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## A STUDY ON PASSENGERS' PREFERENCES AND CHALLENGES FACED IN THE SELECTION OF AIRLINES IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Air transport has become one of the most vital modes of transportation in the modern world, offering speed, convenience, and global connectivity. With the expansion of globalization, international trade, and tourism, the demand for air travel has increased significantly. However, the choice of air travel is influenced by several factors such as cost, safety, service quality, flight frequency, accessibility, and overall travel experience. Although air transport offers significant benefits in terms of speed, comfort, and connectivity, travelers often encounter challenges such as high-ticket prices, flight delays, security concerns, limited route options, and environmental impacts, all of which can influence their preferences and overall travel experience. The study aims to examine the key factors influencing passengers' choice of air transport and the major problems encountered in the process. To analyze the factors influencing the choice of air transport, Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (Kendall's W) was applied, while the Weighted Average Ranking method was used to identify and rank the problems faced by travelers. The study concluded that ticket fare, ease of the booking process, and baggage handling are the most significant factors influencing the choice of air transport. Conversely, flight delays, cancellations, and high ticket pricing emerged as the main challenges faced by passengers.

**Keywords:** Airlines, passengers preferences and challenges faced

### INTRODUCTION

Air transport has emerged as a cornerstone of modern mobility, enabling rapid movement of people and goods across national and international boundaries. It not only supports tourism and global trade but also plays a crucial role in economic growth and cultural exchange. The increasing urbanization, rising

disposable incomes, and expanding global business networks have further intensified the demand for air travel. Airlines and policymakers are focusing on enhancing operational efficiency, improving passenger experiences, and ensuring safety and sustainability in an increasingly competitive environment.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**R. Archana and M.V. Subha (2012)** examined the impact of service quality on passenger satisfaction in air transport. They employed exploratory factor analysis to identify the dimensions of airline service quality and Likert's five-point scale was used to rank the statements related to these dimensions. The study found that in-flight service, in-flight digital service, and back-end operations were positively associated with perceived service quality. Furthermore, the findings indicated that passenger satisfaction varied across different airline companies depending on the level of service delivered. The research highlights the critical role of service quality in shaping passenger perceptions and provides a framework for assessing customer satisfaction in the aviation sector.

**Murugesan and Perumal Samy (2016)** conducted a study to assess customer satisfaction in the airline industry by analyzing factors such as passengers' opinions, quality of services provided, safety measures, and other related aspects. A total of 100 respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique, and Chi-square tests were employed for data analysis. The study concluded that customers were generally satisfied with the quality of service, safety measures, in-flight amenities, and seat comfort. It was recommended that airlines should focus on minimizing passengers' waiting time during check-in and boarding, improving baggage handling, and ensuring punctuality in aircraft arrival and departure schedules

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the factors influencing passengers' preferences in the selection of airlines in India
- To identify the challenges faced by passengers' in the selection of airlines and using airline services

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on survey method. The technique of convenience sampling has been adopted to investigate passengers' preferences and challenges in selecting airlines in India. The study makes use of both primary and secondary data. A total of 75 airline passengers from Erode city have been interviewed, ensuring a diverse mix of passengers in terms of age, travel frequency, and airline experience.

## HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

There is no significant agreement among passengers regarding the factors influencing their preferences in the selection of airlines in India.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The socio-economic profile of the respondents based on their demographic factors such as Gender, Age, Marital Status, Educational Qualification, Occupation, Annual Family Income, Nature of the Family and Area of Residence have been examined by using simple percentage analysis. It is shown in Table 1.

TABLE - 1

Demographic Data	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	43	57.3
	Female	32	42.7
	<b>Total</b>	75	100
<b>Age</b>	Below 25 years	4	5.3
	25 years to 35 years	25	33.3
	35 years to 45 years	20	26.7
	45 years to 55 years	14	18.7
	Above 55 years	12	16
	<b>Total</b>	75	100
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	59	78.7
	Un Married	16	21.3
	<b>Total</b>	75	100
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	Illiterate	5	6.7
	Upto school level	10	13.3
	Graduate	25	33.3
	Post graduate	14	18.7
	Professional	21	28
	<b>Total</b>	75	100
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	7	9.3
	Business	12	16.0
	Professional	16	21.3
	Employee	31	41.3
	Others	9	12.0
	<b>Total</b>	75	100
<b>Annual Family Income</b>	Upto Rs 1 lakhs	16	21.3
	Rs 1 lakhs to Rs 3 lakhs	15	20.0
	Rs 3 lakhs to Rs 5 lakhs	12	16.0
	Above Rs 5 lakhs	32	42.7
	<b>Total</b>	75	100
<b>Nature of family</b>	Nuclear	50	66.7
	Joint	25	33.3
	<b>Total</b>	75	100
<b>Area of Residence</b>	Rural	23	30.7
	Urban	22	29.3
	Semi-Urban	30	40.0
	<b>Total</b>	75	100

The Table 1 elucidates that the majority of respondents are male (57.3%), in the age group of 25-35 years (33.3%), 78.7% are married, 33.3% are graduates, 41.3 % are employee, 42.7% have an annual family income of above Rs. 5 lakhs, 66.7% belongs to nuclear family and 40% reside in urban area.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING PASSENGERS' PREFERENCES IN THE SELECTION OF AIRLINES IN INDIA – KENDALL'S W

The factors influencing passengers' preferences in the selection of airlines in India is analysed by applying Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (Kendall's W) technique. The ranking of the factors influencing the passengers' preferences in the selection of airlines is shown Table 2.

**TABLE – 2**

Particulars	Mean Score	Rank
Brand Image and overall reputation	5.51	5
Punctuality and on-time performance	6.17	4
Ticket fare	8.64	1
Safety record and reputation	3.21	9
Ease of booking and check-in process	8.32	2
Quality of in-flight services (meals, comfort, in-flight entertainment)	4.27	8
Baggage handling efficiency	7.47	3
Customer service and complaint resolutions	4.39	7
Availability of routes and flight frequency	4.81	6
Frequent flyer program and rewards	2.21	10

It is found from the Table 2 that ticket fare is the most important factor, followed by ease of booking and check-in process and baggage handling efficiency. The least important factors are frequent flyer programs and safety record and reputation.

The Kendall's W value of 0.502 shows that there is a moderate level of agreement among the 75 respondents about the factors they think are important when choosing an airline. Since the significance value is 0.000 (less than 0.05), the result is statistically significant, meaning that passengers' opinions are consistent and not random.

**CHALLENGES FACED BY PASSENGERS' IN SELECTION AND USING AIRLINE SERVICES****– WEIGHTED AVERAGE SCORE**

The challenges and difficulties experienced by passengers while availing airline services is then analysed by applying weighted average ranking score technique. The ranking of the problems is shown in Table 3.

**TABLE - 3**

PROBLEMS	Rank	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
	Score X	7	6	5	4	3	2	1			
Flight delays and cancellations	F	26	11	10	9	5	8	6	75	4.95	1
	FX	182	66	50	36	15	16	6	371		
Difficult in getting refunds	F	12	13	13	12	12	8	5	75	4.43	4
	FX	84	78	65	48	36	16	5	332		
Poor baggage handling or lost luggage	F	16	12	8	10	12	8	9	75	4.33	5
	FX	112	72	40	40	36	16	9	325		
Uncomfortable seating	F	12	14	18	10	7	6	8	75	4.52	3
	FX	84	84	90	40	21	12	8	339		
Poor in-flight services	F	10	8	14	11	12	13	7	75	4.01	6
	FX	70	48	70	44	36	26	7	301		
High ticket price or fare fluctuations	F	18	14	12	7	8	8	8	75	4.61	2
	FX	126	84	60	28	24	16	8	346		
Inconsistent safety or hygiene standards	F	9	8	7	12	14	12	13	75	3.64	7
	FX	63	48	35	48	42	24	13	273		

The Table 4.9 reveals that out of the various problems faced by the passengers while while availing airline services, flight delays and cancellation is ranked first with weighted average score of 4.95, high ticket price or fare fluctuations is ranked second with the weighted average score of 4.61 and uncomfortable seating is ranked third with weighted average score of 4.52. It is followed by difficult in getting refunds (4.43), Poor baggage handling or lost luggage (4.33), poor in-flight services (4.01) and inconsistent safety or hygiene standards (3.64).

## SUGGESTIONS

Airlines should prioritise reducing flight cancellations and delays, upholding clear pricing and refund guidelines, and enhancing passenger comfort. Passenger happiness and loyalty can be further increased by improving baggage handling systems, maintaining consistent safety and hygienic standards, and offering improved customer service and digital booking facilities.

## CONCLUSION

Indian airlines play a crucial role in connecting diverse regions of the country, enabling efficient travel for business, tourism, and social needs. They also significantly contribute to the nation's economic growth by supporting trade, employment, and regional development. The findings of the study emphasized the need for airlines to continuously enhance service quality, pricing strategies, and customer engagement to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

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