Customer satisfaction in communicating with reservation staffs of Thai Airways International

Alina Homsangpradit

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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN COMMUNICATING WITH RESERVATION STAFFS OF THAI AIRWAYS INTERNATIONAL

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Interdisciplinary Studies

by
Alina Homsangpradit
March 2003
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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to investigate 1) the correlation between customer satisfaction and demographic data, 2) the correlation between the level of customer satisfaction towards THAI’s reservation staff and customer’s attitude, and 3) the correlation between customer satisfaction and the communication behavior of THAI’s reservation staff.

Subjects and Settings: One hundred fifty questionnaires were handed out to respondents at three locations in Los Angeles. The questionnaires were handed out at the THAI airport counter at Los Angeles International Airport, THAI's main ticketing counter at the main office in Los Angeles, California, and the Thaitown area in Hollywood, California. One hundred fifty questionnaires were handed out, one hundred thirty nine questionnaires were returned but only one hundred twenty one surveys were completed. The sample population consisted of sixty-six (66%) males and fifty-five (55%) females. The sample population range in ages from seventeen to over fifty-six.

This research study used questionnaires to collect data systematically. Participants were customers of THAI in the Los Angeles area and were randomly selected at
three locations. Participants used a data collection questionnaire to provide demographic information and also to rate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of THAI’s service.

The research results show as follows: No correlation was reported between age, gender, educational level of customers and customer satisfaction with the reservation staff of THAI. The communication behavior of the reservation staff of THAI is not correlated to the customer satisfaction towards the service of THAI’s reservation staff. However, customer’s level of income and customer’s attitude toward THAI’s reservation staff correlated to customer satisfaction.

Within this study sample, customer satisfaction is affected by customer level of income. Along with this, customer satisfaction is also affected by customer attitude towards THAI’s reservation staff. Therefore it can be concluded that interventions to positively improve customer attitude towards THAI’s reservation staff will result in increased customer satisfaction.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

In business, customer satisfaction is one of the most important factors leading to customer loyalty, which eventually will result in repeat sales. Customer's satisfaction level is positively correlated to the level of the quality of service. In the airline industry, the most important thing an airline sells is its services. In order to increase the level of customer satisfaction, every employee who comes into contact with a customer must be "service oriented" this is what helps make the airline industry known for its care and courteous treatment of its passengers. Satisfaction is usually conceived of as a function of a customer's expectations prior to a purchase, and perceptions of performance after a purchase (Oliver, 1996). Customers start forming their satisfaction opinion as soon as they interact with the first point of contact. For the airline industry the reservation staff or customer service staff are usually in the first line of contact with the customers. The reservation staff is becoming more important as their communication skills and behavior can provide comfort and reassurance to the existing and
prospective customers. Cushman (1985) said that communication is an important tool for establishing, maintaining, and terminating personal relationships.

The focus of this study is customer satisfaction with the reservation staff communication behavior of Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (North America) THAI. In our world of instant communication, satisfying customers is a challenge. Both listening skills and communication skills are essential to the reservation staff to increase customer satisfaction. Therefore, one way to improve THAI customer satisfaction is to improve listening and communication skills of THAI reservation staff in order to effectively communicate with their customers.

Statement of Problems

Due to the importance of customer satisfaction, it is crucial that companies must improve their service in order to compete in this fiercely competitive industry. The transpacific airline sector is one of the most competitive sectors in the airline industry. Most flights are long with the shortest flight from Los Angeles to Japan taking twelve hours. Although in-flight service is the heart of the battle, the initial contact between the potential
customers with the reservation staff can make or break the sales. It is apparent that to improve customer satisfaction at the first point of the contact, the reservation staff, must be improved.

Purpose of Study

The study has two main purposes. The first purpose is to evaluate the importance of customer satisfaction with THAI’s reservation staff. The second purpose is to understand the impact of communication behavior and skills of THAI’s reservation staff on customer satisfaction level.

The purpose can be decomposed into the following objectives of study:

1. To investigate if the customer satisfaction level with THAI’s reservation staff affect the customer attitude.

2. To examine correlation between customer satisfaction and the THAI’s communication behavior.

3. To examine the correlation between the THAI’s customer satisfaction and the demographic data.
The objective of this study is to provide the findings to the management of THAI in Los Angeles to improve the service quality at the concerned departments.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:
1. Is customer satisfaction affected by their demographical data?
2. Is customer attitude toward THAI affected their satisfaction with reservation staff?
3. Is customer satisfaction correlated to the communication behavior of THAI?

Hypotheses
a. Customer satisfaction is significantly affected by the demographical data.
b. Customer attitude toward THAI affected their satisfaction with the reservation staffs of THAI.
c. Customer satisfaction is directly correlated to the communication behavior of THAI.

Organization of the Study
This chapter provides background of the research problems, statement of problems, purpose of study, hypothesis, organization of the study, limitations, and definition of terms. Chapter two provides a comprehensive
literature review where background of airline industry and other principles in customer satisfaction are reviewed. A brief review of the airline situations is presented to give an idea of the circumstances.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study. Chapter four presents the findings. The statistical evaluations of customer satisfaction with reservation staff of THAI are presented. The findings are compared to results of other studies in the same area. Chapter five provides conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research direction.

Definition of Terms

**THAI** - Thai Airways International Public Company Limited but in this paper THAI means the operation of Thai Airways International Public Company Limited in North America region.

**Reservation Staff** - THAI's employees who have contact with customers via telephone or in persons, by giving customers information in reservation service, answering customers' questions and solving customers' problems with the intention of using THAI's services.

**Customer** - People who have contact with THAI's reservation.
Communication Behavior - The conversation between reservation staff of THAI and customer over the telephone or in person. Communication behavior is measured by verbal statement and tone of voice.

Customer Satisfaction - A customer’s positive, neutral, or negative feeling about the value received from an organization’s product or service (Harrell, 2002).

Attitude - Attitude is a person’s enduring favorable or unfavorable cognitive evaluation emotional feeling, and action tendencies toward some object or idea (Kolter, 1999).

Limitations
1. The population in this research is small considering it covers only City of Los Angeles. There may be differences between the samples and the general population in regards to the demographical environments, the local patronage system, and the competition in the local market.
2. Some of the respondents answering the questionnaires may not have given the answers accurately because of the fear that the data, especially the demographical one might be misused to trespass their privacy.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background on the Airline Industry

Since the passage of the 1979 Airline Deregulation Act, air travelers in the United States have enjoyed lower fares and greater choices of services. Despite the success of domestic liberalization in the United States, the European Union, and elsewhere, international air travel is still heavily regulated, and the U.S. domestic air travel market remain closed to foreign competition.

America’s closed domestic market weakens the U.S. negotiating position abroad. Under the current policy, the U.S. government seeks to open international markets through its “Open Skies” initiative while keeping the world’s largest domestic market, which represents more than one-quarter of global air travel, closed to foreign competition.

The events of September 11, 2001 have had some of their worst economic effects on the airline industry, leading to a dramatic fall-off in passenger demand and substantially higher costs. But even before that day, the industry was facing bad times, with few airlines anticipating profitable performances in 2001. Some have
argued that deregulation has contributed to the industry’s problems, and, furthermore, to problems for passengers.

Regulation and Deregulation

Before deregulation of the airline industry began in 1979, the Civil Aeronautics Board controlled both the routes airlines flew and the ticket prices the charged, with the goal of servicing public interest. With deregulation, any domestically owned airlines that was deemed "fit, willing, and able" by the Department of Transportation (DOT) could fly on any domestic route. The primary regulatory role of the DOT changed from approving whether an airline was operating in the public interest to deciding whether an airline was operating in accordance with safety standards and other operating procedures.

While route schedules and pricing for the airline industry have been largely deregulated for over 20 years, many other aspects of the industry are still highly regulated. Perhaps, the most important regulation comes from local governments, which own and manage the airports in their region and therefore control key bottlenecks to airport services: Access to boarding gates and runways. Most local airport commissions allocate gates without a formal market mechanism, such as bidding process; often
they require proof that the airline would operate in the best interest of the public.

In addition, international routes have been deregulated only gradually, through negotiated bilateral open-skies agreements, which generally allow airline companies from the two countries in question to fly between those countries without restriction. These open-skies agreements do not create a fully competitive market, as they do not allow foreign carriers to transport passengers within the United States or vice versa.

In summary, even though the end-consumers for airline tickets face a market-driven menu of prices and services, key inputs into the industry are allocated using non-market mechanisms. Thus, 22 years after airline deregulation, the airline market is still partly regulated.

International Reform

Despite the developments in other regions, problems remain in Asian-Pacific, one of the two largest overseas markets served by U.S. carriers. Asian-Pacific routes were the subject of the Open Skies initiatives in the early 1980s and again in the late 1990s. Although the number of liberalizing agreements signed was impressive, several key
countries, including Japan, did not reach an agreement. That deadlock led to protracted discussion about reforming the existing system of agreements that dated back to 1952.

Japan is important in the Asian portion of any global network of services because of its location and market size. It currently generates 78 million domestic passengers and 11 million international passengers annually. Current technology does not enable aircraft to fly nonstop from the United States to many major Asian-Pacific destinations beyond Japan. Even if the ranges were extended, many of those markets would not justify frequent service. Japan is, therefore, a natural Asian hub for U.S. passengers and freight carriers serving the Asian-Pacific region.

Thai Airways International also uses Japan as a stopover for its U.S. to Thailand flights.

**Background on Thai Airways International**

**Company Background**

Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI) is the country's national airline. THAI is the symbol of Thailand. THAI now flies more than 72 destinations in 37 countries on four continents. THAI flies more than 1,000 daily flights worldwide, over 500
internationally. THAI is also a member of Star Alliance comprising of Air Canada, Air New Zealand, All Nippon Airways, Austrian Airlines, BMI British Midland, Lufthansa, Mexicana, Scandinavian Airlines, Singapore Airlines, United Airlines, and VARIG Airlines.

**Overseas Offices**

THAI has established overseas sales offices in 28 of Thailand’s top 30 tourist-generating markets. In all, THAI operates 54 overseas offices in 40 countries around the world. Apart from these "on-line" offices, in cities where THAI flies, the airline also has a strong "off-line" presence in 24 cities.

Although their primary function is to assist passengers, sell and issue air tickets, THAI’s overseas offices are also responsible for promoting Thailand as a tourist and convention destination.

**Thai Airways in Los Angeles**

Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI) in Los Angeles is responsible for all sales and flight operations in North America. THAI closed all of its seven offices in North America except its office in Los Angeles after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C.
Thai Airways International in Los Angeles office consists of:

1. Administration Department
2. Accounting Department
3. Sales Department
4. Reservation Department
5. Airport Operations
6. Flight Operations
7. Line Station Maintenance
8. Los Angeles Cargo
9. Material Administration Division

Reservation Department of Thai in Los Angeles

The reservation department hours of operation are Monday to Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Pacific Time). The reservation staff in Los Angeles takes care of customers all over North America.

The main responsibilities of THAI reservation staff are:

1. To provide information to customers who want to travel to Thailand
2. To provide information to customers who want to travel to ASIA
3. To provide flight confirmation or flight schedules for customers before their departure
4. Reserve tickets for customers

5. Assist customers with changing their flight schedules

**Reservation and Communication**

Communication skills are the gear of the travel industry and are used in every aspect of the travel industry. A survey of all major airlines revealed that the average time for each reservation varied from a low of one minute to maximum of six minutes. Statistics from this study also revealed that THAI’s reservation staff handled a high volume of calls within an hour’s time. This demands an alert mind and a temperament that can stand dealing with never-ending succession of phone calls; each requiring individualized treatment and service (Woodring, 1991) therefore the reservation staffs’ main function is to communicate with the customers so, communication skills are extremely important for the reservation staff.

Harrell (2002) states “Communication is the exchange of meaning between or among parties. It involves sharing points of view and is at the heart of forming relationships.” You simply cannot connect with customers unless you communicate with them.

According to Schiffman (1978), “Communication is the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver by
means of a signal of some sort sent through a channel of some sort.”

Cooley describes communication as “the mechanism through which human relations exist and develop—all symbols of the mind, together with the means of conveying them through space and preserving them in time” (1909).

Communication is natural, necessary, omnipresent activity (Schramm & Porter, 1982). Communication pervades everything humans do. It is the stuff of which human relations are made. It is a current that has flowed through all human history, constantly extending our senses and or channels of information. Every day, humans communicate, speak, write, and draw, to let people know what we are thinking and feeling. Berlo’s (1960) research indicated that the average American spends about 70 per cent of his/her active hours communicating verbally-listening, speaking, reading, and writing, in that order.

This paper will concentrate on the customer satisfaction with the reservation staff communication behavior of THAI in the North America region. One of the possible ways to improve customer satisfaction of THAI is by being able to efficiently communicate with customers.
Why is Consumer Satisfaction Important?

Consumer satisfaction is important to the firm because it is generally assumed to be a significant determinant of repeat sales, positive word-of-mouth, and consumer loyalty. Satisfaction is important to the consumer because it reflects a positive outcome from the outlay of scarce resources and/or the fulfillment of unmet needs (Day & Landon 1977; Landon 1977). Previous research has demonstrated that unsatisfactory purchases, though varying by product class or service category, appear to be prevalent. For example, Andreasen and Best (1977) reported that as many as one in five purchase experiences resulted in some dissatisfaction. Thus, minimizing dissatisfaction and maximizing satisfaction are seen as important goals for both the firm and the consumer.

What is Consumer Satisfaction?

Kotler and Armstrong (1999) held that consumer satisfaction depends on a product perceived performance in delivering value relative to a buyer’s expectation. If the product performance falls short of the consumer’s expectations, the buyer is dissatisfied. If the performance matches expectations, the buyer is satisfied. If performance exceeds expectations, the buyer is
delighted. Outstanding marketing companies go out of their way to keep their customers satisfied. Satisfied customers make repeat purchases, and they tell others about their good experience with the product. The key is to match customer expectations with the companies' performance. Smart companies aim to delight the customers by promising only what they can deliver, then delivering more than they promise.

Consumer satisfaction with a product/service refers to the favorability of the individual's subjective evaluation of the various outcomes and experiences associated with using or consuming the products/services (Hunt, 1977). According to theories of buyer behavior (Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1973; Howard & Sheth, 1969), the evaluation is based on a cognitive process in which consumers prepare their prior expectations of product outcomes (e.g. product performance and other important attributes) to those actually obtained from the products. The extent to which expectations are realized is assumed to be directly related to the level of satisfaction experienced. If actual product outcomes meet or exceed those expected, satisfaction results. If, however, product outcomes are judged below expectations, dissatisfaction occurs. Swan and Combs (1976) have provided empirical
support for these propositions. This view of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction has been conceptualized as the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm and has been widely accepted as the process by which consumers develop feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Confirmation/Disconfirmation of Expectations Paradigm

At time t, a choice of a particular brand (the focal brand) is made. The choice is based on the hierarchy of effects process involving expectations or brand attribute beliefs, attitudes and intentions (Oliver, 1980a). At some subsequent time, t + 1, an occasion occurs in which the focal brand is used. A perception of the brand’s performance is triggered and the consumer evaluates the use experience. Because evaluation implies comparison of actual performance with some standard, three outcomes of this evaluation are possible. Confirmation occurs when performance matches the standard, leading to a neutral feeling. Performance exceeding the standard results in positive disconfirmation and, in turn, leads to satisfaction. Performance below the standard creates negative disconfirmation and, subsequently, dissatisfaction.
Other evaluative standards besides expectations have been investigated in the literature, including desired levels of product performance or outcomes (Westbrook & Reiley, 1983), brand or product-category norms (Woodruff, Cadotte, & Jenkins, 1983), and equitable performance or outcomes (Oliver & Swan, 1989). The evaluative aspect of the satisfaction judgment is typically assumed to vary along a hedonic continuum, from unfavorable to favorable. In this regard, satisfaction is generally assumed to be a uni-dimensional concept. Although, attitude-like in some respects, the concept of satisfaction is distinguished from attitude towards the product or brand, which represents a more generalized evaluation of a class of purchase objects (Oliver, 1981).

Consumer satisfaction definitions differ in their level of specificity. Commonly employed levels include satisfaction with a product (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver & Linda, 1981; Swan & Trawick, 1981), with a consumption experience (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Fisk & Young, 1985), with a purchase decision (Westbrook & Newman 1978), with the salesperson (Swan & Oliver, 1989), with a store (Oliver, 1981), and with a pre-purchase experience (Westbrook, 1977).
Factor Structure of Consumer Satisfaction

As already mentioned, it is generally assumed that customer satisfaction is a uni-dimensional construct, however, a few studies have investigated the possibility that it may be multi-dimensional (Czepiel, Rosenbreg, & Akerele, 1974; Leavitt, 1977; Oliver & Westbrook, 1982; Swan & Combs, 1976; Maddox, 1981). The most frequently proposed theory is a dual factor theory, which is similar to Herzberg’s two-factor theory of job satisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). According to the two-factor theory, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are different constructs, which are caused by different facets of interaction between a product and consumer. Since the constructs are unrelated, the level of satisfaction can be independent of the level of dissatisfaction. For example, an individual can be both very satisfied and very dissatisfied with a product, according to the dual factor theory. This approach can be contrasted with the one-factor theory postulating that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are opposites on a single, bipolar continuum.
Affect in Consumer Satisfaction

It has also been argued that satisfaction is not solely a cognitive phenomenon. Rather, it also comprises an element of affect or feeling, in that consumers feel subjectively good in connection with satisfaction, and bad connection with dissatisfaction. In addition to affect, the construct of satisfaction also involves an element of conation, in that high levels are associated with intentions to repeat the purchase choice if faced again by a similar buying situation, and low levels with intentions to purchase differently (Hunt, 1977).

Not well represented in the cognitive perspectives is consideration of the affective basis of satisfaction. Westbrook has made progress in this area. Westbrook (1987) posits that consumers from two summary affect states, one based on the positive affects in consumption and the other on the negative affects. Using Izard's (1977) Differential Emotions Scale (DES), he showed that the affects of joy and interest load on a factor separate from that of anger, disgust, and contempt, and that these factors are relatively uncorrelated. Moreover, both were significantly related to satisfaction in the expected direction. These relationships held up to the introduction of cognition (i.e., disconfirmation) in the satisfaction equations. On
the basis of the consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction reviewed in the discussions of cognitive and affect influences, Oliver (1993), presents the satisfaction response as being represented by the constructs. The cognitive antecedents include expectations, performance, disconfirmation, attribution, and equity/inequity. Further, the model shows affect as augmenting these variables in the prediction of satisfaction and, in addition, shows affect as mediating an indirect influence on attribution.

The emergence of affect as a proposed component of post-purchase expression is not unusual in light of other emerging work in the consumer area (Batra & Holbrook, 1990; Havlena & Holbrook, 1986). Earlier writings on consumer affect, however, can be traced to Bradburn (1969) in the quality-of-life area. Bradburn was, perhaps, the first to propose an “affect balance theory” which recognized that the positive experiences of life (e.g., excitement, pleasure) are not necessarily inversely correlated with negative experiences (e.g. loneliness, boredom). Generally, positive and negative affect have been found to make independent contributions to life satisfaction/dissatisfaction judgments in the life quality literature (Horley & Little, 1985). In other words,
Bradburn’s "independent hypothesis" states that events in life alternate between the positive and negative, and that instance of one do not preclude occurrences of the other. This argument is especially relevant to product and service consumption, where numerous and varied attributes exist at different levels of abstraction. Because each attribute is a potential source of pleasure or frustration, the likelihood of positive and negative experience is enhanced, a premise underlying the use of multi-attribute models of attitude.

The role of events (e.g., attribute performance experiences) as causal agents for positive and negative affective states has not been well conceptualized in the consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction literature (Oliver, 1993). Via a mechanism similar to the emergence of attribution-dependent affect, research in the affect literature (Scherer & Tannenbaum, 1986) suggests that various affects are also event specific. That is, different types of everyday experiences may directly trigger different type of affect.

Additionally, prior research has not elaborated on how consumers could entertain both positive and negative affect toward the same product simultaneously (Oliver, 1993). Yet regressions of satisfaction on positive and
negative affect in Oliver’s (1993) studies clearly indicate concurrent effects. The explanation draws on the Bradburn (1969) affect-balance theory which would propose the simultaneous operation of multifaceted product or service attributes, thereby providing differentially valence product.

General States of Affect
Westbrook (1980) argued that since satisfaction is an evaluative response comprising an affective model, it should be influenced by other more general states of affect concurrently experienced by the individual. The presence of appreciable positive or negative affect, unrelated to the product, may well shape the affect evoked by the evaluation process inherent in satisfaction judgments. For example, arousal of a good mood, or the presence of a happy, contented disposition, may cause the individual to feel relatively more satisfied not only with specific products, but also with other familiar objects in his/her experience. There exists empirical evidence for this proposition in the work of Isen, Clark, Shalker, and Karp (1978). These researchers explained their results with the “accessibility and cognitive loop” hypothesis which states: that affective states partially determines
the cognitive materials available in memory for stimulus evaluation and decision making, which in turn reinforce the prevailing affective state.

A number of distinct sources of affect may influence consumers' product satisfaction/dissatisfaction, differentiated by relative permanence and domain. Certain affective states are relatively more permanent and invariant, whereas others are particularized to a specific time or situation. Independent of temporal stability, affective states also differ in focus, some being relatively general, and others limited to a more specific domain (in this instance, consumption activity). Thus, at least four relatively different types of affective influences may be distinguished (Westbrook, 1980):

1. Stable/generalized affective influences are typified by basic personality dispositions, as well as relatively enduring global attitude structures. Optimism and pessimism (Goldman-Eisler, 1960; Tiger, 1979) and happiness (Cantril, 1965) illustrate the former, and life satisfaction (Andrew & Withey, 1976), the latter.

2. Transient/generalized affective influences consist of the various elements of mood, such as
elation, depression, tranquility, manifest anxiety, harmony, anger, etc. (Wessman & Ricks, 1966).

3. Stable/consumer domain affective influences are those pertaining to attitudinal structures specific to the domain of consumption, e.g. the goods and services offered in the marketplace, its producers, merchants, and other institutions, and its business practices. Attitudes towards business, the marketplace and consumerism, as well as sentiments of private consumer discontent typify this class of influences (Lundstrom & Lamont, 1976).

4. Transient/consumer domain affect is typified by temporarily favorable or unfavorable sentiments in connection with elements of the domain of consumption, e.g., product offerings, marketing practices and retail institutions, as prompted by prior experience or news revelations.

Westbrook (1980) stated that these affective influences do not deny the role of cognitive processes such as expectancy confirmation or disconfirmation, but rather combine with them in the determination of consumer satisfaction. He also suggest that the role of affective
influences on the process through which satisfaction is determined may vary by product category adding that perhaps judgments of satisfaction are not mediated by the individual's more general affective states for relatively less important products.

Consumption Emotion and Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction

Consumption emotion refers to the set of emotional responses elicited specifically during product usage or consumption experiences, as described either by the distinctive categories of emotional experience (e.g., joy, anger, and fear) or by the structural dimensions underlying emotional categories, such as pleasantness/unpleasantness, relaxation/action, or calmness/excitement (Russel, 1979). Since judgments of satisfaction vary along a hedonic continuum, a natural question is whether satisfaction and consumption emotion are distinguishable theoretical constructs. As stated by Hunt (1977, p. 459) "satisfaction is not the pleasure of the consumption experience, it is the evaluation rendered that the experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be." Westbrook (1987) further argued that satisfaction necessarily incorporates an evaluation of the emotional aspects of the antecedent consumption emotions.
elicited by product usage. This position was supported by an empirical study demonstrating that 1) separate and independent dimensions of positive and negative affect underlie discrete emotional responses elicited during consumption (i.e. joy, interest, surprise, anger, disgust, and contempt), and 2) both these dimensions contributed significantly to satisfaction above and beyond expectancy-disconfirmation beliefs.

These distinctions are reaffirmed by the Cohen and Areni (1991) review of affective processing mechanisms, in which emotions elicited during consumption experiences are believed to leave strong affective traces or "markers" in episodic memory. So marked, these memory elements are believed to be highly accessible to current cognitive operations. When an evaluation of the relevant consumption experience is required, the affective traces are readily retrieved and their valences integrated into the evaluative judgment along with other pertinent semantic memories, such as prior expectancies, disconfirmation beliefs, and so on. Under these interpretations, only the valence of the consumption emotion response is translated into satisfaction judgment. Oliver (1989) has questioned this assumption by theorizing that specific types or categories of emotional response may be causally
antecedent to, and coexist with, the satisfaction judgment. He proposed five qualitatively different emotional states for instances of satisfaction. Ordered by increasing favorableness and contribution to satisfaction, these are acceptance, happiness, relief, interest/excitement, and delight. For dissatisfaction, the emotional groupings in order of decreasing favorableness are tolerance, sadness, regret, agitation, and outrage.

In contrast to the foregoing distinctions between consumption emotion and satisfaction, other investigators have conceptualized satisfaction as itself an emotional response to the judgmental disparity between product performance and a normative standard (Cadotte, Woodruff, & Jenkins, 1987; Woodruff et al., 1983). Studies of emotion meaning and knowledge (Plutchik, 1980; Russell, 1979) reveal that the state of high satisfaction does indeed have unequivocal emotional connotations, notably "happy," "pleased," and "contended" (dissatisfaction is less specific in connotation).

Incorporating Desires in Consumer Satisfaction

According to Spreng, McKenzie, and Olshavsky (1996) satisfaction research has focused primarily on the disconfirmation of expectations, rather than of desires,
as the key determinant of satisfaction. These researchers believe that the extent to which a product or service fulfills a person's desires also plays an important role in shaping his or her feelings of satisfaction—much as the marketing concept would predict and has been acknowledged by some in the satisfaction literature (Olshavsky & Spreng, 1989; Westbrook & Reilly, 1983). They further argue that the failure to consider the extent to which a product or service fulfills a person's desires has led to logical inconsistencies, such as predicting that a consumer who expects and receives poor performance will be satisfied (LaTour & Peat, 1979) and research that sometimes shows no relationship between disconfirmation of expectations and satisfaction (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982).

Thus, they propose a model of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction stating that feelings of satisfaction arise when consumers compare their perceptions of the performance of a product or service to both their desires and expectations. They claim that this comparison process produces of satisfaction with the product or service, but also feelings of satisfaction with the information (often supplied by marketers in such forms as advertising, package information and salesperson
communications) on which their expectations are based. An empirical test of the model provided support for the hypothesized relationships and a better understanding of the mechanisms that produce satisfaction.

Market-Level View of Satisfaction

The preceding discussion of consumer satisfaction can be conceptualized as "transaction specific," however, it is important to note that there exists another conceptualization of satisfaction that can be defined as "cumulative." It is an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time (Fornell, 1992; Johnson & Fornell, 1991). It is considered as a more fundamental indicator of the firm's past, current, and future performance (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994).

According to Johnson, Anderson, and Fornell (1995) relatively little attention has been paid to the determinants of market-level satisfaction, which is defined as the aggregate satisfaction of those who purchase and consume a particular product offering. They suggest scientific and pragmatic reasons for studying market-level customer satisfaction and its antecedents.
Drawing on economic psychology and economic perspectives they conceptualized market-level customer satisfaction as a cumulative construct that is affected by market expectations and performance perceptions in any given period and is affected by past satisfaction from period to period. Their results suggest that market performance expectations have a large rational component yet remain adaptive to changing market conditions. Additionally, market-level satisfaction was found to be relatively stable over time and was positively affected by performance and expectations in any given time period. This finding suggests that managers who are interested in increasing market satisfaction in order to improve future profitability should invest in long-run quality improvement programs and strategies. Short-run tactics that temporarily increase performance or benefits per customer dollar spent will have little long-run impact (Johnson, Anderson, & Fornell, 1995).

From a scientific standpoint, satisfaction research stands to gain by augmenting existing individual-level studies with market-level analyses. They propose that studying customers in the aggregate is one way to establish empirical generalizations in the domain of satisfaction research. While individual-level studies
demonstrate the range of possible behavioral phenomena, psychologists have long recognized the difficulties involved in obtaining generalizations from them (Warneryd, 1988). According to Johnson et al. (1995), a lack of emerging empirical generalization is clearly evident in the quality and satisfaction literature, in which the debate over alternative models and methods continues (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Yi, 1991). They argue that the attitudes and behavior of individuals may be so situational unique that individual-level studies will be unable to establish reliable generalizations in this area. They suggest the solution of aggregations of individuals, occasions, stimuli, and/or modes of measurement (Epstein, 1980).

From a pragmatic standpoint, they argue that, marketing managers, product planners, and development teams focus on the needs and wants of entire markets or market segments thus making the contribution of market-level satisfaction relevant to these professionals. Aggregate-level surveys to Consumer Reports surveys provide important indicators of the level of satisfaction in a firm's customer base. They state, that this market-level satisfaction is a strong indicator of aggregate customer retention and future profitability.
(Anderson, Fornell, & Lechmann, 1994) and thus has emerged as an important yardstick or benchmark for firms seeking to accelerate business performance as well as for policymakers interested in tracking consumer well-being.

How is Consumer Satisfaction Measured?

Direct survey methods are the most widely used means of measuring consumer satisfaction. Their primary advantage is directness; the purpose is clear, and the responses straightforward. The major disadvantage is reactivity. Responses might be influenced by the act of measurement itself. Other problems such as selection bias, interviewer bias, and non-response bias, also provide threats to the validity of the survey data.

Other methods of measuring consumer satisfaction include collecting data on consumer complaints and repeat purchases. These indirect methods are important since complaint and repeat purchase behaviors are truly relevant to consumer satisfaction, important to both firms and consumers, and are relatively unobtrusive, resulting in reduced reactivity. However, they do have their disadvantages. For example, the corresponding rules between the concept and the measures are ambiguous and imperfect due to confounding factors. Repeat purchase is
affected not only by consumer satisfaction but also by other factors, such as promotional activities, and brand availability. Also, these measures may sample from the tails of the distribution and fail to capture the typical consumer's level of satisfaction.

Antecedents of Consumer Satisfaction

Some studies have examined demographic or socio-psychological characteristics of consumers as determinants of consumer satisfaction (Pfaff, 1972; Pickle & Bruce, 1972; Westbrook & Newman, 1978). Consumer satisfaction has been found to increase with age and personal competence (Westbrook & Newman, 1978), and to decrease with education and total family income. There is also evidence that consumer satisfaction is related to race (Pfaff, 1972) and marital status. However, other investigations fail to find such relationships with age or education. Overall, support for relationships between consumer satisfaction and these factors seems to be weak (Westbrook & Newman, 1978).

Other studies have focused on post-purchase evaluation of product performance by relating it to cognitive processes such as confirmation or disconfirmation of expectation. In these studies,
expectation (or some other comparison standard) and confirmation/disconfirmation have consistently been found to be key variables affecting evaluation of product performance. To date, this approach has been more fruitful than attempts to find demographic factors and appears to be promising (Yi, 1990).

Objective versus Perceived Performance

In developing research for some of the antecedents of consumer research there has been a conceptual difference between perceived product performance and objective product performance. Objective performance of a product is the actual level of product performance that is assumed to be constant across consumers. As a result, only one level of objective performance exists for a product. However, perceptions of product performance may vary across consumers, depending upon their expectations. That is, several different levels of perceived performance for a product may exist among consumers. Therefore, there are two types of disconfirmation, which is defined as the disparity between expectations and performance, depending upon the type of performance. The discrepancy between expectations and objective performance is referred to "objective disconfirmation," whereas the discrepancy
between expectations and perceived performance is referred to as "subjective disconfirmation."

Mixed Findings

Some key variables that have been found to affect consumer satisfaction include expectation, disconfirmation, perceived performance, and prior attitudes. However, there are mixed findings as to the antecedents of consumer research. Consumer satisfaction was found to be directly affected by expectations in some studies (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980), but not in other studies (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver & Bearden, 1983). Most studies found that disconfirmation is a significant predictor of consumer satisfaction, but Churchill and Surprenent (1982) showed that neither disconfirmation nor expectation had any effect on consumer satisfaction, and that only perceived performance had a significant effect. The effect of attitudes was found in some studies (Oliver, 1980) but not in others (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Oliver & Bearden, 1983).
Consequences of Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer Satisfaction and Profitability for a Firm

How does satisfying current customers affect profitability? Fornell (1992) enumerates several key benefits of high customer satisfaction for the firm. Several of these will be discussed.

**Increased Loyalty.** In general, high customer satisfaction should indicate increased loyalty for current customers. This means more customers will repurchase in the future. If a firm has strong customer loyalty, it should be reflected in the firm’s economic returns because it ensures a steady cash flow.

**Reduced Price Elasticity.** Customer satisfaction should reduce price elasticity for current customers (Garvin, 1988). Satisfied customers are more willing to pay for the benefits they receive and are more likely to be tolerant of increases in price. This implies high margins and customer loyalty. Low customer satisfaction implies greater turnover of the customer base, higher replacement costs, and due to the difficulty of attracting customers who are satisfied doing business with a rival, higher customer acquisition costs. Decreased price elasticity lead to increased profits for a firm providing superior customer satisfaction.
Lower Transaction Costs. High customer satisfaction should lower the costs of transaction in the future. If a firm has high customer retention, it does not need to spend as much to acquire new customers each period. Satisfied customers are likely to buy more frequently and in greater volume and purchase other goods and services offered by the firm.

Reduced Failure Costs. Consistently providing goods and services that satisfy customers should also increase profitability by reducing failure costs. A firm that consistently provides high customer satisfaction should have fewer devoted to handling returns, reworking defective items and handling and managing complaints.

New Customers. The costs of attracting new customers should be lower for firms that achieve a high level customer satisfaction (Fornell, 1992). For example, satisfied customers are reputedly more likely to engage in positive word of mouth and less likely to engage in damaging negative word of mouth for the firm (Anderson, 1994; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Reichheld &asser, 1990; TARP, 1979, 1981). Media sources are also more likely to convey positive information to prospective buyers. Customer satisfaction claims may also make advertising more effective.
Increased Reputation. An increase in customer satisfaction should also enhance the overall reputation of the firm. An enhanced reputation can aid in introducing new products by providing instant awareness and lowering the buyer’s risk of trial. Reputation can also be beneficial in establishing and maintaining relationships with key suppliers, distributors and potential allies (Anderson & Weitz, 1989; Montgomery, 1975). Reputation can provide a halo effect for the firm that positively influences customer evaluations, providing insulation from short-term shocks in the environment. Customer satisfaction should play an important role in building other important assets for the firm, such as brand equity.

Although there are many compelling reasons to conclude that higher customer satisfaction leads to higher profitability, it is, nevertheless, not always the case. At some point, there must be diminishing returns to increasing consumer satisfaction. Given that increasing customer satisfaction by design like adding features, increasing the quality of raw materials, increasing the level of personal service, providing greater variety by differentiating the product line to meet needs etc. will invariably increase costs at an increasing rate thus reducing the profitability of consumer satisfaction.
Attribution Theory and Consumer Satisfaction

Expressions of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with products may be partly due to the individual, and not to factors under the control of marketers and public officials (Westbrook & Newman, 1978) given the caveats and assumptions of causality implicit in consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction conceptual models. This view is consistent with deductions from attribution theory (Kelly, 1967, 1972). As Settle and have argued, consumers may attribute marketers' communications of product performance to the latter's desire to sell the product, rather than to the inherent nature of the product itself. The results of such attributions would be weaker and less realistic expectations, which are less likely to be confirmed by actual product outcomes, thereby, reducing satisfaction with the product.

Attribution theory notions are also relevant to assessing the effects of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction, once these judgments have been formed. In principle, product satisfaction may be attributed to the inherent nature of the product, the motivations of the seller, the consumer's own abilities to select or consume the product appropriately or to the
circumstances surrounding choice or consumption, depending on the information available (Orvis, Cunningham, & Kelly, 1975). Yet, research has suggested that consumers are more likely to attribute their product dissatisfaction to the product and/or seller than to themselves, and that attributions are linked to subsequent complaining behavior (Landon & Emery, 1975; Valle & Wallendorf, 1977).

Consumer Responses to Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction

Many studies have attempted to identify factors that predict different types of consumer responses to satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Best & Andreasen, 1977; Day & Ash, 1979). Substantial focus has been placed on consumers' complaint strategies in reaction to dissatisfaction. It has been found that consumers show several types of responses to dissatisfaction. It has been found that consumers show several types of responses to dissatisfaction: 1) taking no action, 2) switching brand or curtailing patronage, 3) making a complaint to the seller or third party, and 4) telling others about the unsatisfactory product [i.e., negative word-of-mouth communication] (Day, 1980; Krapel, 1985; Richin, 1983).
Complaining behavior as a reaction to dissatisfaction in order to seek rectification varies considerably. Frequently, consumers do not take any actions to alleviate their marketplace to induce problems. Day and Landon (1976) discovered that reported cases of extreme dissatisfaction for which no action of any kind was taken were 49.6% for non-durable goods, 29.4% for durable products, and 23.2% for services. Substantial evidence suggests that complaint behavior is not just a function of the intensity of dissatisfaction but of several other factors as well, such as consumer characteristics, consumers perceptions of the attribution of dissatisfaction, expectancy of outcomes, economic costs involved, product type, etc. This can explain empirical findings that show that a large proportion of dissatisfied consumers do not complain.

These findings have negative implications for marketers and consumers alike. First, failure to express dissatisfaction prevents the consumer from achieving redress from an unpleasant marketplace experience. Second, limited action on part of consumers may mask marketplace problems that the firm could and/or should correct.
Additionally, complaints are now seen as important free sources of information that can help firms create more competitive products. One study of a variety of consumer products for which the potential loss to the consumer exceeded US$ 100 estimated that 54 percent of consumers whose complaints were satisfactorily resolved and repurchased the product, compared with 9 percent of unhappy customers who did not bother to complain.

Some studies have also attempted to obtain profiles of complaining customers. They examined the following questions: What types of consumers are likely to voice complaints? What are the differences between consumers who complain and consumers who give compliments? Robinson and Berl (1980) found that complainers were typically younger, had more income, and were less brand-loyal than were complimenters. The finding that younger, high-income consumers were more likely to complain suggests that their expectations were higher. If this had been the case, their expectations were highly likely to be disconfirmed.

Consumer Satisfaction as a Mediator of Attitude Change

An important issue is the role of consumer satisfaction in attitude change. As consumers interact with a product toward which they have established an
attitude, they are subject to two sets of forces. On one hand, new experiences and information produce forces toward change. An attitude may change with the product experience, since some consumers learn from experience. An attitude will therefore be affected by consumer satisfaction, which can be seen as a summary of the nature of product experience. On the other hand, the existing attitude creates forces toward stability (resistance to change). As a result, an attitude may be affected by the previous attitude. In sum, the effect of a previous attitude indicates the temporal stability of an attitude, whereas the effects of consumer satisfaction reflects the consequence of consumer learning from the product experience (Oliver, 1980).

What are Attitudes?

The term "attitude" is widely used in popular culture. Solomon (2002) said that an attitude is a lasting general evaluation of people (including oneself), objects, and advertisements. An attitude is lasting because it trends to endure over time. It is general because it applies to more than a momentary event such as hearing a loud noise, though you might over time develop a negative attitude towards all loud noises. Consumers have attitudes
towards a wide range of attitude objects; from very product-specific behaviors to more general consumption-related behaviors.

Thurstone (1928) said that attitude is the sum total of a man's inclinations and feelings, prejudice and bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats, and convictions about any specified topic. Meuller (1986) said that attitude is the extent of liking or disliking something.

Attitudes are the stands a person takes about objects, people, groups, and issues. Attitudes can be formed by many situations in life, and they are constantly evolving to accommodate new information. When someone takes a stand on an issue, it is rendered in terms of his attitude. When one has an attitude, he is no longer neutral. He will keep that attitude until he adopts a different one.

Why do we Have Attitudes?

People form attitudes about many aspects of life and for many different reasons.

- To simplify complex subjects
- To protect self esteem
- To help adjusting to the world
- To express fundamental values
Socialization is a continuous process by where we change from children into adults. Friends, family, school, and media all influence how we learn attitudes. Groups influence many of our attitudes. Hallorah (1967) said that the socialization process deals with transformation, the transformation of the child into the adult, a process that includes the learning of attitudes and values.

There are three main sources of attitudes: 1) Direct experience with the objects and situations, 2) Explicit or implicit learning from others, and 3) Personality development. If we experience disappointment associated with something, we will develop unfavorable attitudes about that thing. On the other hand, when we succeed or hold a powerful position in a situation, we will develop favorable attitudes.

Attitudes have 3 components: 1) Cognitive component—the idea which is generally a category used by humans in thinking, 2) Affective component—the emotion which charges the idea, and 3) Behavioral component—a predisposition to action.

Theories of Attitude Change

Formation and change of attitude are not two separate things. They are interwoven. People are always adopting,
modifying, and relinquishing attitudes to fit their ever-changing needs and interests. Attitude cannot be changed by simple education. Acceptance of new attitudes depends on who is presenting the knowledge, how it is presented, how the person is perceived, the credibility of the communicator, and the conditions by which the knowledge was received (Hallorah, 1967).

Attitudes change when: 1) A person receives new information from others or media—Cognitive change, 2) Through direct experience with the attitude object—Affective change, and 3) Force a person to behave in a way different than normal—Behavioral change (Traindis, 1971).

Attitude can be changed by a number of sources including other people, family, media, church, or the object itself. In 1968, McGuire developed steps of changing an attitude. The steps are attention, comprehension, yielding retention, and action. Traindis (1971) said, "In analyzing the attitude-change process, we must consider the effect of who says what, how to whom, with what effect."

Attitude will be changed based on how a person sees the communication and the communicator. Less committed people will change ideas more frequently. Attitude change also has to do with other personality characteristics such
as susceptibility to persuasion, intelligence, readiness to accept change, etc. We are more likely to accept information if we feel the communicator has no intent to change our attitudes and opinions.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

This paper models the survey research by using questionnaire as an instrument. This chapter will detail the methodology used in this research. The population, sample, independent variables, dependent variable, sampling, data collection methods, and data transformation will be explained.

Population
Customers of THAI residing in the Los Angeles who have previous contacts with the reservation department of THAI (North America)

H1: Customer satisfaction is significantly affected by the demographical data

Dependent Variables: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff of THAI

Independent Variables: The demographical data

H2: Customer attitude toward THAI is affected by their satisfaction with the reservation staff of THAI

Dependent Variables: Customer attitude towards THAI
Independent Variables: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff of THAI

H3: Customer satisfaction is directly correlated to the communication behavior of THAI’s reservation staff

Dependent Variables: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff of THAI

Independent Variables: The communication behavior of THAI’s reservation staff

Questionnaire Design

To achieve the purpose of the study, the questionnaire was designed to gather relevant information to evaluate the relationship between customer attitude and their satisfaction, customer satisfaction and the behavior of THAI reservation staff, and the customer satisfaction and the demographical data.

The questionnaire consisted of yes and no, open-ended, and check list questions. The questions were divided into four sections: 1) general demographical information, 2) customer’s experience with the reservation staff of THAI, 3) customer satisfaction with the
communication behavior of the reservation staff of THAI, and 4) customer's attitude toward THAI's reservation.

The questions in the questionnaire were created and gathered from other relevant documents, journals, and other researches. In section one of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to provide background information about themselves such as age, sex, income, and education. In section two, the respondents were asked to answer question about customers' experience with THAI reservation service. In section three, a five point scale about customer satisfaction from very satisfied to very dissatisfied was designed to obtain the respondents' level of satisfaction of THAI's reservation staff communication behavior. In the last section, the respondents were asked their opinions about service of THAI, in this part, a five point scale was used from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Data Collection Method

Three committee members were consulted to make sure that the respondents could understand the questionnaire clearly and easily and would not misinterpret the questions.
One hundred fifty questionnaires were handed out to respondents in three areas in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles International Airport, THAI main ticketing office in Los Angeles and Thai Town in Hollywood, California) during January 20, 2003 to February 2, 2003. These three sites were selected because of the increased likelihood of finding a participant in the target group.

The first fifty questionnaires were handed out to customers at the THAI ticket counter at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) during January 20 - 26, 2003. The questionnaires were given to passengers who were waiting in line to check their baggage.

The next fifty questionnaires were handed out to customers at the THAI main ticketing office in Los Angeles on January 27 through January 31, 2003. The questionnaires were given to customers who came to the THAI office to pick up tickets, to buy tickets, to refund tickets, or to seek information regarding tours in Thailand. At this location most of the respondents were not in a rush and were very cooperative with the surveys.

The last fifty questionnaires were handed out to respondents at Thai Town (Hollywood, California) during February 1-2, 2003. The questionnaires were handed out to
people who were in the shops in the supermarkets at Thai town.

Data Entry and Analysis

After collecting all returned and competed questionnaires, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to analyze the data. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS for Windows) program was employed for data processing.

Samples

The samples were selected from THAI customers. Out of the one hundred and fifty questionnaires handed out, one hundred thirty nine questionnaires were returned. Samples were selected by using purposive sampling. The questionnaires were given to the respondents in three areas in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles International Airport, THAI office in Los Angeles and Thai Town in Hollywood, California) during the period of January 20, 2003 through February 2, 2003. The first fifty questionnaires were handed to the customers at the Thai counter at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), the next fifty questionnaires were handed to the customers at the THAI main ticketing office in Los Angeles, and the
last fifty questionnaires were handed to the respondents that were shopping at Thai Town.

Scoring Criteria

For part 3 of the questionnaire, the answer for each question will be weighted as follows:

- Very Satisfied: 5 points
- Satisfied: 4 points
- Neutral: 3 points
- Unsatisfied: 2 points
- Very unsatisfied: 1 point

The average score criteria of the customer attitude towards the reservation staff is interpreted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.00 - 1.50</td>
<td>Attitude is very negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.51 - 2.50</td>
<td>Attitude is negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.51 - 3.50</td>
<td>Attitude is neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.51 - 4.50</td>
<td>Attitude is positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.51 - 5.00</td>
<td>Attitude is very positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For part 4 of the questionnaire, the answer for each question will be weighted as follows:

- Strongly agree: 5 points
- Agree: 4 points
- Not sure: 3 points
Disagree 2 points
Strongly disagree 1 point

The average score criteria of the customer satisfaction towards the reservation staff is interpreted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.00-1.50 points</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction is very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.51-2.50 points</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction is low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.51-3.50 points</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction is moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.51-4.50 points</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction is high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.51-5.00 points</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction is very high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were applied to analyze the data from the questionnaire survey in order to answer the research questions. The Hypothesis testing (F-test, and t-test) was used to evaluate the data. The Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) is used to test the variables. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation is used for regression analysis. The program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows) was used to obtain such above data with higher accuracy.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

This study of Customer Satisfaction with communicating behavior of THAI’s reservation staff in Los Angeles was conducted under the principle guidelines of research methodology. One hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed to the customers of THAI in the Los Angeles area, however only 139 or 92.67 percent were returned. The data was analyzed using a program called SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science for Windows).

Descriptive Analysis
1) General demographic information such as gender, age, income, education, and occupation.
2) Customer experience with THAI reservation service
3) Customer satisfaction toward service of reservation staff
4) Customer attitude toward THAI

Hypothesis Testing
1) The t-test analysis and the One-way ANOVA analysis were used to test the correlation of
independent variables such as gender, age, education, and income.

2) The Pearson Product Moment Correlation is used to explain the correlation between THAI’s customer attitude towards THAI and their satisfaction towards the quality of service provided by THAI’s reservation staff, and the correlation between the customer satisfaction and the behavior in communicating by the reservation staff.

Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

General Background of Respondents

One hundred fifty questionnaires were handed out to respondents participating in the survey—50 at THAI’s ticket counter at LAX International airport, 50 at the Los Angeles main ticketing office, and 50 in Hollywood’s Thai town. Although one hundred thirty nine questionnaires were returned, only one hundred twenty one were usable since only one hundred twenty one respondents have ever contacted THAI and answered “yes” to question 1 of part 2.

Appendix C, Table 1 of the Respondents Grouped by Gender shows that, out of 121 respondents, there were 66
males or 54.55 percent and 55 females, an equivalent of 45.45 percent.

Appendix C, Table 2 of the Respondents Grouped by Age shows that the age group of 26-35 year olds represented the most frequency of 48 or 39.67 percent, followed by the 36-45 year olds and 46-55 year olds with 27.27 percent and 15.70 percent respectively. There were 10 respondents or 8.26 percent who were under 25 years of age and 4 respondents or 3.31 percent older than 56 years old. Seven of the respondents or 5.79 percent chose not to answer this question.

Appendix C, Table 3 of the Respondents Grouped by Education shows that more than half of the respondents or approximately 54.55 percent had a bachelor degree or equivalent. The total number of graduate education or higher is 40 or approximately 33.06 percent. Ten respondents or approximately 8.26 percent had a high school education or lower while 5 respondents or 4.31 percent chose not to answer this question.

Appendix C, Table 4 of the Respondents Grouped by Annual Income shows that most of the respondents (40.50 percent) reported an annual income in the range of $15,001 - 30,000 followed by 26 percent of the respondents with an annual income within the $30,001-$45,000 range, and 16
percent of the respondents with an annual income of $15,000 or less. The group with an annual income within the range of $45,001-60,000 came in fourth with 10 percent. The group with an annual income of $60,000 and above came last with only 6 percent. Only 2 percent of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

Appendix C, Table 5 lists Respondents Grouped by Occupation. Most of the respondents were self-employed with 28 percent. Approximately 26 percent of the respondents were students. The number of government employees and professionals represent about 19 percent of the respondents. The fewest number of respondents, 6 percent, were Executives. Twenty one percent of the respondents chose to answer as other occupation. Only 1 percent of the respondents refused to disclose this information.

Respondents' Information about Service of Reservation

Appendix C, Table 6 shows the percentage of respondents who ever contacted with reservation staff of THAI. Out of 139 respondents, there were 121 respondents who ever contacted with reservation staff of THAI.

From the Appendix C, Table 7, the frequency per month of customers contacting THAI, it can be seen that most of
the respondents (85%) contacted THAI’s reservation staff less than once per month. Less than 10 percent of the respondents contacted THAI’s reservation staff on the average of once a month. Around 5 percent of the respondents contacted THAI’s reservation staff more often than once a month. All the respondents answered this question.

Appendix C, Table 8 shows the various purposes of contacting THAI. Most of the respondents or around 36 percent reported contacting THAI when they wanted to change their reservations or tickets. The second most common reason respondents reported contacting THAI was to inquire about flight schedules and airline information for 26 percent and 20 percent respectively. Only less than 6 percent of the respondents reported calling THAI to check fare price. About 7 percent of the respondents reported contacting THAI to purchase their tickets, and only 2 percent of respondents reported contacting THAI with other reasons such as to inquire information about the airline’s mileage program.

Appendix C, Table 9 shows the time of contact with the reservation staff, most of the respondents (approximately 50 percent) contacted the THAI reservation staff between 9:01 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Approximately 39
percent of the respondents reported contacting THAI in the afternoon between 12:01 p.m.-3:00 p.m. and between 3:01 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Only 11 percent of the respondents reported contacting THAI in the early morning during 7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m.

From the Appendix C, Table 10, it is seen that more than half of the respondents (52 percent) experienced long waiting period before a THAI representative answered their calls. The answering system picked up the calls and placed the respondents on hold for a short moment for 34 percent of the respondents. About 14 percent of the respondents experienced busy signals, difficulty connecting to a THAI representative, or were disconnected before their calls were answered by a THAI representative.

Customer's Satisfaction toward Reservation Staff

From the Appendix C, Table 11, it can be explained that the customer satisfaction towards the communication behavior of the THAI's reservation staff from the 17 questions by the 121 respondents as follows:

1) The staff spoke clearly. The respondents answered the most with "satisfied" by approximately 56.2 percent followed by the "neutral" of 28.9 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied,"
and "unanswered" are 8.26, 2.48, 0.83, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.59 considering as highly satisfied.

2) Staff always greeted, and announced his or her name when answering the call. The respondents answered the most with "satisfied" by approximately 36.4 percent followed by the "neutral" of 30.6 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 8.26, 19.8, 1.65, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.20 considering as moderately satisfied.

3) Staff always sincerely apologized whenever it was problematic. The respondents answered the most with "neutral" by approximately 41 percent followed by the "satisfied" of 33.1 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 7.44, 14.0, 1.65, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.21 considering as moderately satisfied.
4) Staff never argued. The respondents answered the most with "neutral" by approximately 37.2 percent followed by the "satisfied" of 33.1 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 8.26, 17.4, 0.83, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.21 considering as moderately satisfied.

5) Staff spoke with proper tone of voice. The respondents answered the most with "satisfied" by approximately 38 percent followed by the "neutral" of 36.4 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 8.26, 11.6, 1.65, and 4.13 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.27 considering as moderately satisfied.

6) Staff was not threatening. The respondents answered the most with "satisfied" by approximately 37.2 percent followed by the "neutral" of 33.9 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 9.09, 14.9, 1.65, and 3.31
percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.27 considering as moderately satisfied.

7) Staff ended calls courteously. The respondents answered the most with "satisfied" by approximately 34.7 percent followed by the "neutral" of 33.1 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 7.44, 19.8, 1.65, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.17 considering as moderately satisfied.

8) Staff can controlled their emotion. The respondents answered the most with "satisfied" by approximately 34.7 percent followed by the "neutral" of 30.6 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 4.13, 24, 3.31, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.02 considering as moderately satisfied.

9) Staff was not rude. The respondents answered the most with "satisfied" by approximately 36.4 percent followed by the "neutral" of 34.7
percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 6.61, 17.4, 1.65, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.19 considering as moderately satisfied.

10) Staff always took good care of you. The respondents answered the most with "neutral" by approximately 43 percent followed by the "satisfied" of 33.1 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 6.61, 12.4, 1.65, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.21 considering as moderately satisfied.

11) Staff thought that the problems were very important. The respondents answered the most with "neutral" by approximately 43.8 percent followed by the "satisfied" of 24 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 5.79, 21.5, 1.65, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.0 considering as moderately satisfied.
12) Staff was enthusiastic in problem solving. The respondents answered the most with "neutral" by approximately 40.5 percent followed by the "satisfied" of 30.6 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 4.96, 18.2, 2.48, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.07 considering as moderately satisfied.

13) Staff never refused to help. The respondents answered the most with "neutral" by approximately 41.3 percent followed by the "satisfied" of 33.9 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 4.96, 14.9, 1.65, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.16 considering as moderately satisfied.

14) Staff treated you as if you were very important. The respondents answered the most with "neutral" by approximately 43 percent followed by the "satisfied" of 32.2 percent. The group of "very satisfied," "unsatisfied," "very unsatisfied," and "unanswered" are 4.96, 14.9, 0.83, and 4.13 percent respectively.
percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.13 considering as moderately satisfied.

15) Staff gave good advice. The respondents answered the most with “neutral” by approximately 38 percent followed by the “satisfied” of 35.5 percent. The group of “very satisfied,” “unsatisfied,” “very unsatisfied,” and “unanswered” are 8.26, 14.0, 0.83, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.26 considering as moderately satisfied.

16) Staff worked with the same standard. The respondents answered the most with “neutral” by approximately 42.1 percent followed by the “satisfied” of 26.4 percent. The group of “very satisfied,” “unsatisfied,” “very unsatisfied,” and “unanswered” are 4.96, 19.8, 3.31, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.0 considering as moderately satisfied.

17) Overall Satisfaction. The respondents answered the most with “neutral” by approximately 40 percent followed by the “satisfied” of 38
percent. The group of “very satisfied,” “unsatisfied,” “very unsatisfied,” and “unanswered” are 4.13, 12.4, 0.83, and 4.96 percent respectively. The average score of satisfaction is 3.17 considering as moderately satisfied.

Customer Attitude toward Staff

From the Appendix C, Table 12, we can analyze the customer attitude towards the reservation staff of THAI by the 6 statements in the questionnaire of 121 respondents as follows:

1) Staff is knowledgeable and skilled in providing good service. The respondent with “agree” group is the most with 48 percent following by “not sure” 38.02 percent. The “strongly agree,” “disagree,” “very disagree,” and “unanswered” are 8.26, 1.65, 0.83, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score for the comments is 3.51 considering as highly agreed attitude.

2) Staff worked efficiently. The respondent with “not sure” group is the most with 43.8 percent following by the “agree” 42.15 percent. The “strongly agree,” “disagree,” “very disagree,” and “unanswered” are 2.48, 6.61, 0.83, and 4.13
percent respectively. The average score for the comments is 3.26 considering as neutral attitude.

3) Staff was polite. The respondent group with "not sure" and "agree" are the most with 37.19 percent following by the "disagree" 14.88 percent. The "strongly agree," "very disagree," and "unanswered" are 5.8, 0.83, and 4.13 percent respectively. The average score for the comments is 3.20 considering as neutral attitude.

4) The service was impressive. The respondent with "not sure" group is the most with 43.8 percent following by the "agree" 38.02 percent. The "strongly agree," "disagree," "very disagree," and "unanswered" are 2.48, 10.74, 0.83, and 4.13 percent respectively. The average score for the comments is 3.18 considering as neutral attitude.

5) The services by the staff were up to the world standard. The respondent with "agree" group is the most with 44.63 percent following by the "not sure" 39.67 percent. The "strongly agree," "disagree," "very disagree," and "unanswered" are 4.96, 5.79, 0.83, and 4.13 percent
respectively. The average score for the comments is 3.35 considering as neutral attitude.

The service charge is relatively reasonable to the quality of service. The respondent with "not sure" group is the most with 38.02 percent following by the "disagree" 28.93 percent. The "strongly agree," "agree," "very disagree," and "unanswered" are 0.83, 23.14, 5.8, and 3.31 percent respectively. The average score for the comments is 2.74 considering as neutral attitude.

Hypothesis Testing

In this study, there are three hypotheses for the research in correlation analysis as follows:

H1: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by the demographical data.

This hypothesis can be subdivided into another 4 Hypothesis as follows:

H1.1: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by gender of the customer.

H1.2: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by age of the customer.

H1.3: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by educational level of the customer.
H1.4: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by income level of the customer.

H2: Customer satisfaction toward THAI is affected by their attitude with the reservation staff of THAI.

H3: Customer satisfaction is correlated to the communication behavior of the reservation staff of THAI.

Testing

H1: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by the demographical data.

H1.1: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by gender of the customer.

The t-test statistical analysis is used to test the Hypothesis.

Table 1. T-test Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, it can be seen that the customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI
is not correlated to the gender of the customer at the level of significance 0.05

We, then, reject the Hypothesis 1.1

H1.2: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by age of the customer.

Table 2. Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.6543</td>
<td>0.6242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 and above</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table, it shows that the customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is not correlated to the age of the customer at the level of significance 0.05.

We, then, reject the Hypothesis 1.2.

H1.3: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by educational level of the customer.
Table 3. Statistical Analysis for Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school or under</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.0554</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that the customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is not correlated to the educational level of the customer of the level of significance 0.05.

Again, then we reject the Hypothesis 1.3.

H1.4: Customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is affected by income level of the customer.
Table 4. Statistical Analysis for Annual Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Avg.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 or less</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>4.271</td>
<td>0.0021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,001 - 30,000</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,001 - 45,000</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 &gt; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$45,001 - 60,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher than $60,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be observed from the above table that the customer satisfaction with the reservation staff at THAI is correlated to the income level of customer at the level of significance 0.05 and when we test the pair differential with SCHEFFE' Model, it is found that the customers in the income range of $15,001-30,000 has higher level of satisfaction than those in the income range of $45,001-60,000.

Then, we accept the Hypothesis 1.4

H2: Customer satisfaction toward THAI is affected by their attitude with the reservation staff of THAI.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation is used to explain this correlation between the customer attitude
towards THAI and their satisfaction towards the THAI’s reservation staff.

Table 5. Customer’s Attitude towards Reservation Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer attitude toward THAI</td>
<td>0.7163</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, it can be seen that the customer’s attitude towards THAI’s reservation staff is correlated to the customer satisfaction at the level of significance 0.05. The moderately positive R means that if the customer attitude towards reservation staff of THAI is high, the customer satisfaction will be high, too.

We, then, accept the Hypothesis 2

H3: Customer satisfaction towards the service of THAI’s reservation staff is correlated to the communication behavior of the reservation staff of THAI

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation is used to explain this correlation between the customer satisfaction and the communication behavior of the reservation staff of THAI.
Table 6. Communication Behavior of the Reservation Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THAI's reservation communication behavior</td>
<td>.0432</td>
<td>.625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, it is found out that the communication behavior of the reservation staff of THAI is not correlated to the customer satisfaction towards the service of THAI's reservation staff at the level of significance 0.05.

Then we reject the Hypothesis 3.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study "Customer Satisfaction in Communicating with Reservation Staffs of THAI" has the following research purposes:

1) To examine the correlation between the THAI's customer satisfaction and the demographical data.
2) To investigate the correlation between the customer satisfaction with the THAI reservation staff and by the customer attitude.
3) To examine the correlation between customer satisfaction and the THAI's communication behavior.

This study was conducted from January 20, 2003 through February 2, 2003. Data was gathered through the completion of questionnaires by customers of THAI in the Los Angeles area who were selected through random sampling. One hundred fifty questionnaires were personally handed out to respondents. One hundred thirty-nine questionnaires or 93% were completed. The researcher used purposive sampling to selecting three locations in Los Angeles with a high potential of finding THAI's customers:
THAI's airport counter at Los Angeles International Airport, THAI's main ticketing counter at the North America main office in Los Angeles, California, and the Thai Town area in Hollywood, California. Participants were selected using Systematic Random Sampling.

The questionnaire was divided into 4 parts:

1) General demographic information
2) Customer's past experience with the reservation staff of THAI.
3) Customer satisfaction with communication behavior of the reservation staff of THAI
4) Customer's attitude towards the THAI's reservation staff.

In analyzing the data, percentage and average means were used to explain demographical information of the respondents. Descriptive statistics, the Hypothesis Testing (F-test, and T-test, ANOVA, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation were used in regression analysis for testing the hypothesis.

Conclusions

Demographical Data of the Samples

From the total respondents of 139, only 121 had contact with THAI. They were comprised of 55 percent male
and 45 percent female. Most of them are in the age range of 26-35 followed by the range of 36-45. Most of them had bachelor degrees or equivalent and followed by the group with graduate degrees. Most of the respondents were self-employed or students. In addition, most of them earned annual salaries and wages in the range of US$ 15,001-30,000 and US$ 30,001-45,000.

Service

Customers contact THAI primarily to change their flight schedule, inquire flight information, inquire information on the Royal Orchid Plus mileage program, and check fare and availability respectively. Most of the respondents will contact THAI during 9:01 a.m.-12:00 noon following by 12:01 p.m.-3:00 p.m. and 3:01 p.m.-5:00 p.m. The most difficult times to get connected to THAI’s representative is, between, 9:01 a.m.-12:00 noon followed by 3:01 p.m.-5:00 p.m. The majority of the respondents were only connected to the answering service and voicemail.

Customer Satisfaction with the Reservation Service

The customer satisfaction with the reservation service of THAI was concluded to be in the moderate degree. The respondents were most satisfies with the service in that the staff speak clearly, followed by the
staff speaking with the proper tone of voice and in a non threatening manner respectively. The standard of service, and the importance of problems are the two least significant factors affected to the customer satisfaction.

Customer Attitude towards the Reservation Staff

The respondents' attitude towards the reservation staff of THAI was one of moderate approval. A majority of the respondents agreed that THAI's reservation staff is knowledgeable and skilled in providing good service quality. Along with that, most of the respondents disagreed that the service charge is appropriate to the quality of service.

Recommendation to Improve the Service Quality of Reservation Staff

Most of the respondents agreed that improvement of the service quality of the reservation staff is very important and most desired. The staff must be able to control their emotions and be enthusiastic about problem solving. Furthermore, the respondents want THAI to increase its capability with more staff and phone lines to cope with the higher demand of the customers during peak times. The staff also should be regularly trained to be more service-minded.
Regression analysis data obtained through the SPSS program revealed the following information

1. There was no correlation between customer satisfaction and gender, age, and level of education. Customer satisfaction is not significantly affected by gender, age, and level of education.

2. There was a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and customer’s income. Customer satisfaction is affected by customer’s level of income. This finding correlated with studies performed by Westbrook and Newman on demographic characteristic of consumers as determinants of consumer satisfaction.

3. There was a positive correlation between customers’ attitude and THAI’s reservation staff. Most of the respondents answered that they had favorable attitudes towards the reservation staff. This finding supports Oliver’s findings that consumers’ attitudes are affected by consumer satisfaction.

4. There was no correlation between customer satisfaction and communication behavior. This means that the customer satisfaction is not
significantly affected by the communication behavior of the THAI reservation staff.

It is important to point out shortcomings in this study that should be addressed, recommend ways in which it may be refocused to fill gaps in the literature, and outline potential areas for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Enlarging the population of the study to cover other cities and other states within the United States. Increasing the sample size is necessary to better generalize the findings from the sample population to the entire population of THAI customers.

2. Future study should include the research on finding out how customer satisfaction is positively correlated to level of income to determine how to increase customer satisfaction in customers at the lower income range.

3. Future study should also include research on finding ways to promote favorable attitudes towards THAI reservation staff to improve customer satisfaction.
In summary, while there have been improvements in researching the issue of customer satisfaction there are still many areas which deserve further study. The study of customer satisfaction is necessary to find new ways to increase customer satisfaction in order to win repeat sales, maintain customer loyalty, and to gain new customers to improve future profitability.
APPENDIX A

LETTER TO RESPONDENTS
Dear Respondents,

The following questionnaire is designed to collect data for a research paper in customer satisfaction with the communication behavior of reservation staff of Thai Airways International Public Company Limited in Los Angeles as a partial requirement to fulfill a Master degree in Integrated Marketing Communication. All responses are confidential and will be used for study purposes only.

Your time and responses are greatly appreciated. The results of this study will be utilized to improve the airline’s service quality as well as for future references.

Your sincerely,

Alina Homsangpradit
Graduate Student
California State University San Bernardino
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE
Customer Satisfaction of THAI’s Questionnaire: Please read each question below and choose the answer that most clearly correspond to yourself or your evaluation.

**Part 1 General Background**

1. **Sex**
   a. Male  
   b. Female

2. **Age**
   a. 17-25  
   b. 26-35  
   c. 36-45  
   d. 46-55  
   e. 56 and above

3. **Education**
   a. High school or under  
   b. Undergraduate  
   c. Graduate  
   d. Post graduate

4. **Annual Income**
   a. $15,000 or less  
   b. $15,001-30,000  
   c. $30,001-45,000  
   d. $45,000-60,000  
   e. higher than $60,000

5. **Occupation**
   a. Student  
   b. Self-Employed  
   c. Government Employee  
   d. Professional  
   e. Executive  
   f. Other (Please specify)
Part 2 Customer’s experience with THAI reservation service

1. Have you ever contacted with reservation staff of THAI in Los Angeles?
   a. Yes (Please go to question 2)
   b. No because If no please stop return this questionnaire to sender

1. In one month how often do you contact with the representative staff?
   a. Once a week
   b. 2-3 time per week
   c. 4-5 time per week
   d. Everyday
   f. Other (Please specify)

2. The purpose of the contact with the reservation staff:
   a. Make reservation
   b. Ask flight schedule inquiry
   c. Ask about the price
   d. Change the reservation
   e. Ask about airline information
   f. Other please specify

3. What time do you usually contact the representative of THAI in Los Angeles?
   a. 7.00 a.m. - 9.00 a.m. (PST)
   b. 9.01 a.m. – noon (PST)
   c. 12.01 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. (PST)
   d. 3.01 p.m. – 5.00 p.m. (PST)

4. When you make a phone call to make reservation, how are your calls answered? (Please choose one)
   a. Answering machine then a representative
   b. Answering machine and long waiting time before answered by a representative.
   c. Other (Please specify)
### Part 3 Satisfaction when you contact the reservation staff of THAI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Very Unsatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staff speak clearly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff greet and states his/her name when answering the phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staff apologize sincerely when they have problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Staff never argues with you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Staff speak with proper tone of voice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Staff are not threatening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Staff ends call courteously</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Staff can control their emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Staff are not rude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Staff take good care of you every time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Staff think your problem is important to them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Staff are enthusiastic in solving your problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Staff never refuses to help you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Staff treat you as if you were important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Staff give good advice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. All Staff work according to the same standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Overall satisfaction with customer reservation of THAI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
  a. Very satisfied |           |         |         |             |                  |
  b. Satisfied |               |           |         |             |                  |
  c. Neutral |           |           |         |             |                  |
  d. Unsatisfied |               |           |         |             |                  |
  e. Very unsatisfied |           |           |         |             |                  |

89
### Part 4 What is your opinion about the following question?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your opinion about this</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staff are knowledgeable and skilled in providing good service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff work efficiently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staff provide polite service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Staff service is pleasant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The service from staff is organized equal as world standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The service charge is appropriate to quality of service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

TABLES
Table 1. The percentage of respondents by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The percentage of respondents grouped by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 and above</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. The percentage of respondents by education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school or under</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4. The percentage of respondents by annual income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual income</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 or less</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,001 - 30,000</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,001 - 45,000</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$45,001 - 60,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher than $60,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5. The percentage of respondents by occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government employee</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6. The percentage of respondents who ever contacted with reservation staff of THAI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>87.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>139</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 The percentage of the frequency of customer contact with reservation staff of THAI in one month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The frequency of contact with reservation staff</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a month</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>85.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. The percentage of the purpose of the contact with reservation staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make reservation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight schedule inquiry</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask about the ticket price</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the reservation</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask about airline information</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9. The percentage of the range of time that customer usually contact the reservation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of time (PST)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.00 a.m. - 9.00 a.m.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.01 a.m. – noon</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>50.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.01 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.01 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. The percentage of how the call was answered when customer made a call to THAI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answering machine then a representative</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answering machine and long waiting time before answered by representative</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11. The amount, percentage, and mean of respondents by customers satisfaction of communication behavior of THAI’s reservation staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Avg</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Staff speaks clearly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff greets and states his/her name when</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering the Phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staff apologizes sincerely when they have problems</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Staff never argues with you</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Staff speaks with proper tone of voice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Staff is not Threatening</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Staff ends call Courteously</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Staff can control their emotions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Staff is not rude</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Staff takes good care of you everytime</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Staff thinks your problem is important to them</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>Avg</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfied</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Unsatisfied</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Staff is enthusiastic in solving your problem</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Staff never refuses to help you</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Staff treats you as if you were importance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Staff gives good advice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. All staff work according to the same standards</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. Customer’s attitude toward THAI’s Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Staff is knowledgeable and skilled in providing good service</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Unanswered</th>
<th>Unanswered</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N, %</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.306</td>
<td>3.5124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff works efficiently</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1323</td>
<td>3.2646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staff provides polite service</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1323</td>
<td>3.1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Staff service is Pleasant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1323</td>
<td>3.1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The service from staff is organized equal as world standard</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1323</td>
<td>3.3471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The service charge is appropriate to quality of service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.306</td>
<td>2.7438</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


