HOW TO ESTABLISH CUSTOMER TRUST AND RETENTION IN A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AIRLINE BUSINESS

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Abstract. The Indonesian social class population is increasing in number and the demand for rapid transportation heightens the competition in the airline industry in Indonesia. Many business players in this industry are changing their strategies and start to apply new strategies from intensive marketing, advertising, and promotion up to Low Cost Carriers strategy to get more passengers. Highly competitive market triggers the airline companies to attract and retain customers. Increasingly saturated market drives significant gains; thus, customer retention is essential for airlines industry. This study aims to analyze the influence of Service Quality, Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Trust on Customer Retention. A number of hypotheses are examined using a sample of Customers of Low Cost Carriers in Indonesia (Lion Air, Citilink, Sriwijaya Airline, Kalstar and Air Asia). The data is analyzed using LISREL, collected from 417 passengers who travel from Soekarno-Hatta Airport, Jakarta. We find that Service Quality, Brand Image, Customer Trust, and Customer Satisfaction have positive effect on Customer Retention.

Key words: service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, customer trust, customer retention, airline business

Introduction

Mobility and the needs for travelling have increased in the recent years. Despite using full service airlines, many of travellers often choose more efficient ways of travelling. People tend to look for more affordable and efficient services in terms of usage, costs as well as time. People no longer demand for a full-service airline, instead the rise of low cost carrier services is reaching its peak. In choosing a service provider, the users of airline services have been provided with many options. Airline service is also modified from high-cost service to low-cost service. Eventhough the range of services varies, customers have their own tendencies to keep on buying the same services and that is built on the construct of many variables such as service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, and trust (Sroka, 2011; Oláh, et al., 2017). Indonesians have also made air transportation mode as an option. It is because, in addition to saving time, the price of air transportation services nowadays is quite affordable. One of the options airline

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companies choose to draw off potential communities is implementing a low-priced competitive strategy or often called as Low Cost Carriers (LCCs). The occurrence of LCCs in Indonesia started with the introduction of LCCs by Air Asia and also Lion Air, a well-known airline company in Indonesia. LCCs provide low tariffs to their passengers, with the aftermath like eliminating or bringing down some of the services or facilities that regular flights will offer. LCCs with cheap airfare are welcomed by Indonesian people who want to travel on a limited budget. This is also held up by the growth of the middle class in Indonesia. The number of passengers is increasing from year to year as shown by the data below.
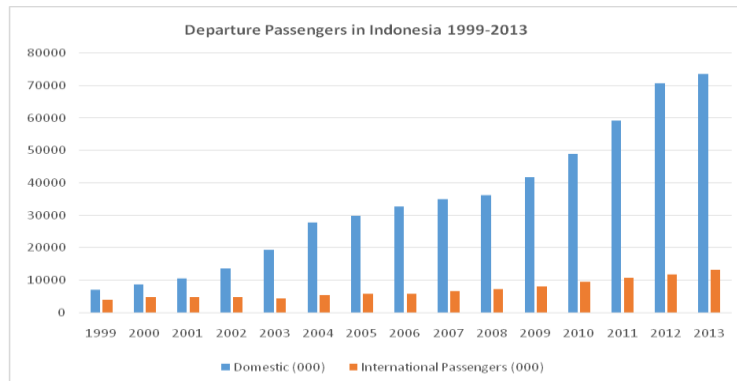

Figure 1. Departure Passengers in Indonesia 1999-2013

This phenomenon is also accompanied by an enhanced competition as airlines improve their flight schedule as well as do price competition by offering LCC services, mainly for foreign flights. Thus, especially from the marketing point of view, airline companies in Indonesia have difficulties in performing their business which will impact the condition of the airline companies themselves. Several Indonesian airline companies which are shut down or bankrupt due to business competition for trust and customer loyalty such as A-Wair in 2001, Indonesia Airline in 2003, Bourag Indonesia Airlines in 2005, Adam Air-Jatayu Airline - Star Air and Sempati Air shut down in 2008, Linus Air in 2009, Kartika Airline in 2010, Riau Airlines in 2011, Batavia Air in 2013, Mandala Air and Merpati Air shut down in 2014. Moreover, how the image of a carrier's brand is evaluated by customers will trigger customer trust and satisfaction that subsequently will lead to repeated buying. After all, the underpinning of the marketing concept is that customer retention can be improved from identification and satisfaction of customer needs Day (1994). Heavy spending and importance attached to customer satisfaction measurement suggest that the link between customer satisfaction and companies' economic standard of living is believed by companies that it places emphasis on satisfaction. Nevertheless, most of the proofs provided to support this relationship is largely anecdotal in nature E. Sivadas and J.L. Baker-Prewitt (2000). In explaining customer post-purchase behaviour, key concepts like quality

of product and service, satisfaction, and trust have long been considered. These variables have contributed to creating favourable intentions toward a firm and affecting retention and loyalty by researchers Bowen and Chen (2001) as well as Han (2013). Identifying the importance of such variables, every company in the aviation and transportation industry is becoming more related to quality improvement and organizes customer satisfaction and trust. This research is aimed at examining the impacts of service quality and brand image on the airlines' customer retention through the mediating roles of customer satisfaction and trust.

The review on the differences with previous researchers and literature review have resulted in novelty, so the study is free from duplication and replication. The novelty in this research is to see the influence of Service Quality, Brand Image on Customer Retention through Customer Satisfaction and Customer Trust which focuses on LCCs in the Indonesian aviation industry which has never been done before by previous researchers. We propose that brand image and service quality are signalling tools that increase customer satisfaction and trust, which in turn increase customer retention. Below is the conceptual framework of this research (Figure 2).
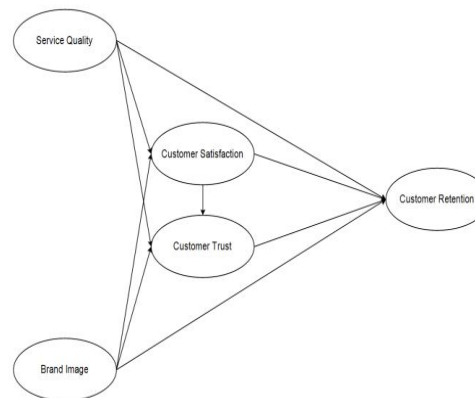

Figure 2. Research Paradigm

Service Quality

Competitive environment in the airline industry has been demanding every airline to maintain and get new customers, for example through applying good service quality. Competitiveness results from the relationship between the needs which are constantly growing and the ability to replace them (Kowalska, 2014). At the moment when customers compare a perceived performance of a product with their prior expectations, they may experience the feeling of pleasure or disappointment, and that is defined as satisfaction by (Tse and Wilton, 1988). Service quality in general is defined as a form of attitude that is a long-term comprehensive appraisal Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988). It is in line with the statement that a human need always increases, so service quality is required more than before.

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That is why it needs an overall evaluation. As a pioneer, two distinct service dimensions proposed on a research by Grönroos (1984) include technical and functional quality. Another measurement of service quality is developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) as SERVQUAL, consisting of five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Ting (2004) implies that it is essential in forming one's intention in the relationship between quality and satisfaction. According to the study by Rust and Zahorik (1993), retention has a significant relationship with loyalty. Ercsey (2017) also emphasizes the role of customers' satisfaction and their involvement in service production in order to increase the productivity and service quality of companies so that the companies can stay competitive for a long time.

Brand Image

Brand is a fundamental thing for building customer's likeliness to keep on buying one company's product or services. Trust rises customer intentions to buy a service or product from a company Kandampully et al. (2015) and Jarvenpaa et al. (1999). Brand image has direct effects and brand awareness has indirect effects Esch et al. (2006). A brand's image gives it its perceived 'personality'. The proliferation of research on brand personality (Duboff, 1986; Durgee, 1988). A brand's personality can be described as the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand J.L. Aaker (1997). The summation of brand association that leads the customer towards brand perception includes brand benefits, attributes, and attitude (D. Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). Company's marketing program to sustain brand image and form brand strategy is essential (D.A. Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Image is able to create significances. Image also helps consumers gather information, differentiate the brand from the others, build reasons to purchase, and also create encouraging feelings and provide basis for brand extension D.A. Aaker (1991).

Customer Satisfaction

Zeithaml et al. (1996) propose the measurement of respondents' perception of service quality using the five-dimensional measurement scale. We put service quality into operation as a multi-dimensional construct that consists of five dimensions including tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The evaluation items from Cronin and Taylor (1992) (Lam et al., 2004) for customer value are measured using the items adopted from Ulaga and Eggert (2002). Service and/or product quality suggests the performances obtained from the interactions with service personnel (Price et al.,1995). According to Fornell et al. (1996), customers can evaluate whether they are satisfied or not when they decide to purchase until they consume a product and service. Bloemer and Kasper (1995) define brand satisfaction as the result of the subjective evaluation when the chosen alternative brand meets or exceeds expectations. Consumer satisfaction is essential for the longevity of any business and is in fact one of the most researched topics in marketing Pappu and Quester (2006). Bodet (2008) confirms the relationship

between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Shankar et al. (2003) also offer verification that there is a positive relationship between loyalty and satisfaction. Kmecová (2016) considers a satisfied customer to be a primary condition for the success of the businesses which provide services.

Customer Trust

Brand lies on the perspective of customers who believe on the companies which already have a good image of their brand. D. Aaker (1996) states that a strong brand name can facilitate consumers to distinguish and convey the quality of a product. Trust is necessary for building strong consumer-brand relationships (Susan and David, 1999) and it has a positive relationship with brand loyalty. Consumers develop trust in a brand based on a positive thought regarding their expectation for the organization's behaviour and products performance which a brand represents, according to Ashley et al. (2009). In the recent years, trust has been linked with brand image and it becomes one of the factors that build trust. A linkage between customer satisfaction and loyalty is also offered by Fornell et al. (1996) Trust can be defined as a confident belief from consumers that they can rely on the provider to deliver the promised services, whereas a relational value can be defined as the perception of consumers about the benefits enjoyed against the cost incurred in maintaining the ongoing exchange relationship Clara and Jagdip (2005). The trust in the purchased brand may be viewed as the leverage of its credibility, which may strengthen the consumers' behaviour in repeating purchase Abdelmajid (1998). Trust expresses cumulative effects over time not only on loyalty in a high-involvement but also in high-service product markets Chiou and Chi-Chung (2006). Other researchers provide cognitive or evaluative definitions of trust, arguing that the link between trust evaluations and behavioural response should be open to heuristic examination and anticipated as subject to the influence of other contextual factors (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Therefore, we define consumer trust as the future expectations held by the customers toward the service providers who are reliable and can be dependent upon the delivery of their promises.

Customer Retention

We establish a direct relationship between airline brand image and customer retention. Customers who believe the airline is willing to deliver on its promises have a positive feeling toward the company Gittell (2002). An increasing rates in customer satisfaction and retention is a result of a more effective relationship developed with customers created by service providers. According to Rust and Zahorik (1993) retention and loyalty have a significant relationship. Customer retention can also reflect loyalty Hallowell (1996). In the customer retention, it is important for the firms to know who will serve their customers. It is essential for a product or service provider to focus on the quality of a product and service given.

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Post sales services are identified by Saeed et al. (2005) as the important drivers for customer retentions. Statistically, Lin and Wu (2011) state that there is a significant relationship among quality commitment, satisfaction, trust and customer retention and the future use of a product, as retention is influenced by the future use of product. Comparably, the relationship among customer retention and customer loyalty is examined by Petterson (2004). Wong et al. (2009) prove that when organizations have a good relationship with customers, they may create customer loyalty as it has a significant positive impact. Witkowska (2010) considers brand image and identity to be essential components of the company's relations with customers as the receivers of brand image and she emphasizes the need to build and support customer loyalty towards the brand. As studied by Smith and Chang (2009), customer retention has no impact on customer loyalty. Bolton et al. (2000) examine that customer loyalty has significant effects on retention. Another research examining the relation between customer retention and customer loyalty in telecommunication market is carried out by Gerpott et al. (2001).

Research Methodology

This study uses a questionnaire as a data collection tool, so it is necessary to measure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The next stage is analyzing and interpreting the data obtained in the field using a descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistics. For this study, the total sample is 417 customers and it is drawn proportionately from each country in Indonesia (Lion Air, Citilink, Sriwijaya Airline, Kalstar and Air Asia). The technique of spreading questionnaires is random with regard to the spread of the composition. The data is collected from the passengers who travel from Soekarno-Hatta Airport, Jakarta. The data is analyzed using LISREL. The implementation period of survey is during 2 weeks which start from 1 March to 14 March 2016. All items are measured based on the responses to semantic differential scale point 5, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The primary data obtained from customers (sample) are analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on software LISREL 8.71. SEM is used to test the research hypothesis. The relationships patterns among variables that will be studied are the causal relationships of one or more independent variables with one or more dependent variables.

Results

To test the validity and reliability, we use a confirmatory factor analysis. The research model comprises five variables of Service Quality, Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Trust, and Customer Retention. All the indicators for the dimension in each construct have resulted in the value of a loading factor bigger than 0.5 so there is no indicator excluded from the model.

Table 1. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis First Order

Variable	Dimension	λ	CR	VE	Variable	Dimension	λ	CR	VE
Service Quality	On-board Comfort	0.754			Customer Satisfaction	Tangibles	0.82		
	Airline Employess	0.614				Reliability	0.798		
	Reliability of Service	0.65	0.815	0.5		Responsiveness	0.833	0.899	0.6
	Convenience of Service	0.679				Assurance	0.812		
	Handling Abnormal Condition	0.722				Empathy	0.737		
Brand Image	Attributes	0.686			Customer Trust	Corporate Integrity	0.963	0.933	0.9
						Corporate Credibility	0.787		
	Benefit	0.665	0.783	0.5	Customer Retention	Word of Mouth	0.701		
						Purchase Intension	0.736	0.783	0.5
	Brand Attitude	0.845				Complain Behaviour	0.598		
						Price Sensitivity	0.716		

The model structure illustrates the relationship among constructs. The value of X^2 447.95 with df 139 (Marginal), Sig. Probability 0.000 (poor), GFI 0.90≥ 0.90 (Good), RMSEA 0.073 ≤ 0.08 (Good), Normed X^2 3.22< 5 (Good), NFI 0.93> 0.90 (Good), NNFI 0.93> 0.90 (Good), CFI 0.95> 0.90 (Good), RFI 0.91> 0.90 (Good), AGFI 0.86 (Marginal) and PNFI 0.75 (Marginal) are in the range of 0 – 1.

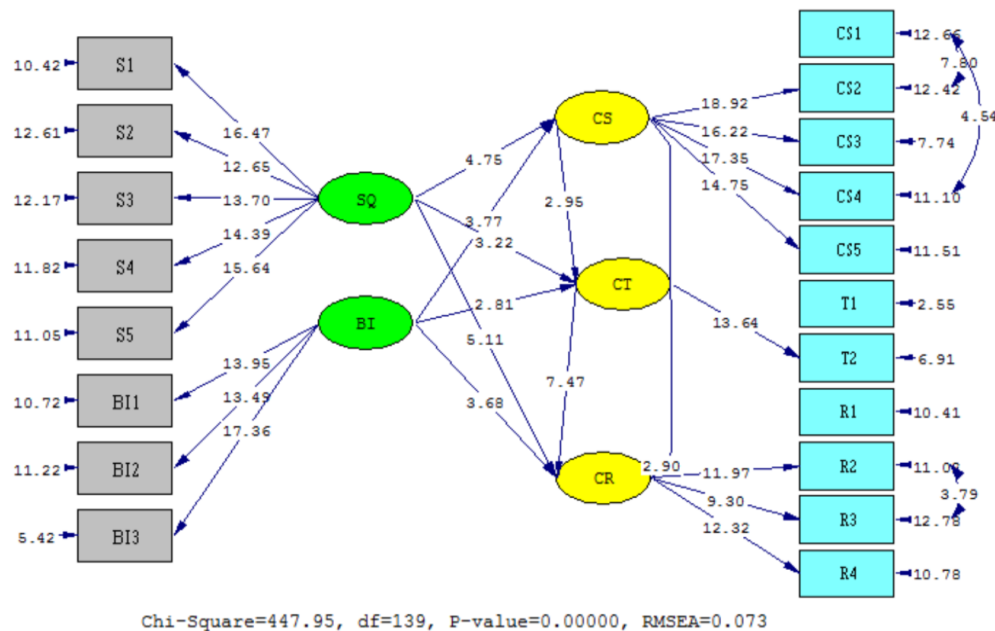Chi-Square=447.95, df=139, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.073

Figure 3. Model structure

From the structural model, service quality influences customer satisfaction with the coefficient value 0.27 and t-value 4.75. Brand Image influences customer satisfaction with the coefficient value 0.22 and t-value 3.77. Service quality influences customer trust with the coefficient value 0.19 and t-value 3.22. Brand Image influences

customer trust with the coefficient value 0.16 and t-value 2.81. Service quality influences customer retention with the coefficient value 0.28 and t-value 5.11. Brand Image influences customer retention with the coefficient value 0.20 and t-value 3.68. Customer satisfaction influences customer trust with the coefficient value 0.17 and t-value 2.95. Customer satisfaction influences customer retention with the coefficient value 0.15 and t-value 2.90. Finally, customer trust influences customer retention with the coefficient value 0.45 and t-value 7.47. It means all the inter-construct relationships are significant because the t-value is bigger than the cut off 1.96. Based on the structural equation of customer satisfaction, the value of R^2 is found 0.14, meaning that service quality and brand image contribute 14% to the creation of customer satisfaction. Whereas from the structural equation of customer trust, the value of R^2 is found 0.13, meaning that service quality, brand image and customer satisfaction contribute 13% to the creation of customer trust, and of customer retention the value R^2 is found 0.55, meaning that service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction and customer trust contribute 55% to the creation of customer retention.

Discussion

From the data above, the hypothesis developed from the research model proves that service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction and customer trust positively affect customer retention. Customer trust becomes the most dominant variable in creating customer retention. It means the customers will be retained if they believe the impact of service quality and brand image of the company. In this study it is also explained that customer retention is resulted from the customer trust in the company. This study also supports the research by Selnes (1993) that companies should monitor and improve both customer satisfaction and brand reputation. In situations where the intrinsic cues of the product or service are ambiguous, brand reputation is the strongest driver of customer loyalty compared with customer satisfaction. In addition, it also strengthens the results of study carried out by Hussain et al. (2015) who explain that service quality, perceived value, and brand image have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction, which can lead to brand loyalty. The study results can be also applied in the conditions of companies operating in the European airline environment, for example Deutsche Lufthansa AG, Russian Airlines, CSA Czech Airlines, Aeroflot, LOT – Polish Airlines, Norwegian Air Shuttle, which proves the general impact of the study results. The situation in Europe regarding the airline companies can be seen similarly as the Indonesian conditions. The airline industry in Europe with 30.000 flights a day and the air traffic increase of 54% since the liberalization of the European aviation market in 1993 made travel much more accessible and has stimulated growth in air services. In 2016, the total number of passengers travelling by air in the European Union was 973 million (Eurostat, 2017). The deregulation of prices in Europe in 1990s gave rise of low cost carriers in Europe. Wilson (2017) identifies ten LCCs based in Europe and operating on the continent: Norwegian Air, Wow Air, Easy Jet, Ryanair, Wizz Air,

airBaltic, FlyBe, ArlBerlin, Vueling, and Pegasus Airlines. As a result, there is a strong need to study different issues regarding the airlines companies and managers can be inspired and influenced by the results of such studies in their work. The managers of airline companies operating in Europe face similar problems like in Indonesian companies connected to the fierce competition in this industry and thus an endless struggle to win the customers' trust and loyalty. As Badicu and State (2016) mention in their study, unsolved problems and strong competition in airline industry caused the closure of several companies, for example Belgian Sabena, Maleo Hungarian Airlines or Spanair S.A. Therefore, it is vital for the companies to concentrate on examining and analysing different significant issues related to the airline business management.

There are several authors who pay attention to such an important industry with its global impact as the airline industry has on the global economic problems. Gladson Nwokah and Gladson-Nwokah (2013) compare delivery customer experience management practices in the UK and Nigeria Aviation industry with a result of positive relationships between the dimensions of customer experience and management practices. The study supports the idea of the significance of customer' service experience for the success of airline companies. Vaaben and Larsen (2015) focus their research on the impact of the mitigation of airspace congestion on airline networks. Diaconu (2012) offers a detailed analysis and a comparison of European and American low cost operators which have to solve many similar problems, one of which is also the lack of customers' brand loyalty. Further studies and research is needed in the area of airline industry especially from the point of view of cross cultural analyses.

Conclusion

From the research it can be concluded that service quality, brand image, satisfaction and customer trust have a significant influence on customer retention. Furthermore, customer trust influences customer retention. This study explains that the customer retention of low cost carrier airline industries will determine whether they will be retained or not based on the customer trust and service quality given by the company. The policy which companies can apply is to improve the service quality that has been done although their status is LCC. In order to improve the brand image, companies can do several things such as using marketing tools through website, mobile branding, getting involved in the interaction in social media and being consistent with the service that has been delivered.

The managerial implications of the research results in paying attention to the quality of provided services which are the key elements of any successful and effective company operating in the aviation industry. Managers should concentrate on the training of their employees so that they are capable of providing services in the way which makes the customers satisfied.

The results of this study can provide airline management with information regarding their service quality and the subsequent customer satisfaction. The study suggests

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managers to measure and evaluate the level of customers' satisfaction. One of the options is to analyze the complaints of the consumers to make corrections and eliminate the mistakes in delivering services. Managers of airline companies should insist on perfect and professional service delivery by the personnel to create sustainable customers' trust and loyalty towards the brand and thus maintain excellent relationships with the customers which bring repetitions in buying. Information and the results of the research presented in this study are important for the managers not only from the point of view of keeping the loyal customers but also for the sake of attracting the new potential ones.

The study results regarding service quality, brand image, satisfaction, customer trust and retention can serve the managers in their decision-making processes about the future strategies of airline companies so that the companies can differentiate their own image from that of their competitors in order to strengthen their market position in a highly competitive airline environment with the effects of airline companies to the global economy.

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BUDOWANIE ZAUFANIA KLIENTÓW I ICH UTRZYMYWANIE W WYJĄTKOWO KONKURENCYJNYM BIZNESIE LOTNICZYM

Streszczenie: Liczba ludności w Indonezji rośnie, a popyt na szybki transport zwiększa konkurencję w tatejszym przemyśle lotniczym. Wielu graczy biznesowych, w celu pozyskania pasażerów, zmienia swoje strategie i zaczyna stosować nowe, począwszy od intensywnego marketingu, reklamy i promocji do strategii niskokosztowych przewoźników. Wysoce konkurencyjny rynek powoduje, że linie lotnicze przyciągają i zatrzymują klientów. Coraz bardziej nasycony rynek znacznie napędza zyski; w związku z tym utrzymanie klientów jest niezbędne dla przemysłu lotniczego. Celem badania jest analiza wpływu jakości obsługi, wizerunku marki, zadowolenia klienta i zaufania klienta, na jego utrzymanie. Na próbie klientów niskokosztowych przewoźników w Indonezji (Lion Air, Citilink, Sriwijaya Airline, Kalstar and Air Asia) zweryfikowanych zostało wiele hipotez. Dane przeanalizowane zostały za pomocą oprogramowania statystycznego LISREL i zebrane od 417 pasażerów, którzy podróżowali z lotniska Soekarno-Hatta w Dżakarcie. Autorzy sa zdania, że jakość obsługi, wizerunek marki, zaufanie klienta i zadowolenie klienta mają pozytywny wpływ na utrzymanie klientów.

Słowa kluczowe: jakość obsługi, wizerunek marki, satysfakcja klienta, zaufanie klienta, utrzymanie klienta, biznes lotniczy

如何在客户中建立客户的信任和保留
高度竞争的航空业务

抽象。印度尼西亚的社会阶层人数不断增加, 对快速运输的需求增加了印度尼西亚航空业的竞争。这个行业的许多商业人士正在改变他们的战略, 并开始采用新的战略, 从密集的营销, 广告和推广到低成本航空公司战略, 以获得更多的乘客。高度竞争的市场触发航空公司吸引和留住客户。日益饱和的市场驱动显着收益;因此, 客户保留对航空业至关重要。本研究旨在分析服务质量, 品牌形象, 客户满意度和客户信任对客户保留的影响。利用印度尼西亚的低成本航空公司客户(LionAir, Citilink, Sriwijaya Airline, Kalstar和AirAsia)的样本, 对一些假设进行了检验。使用LISREL分析数据, 这些数据是从雅加达SoekarnoHatta机场旅行的417名乘客中收集的。我们发现服务质量, 品牌形象, 顾客信任和顾客满意对顾客保留有积极的作用。

关键词:服务质量, 品牌形象, 顾客满意, 顾客信任, 顾客保留, 航空公司业务。