2.73	.517
Abudhabi	31	1	5	3.29	1.039
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Chi-Square Test

Frequencies

Dubai

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
3	29	18.7	10.3
4	22	18.7	3.3
5	5	18.7	-13.7
Total	56		

Sharjah

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
2	10	11.0	-1.0
3	22	11.0	11.0
4	1	11.0	-10.0

Total	33		
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Abudhabi

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
1	1	6.2	-5.2
2	6	6.2	-.2
3	11	6.2	4.8
4	9	6.2	2.8
5	4	6.2	-2.2
Total	31		

Test Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
Chi-Square(a,b,c)	16.321	20.182	10.129
df	2	2	4
p- value	.050		

Question to test Criterion number 4

How do you rate extent to which the airport staffs and facilities made you feel comfortable and attempt to improve your overall experience, by keeping you pleased and satisfied, rather than bored, worried, lost, confused... etc.?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Frequencies

Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
N Valid	56	33	31
Missing	0	23	25

Frequency Table

Dubai

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 3	9	16.1	16.1	16.1
4	30	53.6	53.6	69.6
5	17	30.4	30.4	100.0
Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Sharjah

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2	18	32.1	54.5	54.5

	3	15	26.8	45.5	100.0
Total		33	58.9	100.0	
Missing System		23	41.1		
Total		56	100.0		

Abudhabi

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1.8	3.2	3.2
	2	5	8.9	16.1	19.4
	3	16	28.6	51.6	71.0
	4	9	16.1	29.0	100.0
Total		31	55.4	100.0	
Missing System		25	44.6		
Total		56	100.0		

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dubai	56	3	5	4.14	.672
Sharjah	33	2	3	2.45	.506
Abudhabi	31	1	4	3.06	.772
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Chi-Square Test

Frequencies

Dubai

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
3	9	18.7	-9.7
4	30	18.7	11.3
5	17	18.7	-1.7
Total	56		

Sharjah

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
2	18	16.5	1.5
3	15	16.5	-1.5
Total	33		

Abudhabi

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
1	1	7.8	-6.8
2	5	7.8	-2.8

3	16	7.8	8.3
4	9	7.8	1.3
Total	31		

Test Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
Chi-Square(a,b,c)	12.036	.273	15.839
df	2	1	3
p – Value		.000	

Question to test Criterion number 5

From your experience in the Airport, (whether you are a frequent flier or not), How well does the airport recognizes frequent fliers and provides them with better and faster service, or any further assistance of any kind?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Frequencies

Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
N Valid	56	33	31
Missing	0	23	25

Frequency Table

Dubai

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 3	12	21.4	21.4	21.4
4	26	46.4	46.4	67.9
5	18	32.1	32.1	100.0
Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Sharjah

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2	6	10.7	18.2	18.2
3	22	39.3	66.7	84.8
4	5	8.9	15.2	100.0
Total	33	58.9	100.0	
Missing System	23	41.1		
Total	56	100.0		

Abudhabi

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	14	25.0	45.2	45.2
	3	14	25.0	45.2	90.3
	4	3	5.4	9.7	100.0
	Total	31	55.4	100.0	
Missing	System	25	44.6		
Total		56	100.0		

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dubai	56	3	5	4.11	.731
Sharjah	33	2	4	2.97	.585
Abudhabi	31	2	4	2.65	.661
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Chi-Square Test

Frequencies

Dubai

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
3	12	18.7	-6.7
4	26	18.7	7.3
5	18	18.7	-.7
Total	56		

Sharjah

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
2	6	11.0	-5.0
3	22	11.0	11.0
4	5	11.0	-6.0
Total	33		

Abudhabi

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
2	14	10.3	3.7
3	14	10.3	3.7
4	3	10.3	-7.3
Total	31		

Test Statistics

	Dubai	Sharjah	Abudhabi
Chi-Square(a,b,c)	5.286	16.545	7.806

df	2	2	2
p - value		.000	

Appendix 4 (Survey)

Question to test Criterion number 1

How satisfied are you with the airports treatment with regards to cultural/race/background/color tolerance, adaptability, hospitality and all related issues or discrimination, of any kind or nature?"

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Question to test Criterion number 2

Based on your past experience with airports, and your expectations of UAE in general and UAE's airports specifically, how satisfied are you with the overall infrastructure and upkeep of the airport?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Question to test Criterion number 3

How do you rate the extent to which the airports' staffs proactive / innovative at identifying and assisting you in any problems/issues that you have faced?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Question to test Criterion number 4

How do you rate extent to which the airport staffs and facilities made you feel comfortable and attempt to improve your overall experience, by keeping you pleased and satisfied, rather than bored, worried, lost, confused... etc.?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Question to test Criterion number 5

From your experience in the Airport, (whether you are a frequent flier or not), How well does the airport recognizes frequent fliers and provides them with better and faster service, or any further assistance of any kind?

1. Very Bad 2. Bad 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent

Follow up Questions:

Boomerang Model:

1. How would you rate the cooperativeness of the ground staffs at the airport, with the requirements, needs, queries, issues faced by passengers through the airport?
(Boomerang)
2. How would you rate your experience with immigration section, with regards to any related concern, whether it was delay because of long queues, or visa issuance issues, or staff with limited respective knowledge, or any other issues?
(Boomerang)

3. How would you rate how receptive airports were to passengers feedback, were there clear adequate means of feedback, is feedback and complaints put forth by the customers recorded and looked into properly? (*Boomerang*)
4. How would rate the extent to which the airport staff is informed and helpful when it comes to finding out about the timings, locations, counters, gates of arrivals or departures of different Air Lines taking place at the airport? (*Boomerang*)
5. In the event of flights being late or delayed by large times, rate the extent to which the airport supports provisions for allowing the passengers to make use of the services of the airport while waiting for their flights? (*Boomerang*)

Pleasure Model:

6. How adequate was the seating arrangements made for the passengers to sit and rest while waiting for their flights to arrive and board? Where necessities provided within (Coffee, toilets, prayer) or once accessed no stepping out to the other facilities?(*Pleasure*)
7. From your experience within the airport, what would you rate the extent to which the Airport is equipped with facilities to support and counteract and security threats which may arise? e.g. enough security personnel, fire exits that are clearly marked, enough fire extinguishers within sight, instructions in case of threat... etc. (*Pleasure*)
8. How would you rate how proper are the facilities supported for carrying heavy baggage and luggage until the check-in point? Weighting systems, baggage rappers, and means of payment for excess luggage? (*Pleasure*)
9. Please rate the extent to which the airport is equipped with clear indicators and signs regarding the various facilities and services, like terminals, gates, restrooms, restaurants, prayer rooms... etc. and their reliability (reliability means do you need to ask staff despite existing signs because of confusion?) (*Pleasure*)
10. How would you rate accessibility to the airports from where you come, is it easy to commute to and from the airport for arrival and departure whether during peak or off-peak hours? (*Pleasure*)

11. How would you rate the provisions made for the passengers in transit to cater to the needs of the passengers, especially in cases of long transit periods? (*Pleasure*)

12. Other than ones private car, how would you rate the availability of transportation from and to the airport, whether cabs or public transport or airport shuttles? (*Pleasure*)

Multicultural Model:

13. How would you rate the ease of communication with Airport staff? Are they proficient in more than a single language so as to converse with passengers in a language that they are more comfortable in? (*Multicultural*)

14. How would you rate the extent to which the Airport equipped and tailored to handle the special needs of ailing passengers, elderly, children, and physically disabled who may need special and sometimes constant attention? (*Multicultural*)

15. How would you rate the quality of services such as food, shopping and other activities in the Airport, taking into consideration the variety of choices for different religions and cultures (e.g. Vegetarian, Halal food, different religion prayer rooms, magazines in varied languages) (*Multicultural*)