

The influence of brand experiences on brand loyalty: A study on Air Serbia

Uticaj iskustva sa brendom na lojalnost prema brendu: Studija slučaja Air Serbia

Marija Mandarić^{a*}, Dejan Sekulić^a, Suzana Lazović^a

^a University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism in Vrnjačka Banja, Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia

Article info

Original scientific paper/ Originalan naučni rad

Received/ Rukopis je primljen:

31 March, 2023

Revised/ Korigovan:

20 April, 2023

20 May, 2023

Accepted/ Prihvaćen:

8 June, 2023

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5937/bizinfo2301009M>

UDC/ UDK:

658.626:3.083.7]:656.7(497.11)

Abstract

Brand experience has turned into an important factor in achieving brand loyalty. This tendency is especially perceptible in the airline industry. Airline companies operate in very competitive market conditions and are oriented towards constant improvement in providing services. Brand experience affects consumer loyalty, directly and indirectly through brand satisfaction and brand trust. The paper aims to investigate the relationships between passengers' experience with the Air Serbia brand and their brand loyalty. The research included the views of 100 respondents who used Air Serbia services in the previous two years. Hypotheses testing in the research was conducted using correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results confirmed the significant relationships between the variables in the research model. The obtained results indicate a strong influence of passenger experience, trust and passenger satisfaction on loyalty to the Air Serbia company.

Keywords: brand, experience, trust, satisfaction, loyalty

Sažetak

Iskustvo sa brendom postalo je značajan faktor u postizanju lojalnosti prema brendu. Ovaj trend je posebno primetan u avio industriji. Avio kompanije posluju u veoma konkurentnim tržišnim okolnostima i orijentisane su na konstantno unapređenje u pružanju usluga. Iskustvo sa brendom utiče na lojalnost potrošača, direktno i indirektno kroz zadovoljstvo i poverenje u brend. Rad ima za cilj da istraži veze između iskustva putnika sa brendom Air Serbia i njihove lojalnosti prema brendu. Istraživanjem su obuhvaćeni stavovi 100 ispitanika koji su koristili usluge Air Serbia prethodne dve godine. Testiranje hipoteza u istraživanju sprovedeno je primenom korelacije i multiregresione analize. Rezultati su potvrdili značajne veze između varijabli u istraživačkom modelu. Dobijeni rezultati ukazuju na snažan uticaj iskustva putnika, poverenja i zadovoljstva putnika na lojalnost prema kompaniji Air Serbia.

Ključne reči: bren, iskustvo, poverenje, satisfakcija, lojalnost

1. Introduction

One of the biggest service industries in the world is aviation sector, and satisfying passenger expectations is a critical factor that should be considered. Pressed with increasing competition, airline companies connect with passengers and provide them with better services and constantly strive to satisfy and keep customers to survive and remain profitable (Soomro et al., 2022; Shen et al., 2021). But, customers today are more informed about air services and compare airline services. The airline industry improves the passenger experience to gain passengers loyalty and keep long-term relationship with them.

Airlines are pioneers in the development of programs aimed at rewarding loyalty (Veljković, 2010; Batarliene et al., 2023). They were the first to develop so-called frequent flyer loyalty programs aimed at increasing the frequency of using the services of a particular airline. If the frequent flyer program is attractive enough for passengers it may enhance customer loyalty (Shiwakoti et al., 2021). The airline industry is characterized by few barriers to market exit and, frequently, a wide range of options from which customers can choose to meet their needs. As a result, airlines are required to examine the demands and experiences of passengers to determine the elements that most affect their loyalty. In order to increase

*Corresponding author

E-mail address: mmandaric@kg.ac.rs

This is an open access paper under the license



consumer satisfaction and loyalty, numerous forms of study have been conducted to examine how passengers rate airline services. But, according to Batarliene et al. (2023), only 6% of all airline passengers took part in loyalty programs worldwide, which is a small percent. It shows that airlines do not know enough factors that significantly affect passenger loyalty.

The paper aims to investigate factors that have a strong influence on passenger loyalty, based on a study that included 100 passengers of the Serbian national airline Air Serbia. The results of the research should indicate potential opportunities for improving the experience of passengers, their trust and satisfaction with air services, in order to make Air Serbia the preferred brand to which passengers are gladly to return and recommend their services to others.

This research study has the following structure. The review of relevant literature about important concepts and the formulation of the hypothesis is covered in the papers after introduction. Then follows methodology, which includes information regarding the research instrument, respondents, statistical methods, and processes. The research findings and discussion are presented in the next section of the essay. The study's limitations and recommendations for further research were included in the conclusion, which is the last section.

The conclusions of this original research could provide useful implications for improving the service users' experience with the brand, all to create greater loyalty. A model with four statistically tested hypotheses was created based on a survey of the literature on loyalty variables.

2. Literature review

2.1. Airline brand

Mandarić (2023) defined brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination thereof, with the primary purpose of identifying the products and services of a particular manufacturer and/or seller and differentiating them from the competition" (Mandarić, 2023). Selecting a brand by consumers during the procedure of buying is determined by numerous decisions that are influenced by different factors (Stefanović, 2022). A brand is distinguished from other similar brands that are created to satisfy the same need or want by particular characteristics that are the outcome of developing a distinctive brand identity. Chung et al. (2022) state that "a brand's identity has numerous components that directly or indirectly affect the customer's purchase intention". Brand identity can have both positive and negative effects on brand image. Brand image is created in the minds of consumers and represents a subjective image of objective reality. It takes a lot of effort to create such a brand identity that will allow creation a clear, consistent, and positive image of the brand among service users. Brand image can influence consumer preferences and the intention to buy or try the brand. Chung et al., (2022) described brand identity as "a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategists aspire to create or

maintain and these associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization". Also, a brand's identity plays an important contribution to improving a customer's brand satisfaction. In a prior study (Chug et al., 2022) an airline's brand and the intention of repeat purchasing, which might be related to airline loyalty, have been found to have a substantial impact on the airline sector.

Air Serbia is the national brand of the Republic of Serbia, airline with a long tradition. Its forerunner is the first national company Aeroput, founded way back in 1927. Later, it operated under the name JAT, and it has been operating under the current name Air Serbia since 2013. During the ten years since the new chapter in the history of the Serbian airline, Air Serbia has entered new markets and opened numerous direct routes, including connections with the USA and the PRC. Taking into account the strong competition in the airline market, the aim is to explore opportunities to improve passenger experience and brand loyalty of the national airline company. The relationship between a Serbian airline company's brand experience, customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty has not yet been investigated. Previous studies about brand loyalty in travel services were conducted in Australia - only individuals who utilized a hotel or airline brand when traveling domestically or abroad during the previous year were included in the study. (So et al., 2016), also with the passengers that flew on routes with Vietnam Airlines between Vietnam and Australia (Shiwakoti et al., 2021), airline industry in Korea (Chung et al., 2022) and low-cost carriers in Saudi Arabia (Hassan et al., 2022). Additionally, other research looked into how airline brand performance is affected by brand and customer experience (Pabla et al., 2022; Laming et al., 2014).

2.2. Brand experience

The brand experience is one of the most effective methods to link service providers and customers. Numerous academics have studied the impact, effects, and aspects of brand experience during the previous few decades. Schmitt et al. (2015) suggest that customers purchase brands for the experience of certain interactions. Customer satisfaction is greater when a company satisfies the customer's expectations. Brakus et al. (2009) were particularly interested in experience research in the service industry that extends through time, including as airline flights. In general, creating an unforgettable experience is important for the entire tourism industry. Airlines in conditions of intense competition are finding new ways to get closer to passengers and make their experience as pleasant as possible. They also use slogans such as Air Serbia: "Have it your way", trying to attract passengers and promise a pleasant experience. The brand experience is viewed from different perspectives. According to Brakus et al. (2009) "brand experiences are observed through four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral". Brakus et al. (2009) carried out several studies to validate and construct a model with the stated brand experience dimensions. It is believed that various stimulants are evoked when consumers associate with a brand, either directly or indirectly, and that this association results in responses such as sensory,

intellectual, emotional, and behavioral. Those answers or reactions to stimulants form the overall experience with the brand. By exploring and improving dimensions of the brand experience, companies can achieve differentiation in the market by delivering a unique, high-value service. Laming (2014, p. 16) suggests that "the purpose of customer experience is to drive brand success by creating a brand-based customer experience which is differentiated from its competitors and for which consumers are willing to pay".

When researching, shopping, and purchasing brands, customers become familiar with product or service features. As a result, individuals come into touch with a variety of brand-based stimulants, such as brand name or colors used in the logo, and backgrounds. These brand interactions occur in an online or offline store or at an event, in contact with the brand name, logo and slogan, websites, and advertisements. All these stimulants, which are the main source of individuals and subjective reactions of customer, have an impact on how the "brand experience" is formed (Brakus et al., 2009). Customers' good thoughts toward a brand are greatly influenced by their brand experience, which can also strengthen such feelings.

Brand experience can be observed as "the customers' view of the brand at any point of interaction with it" (Pabla et al., 2009, p. 2), through direct interaction with the brand or brand images. The sensory brand experience describes the experience with the brand using their five senses and describes how well the brand responds to the consumer's senses and leaves a strong impression on his senses (Nysveen et al., 2014). The affective dimension of brand experience is concerned with the moods and feelings that a product or service evokes (Brakus et al., 2009). Such a cordial greeting from flight attendants might be considered a successful experience that stirs up passengers' sensations and emotions. The intellectual dimension shows the extent to which the brand arouses the interest of customers and encourages them to think and solve problems (Nysveen et al., 2014). This dimension refers to thinking, engaging the imagination, and solving problems (Xie et al., 2017). The behavioral dimension of brand experience links physical experience to how successfully a business can engage customers in physical activities (Brakus et al., 2009; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014). The behavioral dimension is relevant to the physical discomfort experienced by air travelers, such as ear pain, ankle or foot swelling, headaches, and weariness. All bodily experiences and behaviors are a part of the behavioral brand experience because flight crew advise hard swallowing and chewing gum to reduce ear pressure.

2.3. Brand trust

Chung et al., (2022) was defined trust as "the expectation of ethically justifiable behavior". Unfortunately, until now, the airline industry has rarely performed empirical studies on passenger trust in airlines. However, one research discovered that trust in airlines is particularly important for future intentions to use airline services. On the other hand, generally, it is considered that aviation is

a safe industry (Shiwakoti et al., 2021). Trust is the result of evaluating the service used based on the following dimensions: convenience, safety, security, and responsiveness. Customers' trust affects their loyalty also through the impression of the service's worth. Also, ethically managing the brand, affects the entire image of the company's offer (product or service) and rises customer trust. A strong brand trust could lead to a willingness and desire to buy air service, as well as a readiness to pay a premium for them.

Reliability and professionalism have a direct impact on customer loyalty. Corporate trust has a positive relationship with customer loyalty (Oh et al., 2020). In addition to influencing trust and the likelihood of repeat purchases, consumer happiness also affects loyalty. Numerous studies have been conducted in order to determine the key factors, including as trust and customer pleasure, that contribute to a customer's loyalty. (Chung et al., 2022). According to Gajić et al. (2022) major problems are being faced by airlines and even worldwide companies in tourism and hospitality. Some of them are linked to trust and fears among consumers.

2.4. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a result of customers' experiences with a company brand or during the purchasing process surpassing their particular satisfaction goals (Soomro et al., 2022). The comparison between the perceived quality of the service and what the consumer expected can also be considered as the result of satisfaction. He et al. (2012) state when a brand performs to a customer's expectations, satisfaction is produced. Future customer behavior, such as buy-backs and loyalty, is influenced by the satisfaction of customers.

The satisfaction of customers is believed to be the main determinant of customer loyalty because it is directly related to it... According to studies, customer satisfaction is a main determinant for measuring how loyal customers are, and better satisfaction was associated with greater customer loyalty. Customers will continue to purchase services from a business in the future if they are satisfied with the services it offers. (Chung et al., 2022). Between customer satisfaction and loyalty is a set relationship (Hussain, 2016; Lee et al., 2000; Soomro et al., 2022). Full customer satisfaction results in customer loyalty; provides profit and growth for the companies. Satisfied customers spread positive word of mouth about a product or service at no cost to the business. Also, such recommendations are considered more credible by potential customers compared to the usual advertising methods used by companies (Seočanac & Sekulić, 2020). Satisfaction is important for airline companies to provide sustainability and profitability. Earlier research (Jiang et al., 2016) showed that ticket prices had a favorable and significant impact on passengers' overall satisfaction and customer loyalty among leisure travelers; however, results indicate that price has no effect on business passengers' satisfaction and loyalty, so investigating additional variables that can raise passenger satisfaction and loyalty is therefore crucial.

Regardless of the definition, all studies recognize the importance of a service's ability to satisfy customers due to the number of benefits that satisfaction brings to service providers. Above all, satisfied customers enable service providers to make a profit based on the expansion of their activities and taking a larger market share. Market share in the airline industry is very sensitive and can be strongly affected by passenger dissatisfaction due to poor service (Shiwakoti et al., 2021). According to Hassan et al. (2022), for industries that face intense competition, like the airline industry, customer satisfaction is crucial since satisfied passengers tend to become regular patrons. The relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty was primarily ignored by researchers in the context of airline alliances.

2.5. Brand experience and brand loyalty: a relationship

Despite brand experience is a relatively new marketing strategy in airline companies, customer experience is not a recent concept. Experience provides an adequate opportunity to establish, develop, and strengthen connections with customers. As a result, the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty is explored in this study. Customer loyalty could be significant intangible asset and a source of competitive advantage for airline companies. Loyalty can be characterized as strongly held commitment to re-purchase or re-patronize a favored product or service in the future. Repeated purchases, insensitivity to price, resistance of counter-persuasion, and recommendations to others are activities of customer loyalty (Shiwakoti et al., 2021). Previous studies' findings suggest that customer engagement raises consumers' opinions of a brand's reliability, trustworthiness, and loyalty (So et al., 2016) and the purpose of customer experience is to provide satisfaction throughout the customer experience, which in turn encourages brand loyalty and advocacy (Laming et al., 2014).

It has been established (Pabla et al., 2023, p. 4) "marketers construct meaningful brand experiences so that they contribute to long-term memories in the minds of customers and influence satisfaction". It is possible to resume that satisfaction is a after-decision experience (Jiang et al., 2016). Numerous earlier research have demonstrated a causal connection between brand experience and brand loyalty (Azize et al., 2012; Chinomona, 2013; Pabla et al., 2023). Back then, customer satisfaction and feelings had a positive influence on loyalty. Brand loyalty is a concept that includes, not simply repetitive purchases, already positive feelings and attitudes toward a specific brand, and amplification of previous purchase experience (Kim et al., 2019). Although there are not frequent studies regarding the influence of passenger trust on airline loyalty, according to one research, airline passenger trust is crucial for fostering loyalty or repurchase intentions in the sector, particularly when it comes to dream qualities like convenience, safety, assurance, and responsiveness (Chung et al., 2022). In addition, various preceding studies have shown that brand experience has a positive impact on brand loyalty. Positive brand experience, as

shown by prior research, affects and improves brand loyalty. Consequently, this research study in order to find out which dependencies on brand loyalty exist, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1. Brand experience is highly correlated with airline brand loyalty.

H2. Brand trust is highly correlated with airline brand loyalty.

H3. Satisfaction is highly correlated with airline brand loyalty.

H4. Brand experience has the greatest impact on airline brand loyalty.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Description of the research methodology and sample

The sample includes 100 respondents who used the airline services of Air Serbia in the past 2 years. The questionnaire was used as a research instrument. The research was conducted in April of 2023. An electronic questionnaire for the study was created in advance using the Google Forms service. The survey was disseminated online via several public and private Facebook groups, on a LinkedIn account, as well as privately to friends and acquaintances. The respondents evaluated the findings on the Likert scale with grades from 1 to 7 (1-absolutely disagree; 7-absolutely agree). The questionnaire consists of five parts with closed-ended questions: the first part includes profile questions to obtain information about the respondents. The second part of the questionnaire includes items used to describe the Air Serbia brand experience. Brand experience is observed through four experience dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral (Brakus et al., 2009).

All these items are grouped into four variables. Issues belonging to the brand experience: "The airline brand appeals to my senses (colors, shapes, design, name, logo, etc.);"; "The airline brand leaves a strong impression on my senses"; "I think that the airline brand is interesting and can be experienced through the senses"; "The airline brand evokes pleasant associations (family, vacation, travel, comfort, etc.);"; "The brand of the airline company encourages positive emotions (fun, joy, delight, inspiration, etc.);"; "The emotional benefit of the brand is greater than the rational benefit"; "The airline company encourages the active participation of users in various activities (buying tickets, checking in, participating in the loyalty program, etc.);"; "The airline affects changes in passenger behavior (buying tickets online, online check-in, etc.)"; "The experience with the airline's brand results in positive changes in behavior (the way travel is organized, the decision to travel, etc.);"; "The airline's brand is active and improves the customer experience"; "The offer of the airline influences the thinking about the trip"; "The brand stimulates my curiosity and desire to travel"; "Using the services of the airline makes it easier to organize the trip". The following variables belonged to the brand trust: "I trust this brand I rely on this brand"; "This is an honest brand"; "I feel safe when I use the services of this airline". Brand satisfaction consists of the

following items: "Overall, I am satisfied with my overall experience with the airline"; "I am satisfied with the value I received for the price I paid"; "I am satisfied with the service received compared to the ideal service"; "I am satisfied with the overall experience and expectations". Brand loyalty includes items: "I feel good when I use the services of this airline"; "If a suitable service is available, I will fly with this airline the next time"; "I intend to continue using the services of this airline in the future"; "I am dedicated to this brand"; "I am ready to pay a higher price for the services of this brand compared to other brands". The assessment of brand experience components was performed on a paper model by Brakus et al. (2009); Akoglu et al., 2021; Findings for trust, satisfaction, and brand loyalty were adapted based on previous studies (So et al., 2016; Akoglu et al., 2021).

Table 1. Structure of respondents

	Frequency (N = 100)	
	N	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	45	45
Female	55	55
<i>Education</i>		
High school	5	5
Applied degree	17	17
BSc degree	37	37
MSc degree	24	24
PhD degree	17	17
<i>Age</i>		
18–25	13	13
26–35	32	32
36–45	26	26
46–55	24	24
Over 55	5	5
<i>Employment</i>		
Employed	88	88
Unemployed	3	3
Student	9	9

Source: Author's calculation

In the observed sample, the largest number of respondents are women (55%), while male respondents make up 45% of the sample. The respondents' distribution shows that those with bachelor's degrees make up the majority, followed by those with master's degrees, an equal number with higher education and a doctorate, and the fewest respondents with a high school education, 37%, 24%, 17%, 17%, 5%, respectively. The sample is dominated by young respondents between 26 and 35 age (32%), while the sample includes respondents aged 18 to 25 (13%), the group from 36 to 45 (26%), the group 46-55 (24%) and respondents over 55 years of age (5%). The largest number of respondents is employed (88%), a small percentage of unemployed (3%), and the student population is represented among the respondents (9%).

3.2. Statistical methods

IBM SPSS Statistics 23, was used in the processing of statistical data. The descriptive results are presented first. Data are first presented descriptively and categorical variables using absolute and relative frequency. Numerical data are presented using the average value, median and standard deviation for the observed variables.

Checking the normality of data distribution was done using the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* normality test. The *Mann-Whitney U* test was used to analyze the average scores of the applied scales about categorical variables with two answers, given that the data did not follow a normal distribution. *Kruskal-Wallis* test was used to analyze the average scores of the applied scales with categorical variables with more than two answers, given that the data did not follow a normal distribution.

The set research hypotheses are tested using correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results were considered statistically significant if the significance (p-value) was less than or equal to 0.05. The reliability of the items used in the questionnaire is tested by reliability analysis.

4. Results of the research and discussions

4.1. Descriptive data analysis

The arithmetic mean, median, and standard deviation values were calculated by applying descriptive statistical methods to the study of the responses from the 100 respondents. The outcomes of descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2. Based on the arithmetic mean, median, and standard deviation values for each variable in the model, conclusions were drawn.

Table 2. Measures of descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.
<i>Brand experience</i>	100	4.78	4.96	1.06
<i>Satisfaction</i>	100	5.23	5.25	1.20
<i>Brand trust</i>	100	5.38	5.75	1.26
<i>Brand loyalty</i>	100	4.96	5.10	1.28

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS 23.0

The variables in the model that have the highest values of arithmetic mean are *brand trust* (5.38) and *satisfaction* (5.23), which is justified considering that the airline brand was observed. Concerning the stated values, the variable *brand experience* (4.78) and *loyalty* (4.96) have a lower score, which suggests consideration of a possible improvement of the travel experience with Air Serbia, while a lower loyalty score indicates the danger of price competitors who can hijack passengers. The low values of the standard deviations of *brand experience* (1.06), *satisfaction* (1.20), *brand trust* (1.26), and *loyalty* (1.28) indicate the homogeneity of respondents' attitudes towards the claims that belong to the corresponding variables.

4.2. Reliability analysis

People who responded expressed their degree of agreement with the findings from the questionnaire using a seven-point numerical scale, the application of which is common when it comes to this type of research. We measured the internal consistency of the statements using the value of *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient which shows the reliability of a variable, that is, the internal consistency of the statements by which that variable is measured. This

coefficient has values between 0 and 1, and values over 0.7 are regarded as sufficiently reliable and consistent (Nunnally, 1978). Table 3 presents the statements through which the latent variables of the model were measured.

Table 3. Results of reliability analysis

Variables	Value of coefficient Cronbach's alpha
Brand experience	0.924
Satisfaction	0.952
Brand trust	0.959
Brand loyalty	0.912

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS 23.0

Cronbach's alpha coefficient values for *brand experience*, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole model is 0.966 and values for *brand experience*, *satisfaction*, *brand trust*, and *loyalty* are 0.924, 0.952, 0.959, and 0.912, respectively. The results show that the manifest variables have a sufficient level of internal consistency and reliability.

4.3. Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis tests the direction and strength of the relationship between loyalty and each individual dependent variables: brand experience, brand trust and satisfaction. The correlation method was used to analyze the correlation between the scores of the applied scales, that is, the value of *Spearman's Correlation Coefficient* was interpreted considering that the data did not follow a normal distribution. The Spearman's Correlation Coefficient's value indicates the correlation's strength and direction. Starting from the premise that correlation coefficient values range from 0 to 0.29, indicate weak correlation between variables, range from 0.30 to 0.49, representing medium correlation, and range from 0.50 and higher, indicate strong correlation between variables (Pallant, 2011). The direction of the association is also determined by whether the correlation coefficient has a positive or negative value. The positive numbers show that the development of one variable influences the development of another and vice versa. Conversely, in the case of a negative value of the correlation coefficient, the

growth of one variable leads to the decline of another variable and vice versa. The correlation analysis's findings are shown in next table.

Table 4. Spearman's Correlation Coefficient

Variables	Brand experience	Satisfaction	Brand trust
Brand loyalty	0.662**	0.830**	0.828**

* Sig. 0.05
** Sig. 0.00

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS 23.0

The results show significant values of *Spearman's Coefficient* so that a high degree of linear correlation occurs between dependent and independent variables of the research model. There is a very strong, positive and statistically significant correlation between brand loyalty and brand experience ($\rho = 0.662$; $p = 0.000$), brand loyalty and satisfaction ($\rho = 0.830$; $p = 0.000$), and brand loyalty and brand trust ($\rho = 0.828$; $p = 0.000$). The relationship between brand loyalty and satisfaction was shown to be the most significant. ($\rho = 0.828$; $p = 0.000$).

The research results confirmed the initial hypotheses (H1-H3). There is a positive and significant relationship of brand experience with passenger loyalty to the brand. Also, it has been proven that there is a positive and strong correlation between brand trust and brand loyalty and also between satisfaction and airline brand loyalty.

4.4. Multiple regression analysis

To test the research hypotheses H4, regression model will be used. Analysis of the impact of independent variables on passengers' loyalty towards airline brand is performed using multiple regression analysis. To examine the effects of brand experience, satisfaction, and trust on loyalty, more specifically, a prediction model was created and standard multiple regression was applied. Based on the coefficient of determination's value ($R^2=0.773$), it was determined that this model as a whole, describes as much as 77.3% of the variability of the dependent variable brand loyalty, while the rest is influenced by other factors. This result reaches statistical significance ($p = 0.000$).

Table 5. Standard multiple regression

	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Brand expiriance	0.230	0.041	0.228	5.569	0.000**
Satisfaction	0.429	0.064	0.394	6.723	0.000**
Brand trust	0.346	0.060	0.352	5.724	0.000**

Dependent variable: Airline brand loyalty
Sig. ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$
 $R^2=0.773$; $p=0.000$

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS 23.0

Based on the results of the regression analysis, satisfaction has the greatest unique impact ($\beta = 0.394$, $t=6.723$, $p = 0.000$) and hypothesis H4. is rejected. However, it can be concluded that all three variables (brand experience, brand trust, and satisfaction) have a statistically significant impact ($p = 0.000$) on brand loyalty.

5. Conclusion

Based on earlier research on the airline industry, the current research investigated, the relationships and influences of the experience, trust and satisfaction on brand loyalty. The findings of this research revealed that brand experiences, trust and satisfaction, separately, have positive correlation with brand loyalty. On the other hand, all three variables have a statistically significant influence

on brand loyalty, however, passenger satisfaction has the greatest influence on the future purchase intentions of users of airline services. The results will also aid in comprehending the various aspects of the brand experience. Managers of airlines need to concentrate their strategies on different aspects of brand experience since they significantly affect brand loyalty. The results indicate that brand experience can have great importance in shaping and creating long-lasting and meaningful relationships with consumers.

Study has once again pointed out the importance of satisfaction on loyalty, but this does not diminish the importance of the brand experience, it is necessary to continue to improve it. This research contributes to understanding the brand experience differently. First, this research investigated the significance of the brand experience concept in the aviation sector in order to solve a current problem in the aviation industry. The lack of research in the aviation sector is a result of literature focusing on a variety of service industries. This research assists in comprehension of the interactions between variables in the research model. The theoretical contribution of this study is an integrated approach to researching the links between brand experience, brand trust, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty. The paper shows both theoretical and practical implications by connecting theory and practice. Important conclusions from the study are provided for airlines seeking to build brand loyalty. In creating this loyalty, the consumer's perception of the brand experience should be positive. For this reason, it is suggested that airline management develop factors that would enhance the brand experience. The experience of buying online, which has grown in popularity with the advancement of information technology, can also be included.

Company managers should provide additional benefits for customers who stay and continue to use the company's services over time. Retaining existing users and their experience with the brand can be important for gaining trust with new users, through passing on experience and positive recommendations. Creating consumer trust in a brand is a long-term and demanding process. Risk and uncertainty perception instills mistrust among customers, and they are particularly sensitive when it comes to airline services. Therefore, conveying a positive experience with an airline brand can reduce the perception of risk in the mind of the consumer and increase trust in the brand. This will have a significant impact on brand loyalty, and later on the propensity of new users to be brand advocates. It is useful for customers of airline services to point out why a particular airline brand is better than other alternative brands. Celebrities can further make the brand experience more positive. All this together could create satisfaction, trust in the brand, and brand loyalty among the customers of airline services. Brand loyalty may be correlated with brand satisfaction and trust. Airlines have to recognize that brand experience is crucial to creating brand loyalty and that brand trust has evolved.

In interpreting the study results, it should be considered the following limitations of the study. The first limitation

relates to the results' generalization. The research was conducted with respondents who used the services of Air Serbia in the previous two years, and the results of the research cannot be applied to users of the services of other airlines. Further research could examine service users of other airlines as well. Another limitation relates to the small representation in the sample of respondents over 55 years of age, which should be removed in the next research and include a larger number of respondents who make up a significant market segment at the global level. Also, the proposed model could be improved by involving other factors, such as perceived value and perceived service quality, or the existing model might be used in other different industries.

Despite its shortcomings, the study offers a valuable contribution. Primarily, it provides insight into the importance of brand experience, trust and satisfaction for the formation of brand loyalty. This result can provide a better understanding of how to improve loyalty in the airline industry by passengers. A further contribution to the literature on the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty was made by this research study that focused on an airline.

References

- Akoglu, H. E., Ozbek, O. (2021). The effect of brand experiences on brand loyalty through perceived quality and brand trust: a study on sports consumers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 34 (10), 2130-2148. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-05-2021-0333>
- Azize, S., Cemal, Z., Hakan, K. (2012). The effects of brand experience and service quality on repurchase intention: the role of brand relationship quality. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6 (45), 11190-11201. <https://doi.org/10.5897/ajbm11.2164>
- Batarliene, N., & Slavinskaite, N. (2023). Assessment of Factors Determining Airline Consumer Loyalty: Case Study in Lithuania. *Sustainability*, 15, 1320. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15021320>
- Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand Experience: What Is It? How Is It Measured? Does It Affect Loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 52-68. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.3.052>
- Chinomona, R. (2013). The Influence of Brand Experience on Brand Satisfaction, Trust and Attachment in South Africa. *International Business & Economics Research Journal (IBER)*, 12(10), 1303-1316. <https://doi.org/10.19030/iber.v12i10.8138>
- Chung, S.; Park, J. W., & Lee, S. (2022). The Influence of CSR on Airline Loyalty through the Mediations of Passenger Satisfaction, Airline Brand and Airline Trust: Korean Market Focused. *Sustainability*, 14, 4548. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14084548>
- Gajić, T., Penić, M., & Vukolić, D. (2022). The impact of fear of COVID-19 infection on consumers' intention to visit restaurants. *Hotel and Tourism Management*, 10(1), 67-78. <https://doi.org/10.5937/menhottur2201067G>
- Hassan, T.H., & Salem, A.E. (2022) Impact of Service Quality of Low-Cost Carriers on Airline Image and Consumers' Satisfaction and Loyalty during the COVID-19 Outbreak. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(83). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010083>

- He, H., Li, Y., & Harris, L. (2012). Social identity perspective on brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(5), 648–657. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.03.007>
- Hussain, R. (2016). The mediating role of customer satisfaction: Evidence from the airline industry. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 28(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-01-2015-0001>
- Jiang, H. & Zhang, Y. (2016). An investigation of service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in China's airline market. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 57, 80–88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2016.07.008>
- Kim, H. L., & Hyun, S. S. (2019). The Relationships among Perceived Value, Intention to Use Hashtags, eWOM, and Brand Loyalty of Air Travelers. *Sustainability*, 11, 6523; <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11226523>
- Laming, C., Mason, K. (2014). Customer Experience – an analysis of the concept and its performance in airline. *Research in Transportation Business & Management*, 10 (April), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rtbm.2014.05.004>
- Lee, H., Lee, Y., & Yoo, D. (2000). The determinants of perceived service quality and its relationship with satisfaction. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14(3), 217–231. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876040010327220>
- Mandarić, M. (2023). *Osnove brend menadžmenta*. Univerzitet u Kragujevcu, Fakultet za hotelijerstvo i turizam u Vrnjačkoj Banji.
- Nunnally, J.C. (1978). *Introduction to Psychological Measurement*. McGraw-Hill, New York.
- Nysveen, H., & Pedersen, P.E. (2014). Influences of co-creation on brand experience: the role of brand engagement. *International Journal of Market Research*, 56(6), 807–832. <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJMR-2014-016>
- Oh, A. H., & Park, H. Y. (2020). Marketing Strategies for Improving Customer Attitude Using Airline Advertising Model: Focusing on Corporate Image and Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Distribution Science*, 18(4), 13–26. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15722/jds.18.4.202004.13>
- Pabla, H., & Soch, H. (2022). Up in the air! Airline passenger's brand experience and its impact on brand satisfaction mediated by brand love. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 107, 102345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2022.102345>
- Pallant, J. (2011). *SPSS priručnik za preživljavanje*. Mikro knjiga, Beograd.
- Schmitt, B.H., Brakus, J., & Zarantonello, L. (2015). The current state and future of brand experience. *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(9), 727–733. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2014.34>
- Seočanac, M., & Sekulić, D. (2020). Zadovoljstvo kvalitetom hotelske usluge u planinskim hotelima Srbije: Analiza recenzija sa Booking.com. *Marketing*, 51(2), 108–120.
- Shen, C., & Yahya, Y. (2021). The impact of service quality and price on passengers' loyalty towards low-cost airlines: the Southeast Asia's perspective. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 91, 101966. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2020.101966>
- Shiwakoti, N., Jiang, H., & Nguyen, A. D. (2021). Passengers' perception of safety and its relationship with demographics, service quality, satisfaction and loyalty in airlines sector - A case study of Vietnam to Australia route. *Transport Policy*, 124, 194–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2021.04.029>
- So, K. K. F., King, C., Sparks, V. A., & Wang, Y. (2016). The Role of Customer Engagement in Building Consumer Loyalty to Tourism Brands. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(1), 64–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287514541008>
- Soomro, Y. A., Bhutto, M. Y., Ertz, M., Shaikh, A. H., Baeshen, Y., & Batati, B. A. (2022). Does Brand Love Precede Brand Loyalty? Empirical Evidence from Saudi Airline Customers in Strategic Alliance Setting. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 9(6), 81–93. <https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2022.vol9.no6.0081>
- Veljković, S. (2010). *Brend menadžment u savremenim tržišnim uslovima*, Centar za izdavačku delatnost Ekonomskog fakulteta u Beogradu.
- Xie, L., Poon, P., & Zhang, W. (2017). Brand experience and customer citizenship behavior: the role of brand relationship quality. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 34 (3), 268–280. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-02-2016-1726>