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## Title page

# Comfort evaluation of aircraft cabin system employing a hybrid model

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# Comfort evaluation of aircraft cabin system employing a hybrid model

**Abstract:** Comfort is becoming one of the most important principles in the process of design and evaluation of civil aircraft cabin. However, the comprehensive quantitative evaluation of comfort in an aircraft cabin is a complicated issue, because of the subjectivity of comfort perception and a large amount of factors involved in the whole complex cabin system. A hybrid model combined with Decision Making Trial and Evaluation Laboratory (DEMATEL) method and fuzzy comprehensive evaluation is proposed, which considers both the interrelation between the criteria and the fuzziness of subjective comfort perception concurrently. The result of empirical study from questionnaire survey in flight was consistent with that of the hybrid model. The proposed model is effective. It could provide a more reasonable priority to improve comfort in the aircraft cabin. According to the measured results of cabin environment, cabin facilities and layout, seat and service, the specific differences between the criteria can be displayed clearly, which is helpful to improve the cabin comfort level.

**Keywords:** Comfort in aircraft cabin, a hybrid model, DEMATEL, fuzzy comprehensive evaluation

## 1 Introduction

2 Comfort in aircraft cabin system is becoming an important issue with which airlines differentiate themselves in  
3 a competitive market. Passengers are paying more attention to it with the increase of traveling by airplane. Some  
4 studies show that comfort has a close relation with passenger's choice about airlines and flight. Data indicate that  
5 about 35% of passengers base their choices on comfort, past flight experience, and delays (Brauer, 2004).  
6 Richards and Jacobson (1975) suggested that comfort levels would influence how willing a person is to fly again  
7 on future occasions. Therefore, there is no doubt that the research about comfort in aircraft cabin system plays an  
8 increasingly important role in the aviation industry.

9 The aircraft cabin is an artificial closed space at high altitude with high speed when the aircraft is in flight, in  
10 which the physical environment is of great difference with ordinary cabin environment. Passengers are required to

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1 stay in the seat with safety belt and are not allowed to walk around. At the same time, passengers need to stay to-  
2 gether for a period of time with other passengers and crews from diverse countries and cultures. The comfort per-  
3 ceived by passengers is influenced on both objective environment, facilities, services, etc., and subjective and  
4 emotional factors, such as expectations, emotions and preferences, characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty.

5 The existing comfort researches mainly focus on the automobile seat, office seat, hand tools, trains, etc. In the  
6 field of comfort in the aircraft cabin, the studies are relatively not many. Some scholars conducted some empirical  
7 studies to identify the influencing factors and generating mechanism (Richards & Jacobson, 1977; Vink & Brauer,  
8 2011). Some researchers studied the relationship between passenger comfort and influencing factors (Liu, Yu,  
9 Chu, & Gou, 2017). These studies discuss the influences of one aspect in the aircraft cabin. Little attention has  
10 been devoted to establishing a comprehensive comfort evaluation of the whole cabin system. As a subjective and  
11 personal perception state (De Looze, Kuijt-Evers, & van Dieen, 2003), the comprehensive evaluation of comfort  
12 in aircraft cabin system from the holistic perspective is a complicated issue. The main reasons are the subjectivity  
13 of comfort perception and the complexity of a large number of factors involved in the whole cabin system. Fur-  
14 thermore, these studies mainly adopt the interview and data statistics to evaluate the passenger comfort in the  
15 aircraft cabin. They could not evaluate the comfort in aircraft cabin system from a holistic perspective and could  
16 not offer a quantitative and visualized display result.

17 Referring to the comfort evaluation, many scholars are devoted to studying the objective and quantitative meas-  
18 urement and evaluation methods of comfort (Antonsen et al., 2018). Fuzzy set theory can be applied to measure  
19 ambiguous concepts associated with human's subjective perceptions and judgments, which is suitable to describe  
20 passenger comfort perception. Voisin and Levrat (2001) presented the evaluation of a sensory measurement fuzzy  
21 system intended for the design of car seat comfort, and by comparing with seat evaluators to test validation and  
22 the result was shown correspondingly. Grabisch, Duchêne, Lino, and Perny (2002) established a model of objec-  
23 tive sensation of discomfort and different macro-zones of the body using fuzzy measures and Choquet integrals,  
24 which is more flexible and has a good accuracy. The above methods are mainly applied to assess the ground vehi-  
25 cle seats comfort or environment comfort, just a part of overall comfort. And they have not been used in the field  
26 of comfort evaluation in an aircraft cabin system. However, they could provide good references and lay a founda-  
27 tion for comfort evaluation in an aircraft cabin system.

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1 As a consequence, the purpose of this paper is to establish a new evaluation model for comfort in aircraft cabin  
2 system with consideration of interrelationship between criteria from the perspective of the whole cabin system.  
3 Based on summarizing the factors influencing on comfort in aircraft cabin system, a comprehensive evaluation  
4 criteria system is established. A new hybrid model combined with Decision Making Trial and Evaluation Labora-  
5 tory (DEMATEL) method and fuzzy comprehensive evaluation method is proposed, which takes full advantage of  
6 these two approaches. The DEMATEL method is applied to illustrate the interrelations between criteria and calcu-  
7 late the corresponding weights. Fuzzy comprehensive evaluation is used to evaluate the subjective comfort per-  
8 ception and provide a quantitative result, which could be applied to the process of improving comfort in aircraft  
9 cabin system with a more reasonable priority.

## 10 **Methods**

### 11 **Procedures**

12 A hybrid model for evaluating comfort in aircraft cabin system is proposed and introduced, which integrates the  
13 DEMATEL method with multi-level fuzzy comprehensive evaluation. The DEMATEL method is used to con-  
14 struct the interrelationship between criteria and calculate their weights according to their importance important  
15 degree. Multi-level fuzzy comprehensive evaluation is applied to deal with the subjectivity of evaluation and  
16 quantify the comfort level.

17 The procedures of the hybrid model are shown briefly in Fig.1.

18 Fig.1 The hybrid model procedures

19 Decision Making Trial and Evaluation Laboratory (DEMATEL) was first proposed and developed by The Bat-  
20 telle Memorial Institute through its Geneva Research Centre in 1973 (Fontela & Gabus, 1976), which is one of the  
21 structural modeling techniques based on graph theory and matrix. Unlike the traditional methods such as Analytic  
22 Hierarchy Process (AHP) with the assumption that elements are independent, it could not only analyze and visual-  
23 ize the causal relationships between criteria through causal diagram but also provide weights ranking according to  
24 the importance degree of criteria. This method could classify the criteria into two groups, one is cause group (cri-  
25 teria impose an effect on others), and the other one is effect group (criteria receive effect from others). This can  
26 help researchers understand the structural relationship between criteria better. The DEMATEL method has been

1 currently applied in many fields except for the field of comfort evaluation. This paper will adopt this effective  
2 structural modeling method to discuss the interrelationship between criteria.

3 Subjectivity and fuzziness exist in the process of comfort perception and evaluation. Passengers give their as-  
4 sessment or describe their perception using qualitative criteria and lingual expressions instead of crisp values,  
5 which makes further analysis difficult to compute. Therefore, the fuzzy evaluation may be more suitable to meas-  
6 ure ambiguous concepts associated with human being's subjective perceptions and judgments. Fuzzy comprehen-  
7 sive evaluation based on the fuzzy set theory is proposed as a new decision-making method that is particularly  
8 useful in multivariable circumstances (Guo, Gao, Yang, & Kang, 2009). The numerous criteria will be classified  
9 into different layers according to the multi-level fuzzy comprehensive evaluation method, which could realize the  
10 evaluation from the lower levels to higher ones.

#### 11 Comfort Evaluation Criteria System

12 The numerous criteria will be classified into different layers according to the multi-level fuzzy comprehensive  
13 evaluation method, which could realize the evaluation from the lower levels to higher ones. On the basis of a  
14 literature review, a comprehensive evaluation criteria system of comfort in aircraft cabin system was established  
15 (Fig.2), which can be divided into target layer, factor layer, and criteria layer. Comfort evaluation ( $U$ ) is the main  
16 objective of this system, thus it is located in target layer, which includes four factors: cabin environment comfort  
17 ( $U_1$ ), cabin facilities and layout comfort ( $U_2$ ), seat comfort ( $U_3$ ) and service comfort ( $U_4$ ), i.e.,  $U=f(U_1, U_2, U_3,$   
18  $U_4)$ . These four factors constitute the factor layer, which are the four major categories of evaluation criteria. They  
19 have different weights, which means they are different in importance. Every factor includes the specific related  
20 criteria. For example,  $U_1$  is consisted of the criteria temperature ( $u_{11}$ ), humidity ( $u_{12}$ ), pressure ( $u_{13}$ ), air quality  
21 ( $u_{14}$ ), light ( $u_{15}$ ), vibration ( $u_{16}$ ), noise ( $u_{17}$ ), color ( $u_{18}$ ) and cleanness ( $u_{19}$ ).  $U_2$  refers to the criteria seat layout ( $u_{21}$ ),  
22 pitch ( $u_{22}$ ), luggage room ( $u_{23}$ ), washroom ( $u_{24}$ ), kitchen ( $u_{25}$ ), porthole ( $u_{26}$ ), aisle ( $u_{27}$ ), ceiling ( $u_{28}$ ), safety in-  
23 structions ( $u_{29}$ ).  $U_3$  focuses on the criteria seat height ( $u_{31}$ ), width ( $u_{32}$ ), depth ( $u_{33}$ ), material ( $u_{34}$ ), backrest height  
24 ( $u_{35}$ ), backrest width ( $u_{36}$ ), backrest shape ( $u_{37}$ ), adjustability ( $u_{38}$ ), legroom ( $u_{39}$ ), lumbar support ( $u_{310}$ ), headrest  
25 ( $u_{311}$ ), armrest ( $u_{312}$ ) and tray table ( $u_{313}$ ).  $U_4$  includes books and magazines ( $u_{41}$ ), music ( $u_{42}$ ), videos ( $u_{43}$ ), button  
26 layout ( $u_{44}$ ), meals ( $u_{45}$ ), drinks ( $u_{46}$ ), crew's attitude ( $u_{47}$ ), crew's appearance ( $u_{48}$ ), response time ( $u_{49}$ ) and infor-

1 mation broadcast ( $u_{410}$ ). These criteria in this layer would be the main basis for evaluating and improving passen-  
 2 gers' comfort.

3 Fig.2 Passenger comfort evaluation criteria system

#### 4 Results

5 According to the procedures of the hybrid model, the results were obtained and displayed in this section.

#### 6 Results of the hybrid model

7 After establishing the evaluation criteria system, the DEMATEL method is applied to analyze the interrelations  
 8 among criteria and calculate the weights of them based on importance degree.

9 Firstly, according to the linguistic scale, a pair-wise comparison of criteria was conducted by selected totally  
 10 six experts, who were two cabin designers, two industrial designers, and two passengers. Then the direct-relation  
 11 matrix  $Z$  was obtained. The average of the direct relation matrix was calculated from the six experts. The normal-  
 12 ized direct-relation matrix  $D$  and the total relation matrix  $T$  are obtained according to the steps of DEMATEL.

13 Influencing degree  $R$  and influenced degree  $C$  can be obtained by calculating the sum of rows and columns  
 14 from the total relation matrix  $T$ . Besides central degree ( $R+C$ ) and relation degree ( $R-C$ ) were calculated  
 15 by  $(r_i + c_i)$  and  $(r_i - c_i)$ . The weights of criteria and factors were calculated, which were shown in Table 1.

16 **Table 1.** The weights of factors and criteria

Target layer	Factor layer	Weights of factors	Criteria layer	Weights of criteria
Comfort evaluation criteria system	Environment $U_1$	0.2304	Temperature $u_{11}$	0.0265
			Humidity $u_{12}$	0.0272
			Pressure $u_{13}$	0.0075
			Air quality $u_{14}$	0.0215
			Light $u_{15}$	0.0298
			Vibration $u_{16}$	0.0237
			Noise $u_{17}$	0.0240
			Color $u_{18}$	0.0233
			Cleanness $u_{19}$	0.0487
			Seat layout $u_{21}$	0.0359
Cabin facilities and Layout $U_2$	0.2192	Pitch $u_{22}$	0.0429	
		Luggage room $u_{23}$	0.0198	

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		Washroom $u_{24}$	0.0211
		Kitchen $u_{25}$	0.0402
		Porthole $u_{26}$	0.0123
		Aisle $u_{27}$	0.0275
		Celling $u_{28}$	0.0111
		Safety instructions $u_{29}$	0.0114
		Height $u_{31}$	0.0179
		Width $u_{32}$	0.0212
		Depth $u_{33}$	0.0278
		Material $u_{34}$	0.0083
		Backrest height $u_{35}$	0.0399
		Backrest width $u_{36}$	0.0245
	Seat $U_3$	Backrest shape $u_{37}$	0.0330
	0.3498	Adjustability $u_{38}$	0.0502
		Legroom $u_{39}$	0.0385
		Lumbar support $u_{310}$	0.0198
		Headrest $u_{311}$	0.0108
		Armrest $u_{312}$	0.0203
		Tray tables $u_{313}$	0.0476
		Books and magazines $u_{41}$	0.048
		Music $u_{42}$	0.0116
		Videos $u_{43}$	0.0265
		Button layout $u_{44}$	0.0167
	Service $U_4$	Meals $u_{45}$	0.0469
	0.2008	Drinks $u_{46}$	0.0264
		Crew's attitude $u_{47}$	0.0154
		Crew's appearance $u_{48}$	0.0135
		Response time $u_{49}$	0.0220
		Information broadcast $u_{410}$	0.0178

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1 A causal diagram was drawn by mapping the data set of  $(R+C, R-C)$ , employing the prominence  $(R+C)$  as a  
2 horizontal axle and the relation  $(R-C)$  as a vertical axle, which was shown as Fig.3.

3 Fig.3 The causal diagram

4 On the basis of having obtained the weights of factors and criteria, the multi-level fuzzy comprehensive evalua-  
5 tion of comfort in aircraft cabin system was conducted. Firstly, a survey was carried out during the flight from

1 Xi'an to Qingdao, which belongs to the Shandong Airlines SC CDG. The airplane type is a Boeing 737-300. The  
 2 Seat pitch is 31 inches. Seat width is 17 inches. The Configuration of seat is 3-3. The In-Flight Entertainment  
 3 (IFE) employs the TV overhead.

4 The duration of this flight was 2.5 hours. The questionnaires were distributed to the passengers at half an hour  
 5 before landing, which is shown in the appendix. 200 questionnaires were distributed in one week and the valid  
 6 ones were 178, including 127 males and 51 females. Their average age was 37 years (22-63 years), average stature  
 7 1.72m (1.50-1.88 m) and average weight 67 kg (45-88 kg). They gave their evaluation on this aircraft cabin sys-  
 8 tem adopting five comment grades, which is denoted as  $V = \{v_1, v_2, v_3, v_4, v_5\}$ , respectively represent "worse", "bad",  
 9 "general", "good", "better". The number of these five comment grades aiming at every evaluating criterion was  
 10 counted. And the normalization was carried, therefore, the fuzzy evaluation matrix of different factors was  
 11 obtained. Take the criteria "temperature" in cabin environment factor, for example, 53 passengers chose "better",  
 12 71 chose "good", 36 chose "general", 18 chose "bad", no one chose "worse". Therefore, the comment set of  
 13 "temperature" was calculated as  $C = (53/178, 71/178, 36/178, 18/178, 0/178)$ . The rest comment sets were  
 $= (0.3, 0.4, 0.2, 0.1, 0)$

14 obtained in the same way, and an evaluating matrix was composed of the comment sets of whole criteria in a  
 15 factor layer. For example, the result of the cabin environment factor layer was shown in Table 2.

16 **Table 2.** Evaluating sets of criteria in cabin environment layer

$U_i$	Comment grades				
	better	Good	General	Bad	Worse
$u_{11}$	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.1	0
$u_{12}$	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.1
$u_{13}$	0	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.1
$u_{14}$	0	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.2
$u_{15}$	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.1
$u_{16}$	0	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.1
$u_{17}$	0.5	0.3	0.2	0	0
$u_{18}$	0.2	0.2	0.6	0	0
$u_{19}$	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.1

17

1 The corresponding evaluation matrixes were obtained.

2 The fuzzy calculation was conducted with weighted average fuzzy arithmetic operators, the results were shown  
3 as follows.

$$4 \quad \begin{aligned} S_1 &= W_1 \circ R_1 \\ &= (0.1604 \quad 0.2300 \quad 0.3773 \quad 0.1582 \quad 0.0741) \end{aligned}$$

$$5 \quad \begin{aligned} S_2 &= W_2 \circ R_2 \\ &= (0.0582 \quad 0.2120 \quad 0.3312 \quad 0.3237 \quad 0.0748) \end{aligned}$$

$$6 \quad \begin{aligned} S_3 &= W_3 \circ R_3 \\ &= (0.0850 \quad 0.2537 \quad 0.3436 \quad 0.1974 \quad 0.1203) \end{aligned}$$

$$7 \quad \begin{aligned} S_4 &= W_4 \circ R_4 \\ &= (0.2327 \quad 0.3488 \quad 0.2661 \quad 0.1238 \quad 0.0284) \end{aligned}$$

8 The fuzzy evaluation matrix  $R$  of the target layer could be formed by these results.

$$9 \quad \begin{aligned} R &= (S_1, S_2, S_3, S_4)^T \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} 0.1604 & 0.2300 & 0.3773 & 0.1582 & 0.0741 \\ 0.0582 & 0.2120 & 0.3312 & 0.3237 & 0.0748 \\ 0.0850 & 0.2537 & 0.3436 & 0.1974 & 0.1203 \\ 0.2327 & 0.3488 & 0.2661 & 0.1238 & 0.0284 \end{bmatrix} \end{aligned}$$

10 The fuzzy calculation was conducted again with weighted average fuzzy arithmetic operators to obtain the final  
11 results.

$$12 \quad S = W \circ R = (0.1248 \quad 0.2570 \quad 0.3339 \quad 0.2024 \quad 0.0819)$$

13 The comfort evaluation result could be displayed in Fig.4.

14 Fig.4 Measured results of comfort in aircraft cabin system

15 Results of empirical study

16 In order to obtain the basic data of passenger comfort in aircraft cabin, a questionnaire was designed according  
17 to the literature review, which comprised 6 themes and totally 58 comfort related questions. The questionnaires  
18 were distributed by way of field survey during one week. 200 questionnaires were distributed in Xi'an Xianyang  
19 International Airport, and the valid ones were 178. On a 5-point scale (1-worse, 2-bad, 3-general, 4-good, 5-  
20 better), the passengers were asked the comfort experience about this flight. The data was analyzed employing

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1 SPSS 22.0. The average score of overall comfort experience in this flight was 3.7, which indicated that passen-  
2 gers' comfort feeling was more than "general", but not at a "good" level in this flight. This result was consistent  
3 with the computation result of model.

#### 4 **Discussions**

##### 5 *Interrelationship analysis between criteria*

6 There are some information and indications to be extracted from the results of the causal diagram. These sug-  
7 gestions are of great importance to direct cabin design for improving comfort in aircraft cabin system. The criteria  
8 could be analyzed according to their values of central degree and effect degree. Because there are so many criteria  
9 in the evaluation system, we take some typical criteria for example to show the interrelationship between them.

10 The criteria are classified into two groups according to the value of  $(R-C)$ : cause group, and effect group. The cri-  
11 teria in cause group ( $R-C > 0$ ) dispatch more influence on the ones in effect group ( $R-C < 0$ ). Therefore, it is neces-  
12 sary to pay more attention to the criteria in cause group. Backrest shape ( $u_{37}$ ) has the highest value of  $(R-C)$ , which  
13 means that  $u_{37}$  is the most influential criterion because it influences other criteria most and is influenced by others  
14 least. Table 1 shows that the central degree of  $u_{37}$  is 0.1830, located in the middle of  $X$  axle, which represents that  
15  $u_{37}$  is an important criterion impacting on the passenger comfort. The improvement of  $u_{37}$  can lead to the ameliora-  
16 tion of the whole passenger comfort level. Therefore, in order to improve the passenger comfort feeling, the  
17 backrest shape ( $u_{37}$ ) should be attached more importance.

18 Legroom ( $u_{39}$ ) has the lowest value of  $(R-C)$ , while its central degree is located in the relatively front place in  
19 the  $X$  axle, which indicates that  $u_{39}$  has a low influence on the whole comfort evaluation system, but is susceptible  
20 to other criteria. The adjustment of other criteria would lead to the improvement of  $u_{39}$ . For example, the legroom  
21 is impacted by seat pitch, seat width, backrest shape, etc. If we want to improve the  $u_{39}$  to enhance the passenger  
22 comfort perception, we can take measures from the corresponding cause criteria. The improvement of these crite-  
23 ria would trigger the change of  $u_{39}$ .

24 From analysis of central degree, adjustability ( $u_{38}$ ) belongs to the effect group, while it has the highest central  
25 degree, which means that it is the most important criterion in comfort evaluation system. Although the impact it

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1 imposes on others is relatively low, it is still needed to consider first, including the adjustable angle of the backrest,  
2 armrest, and headrest, etc.

3 The weights of all criteria are assigned according to their importance degree. In factor layer, seat comfort ( $U_3$ )  
4 has the highest weight value of 0.3540, which is the most influential factor and should be considered first. The  
5 reason is that passengers spend the most time on the seat, therefore, seat comfort has a direct relation to comfort  
6 evaluation. The rest is cabin environment, cabin facilities, layout and service. In criteria layer, seat adjustability  
7 ( $u_{38}$ ) has the highest weight. Cleanness ( $u_{19}$ ), button layout ( $u_{45}$ ), tray table ( $u_{313}$ ) are the more important criteria.

#### 8 *Evaluation analysis*

9 Fig.4 shows that the result of cabin comfort affiliated with “better”, “good”, “general”, “bad” and “worse” re-  
10 spectively are 0.1248, 0.2570, 0.3339, 0.2024 and 0.019. According to the maximum membership principle, the  
11 comfort level of this aircraft cabin system is regarded as “general”, which needs to be improved in future. This  
12 result is consistent with the result of questionnaire survey in flight.

13 Referring to what measures are necessary to be taken to improve the cabin comfort level, the measured results  
14 of factor layers could offer some suggestions, which show the specific differences between the criteria.

15 From the perspective of cabin environment, the measured results affiliated with “general” and “good” respec-  
16 tively are 0.3773 and 0.2300, accounting for 60.73% of total measured results, which means that the comfort level  
17 of cabin environment basically satisfies the demands of passengers currently. If we want to take measures to im-  
18 prove environment comfort, the criteria such as cleanliness ( $u_{19}$ ), light ( $u_{15}$ ), temperature ( $u_{11}$ ), noise ( $u_{17}$ ), etc. are  
19 needed to pay more attention according to their importance. With the development of technology, passengers at-  
20 tach great importance to higher requirements, the cabin cleanliness is becoming the most important criterion. If  
21 cabin environment is tidy and clean, the passenger would perceive more intensive comfortable feelings, which  
22 also testify the research result of [Ahmadpour, Lindgaard, Robert, and Pownall \(2014\)](#). Moreover, the lighting  
23 system in the cabin will be the next candidate in the improvement measures. Fig.3 and Table 1 show that the light  
24 has higher value of ( $R-C$ ) and belongs to cause group, which could impact other criteria such as meals, cleanliness,  
25 temperature, activities, etc. The current light system is always simple with illumination function. If the light  
26 system could provide more functions, for example, Finnair’s A350 cabin adopts northern lights as their lighting

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1 mood, which could offer the different experience about Finnish characteristics for passengers, consequently to  
2 improve the passenger comfort perception. Referring to temperature, it will be better with more stability. Many  
3 passengers complained that when the airplane was taking off and landing, the cabin was always cold. Noise does  
4 not only result from the vibration but also the passengers' communication and children's crying. The  
5 improvement of noise could start with these aspects.

6 Referring to a factor of cabin facilities and layout, the measured results affiliated with "general" and "bad" re-  
7 spectively are 0.3312 and 0.3237, accounting for 65.49% of the total, which indicates that this factor does not  
8 meet the passengers' demands. The evaluation result is not good enough. The ranking of important criteria is the  
9 seat pitch ( $u_{22}$ ), layout ( $u_{21}$ ), kitchen ( $u_{25}$ ), etc., which is also the priority of taking measures to improve the cabin  
10 comfort. From Fig.3 and Table 1, seat pitch has a higher importance degree among criteria and is a cause criterion,  
11 which is a critical one impacting on passenger comfort. In the flight from Xi'an to Qingdao, which belongs to the  
12 Shandong Airlines SC CDG. The airplane type is a Boeing 737-300. The seat pitch is 31 inches. It is not the most  
13 comfortable distance comparing with the deluxe class. For a specific type aircraft and type of class, seat pitch is  
14 not easy to change considering the economical reason. The layout is as same as pitch. If in the process of a new  
15 cabin design, it would be considered in advance. The kitchen is relative with a supply of meals and drinks, pas-  
16 sengers pay more attention to it. If the kitchen is tidy, neat and sanitary, passengers would feel more comfortable.

17 The measured results of seat comfort affiliated with "general" and "good" respectively are 0.3436 and 0.2537,  
18 accounting for 59.73% of total measured results, which indicates that the current seat comfort of this type airplane  
19 is basically satisfied the passengers' demands. According to the weights assignment, what has greater importance  
20 on cabin comfort respectively are adjustability ( $u_{38}$ ), legroom ( $u_{39}$ ), tray table ( $u_{313}$ ) and backrest shape ( $u_{37}$ ). In the  
21 future process of cabin design, more attention should be paid to seat adjustability, especially the backrest adjusta-  
22 ble angle, which is of great importance to the improvement of cabin comfort. Passengers spend the most time on  
23 the seat. The duration of flight is generally more than 2 hours. If the backrest of the seat is always kept upright,  
24 passengers would feel fatigued easily. It would improve spine stress if backrest has an appropriate angle of incli-  
25 nation. However, in this economy class cabin, due to the legroom is not large enough, passengers are not allowed  
26 to adjust their backrest freely, which would greatly impact on the activities of rear row passengers. Therefore, the

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1 seat adjustability of this cabin could not provide a better sitting perception. The legroom also plays an important  
2 role in cabin comfort. Fig.3 shows that it is an effect criterion with the highest value of  $(R-C)$ , which is susceptible  
3 to other criteria. It is influenced by seat depth, tray table, backrest shape, etc. If we can improve these relative cri-  
4 teria, legroom would be improved correspondingly.

5 The measured results of service factor are respectively 0.2327, 0.3488, 0.2661, 0.1238 and 0.0284. The sum of  
6 “better”, “good” and “general” accounts for 84.76% of total measured results, which means that passengers satisfy  
7 with the services in this cabin. In view of saving resources, service is not the first priority to consider to improve  
8 the cabin comfort.

### 9 **Conclusion**

10 Comfort evaluation of aircraft cabin system plays an increasing role in process of cabin design. As a complex  
11 system, the comprehensive comfort evaluation in aircraft cabin system from the holistic perspective is a compli-  
12 cated problem. Quantitative evaluation methods are needed to consider to provide a direction for cabin design  
13 from the view of comfort. Therefore, a hybrid model is proposed to deal with this problem. On the basis of litera-  
14 ture review, a comprehensive comfort evaluation criteria system is outlined, including cabin environment, cabin  
15 facilities and layout, seat comfort and service four factors, 41 criteria in total. The DEMATEL method is adopted  
16 to analyze the interrelations between criteria and calculate their corresponding weights according to their im-  
17 portance degree. A multi-level fuzzy comprehensive evaluation is conducted to obtain a quantitative result about  
18 an airline. Finally, the evaluating results could provide a direction to improve the cabin comfort. The empirical  
19 study testified that this hybrid model combined with DEMATEL method and fuzzy comprehensive evaluation was  
20 an effective method.

21 However, there are still some limitations in this study. First of all, the hybrid model proposed in this study just  
22 analyzed the evaluating results about the current cabin in a certain aircraft. It could not be used as a predicted  
23 model. In the future research, more attention should be paid to establish an effective predict model to direct cabin  
24 design, which is of great importance to improve the cabin comfort. Besides, this paper just gives the suggestions  
25 on how to improve cabin comfort. More specific measures and data should be researched in a future study.

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## 1 **Declarations**

2 Availability of data and materials: The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available  
3 from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

4 Competing interests: No conflict of interest exists in the submission of this manuscript, and manuscript is ap-  
5 proved by all authors for publication. We declare that we have no competing interests.

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9 manuscript and analyzed the data. Suihuai YU checked the paper and gave the valuable suggestions. Jianjie CHU  
10 performed the survey.

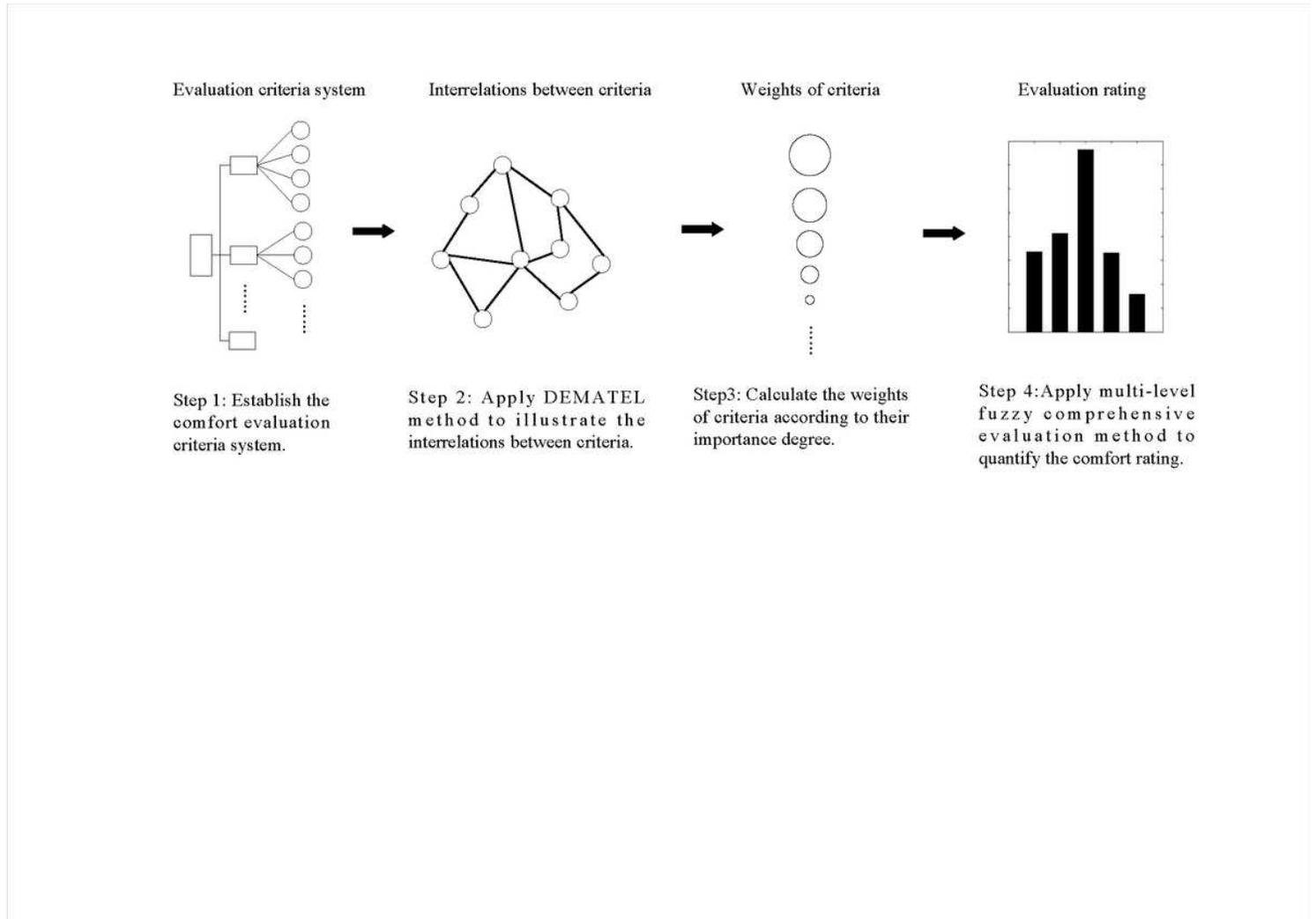
11 Acknowledgements: Not applicable

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# Figures



**Figure 1**

The hybrid model procedures

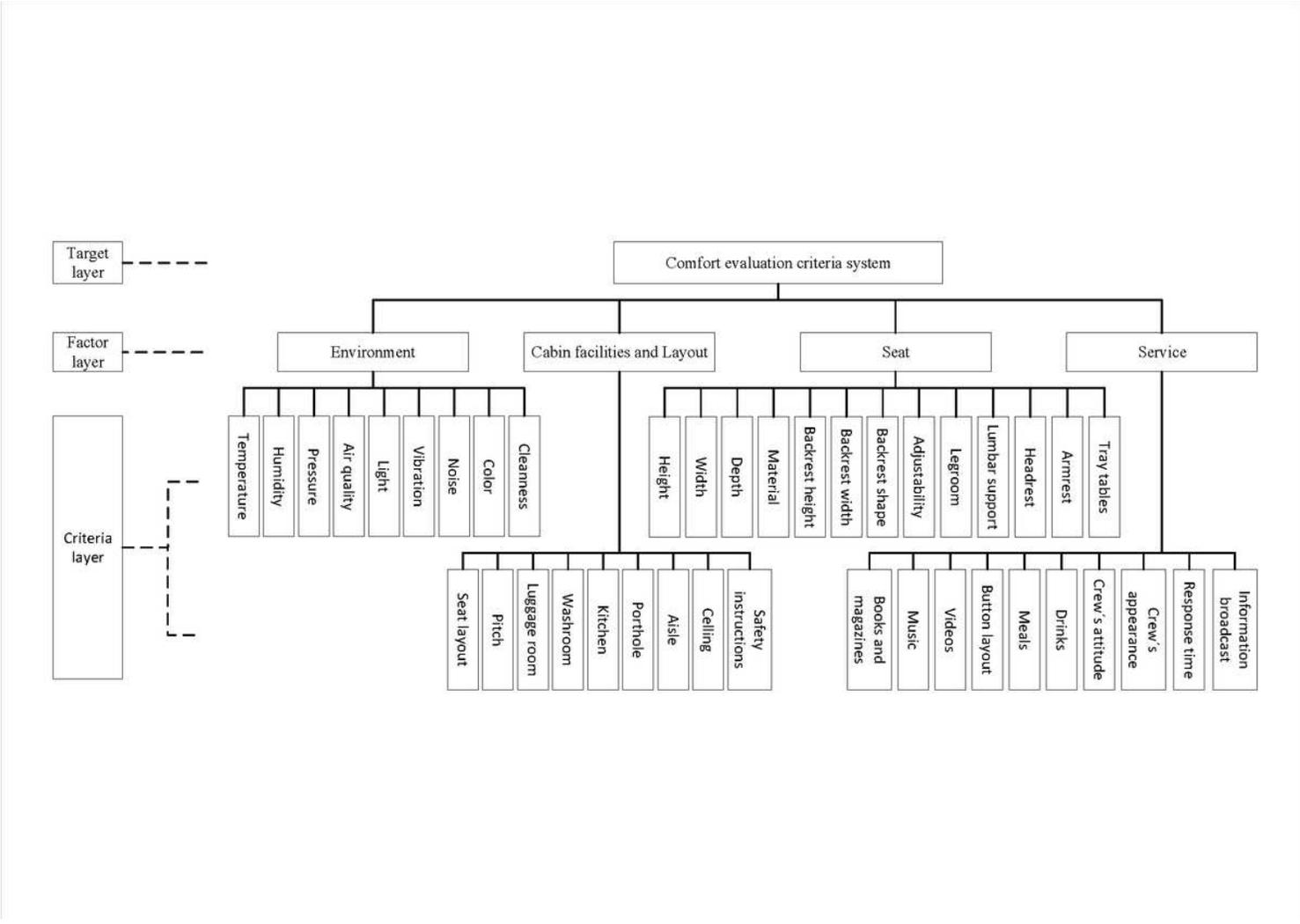
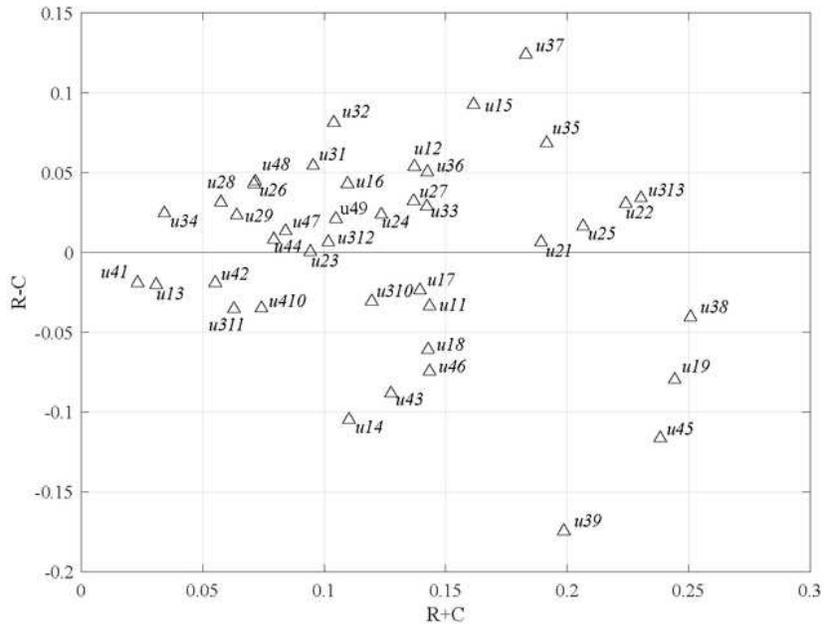


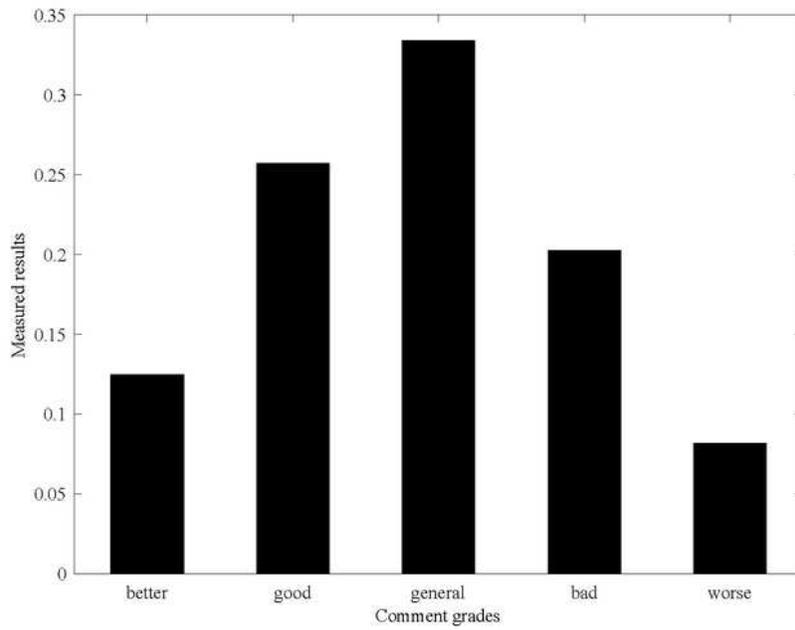
Figure 2

Passenger comfort evaluation criteria system



**Figure 3**

The causal diagram



**Figure 4**

Measured results of comfort in aircraft cabin system