

Garuda Indonesia Experience: A New Concept of Airline Service

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ABSTRACT

Projected economic and job growth are expected to be dominated by services through the 21st century. Parallel to these, the globalization of services and fast technological development, afforded by information and communication technology, are increasing the pressures for service firms to compete on new offerings and innovation. The innovation has a vital role so that the firm would not be suppressed by its competitors. Garuda Indonesia as a leading actor in the aviation sector in Indonesia also did innovation. It has developed a new concept of service namely Garuda Indonesia Experience (GIE). This GIE engaged the passengers' five senses, i.e., sight, sound, scent, taste, and touch that includes 28 customer touch points, from pre-journey, e-flight, in-flight, post flight to post journey services. This paper is introduced and described the concept of the GIE. In the end of this paper, the future research direction is presented which is the performance evaluation of Garuda Indonesia's service according to GIE's elements.

Keywords: airline, Garuda Indonesia experience, innovation, service

1. INTRODUCTION

Service sector has grown significantly over the past decades. It is corroborated by the fact that there is a shift of employment from manufacturing sector to the service sector. In the developed countries, more than 70% of the labor force is taken part in the service sector [1]. Walmart, the number one company in the Fortune 500 list in 2021, is also engaged in the service area [2]. Changes in the pattern of employment will have implications on where and how society live, on educational requirements, and on the kinds of organizations that will be important to that society. In the case of the growth of the service industries and firms, it can be considered as a signal of being mature and the high quality of the life standards.

Services again will continue to be the source of evolution in the number of jobs in both developed and developing countries. Innovation in service is believed to be one of key factors in creating demand for new services and fuel service growth [3], the other is social trends. In today's highly global competitive market, if a service firm does not do innovation, then it will soon be suppressed by its competitors.

However, although service firms consider innovation as being vital, they have been noticed as a sector lagging the manufacturing sector in the form of low innovation activity, see for example [4], [5]. This is not correct; they do innovate, but the form of innovation is quite different from what the manufacturing sector do [6]. The analysis of innovation: quantifying, evaluating, and benchmarking, is challenging and considered significantly as a complex issue [7]. It is challenging from two standpoints [6]. First, the theory of innovation is principally developed based on analysis of technological innovation in manufacturing activities. Second, the characteristics of service activities: its simultaneity, perishability, intangibility, and heterogeneity, make it difficult to measure them by the traditional economic methods (on the quantitative level) and to detect the improvement or change (on the qualitative level).

Airline service also cannot be detached from the innovation they have performed. The form of innovation in airline service takes several practices, for example, Singapore Airlines has provided the first-

class airport check-in in a special exclusive lounge, and Delta Airlines has used an ATM-like kiosk to distribute boarding passes to passengers [8]. It should be pointed out that most of the innovations manifest itself through the implementation of a new technology. Garuda Indonesia, however, a leading and the main actor in the aviation sector in Indonesia, did an innovation that does not mainly based on the employment of a new technology. It has developed a new concept of service that reflects the best in Indonesian hospitality at all customer touch points: “The Garuda Indonesia experience (GIE).” The concept of GIE is based on the five senses, i.e., sight, sound, scent, taste, and touch, which includes 28 customer touch points, from pre-journey, pre-flight, in-flight, post flight, and post journey services.

The main purpose of this paper is to introduce and describe the concept of GIE, which leads Garuda Indonesia to be one of the world’s leading airlines. This research is under permission of Garuda Indonesia branch Semarang that being the central operation for Garuda Indonesia to handle its business activities in Central Java Province. The following section presents the main body of this paper: the GIE, and the next section describes the future research direction of this research.

2. GARUDA INDONESIA EXPERIENCE

PT Garuda Indonesia (Persero), Tbk, or known as Garuda Indonesia, is a flag carrier of Indonesia. It is named after the holy bird Garuda, the mythical bird vehicle of Vishnu, one of the God in Hinduism. Garuda is also the national emblem of the country. Garuda Indonesia is the first Indonesian airline to join Sky Team, a worldwide base team that consists of 20 best airlines from different countries. The airline is given an access to expand its destinations up to 1000 cities around the world.

Despite its struggling to reach the peak level currently, Garuda Indonesia had faced a hard period. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a series of financial and operational problems strike the airline fiercely. Two distinct accidents in 1996 and 1997 added to the problems being caused by the 1997 Asian financial crisis, resulting in a severe decline in operations, including the termination of service to the Americas and a huge scaling back of its European operations. In September 2004, the situation was worsened when there was an in-flight murder of a human rights activist by airline staff [9].

In 2009, Garuda Indonesia carried out a five-year modernization plan, which is well known as the Quantum Leap. The plan involved an image overhaul, including changing the livery, staff uniform, logo, nearly doubling the size of its fleet from 62 to 116, and a strategy to boost passenger annual numbers to 27.6 million in the same period through increasing domestic and international destinations from 41 to 62. One of the most radical changings in term of services to passengers at this “rebirth” period is a program launching of GIE. It is a new concept of service designed to allow passengers to experience Indonesia at its best. From the moment the passengers make flight reservation until their arrivals, the passengers are pampered with a sincere and friendly service, the epitome of Indonesian hospitality, as symbolized in the new standard greetings, “Salam Garuda Indonesia” [10].

Since it was first launched in 2009, the GIE 1.0 offers the Indonesia hospitality to the 24 customers touch points. Currently, there is GIE 2.0 that expands the customers touch points by 28. By introducing the concept of GIE, Garuda Indonesia is creating a special brand identity for the company and at the same time promoting Indonesia in the international level as its special mission. It engages all five senses (sight, sound, scent, taste, and touch) to create a new experience economy [11]. The experiences create added value by involving and connecting with the passengers in a personal and memorable ways. The concept of Indonesian hospitality is applied into numerous icons designed to amuse the five senses. The unique Indonesian materials and ornaments can be seen in the interior of the aircraft, the exotic scent of Indonesian flowers can be smelled in the lounge, the sound of Indonesian indigenous folk music can be heard along the pre-journey in the aircraft, and the taste of Indonesian traditional food and beverage can be enjoyed during the journey.

Sight

Indonesia offers beautiful luxuries to anybody who visits. It includes a great variety of Indonesian traditional textiles with vivid colors, beautiful patterns, and unique textures. Batik, the icon of Indonesia

and a world intangible heritage by the UNESCO is one of the traditional motifs of Indonesia that is exhibited on the interior of the lounge, cabin, and the uniform for the flight attendants [12]. Batik has a wide diversity of patterns that reflects a variety of influences, ranging from Arabic calligraphy, Chinese phoenixes, Japanese cherry blossoms, Indian peacocks, to European bouquets. These are sights, something that Garuda Indonesia offered, that will pamper the passengers' eyes, bring warmth to their hearts, and inspire their soul, see Figure 1.



Figure 1. First class lounge

The uniforms that are worn not only by the flight attendants, but also by other front-line personnel, such as the ticketing office staffs, ground handling crews, and others, represents a modern design concept which includes cutting, motif and colors harmoniously aligned with the concept of GIE. The uniform for female flight attendants is a modified kebaya, an Indonesian traditional blouses-dress combination. It is inspired by the traditional batik motif of Parang Gondosuli, which has a philosophical value of “distinguished light in life” and creates a cultured and elegant look. The motif is called Lereng Garuda Indonesia. Meanwhile, the male flight attendants' uniform shows the standard professional business attire. It comprises grey single-breasted suit jacket over a light-blue shirt of combined cotton and polyester. The tie is made of silk with graphic an element, pattern, and color that reflect the identity of Garuda Indonesia.

The uniform has three main colors: Tosca green for a fresh and tropical look; orange for a warm, friendly, and dynamic impression; and blue that represents reliability, trust, timeless, and serenity. These three colors are selected based on the unique Indonesian textile tradition, in line with the corporate color scheme of Garuda Indonesia. The color choices also blend harmoniously with the cabin interior colors in Garuda Indonesia's aircraft, dominated by terracotta brown, orange, and brick red. The fabric of the uniform is made of a material that is wrinkle-free and comfortable to wear. Aside from a professional look, another main criterion in the design of the uniform is that it should allow for easy bodily movements by flight attendants especially during evacuation or other emergency processes.

A team consist of experts in fashion design and related professions assists Garuda Indonesia in the design process. This includes Josephine Werratie Komara, a famous cloth maker; Irma Hardisurya, color and image expert; Ted Sulistio, architect and interior designer; and Dianti Poetranto, a former Garuda flight attendant, who provides practical input on the most comfortable clothes for female flight attendants.

Sound

Indonesia has a lot of traditional music which are produced by various traditional musical instruments, such as angklung, gamelan, kecapi, and many more. These are reflections of the diverse ethnic groups, tribes, and cultures peacefully co-existing in the vast archipelago. Enjoying the unique sounds of the traditional music can be both an entertainment of easy listening as well as a new way to truly experience Indonesia. A state-of-the-art in-flight entertainment system is available for passengers in Garuda Business Class and Economy Class. The advanced Audio & Video on Demand (AVOD) system offers a rich variety of movies, TV programs, video games, and music, including modern and traditional Indonesian music, see Figure 2.



Figure 2. First class cabin

Scent

As a tropical country, Indonesia has many flowers and herbs which have an aromatic scent. The aroma has been used since ancient times. The tradition continues to live today such as on modern aromatherapy and spa treatments. Extensive research is currently being conducted to develop the scents to be used in the passenger cabin onboard. It is an aromatic blend of essential oils extracted from native Indonesian plants and spices, including clove and nutmeg, to create a refreshing yet soothing aroma. All of these are expected to provide a fresh Indonesian experience for the passengers of Garuda Indonesia

Taste

For centuries, Indonesia has been known as the land of spices and a heaven of tropical fruits. Lying at the crossroad of trading routes since ancient times, Indonesia's cuisine has also been influenced by a variety of foreign culinary arts, resulting in the exotic, and tantalizing Indonesian traditional food. The unique taste and sensation of Indonesia come to live onboard in the in-flight meals and refreshments served by friendly flight attendants. Garuda Indonesia is proud of its signature food and beverage, such as nasi kuning (yellow rice) and the martebe juice (made of yellow-flesh passion fruit and Dutch eggplant). This tasty food makes Garuda Indonesia won "Outstanding Food Service in Asia 2015" from Pax International Magazine, a leading source for travel industry news based in Canada.

Touch

Indonesia is also recognized for its hospitality, the characteristic which has been capturing the hearts of many, making the country one of the world's most favorite destinations. Many of its traditional dances of greetings reflect the warm welcoming gesture and a touch of the prominent Indonesian hospitality. From the moment the passengers make flight reservation until their arrival at the destination, they will be pampered with a sincere and friendly service, the epitome of Indonesian hospitality, as symbolized in the new standard greetings, "Salam Garuda Indonesia".

3. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

In this paper, the new concept of airline service, i.e., the GIE, which has been employed by Garuda Indonesia, has been introduced and presented. It is a new concept of airline service that engages the passengers' all five senses including sight, sound, scent, taste, and touch. It will create an experience and a memory as well as connecting the passengers with the firm in an intimate way. Since launched in 2009, the GIE now has developed and improved a lot. It has a vital role in changing Garuda Indonesia into one of the world's leading airlines after awakening from its hard period. The performance of GIE, however, has not been assessed yet, although it has been more than six years implemented. The performance evaluation of GIE is going to be the next issue to be pursued.

Since the business of Garuda Indonesia belongs to service industry, thus, the performance evaluation of GIE is more appropriate to be conducted in the area of service management. There are methods that can

be used to assess the performance of GIE, among them is importance-performance analysis (IPA). IPA which is introduced by [13] can be used to identify attributes that are good or have to be improved. IPA is still popular nowadays due to its simplicity and easy to be used interpreted. There are several studies that used IPA to evaluate their service performance, such as [14] – [18].

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