**Executive Summary**

Enhanced interpersonal communication between service providers namely the airport travel retail and the passengers in an airport becomes important for achieving high customer service standards, service quality ranking and affecting non-aeronautical revenues for an airport. The SERVQUAL model of service quality identifies gaps in the service quality model. The Gap 3 in the model points towards the service delivery being affected due to poor interpersonal communication of the frontline staff. However, there is no training intervention that suggests the closing of the gap 3 specifically.

There is a generic soft skills training needs analysis put in place and generic training that is imparted on soft skills at the IGI airport, New Delhi. There isn’t, however, any study that suggests a specific training need analysis on airport retail staff’s interpersonal communication. Moreover, no such specific training framework on enhancing their interpersonal communication is outlined.

The study identifies the Training Needs Analysis on the interpersonal communication that is based on the Functional Fluency Model of Transactional Analysis and is also a model of interpersonal communication. The model is about ‘choosing our responses’ by responding and not reacting. There are 54 variables / descriptors in the model, out of which 30 are negative ways of reacting and 24 are
positive ways of responding. Therefore, employees can monitor their communication responses with the passengers / customers and thereby improve not only the customer experience but also help in their self-development. Hence, instead of a generic soft skills training program, a questionnaire based on the Functional Fluency model of transactional analysis is developed to assess the training need analysis on interpersonal communication of the airport travel retail staff.

The questionnaire to assess the interpersonal communication of airport travel retail staff at the IGI airport, New Delhi, was validated by interpersonal communication experts and reliability checked on a sample of 73 senior airport retail personnel and scoring norms (benchmark) accordingly created for the questionnaire. Thereafter, a sample size of 271 retail staff from 7 retail categories at IGI airport was selected; covering all the retail outlets in the 7 categories. The questionnaire was administered on these airport retail staff. Factor Analysis was applied to analyze the interplay of 54 variables of the functional fluency model for the cohort. With the labeling of the factors based on the emerged variables, a pen-picture on the training needs on interpersonal communication was framed for the retail staff.

The pen picture or the training needs analysis for the airport travel staff at IGI Airport is a combination of positive and negative descriptors of the functional fluency model. It is observed for the retail staff that their dominant style points towards ‘being responsive’ to the customers.
however they are *overindulgent* and *compliant / resistant* in their interpersonal communication.

The training framework is thereafter created for the retail staff based on the functional fluency model. The framework outlines the enhancement/restrain of the retail staff’s interpersonal communication responses through the meaning attributed to functional fluency modes. Also, it looks at the enhancement of positive variables / descriptors (that did not emerge in the findings) and to exercise restraint on the negative variables / descriptors (that did emerge in the findings) as per the factor analysis applied on the variables of the model.

The study also conducted the efficacy of the training framework on customer service and customer satisfaction through senior officials managing the airport and retail establishments. The results pointed to positive variables bringing about positive effect to both the customer satisfaction and service and vice versa.

The practical implication lies in the application of a transactional analysis model for the development of questionnaire that brings out the training need analysis on interpersonal communication of airport retail staff. Moreover, based on this a training framework based on the same model is designed that enhances the retail staff’s interpersonal communication.
The research limitation is that since the functional fluency model has 54 variables and to conduct the factor analysis a minimum of 270 (5 times the number of variables) sample size is required. Moreover, since IGI airport boasts of the largest airport retail hub, the study was conducted at just the IGI airport. Furthermore, the study takes into account only gap 3 and not the other gaps of the SERVQUAL model as literature review for the implication to take place. Herein lies the contribution to theory whereby the Gap 3 of SERVQUAL model is bridged through both the training need analysis and training framework based on the functional fluency model.