

Aviation Industry and Covid-19: New Normal in the Pandemic Era, the Experience of Passenger, Post-Pandemic Traveling, and Long-term Impact on the Airlines

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic is currently ravaging the entire world and the aviation industry is one of the hardest hit industries. This paper aims to analyze and understand the change in consumers behavior with regards to the aviation industry due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A questionnaire was administered to 100 respondents to glean insights into passenger preferences and travel decisions. The results reveal a strong willingness among respondents to travel when a cure for COVID-19 becomes available, emphasizing the crucial role of medical solutions in boosting passenger confidence. Additionally, the importance of low COVID-19 case counts at destinations and the tension between safety measures and passenger freedom is evident. Moreover, the research highlights the value passengers place on convenience and adaptability, as well as their evolving expectations regarding personal space and hygiene. These findings provide comprehensive insights into the complex dynamics of passenger behavior and satisfaction within the aviation industry during the pandemic, offering valuable reference points for industry stakeholders and policymakers.

Keywords: Airlines Sustainability, Aviation Industry, Consumer Behavior, Covid-19, Post Pandemic Traveling

INTRODUCTION

Airlines provide flight services for passengers or goods. Services refer to intangible products i.e. activities that assist and benefit businesses such as transportation, tourism and insurance services (Kotler, 2018). [B11]They rent or own aircraft to provide transportation services and form partnerships or alliances with the airline system for mutual benefit. For example, Malaysia Airlines Berhad has served more than 50 destinations worldwide and operates more than 300 flights a day. Malaysia Airlines operates flights from Kuala Lumpur International Airport and offers connections to the rest of the world, namely Europe, the Middle East, Australia, North and South Asia, and Southeast Asia (Malaysia Airlines, n.d.).

As a consequence of the pandemic, the Malaysian government enforced the Movement Control Order (MCO) on March 18, 2020, to address the prolonged state of uncertainty. This measure had significant repercussions on both Malaysia's economy and its hospitality industry (Zubair & Shamsudin, 2021). The Covid-19 outbreak has left a row of aircraft stranded at all global airports following travel restrictions and border closures in order to curb the Covid-19 outbreak from spreading in March 2019. This problem went on to inflict significant financial losses on a number of companies, to the extent that some of them were compelled to cease their operations altogether (Nair et al., 2021). In the context of the airline industry, this issue proved particularly detrimental. The ramifications of this issue reverberated throughout various industries, affecting businesses both large and small. However, the airline industry, in particular, felt the brunt of the impact. With travel restrictions and safety concerns at the forefront, airlines experienced a severe decline in passenger numbers, leading to plummeting revenues. The adverse impacts were profound, resulting in a domino effect of economic instability. For instance, at the domestic level, the national aviation industry is expected to lose around RM13 billion in 2020, including a loss of RM10.9 billion borne by local airlines, namely Malaysia Airlines Bhd, AirAsia Group Bhd, and Malindo Airways Sdn. Bhd. (Aziz, 2020).

To ensure the continuity of the round trip while in the new norm to prevent Covid-19 infection from spreading among passengers, several measures have been taken by the airlines. Among the new norms implemented by each airline is that all aircraft need to go through regular disinfection procedures to minimize the risk of spreading Covid-19 infection. All cleaning and disinfection products that have been used must be approved by the Public Health Authority and the aircraft manufacturer and perform each procedure in accordance with the Airbus Aircraft Maintenance Manual (AMM). Identifying potential virus carriers, enforcing physical distancing measures, and implementing other preventive measures incur substantial expenses and involve a complex and demanding undertaking (Hao & Xuan, 2020). This multifaceted task encompasses a range of challenges that extend far beyond the financial burden. Detecting individuals who may be harboring a contagious virus necessitates comprehensive testing and contact tracing efforts, requiring significant resources and manpower. In addition to the financial implications, there are logistical and operational hurdles to surmount in order to maintain and enforce physical distancing rules effectively.

In light of the numerous challenges faced by the aviation industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this research paper seeks to address several critical components. The research problems to be investigated include the shift in consumer behavior within the aviation sector as a consequence of the pandemic and the subsequent emergence of a 'new normal.' The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform industry stakeholders, policymakers, and academics, helping them make informed decisions and take effective measures to navigate the challenges that have arisen, such as revenue losses, job cuts, and the broader repercussions on tourism and related sectors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Emergence of COVID-19

COVID-19 is caused by SARS-CoV2 called coronavirus where the first case was discovered in Hubei Province, China in November 2019 (Sadeleer & Godfroid, 2020). These viruses then spread largely throughout the whole world until it was announced as a pandemic worldwide. COVID-19 infects people who have zero direct contact with animals which means that it is spread from one person to another person through coughing, sneezing, or speaking that releases liquid particles. The worst part is that this virus can cause a serious illness or even death without considering any stage of age.

Based on the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), the symptoms of COVID-19 can be categorized into three types which are most common symptoms such as fever, cough, tiredness, and loss of taste, less common symptoms like sore throat, headache, diarrhea, aches and pains, a rash on the skin and irritated eyes and the last one is the serious symptoms such as difficulty when breathing, loss of speech or mobility and chest pain. Governments in all countries have come out with some prevention that should be taken by the citizens such as wearing face masks at all times when in contact with people, staying one meter apart from others, getting vaccinated, and many more.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Aviation Industry of Malaysia

Malaysia is anticipated to experience a significant impact from this highly contagious outbreak, affecting various sectors, including travel, tourism, and the associated hospitality industry (Alwi, Patwary, & Ramly, 2020). In the opening months of 2020, a time marked by the burgeoning global health crisis, the Malaysian government found itself grappling with a formidable economic challenge. According to their estimations, the nation's tourism sector, which had long been a key economic driver, was severely impacted, incurring staggering losses amounting to RM 3.37 billion (Permal & Jamal, 2020). This financial blow to the tourism industry, typically a thriving and dynamic sector within Malaysia, reverberated far beyond just economic concerns. As the Covid-19 pandemic evolves, Malaysia's aviation industry faces the pressing need to innovate and respond to the new normal, adapting to changing passenger behaviors and implementing enhanced safety measures.

The term 'aviation' is most commonly used to describe mechanical air transportation, which is carried out using an aircraft. The two main types of aircraft are airplanes and helicopters, but most modern definitions of the word 'aviation' extend beyond this to include the use of unmanned aircraft, such as drones. With this in mind, the aviation industry can be described as all industry that surrounds these activities (Sales, 2016).

Movement Control Order (MCO)

The implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) by the Government of Malaysia, starting on March 18, 2020, had profound implications for various sectors, including the aviation industry. This significant decision, driven by the imperative to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission, was instrumental in shaping the aviation landscape within the country and beyond (Shah et al., 2020).

The MCO imposed stringent restrictions on movement, effectively grounding flights, closing borders, and restricting travel. This had an immediate and substantial impact on the aviation industry, causing a sharp decline in passenger numbers, revenue losses, and operational challenges for airlines and airports. The industry was confronted with the sudden cessation of international and domestic travel, prompting airlines to ground their fleets and furlough employees as travel demand plummeted.

Furthermore, this governmental response led to a series of ripple effects, influencing travel patterns, passenger behavior, and the financial stability of airlines (Suau-Sanchez, Voltes-Dorta, & Cugueró-Escofet, 2020). The aviation industry, which relies heavily on the free movement of people and goods, was confronted with an unprecedented disruption. As the MCO continued to evolve in response to the pandemic's dynamics, it required adaptability and innovation within the aviation sector to navigate these uncharted waters.

Significant Loss in Aviation Industry's Revenue

The year 2020 witnessed an unprecedented disruption in the aviation industry's economic landscape, primarily attributed to the profound and far-reaching consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Singh et al., 2021a). According to study by Singh et al. (2021b), the contributing factors include travel restrictions, a scarcity of passengers, and an elevated employee count, all of which lead to a significant reduction in revenue. The global economic upheaval induced by the far-reaching COVID-19 pandemic, with the looming threat of an impending recession, presents a unique window of opportunity for Malaysia's aviation sector to undergo a transformative resurgence and attain profitability (Joseph, 2022). The emergence of the virus led to travel restrictions, reduced passenger numbers, and a fundamental reevaluation of safety and health measures for both travelers and aviation personnel. The impact was acutely felt as travel demand plummeted to record lows, causing airlines, airports, and associated businesses to grapple with a multitude of hardships. Amidst this turmoil, the aviation industry faced a stark reality characterized by grounded fleets, travel restrictions, plummeting revenues, and significant losses. However, amidst the challenges lie opportunities for strategic reevaluation and innovation. By proactively repositioning itself and adapting to the evolving needs and expectations of travelers, Malaysia's aviation sector can navigate this challenging terrain and emerge as a more robust and profitable player in the global aviation landscape.

To seize this prospect, the Malaysian aviation industry must engage in forward-thinking strategies, such as enhancing safety measures, embracing digital technologies, and redefining its services to align with the post-pandemic preferences of passengers. Moreover, collaboration between the government and industry stakeholders will be instrumental in fostering an environment conducive to recovery and growth. This strategic reset has the potential not only to revitalize Malaysia's aviation sector but also to contribute to the broader economic recovery, offering a beacon of hope amid the economic uncertainties posed by the pandemic. By harnessing this transformative moment, Malaysia can steer its aviation industry toward a future characterized by resilience, adaptability, and sustainable profitability. The following sections will delve into the experiences of passengers during the pandemic, the changes and challenges associated with post-pandemic travel, and the long-term impact on airlines.

Long Term Impact of Covid-19 on the Aviation Industry of Malaysia ***Passenger Foot Fall***

The outlook for the aviation industry appears increasingly challenging, raising concerns about its ability to sustain operations in the foreseeable future. One of the most pressing issues is the prolonged recovery period expected for passenger traffic to return to pre-pandemic levels. The aviation sector is confronted with an extended period of uncertainty as the fear of traveling lingers, travel restrictions remain in place, new virus mutations continue to emerge, and the global tourism sector experiences a decline. Additionally, the rise of virtual meetings and remote work arrangements has further curtailed the demand for air travel, directly affecting the aviation industry's viability.

These compounding factors create a complex landscape for the industry, with airlines having to adapt and innovate to survive in this challenging environment. As the world grapples with the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the aviation sector faces an uphill battle in its quest for sustainable operations, necessitating creative solutions and a proactive approach to navigate these turbulent times.

Drying Cash Reserves

In the complex world of aviation, the liquidity of capital is paramount, serving as the lifeblood that fuels the industry's relentless operations. However, the unprecedented shutdowns that the aviation sector endured in the wake of the pandemic have necessitated the utilization of substantial cash reserves and capital. This depletion, while vital for survival during a time of crisis, now poses a formidable challenge in the quest to rebuild and recuperate.

The situation is further compounded for those within the aviation industry who resorted to loans and other financial borrowings as a means of sustaining their operations amid the pandemic's turmoil. The repayment of these financial obligations has transformed into a formidable burden, as the industry grapples with the dual challenge of restoring liquidity and managing the weight of debt repayment. The aviation sector finds itself at a critical juncture, requiring strategic financial planning and innovative approaches to navigate this intricate landscape and ensure long-term sustainability in a post-pandemic world.

RESEARCH METHOD

The main aim of this study was to analyze consumer behavior, their expectations while using services of airline industries. Hence, the researchers collected primary data by rolling out questionnaires. The sample was fixed as 100 and sample collections were random, we rolled out questionnaires via google forms through online mode like WhatsApp and other messaging apps.

The questionnaire was divided into 3 segments, the first segment is to know the basic demographics of the respondent like age, gender, occupation etc. In this segment we have also asked the respondent whether they have used air services anytime in their life, especially during the pandemic time. The second segment of the form is to understand the consumer behavior in the post pandemic traveling, post pandemic usage of services of aircraft and airlines industry, are respondents willing to travel, if so how, when and where would they travel, if restrictions like quarantine are imposed, then are they willing to travel along with such restrictions.

Section 3 concentrates on what are the expectations of respondents from the service providers when they are traveling via aircraft, what are concerns the passengers are having, what are the new normal changes that the airline industry has to go through, and what are the respondent's behavior to that. All these objectives were rolled out in the form of questionnaires across the mentioned 3 sections and responses were taken.

RESULTS

Respondent Demographics

Table 1. Summary of Respondents' Demographic

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	69	69
Male	31	31
Age		
20 and below	33	33
21-30	51	51
31-40	7	7
41-50	6	6
51 and above	3	3
Occupation		
Student	71	71
Employed	15	15
Self-employed	10	10
Unemployed	2	2
Retired	2	2
Do you use an airline services during pandemic Covid-19		
Yes	16	16
No	84	84

Table 1 shows the summary for the respondents' demographic profile. The data from the survey showed there were 69% female respondents and 31% male respondents which make up the total 100 respondents. In this case, the respondents were asked to categorize themselves based on age-group and not individual ages. Based on table 1, we can see that the highest of the respondents 51% are aged between 21-30 years old followed by 20 and below with 33%. The lower of the respondents 3% are aged 51 and above. The highest respondents who are students with the range 71% out of 100 respondents. The second highest occupations were employed with 15% out of 100 respondents and the third highest were self-employed with 10% out of 100 respondents. The lower of occupation were unemployed and retired with 2% respectively. In the survey, we asked respondents whether they used airline services during the covid-19 pandemic. As a result of the research, only 16 respondents out of 100 respondents used airlines during the covid-19 pandemic. And the rest do not use that as much as 84 of respondents or 84%.

Passenger Behavior in New Norms

Table 2. Summary of Passenger Behaviour in New Norms

Response	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
I would travel if a cure for COVID-19 is developed	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	21 (21%)	22 (22%)	57 (57%)
If the number of new confirmed COVID-19 cases in my destination begins to decline, I would travel	3 (3%)	13 (13%)	29 (29%)	24 (24%)	31 (31%)
I would travel if my destination declares itself COVID-19 free	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	19 (19%)	21 (21%)	58 (58%)
I would travel if my destination does not impose entry restrictions	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	30 (30%)	30 (30%)	36 (36%)
I would travel if the self-isolation period was reduced to 2 week or less upon arrival	3 (3%)	21 (21%)	28 (28%)	22 (22%)	26 (26%)
I would travel if self-isolation was no longer required	3 (3%)	7 (7%)	22 (22%)	21 (21%)	47 (47%)
I would definitely travel if the circumstances allow me to do so, regardless of the COVID-19 situation.	2 (2%)	4 (4%)	27 (27%)	27 (27%)	40 (40%)

Note. 1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree

Table 2 shows passenger behaviour in new norms using airline services and airport management. Based on the table above, More than half of the respondents, 79% respondent will travel if a cure for COVID-19 is developed. 21% remain neutral. If a cure is already developed, none of the people will agree to travel.

Almost half of the respondents agree that they would travel if the number of new confirmed COVID-19 cases in their destination begins to decline. While only 16% disagree and 29% are neutral on this statement. It is essential to make sure the number of new confirmed covid-19 cases per day falls low positivity in their destination before deciding to travel.

It shows that most people seek safety over entertainment. Even though it already declares free Covid-19, there are 2% who still disagree to travel and the rest choose to either agree or disagree. It can be related to the next questionnaire because it shows that 66% of people want to travel only if their destination does not impose an entry restriction. Changes to new norms that prioritize safety are also seen as a restriction on passenger freedom thus only about 4% approved the entry restriction.

From the survey, we can see that the respondents are aware that self-isolation is a key to control the spread of coronavirus. Even so, it is still kind of a burden. 48% would travel if the self-isolation period was reduced to 2 week or less upon arrival and 24% disagree with the period. It proved that they would consider travel if self-isolation was no longer required. It is shown when most of them vote agreeing increasing to 68 % meanwhile 22% unsure about this case and only 10% disagree.

As travel is considered a treat after staying at home for a long time, most respondents, 67%, vote to travel if the circumstances allow them. In spite of that, 27% neutral and 6% disagree with the statement.

Passenger Satisfaction Use Airline Services and Airport Management in New Norms

Table 3. Passenger Satisfaction Use Airline Services and Airport Management in New Norms

Response	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
I would travel by air if the airline seats remain distanced from each other (1m or more)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	20 (20%)	31 (31%)	46 (46%)
I would travel by air if all airport employees and cabin crew wore face masks.	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	21 (21%)	25 (25%)	51 (51%)
I would travel by air if preventive measures were regularly carried out in all airport facilities.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	24 (24%)	21 (21%)	55 (55%)
I would travel by air if COVID-19 testing was conducted on all passengers upon departure or entry	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	21 (21%)	25 (25%)	54 (54%)
I would travel by air if direct flights were available for me to travel to my destination.	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	26 (26%)	22 (22%)	51 (51%)
Even if a layover is needed to arrive at my destination, i would travel by air if i only have to stay inside the airport.	0 (0%)	6 (6%)	34 (34%)	31 (31%)	29 (29%)
I would travel by air if i don't have to wear a face mask inside the aircraft (if i can breathe freely).	9 (9%)	12 (12%)	37 (37%)	21 (21%)	21 (21%)
I would travel by air if a distance (1m or more) is maintained between people for the check-in, security check, and boarding.	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	23 (23%)	33 (33%)	43 (43%)
I would travel by air if the public transportation (trains and buses) used to access the airport do not get crowded.	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	27 (27%)	27 (27%)	43 (43%)

Note. 1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; 5: strongly disagree

Table 3 shows passenger satisfaction in new norms using airline services and airport management. Based on the table above, nearly of respondents agree that they would travel by air if the airline seats remained distanced from each other for 1 meter or more, while 20% neutral and 3% disagree about this topic. It is because they want to minimize staying close with other passengers they know.

Besides that, the survey shows that customers would travel by air if all airport employees and cabin crew wore face masks. About 76% agree that employees and cabin crew must wear face masks when they work; maybe they will become secure when customers have interact with them. Airport facilities also need to be clean while customers wait for their flights. The majority of passengers, about 76%, agree that they would travel by air if preventive measures were regularly carried out in all airport facilities while 24% neutral and no one disagree about this statement.

All passengers would ride by air if COVID-19 testing were undertaken at the point of departure or arrival. According to a recent survey, 79 percent of participants agreed, and 21 percent disagreed that they only travel by air if all passengers are healthy free of symptoms of the Coronavirus. Because a recent survey found that most people would prefer to air if they could, it would be excellent if the aviation sector had a strategy to make a direct flight for their customers (73%). About 60% of respondents answered that they would still fly even if a layover was required to get to their final destination. 34% of respondents are undecided, while only 6% disagree. Also, about 42 % stated that they would travel by air if they didn't wear a face mask inside the aircraft. It shows that they want to ride by air if they can breathe freely while they are in the air. But, this survey also stated that about 21 % don't want to open their mask maybe because they are cautious about their surrounding, and lastly, 37% are unsure if they wish to wear a mask.

Meanwhile, more than half of customers pick that they would travel by air if a distance (1m or more) is maintained between people for the check-in, security check, and boarding, while only 23 % still unsure and 1% disagree. Social distancing is very important to make sure everything is successful. Based on findings that customers would travel by air if the public transportation used to access the airport does not get crowded, the majority of 70 respondents, representing 70 %, agreed that if train and buses in the airport must be a lot when they landed in the airport.

DISCUSSION

The research findings presented in Table 2 offer a profound and nuanced exploration of passenger behavior in the context of the 'new normal' precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific focus on the aviation industry and airport management sectors. This comprehensive analysis provides invaluable insights into the multifaceted determinants that shape individuals' decisions to embark on journeys, unveiling the intricate balance between safety apprehensions and the enduring desire for the liberties and pleasures associated with travel.

A conspicuous revelation from this research pertains to the profound impact that the development of medical solutions has on passenger willingness to travel. Astonishingly, an overwhelming 79% of the surveyed respondents display a profound eagerness to embark on journeys when a cure for COVID-19 is made available. This striking finding underscores the pivotal role that the advancement of medical interventions plays in revitalizing passenger confidence and resuming travel activities. The significance of this observation is not to be understated, as it highlights the profound interconnectedness between healthcare advancements and the aviation industry's resurgence, emphasizing the industry's reliance on a viable cure for a return to pre-pandemic passenger traffic.

Conversely, a notable paradox emerges when passengers are presented with a scenario where a cure for the virus is already accessible. In stark contrast to their willingness when a cure is yet to be realized, none of the surveyed respondents express an inclination to travel under these circumstances. This observation carries significant implications, suggesting that even with the availability of a cure, other factors such as lingering safety concerns, continued travel restrictions, or altered perceptions of travel's necessity and value come into play, acting as deterrents to passenger movement.

The research data presented further delves into the intricate factors influencing passenger travel decisions during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. One of the standout findings underscores the pivotal role that the incidence of new confirmed COVID-19 cases at a potential travel destination plays in shaping passengers' willingness to embark on journeys. A noteworthy 48% of the surveyed respondents express their agreement with the notion that they would be inclined to travel when new cases at their destination decline. This resounding agreement highlights the importance of low case positivity rates as a prerequisite for travelers, emphasizing that a reduced risk of exposure is an influential determinant in their travel considerations. In contrast, a mere 16% express disagreement, indicating a relatively small cohort of passengers who are less influenced by the decline in case numbers when making their travel decisions.

Additionally, the survey brings to the forefront the role of entry restrictions in molding travel intentions. A substantial 66% of respondents convey a strong preference for traveling to destinations that impose no entry restrictions, underscoring the immense value passengers place on the freedom of movement and unhindered travel experiences. This finding signifies that the ability to navigate across borders without encumbrances remains a high-priority factor for passengers, despite the pandemic's challenges. Intriguingly, only around 4% of respondents express approval of entry restrictions, marking a minority who view such measures favorably. This stark contrast between those advocating for a free and unencumbered travel experience and the few who accept entry restrictions highlights an inherent tension between the imperative of safety measures and passengers' yearning for unrestricted mobility. These research findings provide a layered understanding of the interplay between safety concerns, travel conditions, and passenger preferences. The significance of declining case numbers at potential destinations and the paramount value attributed to unrestricted travel underscore the complexity of factors that shape travel decisions in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. The tension between safety measures and the desire for freedom of movement reflects the challenging terrain that the aviation industry must navigate as it adapts to evolving passenger expectations and requirements in the 'new normal'.

The research further delves into the concept of self-isolation, revealing that the majority of respondents, 48%, would consider travel if the self-isolation period upon arrival is reduced to two weeks or less. The data emphasizes the burden of self-isolation, and the potential for increased travel if this requirement were eliminated, as indicated by 68% of

the respondents who agree with this prospect. The result also highlights the intrinsic human desire for travel, with 67% of respondents indicating a willingness to travel when circumstances permit. This highlights the pent-up demand for travel experiences, with only 27% remaining neutral and a minor 6% expressing disagreement with the notion. These findings offer valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors influencing passenger behavior in the context of the 'new normal' in the airline and airport industry, providing a foundation for further analysis and policy considerations.

In addition, the findings presented in Table 3 shed light on passenger satisfaction within the new norms of airline services and airport management, underscoring key factors that significantly influence travelers' experiences and decisions. One prominent observation is the considerable preference for social distancing among passengers, with nearly all respondents expressing agreement that they would choose air travel if airline seats remained distanced by at least one meter or more. This strong inclination toward maintaining distance from fellow passengers reflects the desire to minimize close contact with others, emphasizing the importance of safety and personal space during the travel experience.

The survey's insights delve even deeper into the critical role that safety measures play in shaping passenger satisfaction within the aviation and airport management sectors. A resounding and notable consensus emerges as approximately 76% of the respondents express their endorsement of the practice of requiring all airport employees and cabin crew to wear face masks while conducting their duties. This overwhelming agreement signifies that passengers view face masks as more than just a preventive measure; they perceive them as fundamental elements that enhance the overall security of their interactions with airline personnel. In the wake of the pandemic, face masks have become symbolic of the commitment to health and safety, reassuring passengers that their well-being is prioritized at every stage of their journey.

Furthermore, the survey brings to light the profound importance of implementing regular preventive measures within airport facilities as passengers await their flights. A remarkable 76% of respondents explicitly acknowledge the value of these measures, emphasizing the significance of maintaining a high standard of cleanliness and safety in airport environments. This consensus underscores the passengers' collective expectation for top-tier hygiene practices and safety protocols, both of which directly influence their levels of satisfaction during the travel experience. In essence, passengers now equate a well-maintained and secure airport environment with a more satisfying and reassuring journey, amplifying the emphasis placed on these critical elements by the aviation industry.

The research findings underscore the integral connection between safety measures and passenger satisfaction within the evolving landscape of air travel. Passengers demand not only enhanced security when interacting with airline personnel, as symbolized by face masks, but also a consistent and rigorous commitment to cleanliness and safety within airport facilities. These expectations have profound implications for the aviation industry, highlighting the importance of continuous improvements and investments in health and safety measures to meet the evolving needs and preferences of passengers in the 'new normal'.

The research also highlights the strong preference for health and safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most respondents, around 79%, express agreement with the notion of traveling only if all passengers are free of symptoms of the coronavirus, emphasizing the significance of passenger well-being. Furthermore, the survey delves

into the desirability of direct flights and layovers, revealing that the majority of respondents, approximately 73%, favor direct flights. It's noteworthy that a considerable 60% of participants are still willing to fly even if a layover is required to reach their final destination. This flexibility in passenger preferences underlines the importance of convenience and connectivity in air travel.

Moreover, the survey's findings provide insights into passenger attitudes toward mask-wearing during flights. While a notable 42% of respondents express a preference for not wearing face masks inside the aircraft, indicating a desire for unrestricted breathing, approximately 21% hesitate to remove their masks, perhaps due to concerns about their surroundings. Additionally, a substantial 37% remain uncertain about their stance on mask-wearing, highlighting the varying attitudes and perceptions regarding this safety measure.

The research data also implies the paramount importance of social distancing in shaping passenger preferences and enhancing their overall satisfaction within the evolving norms of the aviation industry. A substantial 70% of the respondents express a clear preference for maintaining a distance of at least one meter or more during various stages of their airport journey, including check-in, security checks, and the boarding process. This robust preference for social distancing highlights passengers' deep-seated concern for their personal safety and the mitigation of health risks during their travel experience. The one-meter distancing requirement reflects passengers' desire for reduced physical contact and increased personal space to minimize the potential transmission of infectious agents.

In addition to on-site distancing measures, passengers also place considerable value on ensuring that public transportation methods used to access the airport remain uncrowded. A notable 70% of respondents emphasize this point, signifying the importance they attribute to uncluttered and spacious transit options. The emphasis on uncrowded transportation aligns with the overarching goal of minimizing close contact with others and reducing the risk of contagion while in transit.

These findings underscore the essential role of safety and personal space as integral elements in enhancing passenger satisfaction and overall travel experiences in the 'new normal' of the aviation industry. The strong preference for social distancing and uncrowded public transportation demonstrates that passengers view these measures not merely as conveniences but as prerequisites for a safe and comfortable journey. The aviation industry's ability to adapt to these evolving preferences and implement effective measures will be instrumental in revitalizing traveler confidence and satisfaction as it navigates the complex landscape of post-pandemic air travel.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research findings from provide comprehensive insights into the complex dynamics of passenger behavior and satisfaction within the evolving landscape of the airline services and airport management sectors in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. These insights underscore the significant role of safety, health, and personal space in shaping passenger preferences and travel decisions.

The results reveal a strong willingness among respondents to travel once a cure for COVID-19 becomes available, emphasizing the pivotal role of medical solutions in rebuilding passenger confidence. The desire for reduced numbers of new confirmed COVID-19 cases at destinations as a precursor to travel highlights the importance of low

case positivity in travel considerations. The tension between safety measures and passenger freedom is evident in the preferences for entry restrictions. The burden of self-isolation, a potent factor in travel decisions, underscores the value of convenience in passenger choices. Moreover, the pent-up demand for travel experiences is evident, signifying the resilient human desire to explore, albeit within the parameters of safety.

On the other hand, the results also illuminate the imperative role of safety measures in enhancing passenger satisfaction. A strong preference for social distancing and the significance of face masks worn by airport employees and cabin crew underscore passengers' expectations of personal space and hygiene. The value placed on preventive measures within airport facilities signifies the importance of cleanliness and safety in the travel experience. These findings accentuate the role of health and safety in travel choices, and the flexibility exhibited by passengers in relation to direct flights and layovers highlights their adaptability in exchange for convenience and connectivity.

Together, these research findings serve as valuable references for policymakers and industry stakeholders in understanding the evolving preferences and priorities of passengers in the 'new normal' of the aviation industry. As the industry continues to adapt and recover in the wake of the pandemic, these insights offer a foundation for informed decision-making, enabling the alignment of passenger expectations with industry practices and safety measures.

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