

# A Review of Website Quality Framework for Low Cost Carrier

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**Abstract** The current trend in travel witnessed, travelers prefer to book their flight ticket online. As such, a good website design for an airline company is essential. Based on review of service quality and website design studies, this study proposes a framework for a low cost carrier website. The framework includes five dimensions for a low cost airline website such as content information, navigation, responsiveness, personalization, and security and privacy. This paper concludes with the framework as contribution to both academic and practical aspects.

**Keywords** Website Quality, Low Cost Carrier, Evaluation Instrument

## 1. Introduction

The emergence of Internet technology in the late 1990 has witnessed, website as an imperative tool in online transaction. For the airline industry, ticket has become the main source of the revenue, which is projected to grow about 40 percent from \$48 billion in 2008 to \$68 billion in 2014[1]. In Asia Pacific, the online booking of low cost carrier is expected to reach US\$ 13.3 billion in 2013, increasing 55 percent over 2011[2].

Impression about a website occurred once a customer visited the website. Since website is a connection tools between customers and company, a quality website is important[3].

Studies in electronic commerce have investigated the application of website in retail, auction, bookstore, banking, travel and tourism, government transactions and other. Nonetheless, different service quality variables are applied in different online business settings. Studies found that different shopping environment utilize different dimensions to measure service quality[4]. Most researchers proposed their model or scale to measure online service quality ([5],[6],[7],[8],[9],[10],[11]).

Most researches evaluate airline's overall service quality in terms of in-flight service, pre-flight service, post-flight service, airport services, flight schedule, counter services, staff performance, price, and back-office operations. Such related studies had been conducted in common airlines

([12],[13],[14],[15],[16],[17]) and specifically in low cost airline ([4],[7],[18],[19],[20],[21],[22]). Yet, few researchers study airline industry in terms of e-service quality[24],[25],[26],[27],[28],[29]. Bukhari et al.[29] mentioned that there is little research into website evaluation particularly on airline industry. While these studies have investigated the website quality, it did not link with online motivation (utilitarian and hedonic motivation). Shopping motivation happened as there are a reasons or need for customers to go shopping[30]. Thus, the specific motivation while customer shopping in different sector website will largely vary due to inherent customer needs. For example, utilitarian motive were identified as the key reasons for customers to book travel online ([31],[32]). Nusair and Kandampully[33] suggested to examine shopping motivation (utilitarian/hedonic) of different travel industries to develop and verify the dimensions of web quality. Based on these motivations, it can identify the relevant dimensions required for online low cost carrier website.

As there are no common agreed upon standards for website evaluation in existing tourism literature[34], it is crucial to review and adapt existing dimensions from different aspect to form an accurate and valid quality measurement for websites particularly for low cost carrier. The next section will discuss the literature review on related topics, followed by methodology of this study. The paper ends up with a summary of the study and research contributions.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Website Quality

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**Table 1.** List of Variables Investigated in Travel and Tourism Studies

Dimensions \ Researchers	[37]	[38]	[39]	[24]	[33]	[26]	[40]	[41]	[27]	[28]	[42]	Total Count
Ease of Use				•		•	•	•	•	•		(6)
Usability/Useful			•				•	•			•	(4)
Trust (Privacy/Security)		•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	(9)
Responsiveness	•	•	•	•	•	•		•				(7)
Information quality/Price knowledge	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	(10)
System quality (Design/Navigation)	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	(10)
Availability/Access	•		•								•	3
Interactivity			•	•								2
Enjoyment/Playfulness					•							1
Personalization	•				•	•				•		(4)
Customer service		•						•				2
Compensation /Incentives			•									1
Fulfillment									•			1

Within the academic literature, website quality is recognized as a significant factor to drive e-business[35]. As such, continuous website improvement is necessary to attract new and retain existing online consumers[36]. In the past, several scales were established by prior researchers to measure the quality of website in travel and tourism industry and they defined over these dimensions. However, most dimensions or constructs developed by earlier researches are overlapping between models from different fields[29]. Among the dimension proposed by website quality models, some dimensions with similar meaning are named differently; even some dimensions with different meaning are treated as same dimension. Bukhari et al.[29] had collect and list the variables of web quality model that investigated in earlier studies, specifically in the travel and tourism industry. They had been formed several dimensions (ease of use, usability/usefulness, trust, responsiveness, information quality, system quality, availability, interactivity, enjoyment, personalization, customer service, compensation, and fulfilment), to categorise each collected variables from previous studies. However, the total count stated are not enough since there are some studies regarding customer behaviour and web service quality within travel and tourism not mentioned. Thus, this study had analysed and categorised each dimensions with similar meaning from previous studies, to re-count the occurrence for each of them. In order to enhance the accuracy of variable, Table 1 had been constructed to extend and add-on other variables of website quality within travel and tourism industries that are not mentioned by Bukhari et al.[29].

As a result, the observation is consistent with the Bukhari et al.[29] studies, who found out that Ease of use, Usability/Usefulness, Responsiveness, Information Quality, System Quality, and Trust (Privacy/Security) are significant dimensions that are most utilized by previous research in travel and tourism service settings. Meanwhile, Personalization is added as one of the significant dimensions

in this observation.

## 2.2. E-Service Quality Scale Models

Table 2 shows models used by previous researchers to assess web service quality.

**Table 2.** Summary of E-Service Quality Measurement Scale

Model /scale	Author(s)	Service Setting
SERVQUAL	[43]	Offline environment
E-SERVQUAL	[11]	Product variety (online environment)
E-QUAL	[37]	Travel and tourism
SITEQUAL	[10]	Internet shopping site
WebQual	[6]	Online bookstore
PIRQUAL	[5]	Internet retailing
eTailQ	[9]	Online retailing
NetQual	[44]	Travel & electronic goods
E-Satisfaction model	[8]	Online retailing

While different models proposed to evaluate web service quality in each service setting, the E-QUAL scale is applied in travel and tourism industry. Based on SERVQUAL scale, Kaynama and Black[37] has been proposed seven dimensions including content, accessibility, navigation, design/presentation, responsiveness/feedback, background information, and personalization/customization for online travel agencies. Table 3 shows some researchers deployed E-QUAL scale within the travel and tourism industry ([37], [40],[38]).

Ho and Lee[38] mentioned that the content of E-QUAL scale constructs were ambiguous and brief. Moreover, since the existing studies which utilise E-QUAL scale evaluate website quality only in common travel and tourism service setting, it is crucial for this study to extend the application of E-QUAL framework, in order to deploy it in airline context, specifically in low cost carrier.

**Table 3.** E-QUAL Scale Proposed and Adapted by Past Researchers

Author(s)	Service Setting	Dimensions of E-QUAL Scale							Add-on	
		Content	Accessibility	Navigation	Design/ Presentation	Responsiveness/ Feedback	Background Information	Personalization/ Customization	Usefulness	Reputation and Security
[37]	Online travel agencies	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
[40]	Online travel agencies and suppliers	√		√					√	√
[38]	Internet-based travel service	√		√		√		√		√

### 2.3. Airline Website Quality Evaluation Instrument

There are several evaluation instruments, tools, and index been developed specifically for airline industry. The existed instruments were utilized to evaluate the quality of airline website over different countries. There are PAWQI, ASEF, AWAI and AWET as stated in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Overview of Airline Website Quality Evaluation Instrument

Author / Year	Evaluation Instrument	Dimension	Region
[24]	PAWQI (Perceived Airline Website Quality Instrument)	Site Quality, Information Quality, Interaction Quality, and Airline-Specific Quality	New Zealand
[45]	AWET (Airline Website Evaluation Tool)	Interface and Design, Navigation, Content, Usability, Reservation Process, Customer Support, and Technical aspect	Worldwide (American, European, Israel, and Canadian)
[46]	ASEF (Airline Site Evaluation Framework)	Site Finding, Interface, Navigation, Content, Reliability and Technical aspect	Worldwide (European, Asian, American, Oceania)
[47]	AWAI (Airline Website assessment Index)	Transactional Content, Informational Content, Website Design and Passenger Enjoyment Support	Arabian Country
[48]	AWAI (Airline Website Assessment Index) – adopted and modified	Informational Content, Passenger Enjoyment/Support, Transactional Content, and Website Design	Middle East

### 2.4. Online Motivation Orientation

Engagement of online retailing or shopping involve of two motivations: utilitarian motivation orientation and hedonic motivation orientation. Customer who motivated by utilitarian preferred purchasing products or services through an efficient and timely manner way to achieve their goals with minimum irritation[49] while customer motivated by hedonic tend to search for enjoyment and happiness[50]. Since most of the customers who shop online had specific planned purchase in mind, they are treated as customer with utilitarian motivation[9]. Utilitarian oriented customers are most likely to have more direct search intention and purchase intention, as stated by Tsao and Chang[51]. Basically, traveller is associated with utilitarian motive while using website to book flight ticket for their personal needs, they prefer to complete their booking quickly without delay. The motivation while customer shopping in different sector website will largely varies due to inherent customer needs. Customers doing online booking such as travel, airline, hotel, and event tickets, is an example of utilitarian motivation ([31],[32]), since most of this booking are with objective and defined motives. At this point, entertainment becomes less important than fare tickets through a convenience, effective,

and efficient website.

## 3. Methodology

The website quality dimensions of this study were adapted and modified based on E-QUAL scale proposed by Kaynama and Black[37]. The E-QUAL scale was adapted in this study because it is developed to measure dimensions of website quality and customer satisfaction in travel and tourism industry, which are similar to airline industry. As mentioned by[37], there are similarity of travel sites in the types of additional information and service they provide, due to these sites have become homogenous in terms of offering online reservations for hotel, airline, and cars. However, the other scales and models are not selected due to irrelevant business context. To design the dimensions of E-QUAL scale for airline industry, several criteria need to be considered.

First, evaluation instruments of airline website service (PAWQI, ASEF, AWAI, and AWET) will be adopted, since there were constructed to evaluate the website quality over airline industries, which had familiar context with this study. This study analyses and categories each similar dimensions of these instruments into specific dimension group, by

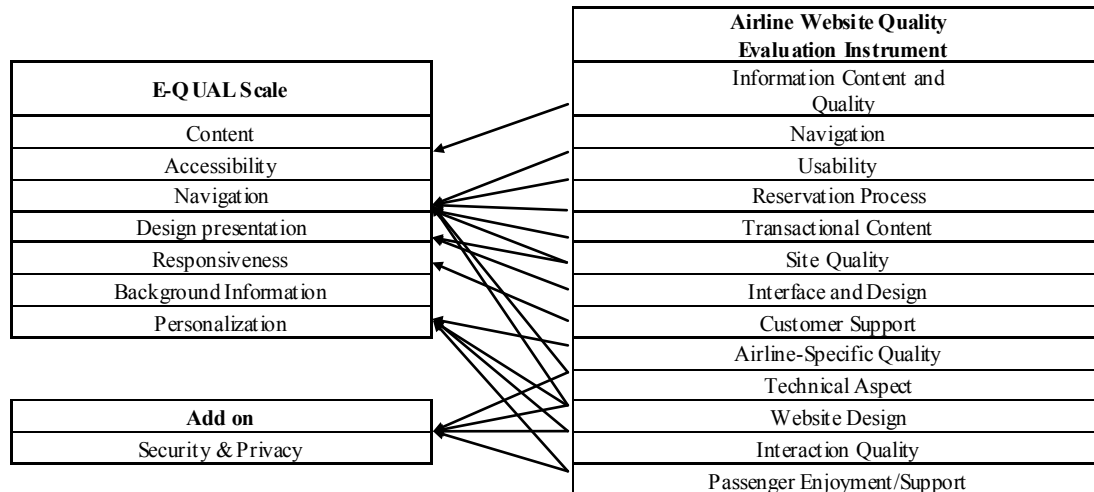
identifying various dimensions and factors with similar meaning.

Several major dimensions over four airline website evaluation tools was created, such as Site Quality, Information Content and Quality, Interaction Quality, Airline-specific Quality, Interface and Design, Navigation, Usability, Reservation Process, Customer Support,

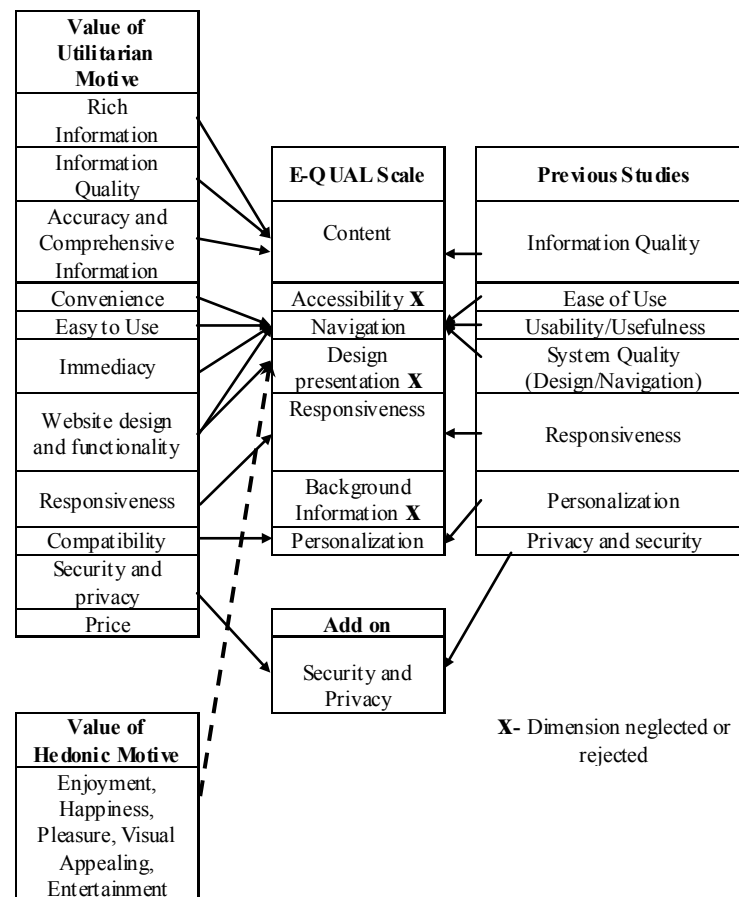
Technical Aspect, Transactional Content, Website Design, and Passenger Enjoyment/Support.

Table 5 shows the adaptation of website quality dimensions, which the outcome of studies (Table 4) are reviewed and categorised, then fit into E-QUAL scale for verification.

**Table 5.** Adaptation of Website Quality Dimensions (Part 1)



**Table 6.** Adaptation of Website Quality Dimensions (Part 2)



Within these major dimensions created, Information Content and Quality consists of *Information Quality*[24], *Content* ([45],[46]), and *Informational Content* ([47],[48]). Interaction Quality derived from *Interaction Quality*[24], and *Reliability*[46]. Interface and Design consists of *Interface and Design*[45], and *Interface*[46]. Website Design formed over *Website Design* ([47],[48]) and *Site Finding* [47].

However, some of the created dimensions keep the same label with original dimension, such as *Site Quality*[24], *Airline-specific Quality*[24], *Navigation* ([45],[46]), *Usability*[45], *Reservation Process*[45], *Customer Support* [45], *Technical Aspect*[45],[46]), *Transactional Content* ([47],[48]), *Passenger Enjoyment Support* ([47],[48]).

Next, as noted in 2.1, previous studies found and agreed that Ease of use, Usability/Usefulness, Responsiveness, Information Quality, System Quality, Personalization, and Trust (Privacy/Security) are dimensions which is most significant for web service quality within travel and tourism. These dimensions fit into the E-QUAL scale to verify each dimension as shown in Table 6.

In addition, as mentioned in 2.4, online airline booking is a part of online shopping therefore online bookers are most likely to have utilitarian motive toward online booking. Since utilitarian motive identified as a main reason for customer to makes flight reservation in airline website ([31],[32]), the value of utilitarian motivation may verify the feature required in website for low cost carrier. This study collects and categorises each value of utilitarian motivation, which related to airline's website service. The utilitarian motivation value will be adapted with the E-QUAL scale, in order to verify and support each dimensions proposed. However, the value of hedonic motivation will be identified and utilised as a reference, to remove the proposed dimensions in E-QUAL scale that are related to hedonic dimension, since the users of airline website are less likely to have hedonic motive.

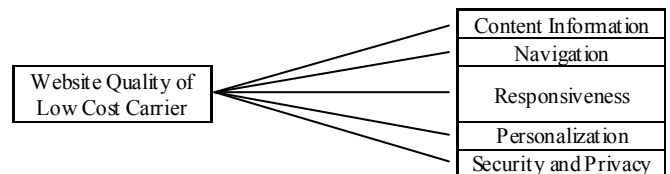
After analysis, values of online motivation are recognised and allocated into two parts, which are Utilitarian motive and Hedonic motive. The resulted utilitarian motivation value which are adapted with E-QUAL scale in order to verify and support each dimensions proposed as shown in Table 6, are *Convenience* ([52],[53],[54],[50],[55],[56]), *Accuracy and Comprehensive Information* ([50],[32]), *Price*[54], *Easy to Use* ([32],[54]), *Compatibility* ([55],[56]), *Website Design and Functionality*[57], *Immediacy and Rich Information* ([52],[53]), *Information Quality*[57], *Security and Privacy* [57], and *Responsiveness*[57].

Values of hedonic motivation which utilised as a reference to remove the proposed dimensions in E-QUAL scale are *Enjoyment* ([58],[59],[60],[50],[61]), *Happiness*[58], *Pleasure* ([62],[57]), *Visual Appealing*[63], and *Entertainment* ([57],[50]).

As a result, four of E-QUAL scale dimensions were selected such as content information, navigation, responsiveness, and personalization. Whereas, another three of the E-QUAL scale dimensions were neglected due to

previous researchers do not consider the accessibility and background information as the significant dimensions to measure the website quality of travel and tourism service or even in airline context, while design presentation neglected, since the users of airline website are less likely to have hedonic motive but usually have utilitarian motive (purchase plan in mind). Basically, customers do not mind any enjoyment or entertainment in the website design of low cost airline, as long as they can grab cheap fare tickets in short time and less effort. Additional dimension which called "security and privacy" is included into this study as there are supported evidences from previous studies. Since online flight reservation requires personal and bank information in transaction process, it leads to high concern of customers toward the security level when providing sensitive information online, especially when there are widespread reports of malicious attacks in websites' security system. Table 7 shows the five dimensions of website quality proposed in this study.

**Table 7.** Proposed Dimensions of Website Quality for Low Cost Carrier



## 4. Conclusions

This paper review and reformulate the key dimension of website quality for airline industry, particularly in low cost carrier based on prior literature. The depth review can be referred by future research to enhance the validity of the outcomes for similar research subject. The proposed dimensions can be applied to evaluate airline's website quality, in order to improve their website performance. It is essential as better quality of website help build good customer relationship and high satisfaction.

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