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The (Mis)alignment between Customer Evaluations of Specific Service Dimensions and Their Overall Experience Ratings

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The (Mis)alignment between Customer Evaluations of Specific Service Dimensions and Their Overall Experience Ratings

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Abstract

In the highly competitive airline industry, customer satisfaction and loyalty are significantly influenced by the nuances of flight experiences. A crucial issue, largely overlooked by the literature, is the alignment—or misalignment—between customer evaluations of specific service dimensions and their overall experience ratings. This misalignment is commonly observed in consumer reviews, where high ratings for individual aspects (e.g., seat comfort or in-flight entertainment) may not always translate into equally high overall satisfaction scores, and vice versa. Understanding this alignment or misalignment is critical because it offers insights into the complex nature of customer satisfaction, revealing that it cannot be fully captured by assessing service dimensions in isolation. It highlights the importance of a holistic approach to evaluating customer feedback, underscoring how individual service elements interact to shape the overall flight experience and influence loyalty and advocacy behaviors.

This study presents the Reliability Index Value (RIV), an innovative metric formulated, tested, and validated with airline customer review data, designed to measure the congruence between evaluations of specific service dimensions and overall experience ratings. Furthermore, the study investigates the relationship between the RIV and customer word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior, exploring not only the individual roles of brand equity and perceived value for money as

potential moderating factors but also their joint condition as a combined moderator, offering a comprehensive view of their impact. Our results unveil that: (1) RIV serves as a robust predictor of consumer recommendation intentions; despite the inherent complexity of consumer behavior and the vast array of factors influencing recommendation intentions, our model demonstrates that the RIV alone accounts for approximately 4.0% of the variance in consumers recommendation intention. This finding, while seemingly modest, represents a significant step forward in our understanding of consumer recommendation behavior, particular when considering the RIV's role as a singular metric. (2) The RIV's impact on recommendation intentions is significantly stronger when either brand equity or perceived value for money is high. (3) Notably, an intriguing finding emerges when both factors are considered together: the RIV's influence on recommendation intent is not solely enhanced by high brand equity but also in contexts of low brand equity coupled with high perceived value. This discovery highlights the crucial role of perceived value for money in amplifying the RIV's effect on recommendation intentions across different levels of brand equity, challenging traditional views and offering new insights into consumer evaluation processes.

Our study contributes significantly to the literature on consumer WOM, especially within service contexts, by shedding light on the complex interplay between RIV, brand equity, perceived value for money and recommendation intentions. From a managerial perspective, this research provides actionable insights for firms looking to improve service quality assessments and recommendation intentions through strategic emphasis on improving RIV and perceived value for money. Offering a bridge between academic research and practical application, this study paves the way for future research and strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing customer loyalty and service excellence in the airline industry.

Keywords: Customer Evaluations; Alignment; Misalignment; Reliability Index Value; Word-of-Mouth (WOM); Recommendation Intentions; Brand Equity; Perceived Value for Money.

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