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A Study on the Effect of Nonverbal Communication of Airline's Flight Crew on Customer Attitudes*

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Abstract

Purpose - This study focuses on the quality of nonverbal communication by the flight attendants at the airline, and the factors that contribute to improve customer behavior, thereby providing positive implications for corporate management.

Research, design, data, and methodology - For the empirical analysis of this study, reliability analysis and frequency analysis were conducted. T-test and ANOVA analyses were performed. In addition, the effects of nonverbal communication have on customer behavior have regressed analysis. The collected data was empirical using the SPSS Win 18.0.

Results - Among the non-verbal communication qualities were found to significantly influence customer attitudes, and demographic differences in airline flight attendants were also shown to influence their perceptions. Empirical analysis revealed significant differences in demographic characteristics between gender, age and airlines used.

Conclusions - All of the non-verbal communication's attributes were found to significantly impact customer attitude. It is used to train the importance of nonverbal communication quality for the role of cabin crew members and to enhance the loyalty of the customers to Airline. This study identifies the relationship between the impact of non-verbal communication quality on customer attitudes and implies the importance of non-verbal communication quality for airline flight attendants. Also, this study suggests that there is a close mechanism between the nonverbal communication and the customer attitudes to airlines.

Keywords: Nonverbal Communication, Customer Attitude, Demographic Characteristics.

JEL Classifications: L15, L84, M31.

1. Introduction

As people's living standards improve, their needs vary and the service industry has grown rapidly in recent years. The reality is that the perception of the passengers being serviced is also increasing. Consumers expect higher quality services than they expected, and their interest in them is much higher than in the past (Na, 2016). The perception of companies with superior service quality enhances satisfaction and customer attitude and has a very positive effect on the company's business performance (Park, 2005). This means

that companies must achieve customer satisfaction in order to sustain their continued growth and development by maximizing the needs of their service quality conscious consumers. Human services should pay particular attention to the most critical time that the receiving customer interacts with the service staff, in the case of aircraft operators whose interaction with the service interface is largely enhanced (Park, 2017). As such, the importance of human services to attract competitiveness and increase revenues is becoming more important, and the overall assessment of the quality of service of the customer's airlines is based on the level of service personnel perform at the service interface (Kim & Lee, 2011).

In particular, airline services are the most important part of human services and therefore, the quality of services produced by airline flight attendants is crucial. Because in the course of a service being delivered to the customer, the overall quality of service is often determined by the service personnel (Park, 2017).

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Airlines are heavily dependent on services from other companies, so a differentiated marketing strategy is imperative to increase customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in order to be more competitive. Since it is impossible to maintain the same quality as before, it provides one-to-one service to clients and helps them meet their expectations.

In particular, since in-flight service is performed at a limited time and space, it is likely that the company will generate profits by assessing customer satisfaction with the quality of the service it feels. In particular, since the quality of the airline service the customer feels on board is determined by the attitude and image of the cabin crew, the importance of the flight attendants in charge of the service is further emphasized (Kim & Park, 2017).

Communication between the airline cabin crew and passengers when serving is largely distinguished between verbal and non-verbal communication (Kim, 2007). Verbal communication is the most basic and primary method of communicating information, meaning choosing and communicating a word with a clear intention in a conversation.

Nonverbal communication, on the other hand, has elements such as facial expressions, looks, or body language that the airline cabin crew members display to the customer at the time of service, and this is in addition to verbal communication and chain communication (Burgoon et al., 1990).

Nonverbal communication, in particular, is often shown unconsciously and is as reliable as verbal communication (Gabbott & Hogg, 2000). And non-verbal communication is sometimes just as important as verbal communication because it complements it, emphasizes it, and even puts the emotion of the communicator into action (Kim & Jang, 2005).

The customer evaluates using the look, gaze, accent, or body language displayed by the service personnel during the service process (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). Accordingly, in this study, nonverbal communication is created by the airlines where the human services of the airline cabin crew are greatly impacted, and by which nonverbal communication is produced by the flight attendants and the passengers at the airline flight attendants.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Nonverbal communication quality of airline cabin crew

Communication is a face-to-face interaction, which means to inform and communicate certain facts to others (Jeong, 2013). It can be said that communication between people and between people is the foundation of human relationships, and many communication is the most basic one between two people, according to many traditional nonverbal communication studies (Argyle, 1975).

Communication is divided into verbal communication using language to communicate a message and non-verbal communication using non-spoken expression such as eye contact or gesture, eye contact, smile, expression, and so on (Lee, 2013).

Argyle (1975) said that humans use both verbal and nonverbal expressions to communicate. Nonverbal communication, among other things, expresses one's feelings and conveys one's attitude to others. Therefore, it performs a function to not only express its personality but also convey responses and interests to others.

Research on communication Sundaram and Webster (2000) said that the way in which people communicate with one another, in a non-lingual, non-verbal, non-lingual way, is the same as the way that they learn to communicate in language. They learn nonverbal expressions with language as the medium of childhood communication. Argyle (1975) also said that nonverbal communication is more important for expressing a person's feelings and communicating their attitudes because it is a more effective tool communication than other tools. As such, expressing emotions and feelings in context is easier to communicate than communicating in language, and non-verbal communication is more likely to play a role in communication. However, humans in the past felt communication could only be done through language for a long time, so the current communication study is focused on verbal communication (Birdwhistell, 1955).

As the various studies into non-verbal communication progressed, non-verbal communication began to be defined as non-literal communication, with the exception of the potentially meaningful language in the communication process (Knapp & Hall, 2009).

Language is essential to communication between people, but it is difficult to convey exactly what it means to communicate with a verbal expression only (Choo & Lee, 2013). Nonverbal communication in the process is not only easier to convey emotions in communication (Leathers, 1986), but also more precisely and quicker to compensate for the lack of verbal communication and to communicate quickly than language communication (Kim, 2007).

2.2. Customer Attitude

Reynolds, Darden, and Martin (1974) said that a behavior that is similar to or requires the same item as a Customer Identity is called a customer attitude that is intended to produce the same brand or product in the same store as it was previously defined by the consumer.

The study by Czech, Gilmore (1987) found that loyalty to the service is a tendency to be supported by positive attitudes or immersion, understanding, faith, and commitment, and active psychology in a particular process. Consumer attitudes are also defined as customer preference, and are called positive oral or re-purchase intentions, positive recommendations, and switching behaviors.

Dick and Basu (1994) defined the degree of the relationship between the relative attitude to the service and the repurchase behavior, and it was divided into four categories based on the consumer's relative or favorable behavior and repeat purchase behavior. Consumers with both the consumer's relative attitude and the repeated purchases had a low degree of loyalty, a high degree of reality and a low degree of potential loyalty with low repeat purchases, but a relatively low profile. Since Gremler (1996) recognizes the degree of repeated customer purchases of service providers, the degree of positive attitude, and the degree to which the reuse is considered, they include three dimensions.

A customer attitude is the ability to engage in depth or to prefer a product purchased over time, to recognize the sequence of customer attitudes in a sequential attitude, and to identify customer attitudes as after (Oliver, 1997). Oliver (1997) says cognitive loyalty is a brand belief, and emotional loyalty is preference or preference based on satisfactory use. Intentional loyalty is the intention to continue to use and repurchase a particular service or brand in the future, and behavioral loyalty is the intention that can be associated with any intention to overcome interruptions by these actions. It is an emotional component that shows its attachment to a particular brand, a deliberate step to continuously use a particular brand in the future, and a final step to show the brand awareness.

Locelock and Wirtz (2004) is a company that has tried to define its customer attitudes as a way to describe the company's love affair with one another, such as its long-standing relationship to a particular company or its associated customer relations.

Kim, Kim, and Jun (2004) suggested that Customer satisfaction is a temporary state of love, and customer attitude is a state of continuous preference.

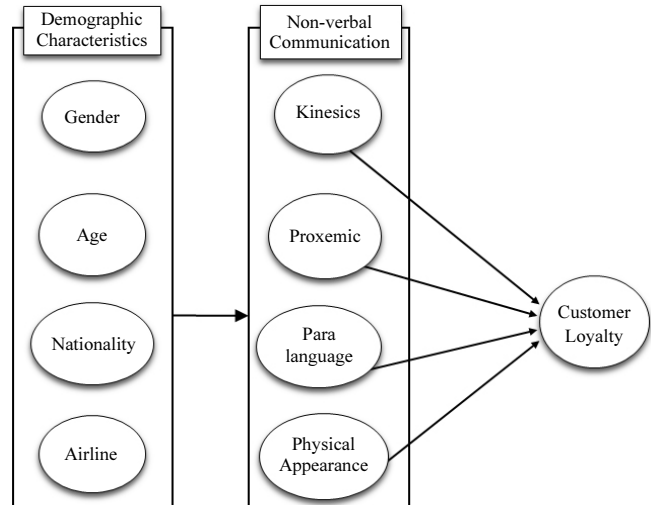
Although the customer is not loyal to a particular product or service, services or products can be re-purchased based on the circumstances due to external influences. Despite the effects of marketing situations and efforts to modify marketing efforts, it is the customer's attitude to bring back the purchase of the same brand as a result of this purchase. Such an intention is again affected by attitudes, intentions in advance, and satisfaction. Customers usually decide to buy the same product again or to change to another product after they are satisfied or dissatisfied with it (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

3. Research Method

3.1. Research model

In this study, we examined the effects of the nonverbal communication quality of airline cabin crew members on customer behavior, focusing on the customer trust and the

interaction effects of the airline brand image, and the nonverbal behavior effects of the airline guest cabin crew members in this study.



<Figure 1> Research model

3.2. Setting a hypothesis

Based on the theoretical backgrounds and research models of several prior studies that work to develop the discussions presented in this study, the non-verbal communication of airline flight attendants will influence customer attitudes. It will also explore how different demographic characteristics differ with regard to the non-verbal communication quality of airline flight attendants.

Effects of the communication effects of Burgoon, Brik and Prau (1990), Poon and Fatt (1998), Wainwright (1999), Sundaram and Webster (2000), on clients's working attitude. In this study, we established hypothesis that the non-verbal communication quality of airline cabin crew members would affect the customer attitude, such as the following :

- <H1> The nonverbal communication quality of airline cabin crew members will vary significantly depending on the demographic characteristics.
- <H2> Nonverbal communication quality of airline cabin crew members will have a significant impact on customer attitude.
 - <H2-1> Kinesics will have a significant influence on customer attitudes.
 - <H2-2> Proxemics will have a significant impact on customer attitudes.
 - <H2-3> Paralanguage will have a significant influence on customer attitudes.
 - <H2-4> Physical appearance language will have a significant influence on customer attitudes.

3.3. Operational Definition of Variables

3.3.1. Nonverbal communication quality of the airline cabin crew

The operational definition of non-verbal communication quality for the empirical analysis of this study was based on studies by Miller (1976), Goldharber (1983), Jandt (1998), and Sundaram and Webster (1998).

① Kinesics

Kinesics is the body's attitude or movement. It includes facial expressions, body language, eye contact, and posture.

② Proxemics

Proxemics means the relative position or distance of a space at which to communicate with one's opponent. Under service conditions, the ability of service personnel to maintain and communicate or service a close spatial distance from the customer can be seen as an immersion effort to perform the service well and significantly affect the satisfaction of the service customer.

③ Paralanguage

Paralanguage can be defined as being achieved by means of speech, and medical language includes pronunciation, speech speed, intonation, and stress. A medical language influences a speaker's feelings or individuality and its ability to comprehend.

④ Physical appearance language

Physical appearance language means an external appearance or body type. Body language is an important clue to form the first impression of the other person, and it is very effective in persuading the other person. Physical appearance language is also one of the factors that enables the receiving customer to develop a more favorable and positive feeling.

3.3.2. Customer attitude

A customer's attitude is used to express good feelings or actions toward a particular object. This study defines the positive attitude of the customer to service providers and their continued preference.

4. Methodology

4.1. Data collection method

In this study, we look at the effects of the nonverbal communication quality of airport flight attendants on customer behavior at airports that serve the occupants of the airline, and we also look at the effects of customer trust and the impact of the airline brand image on the international performance.

The survey period for this survey was approximately 422 distributed per month from July 10 to August 15, 2017 and used the Self-Enrollment Survey Act.

This study conducted empirical studies to determine the relationship between the nonverbal communication quality of airline cabin crew members and the impact of customer behavior. In order to verify the assumptions of this study, a frequency analysis was first conducted regarding the demographic characteristics of the samples in this study. <Table 1> presents the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. Of the 422 samples used in the empirical analysis, the sex was similar with 208 males (49.3%), 214 females (50.7%), and 129 percent (29%) respectively.

<Table 1> Profile of respondents

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	208	49.3
	Female	214	50.7
Age groups	under 29	129	30.6
	30~39	98	23.2
	40~49	107	25.4
	50 or older	88	20.8
Seat class	Economy	386	91.5
	Business and above	36	8.5
Carrier used	Korean Air	193	45.7
	Asiana Airline	101	23.9
	Low Cost Carrier	83	19.7
	Foreign Airline	45	10.7
Recently used portion	domestic flight	115	27.3
	international flight short distance, middle distance	204	48.3
	international flight long distance	103	24.4
Purpose of use	business	56	13.3
	Tourism	309	73.2
	Visiting relatives	22	5.2
	Overseas study and learning	18	4.3
	others	17	4.0
Occupation	student	120	28.4
	private business	46	10.9
	Teacher/civil servant	23	5.5
	Office worker/ administration	76	18.0
	Housewife	42	10.0
	profession	84	19.9
	Retirement/inoccupation/ other	31	7.3

4.2. Factor analysis and reliability analysis

First, the results of exploring factors analysis and reliability verification for non-verbal communication are shown in <Table 2>. Factor analysis revealed that there are four factors which are equal to the theoretical structure of the prior study. Each factor was named Kinesics, Spatial Language, Paralanguage, and Physical appearance language, as was the case with the prior study. Total distributed

explanations were 74.305%, and the model was suitable with KMO=.962, Approx- $\chi^2=4837.494(df=120, p=0.000004)$. In addition, it has been assessed that all items have more than 0.5 load factors and the reliability of each sub-composition concept is 0.7 or higher, making them more relevant and reliable.

<Table 2> Exploratory factor analysis and reliability tests

Items	Factor loading	Commonness	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance extracted
Factor 1. Kinesics			3.227 (.834)	20.168
The expression was bright and gentle	.766	.788		
When I talk to someone, I made a direct eye-contact.	.748	.717		
During conversation, I properly nodded.	.743	.718		
I provided all services in a nice and polite manner.	.625	.648		
Factor 2. Special language			3.035 (.811)	18.969
The gesture was proper	.809	.717		
The space approach was appropriate.	.685	.812		
The distance was just right for me.	.598	.778		
The surroundings were clean environment.	.597	.704		
Factor 3. Paralanguage			3.033 (.756)	18.954
The pace of the conversation was proper.	.780	.798		
The tone of voice was correct.	.730	.793		
The pronunciation was clear.	.622	.753		
The speech was smooth.	.518	.721		
Factor 3. Physical appearance			2.594 (.711)	16.214
The appearance was attractive	.752	.665		
The condition of the uniform was clean.	.748	.761		
The makeup was neat.	.617	.761		
The hair-do was neat.	.523	.754		
KMO=.962, Approx- $\chi^2=4837.494, df=120, p=.000$, Cumulative distribution of explanation=74.305				

The results of the analysis of the exploratory factors for client behavior and the reliability verification are shown in <Table 3>. Factor analysis has shown that one factor is the

<Table 4> Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	Kinesics	Proxemics	Paralanguage	Physical Appearance	Customer Loyalty
Kinesics	4.30	.639	1				
Proxemics	4.26	.643	.596**	1			
Paralanguage	4.33	.612	.574**	.579**	1		
Physical Appearance	4.33	.641	.494**	.553**	.565**	1	
Customer attitudes	4.19	.759	.420**	.426**	.418**	.448**	1

** : p<.01

same as the theoretical structure of the prior study. As a result, it was named 'Customer Attitudes' as in the prior study. The analysis revealed total distributed description as 86.1345%, while the analysis showed that KMO=.749, Approx- $\chi^2=939.746(df=3, p=0.006)$ was the appropriate model. In addition, it was assessed that all items had a significant capacity of 0.9 or higher and reliability of 0.9 or higher, making them more relevant and reliable.

<Table 3> Exploratory factor analysis and reliability tests

Items	Factor loading	Commonness	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance extracted
Factor 1. Attitudes of Customers			2.584 (.919)	86.134
I want to use this airline again next time.	.945	.836		
I would like to recommend my relatives and colleagues to use the airline.	.925	.855		
I want to encourage my friends and relatives to use it.	.914	.893		
KMO=.749, Approx- $\chi^2=939.746, df=3, p=.000$, Cumulative distribution of explanation=86.134				

In this study, an average of each of the measured items was computed based on the factors derived from the analysis of the factors, and a technical statistical analysis and correlation analysis was carried out on them, the results were shown in <Table 4>. The correlation coefficient between all of the compositional concepts should not be suspected, as it is shown to be less than 0.7, and it has been assessed that the identification between the different constitute-based concepts is established. It was also assessed that the degree to which the orientation of the relationship between the different constitutive concepts is consistent with the direction of the hypothesis established in this study, makes it understandable.

In this study, T-test and ANOVA were conducted to verify the difference between the basic demographic characteristics and the non-verbal communication of airline flight attendants and customer attitudes. Among them, significant differences in gender, age and the airlines used were found. First, the difference between each variable for gender is shown in <Table 5>.

<Table 5> Verification of the differences between the variables by gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Kinesics	Male	208	4.213	.63266	-2.585	.010
	Female	214	4.373	.63761		
Proxemics	Male	208	4.165	.60902	-3.151	.002
	Female	214	4.361	.66096		
Paralanguage	Male	208	4.232	.58357	-3.157	.002
	Female	214	4.418	.62684		
Physical Appearance	Male	208	4.272	.59366	-1.738	.083
	Female	214	4.380	.68076		
Customer attitudes	Male	208	4.099	.77934	-2.465	.014
	Female	214	4.280	.72894		

First, the average kinesics was higher for females with 4.213 in men and 4.373 in women, and the difference in body language between males and females with $t=-2.585$ and $p=0.100$

Second, the spatial language averaged 4.165 for men, 4.361 for women, and the significant differences between men and women in groups $t=-3.151$, $p=.002$ for men.

Third, the mean of the paralanguage was higher for females with 4.232 for males and 4.418 for females, and the difference in the doctors' languages between males and females with $t=-3.157$ and $p=0.002$ for females. Fourth, the average physical appearance language was higher for females with 4.272 for males and 4.380 for females, with no difference in the female language group between $t=-1.738$ and $p=0.083$. That is, non-verbal communication qualities found in airline cabin crew members were significantly different by gender, and were perceived relatively high by women.

Fifth, the average customer attitude was higher for women with 4.099 for men and 4.280 for women, and more significant for women with $t=-2.465$ and $p=0.014$ for women in the language of doctors. That is, men and women differ statistically in customer attitudes, and it has been shown to be relatively more recognizable by female customers. In addition, the results of verifying the difference between the different variables for age are shown in <Table 6>.

First, the average kinesics was found to be 4.378 under the age of 29, 4.344 over 50, 4.227 between the ages of 40 and 4.217, and $t=1.799$, $p=.147$ was found in the body.

Second, the average spatial language was found to be 4.41 under the age of 29, 4.219 over 50, and 4.140 between the ages of 40, making it significant to have consensus with $t=4.018$, $p=.008$ Age differences were divided into two groups, those with a higher spatial language were identified as being under the age of 29 years, and those in their 30s, 40s, and 50s or older. It is the recognition of the relative location or distance to the airline cabin crew by the group under the age of 29, and it is necessary to show the relative awareness of the airline cabin crew members during the training session.

<Table 6> Verification of the differences between the variables by age

Variable	29 years or under (n=129)	30s (n=98)	40s (n=107)	Over 50s (n=88)	t-value	p-value
Kinesics	4.378	4.217	4.227	4.344	1.799	.147
Proxemics	4.417 (H)	4.242 (L)	4.140 (L)	4.219 (L)	4.018	.008
Paralanguage	4.434	4.247	4.252	4.347	2.452	.063
Physical Appearance	4.471 (H)	4.273 (L)	4.195 (L)	4.344 (H, L)	4.102	.007
Customer Loyalty	4.375 (H)	4.102 (L)	4.047 (L)	4.197 (H, L)	4.363	.005

Note: H: high score group, L: low score group

Third, the average paralanguage was 4.434 below the age of 29, 4.347 above 50, 4.252 in their 40s, and 4.247, $p=.063$ in their 30s. There was no age difference in the language of the paralanguage.

Fourth, the average physical appearance language was found to be at 4.471 under the age of 29, 4.273 in their 50s, and 4.195 in their 40s, making it significant to have a variation in appearance by $t=4.102$ $p=.007$ The physical appearance was divided into two groups, those in their 50s and older, and those in their 30s, 40s, and 50s and older. The physical appearance and shape of the airline cabin crew members are relatively highly recognized by the group under the age of 29, and are an important implication of their strategic use in the marketing of airlines.

Finally, the average difference in customer behavior was 4.375 under the age of 29, 4.197 over 50, 4.102 between 30s, and 4.047 between the ages of 40. $t=4.363$ $p=.005$ Customer loyalty was divided into two groups, those in their 50s and older, and those in their 30s, 40s and 50s or older.

<Table 7> Verification of differences based on the Airline

variable	Korean Air (n=129)	Asiana Airline (n=98)	Low cost carrier (n=107)	Foreign Airlines (n=88)	t-value	p-value
Kinesics	4.403 (H)	4.290 (H)	4.262 (H)	3.906 (L)	7.833	.000
Proxemics	4.341	4.240	4.202	4.111	2.087	.101
Paralanguage	4.415 (H)	4.312 (L)	4.277 (L)	4.072 (L)	4.209	.006
Physical Appearance	4.391 (H)	4.403 (H)	4.232 (H, L)	4.061 (L)	4.421	.004
Customer loyalty	4.347 (H)	4.297 (H)	4.036 (M)	3.570 (L)	16.144	.000

Note: H: high score group, M: middle score group, L: low score group

The results of the verification of the differences between the variables for the airlines used are shown in <Table 7>.

First, the average kinesics was Korean Air 4.403, Asiana Airlines 4.290, low-cost airline 4.262, and foreign airline

3.906, which shows the difference in usage between $t=7.833$, $p=.000$. Physical appearance language was divided into two groups : Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, low-cost airlines and lower groups.

Second, Korean Air with an spatial language, Asiana Airlines 4.240, Low Cost Airline 4.202, and Foreign Airline 4.111, $t=2.087$, $p=.101$ showed no difference in their use language, and therefore, Airline has no meaningful differences. Special languages were divided into two groups ; upper groups were classified as being less than 29 years old, and lower groups were classified as being in their 30s, 40s, and 50s.

Third, the average paralanguage was Korean Air 4.415, Asiana Airlines 4.312, low-cost airline companies 4.277, and foreign airline companies 4.072, which shows the difference in usage of doctors = 4.20 9. paralanguage was divided into two groups, with the upper group being Korean Air, the lower group being Asiana Airlines, the lower cost carrier and the foreign airline.

Fourth, the average physical appearance language was found to be 4.403 for Asiana Airlines, 4.391 for Korean Air, 4.232 for low-cost airlines, and 4.061 for foreign airlines, which shows a difference in physical appearance between $t=4.421$. $p=.004$. Physical appearance language was divided into two groups, with the upper group classified as Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, and the lower group as lower cost airlines and foreign airlines.

Fifth, the average customer attitude was found to be Korean Air 4.347, Asiana Airlines 4.297, Low Cost Airlines 4.036, and foreign Airlines 3.570. $t=16.144$, $p=.000$ Customer loyalty was divided into three groups : Korean Air Co., Asiana Airlines Inc., the middle group Low-Cost Airlines and the lower group Foreign Airlines.

<Table 8> Effect of Non-verbal Communication Quality on Customer Loyalty

Items	Variable	Nonstandard Factor		S.F	t-value	p-value	VIF	Customer Loyalty
		B	S.E					
(constant)	Customer Loyalty	.017	.192	.017	.091	.928	$R^2=.540$ $Adj-R^2=.536$ $F=122.372$ $(p=.000)1$	
Kinesics		.232	.070	.195	3.330	.001		
Proxemic		.194	.074	.164	2.601	.010		
Paralanguage		.152	.076	.123	2.008	.048		
Physical Appearance		.392	.066	.331	5.937	.000		

5. Conclusions

5.1. General Discussion and Implications

The objective of this study is to identify the quality of nonverbal communication of airline cabin crew, and to

establish the theoretical basis for the integration of the quality of non-verbal communication among airline cabin crew. This study identified the determinants of the non-specific communication quality of the airline cabin crew, the body language, the spatial language, the physician language, the body language, and the relations with customer loyalty.

The results of this study are summarized as follows. The nonverbal communication quality of the airline cabin crew was found to have a significant impact on customer loyalty. These results have important implications for recognizing the importance of nonverbal communication among airline cabin crew. To improve customer loyalty to airlines, it raises the need for training programs that can improve nonverbal communication skills. If an effective non-language communication quality control strategy is established and further studies are conducted on the non-speaking communication quality of the airline cabin crew, factors that directly affect Airline's interests can be well managed.

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