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# Analyzing the dynamic nexus between perceived value, customer loyalty and customer satisfaction for airline passengers

**Taye Sophia Eskender[1*], Eskinder Ibrahim Ahmed[2]**
College of Economics and Management, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing, China.

**Abstract**
This research seeks to examine the dynamic relationships amid customer satisfaction, perceived value, customer loyalty and service quality for domestic and international airline passengers using a structural equation model (SEM). The findings from the study indicate evidence of a positive significant impact between service quality and perceived performance. Similarly, perceived performance is positively associated with perceived value. In a similar situation, perceived value shows a positive significant effect on customer satisfaction. Likewise, both customer satisfaction and perceived value are positively associated with customer loyalty. Besides, there is evidence of an indirect influence between perceived performances on customer satisfaction through perceived value. In conclusion, the findings further indicate a greater influence on customer loyalty by perceived value than total customer satisfaction. With various explicit managerial implications discourse.

**Keywords:** customer satisfaction, perceived value, perceived performance, customer loyalty, service quality.

## Introduction

In an exceedingly competitive environment where the service industry is continuously expanding, the provision of improved and high-quality service, particularly, to airline customers is paramount for the survival of airline firms. Indeed the success of firms in a competitive market is somehow dependent on the services they render to customers. The airline business in Ethiopia is one of the most successful if not the leader on the entire continent of Africa. This is partly as a result of significant strategies adopted by those in authority. Zeithaml *et al.* [1], indicate that customer retention is a significant contributing factor to profit growth, particularly, for service providers. In other words, customer retention plays a significant role in profit growth, especially in the service sector. Therefore understanding the various determinants affecting customer loyalty and the dynamic nexus amid these factors is imperative for designing and adopting effective measures to maintain and increase the number of customers for longer periods. Theories on customer satisfaction and service quality indicate the role of high-quality service in enhancing and stimulating increasing total customer satisfaction and consequently improves the loyalty of customers. In their studies, [2] and [3] investigate the variables 'willingness to recommend a product or service' and 'intention to repurchase the same product or service' in the context of airline passengers. Other researches, however, proposed different measurements of total customer satisfaction alongside the measurement of perceived value. By concluding that perceived value may better predict customers' repurchase intentions of a product or service than the quality of service as well as the aggregate satisfaction customers received from a product or service. Although there is still increasing literature on this topic, that is the role of perceived value, service quality and overall customer satisfaction in forecasting the repurchase of a product or service, the relationship amid these factors remains distinct, specifically in the context of airline service.

Meeting customer's satisfaction and transforming such satisfactions into behavioral commitment is significant for firms to stay in the competition. Various methods are adopted by managers to assess and report customer behavioral intentions and satisfaction. The commonly adopted strategy is based on customer feedback from service or product usage. Morgan and Rego [4] disclose that future managerial objectives and firm's performance are identified and monitored via customer loyalty scores and scores on customer satisfaction. A standardized measurement of customer satisfaction by the International Air Transport (IATA) called Airs @ t is also widely adopted by airline firms to assess passenger's satisfaction. The scale of measurement used by the IATA integrates over 70 features together with in-flight, pre-flight and post-flight characteristics of the total travel experience by passengers. Similarly, different service quality concepts or framework are adopted in the literature when examining the nexus between total customer satisfaction, service quality and customer behavioral intentions [5-9]

Several prior research on the determinants of factors affecting customer loyalty and total customer satisfaction were investigated by [10-16] in the context of airline service. Likewise, passengers [14, 16] consider the influence of the various service characteristics when performing their independent research on service quality and customer satisfaction. The various studies confirmed that a quantum proportion of airline service quality features is associated with improved customer behavioral intentions, customer satisfaction, and willingness to recommend service or products to other people via an airline business model and/or service class, or jointly. On the other hand, there are still conflicts with regard to the specific service characteristics that promote total customer satisfaction and

service quality [16]. Knowledge of the major service characteristics leading to the customer (airline passenger) satisfaction and their differences between airline business model and service groups are very important for profit growth.

The primary objective of the study is mainly to examine the relationships between service quality, perceived value, overall customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty in an airline service setting. Previous work either concentrate on either domestic or international airline passengers. This study, therefore, adds to the existing literature by jointly analyzing these two customers in a single framework using Ethiopia as a case study.

**Review of literature**

Certainly, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are two key behavioral outcomes that any service organization strives to accomplish. Several studies point out that providing superior value created from full-service expertise is among the most significant way to create customer satisfaction and brand loyalty [17-20]. These studies, however, explore the connection between the perceived value of clients and both customer satisfaction and customer retention in distinct service contexts. In addition, a significant proportion of the research examining the relationship referred to above implement the customer's perceived values as a one-dimensional construct and, to a lesser extent, as a multidimensional concept.

In several situations, the choice-making process of travelers is frequently modeled using variables such as service expectations, expected performance, perceived value, customer satisfaction and client behavioral attitudes [7]. However, this research considers the vibrant connection between perceived value, service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The notion of quality of service as a correlation between the expectations of the customer and the real service provided was widely accepted following research by [21]. The level to which expectations and service results are comparable or distinct influences the level to which clients are happy or unhappy. The widely used indicator of the quality of service is SERVQUAL Cronin and Taylor [22] and, on the basis of the disavowal of the anticipated model, the outcomes are verified whenever the output exceeded expectations. Despite objections from other scholars, SERQUAL continues the most widely used test model for assessing service quality and developing service quality policies. For instance, Cronin and Taylor [22] found that performance-based measures such as SERVPERF could better represent customer service quality measures. Zeithaml *et al*. [1], retain, however, that an output-expectation gap measure is suitable if the main objective is to successfully treat service inefficiencies. In particular, it has been observed that the lack of confirmation may justify the perceived variance in quality of service more than just efficiency [21]. The SERVQUAL module has been introduced not just to other particular sectors, commodities and target markets, but also to airline service research [7, 23].

Perceived value is described as "the consumer's general evaluation of the value of a product (or service) dependent on ideas of what has been received and what is provided" [24]. More specifically, perceived value can be described as a trade-off between perceived advantages and perceived expenses [25]. Recent study findings have recommended that perceived value can be a stronger determinant of buyback attitudes than both satisfaction and service quality [17]. The expected value can be evaluated with a one-dimensional indicator [26] or a complex measure [6, 27]. The main concern of the first option is its absence of validity. The latter can be empirically validated, for instance, as a five-dimensional structure composed of economic, emotional, behavioral, epistemological and conditional reactions [6]. The value of services has also been recognized as an alternative explanation for customer satisfaction and willingness [17].

Customer satisfaction is the general adaptive reaction to the anticipated disparity between previous expectations and perceived post-consumption results [28]. It can be described as the extent to which experience is believed to evoke favorable emotions [29]. Generally, customer satisfaction and quality of service are often used interchangeably, since both are assessment factors with respect to consumer awareness of a specific product or service. Nevertheless, some writers have produced an attempt to justify a distinction between the quality of service and customer satisfaction. For instance, [30] proposes that quality of service results are more specific, while client happiness judgments are more general. In essence, service quality is linked to behavioral assessments and customer satisfaction is linked to effective assessments. In order to indicate a holistic assessment after the acquisition, the notion of general satisfaction is used to differentiate between satisfactions with individual characteristics [31]. Customer satisfaction relates to the general subjective, post-consumption assessment of the customer based on all interactions and experiences with a specific organization. In this research, we embrace the notion of general satisfaction.

Empirical studies have created a background, intervening and consequential connection between client judgments of service quality, client satisfaction, value and post-purchase cognitive intensities [17, 29, 32]. More explicitly in the framework of the airline service, some studies have investigated the significance of the interaction between all these factors [7, 33, 34]. As perceived service quality represents the distinction among customer expectations and real output, reduced expectations or greater perceived output are more probable to lead to greater perceived service quality. It is therefore rational to assume that perceptions directly and inversely affect both happiness and perceived value, while perceived performance directly and positively impacts both satisfaction and perceived value. In fact, many study studies have endorsed the connection of perceived value to general client satisfaction [17, 35]. Satisfaction and perceived value are a direct predicate of cognitive motives [17, 36, 37]. Note that the cognitive intent comprises of two things – as a buyback intention and a suggested intention – in the present research. Depending on the evaluation of the previous studies referred to above, the current study proposes a conceptual model (Fig. 1). In addition, the hypotheses to be empirically tested are set out in (Table 1).

**Data and methodology**

A questionnaire survey was performed to collect empirical information from national and foreign airline travelers for use in the present research. The issues in the questionnaire are based on a study of the literature and particular environments of the airline service, and the questionnaire was pre-tested and modified. The design of the questionnaire was considered to be appropriate. The first section of the questionnaire concerned with the evaluation

of the quality of service with 30 characteristics. Study participants are asked to show the perceived significance of each character through a five-point Likert scale from ' least significant (= 1) ' to ' most important (= 5) '. Likewise, the perceived achievement of each characteristic is also assessed using the five-point Likert scale, but from ' highly disagree (= 1) ' to ' highly agree (= 5) '. The second section concerns the assessment of perceived value with two products by means of a seven-point Likert scale from ' highly disagreeable (= 1) ' to ' highly agreeable (= 7) '. The third section concerns the evaluation of one-item general satisfaction and two-item cognitive intentions by means of a seven-point Likert scale from ' ' 1 = highly disagreeable (unlikely) "to ' ' 7 = highly agreeable (probably)." The issues for sections 2 and 3 are set out in Table 2. Finally, the last section (section 4) provides the demographic information of participants with six things, such as sex, age, education, occupation, monthly earnings, and travel.

**Table 1:** The hypothesis of relationships between the model variables

| Hypotheses | Details |
|---|---|
| $H_a$ | Service expectation has a positive influence on perceived performance |
| $H_b$ | Service expectation has a negative influence on perceived value |
| $H_c$ | Service expectation has a negative influence on total customer satisfaction |
| $H_d$ | Perceived performance has a positive influence on perceived value |
| $H_e$ | Perceived performance has a positive influence on total customer satisfaction |
| $H_f$ | Perceived value has a positive influence on total customer satisfaction |
| $H_g$ | Perceived value has a positive influence on customer loyalty |
| $H_h$ | Satisfaction has a positive influence on customer loyalty |

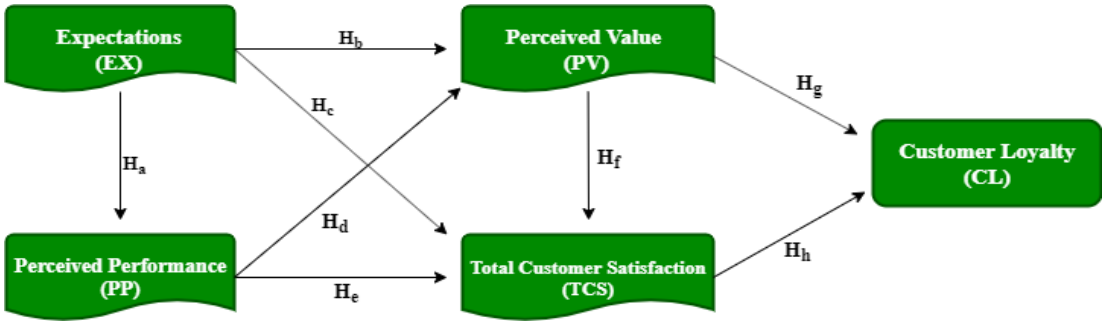



**Fig 1:** Recommended hypothetical model

**Table 2:** Operationalization of perceived value, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty

| Indicators (Variables) | Descriptions |
|---|---|
| Perceived value | Considering the ticket price I pay for the airline, I believe that the airline offers sufficient services. |
| | The ticket price of this airline is reasonable |
| Satisfaction | Overall, how satisfied are you with the airline's service |
| Customer Loyalty | The likelihood that you will fly his airline again in the future |
| | The likelihood that you would recommend the airline to other people |

## Results and Discussions

The questionnaires were circulated and gathered at the International Airport of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa during the month of July 2019. A convenient sampling method was implemented due to restricted time and resources. Passengers traveling both domestic and foreign paths were asked to finish the questionnaire. A total of three hundred and fifty questionnaires were dispersed and 310 usable samples were acquired, i.e. a reaction rate of 88.57%.

In order to generate the measurements of service quality, the investigative factor analysis is used by the survey information of 30 service expectations. Using the main element extraction technique with VARIMAX regression, four variables are recognized and recognized on the grounds of the features presented (Table 3). Only elements with a loading factor higher than 0.5 are selected as shown by Hair *et al*. [38]. Two components with a load factor of less than 0.5 have been removed – such as ' employees' knowledgeable ' and ' clean and comfortable seats '. The four variables account for 65 percent of the complete variance.

**Table 3:** Explanatory series analysis of service expectation (domestic and international airline passengers)

| | Series Loadings | Eigenvalue | Cronbach a | Variance explained (%) | Cumulated variance explained (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Series 1: Employees/facilities** | | 5.523 | 0.896 | 19.54 | 21.30 |
| Readiness to help from workers | 0.813 | | | | |
| Good manners of workers | 0.742 | | | | |
| Rapid and accurate service | 0.715 | | | | |
| Cleanliness of workers | 0.700 | | | | |
| Management of missing and broken luggage | 0.695 | | | | |
| Well-organized booking queuing line | 0.680 | | | | |
| Adequate checking-in and luggage supervision service | 0.652 | | | | |
| Interior hygiene | 0.603 | | | | |
| Good safety image of the airline | 0.599 | | | | |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Series 2: Product | | 4.790 | 0.878 | 17.02 | 38.22 |
| Internet, email, fax and telecom service on the flight | 0.822 | | | | |
| Modern sources of entertainment | 0.787 | | | | |
| Recurrent advertisement | 0.769 | | | | |
| Rapid food and drink service | 0.743 | | | | |
| Adequate food and drink aboard | 0.710 | | | | |
| Provision of desired seat selection | 0.662 | | | | |
| Modern aircraft facilities | 0.623 | | | | |
| International air cooperation service | 0.612 | | | | |
| Non-tax products | 0.568 | | | | |
| Distinct attention from workers | 0.511 | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Series 3: Transaction/Operation | | 4.113 | 0.853 | 13.32 | 52.46 |
| Accessibility of information on the website | 0.803 | | | | |
| Booking function on the website | 0.799 | | | | |
| Efficient reservation services | 0.765 | | | | |
| Availability of flight information | 0.733 | | | | |
| Expedient booking service | 0.678 | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Series 4: Reliability | | 3.623 | 0.823 | 12.86 | 65.24 |
| The exactitude of workers on the first attempt | 0.781 | | | | |
| Punctuality or promptness | 0.746 | | | | |
| Expedient Schedule and Reschedule | 0.720 | | | | |
| Self-assurance in workers | 0.616 | | | | |

The series (Employee/facilities) was proxy using the various objects or indicators as listed below- readiness to help from workers, good manners of workers, rapid and accurate service, and cleanliness of workers and management of missing and broken luggage, well-organized booking queue line, adequate checking-in and luggage supervision service, interior hygiene, and good safety image of airline. Representing 19.54 percent of the total variance or square of standard deviation.

The series (Product) was modeled using the selected parameters listed- internet, email, fax and telecom service (at airport), modern sources of entertainment, recurrent advertisement, rapid food and drink service, adequate food and drink aboard, provision of desired seat selection, modern aircraft facilities, international air cooperation service, non-tax products, and distinct attention from workers. In a similar manner, this variable makes up 17.02 percent of the square of standard deviation or total variance.

The series (Transaction/Operation) was itemized using the selected listed parameters- accessibility of information on website, efficient reservation service, and detailed information of flights, and expedient booking services. Largely, this variable represents 13.32 percent of the square of standard deviation or total variance.

The series (Reliability) was modeled by using the carefully chosen indicators- Expedient schedule and reschedule, punctuality or promptness, the exactitude of workers on the first attempt, and self-assurance of workers. Again, this variable constituted 12.86 percent of the square of standard deviation or total variance. In this study, we adopted the Cronbach $\alpha$ statistic to test for the reliability of the four selected factors or variables. This approach assists us to examine their consistency and dependability in investigating the dynamic nexus between perceived value, total customer satisfaction, service quality, and customer loyalty. The outcome of the Cronbach $\alpha$ test is reported in (Table 3) for the various series. As per the empirical outcome, we confidently conclude that the reliability level for the selected series is efficient and adequate. This implies that the selected variables are sufficient in explaining this relationship. This outcome is inconsonant with the findings of Hair *et al*. [38].

**Analysis of SEM for domestic airline passengers**

Using the survey data collected, the study investigated the nexus amid the chosen variables on the recommended structural equation model (SEM) and hypothesized patterns. In accordance with Joreskog and Sorbom [39], the measurement and proposed SEM is tested via the LISREL 7 structural equation (SE) analysis software package. Similarly, the sample data was further analyzed using the maximum likelihood approach of estimation. During this process, the total fit of the SEM was primarily completed through the v2 statistics. However, with regard to the issue of sample size distortion related to v2 statistic as well as the complex nature of structural equation models, a more robust measure of fit was adopted to minimize such occurrences. This includes adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximations (RMSEA). The commonly accepted and recommended estimates of a good fit to a model should report a value greater than or equal to 0.90 for AGFI, GFI, and CFI. Likewise, the value acceptable for RMSEA should lie between 0.5 and 0.8 for the model to be regarded as a good fit [38]. In this circumstance making a decision with regards to the fitness of the model based on only v2 statistic is deemed inadequate and inappropriate.

In this study, we verified the structural equation model using expectation, perceived performance, perceived value, total customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (a proxy of behavioral intentions as the key variable of concern. The outcome from the structural equation model as reported in (Fig. 2) based on the correlation matrix of the selected measurement variables or factors. As per the result, we conclude by indicating that our recommended model is of a good fit. Specifically, the estimates for v2 = 352.2 ($p < 0.01$), df = 75, v2/df = 4.69, AGFI = 0.91, GFI = 0.86, CFI= 0.90, RMR = 0.04 and RMSEA = 0.6 respectively.

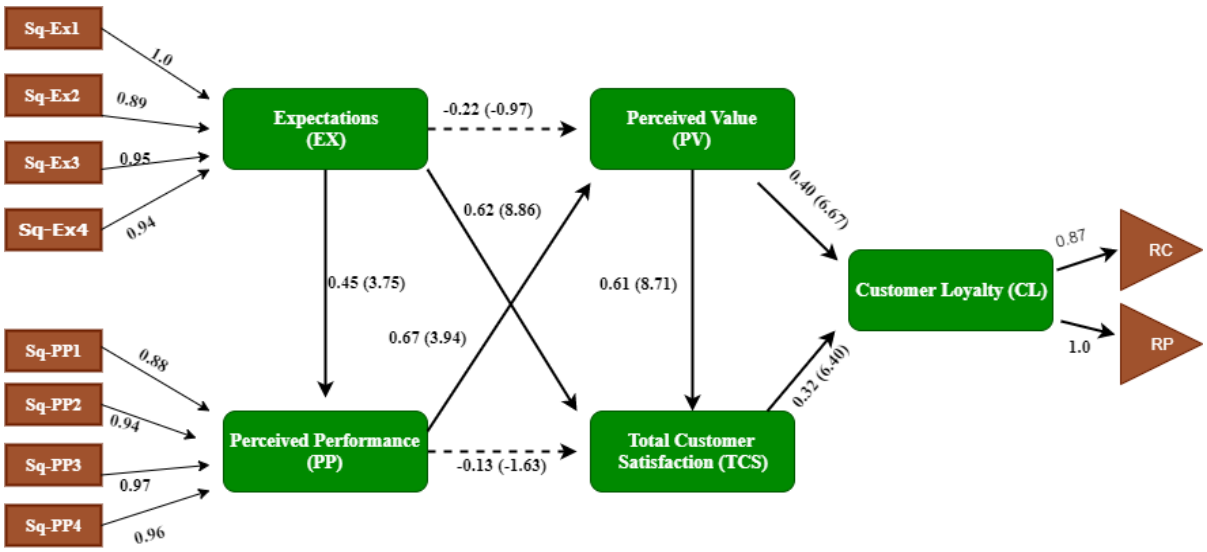
According to Hair *et al*. [38], the convergent rationality of the measurement model's outcome should conform to the concept (composite) reliability, item reliability and mean of the variance obtained. The item reliability or dependability represents the quantity of the square of standard deviation or variance in a product or service based on the primary concept or constructs, with their associated t-values of the individual standardized loadings significant at 1 percent (i.e. p< 0.01) indicating the reliability of the item (product or service). In a similar manner, Hair *et al*. [38], recommends that the reliability of the construct should be above 0.7 (> 0.7). Our estimated values for the reliability of constructs support the recommendation of Hair *et al*. [38], thus, exceeding the proposed level. The mean or average variance extracted describes the total variance explained by the concept or construct, expected to be greater than 0.50 [38]. Our outcome shows a mean or average variance reliability greater than 0.50 for all constructs. These findings further imply that the selected indicators or factors are very dependable and robust.

The outcome from the hypotheses testing are reported in (Table 5) for domestic airline passengers. As per the outcome, we cannot accept the null hypothesis of two- the nexus amid expectation and perceived value (Hb) and the relationship between perceived performance and total customer satisfaction (Ha). Similarly, we fail to reject the null hypotheses of the other six hypotheses.

**Table 4:** Convergent validity of the measurement model (Domestic and international airline passengers)

| Concepts/ Constructs | Items | Item reliability | | | | Construct reliability | Average variance extracted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Factor Loading | Standard errors | Standardized loading | t-value | | |
| Expectation | Sq-EX1 | 1.00 | - | 0.92 | - | 0.87 | 0.68 |
| | Sq-EX2 | 0.89 | 0.05 | 0.75 | 16.28 *** | | |
| | Sq-EX3 | 0.95 | 0.08 | 0.77 | 14.57 ** | | |
| | Sq-EX4 | 0.94 | 0.07 | 0.79 | 14.21 ** | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Perceived | Sq-PP1 | 0.88 | 0.05 | 0.73 | 19.03 *** | 0.95 | 0.75 |
| Performance | Sq-PP2 | 0.94 | 0.06 | 0.79 | 18.78*** | | |
| | Sq-PP3 | 0.97 | 0.04 | 0.86 | 22.11 *** | | |
| | Sq-PP4 | 0.96 | 0.08 | 0.83 | 14.01 ** | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Perceived | PV1 | 1.00 | - | 0.78 | - | 0.83 | 0.70 |
| Value | PV2 | 0.93 | 0.08 | 0.81 | 13.52 ** | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Total Customer | TCSAT | 1.00 | - | 1.0 | - | - | - |
| Satisfaction | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Customer | RP | 1.00 | - | 0.95 | - | 0.91 | 0.79 |
| Loyalty | RC | 0.87 | 0.09 | 0.80 | 15.86 *** | | |

Note: *** and ** represents significant level at 1% and 5%, respectively.




Note: the dash lines denote insignificance (or P > 0.01)

**Fig 2:** Findings of the tested hypothetical model.

This indicates that there exists a causal relationship between the various series. In particular, the findings show that service expectations significantly positively affect perceived performance among this group of passengers. This outcome is inconsonant with the findings of [7]. However, there is no evidence of a significant positive impact between service expectations and perceived value. Likewise, there is no proof of a significant positive effect between perceived performance (PP) and total customer satisfaction (TCS). But, there exist a positive significant impact between

perceived performance and perceived value. In addition, perceived value (PV) show a positive significant effect on total customer satisfaction (TCS) and customer loyalty (CL). Total customer satisfaction (TCS) is positively and significantly associated with customer loyalty (CL). The perceived performance shows a negative impact on total customer satisfaction moderated by perceived value. Therefore, without considering perceived value, the predictive power of service quality to employee satisfaction is uncertain. Note that this evidence supports the argument of the importance of the measurement of perceived value in conjunction with the measurement of satisfaction by Woodruff [35]. Finally, perceived value and total customer satisfaction reveal a significant positive impact on customer loyalty (a proxy for behavioral intentions).

**Table 5:** The empirical result of the hypotheses (Domestic airline passengers)

| Hypothesis | Direction of Causality | Coefficient/Elasticity | Standard error | t-value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| Ha | EX → PP | 0.45 | 0.12 | 3.75 *** | Fail to Reject |
| Hb | EX→ PV | -0.22 | 0.23 | -0.97 | Cannot Accept |
| Hc | EX →TCS | 0.62 | 0.07 | 8.86 *** | Fail to Reject |
| Hd | PP→PV | 0.67 | 0.17 | 3.94 *** | Fail to Reject |
| He | PP→ TCS | -0.13 | 0.08 | -1.63 | Cannot Accept |
| Hf | PV→ TCS | 0.61 | 0.07 | 8.71 *** | Fail to Reject |
| Hg | PV→ CL | 0.40 | 0.06 | 6.67*** | Fail to Reject |
| Hi | TCS →CL | 0.32 | 0.05 | 6.40 *** | Fail to Reject |

Note: *** represents the significant level at 1%.

**Table 6:** Estimates of the direct and indirect effects on customer loyalty (Domestic and international airline passengers)

| Direction of causality | | Estimates |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| Service Expectation→ Customer loyalty | Indirect influence | 0.19 |
| Perceived performance→ Customers loyalty | Indirect influence | 0.43 |
| Perceived value→ Customer loyalty | Indirect influence | 0.53 |
| | Direct influence | 0.45 |
| | Total influence | 0.69 |
| Total Customer Satisfaction→ Customer Loyalty | Direct influence | 0.32 |

As per the outcome of the direct and indirect influence of the various explanatory indicators or variables on customer loyalty (a proxy for behavioral intentions) as the respondent variable as presented in (table 6). We realized that perceived value and total customer satisfaction record a direct influence on customer loyalty. Likewise, service expectations and perceived performance show evidence of an indirect impact on customer loyalty. In conclusion, the overall influence of perceived value on customer loyalty (represented by the summation of the indirect and direct influence via perceived value's impact on total customer satisfaction) is estimated at 0.69. Furthermore, the overall impact of total customer satisfaction on customer loyalty is estimated at 0.32. As we can see, our findings indicate that perceived value largely affect customer loyalty than total customer satisfaction. This implies that the most significant indicator of customer loyalty among domestic and international airline passengers is perceived value.

## Conclusion

Our study seeks to examine the dynamic nexus between perceived value, service quality, total customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (a proxy for behavioral intentions) using a sample of survey data of both domestic and international airline passengers from Ethiopia. The empirical evidence or highlights indicate a direct positive effect between total customer satisfaction and perceived value on customer loyalty. However, perceived performance indicates an indirect relationship or impact instead of our anticipated positive direct influence on total customer satisfaction as moderated by perceived value. Based on our findings we conclude by saying that service quality may not necessarily promote customer total satisfaction unless it further causes the perceived value to rise. Indicative of the significant role of perceived value perform in enhancing total customer satisfaction and long-term customer loyalty in the airline industry.

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