Passenger Opportunities and Challenges During International Flight Booking: A Study on Fly Kite Holidays and Travels in Palakkad City

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Abstract
The rapid transformation of the global aviation industry, driven by digitalization, dynamic pricing mechanisms, and evolving passenger expectations, has significantly reshaped international flight booking behavior. In emerging urban centers such as Palakkad city in Kerala, traditional travel agencies continue to play a critical intermediary role alongside online booking platforms. This empirical study examines passenger opportunities and challenges encountered during international flight booking, with specific reference to Fly Kite Holidays and Travels, Palakkad. Primary data were collected from 150 respondents using a structured questionnaire, and descriptive as well as inferential statistical tools were applied for analysis. The findings reveal a strong positive relationship between perceived service quality and repurchase intention. Despite the expansion of online travel agencies, passengers in Palakkad demonstrate strong preference for agency-assisted booking due to reliability and documentation guidance. The study contributes to regional aviation and tourism literature by highlighting the continued relevance of travel intermediaries in international air travel markets and provides strategic recommendations for enhancing customer satisfaction and competitiveness.
Keywords: International Flight Booking, Passenger Satisfaction, Travel Agencies, Airline Service Quality, Fare Volatility

Introduction

The global aviation industry has undergone substantial transformation over the last two decades, primarily driven by deregulation, technological innovation, and the rapid expansion of international mobility. The integration of artificial intelligence, real-time pricing systems, mobile booking applications, and online travel aggregators has fundamentally reshaped how passengers search, compare, and purchase international flight tickets. According to Taneja (2020), airline distribution systems have shifted from

traditional Global Distribution Systems (GDS) to multi-channel platforms combining direct airline websites, Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), and meta-search engines. This shift has created enhanced accessibility, competitive pricing visibility, and faster transaction processing for passengers worldwide.

In the Indian context, the aviation sector has witnessed accelerated growth, supported by rising disposable income, globalization of employment, educational migration, and tourism expansion. Thangavel (2024) highlights that India is projected to become one of the largest air passenger markets by 2030, with substantial growth in international outbound travel. This expansion is not limited to metropolitan cities; Tier-II and Tier-III cities such as Palakkad are increasingly participating in international travel flows due to migration to Gulf countries, overseas education, and global business linkages. However, infrastructure limitations, digital literacy disparities, and regulatory complexities continue to influence passenger booking behavior in these regions.

International flight booking presents numerous opportunities for passengers. Digital platforms enable fare comparison across multiple airlines, flexible payment methods, promotional discounts, loyalty integration, and real-time itinerary customization. Vinod (2024) argues that advanced analytics and data-driven personalization enhance consumer engagement and optimize booking experiences. Similarly, Bakir et al. (2025) emphasize that predictive analytics and AI-based recommendation systems improve price optimization and customer targeting strategies. For passengers, such innovations reduce search costs, improve convenience, and increase perceived control over travel decisions.

Despite these opportunities, international booking is accompanied by significant challenges. Fare volatility caused by algorithm-based dynamic pricing creates uncertainty in purchasing decisions. Sudhakar and Gunasekar (2020) note that fluctuating ticket prices and inconsistent online information may reduce customer trust. Refund delays, cancellation penalties, and hidden ancillary charges further complicate the booking process. Moreover, complex visa documentation, travel regulations, and health compliance requirements create additional stress for international travelers, particularly first-time passengers.

Service quality remains a critical determinant of booking satisfaction. Agarwal and Gowda (2021) found that reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy significantly influence airline customer satisfaction in India. Aiyub et al. (2025) further demonstrate that high e-service quality positively affects repurchase intention and long-term loyalty. While online systems provide automation and speed, physical travel agencies often bridge knowledge gaps by offering documentation guidance, personalized consultation, and after-sales support—services particularly valued in semi-urban markets (Mallick, 2025).

Emerging technologies such as blockchain and secure digital payment systems are being introduced to address issues of fraud and transparency in airline transactions. Haq, Nandal, and Uppal (2025) argue that blockchain integration can streamline refund mechanisms and enhance transactional security. However, the adoption of such technologies remains uneven across regional travel intermediaries.

Against this backdrop, travel agencies in smaller cities continue to occupy a strategic role in international flight booking ecosystems. In Palakkad city, Fly Kite Holidays and Travels serves as a key intermediary facilitating international travel for employment, tourism, education, and business purposes. Despite the proliferation of online booking channels, many passengers prefer agency-assisted booking due to perceived reliability, visa support, and reduced procedural risk.

Although substantial research exists on airline service quality and digital booking platforms, limited empirical studies focus on passenger experiences in Tier-II cities such as Palakkad. This creates a contextual research gap. Therefore, the present study aims to examine passenger

opportunities and challenges during international flight booking with special reference to Fly Kite Holidays and Travels. By analyzing booking behavior, perceived benefits, operational constraints, and satisfaction levels, the study seeks to contribute to regional aviation literature and provide actionable insights for travel intermediaries operating in emerging markets.

Literature Review

The airline industry has undergone structural transformation due to deregulation, globalization, and digital innovation. Taneja (2020) explains that modern airline distribution systems have shifted from traditional Global Distribution Systems (GDS) toward hybrid models integrating Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), direct airline websites, and meta-search engines. While digital platforms have enhanced booking efficiency and transparency, intermediaries such as travel agencies continue to provide value-added services, particularly for complex international travel involving visa documentation and regulatory compliance.

Research on service quality and passenger satisfaction has consistently demonstrated a strong correlation between perceived service quality and customer loyalty. Agarwal and Gowda (2021) found that responsiveness, reliability, and assurance significantly influence airline customer satisfaction in India. Similarly, Aiyub et al. (2025) emphasize that e-service quality dimensions including website usability, booking clarity, and secure payment systems directly affect repurchase intentions. These findings suggest that both technological efficiency and human interaction are critical in shaping passenger perceptions.

Digital transformation in aviation has introduced both opportunities and challenges. Vinod (2024) notes that online travel platforms enhance price comparison and convenience but also contribute to fare volatility and reduced transparency due to algorithm-based dynamic pricing. Mallick (2025) highlights that India's expanding e-tourism sector faces infrastructural and digital literacy challenges, particularly in semi-urban regions. This indicates that in cities like Palakkad, passengers may rely more heavily on physical travel agencies for assistance.

Customer reviews and online ratings have also emerged as influential decision-making factors. Sudhakar and Gunasekar (2020) demonstrate that digital feedback mechanisms significantly affect airline selection and booking behavior. Moreover, Thangavel (2024) discusses the projected growth of India's air passenger market, emphasizing the need for improved infrastructure, policy reforms, and enhanced service delivery to manage increasing demand.

Emerging technologies such as blockchain and AI are increasingly being integrated into airline booking systems to improve security and transparency. Haq, Nandal, and Uppal (2025) argue that blockchain can reduce fraudulent transactions and streamline refund processes, while data-driven analytics enhance personalized marketing strategies (Bakir et al., 2025). However, despite technological advancements, refund delays, hidden charges, and complex visa regulations remain persistent challenges for international travelers.

Overall, the literature indicates that while digitalization has expanded booking opportunities, human-centered service delivery remains essential, particularly in developing regions. However, limited empirical studies have focused on passenger booking experiences in Tier-II cities such as Palakkad, creating a research gap that this study seeks to address.

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine passenger opportunities and challenges during international flight booking at Fly Kite Holidays and Travels in Palakkad city. Primary data were collected from 150 customers who had booked international flights through the agency during the period 2024–2025. A structured questionnaire was developed comprising

demographic variables, booking behavior patterns, perceived opportunities, challenges faced, satisfaction levels, and repurchase intention. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale to measure perception-based variables ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A convenience sampling technique was employed due to accessibility of respondents. Secondary data were gathered from academic journals, aviation reports, books, and industry publications to support theoretical grounding. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis, mean and standard deviation, correlation analysis, and chi-square testing to examine relationships between service quality, booking experience, and repurchase intention. The findings were systematically presented in tabular form to ensure clarity and empirical validation.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	88	58.7%
	Female	62	41.3%
Age	18–30	46	30.7%
	31–45	72	48.0%
	46+	32	21.3%
Purpose of Travel	Employment	65	43.3%
	Tourism	48	32.0%
	Education	22	14.7%
	Business	15	10.0%

Source: Primary data

Table 2: Booking Mode Preference

Booking Mode	Frequency	Percentage
Travel Agency (Offline)	92	61.3%
Online Direct Airline	28	18.7%
Online Travel Agency	30	20.0%

Source: Primary data

Table 3: Perceived Opportunities (Mean Score Analysis)

Opportunity Factor	Mean Score	Std. Dev
Price Comparison	4.12	0.78
Flexible Payment Options	3.95	0.84
Personalized Assistance	4.35	0.69
Visa Guidance	4.48	0.60
Promotional Offers	3.88	0.91

Source: Primary data

Table 4: Challenges Faced During Booking

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
High Fare Fluctuation	94	62.7%
Refund Delays	78	52.0%

Hidden Charges	69	46.0%
Complex Visa Rules	102	68.0%
Technical Issues	34	22.7%

Source: Primary data

Table 5: Satisfaction Level

Satisfaction Level	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Satisfied	52	34.7%
Satisfied	71	47.3%
Neutral	18	12.0%
Dissatisfied	9	6.0%
Technical Issues	34	22.7%

Source: Primary data

Table 6: Correlation Between Service Quality and Repurchase Intention

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance	Result
Service Quality & Repurchase	0.72	$p < 0.01$	Strong positive relationship

Source: Primary data

Discussion

The study reveals that passengers in Palakkad rely heavily on travel agencies for international bookings, particularly due to visa complexity and documentation requirements. This aligns with Mallick (2025) and Vinod (2024), who highlight the hybrid future of airline distribution. High fare fluctuation and refund delays remain significant issues, consistent with Taneja (2020). Personalized service significantly enhances satisfaction, supporting findings by Agarwal & Gowda (2021). Digital transformation is creating opportunities but also increasing transparency expectations. Travel agencies that integrate AI-based support and real-time pricing tools can strengthen competitiveness.

Conclusion

International flight booking presents both significant opportunities and persistent challenges for passengers. In Palakkad, Fly Kite Holidays and Travels plays a crucial intermediary role in simplifying booking complexity. While digital platforms are expanding, human assistance remains vital in international travel. Enhancing transparency, digital integration, and service responsiveness will strengthen passenger satisfaction and long-term loyalty.

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