



The Components Affecting Thai Cabin Crew Work in the Middle East Airlines

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Abstract

Working as a cabin crew is not always an easy job because every cabin crew member needs to meet many requirements to be able to operate the flights. The cabin crew must have good physical and psychological conditions to work. The objective of this research was to study and analyze the components affecting Thai cabin crew work in Middle East airlines. This research was a mixed methodology where quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire of 385 Thai cabin crew members and an in-depth interview of 5 Thai cabin crew members in different positions for the qualitative data. Data were analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The results have been divided into 2 aspects; trainings and components affecting Thai cabin crew work. Training aspects consisted of 1) safety and security, 2) first aid, 3) service and 4) information technology and it showed that the most critical component in training aspect was safety and security training (96.88 %). The components affecting Thai cabin crew work consisted of 5 aspects: 1) decision making, 2) intercultural communication, 3) organization policy, 4) compensation and 5) facilities. The results suggested that the intercultural communication aspect was the most critical component ($\bar{x}=4.20$) followed by the compensation aspect ($\bar{x}=4.17$) and the least critical component that is affecting Thai cabin crew work was the organization policy ($\bar{x}=3.80$). Furthermore, emotional management was also the additional suggestion aspect.

Keywords: *Thai cabin crew, Cabin crew Training, Intercultural communication, Making decision, Working environment*

1. Introduction

Increasing customer demand towards the aviation industry is the answer of how people need air travel. The reason why people prefer air travel is not only to save time but also to save their lives. Aviation Safety Network (ASN) reported that airliner accident fatalities were 15 in 2018 (Smith-Spark, 2019). Meanwhile car accident fatalities were 1.3 million each year around the world (Beltz, 2018). This information become a vital factor for people who would like the air travel.

Since air travel has become more demanding, the aviation personnel are also required to drive an aviation business such as pilot, ground staff services, air traffic controller, flight attendant or cabin crew, etc. Each aviation career requires people who have skills, knowledge and attitude to complete the job tasks and responsibilities. Although aviation personnel do not have the same duties and responsibilities, they have safety as a first priority to maintain standard for their jobs.

Flight attendants or cabin crew are one of aviation careers that take a majority part in the aviation industry. The flights could not be operated without cabin crew. A cabin crew job requires people who are able to work under pressure and maintain good physical and mental health. The responsibilities of cabin crew include assisting passengers, serving food and beverage and working for customers, colleagues and themselves' safety (Mumtaz, 2017), etc. Cabin crew members need to use all skills that they have learned from their experiences and trainings to meet customers' satisfaction (Toprasert, 2009).

The purpose of this research was to study and analyze the components affecting Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines. Regarding the fast growth of the Middle East airlines, it makes the amount of destination and the requirement of international cabin crew increase. Thai cabin crew are also required because there are many flights from the Middle East to Thailand. Having a native speaker of Thai onboard is quite important because they are a part of the services. The uniqueness of Thai culture reflects on how Thai cabin crews work (Yoosakul, 2008). However working aboard, Thai cabin crew might face many barriers as follows: intercultural, emotional management, home sick, physical condition, trainings, etc., but on the other hand the benefits such as salary, welfare, other compensation, can make them satisfied. These



factors could affect Thai cabin crew working in the Middle East airlines. The Middle East airlines in this research consisted of Etihad Airways, Emirates Airline, and Qatar Airways and they were recognized by passengers around the world because of their outstanding services.

Skytrax (2019) reported that three Middle East airlines were chosen by passengers around the world to be the world's top 10 airlines from 2009 to 2017. The rankings of three Middle East Airlines are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 The world's top 10 airlines by Skytrax

Airlines/Year	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Etihad Airways	8	6	6	9	7	6	6	6	7
Emirates Airline	4	1	5	4	1	8	10	8	5
Qatar Airways	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	3	4

2. Objective

To study and analyze the components affecting Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines.

3. Materials and Methods

This research study used four psychological theories which included Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (McLeod, 2018); the motivation theory comprising a five-tier model of human needs, Herzberg's two factor theory or the motivator-hygiene theory (MindTools, 2018), Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Trkovsky, 2017) and Walton's quality of work life theory (Walter, 2017). Moreover trainings before operating flights to gain fundamental knowledge about aviation and how to apply to the job were also significant for cabin crew (Fox, 2008).

3.1 The population

The amount of 385 Thai cabin crew members working in the Middle East was the population of this research.

3.2 The sample

Thai cabin crew working for the Middle East airlines: Etihad Airways, Emirates Airline, and Qatar Airways were the sample of the research. The purposive sampling of five Thai cabin crew members with different positions are as follows: 1) 1 Economy class cabin crew member who has worked at the current airline for 2 years and used to work as a cabin crew for a few airlines, 2) 1 Business class cabin crew member (no prior experience in any fields) with 2 years 4 months experience as a Business class cabin crew and almost 4 years at the current airline, 3) 1 First class cabin crew member with 3 years' experience as a First-class cabin crew and 6 years at the current airline and used to work in various positions in different fields and 4) 2 pursers including 1 purser who has worked at the current airline for 10 years and 2 years as a purser (prior experience in hospitality industry) and one more purser who has worked as a purser for 1 year and 7 months and 10 years at the current airline (prior experience in many different fields). These five cabin crew members were the sample of the qualitative research. According to W.G. Cochran's formula for sample size calculation (Statistics How To, 2019), the amount of 385 Thai cabin crew members was the sample of quantitative research.

3.3 Data collection

Secondary sources of data were books, journal articles, website, research gathered by other researchers which concluded the components affecting cabin crew work presented in table 2; Synthesis table of the components affecting work of other researchers.

Primary sources of data consisted of quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was created to gather quantitative data on Google Drive. Thai cabin crew could be able to answer the questions directly on it and the data were gathered automatically. In-depth interviewing of five Thai cabin crew



members working in the Middle East airlines with open-end question was taken in order to gain qualitative data.

3.4 Research instrument

The questionnaire was divided into 4 parts. Part 1: the general information consisted of gender, age, education, work experience, airlines, positions, salary and status.

Part 2: trainings consisted of safety and security, first aid, service and information technology training. There were 42 questions for this part.

Part 3: the components affecting work consisted of decision-making, intercultural communication, the organization policy, compensation and facilities. Likert scale (Yoothanom, 2017) was used for 32 questions in part 3 to scale the opinion of the sample. The Likert scale included strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neither agree nor disagree = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree = 1. Class interval (Wyzant, 2019) in part 3 was 0.8 and it could be defined in each class as follows; 1.00-1.80 = strongly disagree, 1.81-2.60 = disagree, 2.61-3.40 = neither agree nor disagree, 3.41-4.20 = agree, 4.21-5.00 = strongly agree.

Part 4: suggestions and comments toward the components affecting Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines.

In-depth interviewing consisted of 2 open-end questions; 1) what trainings have you done before operating flights? and 2) what are the components affecting your work as the Middle East airlines cabin crew?

3.5 Data analysis

The quantitative data in part 1, 2, and 3 of the questionnaire have been analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Analytical description was used in part 4 of the questionnaire.

Table 2 Synthesis table of the components affecting work of other researchers

Research Framework/ Researchers	Busin (2007)	Chuensanguan (2011)	Clark (2012)	Fox (2008)	Gras (2010)	Kalayanamitr (2007)	Kaylyanamit (2010)	Kusunote (2007)	Neampark (2008)	Mumtaz (2017)	Petchprom (2007)	Suwanvatin (2016)	Thongves (2009)	Walter (2017)	Yoosukul (2008)
1. General information; Gender, Age, Education, Positions, Experience, Salary, and Status	√						√	√		√	√		√	√	√
2. Annual leave							√								
3. Ability to communicate			√	√		√									
4. Working satisfaction	√			√											
5. Relationship with organization	√			√											√
6. Trainings			√	√	√	√				√	√				√
7. Work environment	√							√		√	√		√		
8. Health	√									√					
9. Personality								√	√			√	√		√
10. Leadership									√			√			
11. Self esteem		√							√						
12. Decision making			√		√	√			√	√	√				√



Research Framework/ Researchers	Busin (2007)	Chuensanguan (2011)	Clark (2012)	Fox (2008)	Gras (2010)	Kalayanamitr (2007)	Kaylyanamit (2010)	Kusumote (2007)	Neampark (2008)	Mumtaz (2017)	Petchprom (2007)	Suwanvatin (2016)	Thongves (2009)	Walter (2017)	Yoosukul (2008)
13. Emotional management				√						√	√				
14. Stress at work										√		√			
15. Happiness		√													√
16. Teamwork															
17. Lifestyle culture			√			√									
18. Unions										√					
19. Patience			√							√					
20. Quality of work life					√										

The components that agreed by more than 4 researchers were chosen to be the components affecting Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines which included general information, trainings, work environment, personality and decision making.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of quantitative data have been divided into 4 parts and details as follows; part 1: general information. This part contained 8 questions and the results presented in table 3.

Table 3 General information

General Information	The amount of cabin crew	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	14	3.64
Female	371	96.36
Ages (years)		
20-25	6	1.56
26-30	49	12.73
31-35	242	62.85
36-40	88	22.86
Education		
Bachelor's Degree	377	97.92
Master's Degree	8	2.08
Working experience		
Less than 3 years	9	2.34
3-5 years	213	55.33
6-10 years	143	37.14
11-15 years	20	5.19
Airlines		
Etihad Airways	43	11.17
Emirates Airline	237	61.55
Qatar Airways	105	27.28
Positions		
Air Purser	19	4.94
Cabin Supervisor	4	1.04
First Class Cabin Crew	280	72.73
Business Class Cabin Crew	53	13.76
Economy Class Cabin Crew	29	7.53



Salary		
60,001-80,000 Baht	56	14.55
80,001-100,000 Baht	295	76.62
More than 100,000 Baht	34	8.83
Status		
Single	363	94.29
Married	22	5.71

The data revealed that most of the samples were female (96.36%), 31-35 years old (62.85%), having a bachelor's degree (97.92%), 3-5 years of current airline experience (55.33%), working for Emirates Airline (61.55%), first-class cabin crew (72.73%), earning salary 80,001-100,000 Thai Baht (76.62%), and single (94.20%).

Part 2: Trainings. The information about aviation trainings could be changed all the time. It depended on airline policy and other factors that might affect the operation. It was not only the airline who needed to know the change or update in aviation industry but also the cabin crew. Eventually, knowledge and skills that cabin crew gained from trainings might affect customer's perceptions of service excellence (Daly et al., 2009). The trainings in this research concluded safety and security training, first aid training, service training, and information technology training as details in Table 4.

Table 4 Trainings affecting Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines

Trainings	The amount of cabin crew attending trainings	Percentage (%)
Safety and Security	385	100
First Aid	385	100
Service	385	100
Information Technology	15	3.90

The result of trainings affecting Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines showed that there were 385 (100%) cabin crew members passing through safety and security, first aid and service training and they agreed that these 3 trainings could assist them during operating flights, however only 15 (3.90%) cabin crew members who have done the information technology training because it was not compulsory for all cabin crew.

Table 5 The components affecting Thai cabin crew work in Middle East airlines

The components affecting cabin crew work	\bar{X}	S.D.	Interpretation
Onboard working components			
Decision making	3.90	0.47	Agree
Intercultural communication	4.20	0.55	Agree
Working environment components			
The organization policy	3.80	0.78	Agree
Compensation	4.17	0.73	Agree
Facilities	4.13	0.53	Agree

As presented in Table 5, all Thai cabin crew agreed with the components affecting Thai cabin crew work. There were 2 main components which included onboard working components and working environment components. The results of the average of each aspect are as follows: decision-making aspect included following the airline's rules and procedures to make decisions ($\bar{X} = 4.33$), the ability to solve problems ($\bar{X} = 4.09$) and the ability to analyze problems ($\bar{X} = 3.91$). Intercultural communication aspect contained the importance of intercultural communication to cabin crew jobs ($\bar{X} = 4.69$), the ability of cabin crew in intercultural communication ($\bar{X} = 4.32$), and using body language for better communication ($\bar{X} = 4.28$). The organization policy aspect consisted of the belief of cabin crew on airline sustainability ($\bar{X} = 4.28$), the pride of cabin crew to the airline ($\bar{X} = 4.24$) and the protection of cabin crew while working ($\bar{X} = 3.99$).



The compensation aspect comprised the good level of compensation ($\bar{x} = 4.39$), making self-economic better when working as a cabin crew ($\bar{x} = 4.26$) and the compensation was enough to cover a cabin crew expense ($\bar{x} = 4.03$). The facilities aspect consisted of having enough equipment during operating flights ($\bar{x} = 4.32$), the suitable design of equipment ($\bar{x} = 4.16$) and the suitable working space onboard the aircraft ($\bar{x} = 3.92$).

The qualitative data disclosed that cabin crew have done the trainings as follows: safety and security, crew resource management (CRM), first aid and service training. The component affecting cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines concluded the emotional management, service attitude, respecting cultures and colleagues and the situation awareness.

5. Conclusion

According to the synthesis of the components affecting work of other researchers (Table 2), it showed that the study of trainings before operating flights and four psychological theories which included Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two factor theory, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and Walton's quality of work life theory were the essential to disclose the components affecting Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines.

This research has made significant contribution to the components affecting Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines by exploring training aspects that were compulsory and it found that the safety and security training (96.88 %) was the most important training for cabin crew. Whilst the research studied by Kalayanamitr (2007) revealed that the airlines required cabin crew who passed the trainings and also had knowledge, skills, and attitude. Knowledge of cabin crew included safety & security, English communication and food & beverage service. Cabin crew skills consisted of working management, problem-solving, working under pressure and building customer relationship. Moreover the attitude of cabin crew comprised positive thinking and acting as well as willing to serve.

The aspect of intercultural communication ($\bar{x} = 4.20$) was also the most significant onboard working component that affected cabin crew work. Regarding the research studied by Trkovsky (2017) about the study of Walton's quality of work life theory toward improved flight safety through effective communication among multicultural flight crew disclosed that cultural differences affect the effectiveness and efficiency of interpersonal communication.

Furthermore, the most significant working environment component was the compensation ($\bar{x} = 4.17$) aspect. In agreement with that results, the research studied by Walter (2017) exposed that the adequate and fair compensation was the one of the working concepts affecting cabin crew work.

The other components apart from the questionnaire that also affected Thai cabin crew work in the Middle East airlines are as follows: the emotional and homesick management (57.92 %), fitness to fly (31.69 %), adapting to new environment, social and cultures (4.16 %), unpredictable roster (3.12 %), ability to speak Arabic (1.82 %) and teamwork (1.29 %).

Regarding in-depth interviews, cabin crew had done safety and security, crew resource management (CRM), first aid and service training before operating flights. Moreover the emotional management, service attitude, respecting cultures and colleagues and the situation awareness were also the components that affected Thai cabin crew work.

In addition, the other components that suggested by the sample consisted of service-minded, positive attitude, patience and willingness to learn skills. These components were part of cabin crew skills and other careers in the aviation industry.

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