CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Customer service is a core value for airports, not just in respect of passengers but also in respect of the airlines and airport organizations, the non-travelling public and airport staff, that make up an airport's customer base. Understanding and meeting their disparate needs and expectations is the key to operating an airport successfully.

The increasingly globalised economy and rising standards of living have driven demand for both business and leisure travel. The emergence of the low cost carriers has made air travel more accessible and affordable than ever before. Annually, approximately 5 billion passengers travel on 77 million flights, at around 1,700 airports globally. These passenger numbers are expected to double by 2025 but without a corresponding increase in the number of airports.

So, airports have to handle increasing numbers of passengers, who also have rising expectations about the services and standard of service that an airport should provide. Then there are also the mandatory customs, immigration, quarantine and aviation security requirements and processes, which have become more complex and onerous. Some countries also enforce strict bio-security measures, which complicate the passenger facilitation processes further. So, managing the passenger facilitation process and service quality at airports is a challenge.

On the regulatory side, ACI works closely with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to address facilitation issues. In recent years, the SARS and Avian Flu outbreaks and the Influenza A(H1N1) pandemic, has highlighted the important role that airlines and airports can play in preventing the spread of infectious disease. On the security side, the restriction on the carriage of Liquids, Aerosols and Gels (LAGs) has had a significant impact on passengers and airport processes, since it was introduced in late 2006. These measures will need to remain in place until such time that Liquid Explosive Detection Systems (LEDs) are deployed at airports, which is unlikely before 2013. The threat from terrorists using improvised explosive devices that are artfully concealed on their body, has also seen a move towards the use of body scanners at airports. This presents a number of challenges, as these devices are heavy and have a larger footprint than the conventional systems in use at airports. Passenger concerns about safety and privacy with these devices have arisen. ACI believes that these concerns have been adequately addressed in the design and operational protocols and government studies show that these devices are completely safe. Therefore, ACI advocates that airports should be allowed (but not be required) to use these devices in passenger screening.

ACI is also working with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and other stakeholders on cross-industry initiatives to improve the facilitation of passengers. There are various industry working groups that are developing recommended practices for technology solutions and processes, facilitating the early adoption of innovative solutions. In this regard, the move towards off-airport processing and self-service applications is expected to grow, reducing the time needed for check in and processing at the airport. Advances have also been made in automating the border control process and there are many examples of automated border clearance, using a combination of an e-passport or identity card, biometrics and turnstile arrangements. The machine
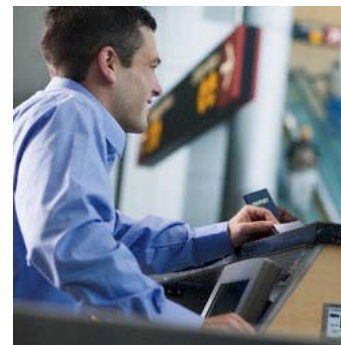
readable travel document is now standard worldwide and this will hopefully facilitate greater adoption of automation in passenger processing.

Airport Service Quality

Meeting customer needs and expectations is the key to operating an airport successfully. And with pressure on airports to reduce aeronautical charges, there is a need for airports to grow their non-aeronautical revenues. Good customer service therefore makes good business sense.

ACI launched its Airport Service Quality (ASQ) programme is 2006 to help airports measure and benchmark service quality. Analysis from the ASQ programme has subsequently led to the development of industry best practices. Around 180 airports currently use the ASQ Survey to gauge passenger satisfaction from around 300,000 interviews annually. Each interview covers over 30 aspects of the passengers experience at the airport, from availability of facilities and their cleanliness, to waiting times and courtesy of staff. By dissecting and measuring each part of the passenger process, an airport is able to identify problems and performance gaps, which in turn facilitate improvement actions.

The ASQ Survey results clearly show the key factors that influence passengers. These factors relate to the core processes and basic needs of passengers, namely cleanliness of the terminal, availability of washrooms, the efficiency of the processes, waiting times and courtesy and helpfulness of staff. Get the basics right and an airport can then achieve even higher levels of satisfaction through its value-adding services, like shopping, restaurants and entertainment.

Managing service quality at airports has evolved into managing a passenger experience, and the ASQ programme provides airports with a toolbox for doing this. The ASQ Performance programme provides airports with a tool for measuring and benchmarking the 16 core processes that a passenger uses when travelling through an airport. This enables an airport to compare passenger satisfaction ('the perceived quality of service') with the actual service delivered. Such analysis helps airports to set and maintain service standards.

The ASQ Survey results show a 7.5% (industry average) increase in passenger overall satisfaction at airports in the survey between 2006 and 2009. This is quite an achievement when one considers the additional security measures that have been in force during that time. This is testimony to the importance that airports place on service quality and the management expertise that airport managers have developed. The ASQ Assured certification programme benchmarks an airport's management approach to service quality against industry best practice. It provides too a framework for excellence that airports can use in their service improvement strategies.

Each year, ACI presents ASQ Awards to those airports that in the opinion of passengers have provided the highest levels of overall satisfaction. These Awards and Top 5 rankings are based on the results of all the survey interviews conducted in the preceding calendar year. The winning airports in 2009 were:

BEST AIRPORT BY SIZE OF AIRPORT
fewer than 5 million passengers
1) Halifax (YHZ)
2) Ottawa (YOW)
3) Portland (PWM)
4) Guayaquil (GYE)
5) Jackson (JAN)

5 – 15 million passengers
1) Hyderabad (HYD)
2) Austin (AUS)
3) Cancun (CUN)
4) Nagoya (NGO)
5) Jacksonville (JAX)

15 – 25 million passengers
1) Baltimore/Washington (BWI)
2) Taipei (TPE)
3) Shenzhen (SZX)
4) New Delhi (DEL)
5) Salt Lake City (SLC)

25 – 40 million passengers
1) Incheon (ICN)
2) Singapore (SIN)
3) Tokyo Narita (NRT)
4) Kuala Lumpur (KUL)
5) Shanghai Pudong (PVG)

over 40 million
1) Hong Kong (HKG)
2) Beijing (PEK)
3) Denver (DEN)
4) Dallas Fort Worth (DFW)
5) Houston George Bush (IAH)

ASQ Top Performers 2009

BEST AIRPORTS WORLDWIDE
1) Incheon (ICN)
2) Singapore (SIN)
3) Hong Kong (HKG)
4) Beijing (PEK)
5) Hyderabad (HYD)

BEST IMPROVEMENT AWARD BY REGION
Africa: Cairo (CAI)
Asia Pacific: New Delhi (DEL)
Europe: Ponta Delgada (PDL)
Latin America-Caribbean: Cancun (CUN)
Middle East: Abu Dhabi (AUH)
North America: Cleveland (CLE)

For more information on the ASQ Programme, visit www.airportservicequality.aero

BEST AIRPORT BY REGION
Africa
1) George (GRJ)
2) Johannesburg (JNB)
3) Cairo (CAI)
4) Port Elizabeth (PLZ)
5) Durban (DUR)

Asia-Pacific
1) Incheon (ICN)
2) Singapore (SIN)
3) Hong Kong (HKG)
4) Beijing (PEK)
5) Hyderabad (HYD)

Europe
1) Keflavik (KEF)
2) Zurich (ZRH)
3) Porto (OPO)
4) Malta (MLA)
5) Southampton (SOU)

Latin America & Caribbean
1) Cancun (CUN)
2) Guayaquil (GYE)
3) Barbados(BGI)
4) Mexico City (MEX)
5) Montego Bay (MBJ)

Middle East
1) Tel Aviv (TLV)
2) Dubai (DXB)
3) Abu Dhabi (AUH)
4) Doha (DOH)
5) Muscat (MCT)

North America
1) Austin (AUS)
2) Halifax (YHZ)
3) Ottawa (YOW)
4) Jacksonville (JAX)
5) Portland (PWM)