

## The impact of animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity and service performance on Saudis' attitude towards airline services

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**Doctoral Program, Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Business School**

**The Impact of Animosity, Ethnocentrism, Religiosity and  
Service Performance on Saudis' Attitude Towards Airline  
Services**

**24<sup>th</sup> Sep 2024**

A thesis submitted to the University of Wolverhampton in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Fahad Albishi

2024 - 2025

Supervisors: Dr Ade Oriade & Professor Yong Wang

## Declaration

This work or any part thereof has not previously been presented in any form to the University or to any other body whether for the purposes of assessment, publication or for any other purpose (unless otherwise indicated). Save for any express acknowledgments, references and/or bibliographies cited in the work, I confirm that the intellectual content of the work is the result of my own efforts and of no other person.

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## **Abstract:**

This thesis examined the impact of animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity and service performance (moderator variable) on the attitudes of Saudi consumers towards airline services (dependent variable). This was noteworthy and timely, given the context of Vision 2030 and its National Transformation Plan having introduced significant changes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Airline services in the country are changing demonstrably. Previous research has shown service performance and quality significantly impact consumer behaviour, with dissatisfied customers readily switching to alternative providers; a gap remained in studies around this combination of variables within this geographic area.

A wide literature review of themes related to consumer psychology, cultural influences, and service quality models led to the consideration of several potential variables. Animosity, ethnocentrism, and religiosity were selected for their particular relevance to the Saudi context, particularly with the regional cultural and religious significance of air travel for many consumers. Literature revealed studies suggesting that consumer animosity can significantly affect brand perception and loyalty, particularly in markets undergoing transformation (Odeh, 2015). Including service performance as a moderator was influenced by its critical role in shaping consumer experiences and perceptions of airline services.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) provided a robust, holistic framework to examine the dynamics

and nuances within the data. A quantitative approach was used, with survey methodology. A purposive sampling frame selected a homogenous study population consisting of 100 passengers at 5 different regional airports (adjusted response rate n= 426, 85.2%). Data analysis used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and WarpPLS 7.0 regression with Stable3 resampling technique; testing the model revealed it met the criteria for model fit and quality indices. Age, Gender and Education were controlled for following Marsh's (1982) elaboration approach. Results revealed both consumer animosity and religiosity positively impacted consumer attitudes, consumer ethnocentrism did not have a significant influence. Service performance was seen to moderate the relationship between consumers' ethnocentrism and attitude, while consumer animosity was not moderated by service performance.

This research offers actionable insight for airlines applying for operational licenses in Saudi Arabia: they inform marketing (e.g. incentivising travel for pilgrims), and emphasise that positive service encounters mitigate the negative impact of ethnocentrism and amplify the positive effect of religiosity on consumer attitudes. Animosity alone did not impact consumer uptake, therefore international airline brands could capitalise on demonstrating cultural sensitivity and high functional value. This study provides policymakers with evidence that supports investment in the sector under Vision 2030. The small effects seen in the results demonstrate that even subtle factors can have cumulative or situational importance. The use of TPB with TCV offers a

nuanced lens to offer understanding of consumer behaviour within this unique context.

Key words: animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity, service performance, Saudi consumers' attitudes, airline services, Structural Equation Modelling, Vision 2030, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Theory of Consumer Values (TCV)

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The English translation is " therefore remember me, I will remember you, and thankful to me, and do not be ungrateful to me" (Qu'ran Verse 2:152). I am thankful to you Allah.

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

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أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in this thesis

Abbreviation / Arabic word	Full term / closest translation
الله سبحانه وتعالى Allah, Subhanahu wa ta'ala	May He be praised and exalted
ANIM	Consumer Animosity (variable)
AttEC	Attitude Towards Ethnic Culture
ATT	Consumer Attitudes
BI	Behavioural Intention
CEDA	Council of Economic and Development Affairs
CETSCALE	Consumer Ethnocentric Tendency Scale
COO	Country of origin
CRS	Centrality of Religiosity Scale
DMM	King Fahd International Airport, Dammam City
EDUC	Education
ETHN	Consumer Ethnocentrism (variable)
FSCC	Full Service Cost Carrier
GAS	General Authority for Statistics
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
الحج Hajj	Pilgrimage to Mecca; all Muslims are expected to go once in a lifetime
HCC	High Cost Carrier
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
إِحْرَام Ihṛām	, a state of consecration [to be entered into or achieved in order to perform umrah]
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JED	Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport

Kafala	a system whereby any foreign national is sponsored to be in the country by a Saudi National or organisation
KKIA RUH	King Khalid International Airport Riyadh
القرآن Koran or Quran or al-Qur'an	The central religious text of Islam
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (certification)
LCC	Low Cost Carrier
MED	Prince Muhammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport
مَكَّة Mecca or Makkah	Capital city in Mecca Province, Hejiz region, Holiest city
مِيَقَات Miqat	A principal boundary at which Muslim pilgrims intending to perform the Hajj or 'Umrah must enter
مُحَمَّد Muhammad or Mohammad or Mohamed	Prophet, founder of Islam
NTP	National Transformation Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PBC	Perceived Behavioural Control
REF	Research Excellence Framework
REL	Consumer Religiosity (variable)
RPK	Revenue per passenger kilometre
SBIC	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation
Sharia	Islamic canonical law
SPP	Service Performance
السنة Sunnah	The way of the Prophet
سني Sunni	Lawful
TCR	Transformative Consumer Research
TCV	Theory of Consumption Values
TPB	Theory of Planned behaviour

TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
TVLM	Trust, Value and Loyalty Model
TWA	Trans World Airlines
UK	United Kingdom
العمرة Umrah	Annual pilgrimage to Mecca; sometimes considered a 'mini pilgrimage' compared to Hajj
UN	UN: United Nations
UNESCO	UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
الوهابية Wahhabi	Orthodox sect of Sunni
WHO	World Health Organisation

## List of Key Definitions

The following terms used and referenced throughout this thesis are hereby defined to provide clarity and consistency for the reader.

**Consumer animosity:** Consumers' negative feelings and emotions against another country that affect product purchase intentions when dealing with goods from that country.

**Consumer ethnocentrism:** The beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality of purchasing foreign-made products.

**Consumer religiosity:** Religiosity refers to the beliefs and behaviours of individuals that address religious or transcendent concerns and help to understand consumption behaviour as it has a significant impact on the consumer's fundamental values.

**Service performance:** a way of measuring and evaluating how well a business supports its customers throughout the buyer's journey.

**Structural Equation Modelling:** (SEM) is a powerful, multivariate technique found increasingly in scientific investigations to test and evaluate multivariate causal relationships.

**Control variable:** Control variables are covariates or nuisance variables whose primary purpose is to reduce any potential for confounding effects. Their use elucidates the relationship between the variables under scrutiny meaning any observed relationship between variables is not due to any confounding effect.

**Zero-order relationship:** The original relationship between the two variables without the presence of the control variable

**Partial relationship:** When the zero relationship is compared in each sub-group in the presence of the control variable, the relationship is known as the partial relationship.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

**T**he Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is going through unprecedented social and economic change with the advent of Vision 2030, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman's program of reform. Ranging from minor changes to some laws that legislate for business to several far-reaching and significant changes that are altering the social landscape of the country, such as increasing the number of women in all aspects of the workforce (Tanis, 2022). In particular, the skies over the country are opening up as new air routes are established and further airline services planned (TNA, 2022), which paves the way for a massive increase in passenger transportation in the coming months and years. Moreover, new routes will undoubtedly lead to airline competitors vying for passenger and commercial trade as opportunities to expand into the region are created.

Securing a presence in the market in such a competitive arena will also undoubtedly entail ascertaining what the customer is looking for and providing the best possible services at the right price. There is no one-size-fits-all in this dynamic, diverse world; researchers are already determining how the individual needs of consumers in general differ, and more importantly, what influences guide their thinking, their attitudes, and their choice (e.g., Nassè, 2021). Indeed, the aviation sector in particular is affected by issues such as service performance and quality, with customers readily looking elsewhere for a better deal when dissatisfied with these elements (Munusamy, Chelliah and Pandian, 2011).

This thesis aims to unpick some of the nuances that affect consumer attitudes and ultimately consumer choice within the geographical landscape of Saudi Arabia in these changing times. It investigates the impact that Saudi consumers' animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity and judgement of service performance have on their attitude towards airline services. This chapter forms the structural basis from which to guide the reader through the ensuing chapters; it presents the research concepts and rationale for choosing or excluding variable to investigate in the study, and in addition, it comments on the originality of the research and its contribution to the field. Section 1.5 provides a narrative map of the thesis, guiding the reader through the layout of the ensuing chapters.

## **1.1 The Research Concepts**

For the purpose of this study, the following provides definitions of the three major concepts investigated in this study: Animosity, Ethnocentrism and Religiosity. It also provides a short contextualising narrative on the subject of service performance, which as will be seen in chapter 3 became the moderating variable, and also outlines what this study uses as its core definition of consumer attitudes. This section also elucidates why alternative concepts studied by other scholars in the field were not selected. This process begins the linkage between the concepts under study within the wider academic research arena and the scope for the impact this study will have for the business field in general including the airline services sector and academia.

### 1.1.1 Consumer animosity

Animosity is a strong feeling of hatred for something or someone. It can be deeply personal, or it can be a collective expression, such as one nation against another. Klein *et al.* (1998) describe animosity in terms of it being related to events such as conflict and that such animosity can influence how people behave towards others such as boycotting their products. Much of the previous literature around consumer animosity has centred on pre-existing conditions from historical interactions, thus measuring 'existing' consumer animosity within an 'in-group' that stems from what are perceived harmful actions from within an 'out-group' (Jung, Ang, Leong, Tan, Pornpitakpan, and Kau, 2002; Hoang *et al.*, 2022). Other studies have conceptualised consumer animosity stemming from the 'possibility' of animosity arising within "an historically dominating group (the in-group) in response to a possible threat from an out-group that for multiple generations has been viewed as a minority with no real agency, and therefore not able to pose a threat to the dominating (socio)cultural and socioeconomic identity" (Junker, 2016 p. 35). Saeb Farhan and Mohammad (2018) suggest that animosity is part of negative attitudes people have when they encounter people or merchandise from the countries or places associated with the opposing viewpoint, culture and/or behaviour.

Indeed, there is existing research about the individual attributes within the concept of consumer animosity and how they affect consumer behaviour. For instance, several studies have explored country of origin (COO) as a factor in purchase decision, which Abraham (2013) describes as the image / stereotype

that consumers have of a country and its people. This 'image' triggers automatic thoughts related to the history, traditions and national characteristics of the COO whatever the product is, thereby influencing the consumer's decision to purchase where there is animosity towards the country.

We will see more details in the ensuing sections how Saudi Arabia is a country undergoing change, and that change is being driven through the government's Vision 2030 agenda. It is likely as a result of that change that airline services will see a surge in demand, and that competition will be strong as more routes and services are established. Earlier studies on consumer animosity have found it to be a significant feature in some regions such as Malaysia (Tabassi, Esmailzadeh and Sambasivan, 2012) China (e.g. Cheah *et al.* 2016) and Indonesia (Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, and Pratama, 2020).

### **1.1.2 Ethnocentrism**

The concept of ethnocentrism relates to how we evaluate or make value judgements on other people, cultures or countries based on our own assumptions that we garner from our own culture and traditions (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Studies such as Tabassi, Esmailzadeh and Sambasivan, (2012), have demonstrated that consumer ethnocentrism is a significant influence on purchase intention, with findings including individuals asserting that domestic products are superior to imported goods and purchasing foreign goods leads to unemployment.

Saudi Arabia has a strong tradition rooted in the Islamic faith, with norms and mores deeply engrained in Sharia law and a ruling family that has been at the helm since the country's inception in 1932 (Al Rasheed, 2010). There has yet to be a study involving ethnocentrism as a variable in today's Saudi Arabia – one that is undergoing significant social change under Vision 2030.

McCornack and Ortiz (2017) suggest that the distinctions around a particular cultural characteristic such as customs practice and behaviour are held in high regard in an ethnocentric group, inferring that others are somehow less important. When determining the root cause of ethnocentrism, it would be simple to assume that ethnocentrism is 'likely' to be seen as a feature within Saudi Arabia due to the terms of previous development plans, and a point of reference for this assumption will be the changes afoot with Vision 2030 (as discussed in detail in Section 2.2 and later in Section 7.2). Ethnocentrism is seen as a learned behaviour, fostered by tradition and policy (Hartshorn, Kaznatcheev, and Shultz, 2013; Griffin, 2017). For Saudi Arabia, previous years saw the economic and political trends within the Kingdom had been to promote Saudi culture within the workplace and indeed reduce the need for overseas labour, stressing the importance of 'Saudisation'. This term became established in the terminology of the economic field in the 1970s and was specified in the Second Development Plan for 1970-1975 (Ibrahimkhan, 2007). At the beginning of Saudi Arabia's five-year development plans, there had been a heavy reliance on foreign workers because of the inadequacy of Saudi labour in terms of skills and education. In particular, the Saudi government had been hiring foreign labour in large numbers

to participate in infrastructure projects for both the public and private sectors (Ewain, 1999, Ibrahimkhan, 2007). This situation has simultaneously both consolidated and changed under Vision 2030 – the Saudi Government is reinforcing the thriving cultural norms of the Kingdom whilst harnessing the potential for the country’s citizens and industries yet is welcoming people from other nations, albeit not in a work capacity. In one sense, the concept of ethnocentrism can be seen as the inverse of cosmopolitanism, which has a direct relevance with Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030. Cosmopolitanism is associated with openness and acceptance of diverse cultures, while ethnocentrism involves a preference for one's own culture and resistance to accepting other cultures (Cleveland, Laroche, and Papadopoulos, 2009). The Vision 2030 documentation is clear that it aims to build a thriving nation with diversity a central theme. However, individuals may exhibit varying degrees of both cosmopolitan and ethnocentric tendencies, and the relationship can vary among individuals and across different contexts (Hoang *et al.*, 2022). Cultural and social factors also play a role in the prevalence of cosmopolitanism and ethnocentrism within a society (Lee and Mazodier, 2015; Hoang *et al.*, 2022). Understanding cultural and social factors is also central to the development of services and products as consumers’ preferences are key influences on their choice and decision-making (Chung, 2014; Gammoh, Koh and Okoroafo, 2019).

### **1.1.3 Religiosity**

Religiosity has been defined in various ways, and is seen as more than ‘being religious’. Nassè (2021) explains it from two perspectives – ‘extrinsic religiosity’ –

where a person is seen overtly to hold religious beliefs but that does not always relate to a deep sense of faith, and 'intrinsic religiosity' – where a person lives and breathes their faith but does not do so in a demonstrative way. Auf, Salleh, and Yusoff (2016) found that those consumers who assimilate their religion into their daily routine base their behaviour on their religious principles. Religiosity is described as being influenced by, and to a degree characterised, by the constructs of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity (Deb and Sinha, 2015). Weber *et al.* (2016) frame this from a sociological perspective as religiosity being affected by anger, anxiety, intimacy, and consistency

The next chapter begins with an introduction to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and includes demographics which detail how religion is at the heart of its culture, with Muslims constituting over (99 per cent) of the population. Again, there is a body of literature on the subject of religiosity which is also considered in the following chapter, and it is clear that religiosity influences purchasing behaviour in different ways. Heiman, Gordon, and Zilberman (2019) for instance found that those who closely follow doctrine and have respect for religious authorities are more obedient to directives about consumption of goods (such as no pork for followers of Judaism, halal produce for Muslims etc.) than those who do not follow a faith.

Moving forward to the potential end-users of the findings of this thesis, there is a clear need for marketing information on the types of influences on potential consumers of airline services in what has already been identified as an expanding sector. El-Omari (2019) identifies religiosity as a central consideration for marketing in Saudi Arabia, stating that the intimate relationship between the

organisation promoting goods and services and the targeted environment for its use alongside the potential users of such services need to be fully understood due to their ever-changing nature. Such understanding allows marketing to be shifted, tailored, altered as culture and consumers evolve. El-Omari reminds the reader of the dominant nature of Islam in Saudi Society, stating that:

*Islam in its puritan forms permeates every aspect of life in Saudi Arabia. For Saudis, Islam spells out almost every detail of private and public life to such an extent that it appears to leave little scope for individual initiative. It is inclined to challenge everything new. (El-Omari, 2019, p.654)*

The changes embedded within Vision 2030 are 'new', and so are the 'new' routes and services planned under the reforms. Whereas Vision 2030 is rooted in Islam, worldwide airline services are not; El-Omari (2019) suggests that companies and indeed researchers who are seeking out the type of information needed to identify and address consumer demand would be wise to be equipped with marketing information that is related to the concepts and principles of Islam.

When this is extrapolated to the current study and consumers making decisions on purchase of airline services, there is particular relevance for the Saudi Arabia population. Under Vision 2030, there will be many more opportunities for travel (Gösslinga and Humpe, 2020) within a largely Muslim population in a country which is rapidly changing yet still explicitly religious.

#### 1.1.4 Service Performance

Jääskeläinen, Laihonen, and Lönnqvist, (2014) suggest that airline service performance can be viewed as a quality construct from the perspective of customers of a service or from the industry and regulatory standards that airline service providers are expected to achieve. Either way, the measurement of performance becomes a key feature in the service development – whether that is determining what customers are looking for or what resources are needed to provide a safe and efficient service. This study utilises the concept of service performance as a reflection of the perceptions airline services' customers have of the service they receive; as will be seen in later chapters, it becomes a moderator variable where the study determines what impact, if any, those perceptions have on their attitude towards airline services.

In recent years, service performance has become key in purchase decision-making by passengers, with service failure in particular impacting on the success or otherwise of airline services and the tourism sector (Malik and Lenka, 2019; Loo, 2020). Indeed, Herjanto *et al.* (2021) suggest that the service performance of an airline is 'experiential' – in other words, is measured by experiencing the service and judging other passengers' use of a service. Prospective passengers actively pursue others' experiences to make what the majority hope is a positive choice, often from within the online community (Saleh, 2019). Service performance is often judged by service failures, including flight cancellations, flight delays, misplaced/lost baggage, and poor facilities such as catering and toilet provision (Song, Guo, and Zhuang 2020). Herjanto *et al.* (2021) suggest the

consequences of such poor service performance are great – they not only generate inconvenience, but they are a strong motivation for passengers' negative online reviews. In their study examining the relationship between airline efficiency and customer satisfaction, Bin Taliah and Zervopoulos, (2023), found that airlines classified as low-quality (not listed in the world's top 100) demonstrated a decreased technical efficiency compared to airlines offering high-quality services; this was reflected in customer service performance reviews. They suggest that higher quality airlines need to find a balance between efficiency and firm profits in order to increase positive evaluations and profits.

Capturing the essence of service performance within the literature becomes tricky when it seems to represent more than one concept. In some senses service performance is inexorably linked to service quality, perceived value and behavioural intentions. High service performance often leads to a positive perception of quality. When customers receive services that meet or exceed their expectations in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (the five dimensions of service quality), they are more likely to perceive higher value in the service provided (Arlen, 2022; Bin Taliah and Zervopoulos, 2023). For instance, in a study set within 2 visitor attractions within the UK tourism sector, Oriade and Schofield (2019) investigated relationships between service quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioural intentions. They evidenced that cognitive responses to the attractions were the first features of visitors' responses: quality –'How good it was!' 'It was worth the money' –

followed by an emotional response – ‘I was satisfied’ – then conative responses (behavioural intentions) – ‘I would go again and I recommend to others’.

Service performance is seen as a priority in many services, and Kumbhar (2012) establishes an important point for service providers when they suggest a performance gap — the negative discrepancy between consumer perceptions and expectations — causes consumer dissatisfaction. This can affect trust; consistent delivery of high-quality service builds trust and credibility with customers. When customers trust a service provider to consistently meet their needs and expectations, they are more likely to perceive greater value in the service and exhibit positive behavioural intentions, such as loyalty and advocacy (*ibid*). Moreover, Pakurár *et al.* (2019) suggest that improving perceived value in goods and services for consumers and other shareholders requires providers to adopt innovative solutions in order to gain and maintain a competitive advantage. In addition, Ślusarczyk (2017) stresses the importance of consumers providing feedback on service aspects of products and services; linking the two previous points, this enables service providers to determine the performance gap and feed into requirements for service innovation. Service performance information can be used by consumers as a basis for determining value judgements about services and products; there are major differences in how services perform, which in some sectors makes standardisation of practices challenging, and the ‘customised service’ is always affected by the ‘human factor’ (Gonzalez, Mueller and Mack, 2008). An example in the travel and tourism industry, and therefore relevant to airline services, is obtaining feedback on service performance at times when

service failure looms and passengers face delay. There needs to be a way of capturing feedback about consumer experience of the services at such moments to avoid communication failure in instances where passengers 'have to wait' (*ibid.*). A positive service performance evaluation by customers enhances a service provider's reputation and encourages positive word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied customers. These recommendations further enhance the perceived value of the service among potential customers and influence their behavioural intentions (Marcos and Coelho, 2022).

Given the anticipated expansion in airline services in Saudi Arabia as part of Vision 2030 (Arabian Business, 2022a), the outcome of this study will be of interest to those services competing for a place in the market as a central part of the design, as is outlined in chapter 3, involves passenger feedback.

### **1.1.5 Consumer attitudes**

Consumer attitudes are said to be part of a consumer's belief systems, and capture their thoughts, feelings and intuition ('gut feeling about) about a particular brand, service or product (or even organisation) that they are considering purchasing or using in some way (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). These attitudes can influence behaviour, forming a central part of a person's consumption values (see section 3.3.2; Kotler and Armstrong, 2021), and decision-making in relation to consumption or recommending a product to others. Some would argue that consumer attitudes can be an advantage or a

hindrance when seen in the field of marketing, but it is clear that ignoring consumer attitude leads to limited success (Dean, 2010).

Solomon (2008) describes attitudes from a marketing perspective, stating they are part of the overall general evaluation that a consumer forms about a service or a product and that they develop over a period of time. Dean (2010) argues that when they establish they become deeply entrenched into the mindset and their function satisfies a personal motive; because of this, they become an automatic response or reaction to an object a person is considering purchasing, thus consumer attitudes affect the purchasing and indeed the shopping habits of consumers. A consumer's attitude set is described as a composite of a person's beliefs, feelings, and consequently their behavioural intentions toward something, be it a service or an object within the context of marketing (Perner, 2010). These attitudes can in turn be described as negative or positive; a behavioural intention is led by these consumers' attitudes, their belief or feeling about the product or service (*ibid.*).

Understanding consumer attitudes towards products and services can therefore be seen as a core goal for marketers and service providers, as they influence product choice and purchasing behaviour (Madichi, 2012). Katz (1960) determined the value of understanding consumer attitude when describing that attitudes serve as a function for individuals; in other words, attitudes are determined by individuals' motives. In particular, Katz determined that as each person may have a different attitude towards a product for different reasons,

marketers who are able to understand why consumers have an attitude are in a better position to change it.

Blythe (2008) suggested that attitudes serve four main functions; the first is instrumental, in other words, the attitude serves to provide pleasure, such as when a person develops an attitude towards a restaurant because they enjoy the menu on offer, thus they frequent it more often. The second is described as an ego-defensive function. Blythe suggests attitudes are developed by individuals to protect against internal conflict or even danger. For instance, when there has been a recent airline accident or incident (or even a crash/collision), consumers may develop an attitude to all services offered by the company as a means of self-preservation. This was seen in a more recent study by Xu, Liu and Gursoy (2019) in which individuals were surveyed regarding airline service failures and the impact they had on consumer attitudes. Findings revealed that service failure influences customer emotions, with negative attitudes impacting on future airline purchase decisions and onward customer recommendations with affected airlines. The third function of attitudes is described as value-expressive. Blythe posited that where attitudes tend to be radical, often political, they may involve consumers of services engaging in activities such as boycotting. Interestingly, this has also been seen where staff of airline companies were perceived to have political attitudes not consistent with consumers, even where the company itself did not express such views. One example is that of Cathay Pacific, whose Board expressed support for China over its Hong Kong deportation policies, but where its staff were perceived to be against it. Shi and Wei (2023) found that perceived

negative attitudes of the staff led to consumer boycott. The final function is to provide knowledge. This would explain why some consumers conduct extensive research about a service before purchase (people find decisions easier to make when the 'know what they like' – Blythe, 2008).

Authors have suggested that consumer attitudes develop as a consequence of a complex interplay of different elements, citing examples such as media and friends' influence, their own experience of using products and services, and perceived value (see for instance Keller, 1993; Oliver, 1997). Social influences, such as family, friends, and reference groups, also contribute to the formation of consumer attitudes by providing social norms, values, and opinions (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). Others have suggested consumer attitudes form as the result of personal experience either during formative years or more recently; these experiences may be negative or positive, and influence the strength of such attitudes (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005). They can be relatively enduring (*ibid.*) and are seen as a learned predisposition.

Marketing communications, including advertising, branding, and promotional activities, significantly impact consumer attitudes. Companies strategically craft their messaging and positioning to influence consumers' perceptions and emotions towards their offerings (Keller, 1993). Effective marketing communication can shape positive attitudes by highlighting product benefits, addressing consumer needs, and creating favourable associations with the brand (Aaker and Keller, 1990). Oskamp and Schultz, (2005) suggest that not only are attitudes relatively enduring, but they also become a filter through which a

consumer scrutinises every potential product or service they are considering purchasing.

Some of the earliest theorising around consumer attitudes stems from the work of Katz (1937) and Sidgwick (1907), and their influence remains in more contemporary work (e.g. Ajzen, 2008). The functional theory of attitudes (Katz, 1937; 1960) suggests there are four defined functions of attitudes that offer an interpretation of their motive and use in consumers. The first, the utilitarian function, is perhaps the most well-known, and is based on the ethical theory of utilitarianism (Schultz, 2023). This theory posits that individuals make decisions based on overall happiness. In other words, a consumer will either buy or avoid a product or service based on their positive or negative attitude towards such products and the judgement that it will bring happiness (buy) or pain (avoid). The second is the value-expressive function. When consumers base their attitude towards a service or product on central values or self-concept, it is a reflection of them expressing this function. Solomon (2008) posits this is related to a person purchasing products that will intentionally affect their self-identity, hence of value to marketing. The third function is perhaps the most difficult to change. Katz (1937) defines the ego-defensive attitude as stemming from a consumer's concern that a particular product or service might damage or compromise their self-image. In psychology, ego-defence strategies become a means whereby unconsciously individuals are able to suppress their own frailties or challenges (Narayan, 2010), hence when extrapolated to the consumer framework they are immensely difficult for marketers to address attitudes that stem from such

unconscious strategies. The fourth of Katz's (1937) functions of attitudes is the knowledge function, and is perhaps the most accessible to marketing and businesses. It is described as being most acute in individuals who are discerning and organised about product and service features, those who prefer structure and who weigh up a services attributes with comparison and other strategies before forming an attitude or opinion (Solomon, 2008). Consumers' knowledge function based attitudes can be altered by providing statistics, real-world comparisons, product specifications and published reviews, hence of interest for airline services in the changing geo-political landscape of Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030. Sirgy (1991) argues that appealing to consumer behaviours based these functions of attitude provides scope for marketing and business to develop more effective strategies, and the functions serve to stress the importance of understanding why consumers hold particular attitudes.

There are other, newer models that have arisen to explain consumer attitudes. Ajzen (2008) outlines other models, and importantly, links them directly to theories of consumer behaviour. He suggests that the brand attitudes that individuals develop become important determinants of purchase decisions. One model discussed by Ajzen is the expectancy-value model (see also Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) in which the evaluative reaction to the object of the attitude "is at the core of the attitude" (Ajzen, 2008, p530). The attitude represents a belief (expectation) that the object has a certain attribute, such as a customer's belief that the seats on domestic airlines are more comfortable, or their catering is superior to an overseas airline (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). In a sense, brand

perceived quality as an influencer of attitude is a value judgement that a consumer makes about a product; it includes statements about attributes such as functionality (Asshidin, Abidin and Borhan, 2016). Koech, Buyle and Machário (2023) found that airline brand awareness that is associated with brand quality becomes a significant driver of airline choice; their study determined that it influenced customer attitudes to frequent flyer programmes, the focus of their research. Likewise, because a consumer's perceived value of a product or service encompasses their evaluation of the benefits received such as reaching their destination smoothly and entertained (in-house extras such as movies) as relative to the financial outlay for a service or product, this positively or negatively affects their attitudes towards those products or services (Zeithaml, 1988). Consumers form attitudes based on their perceptions of the quality, price, functionality, and overall value proposition offered by a product or service (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal, 1991).

Ajzen (2008) further suggests that it is possible to assume that attitudes [towards products and services] can become reasonable predictors of consumption, but he advises caution with such assumptions, citing the particular example of consumers' intention to purchase environmentally responsible goods. Although several tools have been developed to measure ethical consumer behaviour, studies have revealed they are poor indicators of final purchase decision (Gill, Crosby and Taylor, 1986).

Another model to explain attitudes is the ABC Model, which comprises three components of attitude – affect, behaviour and cognition (Solomon, 2008). A

means of describing this approach is that the attitude incorporates a feeling [about a product or service], the response to the feeling [behaviour] and the belief or knowledge [cognition] about a service or product (*ibid.*). In this instance, behaviour only infers intention, and not the actual purchasing or engaging a service (Novack, 2010). Novack (2010) suggests the three concepts working together become a hierarchy of effects; this concept distinguishes between motivation and level of engagement a consumer may display toward a product or service. It is conceptualised as standard-learning hierarchy, low involvement hierarchy and experiential hierarchy (Solomon, 2008). Novack (2010) adds a fourth hierarchy that includes behavioural influence and is represented by the component order (behaviour, belief, and affect).

The hierarchies are conceptualised as follows in the consumer attitude arena. Standard-learning hierarchy is high-involvement and posits that consumers conduct extensive research about an object or service and is prevalent in decisions where purchase is considered. The low-involvement hierarchy represents a cognition-behaviour-affect structure to the attitudinal behaviour; any purchase decision is based on what consumers understand about a product and not what they feel about it. The experiential hierarchy is explained by an affect-behaviour-cognition order in which the consumer is more likely to base purchasing decisions on their feeling (Solomon, 2008). A similar theory to this is the ELM theory of attitude change (elaboration likelihood model), which is based on level of involvement in the purchase (Petty and Cooper, 1981).

Perhaps a more influential model of consumer attitudes is the Fishbein model, which has three components of attitude: salient beliefs (gained during a consumer's deliberation about a service or product), object-attribute linkage (the probability of importance of a product's attribute), and evaluation (the measurement of importance of the attributes of the product or service) (Smith *et al.*, 2008).

Nevertheless, understanding consumer attitudes becomes crucial for businesses and marketers to enable effective positioning of their goods and services in a competitive market. Attitude change strategies are central to this process, and Perner (2010) suggests three strategies (changing affect, behaviour and beliefs). Kotler and Keller (2016) suggest insights gained into consumers' attitudes facilitates market strategies including product placement, product offerings (Buy One Get One Free) and media presence being effectively and individually tailored to consumers' needs, preferences, and desires. Importantly, monitoring and tracking changes in consumer attitudes over time through devices such as opinion poll survey and online cookies can assist businesses to not only identify emerging trends and adapt their advertising strategy but also maintain a vital competitive edge in the marketplace (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010).

#### **1.1.6 Other concepts considered but excluded**

In developing the conceptual framework for this study, a preliminary search of the literature was conducted to identify potential variables influencing consumer attitudes towards airline services in Saudi Arabia. It became clear that several

variables of interest already existed in the literature, and there have been extensive studies within service industries, particularly where understanding consumer behaviour is crucial for success. Key areas found in the literature included customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, perceived service quality, cultural identity, animosity, ethnocentrism, and religiosity. Each of these variables has been extensively studied in various contexts, yet it became clear from reading summaries of the studies that no particular combination had been studied within the changing socio-political landscape of Vision 2030.

For instance, one well-represented variable seen was consumer satisfaction related to aspects of the airline industry Agag *et al.*, (2023). Traditionally viewed as a key indicator of service quality and consumer loyalty, customer satisfaction has been linked to repeat purchasing behaviour and positive word-of-mouth (Pappachan, 2023). However, it often serves as an outcome rather than a direct influencer of attitudes, which was of interest in this study. In addition, this study began at a time when increase in airline services providers was being planned under Vision 2030 but had not yet fully come to fruition, hence asking about customer satisfaction in surveys would have almost been service-specific to old-established providers in Saudi Arabia and would not reflect the new context for passengers. Also, perceived service quality as a variable is critical in determining customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hassan and Salem, 2021). However, it overlaps significantly with service performance, whose critical role in shaping consumer experiences (Abosag and Farah, 2014) provides a more actionable metric for airlines to improve upon (MoghadasNian and Takzare, 2024).

Another potential variable considered was brand loyalty, which reflects a consumer's commitment to repurchase a brand (Odeh, 2015; Xin and Seo, 2020; Soomro *et al.*, 2022). While important, its focus on long-term relationships makes it less relevant for immediate consumer attitudes, particularly in a rapidly changing market like Saudi Arabia. Studies retrieved during the literature review were predominantly concerned with the interface between brand loyalty, customer satisfaction and airline image (Alamoudi and Alharthi, 2021; Hassan and Salem, 2021; Soomro *et al.*, 2022) and again did not necessarily provide the context of life in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030.

Finally, cultural identity was another variable seen in some studies from the preliminary literature search (e.g. Su, Lee, and Lovelock, 2023). This is said to influence consumer preferences and behaviours, especially in diverse markets. However, studies seen demonstrated its broad nature, and most were related to marketing and politics related to airline services (Chia, 2022; Fringal, 2024). As this study was specifically set in the context of Saudi Arabia's national transformation plan, and the purpose of the study was to focus down on consumer attitudes, the narrower lens of the selected variables provided the potential for a more focused analysis of specific attitudes towards airline services within the Saudi context.

### 1.1.7 Section Summary

To summarise, this section has outlined how consumer animosity, ethnocentrism, and religiosity are key determinants of airline service attitudes among Saudi Arabian consumers:

- Animosity, driven by negative perceptions of countries or cultures, influences consumer behaviour (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Saeb Farhan and Mohammad, 2018).
- Ethnocentrism, rooted in cultural biases, shapes preferences for domestic products (Tabassi, Esmaeilzadeh, and Sambasivan, 2012).
- Religiosity, reflecting individuals' religious beliefs, impacts purchasing decisions (Nassè, 2021).
- Service performance, a critical factor in consumer decision-making, moderates the relationship between these variables and attitudes toward airline services (Jääskeläinen, Laihonen, and Lönngvist, 2014).

The section then outlined a key component of this study, consumer attitudes, which as dependent variable under investigation is central to the study.

These concepts are discussed further in relation to Saudis' choice of airline services in section 3.3, and in Chapter 4 the rationale for determining the instrument selected [questionnaire] for this study is presented. The next sections outline this study's rationale, placing it in the context of the theoretical landscape of current management research as it addresses the concepts under study, then concludes by providing the aims and objectives of the research.

## 1.2 Rationale for the Study and Chosen Concepts

In determining the rationale for this study, a starting point is that Saudi Arabia is undergoing significant social and economic change. Resting between 'developing nation' status according to the IMF, and 'high developed' nation according to the UN definition (World Data, 2022), the landscape between the two signifies potential for development. As will be seen in Chapter Two, the aviation sector and in particular airline services in Saudi Arabia are expected to expand significantly in forthcoming years, with Vision 2030 outlining an increase in both passenger numbers and available destinations (Gösslinga and Humpe, 2020; Kamel, 2022). There are a limited number of existing studies on Saudi Arabian consumers' intention to purchase goods, and even fewer on attitudes towards services, particularly in the airline services field. A brief search on the library database using 'Saudi Arabia' 'Consumer' 'since 2018' revealed over 19,000 documents; refining this to include peer-reviewed research articles studying consumers in the airline services industry revealed fewer than 100 and most studies were excluded as their focus was unrelated to this study. This suggested a gap in the field; further inquiry was necessary to provide a robust rationale for the research.

Analysts in the sector have investigated the purchasing decisions of consumers when they determine what particular goods or services are bought across different regions. This process is useful for predicting consumer behaviours and encouraging them to embrace specific services and goods (Salman and Naeem, 2015). There is no doubt that developments and changes seen in consumerism

across Saudi Arabia, and in particular the changes now becoming apparent in airline passenger opportunities are creating debate around the changing social culture in the country versus traditional values. Although Saudi Arabia's economic development has been studied extensively, they have yet to carry out a full inquiry into consumer behaviour within its airline services. In particular, it would appear there are gaps in research output that combine religiosity, ethnocentrism, animosity and service performance and how they affect consumers' attitudes towards airline services; such attitudes are important, as they influence consumer decision to purchase (Baron, Branscombe and Byrne, 2009; Kotler and Armstrong, 2021). Although previous studies exist, most have focused on the nature of the airline industry in the country without specifying these factors. This provides a clear rationale for new study to offer powerful insights into Saudi Arabian consumerism within airline services and the concepts that influence the purchase of such.

Another facet of the rationale for this study is related to its timeliness. Set in what is becoming known as the post-COVID 19 pandemic recovery phase (Embling, 2022), and aligning this with Saudi Arabia's commitment to strengthen and diversify the economy, airline services within the tourist sector (as opposed to cargo and other elements of airline services) are now in a prime position to target new markets as people are 'on the move again' (*ibid.*; Fernández, Martínez and Martín, 2023). Of particular note for this study, the pandemic period saw a decline in overseas visitors and significant growth in domestic visitors in many countries (Forbes, 2020). In fact the pandemic saw many businesses closing,

with the airline industry becoming the most severely affected across the economy (Xu *et al.*, 2024). Since the pandemic, recent study has shown that the pattern of customer feedback within the airline industry has changed, with customers being more concerned with elements of service performance including ground services compared to a pre-pandemic focus on reliability (Kim *et al.*, 2024). Pereira *et al.*, (2023), reminds us that service performance failures are a challenge for all industries, in both the both pre- and post-pandemic eras, and it becomes imperative for airline services to address such events to provide as seamless and flawless a service as possible. However, domestic travel has been recovering faster than international travel worldwide since the pandemic (Pele, 2023). This adds to the timeliness of this study, given the new international routes opening up in Saudi Arabia subsequent to the National Transformation Plan (TNA, 2022). The findings from this study could therefore inform the industry when designing a competitive airline service around emerging Saudi consumers of airline services' profiles; determining the effect that the variables of this study have on attitudes towards airline services will shape the airline sector's response during this key recovery phase.

To summarise, there are several reasons for the selection of animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity and service performance and their effects on consumer attitudes as variables for this study. Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia provides particular contextual relevance with its emphasis on national pride and local industry support, yet at the same time it is opening up new flight routes for overseas airlines. Ethnocentrism therefore becomes a critical factor in consumer

attitudes to airline services (Omar *et al.*, 2024). In a similar vein, animosity towards foreign goods and brands may well significantly affect consumer attitudes and their purchasing choices in such a changing geopolitical context (Krüger *et al.*, 2024). Also, religiosity as a variable offers cultural significance; it is essential in shaping consumer preferences in what is a predominantly Muslim society (Mathras *et al.*, 2016). Studies have suggested that consumers with a higher religiosity will be more likely to use brands and services associated with their religion, Muslim in this instance (El-Omari (2019). Finally, the operational impact of service performance cannot be underestimated. Service performance directly influences consumer perceptions and experiences; Abosag and Farah (2014) suggest high service performance can mitigate negative attitudes related to consumer animosity and positively influence attitudes associated with ethnocentrism and religiosity.

### **1.3 Research aims and objectives**

Many researchers begin a study by identifying a question or set of questions with which to interrogate the literature (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Such questions enable projects to be defined, boundaries to be set, the work to be directed along a research trajectory, and the end goals to be defined (O'Leary, 2005, p 33). However, others have asserted that research questions can be limiting (Robson and McCartan, 2016), and advocate for a broad aim with specific, practical objectives in the form of statements about how the aim will be achieved (Ryan, 2023). This study therefore followed the latter approach as outlined by Ryan (2023), who also advised that when researchers have set out a broad aim, they

must set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-based) objectives to guide their research. Therefore, the aim and objectives for this study were as follows:

Study aim:

The aim of this study was to investigate the specific influences of consumer religiosity, consumer animosity, consumer ethnocentrism and service performance on Saudi citizens' attitudes towards airline services. These are set out as:

- To investigate the effect of animosity on Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.
- To investigate the influence of ethnocentrism on Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.
- To investigate the impact of religiosity on Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.
- To investigate any moderating role of service performance in Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.

Study objectives:

These constructs had not been previously been investigated in this combination. To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives were set to guide the research process:

- To conduct a critical review of the literature, thereby establishing the current knowledge in the field and the scope for the study
- To conduct a survey, using validated tools, to examine the impact of the three independent variables (consumer religiosity, consumer ethnocentrism and consumer animosity) on Saudis' attitudes towards airline services (dependent variable).
- To determine the effect, if any, of service performance when it is introduced as a moderator on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.
- To analyse the data retrieved from the survey using validated data analysis systems.
- To contribute to the academic field, to the airline services sector, and to the government policy teams by making recommendations based on the analysis and findings of the survey as completed.

#### **1.4 Originality and contribution to knowledge**

The findings of this research seek to expound on the possible impacts of religiosity, ethnocentrism, and animosity on service users' attitudes towards airline services in Saudi Arabia and to determine whether service performance has a moderating role when introduced into the process. Built upon what is already known in the field, the originality of this study rests in the combination of variables selected and the unique setting – Saudi Arabia in the wake of the launch of Vision 2030, where the socio-economic landscape is changing thus the

demographics of travellers will include women travelling without guardians and airports are now de-segregated. Such advances in consumerism will undoubtedly place challenges on traditional values and social relations, and the findings of this study regarding religiosity, ethnocentrism, animosity and service performance may reveal some of the interplay between those constructs as they are enacted and their effect on consumer attitudes.

This research will add to an existing body of literature on aspects of consumerism within the Saudi airline services that can be used to develop classroom models for students in the related topics of the study. In doing so, these findings will address the specific gaps in literature outlined in the previous sections. For instance, although studies exist about economic development in the country, there is yet to be a study set within the airline services field in Saudi Arabia that examines consumer behaviour using the specific variables chosen for this study. Previous studies have focused on other factors, such as sustainability, or have been conducted pre-Vision 2030. There has yet to be a study in this setting using service performance as a moderating variable on the independent variables selected.

The empirical methodology of this study provides significant evidence supporting the use of structured equation modelling as a means of objectively analysing survey data, thus, this research is assumed to have some implications for future researchers. In addition, the literature review and the nuanced use of a two-theory lens — the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), as presented in section 3.2 — that underpins the

study design, how it was conducted and analysed and how it is presented provides future researchers with an evidence base as to the utility of the chosen theories for their own research.

The policymakers within the country will be able to use the presented findings of this study to inform policymaking related to the aviation industry. For example, the demographic results reflect the age range and educational profile of Saudi travellers, giving information about how the Vision's plans are affecting the new opportunities for travel for education purposes (see sections 5.2 and 6.7). The age profile of the travellers when seen alongside religiosity and airport used on the day of the survey will contribute to planning around airport facilities needed, such as support facilities for older pilgrims.

The analysis of micro-level factors that influence passenger attitudes towards and perceptions of airline services that ultimately leads to purchasing choice adds immense value to marketing strategies related to different services industries. In this study, those factors are all about attitudes; specifically, the minutiae of religiosity, the specifics of animosity, how ethnocentrism makes consumers in Saudi Arabia think about their National flag-carrier airline compared to ones from overseas. The move to examine underlying factors that influence passenger perceptions at an individual level helps analysts understand the areas to consider when examining the nature of the aviation industry and expands the available knowledge on Saudi consumers' attitude towards airline services in Saudi Arabia and across the globe. In addition, the socio-political landscape of Saudi Arabia is evolving and adapting to the changes under Vision 2030, the

National Transformation Plan introduced by the Saudi leadership in 2016. This adds a unique and timely perspective offered in this study.

## **1.5 The organisation of the thesis**

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters. This first chapter has provided an overview of the main concepts being investigated in this study (consumer animosity, ethnocentrism, and religiosity, and service performance with a discussion of consumer attitudes). It excluded other potential variables of interest found in the literature, then identified a rationale for conducting the study as well as an overview of its originality and contribution to the field. Importantly, it also outlined the specific aim and objectives of this study.

Chapter Two presents a detailed overview of Saudi Arabia as the research context for this study. It outlines its people, economy and the current and historical use of airline services. It explains the changing face of society under Vision 2030, which sets the scene for unprecedented change within the Kingdom.

Chapter Three presents a comprehensive overview of the theoretical framework using a two-theory lens: the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV). This leads into a critical review of the literature around previous findings and current understanding related to the concepts under study: consumer animosity, consumer ethnocentrism, consumer religiosity, consumer attitudes [towards airline services] and service performance. Section 3.4 presents the hypothesis development for the research study. The chapter concludes by presenting the research model.

Chapter Four presents a comprehensive overview of and justification for the research philosophy, explaining its use and relevance in this study. It then discusses the research approach and the research design, describing all choices of methods with an explanatory summary of the use of survey in research; this justifies the adoption of the quantitative approach and the selected strategy of data collection and analysis – surveying at airports and analysis of that data using structural equation modelling. The chapter concludes with a discussion around research ethics.

Chapter Five concentrates on presenting the results. It provides descriptive statistics of the demographic data and of the main variables, with WarpPLS 7.0's analysis as utilised in this investigation (Kock, 2015) This includes statistically measuring for validity and reliability and also includes measuring the direct and moderating effects of the main variables as well as the control variables' findings.

Chapter Six presents a detailed discussion of the results, comparing these results with earlier findings sourced from the literature. There is also in-depth discussion related to response rate of this study compared to others, and the implications of all findings are considered. Following this in Chapter Seven, a concluding overview is presented. Section 7.2 provides commentary on Vision 2030 as a driver of change, with 7.3 summarising the practical contributions this study gives to industry and policymakers. This includes some identified limitations of the study, and a final note on the use of reflexivity in quantitative research. It provides account of how this body of work contributes to the field and makes suggestions for future research.

## 1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has detailed the concepts under study in this research. Constructing a methodical rationale, it has delineated the key constructs of interest for this study, giving basic definitions and backgrounds in preparation for a full review of the literature in Chapter Three by evidencing a gap in the literature which this study fills. It has provided a clear set of aims and objectives and set how this study contributes to the field, then an outline for the reader of how the thesis is presented. The following chapter, Chapter Two, builds on this by providing a detailed view of the country and its people, giving the study an important socio-political context.

## CHAPTER TWO: SAUDI ARABIA RESEARCH CONTEXT

### 2.1 Introduction

**T**his chapter presents key information that forms the foundation of this research. Recognising key factors inherent within the sociological, economical and geographical infrastructure is pertinent when setting this study within the context of Saudi Arabia. This chapter, therefore, provides a synthesis of available data and understanding of its people and infrastructure, then progresses to outline and discuss in detail Saudi Arabia's economy and the airline industry.

### 2.2 Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is the largest country on the Arabian peninsula, yet it is one of the most sparsely occupied in the region; over 85 per cent of its 35.3m population live in cities, with Riyadh as its capital city (World Data 2022). Its transport network is extensive, with over 221,000 km of roadways, over 5,000 km of railways and 392 commercial harbours for sea transport. There are 25 airports serving domestic flights and 99 worldwide destinations. According to the United Nations (UN) metrics, Saudi Arabia is experiencing a high level of social and political development (World Data 2022). Some of the key parameters supporting this fact include the quality of citizens' lives, education attainment, and growth of the major sectors of the economy.



Figure 2.1 Saudi Arabia Provincial Map (Source: Yezli *et al.*, 2012)

Saudi Arabia stretches approximately 1,500 km from North to South and nearly 1000 km from East to West, being the largest of the Gulf regions countries (Filor, 1988). Its Red Sea and Arabian Gulf coastlines extend nearly 2,600 km, and the country is bordered to the south by Oman and Yemen, and Jordan and Iraq lie to the north of the country. Red Sea lies on its Western borders (Cordesman, 2009). East of the country lie The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar (see figure 2.1). Saudi Arabia is predominantly desert terrain, with mountains and uplands, especially in the south.

## 2.2.1 The Country and its people

Saudi Arabia is a predominantly Muslim country, governed by the Saudi Royal Family in a system that was established in 1932 when oil was first discovered. The Kingdoms of the Hejaz and Nejd were united to form the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which provided continuity of leadership, as evidenced by the royal lineage continuing today (Al Rasheed, 2010). The country's constitution stipulates that *'The regime derives its power from the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah which rule over this and all other State Laws.'* [Article 7] (Constitute Project, 2005)

Recent estimates suggest (72.5 per cent) of the population are Sunni Muslim, (14.5 per cent) are Wahhabi (orthodox sect of Sunni), and (12 per cent) are Shia Muslim with other religions including Hinduism and Christianity making up the remaining (1 per cent) (World Data, 2022); see figure 2.2.

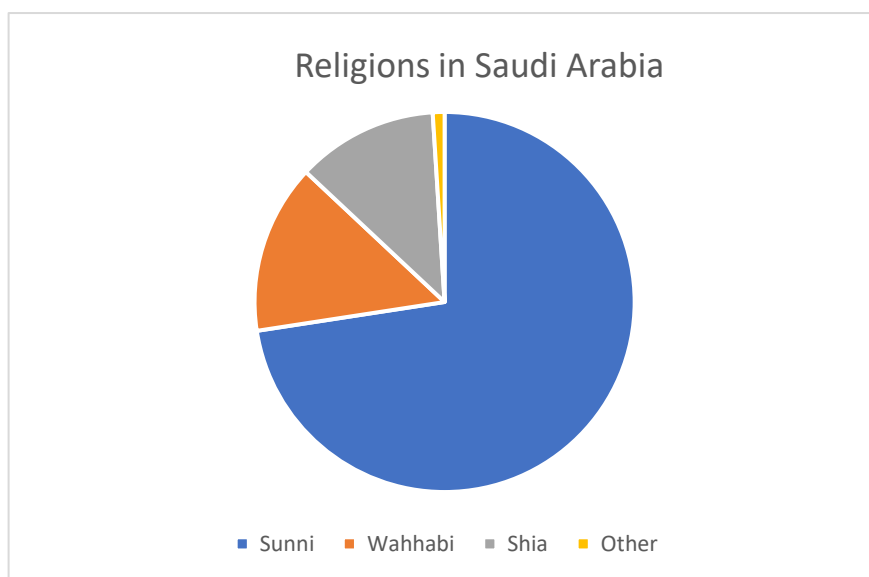


Figure 2.2 Religious affiliation in Saudi Arabia Source: Worlddata.info, (2021)

The Saudi Muslim culture and Sharia legal system combine to form a unique attribute that has a direct influence on entrepreneurship in the country. As seen, figure 2.2 indicates that the majority of the country's citizens are practicing Muslims. Some 35% of the population in 2020 were found to be immigrants, largely from other Muslim countries that were either part of a refugee programme or directly employed in the oil industry or overall services sector under Kafala — a system whereby any foreign national is sponsored to be in the country by a Saudi National or organisation (such as Saudi Aramco, a major oil company) (Lysa, 2020). Indeed, the law does not allow public worship of any faith except Islam, which explains the 1% figure for 'other' in figure 2.2. Alammari *et al.* (2018), suggest that entrepreneurs from other countries study the cultural dynamics of Saudi Arabia to ensure that they make informed decisions about investing human resource into the workplace. An example would be that of Starbucks Corporation, which was compelled to change the mermaid in its logo if it wanted to operate successfully in Saudi Arabia. These measures illustrate how the characteristics of Saudi Arabia are critical for any organisation intending to do business in the country as they continue to reshape the expectations, views, and interactions with the services available in the nation (Alammari *et al.*, 2018). This has implications for the ongoing development and marketing of the airline services sector, providing further justification for this study.

In fact, since 2020 with initiatives such as the mediation of the US, and the Abrahams Accord in particular (although Saudi Arabia has not signed that), one significant change that has already impacted regional relations in the Arab World,

including Saudi Arabia, has been the ‘warming’ of the relationship between Israel and Saudi Arabia (Niu and Wu, 2021; Al Jazeera, 2022). The developments have significance for this study in several ways. Consumer animosity and ethnocentricity may be seen as unsurprising when it is related to Israeli goods and services, as since the very inception of the state of Israel in 1948 Saudi Arabia, alongside the rest of the Arab World, has been active in their resistance against the state of Israel, including boycotting (Niu and Wu, 2021; Ali, 2021). Saudi Arabia have been largely uncompromising in their stance towards Israel in not recognising it as a legitimate state (Ding, 2018). In fact the government along with other members of the Arab League banned all goods and services from the Jewish community of Palestine in 1945, which continued even during the earliest moves towards a peace agreement as seen under King Fahd (1988) and King Abdullah in 2001 (Bıçakcı and Muslu El Berni, 2022). However, the re-positioning of domestic foreign policy under King Salman’s administration has seen new opportunities in a rapidly changing landscape that appears to be re-writing the historical narrative and may even be paving the way for a what Bıçakcı and Muslu El Berni (2022, p327-328) describe as “a normalisation of relationship [between Israel and Saudi Arabia]”. They go on to suggest that

*The renewed rhetoric of the kingdom builds upon a redefined Saudi nationalism with a distance to the Wahhabi understandings, particularly in the educational and social sphere, creating possibilities for Saudi officials to establish a new Saudi identity instead of Arab or Islamic sources of its identity (Bıçakcı and Muslu El Berni 2022, p332).*

In other words, relating this to the variables under study, a possible more entrenched ethnocentrism (“..redefined Saudi nationalism..”) with a potential move closer to Shi’a principles and away “.. from Wahhabi understandings..”.

Much of the change discussed in this section has centred around both history and history in the making; the next section focuses on how the Vision 2030 initiatives are changing society within Saudi Arabia.

### **2.2.2 Vision 2030 and the changing face of society**

In 2016 the government published a blueprint for the country that paved the way for significant economic development and transformation (Vision2030 Office, 2016). Heralding investment and leadership to strengthen the country’s position in both the Arab World and in the global arena, it is seen as a roadmap for harnessing the potential for the country’s citizens and industries. The opening statement sets the tone for the document, with the vision being rooted in the country’s status as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, its determination to become a global investment powerhouse, and its determination to transform Saudi Arabia’s strategic location into a hub connecting Asia, Europe and Africa (Vision 2030, 2017, page 6). Each of these is directly relevant to their ambition to develop the country’s airline services.

Describing its objectives in three main themes — Ambitious Nation, Thriving Economy and Vibrant Society — there are over a hundred streams of action. Utilising existing infrastructure and developing new initiatives, the actions are broad. For instance, Saudi Aramco is a well-established and profitable

organisation which has delivered extensively on the country's oil production. Given the need to diversify from fossil fuels, it is perhaps fitting that Vision 2030 (page 82) recognises the company's strategic transformation programme that will position it as a leader in other sectors. An example of a new initiative is the privatisation programme, with the report stating “..Our goal is to create a comprehensive privatization program. We will make use of international best practices, transfer knowledge and achieve our goals in a balanced and scientific manner.” (Vision 2030, 2017, p 83).

Of note, some significant changes have already been seen, perhaps none so evident as the changing role for women in the workforce. In the last five years, the number of women in the workforce has almost doubled with new opportunities under Vision 2030 and currently stands at 35% (Nihal, 2022). In addition, changes have been made within the guardianship system, giving women the right to drive, live alone and work outside the home without the need for guardianship (*ibid.*). Some other key developments have been seen in Saudi Arabia in recent years, with women being appointed to influential leadership roles. For instance, Princess Reema Bander Al Saud was sworn in as Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the US in 2019 (Saudi Embassy Washington, 2019). 2022 saw two other key appointments for women in leadership positions; in July of that year, Shihana Al Azaz, the first woman Deputy Secretary-General of the Saudi cabinet, was appointed (Gulf News, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022). In September 2022, Saudi Arabia appointed a woman for the first time to chair the Saudi Human Rights Commission (Saudi Gazette, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022). Perhaps reflecting

the significant changes in women's education, in February, 2023 Rayyanah Barnawi, a biomedical researcher and astronaut, became the first female to arrive at the International Space Station. She was selected by the Saudi Space Commission for the Axiom Mission 2 in the key role of mission specialist to conduct research in space on breast cancer tissues and stem cells (Gritten, 2023). Business in particular has seen a growth in women in Board and even CEO positions, including Aramco and STC (Birch, 2023).

Examining the precursors to the changes for women presents interesting and at times challenging debate. In 2012, the representation of Saudi women in the workforce was only 18.2% - only Afghanistan and Iran had a lower percentage of women working compared to all other countries in the world (World Bank, 2014). Critics have suggested that the successive 5-year development plans which preceded Vision 2030 had prioritised men in the workplace — although women's education had improved vastly since the 2005 plan, when women were afforded full access to the educational system and attain higher education qualifications, Saudi Arabian women were rarely able to attain employment that placed them in decision-making positions, or leadership / managerial roles over male employees (Cavusgil, Knight and Reisenberger, 2008; Alfarran, 2016; General Authority for Statistics, 2017). Indeed, authors have argued in the past that because Islamic principles dictate 'the requirement for the separation of men and women' (Alfarran, 2016, p 2) then the predominantly patriarchal family structures remain largely intact (see also Fox, Mourtada-Sabbeh and Al-Matawa, 2006). Mazro'ei and Shaw (2014) suggested that these principles over the years have led women

to not attempt to find employment in workplaces where they would be seen to be in conversation with men who are not relatives (such as tourism).

Many of the Vision 2030 goals are directly aimed at improving citizens' health and wellbeing, including those surrounding education for all, encouraging daily exercise and increasing life expectancy (to 80 from 74; Vision2030 Office, 2016). In general, healthcare in Saudi Arabia is free for its citizens, funded through central government (*ibid.*). With average life expectancy increasing (currently 74.1 for men, 76.9 for women) the healthcare system faces similar challenges to other nations with an increasingly aged population and their primary healthcare needs (*ibid.*). In addition, the rapidly growing population places pressure on the country's infrastructure, in part balanced by increased economic growth to fund improvements; its strong oil-based economy has facilitated the development of local public and private organisations which created new employment opportunities thus raising the socioeconomic status of Saudi Arabian citizens (MEP, 2013). According to the Ministry of Health in Canada (2021), "Ensuring the health and well-being of all is essential to poverty eradication efforts and achieving sustainable development, contributing to economic growth and prosperous communities". This is certainly transferable to all nations, including Saudi Arabia.

Of particular note for this study, though, are those Vision 2030 goals that impact directly on airline services, such as increasing the nation's capacity for welcoming pilgrims for Umrah from 8 million to 30 million; likewise, increasing citizens' own travel capacity for tourism purposes (to increase household

expenditure on cultural activities) as well as bringing more people in to visit with its hope to increase the number of Saudi World Heritage sites (Vision2030 Office, 2016).

At this stage, any consideration of increasing the capacity of Saudi Arabia's airline services must be made within the landscape of the country's infrastructure. Infrastructure is a broad term with many connotations; Pollin (2009) suggests there are three main categories: 1) transportation; 2) energy; 3) water. It also includes any facilities that support urban and rural development such as roads, tunnels, airports, railway networks, the drinking water and wastewater production systems and power supply. In fact, extending service capacity in the main airports is already benefitting from an extension to the energy grid which now offers coverage to all urban areas with in-reach to even the smallest rural community; this has also benefitted the overall economy by creating jobs, thereby meeting some of the Vision 2030 aspirations. Saudi Arabia has introduced and enhanced the use of technology in all sectors that enhance development potential within the airline services sector, including telecommunications; Mobily and Zain entered the Saudi telecom market which is now privatised (Communications and Information Technology Commission, 2019).

The Jadwa Investment Report (2022) saw strong growth in the Saudi economy, with the GDP growing by 7.7% in what is now being seen as the post-pandemic era. This compares favourably with pre-pandemic years (increase of 2.2% in 2018, 0.7% in 2017). The report suggests this growth is both in the oil- and non-oil sector, with growth in the non-oil sector steadily growing.

Once consideration here for the future potential of airline services rests in the mode of government in Saudi Arabia. We have already seen in this section the impact of privatisation on the economy and industry in general. Saudi Arabia is considered a market economy; it has removed almost all price controls and has facilitated and indeed encouraged global trade (Barakat, Shatnawi and Ismail, 2016). Previous theorists posited that any marketing economy wanting to adopt marketing concept must not recognise 'state control' of industry (Tuncalp, 1988; El-Omari, 2019). Current hegemony has evolved to recognise the crucial input from new taxes and state-owned enterprises' sales, domestic equity markets and stimulating efficiency (including quality, competitiveness, exports and growth) – all of which have been seen in the form of privatisation and market economy promoted by the Saudi Government (Satomura, Wedel and Pieters, 2014; El-Omari, 2019; Barakat, Shatnawi and Ismail, 2016). With such changes being fully supported by the government, the potential for airline services to operate has grown exponentially, and facilitates what McDaniel, Hair and Lamb (2018) suggest good marketing practice can do: deal with the changing nature of business, deal with deviations as they occur (such as the changing demand from passengers) and use up to date technology to exchange and utilise marketing information for the betterment of services.

Vision 2030 has clearly seen some progress, yet there remain challenges, many of which will undoubtedly affect the airline services sector. For instance, as we have seen, one of the crucial goals of Vision 2030 is to reduce the kingdom's dependence on oil by diversifying its economy (Vision 2030, 2017; 2022).

Significant investments have been made in sectors such as tourism, entertainment, technology, and renewable energy. The Line project, a substantial cognitive city spreading over 170 kilometres through the Tabuk region, (NEOM, 2024), will be inexorably linked to the airline sector and the cultural tourism industry on completion. Initiatives like the Public Investment Fund (PIF) have financed innovative projects worldwide, enhancing Saudi Arabia's economic footprint. However, continued investment in non-oil will be crucial for achieving economic stability in the long-term. It may be that the Saudi “megaprojects” which represent sustainable urban living become global models, but governments and organisations including those in the airline services sector would be wise to heed caveat that along with innovation (such as The Line) comes disruption (Oriade, Robinson and Clegg, 2020). Burke, Robinson and Choi, (2020), suggest such organisations need all-encompassing strategies to respond to deal with those influential factors (including unanticipated supply chain disruption, as seen with conflict) that disrupt the flow of new developments and therefore increase the chance of success. Another challenge for the long-term prospects of projects like the Sakaka solar power plant, a large-scale installation providing utility company scale renewable energy (Vision 2030, 2017; 2022), lies with balancing such rapid development with environmental conservation. Global examples where this has been successful include the solar farm development at Edinburgh Airport, where the partnership working between a variety of stakeholders (including passenger consultation, the Scottish Government and SEPA) has led to innovation and environmental improvements (EANAB, 2022).

Whilst it is likely that projects such as The Line and the new airport developments will contribute to the shifting patterns in employment seen in Saudi Arabia (Gösslinga and Humpe, 2020), any diversification of the economy must incorporate visible, sustainable job creation for Saudi nationals to continue to address its over-reliance on overseas workers<sup>1</sup>.

Another area of challenge to Vision 2030's aims rests with resistance from conservative elements in the country, as has been seen with the remaining pockets of the Sahwa Movement (Ibrahim, 2022). The movement grew in the 1960s and gained prominence over the next two decades; adopting strict Wahhabi principles, the movement had significant societal influence and was seen as the being solely responsible for curtailing women's rights. Ibrahim (2022) argues that despite the Crown Prince's assertions that the Sahwa movement is over with the new 'moderate Islamism' incorporated in Vision 2030, it still prevails in some tribal regions. This suggests the government need to balance the restructuring and modernisation programmes sensitively with the cultural values and religious norms in the country.

The social reforms proposed and seen in Vision 2030 have been considerable (Kinnimont, 2017; Pilotti *et al.*, 2021), and it is known that continued progress in social reforms can mean a more dynamic and inclusive society (Kinnimont,

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<sup>1</sup> For history of this, see Ibrahimkhan, 2007; see also Javid and Hasanov, 2023

2017). de la Sablonnière, (2017), suggests social reform and change has four key properties, listed here as they apply to Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030:

- the pace of change (in other words, the rate that circumstances impact the citizens and organisations within Saudi Arabia, requiring significant manageable adjustments or a break with the past),
- adaptation of the current macro socio-economic structure (i.e., how far the current systems need to be re-defined including a re-evaluation of government departments with their underlying legal frameworks under Sharia law and their policies and practices),
- alteration of the current normative structure (in other words, how the changes will dictate that new norms and roles need to be adopted by the country and how existing ones will still available or are to be eradicated)
- threat to cultural identity (in other words, whether and to what extent the current Saudi National identities, values, and beliefs will be endangered or challenged by Vision 2030).

These considerations would suggest that ensuring that the reforms are culturally sensitive and widely accepted will be crucial for long-term stability. Also, it is well documented that Saudi Arabia has been criticised internationally for some of its laws and practices that have been said to infringe on Human Rights (Ghaziani and Ghaziani, 2022; ALQST, 2023). There have been improvements, but effective governance of these reforms and transparency will address some of the international criticism, thereby enhancing confidence at home and elsewhere.

In summary, Vision 2030 represents an ambitious roadmap for Saudi Arabia's future, aiming to transform the kingdom economically, socially, and environmentally. The long-term success of this vision hinges on navigating a complex landscape of internal and external challenges. By fostering economic diversification, promoting social reforms, ensuring sustainable development, and strengthening governance, Saudi Arabia can make significant strides towards realising its goals. However, addressing human rights concerns, managing cultural sensitivities, and maintaining regional stability will be critical for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. This study makes commentary on Vision 2030 as a driver of change through the lens of its findings in section 7.2.

### **2.3 Saudi Arabia Economy and the Airline Industry**

In a seminal report for the Guadalajara Global Forum on Transport and the Environment (OECD, 2008), Professor Ken Button outlined the impact of Globalisation on international air transport activity. Without the benefit of foresight, he could not predict when the 2008 World economic crisis would end, nor indeed could he foresee the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine War, the policies for sustainability that followed the Bruntland Report and the UN SDGs (Biermann *et al.* (2022) — in fact, the list is endless. What was known at the time was that air transportation had become an industry in its own right, that it had become a key player for other industries (including trade and supply chain management), for states and military (logistics) and for individuals (tourism, personal and business travel) (OECD, 2008). Economies depend on it, globalisation depends on it; Professor Button projected how international air

transport activity was set to increase, there was optimism about the 'Open Skies' formulations (OECD, 2008, p8) and in particular, he discussed how air transport contributes to countries being able to exploit their comparative advantage more completely.

There is no doubt that the aviation sector has a long history of expansion; though stalled significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic — revenue per passenger kilometre (RPK) reduced by (50 per cent) in 2020 (ICAO, 2020) — the industry has bounced back. Indeed, ICAO (2022) reported a significant increase with passenger numbers and RPK increasing towards pre-pandemic levels. This has been particularly noted in domestic travel and tourism (UNWTO, 2020), which gives additional relevance for this study. Moreover, the boom in the tourism industry has led to the demand from passengers for more services, leaving logistical concerns around not only airline capacity but other infrastructure associated with passenger travel (airport capacity, transit facilities etc.) (Dray, 2020). Some analysts and theorists have called for a rethink on airline expansion. For instance, Gössling and Humpe, (2020), demonstrate the carbon impact from aviation on global warming, with the most frequent fliers (1 per cent of the total worldwide population) accounting for over 50 per cent of total emissions from air passenger travel. There is a growing push for tougher environmental regulation within the sector; four airports in India are already carbon neutral and France has imposed an environmental tax on economy flights to dissuade passengers from using air travel to other EU countries (BCG, 2020). As part of the changing face of airline and aviation expansion, the passenger-as-customer voice is becoming

louder. BCG (2020) suggest 'flight-shaming' by younger passengers who may be more environmentally aware will impact on use and therefore sales; they suggest airline services become more aware of the passenger-as-customer so they can address such concerns and tailor needs.

Filtering down from the overall arena of air transport into airline services, it all becomes somehow more personal. As an industry, airline services has important input into wider social processes such as communication and education, and the demand for airline services is shaped by consumers' changing and growing needs and preferences (ICAO, 2017). Regionally, the Middle East accounts for some 9.2 per cent of global air passenger transportation (OECD, 2023). When this is transposed to Saudi Arabia, figures for the first half of 2022 reveal that 6.2 million passengers were transported around the Kingdom by domestic carriers, and 16.6 million international passengers travelled through Saudi airports in the same period. A global comparison is that in January 2022 passenger numbers had increased to 2.9 billion worldwide, (49 per cent) below pre-pandemic levels but a rapid increase on (60 per cent) below pre-pandemic levels the year previously (ICAO, 2022).

Given that the Saudi Aviation Strategy plans to increase air passenger travel through the Kingdom to 330 million passengers yearly by 2030 and boosting available destinations to 250 (from the current 99) (Kamel, 2022), this provides a rich field for research in many disciplines, particularly marketing and business arenas. Previous studies related to consumers and/or airline service users have examined a breadth of topics including sustainability and climate impact of airline

services (e.g. Gössling and Humpe, 2020), customer satisfaction (e.g. Rivera, Murphy, and Khalilzadeh, 2018), intention to purchase (e.g. Kushwah, Dhir, and Sagar 2019), service judgement (e.g. Park, E. *et al.*, 2019), service performance (Lee and Kang, 2019) and characteristics of consumers such as religiosity (e.g. Tao *et al.*, 2022). Those studies appear to cover a range of geographical regions; whilst some are perhaps over-represented in the field, such as the USA (e.g. Monmousseau *et al.* 2020), a growing number of studies are exploring under-represented regions (e.g. Vietnam: Hoang *et al.* 2022; Latin-America: Areiza-Padilla, 2021).

At 35.34 million in 2021, the population of Saudi Arabia is the highest since modern records were recorded (in 1950). In 2021 the GDP per capita was estimated at US\$23, 585; it has the highest gross domestic product in the Middle East region with the least foreign debt globally (Investopedia, 2022). Perhaps due to its arid physical landscape, Saudi Arabia depends heavily on importing goods from other nations including the USA, Japan and France. However, over the past several decades, there has been considerable growth in Saudi Arabia's economy, no doubt influenced by its substantial oil deposits. In fact, Saudi Arabia's geography and infrastructure connecting to Asia, Europe and the Africa, with good shipping links to the rest of the world for oil exports, are key contributory factors to its economic maturity and global prominence (Oyewole, 2015). What was once an underdeveloped country has transformed since oil was discovered, and Saudi Arabia has become one of the most developed economies in the Middle East. Benny (2021) stated that Saudi Arabia has been seen to

invest in other mineral resources such as copper, gold, iron, titanium, and zinc in an effort to diversify its economy from oil and move towards a greener economy. Additionally, the Saudi Arabian government has engaged in numerous initiatives to expand its industrial sector. For instance, in 1976 it established Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), a chemical industries giant, to expand other sectors of the country's economy (Hertog, 2008).

The country's main trade partners include the United States, China, Japan and Singapore, with China being a major source of imports (Al-Medabesh and Ali, 2014). The Saudi service sector represents a quarter of the country's GDP (IATA, 2020) and is perhaps the strongest non-oil sector the country. Indeed, civil administration, tourism, airline, wholesale, and defence are seen to have a large representation of citizens on the payroll (*ibid.*).

Moving closer to this study, there has been almost continued growth out-with the pandemic era in the Saudi airline industry over the past fifteen years. However, there is merit in understanding the background to the industry worldwide and more specifically in the country, as the changes being witnessed today are inexorably linked to the country's sociological, political and economic growth within the last century.

The first commercial passenger flights globally began with humble origins in Florida, USA (IATA, 2022a). In the early part of 1914, a scheduled service began in an airboat between St Petersburg, Fl, and Tampa. Though only 27 kilometres, the service was hailed a commercial success and popular with the public and

businesses alike. Although a short-lived enterprise — only operating for four months in total — and at a challenging time for industry as a whole, with the First World War looming, the potential was seen by the public, economists and governments alike. At the end of the WWI, services such as mail carriers started distributing mail and packages by air in the United States, and the model was seen expanding across other regions (De La Pedraia, 2013). The postal air services expanded to carry passengers when licensing and regulation permitted from 1918 (Crouch, Boyne and Bilstein, 2023); this led to a scramble for innovation and opportunity, with companies such as de Havilland and Boeing rapidly developing engines and airplanes (Davies, 1983).

Much of the early passenger flights were seen in the Americas and across Europe, with countries such as the UK extending services to colonial routes through Africa, India and also Australasia (Davies, 1983). However, following WWII the surplus in military transport planes led to an increase in available aircrafts, with military airbases having the potential as airports, hence a further period of growth was seen in the industry worldwide (Crouch, Boyne and Bilstein, 2023).

Saudi Arabia entered the airline industry in 1945, when US President Franklin Roosevelt gifted King Abdul Aziz bin Saud with a Douglas DC-3, a plane that could carry up to 37 passengers with a range of 1500 km that only required short runways, making it ideal for Saudi Arabia's internal and regional flights (Gradidge, 2006). The same year, Saudi Arabian Airlines was launched, the nation's flag carrier, which was fully owned by the Government, though operated

at the time under contract by Trans World Airlines (TWA) and offering flights from the main airport based at Jeddah. These significant events and the ramifications such as the development of 'modern airports' may well be seen as one of the precursors to the 5-year Saudi Arabian development plans, which started in 1970 (Alhammami, 2022).

In fact, Saudi Arabia has seen considerable reform in stages since 1926, with Vision 2030 being the most recent and possibly most comprehensive iteration. One of the key targets of reform in the 1970 First Development Plan was indeed transportation, alongside making links with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the introduction of new legislation and initiatives to deliver robust changes across the nation (Ewain, 1999). Crucial to the success and the rapid rate of expansion and development has been the significant financial resource generated through crude oil. In the first 5-year development plan written during a period of financial restraint, yet with an eye to the future, Saudi Arabia allocated a modest resource to non-oil capital projects (defence, education, transport and utilities). However, the unanticipated increase in oil revenue at the time increased GDP from the expected (9.8 per cent) per annum to (11.2 per cent) per annum, far exceeding expectations (Metz, 2023). The impact this had was to allow for further expansion in all areas; building on this, year-on-year, by the mid 1970's Saudia (as Saudi Arabian Airways had become known in 1972) had an extensive fleet including the first Jumbo Jets in the region and was offering a full range of international destinations as well as cargo services (Davies, 1983; Crouch, Boyne and Bilstein, 2023).

By the end of 2000, in line with other economic developments within the Seventh Development Plan spanning the years 2000-2004, Saudia began the process of re-structuring in a move towards swathes of the organisation becoming privatised (Crouch, Boyne and Bilstein, 2023). Though initially tentative, as in fact the Saudi Minister for Defence and Aviation had signed off the processes as part of a scoping exercise to explore the potential of a privatised air services industry in the country (Airwise 2006, for example), this led to catering services going out to tender and paved the way for other future developments such as ground services becoming privatised (Domain-B.com, 2007).

Moving forward, this growth in the airline and associated sectors has continued at an accelerated rate. Klabi (2021) suggests this is linked to a domestic market now comprising a growing number of younger adults who have a rising disposable income. Klabi (2021) also suggests that there is considerable growth potential in the airline sector despite it representing a small part of the overall World economy. Because Saudi Arabia has the largest population among Gulf countries, there is a larger demand from domestic consumers than countries such as the UAE (Al-Medabesh and Ali, 2014). The central connection between Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states as well as other international destinations for trade and tourism has therefore enabled both domestic and international travel (Klabi, 2021) and paves the way for future regional develops in the sector.

Figures for recent years in terms of number of flights by type of operator (commercial v private) and passenger numbers (International and Domestic Flights) are represented in the following charts. There were approximately

701,000 commercial flights in 2022, an increase of 41% over 2021, and approximately 64,000 private flights in 2022, an increase of 41% over 2021:

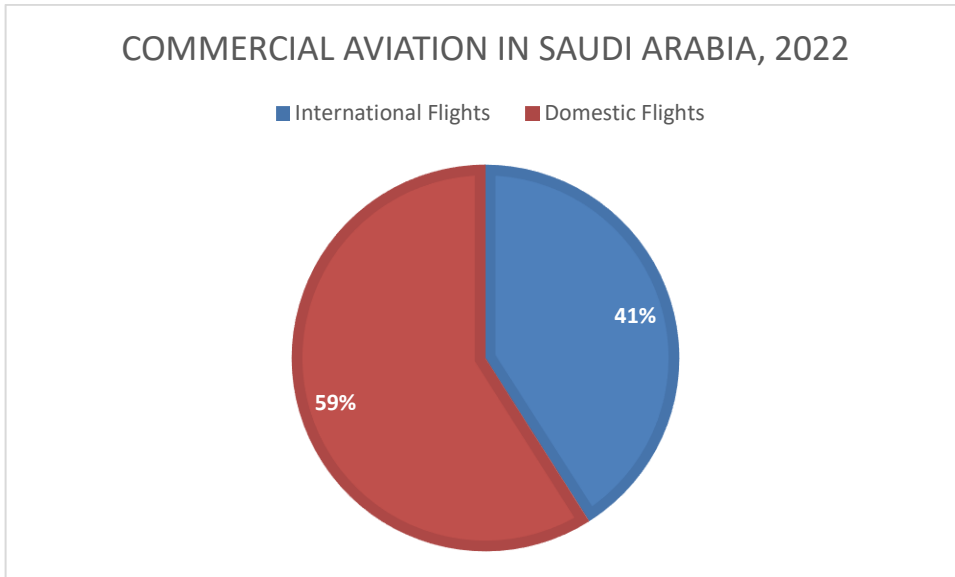


Figure 2.3 Commercial Aviation in Saudi Arabia, 2022 *Source: General Authority of Statistics (2023)*

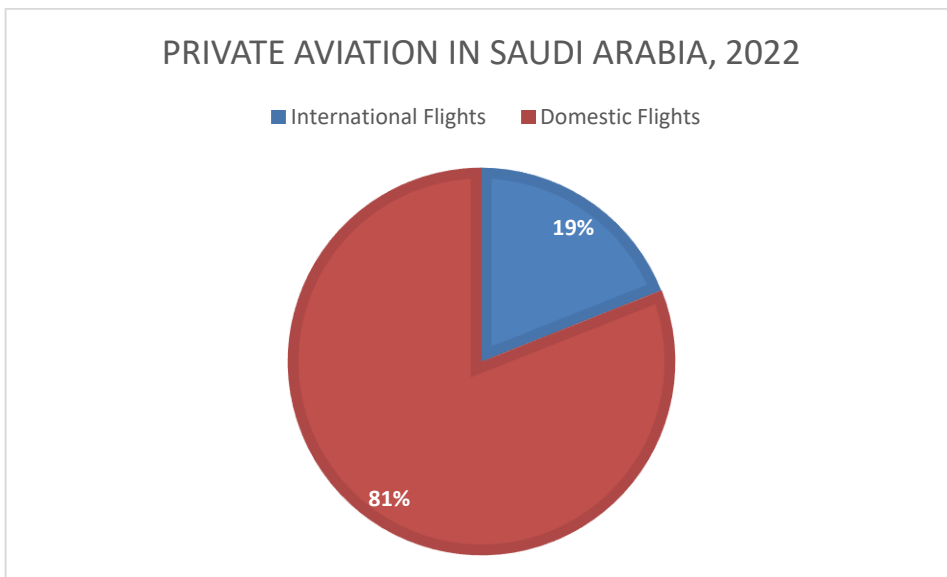


Figure 2.4 Private Aviation in Saudi Arabia, 2022 *Source: General Authority of Statistics (2023)*

As can be see, domestic flights considerably outweigh international flights in both the private and commercial airline sector. There were approximately 701,000 commercial flights that year, and almost 41,000 private flights. The following charts show the passenger numbers in millions for the periods 2021 and 2022, which reveal growth in international passengers in the post-pandemic recovery phase:

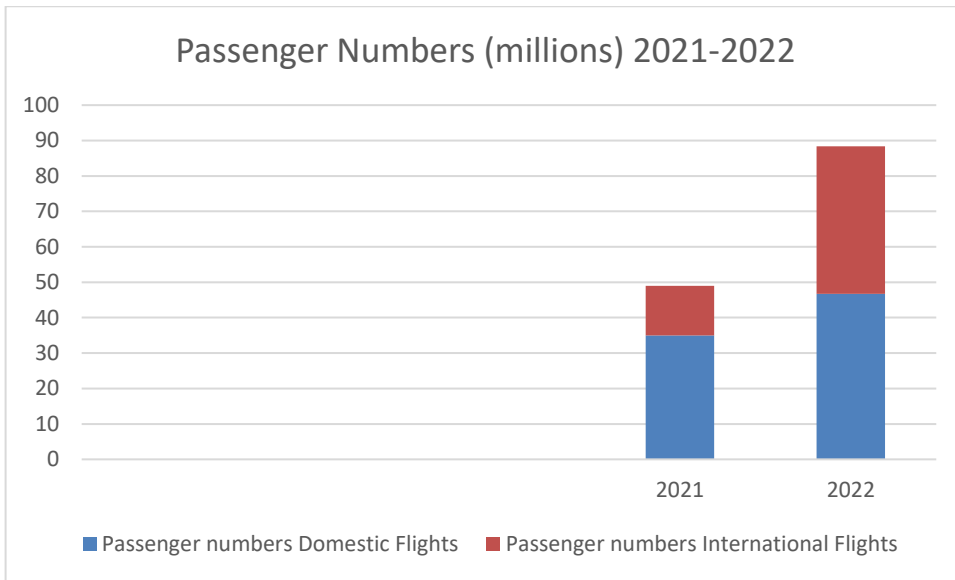


Figure 2.5 Passenger numbers in millions 2021 and 2022

Source: General Authority of Statistics (2023)

At the time of writing this thesis, the most recent key indicators for Saudi Arabia air passenger travel covering the period 2021-2022 were released in 2023 and are shown in Table 2.1:

Key Indicators	Unit	2021	2022	Change %
Number of domestic flights	N= (thousand)	370	412	11%
Number of international flights	N= (thousand)	127	289	128%
Number of passengers on domestic flights	N= (million)	35	46.7	33%
Number of passengers on international flights	N= (million)	14	41.7	98%
Highest international departure destination by number of passengers	Text	Egypt	UAE	-
Highest international departure destination by number of flights	Text	Egypt	UAE	-
Average daily flights arriving and departing at international airports for international and domestic flights	Number	91.9	131.29	42%
Average daily flights arriving and departing at domestic airports	Number	5.36	5.94	20%

Table 2.1: Key Indicators of Air Passenger Transport 2021-2022 *Source: General Authority of Statistics (2023)*

Mapping the routes provides a strong visual cue for the inter-connectedness of Saudi Arabia in the growing airline sector, as seen in figures 2.6 and 2.7:

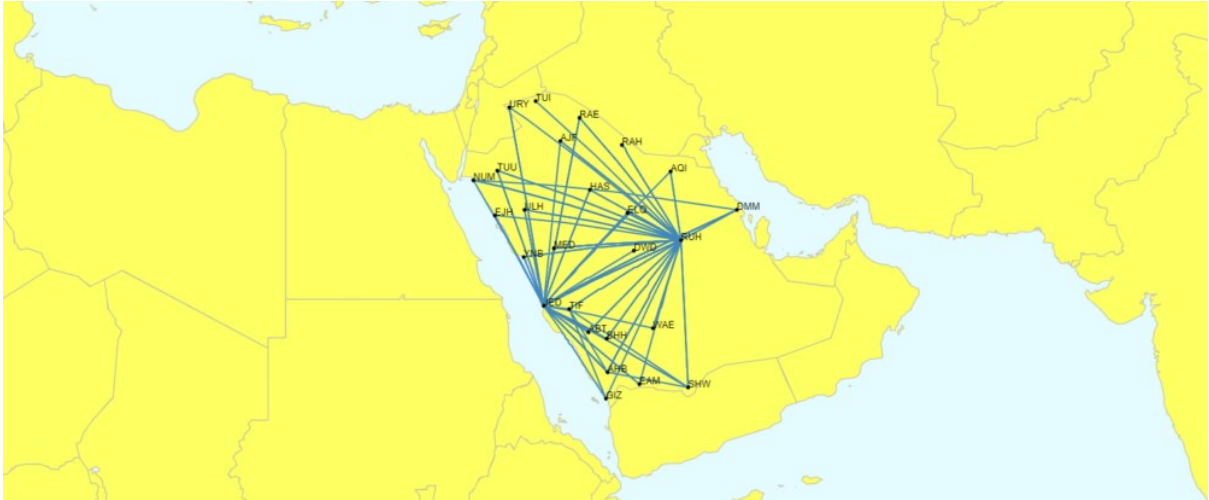


Figure 2.6 Domestic route map, Saudi Airlines, May 2023 (Cirium, 2023)



Figure 2.7 International route map, Saudi Airlines, May 2023 (Cirium, 2023)

In response to such trends and demands, a range of initiatives have been introduced by the Saudi government that aim to expand the local airline services sector across the board as the sector is well-placed for economic growth (Benny, 2021). The sort of initiatives seen include collaboration and connectivity, including collaboration with both international and domestic airline companies

(Kamel, 2022). Kamel (2022) also suggests these initiatives would address concerns and demands from across the passenger demography and ultimately contribute to the economic growth elements in the National Transformation Plan in Vision 2030. Whilst the government is active in continuous policymaking, some of this activity includes partnerships with likeminded agencies and airlines across the globe (Kamel, 2022). It is also concurrently putting in place the necessary mechanisms to improve its import and export air cargo segment. Saudi Arabia was described as having the potential to improve the sector and could contribute over 74 billion US dollars to the economy by 2030 (Gösslinga and Humpe, 2020). In 2018, the industry accounted for \$21.3 billion of Saudi Arabia's GDP (*ibid*).

In terms of infrastructure to support the growing demands within airline services, some of the measures considered to deliver the intended results include mechanising operations, improving security and safety in airports, and collaborating with other key partners. The government has recruited more professions to engage in a number of areas that were integral for the sector, such as fire and rescue, cargo management, safety, operations, and sustainability (Benny, 2021). Similarly, the government was partnering with various institutions involved in aviation studies to train and introduce more workers in the industry (Jahmani, 2017).

Additionally, the Saudi Arabia's aviation industry is recording positive gains due to the governmental policies that have eased foreign investment restrictions. These developments are presently encouraging young people in this country to

identify emerging marketing and travel opportunities to acquire additional insights that can help support economic development within the Kingdom (Jahmani, 2017). Many foreign investors have shown their interest in investing in the country and this trend resonates with the outlined missions and visions for the aviation sector. Experts have been keen to monitor emerging issues and opportunities that might have significant implications for the aviation industry (Arabian Business, 2022a). These measures, therefore, mean that the country's aviation sector stands to record improved gains and continue to meet the diverse needs of more possible clients, both globally and locally.

One such 'emerging issue and opportunity' presented itself in 2022, when the nascent tourism sector in the Kingdom saw an early boost during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. In response to what would be significant numbers of passengers to the region for every stage of the event, and recognising that Qatar itself would not have the infrastructure to accommodate the required numbers, Saudi Arabia increased its shuttle flights to 240 a week and issued multi-entry 60-day visas to fans (TRT, 26 Oct 2022). This has no doubt given analysts much-needed data to feed into service performance evaluation, given that tourism visas only commenced in September 2019, months before the global pandemic effectively closed down travel and tourism (*ibid*). Under Vision 2030, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is aiming for 30 million tourists per annum by the year 2030 (Arabian Business, 2022a); although some of that increase is expected to be part of religious pilgrimage, websites such as [www.againstthecompass.com](http://www.againstthecompass.com) and [www.visitsaudi.com](http://www.visitsaudi.com) are promoting attractions such as Mada'in Salah

(archaeological complex) and the Fayfa region (food and culture). These types of attraction represent “cultural tourism” (Georgieva, Oriade, and Rahimi, 2017), described as an experiential form of tourism, whereby visitors immerse themselves in local culture thus participate in local events and traditions. Cultural tourism affords the opportunity for developing added-value, and Saudi Arabia is potentially a prime target destination for culture tourists (*ibid.*). This concept is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Jin, Almousa and Kim (2018) suggest the Saudi Arabia business sector is booming due to governmental policies that have eased foreign investment restrictions as the young population in the country continue to spend. Though undoubtedly tempered during the current economic difficulties triggered by the pandemic and the Ukraine war, foreign investors have shown their interest in investing in the country. The oil production's reputation in Saudi Arabia has improved the market base for aviation or airline markets in the country. The country is geared to improve the performance of its aviation industry through creating more relationships with the global market for products like hydrocarbons export, which is the central part of the trade-in the country (Miniaoui and Schilirò, 2017). The country is also working to establish a solid basis to export its services in such a way that the existing airlines can transport passengers both locally and globally. This approach will make it possible for the country to achieve its potential and help the industry record positive economic gains (*ibid.*).

### 2.3.1 Use of Airline Services in Saudi Arabia

When discussing the research context for this study, mapping out the impact of globalisation on air transport activity and demonstrating that despite unforeseen events such as the pandemic and the at times fragile post-pandemic recovery era, air transportation remains a vital driver for citizens, businesses and the overall economy. The resurgence of the sector and an associated tourist industry boom has increased demand; at the same time sustainability drivers from both the UN and passengers themselves are challenging companies to think differently, thus consumer preference is becoming more critical. Younger, more environmentally astute travellers are demanding more, and Vision 2030 reforms are opening the skies in previously unheard of ways (lone women travellers, routes to Israel etc.).

As seen in the previous section, Vision 2030 affords the potential for an exciting improvement of the aviation industry in general and Saudi Arabia's global connections (Moshashai *et al.*, 2020). With ambitious plans to increase the contribution of the aviation sector to the country's economy to US\$74.6 Billion by 2030, more than triple the 2018 figures (Arabian Business, 2022a), a wide range of initiatives have been implemented. These include the recent announcement in December 2022 of the launch of the King Salman Airport project. Aiming to build one of the largest airports in the world, when complete it is expected to cover 57 square kilometres, create over a hundred thousand jobs, and to have six runways which can increase passenger flights to accommodate over 180 million passengers a year (Arabian Business, 2022b). Of note, and with an eye to

environmental concerns, the new build project will incorporate green initiatives, use renewable energy sources and the government is seeking to attain the much-coveted LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification on completion.

These types of development within the sector when positioned alongside other reforms (for example, improved work and travel opportunities for women as seen in the previous section) go some way to improve our understanding of the changes within the Kingdom and explore opportunities for research to inform academia and businesses. Such inquiry would help improve the sector and ensure that the demands of the anticipated increased volume of clients are met. Theorists in the fields of economy and management would agree that Saudi Arabia has become a promising destination for people (tourism) and business (trade) from different corners of the globe. The ongoing oil industry has continued to support the country's economic development (Farouk and Brown, 2021) and its strategic location in the wider Middle East region and the availability of the Internet are powerful strengths that are reshaping its overall competitiveness in the globe.

Of note, in recent years the development of the country's key sectors has triggered new trends in consumption and preference for local and international services (Hilal, Scott, and Maadad, 2015). It is also worth noting that the aviation market has already benefitted from the initiatives the government has put in place. For example, liberalisation policies have empowered more Saudis, thereby making it easier for them to focus on better ways to transform their lives. A study

by Esmail (2018) revealed that Saudi Arabia was experiencing a renewed phase of economic growth and social transformation. Consequently, the country was recording an unprecedented increase of around 8 per cent annually in the number of passengers using various airline services. In another study, Farouk and Brown (2021) projected that the number of passengers could triple within the next decade.

Perhaps one of the most politically intriguing developments in air transport has been seen with the Saudi Government granting airspace rights to Israeli flights in 2020 (Specia, 2020), with the first public flight from the State of Israel landing in Saudi Arabia in 2021 and expanded services to other airports within the following year (Bob, 2021; Nahmias, 2022). As seen in Section 2.2.1, the warming of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel is topical; though polarised in their views around Palestine, solidarity over historical and growing security and ideological concerns involving Iran has set the scene for improved relations including trade and tourism (Niu and Wu, 2021).

In 2016, only two airlines were operating in the country, thereby making it impossible for more citizens to afford airline services and other personal needs (Esmail, 2018). By summer 2022 this had risen to five; these trends have helped push prices for air tickets down due to the increasing level of industry rivalry (TNA, 2022). The first two low-cost carriers (LCCs) to attain licences in Saudi Arabia were Flyadeal (operating from Jeddah) and Flynas (operating from Riyadh), who in 2019 carried 3.5 million and 7.6 million passengers respectively in 2019 before the global pandemic (Centreforaviation.com, 2020; Flynas.com,

2020). Flynas and Flyadeal have delivered a 50% increase in available seat kilometres since then (Shishodiya, 2023); when compared overall with the other countries in the region since 2009 (base year), it can be seen that by the year-end 2022, Saudi Arabia as a whole had the highest representation of ASK (see figure 2.8):

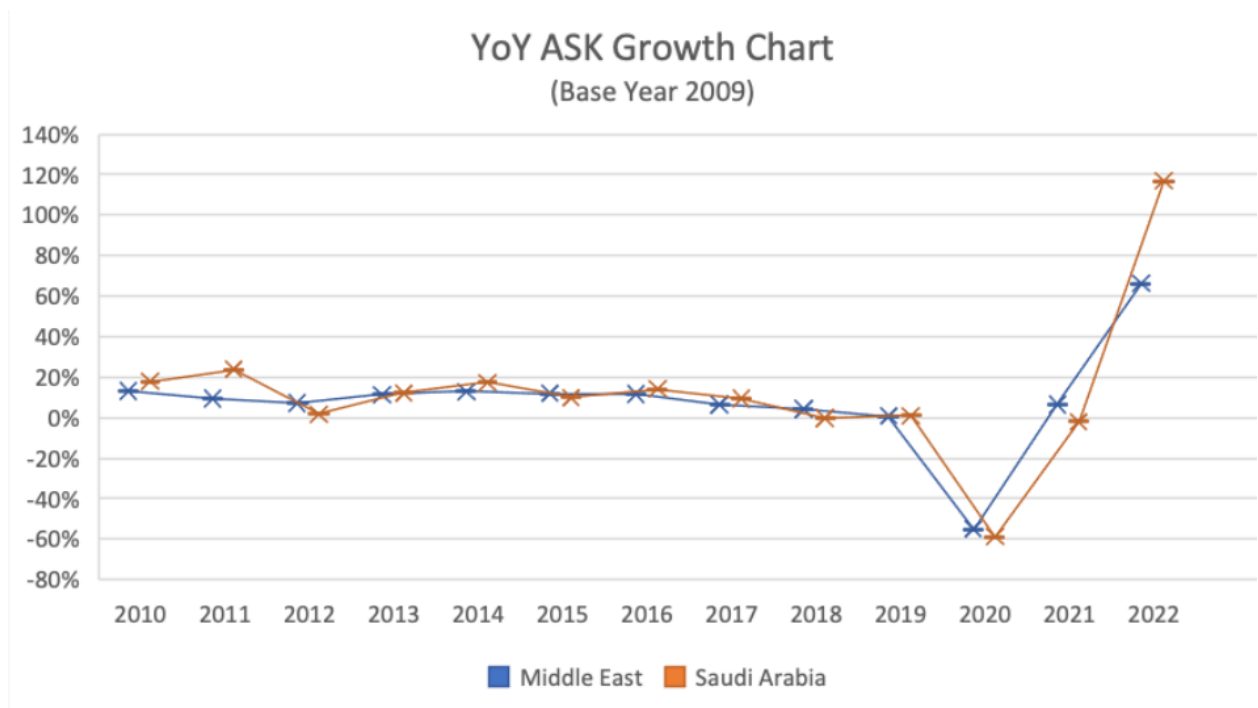


Figure 2.8: Available seat kilometres, Middle East v Saudi Arabia, 2010-2022.

Source: Shishodiya, 2023

Flights by operator reveal that Saudi Airlines had the largest share in 2022:

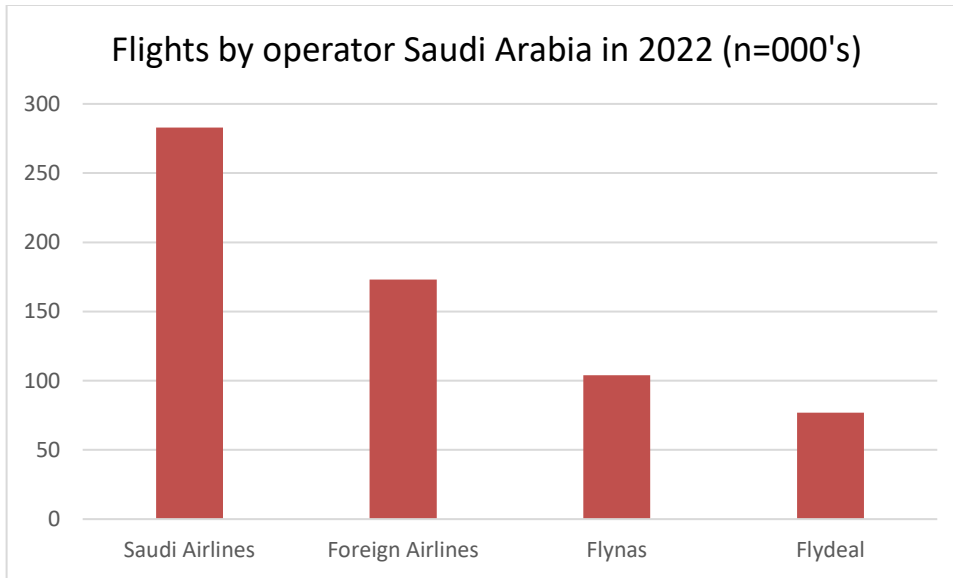


Figure 2.9 Flights by operators at Saudi Arabia's airports 2022 (n=000's) *Source: Shishodiya, 2023*

Wizz Air were granted a licence to operate in the Kingdom, and by the end of 2023 were expected to be transporting a million passengers a year on 22 routes from European cities such as Vienna and Bucharest to three Saudi Airports (Dammam, Riyadh and Jeddah) (Harper, 2022). Indeed, it was announced in January 2024 that Wizz Air had in fact carried more than 600,000 international passengers to Saudi Arabia, with total passenger figures including Saudi Passengers travelling abroad exceeding 1 million (CAPA, 2024).

In March 2023, Saudi Arabia launched Riyadh Air, a new national carrier that initially connected the capital with 100 global destinations (Aviator, 2023). The funding for the development of this new service was sourced directly through Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund and is expected to generate upwards of USD20 Billion to non-oil GDP growth, with the creation of over 200,000 jobs. Of

note, the development was heralded with the announcement that it supports the Vision 2030 aim of global competitiveness whilst unlocking the capabilities of 'promising sectors' by offering a state-of-the-art, sustainable airline service, driving the diversification of the local economy.

The growth experienced in the international market has presented a positive outlook for the Saudi aviation industry as more inbound flights continue to be recorded in the country due to its strategic location. With various diversification approaches being put in place, the aviation sector may continue to witness unprecedented improvements that will eventually promote economic performance (Esmail, 2018). These gains have compelled the government to consider additional measures for expanding its airline services including terminal improvements and expanding passenger (and freight) capacity alongside jobs creation schemes within the sector (Arabian Business, 2022a).

However, this brings challenges: the increasing level of rivalry as passengers vie for the best deal will have significant implications for the existing players and their clients. While Saudi Arabia currently remains a lead player in the regional aviation sector, industry experts have suggested that its market share could decline due to the measures competitors (different airline operators) use (Farouk and Brown, 2021). Until the 1970s, commercial airline services were operating under similar conditions and passengers could expect to pay high prices yet have a similar range of services such as in-flight meals and entertainment (Maxim and Popescu, 2011). With deregulation came low-cost carriers (LCCs) which have changed the landscape for passengers; Southwest Airlines Co. were pioneers in

America in the 1970s, with others following across Europe and Asia between 1990 and 2000 (Picardo, 2022). Since then, several features that passengers consider when deciding which airline service to use and that prompt low-cost carrier choice have emerged including discounted fares, ticketless travelling (making buying easier and transit less cumbersome) and service performance (Veeramani, Rou Yi, Yoong, and Mahmud, (2020).

Suau-Sanchez, Voltes-Dorta and Cugueró-Escofet (2020) remind us that the airline sector, as with all sectors, are prone to devastating consequences of natural disasters such as air space being closed by volcanic ash and economic crises such as oil prices being affected by conflict. All airline services were severely affected by the global pandemic which saw air passenger transport reduce by up to 90% of daily flights (Eurocontrol, 2020). The post-COVID recovery period has not seen a sudden bounce-back, and has indeed seen significant risk-management processes introduced which initially led to further costs and delays for the industry, such as enhanced cleaning and physical distancing (IATA, 2020). Bulchand-Gidumal and Melián-González, (2021) suggest that COVID-19 is not going to disappear, and that travellers' purchase of airline services may be affected by their risk-perception. In fact, it is also suggested that future passengers will be reluctant to buy tickets in advance due to their high psychological, health and financial risk perception (Suau-Sanchez, Voltes-Dorta, and Cugueró-Escofet, 2020). Hassan and Salem (2021) suggest LCCs are particularly vulnerable due to their narrow profit margins and tight cash flow. They suggest such airlines focus on customer loyalty as a means of

ensuring continued custom, and found the responsiveness domain of service quality to be significant at ensuring customer satisfaction.

Despite these possible obstacles, Saudi Arabia has continued its expansion project both with its domestic airline services and aimed at supporting its continued performance in the international market. Increased discretionary income as a result of the country's economic development has transformed the experiences and consumer behaviours of the Saudi population. According to IATA (2020), Saudi citizens have wanted to fly to other regions either within Saudi Arabia or further afield. As newer opportunities for work and study have increased, and the changes starting to appear socially such as those around guardianship requirements, more Saudis are seeking more opportunities to pursue their careers, their studies, or leisure pursuits further afield (Gösslinga and Humpe, 2020). In fact, those same authors suggest that as 'the global society' becomes a 'single community' such changes are an essential part of re-shaping policy, development and future of the Saudi Arabian airline services industry. These issues continue to dictate the current position and subsequent development of this sector. They are also shifting the focus for airlines into the marketing arena – if more people are flying, what do they want from the services they choose?

An early study by Oyewole (2015) sought to analyse the major forces compelling passengers to prefer specific airline companies and their respective services over others. Findings revealed a clear pattern: the convenience the organisation afforded in the booking process, comfort, discounts, and additional in-flight

services dictated most of the consumers' decisions; these were later supported by AbuAlhommos *et al.*, (2021). Catering practices different airline companies offered have also been seen to dictate the willingness of passengers to embrace their services (Gösslinga and Humpe, 2020).

These issues clearly play a significant role in guiding individuals to select their airlines of choice. However, if one steps back and reflects on Saudi Arabia, its people, its economy and its deeply held and constituted religious basis for society, there is merit in exploring some of the nuanced concepts that underpin either consciously or unconsciously airline passengers' choices. In addition, while Chou (2015) reminds us that the airline industry is a service industry, Kurtulmuşoğlu, Can, and Tolon (2016) advocate for airline companies to consider offering a more diverse range of services to not only retain a loyal customer base but also attract new ones. This position has significance for the moderator variable in this study, service performance, when placed alongside consumers' attitude towards airline service. For airline companies to respond to service users' preferences and expectations there is an increased demand for information surrounding selection criteria that passengers use when deciding which company to approach and which service to buy.

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter began with an overview of Saudi Arabia, mapping the health of its nation and how the publicly-funded healthcare system in Saudi Arabia is free for the citizens, especially given the challenges typical of an aging population. It

presented an overview of economic growth, demonstrated how the oil-based economy supports the infrastructure improvements within the Kingdom and moreover presents considerable socioeconomic progress. Importantly, this chapter also presented how the country's constitution draws from Quran and Sunnah, thus its governance is rooted largely in Sunni Islam. Sharia law directly influences cultural norms and the legal system; this directly impacts business practices, and becomes an important consideration for the variables in this study. However, this chapter also revealed how recent geopolitical shifts are challenging historical narratives and are potentially signalling a change in foreign policy under the reforms led by the Crown Prince on behalf of King Salman's administration. There is a suggestion the regime is seeking a new identity as seen in its redefinition of Saudi nationalism; these changes will undoubtedly influence societal attitudes, particularly ethnocentrism. When this evolving landscape is contextualised with Saudi history, it provides for a contemporary examination of the transformations driven by Vision 2030 initiatives.

The chapter then progressed to map out Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the National Transformation Plan (NTP) that was introduced 2016. It outlined what are considerable, ambitious plans for growth and development, in a sense positioning Saudi Arabia as moving from an oil-based economy into a more diverse global investment powerhouse but also as a hub connecting continents. The vision is delivered in three main pillars (themes) and encompasses many streams of action, including expanding private sector business ideology and leveraging existing infrastructure. Striking changes were begun, particularly about the role of

women in the economy and reforms in the guardianship system. This chapter saw how Vision 2030 prioritises citizens' health and wellbeing, with a stated aim of increasing life expectancy. It also saw the bold aim of enhancing the country's tourism infrastructure, which is crucial for the airline services sector and therefore pertinent to this study. Saudi Arabia is clearly transitioning to a market economy; this enhances any potential for airline services expansion within the region, and aligns with modern marketing practices. Initiatives such as the King Salman Airport project are incorporating green initiatives and renewable energy sources, demonstrating the commitment to non-oil based revenue. Such developments underscore the kingdom's evolving landscape, as do the overall societal changes. Saudi's new policies including guardianship changes have essentially empowered more Saudis, and in doing so, have contributed to an 8% increase in air passengers annually, and the aim is to triple those figures over the next 10 years. The rise of LCCs has increased access to air travel for lower earners, directly leading to competition across the industry and price reduction for passengers. However, this chapter also saw how despite promising growth, there remain challenges including post-pandemic uncertainties. It is known that passengers' preferences for qualitative elements around convenience, comfort, and service quality define choice of airline services, thus it becomes pertinent at this time to understanding consumer behaviour. Also, because of Saudi Arabia's unique societal and religious context, there is a crucial need at this time to analyse Saudi passengers' nuanced preferences, as the industry's future success rests in part to airlines' ability to adapt and meet their clients' needs.

The next chapter presents the theoretical framework for this research, then provides a critical review of the literature. Following this, hypotheses are developed.

## CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

### DEVELOPMENT

#### 3.1 Introduction

**T**his chapter seeks to analyse the concepts of consumer animosity, consumer ethnocentrism and consumer religiosity and their subsequent associations. The study also intends to bring an understanding of how each of these constructs interacts with and indeed affects consumer attitudes and subsequent decision-making when looking to use an airline service and when the deliberations that individuals passengers make about airlines' service performance within the overall context of Saudi Arabia are also considered. In doing so, this thesis acknowledges the changing political and social landscape that Saudi Arabia finds itself in and also the overall developments within the global community, which is seeing change in use of local *versus* imported products and services (UN, 2021). Moreover, the recent pandemic, political uncertainty, climate emergency, and the Ukrainian conflict — which in particular has triggered food crises and energy poverty amongst many populations — are all affecting consumer spending choices (Murphy, Yunis and Aliakbari, 2022).

The opening section of this chapter presents the theoretical framework that becomes a lens through which to view the research model, and through which the hypotheses are developed and the findings discussed. presents the theoretical framework for the study with an introduction to the two theories

selected for this study: The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Hagger *et al.*, 2022) and the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) (Sheth, Newman and Gross 1991; Tanrikulu, 2021). Section 3.3 follows, which presents a critical review of existing literature to provide an empirical background and basis for the research; the gaps identified in this review become the basis for exploration in subsequent chapters. The variables examined are:

- Independent Variables: Consumer Animosity, Consumer Ethnocentricity, Consumer Religiosity
- Dependent Variable: Consumer Attitudes Towards Airline Services
- Moderating Variable: Service Performance

The critical review identifies the gaps found in the existing literature from which hypotheses are developed in section 3.4; these feed into the research model in 3.5 which is taken into the next chapter, methodology.

What is missing from the narrative at this juncture is placing the proposed inquiry into a theoretical landscape. Theory in research is a contested and contentious subject. Within a quantitative landscape of inquiry, theory not only provides a basis for developing and testing the hypotheses but it also provides a roadmap for end users of a study — be that other researchers, policy-makers, theorists and academics, industry etc. — to base their contextualisation, critique and understanding of the study findings (Seidel and Shavelston, 2007). Saldaña and Omasta (2018, p. 257) suggest that in research within the social sciences, theory allows the findings of a study to be condensed into a statement about “... life that

holds transferable applications to other settings, context, populations, and possibly time periods”. Robson and McCarten (2016) remind us that theory can range from formal systems to informal speculations; they also state that links to formal theory within research gives assurance that the study was conducted in alignment with other researchers’ attempts to understand and explain phenomena.

The following section extends this inquiry by setting out the theoretical framework that underpins this study. A theoretical framework becomes the lens through which a study may be viewed. In a wider frame, it becomes a conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2009, Page 33), “system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that supports and informs” a research project. In determining how this study will progress, and following an in-depth presentation of the two-theory lens for this study, Section 3.3 critically reviews a range of existing literature on the main concepts of this study.

### **3.2 Theoretical Framework**

Over the years, theorists have presented powerful concepts and frameworks based on their findings on how buyers perceive and select different products. These perceptions have the potential to influence the failure, success, and acceptance of a specific product and service in a given market. Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2006) describe the study of consumer behaviour as the study of the “processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services ideas or experiences to

satisfy needs or desires” (Hall, 2016, online). Another description is given by Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2006) who suggest consumer behaviour includes all the factors that influence or affect the method by which the consumer comes to a decision about what to purchase both at the time and point of purchase and also in the period of debating beforehand. Moreover, since the inception of consumer behaviour as a subject of research investigation, diverse and innovative themes have emerged such as consumer decision making and consumer satisfaction (DeVaney, 2016), and variables such as those chosen in this study – consumer ethnocentricity, animosity and religiosity alongside service performance.

Ramírez-Angulo and Londoño-Roldán (2020) have criticised some of the elements involved in the study of consumer behaviour, with an emphasis on the conflicting paradigms utilised by researchers within the field, which leads to what they describe as repercussions for the methodological tactics. It is imperative therefore that this section of the thesis develops a congruent, robust approach to deliberating and determining the underpinning theoretical framework to support the ensuing literature review and hypothesis development, and indeed, to inform the methodology.

Several models of consumer behaviour have endeavoured to explain behavioural intentions of consumers (do Paço, Shiel and Alves, 2019) which ultimately help explain how beliefs and behaviours are linked and combine to inform an individual’s choice of product or service (Paul, Modi and Patel, 2016). Given the challenges consumers are facing in society with economic stressors and global

energy costs soaring, it is reasonable to look towards changing human behaviour to meet such challenges (*ibid.*).

There are four dominant approaches to theoretical understanding of consumer behaviour: psychodynamic theory, behavioural theory, cognitive theory and humanistic theory (East, Wright, and Vanhuele, 2013; Ramírez-Angulo and Londoño-Roldán, 2020).

The first approach, psychodynamic theory, is rooted firmly in internal, often unconscious drivers of behaviour. Deeply psychological in nature, it sees human functioning based upon the interaction of internal drivers and forces and between the different structures of the personality (Loudon, Stevens, and Wrenn, 2010). Put simply, the unconscious mind (the 'id') is said to be about our basic primal drives, including pleasure, and that is controlled to a certain extent by our conscious mind (the 'ego'), which has our grasp on reality, and the 'superego' which are our moral principles. When this theory is extrapolated into the consumer arena, marketers try through advertising to promote goods and services by targeting the unconscious mind – our preferences and likes. This can be used to change behaviour in a number of ways, the most obvious perhaps being the 'traffic light' system on food labelling. Red is a colour normally associated with the stop sign, or 'danger' and green is associated with 'safe to go'. Food product labels are either Red (e.g. high fat products), Amber (e.g. medium fat products) or Green (e.g. low-fat products). Kunz *et al.* (2020) demonstrated how such labelling impacted on consumer attitudes and particularly on purchase intentions: participants did not have a lower intention to

buy products that were high in sugar, but they did report a higher purchase intention when products had low sugar content when traffic light colours were used compared to when they were not used.

The second, behavioural theory, also has its roots in the neurosciences, but is also well represented in many other disciplines such as education, business economics and several health disciplines (such as dietetics) (Kwon and Silva, 2020). There are many manifestations of behavioural theory in practice; in fact, Kwon and Silva (2020) classify 66 theories as 'behavioural', specifying that a behavioural theory needs to explain some aspect of the response or decision a person makes when faced with a stimulus. The theory was developed from early work by psychologists including Pavlov and Skinner in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Steiner and Fishbein, 1965), and effectively discredits the earlier psychodynamic theory by its assertion that behaviour can be learned through external events, not just via the inner psyche. Behavioural theorists posit that the impact of external events will determine behaviour; central to behaviourist theory is the concept of 'conditioning', which deems that behaviour can be manipulated by external events - this is seen in action with marketing activity that fosters specific patterns of behaviour by effectively manipulating consumers through reinforcing use of their products as being 'the only way to behave' (Lantos, 2011).

Stewart (1994) argued that although behavioural theory and research retained the hegemonic position in explaining consumer behaviour, it was widely recognised that behaviourism was merely one part of a fuller understanding. In particular, he posited that behaviourism alone does not adequately account for

the significant diversity or range of consumer response that can be generated when exposed to similar, or even near identical stimuli. To that effect, the third approach, cognitive theory, became a subject of interest in consumer research.

Stemming from the neurosciences, cognitive theory has its focus on how a person processes and interprets information before coming to an understanding or new thought (Kozbelt (2011). Theorists maintain that the way people perceive events and make sense of them influences our thoughts and behaviour (Galovski, Nixon, and Kaysen, 2020). The theory posits that environmental and social experiences provide consumers with an array of information that they need to internally process and from which they can form a decision: to buy or not; in other words, the information received and how it is processed by the individual will dictate how they behave (East, Wright, and Vanhuele, 2013). Analysing consumer behaviour from a cognitive theoretical perspective is usually performed using one of two approaches (Bray, 2008). Firstly, analytical models are able to examine a wide range of influencing factors on purchasing decisions and intimating broad relationships between those factors as they are applied to purchase settings. Alternatively, a prescriptive model provides users (researchers, marketing experts etc) with a framework or guidance that enables the structure of consumer behaviour to be understood. This offers great utility for allowing companies to respond to consumer activity by ‘tweaking’ or modifying the stimuli that might attract a favourable consumer response – buy one get one free, for example (Bray, 2008).

Humanistic theory, by comparison to the three previous approaches to explaining consumer behaviour, is described as concepts that are introspective to the individual consumer. In some respects research based around humanist theory addresses criticisms of the previously mentioned theories. Cognitive theory, for instance, neglects the role that emotion plays in a consumer's decision to purchase (Natarajan and Bagozzi, 1999), and none explains the role of altruism (Ramírez-Angulo and Londoño-Roldán, 2020). Research using humanistic theory underpinning its design has extended the scope and remit of consumer behaviour study into areas such as volitional stages of decision making (see Natarajan and Bagozzi, 1999), which acknowledges the role that past behaviour has in influencing consumer purchase decisions. In addition, Ozanne, *et al.*, (2011), have identified the role of Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) in exploring both individual and group-level opportunities (and problems) related to consumerism / consumer behaviour.

As well as having a thorough understanding of the types of theory to explain consumer behaviour, another factor influencing the choice of theory for this research is the mechanism of choice of service when actually buying that individuals use. East, Wright and Vanhuele (2013) posit that consumers engage in two types of purchase: routine and impulse. Researchers have differentiated between the two by suggesting impulse buying is unplanned and unintended purchase activity, usually 'on the spot' whereas routine purchases are thought out and planned, making it easier to budget (Redine, Deshpande, Jebarajakirthy, and Surachartkumtonkup, 2022). Crucially, impulse buying is preceded by a

trigger, by exposure to a stimulus resulting in a powerful urge to buy. This impacts on marketing strategy (in this case, for airline services); as stated previously, at the core of behavioural theory is the impact of external events that determine behaviour. It is therefore clear that a behavioural understanding and theory is a more fitting approach to explaining how consumer attitudes and characteristics might influence their choice in service or product (*ibid*).

There are many primary behavioural theories available to provide a theoretical framework for research; as stated earlier, Kwon and Silva (2020) classified 66 individual and distinct behavioural theories including the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Hagger *et al.*, 2022). Following other studies which have used this theory (see Sniehotta, 2009; Ahmmadi, Rahimian and Movahed, 2021), this study selected TPB as part of the theoretical framework. In addition, Sniehotta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares (2014) evidence the areas that the TPB cannot fully address, therefore in keeping with other studies which offer two or more theories to broaden the theoretical lens, this thesis also selected the theory of Consumption Values (TCV) (Sheth *et al.* 1991; Tanrikulu, 2021). This is a well-validated model and the practice of widening the theoretical lens offers depth to the rationale whilst providing insights that the other model may not fully provide. The next sub-sections go on to explore the models in detail.

### **3.2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour**

Initially, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed the Theory of Reasoned Action to explain behavioural intentions. This was extended into The Theory of Planned

Behaviour (TPB) by incorporating the concept of perceived behavioural control (PBC) (Ajzen, 1985; 1991), and has been the leading behaviouralist theory that researchers have turned to in order to inform and steer research, particularly within the health and the business fields. As a behaviouralist theory, TPB incorporates the elements from cognitive and psychodynamic theory that link an individual's beliefs and behaviours, making it highly effective at explaining and developing an understanding of the psychological and cognitive processes as well as the behavioural action involved in contextual consumer decision-making (Paul, Modi and Patel, 2016).

A central premise of TPB posits that “volitional human behaviour is a function of the intention to perform the behaviour and perceived behavioural control (PBC)” (Sniehotta, Pesseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014, p1). Studies that have demonstrated this contention include Camacho, Ramírez-Correa, and Salazar-Concha (2022), who found that consumers’ intention to purchase is positively influenced by perceived behavioural control. In the context of this study (consumer attitudes towards airline services and how they impact spending or making decisions on choice of airline services), intention is described as part of an individual’s attitude towards the purchase (behaviour) and involves a degree of behavioural control, but it also a person’s norms, mores and values. Hagger *et al.*, (2022), suggest that the planned behaviour model is a powerful theory that describes how human beliefs and expectations form a valuable model for guiding attitudes and eventual decisions. When a person’s beliefs [about a product or

service] increase positively, chances are high that he or she would be willing to purchase products or use services (Esmail, 2018).

When debating the extent to which TPB can influence individuals' behaviour, it is useful to consider the inherent mediation hypotheses within the theory. Sutton (2002) describes these as a) perceived behavioural control is partially mediated by intention while the effect of subjective norm and attitude on behaviour is fully mediated by intention; b) behavioural, normative and control beliefs on intention and behaviour are hypothesised to be mediated through attitude, subjective norm and PBC; and c) TPB mediates all other biological, social, environmental, economic, medical and cultural influences.

Over time, TPB has been a much-utilised theory for researchers, predominantly in the health behaviour field but also in corporate and consumer research fields, in particular where correlation analysis has been used to explore associations between cognitions and behaviour. One study in particular demonstrates some of the nuances that become apparent when using the theory to explain the influence of subjective norms on purchase intention. Xin and Seo (2020) examined variables including subjective norms on intention to purchase imported foods. As seen in the previous paragraph, subjective norms are considered an inherent mediation hypothesis within the theory (Sutton, 2002), and previous studies had generally supported that they influence purchase intention (e.g. Ajzen, 2015). However, Xin and Seo (2020) found no influence of subjective norms on intention to purchase. In applying a theoretical interpretation of their finding, they suggest broadening the domains [of purchase intent] to include purchase behaviour and

also for any 'products' under study [that consumers intend to purchase] that attitudes about and product familiarity or involvement is considered as an influence in purchase intention. Certainly in the context of this current study, those considerations were taken into the development of the research instrument (questionnaire design) as will be seen in section 4.5.

Recent examples of studies using TPB in their research design include Wang, Wong and Narayanan (2020), who used an integrated theoretical research model which explicitly adopted both TRA and TPB. They examined consumer green purchase intention within the hotel industry and found the integrated theoretical research model a useful research method for illustrating the impact that intention has on behaviour. Indeed, Mwiya *et al.* (2017), in a study based in Zambia around entrepreneurial behaviour found intention is the best predictor of an individual's behaviour. Another study by Hwang and Gulzar (2020) has attempted to extend the construct of TPB by exploring the moderating effect that awareness of consequences has on an individual's behavioural intention [to use a service]. Their empirical findings showed for the first time that the awareness of consequences plays a crucial moderating role in the relationship between PBC and BI.

Whereas Hagger *et al.* (2022) suggests that TPB is a powerful theory that forms a valuable model for guiding attitudes and eventual decisions and can thus have utility in research, others are more critical. Sniehotta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares (2014) suggest that although the TPB has inspired multiple empirical health behaviour research studies, the majority have used correlational designs.

They cite studies such as McEachan, Conner, Taylor, and Lawton, (2011) which found that when outcome measures were taken objectively rather than as a self-report, the TPB was considerably less predictive of behaviour than other studies which often rely on university student participation in what they term 'shortitudinal' [*sic*] designs. In addition, they state that experimental tests of the TPB are rare and those that have been conducted have not always supported the theory's assumptions. Examples cited include an early study by Chatzisarantis and Hagger (2005) that found that when factorial tests measured the outcomes of interventions to target the theory's cognitive predictors, the results demonstrated that even when successful in changing cognitions, the changes did not always manifest in a change in behaviour. This finding was replicated in part by Sniehotta, (2009), in a study that aimed to investigate university students' planned use of a sports facility. Using three interventions, it is interesting to note that they each had a different outcome: the behavioural belief intervention resulted in changed attitudes, but not intention or behaviour. The normative belief intervention saw an improved subjective norm and intention, but no change in behaviour. The control belief intervention affects neither PBC nor intention, but an effect on behaviour was demonstrated when recorded attendance at sports facilities was reviewed.

Critics have also questioned the TPB's exclusion of unconscious influences on behaviour and its failure to address the role of emotions beyond anticipated affective outcomes (Sheeran, Gollwitzer and Bargh, 2013; Conner, Gaston, Sheeran, and Germain, 2013). There is certainly a lack of focus on interpreting

the evidenced effects of behaviour on cognitions and future behaviour (McEachan *et al.*, 2011). Sniehotta, Priesseu, and Araújo-Soares (2014) suggest that the TPB does not establish or explain sufficiently variability in behaviour, focussing particularly on mediation assumptions. One example cited is from Sniehotta *et al.*, (2013) that found age, socio-economic status, physical health, mental health, and features of the environment predict objectively measured physical activity when TPB predictors are controlled for, and is certainly a consideration when developing the moderation variable for this study.

French and Hankins (2003) suggested alternative approaches to the TPB, and certainly 'Nudging' offers an innovative way of explaining behavioural choice. The concept was first introduced in work by Thaler and Sunstein (2003) and its premise suggests that individuals can be 'nudged' towards choices that are 'better for them'. Examples they cite include cafeterias that have healthy choices prominently positioned to encourage selection. This is an example of choice architecture, which Marteau, Ogilvie, Roland, Suhrcke, and Kelly (2011) suggest contributes to positively impacting on change by varying the salience, cost, and reinforcing behavioural choices. In an interesting study, Chatterjee and Barbhuiya (2021) combined TPB with nudging and choice architecture alongside consumers' willingness to pay a green tax as a theoretical framework through which to investigate pro-environmental behaviour of tourists in relation to the choice to purchase bottled water. Their comments on the framework suggested that each individual theory added to the interpretation of their findings: visual nudges do not necessarily encourage changed behaviour alone but introducing a

green tax assuaged guilt, and when social norms are activated by negatively framed environmental images public information may be more successful [at changing purchase behaviour].

This study recognises the limitations of the TPB model, but also recognises its considerable strength and acknowledges the volume of literature that has underpinned the research design and hypotheses on its premise. In order to balance and indeed strengthen the theoretical approach, and acknowledging other studies that extended the theoretical framework (e.g. Chatterjee and Barbhuiya, 2021), a second theory, the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) (Sheth *et al.* 1991; Tanrikulu, 2021), is selected to use as a lens through which to build the hypotheses and attempt to explain any findings.

### **3.2.2 Theory of Consumption Values**

Unlike the TPB, the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) is predominantly delivered from a values-based perspective (Sheth *et al.* 1991; Tanrikulu, 2021). As a theory it has offered utility to researchers when interpreting consumer behaviour including purchasing choice in both online and face-to-face purchase settings (Kotler, 2020). A central tenet of the theory is that humans have the proclivity towards perceived value when eliciting choice [of products]. This refers to how consumers deliberate and determine the costs and benefits of, say, a marketing offer or a brand of goods when there are competing products and offers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2021). In terms of the perceived value research agenda, there are two angles that researchers pursue: the unidimensional

approach of economic theory and utility, and TCV, a multidimensional approach, which recognises the complex nature of perceived value and therefore overcomes such complexity through the inclusion of hedonic aspects.

Theorists who regard perceived value through the lens of economic theory and utility suggest that choice behaviour is driven by utility maximisation, and they view perceived value as a “trade-off between benefit and sacrifice” (Hallem and Barth, 2011; Hyun and Fairhurst, 2018). Zeithaml (1988, p. 14), suggests perceived value “is the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given”. However, this simplifies the concept and does not offer a comprehensive explanation (Hallem and Barth, 2011).

Those who view perceived value using TCV suggest it has merit in explaining its structural nature through exploring utility not just by price and quality but also in the feelings aroused in the consumer when considering the product and alternatives (e.g. Sinha and Desarbo, 1998; Sweeney and Southar, 2001). Holbrook (2005) suggested a theoretical framework using self-oriented v other-oriented values and external v internal values. This was an extension from earlier work that incorporated values such as efficiency, esteem and aesthetics (Holbrook, 1999). Hyun and Fairhurst (2018) investigated consumer choice using TCV and found the model had particular utility when exploring ethnic culture associated with the product of choice; this becomes particularly important to the current study when investigating ethnocentricity as a variable.

As with TPB, TCV is a behaviourist theory which clarifies consumer motivation in their intention to purchase a product or service. Sheth *et al.* (1991) specify its practical utility is for individual, systemic and voluntary decision-making, making it particularly appropriate for this study. They posited three axiomatic propositions: consumer choice is a function of multiple consumption values, the consumption values make a differential contribution in any given choice situation, and the consumption values are independent. Moreover, as consumers attach different values to different products, this will influence purchase motivation (Ramkissoon, Nunkoo, and Gursoy., 2009). Kamakura and Novak (1992) point out that each consumer may attach many interpretations to one “value”; Sheth *et al.* (1991) suggest researchers utilising TCV consider ‘segmenting’ customers by value system to remove measurement errors. Sheth *et al.* (1991) also argue that consumer choice is influenced by functional, social, conditional, emotional and epistemic values. Tapachai and Waryszak, (2000), suggest each of these five consumption values are capable of influencing consumption choice and experience.

However, just as with TPB, the theory has its critics. For instance, Turel, Serenko, and Bontis (2010) found that its approach limits the exploration of consumer choice behaviour to the effect of value on consumer choice, yet they argue other factors are at play including intention, and loyalty. Their suggestion is to expand methods to include measures such as satisfaction (as seen in Rivera, Murphy, and Khalilzadeh 2018) and intention (as used by Kushwah, Dhir, and Sagar, 2019). Recent studies have attempted to overcome another potential

weakness in the model; Hyun and Fairhurst (2018) acknowledged that TCV identified perceived values related to consumer purchase but did not explain why such values were present. To address this, the authors looked at AttEC (Attitude Towards Ethnic Culture) when constructing their hypotheses; this is a consideration taken into section 3.4 of this thesis.

To illustrate the potential utility of TCV for this study, the following contextualisation is presented which sets this element of the chosen theoretical lens into the broad landscape of this study. As we saw in section 2.2.2, Vision 2030 is opening new opportunities for Saudi Citizens, and as a result of increased educational initiatives alongside the expected enhanced economic prospects, it is likely that the numbers of younger people travelling will increase. Cavagnaro, Staffieri, and Postma (2018) suggested that youth tourism is expected to account for a large percentage of all global tourism and travel demand, with the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies reporting that 25% of all travellers visiting Turkey were youths in 2015 (TURSAB, 2015). Caber, Albayrak, and Crawford (2020) found that exploring travel outcomes using perceived value offered great utility to the field. In particular, they specify that young travellers attach a higher level of importance to psychological values because epistemic and emotional factors influence their value perceptions. Likewise, as seen in detail in the following section, this study investigates the distinct concepts of consumer animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity and service performance. Caber, Albayrak, and Crawford (2020) specify how the travel experience of youth tourists meets their 'functional and epistemic/emotional values', it does not meet their

social value expectations. The authors attribute this to how young people are becoming more individualistic and independent than older members of the population, and this may well be a feature under the changing demographic landscape in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030. Therefore a more nuanced understanding of the concepts that are the founding blocks of the hypotheses may become more apparent using TCV when the demographics of the participants are correlated within age brackets in Chapters 4 and 5.

The following table compares the two theories:

Table 3.1 Theories Compared

CONSTRUCT	TPB	TCV
<b>Type</b>	Behaviouralist	Behaviouralist
<b>Main field of utility</b>	Health Business	Consumer Business Health
<b>Incorporates Cognitive and Psychodynamic?</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Central premise:</b>	Volitional human behaviour is a function of the intention to perform the behaviour and perceived behavioural control	Humans have the proclivity towards perceived value when eliciting choice Values-based perspective; multidimensional approach, recognises the complex nature of perceived value and overcomes complexity through the inclusion of hedonic aspects.
<b>Mediation hypotheses within the theory</b>	a) Perceived behavioural control (PBC) is partially mediated by intention while the effect of subjective norm and attitude on behaviour is fully mediated by intention b) behavioural, normative and control beliefs on intention and behaviour are hypothesised to be mediated through attitude, subjective norm and PBC c) TPB mediates all other biological, social, environmental, economic, medical and cultural influences.	(1) consumer choice is a function of multiple consumption values (2) the values make differential contributions in the choice situation (3) the values are independent of each other.
<b>Previous studies' methods (predominant)</b>	Correlation analysis	Survey research
<b>Criticisms</b>	Experimental (objective) designs = TPB was considerably less predictive of behaviour exclusion of unconscious influences on behaviour and its failure to address the role of emotions beyond anticipated affective outcomes lack of focus on interpreting the evidenced effects of behaviour on cognitions and future behaviour	Limited to investigating value and excludes loyalty and other factors  Identifies values but does not explain their origin / development in individual

### 3.2.3 Section Summary

This section has seen an explanation of the two underpinning theories used for this study, and has examined areas of strength of each in addition to acknowledging points of debate. Integrating TPB and TCV provides a comprehensive framework in this study for understanding consumer behaviour, offering a solid theoretical justification for the chosen variables. As seen in the narrative of sections 3.2 and 3.3, TPB elucidates how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control can shape consumer intentions. Recent applications of TPB in the airline industry have shown its effectiveness in predicting consumer behaviour in response to service quality and cultural factors (Thongkruer and Wanarat, 2023), making it particularly relevant for the context of this study. As an alternative, TCV highlights the multi-dimensional nature of consumer decision-making as influenced by personal values. A recent systemic review of research between 1991 and 2020 by Tanrikulu (2021) reinforced the relevance of TCV in understanding how consumers evaluate services based on functional, emotional, and social values, which are particularly pertinent in the context of airline services in Saudi Arabia, offering a justification for enhancing the theoretical framework with its inclusion.

This combination of theories supports the proposed hypotheses, establishing a clear rationale for the relationships investigated in the study. The integration of these frameworks allows for a nuanced understanding of how animosity, ethnocentrism, and religiosity interact to influence consumer attitudes towards airline services in the context of Vision 2030.

The following section forms a critical review of the literature where themes are explored in relation to previous studies on the subject. Studies examined are assessed to determine their support or otherwise for this study's premise and to determine any gaps within the field of existing study. Commentary is made on the contribution of theory to explain, where possible, existing findings, and to justify their selection for this study. At the end of each sub-section, a hypothesis is developed for testing which is underpinned by the study's theoretical framework. Of note, whilst planning and literature searching for this section, many studies were found about each individual construct (animosity, ethnocentricity, religiosity and service performance) but very few related to the airline sector or Saudi Arabia; this began to unmask the evidence of a gap to be filled by this study even before the review began. Where a study was retrieved of suitable quality and where the variable/s were appropriate for this research but the setting was different due to a gap in the field, it was critically reviewed to determine merit for the current research. For example, a study offering insight to consumer ethnocentricity in America provides this study with a frame of reference and point of comparison when using the CETSCALE in a Saudi setting. The search strategy and a summary of reviewed studies are presented in Table 3.2. which is in Appendix Five

### **3.3 Critical Review of the Literature:**

The following sections provide a discursive overview of the literature related to each individual variable under examination. Each section presents a broad discussion before critically examining key studies in depth, thereby outlining the apparent hegemony of the concepts thus providing the direction in which assumptions and expectations within the hypotheses are expected to travel. At all times the congruence of the study is maintained by providing a narrative that follows the theoretical framework, with links that are taken into the methodology chapter for debate and justification of the methodology selected.

#### **3.3.1 Consumer Animosity and Impact on Consumer Behaviour**

Consumer animosity is a construct which is well represented in previous studies (Antonetti, Manika, and Katsikeas, 2019; Abdul-Latif and Abdul-Talib, 2020), and has also been linked in some studies to ethnocentrism (e.g. Abdul-Latif and Abdul-Talib, 2020) and religiosity (e.g. Tao *et al.* 2022). Originally described as those remnants of antipathy or anger that individuals have that are often related to previous or ongoing political, military, economic, or diplomatic events and that in turn influence or affect in a negative way the purchasing patterns and behaviour of consumers (Klein *et al.*, 1998), it has evolved to include wider expressions such as boycotting (Cheah, Phau, Kea and Huang, 2016; Tao *et al.*, 2022). It has also been described as negative attitudes individuals tend to harbour when they encounter products and services associated with specific countries (Al-Medabesh and Ali, 2014; Saeb Farhan and Mohammad, 2018). For example, people from country A might portray animosity towards goods from country B. Such an outcome is

triggered by a wide range of concerns, including sociological (for example, the known use of child labour or sweatshops in the 'offending' country) and product-based such as poor production methods, and poor quality of goods and services. Consumer animosity has become an important subject of inquiry in recent years, particularly in the light of the expansion of digitisation, increasingly diverse customer base and increased global trade (Wan, Luk and Chow, 2014; Khemchotigoon and Kaenmanee 2015). Digitisation has meant that consumers 'talk to each other', hence formal reviews such as Trust Pilot and informal arenas such as social media can become an environment for fostering and normalising animosity (Legocki, Walker, and Kiesler, 2020).

Countries characterised by historical wrangles could become victims of increased animosity; this assertion is typified in a study by Manna'a and Rahmati (2021) who found consumers were keen to express negative behaviours towards imports or services from nations they perceive as rivals. This reality emerges when cross-national conflicts that fuel consumer animosity compel buyers to express hatred and eventually boycott goods from specific nations. Another study by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2004) found that citizens from industrialised nations were unwilling to purchase or acquire services from developing or underdeveloped countries. Their judgements were rooted in past negative experiences that led to the decision to ignore such goods or move to import their required ones in smaller quantities or from other suppliers. A different finding was seen by Al-Medabesh and Ali (2014), who revealed that consumers from developing nations often exhibit positive attitudes towards imports from developed nations. Consequently, they were prepared to purchase imported goods and

services from such countries since they would deliver the much-needed quality and meet their needs. Areiza-Padilla, (2021) suggested that due to the nature of animosity and its applicability, many capitalists and economists have in the past pursued their objectives depending on the how citizens of specific countries exhibit animosity. One possible outcome is that most corporations have decided to open franchises and subsidiaries in different countries in an effort to maximise organisational performance despite potential consumer animosity.

The concept of consumer animosity and how it is exhibited when nations have historical conflict or deeply-rooted difference in norms, mores and values becomes puzzling when they find ingenious ways to navigate their social, economic, and political differences. One example would be that of Starbucks, a US based corporation that perhaps signals Western values and ideology: in order to operate successfully in Saudi Arabia the company changed its branding by removing the mermaid from its logo to conform with Muslim values (Alammari *et al.*, 2018).

Importantly, consumer animosity can represent deeply-rooted beliefs handed down through generational history in response to internal and external conflict. An example often cited is the South Korean ban on 'Japanese Culture', imposed in 1945 as a protest to their colonisation of Korea. 1998 saw younger consumers turning to the Japanese Pop market when some of the legislation was lifted; Japanese artists recorded popular songs in Korean that appealed to younger audiences (Herskowitz,1998). It could be argued that targeting the younger audience was astute, as they were not directly

affected by the colonisation: unlike their parents, they had not had Japanese language forced upon them (Leong *et al.* 2008), hence there was less likelihood of agonistic or retreat emotions [which directly contribute to consumer animosity] in that generation (Harmeling, Magnusson and Nitish, 2015). The ban on Japanese products during the Second World War was later lifted in 2002 (Leong *et al.* 2008). This links closely to ethnocentrism; Kusumawardani and Yolanda (2021) found that animosity has a significant and positive influence on consumer ethnocentrism. They suggested that the more animosity a person has the more they exhibit consumer ethnocentrism.

Research concerning consumers' buying behaviours shows that consumers' avoidance of purchasing certain products and services grows in the presence of increasing animosity levels (Ali, 2021). According to Rose, Rose, and Shoham (2009), culture is a crucial factor that ties negative ethnicity antecedents, thereby resulting in animosity that causes consumers to avoid imports from nations that they perceive as current antagonists or have a history of antagonism. This was also found by Quang, Chien and Long, (2017); their study revealed that consumers with high expression of animosity avoid purchasing products from countries they hold negative opinions of. Likewise, Lee, Lee and Li (2017) found that where war has occurred, residual animosity remains within a population. This emotional attachment arouses economic tension including fear of business loss and unemployment, displayed amongst consumers as avoidance of products from the region of historical conflict. In a study related to how consumer animosity, ethnocentrism and national identity influence antecedents to and buying behaviour consequences, Jewish-Israeli consumers found animosity to be

strongly influenced by authoritarianism but less so than by empathy in their intention to purchase goods and services (Shoham and Gavish, 2016).

There are several explanations for consumer boycotting, and Klein, Smith and John (2004) provide four motivations that encourage consumer boycott including the need for self-enhancement, the need to feel that participating in boycotting will make a difference and that it will cost the produce enough to enforce change. Importantly, they found that boycotting is more likely to be triggered in response to perceived egregiousness on behalf of the service provider or manufacturer. Determining what could be considered egregiousness by consumers may be within the context of personal preferences, but turning to the current study, in the context of consumer animosity amongst cohorts of airline services users there are obvious examples such as the need for environmental control and climate justice (Gössling and Humpe, 2020).

In fact, the decision to purchase / not to purchase may also be a feature of consumer wellbeing, a concept that has until recently been variously defined in the literature (Zhao and Wei, 2019) but one that may be influenced by consumer animosity. Consumer wellbeing has been described as a hedonistic feature of satisfaction (in a consumption area) (Lee *et al.*, 2002), and this extends to emotions and mood around consumption [of services and goods] (Leong *et al.*, 2016). Waterman, Schwartz and Conti (2008) suggest consumer wellbeing also incorporates social and psychological wellbeing. Indeed, Makarem and Jae, (2016) suggest consumer boycotting of goods and services from a company or country they hold animosity for is protective of

consumer wellbeing. They further suggest that consumers can act to safeguard themselves from threats through expressing their animosity towards targeted imports or brands from a given nation through boycotts, and they can convey their animosity towards a given government or policies from a given nation by refusing to buy imports from that nation. This form of boycott represent anti-consumption actions aimed at impacting public awareness and enhancing awareness of the consumers' concerns to facilitate the implementation of corrective measures to strengthen the country's practices (Olbrich, Jansen, and Teller (2016); boycotting becomes an effective tool for change. Consumer boycotting can be explained using the Theory of Consumption Values by understanding how it relates to consumer wellbeing, particularly social and psychological wellbeing. As stated, Waterman, Schwartz, and Conti (2008) suggest that consumer wellbeing is in part explained by material satisfaction but also by social and psychological aspects. Proponents of TCV advocate exploring utility of a product not just by its price and quality but also in the feelings aroused in the consumer when considering the product, its attributes and its alternatives (Sweeney and Southar, 2001). However, if a product arouses feelings of hatred it disrupts a person's sense of well-being; cognitive dissonance is likely to result – "I enjoy Coffee Company A but they fund country X". Such dissonance is immensely discomforting (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2023) and the typical form of resolution is to either change one's thoughts (about the product) or change one's behaviour (boycott and use another coffee company) (Pöhls *et al.*, 2020; Özyörük, 2021).

Some of the rhetoric around animosity can be State-fuelled, with boycotting behaviours elicited as a direct result of media and political intervention. One particular example of this was seen in India recently, with HJS (Hindu Janajagruti Samiti) appealing to the government directly against what they perceive as Halal validation certification being imposed on the 85% majority of Hindus in the country (HJS, 2020). The call for Indian citizens to boycott Halal goods is clear: HJS has publicly demanded Halal certification must stop and warns citizens of a religion-based parallel economy in what is supposed to be secular India becoming a threat to national security.

Tao *et al.* (2022) investigated consumer animosity in the context of religiosity and ethnocentrism and how it influences the purchase (or non-purchase) of halal products. All three of the main variables are considered in the current study, thus the findings are relevant although the halal products are not a feature. One of the takeaway messages that is taken to the hypothesis is that religiosity alone has an insignificant relationship with unwillingness to buy (halal products) but that consumer animosity mediates a positive relationship between the two. This study uses a moderator variable (service performance) when investigating the relationships between the independent variables and attitude towards airline services and is therefore not directly comparable but it was anticipated that some effect would be seen.

Some studies have suggested there is a tendency for animosity to be related to consumer behaviours (such as buying) rather than value judgement (about products and services) (e.g. Westjohn, Magnusson, Peng and Jung, 2021). This is well explained by TPB which posits that an individual's attitude towards

the purchase (behaviour) involves a degree of behavioural control. Interestingly, Westjohn *et al.* (2021) also found cultural values were seen to partly moderate the relationship between animosity and willingness to buy, which again is considered a tenet within TPB as a person's norms, mores and values form part of service performance judgements within the context of intention [to purchase] (Sniehatta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014). Westjohn *et al.*'s (2021) findings have particular value for this study, in that when they found consumer animosity was more closely affiliated to purchasing behaviour (willingness to buy) than the value judgements consumers make about products and services, they also determined confounding elements in previous studies, such as in measures that included beliefs also capturing other negative emotions such as anxiety. They determined that anxiety itself might determine customer willingness to purchase in addition to / as opposed to consumer animosity; this consideration is taken to Chapter Three in terms of developing the instrument for this study, as their finding has both methodological and theoretical implications. Indeed, as this study will involve regression analysis, one methodological necessity is to counter endogeneity, as correlation does not necessarily mean causation: an unobserved event (such as a flight cancellation on the day a participant is surveyed that fuels anger) may be interpreted as animosity by the instrument when its rightful cause is not related to the overall survey (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).

Another consideration here is individualism, with some authors (e.g. Areiza-Padilla, 2021; Han, Wang, and Nam 2020) suggesting that consumer animosity varies according to product, service or brand to be consumed. They

found that there is less consumer animosity in respondents with individualistic values, suggesting in fact that it is individualism rather than the cultural values of the population that underpins purchase decisions. This may also be explained by TPB, as individualistic persons have a strong self-concept, thus see themselves as separate from their social group. As such, they are led by individualised norms, not as susceptible to outside pressure when expressing intent to purchase (Sniehoffa, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014).

A slightly alternative view was also seen in the literature, with authors such as De Nisco *et al.* (2016) in Germany finding that animosity positively correlates with consumer ethnocentrism, with consumers more likely to choose domestic services and products to boost their national industry where they held animosity towards another country. This finding was later expanded in a later study with De Nisco, Massi and Papadopoulos' (2020) finding that animosity greatly impacts on a consumer's acceptance of products from a country for which they have negative feelings even though the judgement of that service or product may be favourable; introducing an ethnocentric lens revealed no effect on product beliefs but a negative effect on product receptivity. This finding is of interest when developing the variables for this study. In particular, the authors combined three concepts (animosity, ethnocentrism and nationalism) into a single integrated model including a nationalism as a moderator variable, two of which are used in this research as independent variables (consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism). Methodologically, this study also developed a single integrated model including a moderator variable, thereby setting the evidence base for the study design. In addition, their theoretical frame included Realistic Group

Conflict Theory (RGCT); although not considered for this study, as its main focus is related to the creation of negative stereotypes between groups often competing for limited resources (Huang, Phau and Lin, 2010), the findings when viewed through such a frame are relevant to Saudi Arabia's expanding airline services sector. The timing of this current study is crucial and will give policy makers and airline services a point of reference, with new services becoming available this year and passengers vying for flights in a competitive market (see sections 2.2.2, 2.3 and 2.3.1).

Likewise, Hoang *et al.*, (2022) evidenced that consumer animosity influenced product judgement, while consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism together influenced willingness to buy. This again may be explained by TPB, which outlines how our beliefs and expectations guide our attitudes and purchasing decisions (Hagger *et al.*, 2022). Of note for this study is the lack of association between consumer animosity and willingness to buy without the element of consumer ethnocentrism.

As discussed earlier, another angle of debate seen in the literature regarding consumer animosity rests with boycotting. Ali (2021) investigated the relationship between consumer animosity and individuals' motivation, participation and judgement in relation to boycotting, and how they impact on consumers' intent to purchase or aversion to purchase. Results revealed high levels of consumer animosity towards a country where the regions under study faced established conflict; this transferred to low product judgement and strong motivation to boycott goods and services. The author described their results in terms of 'political consumerism' thus:

*Political consumerism does not represent a new type of activism. The recent social changes shifted the focus on political consumption toward daily life engagement, where individuals consider responsible consumption in their daily lives through collective participation in the boycott [...] Political consumerism is expected to result in a strong effect on consumer behaviour in communities that support the political boycott in association with social penalty. (Ali 2021, p. 518)*

Referencing Neilson (2010), the author described two major types of political consumerism: boycotting and buy-cotting. Buy-cotters prefer utilising rewarding approaches, targeting a more comprehensive range of imports to ensure that their effects are significant enough to cause the target nation to amend its practices favouring the consumers. Conversely, boycotting is seen among 'activist' - in the context of political consumerism, they try to gain media attention to jeopardise the target nations' reputation or paint a negative picture of the imports from a given foreign country or company, permitting the boycotter to disseminate their grievances and negative experiences about a specific country or firm. A theoretical explanation for these findings rests with the TPB premise, which centres around volitional human behaviour being a function of the intention to perform the behaviour and expressing perceived behavioural control (Sniehotta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014, p1). In the context of consumer spending, intention is part of an individual's attitude towards the purchase; where intention is to not purchase, as part of boycotting behaviour, (or to buy, as part of "buy-cotting behaviour") it involves both behavioural control and ones' norms, mores and values.

One aspect that may be relevant to this study rests in the potential for consumer animosity lowering desire and willingness to visit a country that a consumer holds animosity towards (De Nisco, Mainolfi, Marino and Napolitano, 2016). For example, as a tourist, travellers may use discernment and actively select alternate destinations if they perceive Saudi Arabia's position on equality or their involvement in conflict in Yemen or Palestine to be contrary to their own (Alvarez and Campo, 2020). The same applies in reverse; Saudi Citizens may prefer to 'holiday at home' than visit the US, thus effectively creating 'perceptual borders' which affect the consumer's touristic behaviour (Moufakkir, 2014).

These deliberations are taken to section 3.4 and form part of the rationale for the hypotheses.

### **3.3.2 Ethnocentrism and its effect on Consumer Behaviour**

Ethnocentrism is a concept that has captured attention of many psychologists, businesspeople, and organisational theorists in the past five decades. Defined as the evaluation or judgement of other cultures based on preconceptions that arise from within one's own culture and customs, its use infers the belief that one's own culture / race / beliefs are somehow superior (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Sharma, Shimp and Shin (1995) suggested that generally the term infers bias as it identifies consumers in one region or nation as members of an 'in-group' while viewing foreign services and goods as from an 'out-group'.

Consumer ethnocentrism emerged from the main ethnocentrism concept, which was first coined by William Graham (Karoui and Khemakhem, 2019).

The idea represents the overall tendency for people to perceive their group as the 'centre of the universe' and how they derive the meaning of other social units based on their group's perspective, thus rejecting individuals with different cultures while accepting those with similar cultures unconsciously (Karoui and Khemakhem, 2019). Sharma *et al.* (1995) were seen as the pioneers of employing the ethnocentrism concept in exploring marketing and consumer behaviours, which resulted in the term 'consumer ethnocentric tendencies'. These authors defined consumer ethnocentrism as the perception held by consumers regarding the appropriateness or ethical acceptability of services, foreign companies or indeed, airline companies. Shimp and Sharma (1987) add that ethnocentric consumers can actively avoid purchasing foreign-made goods and services because of issues such as the goods being detrimental to the country's economy and if consuming the imports can result in unemployment in the nation, either directly through the closure of local industries due to inability to compete with imports in the market, or indirectly. Alsughayir (2013) suggested that consumer ethnocentrism is a concept denoting the unique behaviours customers tend to exhibit when purchasing a wide range of services or goods. Specifically, potential consumers who display high levels of ethnocentrism will first examine where such items have originated before deciding to purchase them (Gösslinga and Humpe, 2020). Generally, the term infers biased in such a way that it identifies consumers in one region or nation as members of an 'in-group' while viewing foreign services and goods as from an 'out-group' (AbuAlhommos *et al.*, 2021): when the level of ethnocentrism is higher, most

of the people would be convinced that local products and services are worth purchasing due to their uniqueness and superiority.

Al-Medabesh and Ali (2014) take the concept of ethnocentrism further in an attempt to understand why some populations view the act of buying goods from other countries as 'immoral and unpatriotic'. They found that when consumers remain ethnocentric, they view their cultural attributes and products as superior, and some might identify their groups and races as superior to their counterparts. Such a notion can have significant implications in the manner in which different community members relate to each other (Gösslinga and Humpe, 2020). Indeed, in regions characterised by high levels of ethnocentrism, it is suggested that the majority of residents will find it hard to appreciate foreign services; instead, they tend to consider the best approaches to identify, promote, and even use the ones available in their countries, and in the process use tactics such as country of origin labels to stir patriotism and animosity (Heiman and Just, 2019). This becomes particularly relevant to this study, with five overseas airlines already operating from bases in Saudi Arabia and airlines from other regions now able to compete for new licenses to fly from Saudi Arabia (Harper, 2022).

Ten years ago, Alsughayir (2013) used the same notion to describe how using ethnocentrism as a strategy remains necessary, since it guides countries to protect domestic jobs and products. Consumers have been seen to support locally-owned services as part of national pride or helping the local economy (Ramadania *et al.*, 2023; Omar *et al.*, 2023), and Joakim and Felix (2023) found individuals choosing their flag carrier owned by their state because of

its national significance. This concept, therefore, continues to feature in many studies focusing on consumer behaviours and purchasing patterns. In the airline industry, a sense of passenger ethnocentrism has been recorded in different countries whereby individuals prefer their national flag carriers. Such people make informed choices in an effort to support their domestic economies and make their corporations more competitive at the global arena (Esmail, 2018), thus making the concept relevant to this study.

From this analysis, it is notable that consumer ethnocentrism refers to buyers' favourable evaluation of local-made products compared with other nations' exports (Karoui and Khemakhem, 2019). Of note, when customers make the type of positive emotional attachment seen in ethnocentrism toward products from their local community, it can significantly increase the competitive power of locally produced services and goods (Kilders, Caputo and Liverpool-Tasie, 2020). This ultimately improves revenue from the products (Van Loo, Grebitus and Roosen, 2019) thereby generating profit. However, the literature review unveiled a disparity in the ways consumers from different countries evaluate their own and others' products and services. Specifically, Karoui and Khemakhem, (2019), found consumers from industrialised nations showed a positive assessment of products from their home nations and negatively evaluated products from other nations. As a result, they tend to buy commodities from their countries and reject those from other nations, especially developing nations. The preferential evaluation of the local items by industrialised nations' consumers is based in loyalty for their nations and a belief that products from developed countries are of superior value (Sharma *et al.*, 1995; Karoui and Khemakhem, (2019). Conversely, early studies on

consumer ethnocentrism in developing nations (Kamaruddin, Mokhlis and Othman, 2002; Wang and Chen, 2004) unveiled a contradictory outcome whereby buyers in the developing countries prefer imports to locally-made items, thereby demonstrating lower levels of ethnocentrism. Also, Becic (2017) urges caution in deeming all residents and regions within a country will hold the same ethnocentric principles and beliefs; he reports that ethnocentrism levels vary in different localities within a country and from one person to another.

Interestingly, Klein *et al.* (1998) suggest that the perception and values surrounding country of origin become a vital indicator of the product's quality. As a result, consumers in industrialised nations rank domestically manufactured products higher in quality than foreign-made products; conversely, consumers in developing nations perceive foreign goods as being of higher quality than domestically-made ones (Wang and Chen, 2004), rather than demonstrating the same level of ethnocentrism. The authors' findings concur with other studies (e.g. Wu, Zhu, and Dai, 2010), and add that consumers' evaluation of the products' quality affects their buying decisions. As a result, how ethnocentrism impacts purchasing home-manufactured or imports would thus be different in industrialised versus developing nations. Wang and Chen (2004) further postulate that the 'consumer ethnocentrism effect gap' is more pronounced due to the developing nations' consumers regarding consumption of foreign-based services as a symbol of escalation in their social status, thus increasing the conspicuous consumption of imports.

There have been several studies in recent years that have investigated the concept of ethnocentrism within the context of consumer behaviour and that have delivered at times differing findings. For instance, in a study investigating airline services, Ragab, Polo-Peña, and Mahrous (2023) found that ethnocentric tendencies influenced consumer perceptions of services in terms of quality, perceived value and loyalty. Such tendencies were found to be more prominent with regards to national carriers compared to overseas operators. Also, de Jong, Behrens, van Herk, and Verhoef, (2022) used an ethnocentric lens to investigate the phenomenon of 'code sharing' within airline services, demonstrating that consumer valuation of other countries' airline operators greatly improved when they were informed that the flight was code-shared with their home country. Their interpretation was that the improved valuation of a foreign air carrier when customers perceived they were somehow partnered with their own domestic air service was not attributable to incentivisation (e.g. frequent flyer discount) or even being ignorant of the meaning of the nature of code sharing. They found consumers consider code sharing by domestic carriers as a mark of quality on the overseas company, increasing their willingness to pay especially in risk averse customers. A limitation of that study rests with the theoretical model used based on random utility theory [RUM], (McFadden, 1973). Congruent with their chosen theory, the authors attributed their findings to stochastic [random] components and did not consider quality or value judgements from their respondents. RUM has been widely used in travel behaviour prediction studies but other approaches such as machine learning are emerging as an alternative (García-García *et al.* 2022). RUM posits that there are simple

explanations for consumer choice behaviour, often random, and the model is suited to positivist, statistical methods of analysis (*ibid.*). Whereas de Jong, Behrens, van Herk, and Verhoef, (2022, p2) discuss “consumer valuation” and “subjective perception” of their participants’ views of alien airlines that codeshare with domestic airlines, their instrument did not present value-based statements. Instead it presented scenarios and asked for stated preference; the tool then determined passengers’ risk attitudes and misconceptions with objective questions that were then measured statistically, in keeping with the Random Utility Model. In turning to the theoretical lens underpinning the current study, both TPB and TCV may offer a different rationale for consumer choice, relying less on random utility and elucidating a more nuanced picture as they may capture, from a behaviouralist perspective, either data surrounding intention to perform behaviour [TPB] or hedonistic aspects [TCV].

Findings from another recent study found consumer ethnocentrism influences consumers’ attitudes towards goods and their intention to purchase; even those respondents who scored highly as ‘ethnocentric’ demonstrated willingness to buy imported goods from the higher-ranking countries than domestic products (Karoui and Khemakhem, 2019). An explanation for this tendency may rest with the TCV model, as the findings [willingness to buy products from other countries even though scoring highly for ethnocentrism and/or risk-aversion] may be an example of feelings being aroused in the consumer when considering the product and alternatives based on preconceptions of other cultures (Sinha and Desarbo, 1998; Sweeney and Southar, 2001). This can be seen at both the affective and the cognitive

elements of attitudes, as well as fixed, stereotypical beliefs (Baron, Branscombe and Byrne, 2009).

Interestingly, Abdul-Latif and Abdul-Talib (2020) investigated consumer ethnocentricity and animosity and their impact on consumer intent to purchase goods and services from a community considered inferior. Findings suggested that ethnocentric consumers agreed that purchasing their own community's goods and services was preferable but the authors found this does not translate into purchasing behaviour, even where negative consumer service performance was perceived. It is challenging to see this finding in isolation, as the study also presented some discussion from a religiosity perspective; this tangled web of concepts gives further weight to the current study's justification, as clarity around all three may provide much needed evidence to the growing body of literature on consumer preference and how it is exercised. When looking to understand these findings through a theoretical lens, the TCV may offer some insight. Hyun and Fairhurst (2018) identified that perceived emotional, social and epistemic values positively influence consumers' intention to purchase ethnic goods, in keeping with TCV. Although the setting for these studies differed in context, there was parity in looking towards one cultural group (majority group) purchasing from another (minority group) and the inherent perceived values about their own group.

We saw in the previous section the findings of Hoang *et al.*, (2022), who evidenced the lack of association between consumer ethnocentrism and product judgement. Other findings in Hoang *et al.* (2022) bear direct relevance to this study despite the research not being based in Airline Services. They

determined that there was minimal impact of consumer ethnocentrism on consumers' judgment of foreign products despite finding consumer animosity led to a negative judgement of overseas' products. This translated into willingness to buy: both ethnocentrism and animosity reduced the likelihood of consumers buying overseas' products and services. However, consumers with a more cosmopolitanism mindset had a more positive evaluation of overseas products. Given the socio-economic changes within Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030 (Vision 2030, 2017; 2022) this may prove significant. Also, early research by Isa, bin Saud and Ismail (2016) reminds us that even when ethnocentric consumers are buying local products and services, that cannot be attributed to ethnocentrism alone, as they demonstrated that service performance, service quality and self-congruity in particular also influence consumer behaviour and may explain purchase decisions.

The current study is specifically investigating the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and the attitudes of Saudi passengers towards airline services; of note, this study is exploring the moderator role of service performance, and as is outlined in section 4.6, the measures include elements of consumer judgement about the services under investigation. If this is extrapolated to the service performance arena, it is of note that, as with Hoang *et al* (2022), the survey instrument will not ask participants to make responses about individual, named airline services. It uses 'Saudi- based' instead, thereby adding to the comprehensive evidence base for the data collection.

Two other studies that examined ethnocentricity in an airline services setting have perspectives to offer the current study. Stamolampros, Dousios, and Korfiatis, (2020) examined over 380,000 Trip Advisor reviews of flights covering a period of three years and determined a strongly positive correlation between customer satisfaction in passengers flying with airlines from their own country compared to foreign airlines. With a methodology based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010), their findings suggest a strong ethnocentric bias exists in passengers which reflects cultural orientation, a heterogeneity of beliefs amongst customers around perceived service performance that was oriented around cultural similarities identified in domestic airline service providers compared to their own. As TPB mediates influences such as cultural (Sutton, 2002), this is an avenue for exploration via the hypotheses. In specific terms, Stamolampros, Dousios, and Korfiatis' (2020) findings suggested that domestic passengers generally rated their airlines more positively than international passengers, particularly in aspects involving service interaction such as customer service. They suggested the influence of ethnocentrism on ratings depended on the specific aspect being evaluated, with mixed effects for standardised services with less or no human interaction. They also found passengers' country of origin and the airline's cultural traits played a role in passenger ratings, with cultural dimensions moderating the tendency of local passengers to rate their airlines higher than international passengers. The specific effects of cultural dimensions on ethnocentrism varied, with power distance and collectivism having moderating effects. Passengers from the majority of countries tended to be more positive towards airlines from their own country, which has direct

implications for the current study. Customer service had the strongest correlation with the overall rating for both domestic and international passengers. Non-country-adjusted descriptive statistics revealed differences between domestic and foreign passengers, with domestic passengers being more favourable toward their airlines. Ethnocentrism influenced consumer beliefs regarding the perceived quality of domestic and foreign products; cultural orientation and individual characteristics (such as collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, long-term orientation, and indulgence) influenced passengers' bias toward domestic or foreign carriers. However, the specific effects of ethnocentrism varied depending on the aspect being evaluated and the cultural dimensions involved. One interesting facet of their methodology included controlling for passenger type (Stamolampros, Dousios, and Korfiatis, 2020, page 5). Their premise rests in business passengers being more experienced fliers and therefore having a more substantial 'previous experience' frame of reference on which to base their evaluations of airline services. Their recommendation for other researchers is to use a validated tool to further explore this concept, with particular reference to CET-scale Shimp and Sharma (1987); this finding and suggestion is taken forward to the research strategy in Section 4.5.

Somewhat uniquely, in a related study, Stamolampros, Dousios, Korfiatis and Symitsi (2020) again used data from Tripadvisor flight evaluations but the focus was on measuring the cultural values implicit within the airline service providers, once more using Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010). Their study posits that both service provider (airline services) cultural effects as well as the passengers' impact on

consumer satisfaction and ultimately their willingness to purchase further from the airline company. By addressing this bilateral effect, the authors aimed to address previous inconsistencies seen in the field; though not related to the variables in this study, their findings become one of several points of reference for Chapter 5 of this thesis. Certainly new and expanding airlines within Saudi Arabia are wise to be aware of market segmentation in this context (Avram, 2019, and recommendations from this study will be seen to give reference to the cultural congruence inherent within positive Trip advisor reviews, which may well signal a nod to ethnocentrism.

Another study examining ethnocentrism relating to airline services' use (Suham-Abid and Vila-Lopez, 2020) compared perceptions of Iraqi and German airline passengers, where Iraq is seen as a high-context country with collectivist behaviour that holds firm and obvious cultural norms, whereas Germany is considered individualist and low context by comparison. In terms of ethnocentrism, Suham-Abid and Vila-Lopez (2020) formalised their theoretical basis on the understanding that the relationship between ethnocentrism and perception of service quality is that ethnocentrism can influence how individuals perceive and evaluate service quality. Their findings suggested that ethnocentrism leads to a bias in evaluating products or services from different cultures, causing individuals to have more positive perceptions of their own country's companies compared to foreign companies. They suggest this bias was evident in the context of airline service quality, where individuals tended to assign higher scores and evaluations to domestic airlines. This suggested that cultural biases and preferences can shape how customers evaluate and perceive the quality of services provided by different

companies or airlines. Their findings supported Stamolampros, Dousios, and Korfiatis, (2020). This again has direct relevance to the current study, as Saudi Arabia can be categorised as high-context with similar characteristics to Iraq, a similar political history and especially as the majority of the population are Muslim (see figure 2.2.). Of note, in finding the ethnocentric influence removes the cultural effect, Suham-Abid and Vila-Lopez, (2020), suggest that the passengers' culture is more likely to determine a rating of an airline than country of its origin. This at first seems perplexing, however their instruments measured an element of visual cues, which demonstrated that German passengers (low-context country) scored higher for 'logo' and visual cues than those from Iraq (high-context country). Their rationale and recommendations were that because consumers from an HCC respond better to clearer signalling that prevents cultural misunderstanding, branding (including logo) should be implicit and should avoid religious and political inference.

The nuances underpinning both of these studies' findings stem from the culture of the passenger rather than the country of origin (COO). However, Sevanandee and Damar-Ladkoo (2018) demonstrated some impact of COO on consumer intent to purchase, but brand type was a more significant influence, suggesting ethnocentrism is not a major feature. The studies are not directly comparable as the latter featured goods whereas the former featured services; however, the differing findings merit further inquiry.

In another study, Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, and Pratama, (2020), investigated consumer ethnocentrism as it affected willingness to buy in a survey conducted in Indonesia. Their results indicated that consumer ethnocentrism

has a negative and significant relationship with willingness to buy, supporting the findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Guo and Zhou (2017) Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, and Pratama, (2020)'s study premise was that consumer ethnocentrism is the tendency of consumers to differentiate between products from their own country and products from foreign countries, and to favour domestic products over foreign ones due to patriotism and nationalism. They suggest ethnocentric consumers view purchasing imported products as non-patriotic and a threat to national interests, and they tend to overestimate the quality of local products which may lead to boycotting foreign products and services Their finding has implications for entering the market with multiple ethnic groups, which will be a consideration for Saudi Arabia in the light of competitive tendering for services and airline services' expansion post-Vision 2030 (Vision 2030, 2017; PIF, 2022). They suggest that "ethno-marketing" or "multi-local marketing" strategies may be helpful for gaining new consumers without losing the existing consumers due to their ethnocentric bias (Pentz, Terblanche, and Boshoff, 2017).

These findings of Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, and Pratama (2020) can be interpreted using the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV). The Theory of Consumption Values posits that consumer choice is driven by five primary types of values: functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value, and conditional value (Sheth *et al* (1991). These values can explain consumer behaviour and decision-making processes, and are seen in Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, and Pratama's (2020) study. Functional value refers to the utility derived from the actual performance of the product. They found that consumer ethnocentrism negatively impacts willingness to buy foreign

products, which can be attributed to the functional value that ethnocentric consumers place on domestic products. Social value involves the perceived utility of a product based on its ability to enhance social self-concept; ethnocentric consumers view purchasing domestic products as a way to express patriotism and loyalty to their country. The study indicates that ethnocentric consumers see buying imported goods as unpatriotic and detrimental to national interests, aligning with the social value dimension of TCV. Emotional value relates to the feelings or affective states a product generates. Ethnocentric consumers may experience a sense of pride, security, and satisfaction from buying local products. Conversely, purchasing foreign products might evoke negative emotions such as guilt or anxiety about betraying their country's interests. The negative relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and willingness to buy foreign products observed in the study can be explained by the emotional value that ethnocentric consumers derive from supporting local products and avoiding imported ones. Epistemic value pertains to the novelty and knowledge-seeking aspects of consumption. For ethnocentric consumers, the epistemic value of local products can come from a sense of familiarity and trust in domestic brands. The study's implication that ethnocentric consumers overestimate the quality of local products and boycott foreign ones suggests that these consumers place a higher epistemic value on what they know and trust. Conditional value arises in specific situations or contexts that make a product particularly valuable. In the context of consumer ethnocentrism, certain conditions, such as national economic policies or marketing campaigns that emphasise patriotism, can enhance the perceived value of local products. Danilwan,

Dirhamsyah, and Pratama (2020) imply that marketing strategies, like “ethno-marketing” or “multi-local marketing,” could leverage these conditions to appeal to ethnocentric consumers, thus highlighting the benefits of supporting local industries, further enhancing the conditional value of domestic products.

Another study that investigated the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase decisions was conducted by Harcar and Karadag, (2022). It was deemed of relevance to this study because their research was conducted within the airline services sector, however, it represented a small dataset in one geographical area of the US. Nevertheless, the study assumptions and findings provide a point of comparison. The study found that the national loyalty status of air travellers affects their purchasing behaviours. Prospective travellers with a strong sense of national loyalty tend to prefer national airlines over foreign airline service providers, a preference driven by the belief that supporting national airlines contributes to the well-being of the national economy. The study also found that prospective travellers have a tendency to over-rate the service quality and merit of national airlines compared to foreign airline services; this bias towards national airlines can influence their purchasing decisions and lead them to choose national airlines over foreign airlines. In addition, the study found that prospective travellers have concerns about foreign airline service providers, finding prospective travellers worry that choosing foreign airlines may damage the national airline companies and have a negative impact on the national economy. The findings of this research suggested that foreign airline companies should work on convincing international travellers that preferring their services over other airlines would not result in a disadvantage for national airlines or deteriorate economic

conditions in their home countries. Foreign airlines need to address the concerns and biases of prospective travellers to attract them as customers. It is important to note that these findings are specific to the case of American travellers and may not be applicable to travellers from other countries. Additionally, the study findings were based on data collected from only 136 people residing and employed in three districts of Pennsylvania, so the generalisability of the findings may be limited.

More recently, one study that has some relevance to this research was conducted on post-pandemic tourism (Gyimóthy, Braun, and Zenker, 2022). Conducted in three European countries, the study utilised survey methodology and explored consumer attitudes towards domestic and foreign travel in the wake of considerable anxiety related to the COVID-19 virus. Their results strongly suggested that COVID-19 anxiety does translate into ethnocentrism. The study suggests that pandemic-induced “assortative sociality”, which includes ethnocentrism, is a response to cues about the virus (such as news about it, increase in cases etc.). The study also found that pandemic anxiety triggers behavioural responses and ethnocentric tendencies, such as a preference for domestic travel and support for the tourism industry within one's own country. Overall, the evidence suggests that individuals who experience higher levels of anxiety related to COVID-19 are more likely to exhibit ethnocentric attitudes and xenophobic tendencies. This bears relevance for this current study on a number of fronts, as the timing of data collection was still in the post-COVID recovery era.

A more recent study suggested that ethnocentric consumers were more likely to choose domestic airlines over international competitors because they have a strong positive perceptions of their own country's brands and 'exaggerate' the service qualities of domestic services (Omar *et al*, 2025). However, the researchers examined ethnocentrism as a moderating variable between service failure and service recovery strategies, and found it did not moderate that relationship (*ibid.*). This lends support to the study aims here of examining ethnocentrism as an independent variable, as ethnocentrism may have a direct effect as hypothesised in section 3.4 rather than influencing the relationship between other variables of interest.

Again, these considerations are taken to section 3.4 and form part of the rationale for the hypotheses.

### **3.3.3 Religiosity and its Effect on Consumer Behaviour**

Human beings have for millennia congregated and associated with certain spiritual and religious beliefs while ignoring or refuting others. This practice has resulted in the establishment of various doctrines and formal religions that dictate the manner in which individuals practice their faith.

Some studies have gone further to examine and describe how religion influences consumer tendencies, and in the field of marketing, experts have realised that religious affiliations tend to affect both consumer tendencies and decision-making processes. In one study, Mansori (2012, p301) noted that the concept of religiosity was diverse and focused on people's intellectual, creedal, ritualistic, and cultural tendencies. He suggests religiosity influences a person's worldview and can therefore influence their behaviour and choices.

For example, Mathras *et al.* (2016) studied the nature of halal products and demonstrated that some Christians in different parts of the globe were keen to avoid imported products that had been halal certified. This evidence supports the idea that individuals would usually tend to boycott or ignore services and products that could be associated with persons with diverse religious beliefs. Another example of religiosity in the field of business is whereby countries in the Islam world have over the years refused to associate themselves with services deemed to have originated from the country of Israel. According to authors such as Abdul-Talib and Mohd Adnan, (2017) and Abdalrahman (2019), this has been triggered by the longstanding enmity between Israel and Palestine and the forceful occupation of different regions, including the Gaza Strip; this also begins to show the considerable overlap between the distinct concepts in this study: ethnocentrism, animosity and religiosity. Another study that demonstrated this overlap was conducted by Kusumwaradani and Yolanda (2021). Their findings revealed that religiosity had a significant and positive relationship with consumer ethnocentrism. One interpretation of this relationship is that the more religiosity a person experiences, the more prominent their expression of consumer ethnocentrism will be. The authors also suggest that if a person is more religious, then their consciousness to buy or use products and services that do not break their religion's law will be higher. This finding may be particularly appropriate for Saudi Arabia, given the strict Sharia law detailed in earlier sections.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the earlier studies around religiosity in consumers have revealed it to be a nuanced concept. For instance, Essoo and Dibb (2004) revealed that religiosity was a powerful attribute that

influenced several personal traits and personal characteristics, including ethical beliefs and materialism. They suggest individuals exhibiting high religiosity would make certain decisions based on their religious beliefs and expectations for their current and after-lives (*ibid.*).

An interesting element of the study by Essoo and Dibb (2004) lay in the fact that it involved Mauritian consumers from diverse religious groups, including Catholics, Hindus, and Muslims. Their findings revealed that staunch Hindu followers' shopping behaviours were distinct from those of casual affiliates to the faith, yet there were no differences in consumer behaviours among the Muslim devotees and the 'casual' members of Islam. Regarding the Catholic religion, there was a significant disparity between the devout Catholic shoppers' buying actions and those of the 'casual' Catholics. These findings illustrate an association between religiosity and consumption behaviours of shoppers from different nations and faiths and also with different levels of religious affiliation and practice.

Similarly, Mathras *et al.* (2016) observed that cases of risk aversion and intolerance among consumers regarding the acceptance of various services had been reported in different parts of the world. These observations show conclusively that religion affiliation and belief systems have the potential to dictate the manner in which customers shop, pursue their consumption demands, and relate to certain products.

Researchers over the years have observed that religiosity remains a central facet of customers' life value even when established during the early years of their lives, forming the basis for their consumption decisions, exclusions, and

even prescriptions (Mathras *et al.*, 2016). This observation implied that religion was a leading force that established consumers' shopping behaviours and patterns based on their previous teachings. Furthermore, Mansori (2012) observed that religiosity was a powerful attribute that formed a basic component of a buyer's cognitive sphere. From this understanding, it becomes possible to appreciate how religious people tend to translate their inherent faith beliefs and apply emerging views into their final behavioural actions (*ibid.*). When extrapolated to the arena of this study, such attributes would also dictate their willingness and desire to identify and acquire services associated with companies from specific countries in the wider Middle East.

One of the earlier studies around consumer religiosity has some relevance to the current study as it explores different measures of religiosity. McDaniel and Burnett (1990) explored the connection between buyer religiosity and retail store patronage. The researchers discovered that different dimensions of religiosity had the potential to determine the consumers' perception of their patronage of multiple stores. In particular, they found religious commitment influenced consumers' evaluation of retail experiences when compared to religious affiliation. Moreover, Vitell and Paolillo (2003) conducted a study on consumer ethics to determine religiosity's role in consumers' idealism and relativism. At the end of their investigation, the authors realised that religiosity affects consumers' idealism and relativism which are fundamental determinants of consumers' moral beliefs. And since ethical beliefs directly impact consumers' purchasing decisions (Usunier, 2006), religiosity indirectly affects consumers' buying choices. Their mixed results also indicated that there was a need for marketers to consider some of these forces in an effort

to make timely decisions and be in a position to achieve their objectives in terms of attracting religious customers: the relevance of this to the current study is clear, given the increase expected (and already seen) in flights to and from Saudi, a highly religious country. Auf, Salleh, and Yusoff (2016) suggest that some consumers tend to assimilate their religion into their routine daily, actions. As a result, their religious principles form the basis of their daily behaviours and attitudes since they are inherently inclined to comply with their religious laws and guidance.

While the concept of religiosity remains dynamic and receives divergent interpretations, scholars have presented powerful insights to link the same to consumer tendencies. For example, Mathras *et al.* (2016) developed a conceptual framework to explore the impact of religiosity on consumer behaviour using four constructs: beliefs, rituals, values and community. They provided convincing evidence from existing literature that religiosity can both disrupt and enhance consumer behaviour: people would avoid specific products and services simply because of their religious beliefs and practices, and likewise they will choose others for the same reason. Although limited by its exclusion of confounding variables, such as the potential influence of cultural (non-religious) norms, the findings are more in keeping with a TPB explanation than TCV. It would seem that avoiding or choosing products due to beliefs is a direct example of consumer intention [to purchase] being fundamentally founded on a person's norms, mores and values (Sniehotta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014, p1). A recent study by Alsaad, Elrehail and Saif-Alyoufis (2022) is of particular interest to this current research as it was also conducted in Saudi Arabia. The authors investigated the interaction

between religiosity, moral certainty and moral intensity in consumer intention to purchase ethical goods, finding that religiosity influenced consumer intention to purchase ethical goods/services independently of moral intensity and moral certainty. Their theoretical lens was focused on cognitive mechanisms used in the interactions between the constructs; the TCV explanation of their finding may sit with the consumer ethnic culture being associated with product choice (Hyun and Fairhurst, 2018).

Some studies have suggested different outcomes for followers of different faiths in the same setting. For instance, an earlier study by Mansori (2012) found a significantly negative relationship between religiosity and innovativeness [in using new goods and services], simultaneously finding that Christian followers are more likely to try new goods and services than Buddhists. In making the claim that religiosity negatively influences consumers' use and choice of new products, there is merit in exploring this arena using TCV. Esmail (2018) posits that a person is more willing to use a service when their beliefs [about a product or service] increase positively; the current study may go some way in unpicking the link between religiosity and attitudes [beliefs] towards the use of airline services by using a robust theoretical lens.

One particular aspect of religiosity has emerged as a factor in purchase intention illustrated by Çavuşoğlu *et al.* (2021) in a recent study. The construct of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and their influence on patterns of consumer behaviour were differentiated by suggesting that extrinsic religiosity is about 'using' a religion whereas intrinsic religiosity is about 'living it'. Findings

suggested that intrinsic religiosity negatively affects consumers' attitudes to the need for buying expensive, branded items (value-expressive and social-adjusted attitude) yet extrinsic religiosity positively affects consumers' attitudes to the need for buying expensive, branded items. Their findings suggest that extrinsically religious buyers opt for services that fulfil their needs not only in terms of product value but also that openly reflect their social attitude and roles. Conversely, intrinsically religious buyers prioritise retaining their intrinsic spiritual integrity before making any choice of services and goods. Holbrook's (2005) interpretation of TCV posits a framework drawing from self-oriented v other-oriented values and external v internal values, which appears to mirror the intrinsic/extrinsic expression of religiosity. The study offers relevance for this current study, as it focused on the dominant religions in Saudi Arabia; in addition, this study follows one of their recommendations for further study in investigating the concept towards other purchasing intention (airline services as opposed to branded goods) (Çavuşoğlu *et al.*, 2021). Interestingly, a study by Nassè (2021) found personality/demographic factors within a multifaith geography a key consideration when investigating extrinsic religiosity and its influence on Muslim consumer purchasing behaviour. Furthermore, Abdullah, Abdullah, and Bujang (2022) identified five core aspects that contribute to Muslim consumers' religiosity and suggested that the socio-environmental aspect was previously under-represented in the literature yet was shown to have significance in the post-COVID economic recovery era.

Minton and Geiger-Oneto (2020) investigated how religiosity influenced consumers' views and behaviours when considering disposal of goods in

environmentally sensitive ways. Their findings demonstrated that extrinsically religious consumers are more likely to dispose of luxury goods after use than re-cycle or donate, which was seen with intrinsically religious consumers. If this is viewed as a strand of sustainability, the findings may hold relevance when it comes to consumers' attitude towards airline services, as airlines are under pressure from stakeholders to reduce emissions (Sher *et al.* 2021). Sarfraz and Kurshid Mian (2022) investigated religiosity as a mediatory role in consumers' decision to adopt takaful products and services, a concept bound in Sharia law. Findings revealed that although religiosity mediates the adoption of takaful, traditional values have a negative effect on the process. These finding may also have value for the current study, which is set in a country steeped in both traditional values and Sharia law.

Section 3.4 presents the development of the hypotheses, and this debate is used when presenting Hypothesis 3.

### **3.3.4 Service Performance and Consumer Attitude towards Airline Services**

At this juncture, it can be seen from studies reviewed that consumer animosity, consumer ethnocentrism and consumer religiosity have been seen to impact on consumer purchasing behaviour in varying ways. Whereas consumer animosity has led to boycotting of products (e.g. Ali, 2021; Tao *et al.*, 2022; Cheah, Phau, Kea and Huang, 2016), less consumer animosity has been found in respondents with individualistic values (Han Wang, and Nam 2020; Areiza-Padilla, 2021). Consumer animosity has been investigated as mediatory variable, e.g. by Tao *et al.* who found consumer religiosity,

patriotism and ethnocentrism compounded consumer animosity, and as an independent variable, e.g. Hoang *et al.*, (2022) who found consumer animosity influenced both willingness to buy and product judgement.

Taking this exploration into the arena of consumers' attitudes towards airline services — which ultimately impacts on their decision to purchase airline services — revealed few previous studies. The majority of previous research retrieved focused on quality management and service user engagement; whilst including service performance in some studies none explicitly investigated it in conjunction with the three independent variables of this study in an airline services setting. This study is specifically examining the concept of service performance, from the perspective of the attitudes consumers have and therefore the judgements and opinions that consumers make about airline services, as it moderates the choices that consumers eventually make with regards to airline services. Agag *et al.*, (2023) suggested that estimating consumer satisfaction by way of using performance metric scores is crucial for firms when looking to market their services and goods. Service performance directly impacts customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are more likely to perceive greater value in the service they receive. Positive experiences with service delivery enhance satisfaction levels, leading to a stronger intention to continue using the service in the future. Siering, Deokar and Janze (2017) state the importance of firms acknowledging and understanding consumer feedback — be it positive or negative — in order to engage prospective customers with their particular brand or service; a clear concern for end-users of this research, given the increase in airline services planned within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (see Sections 2.3 and 2.3.1).

A study conducted by Brush (2019) is of particular relevance to this research, as it compared service performance measures between Western and Asian travellers in the context of the airline industry. The study developed an industry-specific service performance instrument for the international airline industry that is invariant across Western and Asian settings. They found similarities and differences in service performance evaluation and behaviour across cultures, suggesting relevance when considering international travel in the context of new routes opening in Saudi Arabia. They found invariant service performance measures are important for effectively evaluating cross-cultural differences. These are measures or metrics that remain consistent and valid across different cultural or national groups (Morales and Ladhari, 2011) In the context of this study, it refers to the dimensions or factors that consistently contribute to the evaluation of service quality in the international airline industry. These measures are stable, reliable, and applicable in cross-cultural research, allowing for meaningful comparisons and analysis of service performance across different cultural groups (*ibid.*; Brush, 2019).

Service strategy differentiation is important for diverse cultural groups in travel settings because there are differences in how consumers interpret and respond to service performance measures (Voss, Parasuraman and Grewal., 1998). Brush (2019) identified six dimensions of service performance in the airline industry: timeliness, personal interaction, convenience, comfort, meals, and safety and security. Moreover, the author found strength of relationships between service performance dimensions and overall service quality perception differed among Western and Asian consumers: overall service quality perception was positively related to customer satisfaction, with a

stronger relationship among Western consumers; price satisfaction was positively related to overall satisfaction, with a stronger relationship among Asian consumers; overall satisfaction was positively related to behavioural intentions, such as re-patronising the service and recommending it to others. The author found no significant differences in the strength of the relationship between overall satisfaction and behavioural intentions among Asian and Western consumers. Importantly, timeliness, personal interaction, safety and security, and meals had significant effects on overall service quality in different ways for Western and Asian customers. The study found Western travellers place greater importance on service quality, while Asian travellers place greater importance on price in their evaluations of customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction was shown to have a positive and significant effect on intentions to re-patronise the airline and to recommend the airline for both groups. The study emphasised the importance of considering cultural differences in service performance measurement and strategy development in international travel settings, highlighting the need for customisation of certain service quality dimensions based on the specific needs and preferences of different customer segments.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides a useful framework for interpreting the findings of Brush (2019) within the context of service performance in the airline industry. TPB posits that an individual's behaviour is driven by three main components: Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioural Control (Sniehotta, Pousseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014). Brush (2019) found that overall service quality perception is positively related to customer satisfaction. For Western travellers, the dimensions of timeliness,

personal interaction, safety and security, and meals were particularly influential in shaping their perception. In contrast, Asian travellers placed more importance on price satisfaction. The study also noted that customer satisfaction had a positive and significant effect on intentions to re-patronise the airline and to recommend it to others for both Western and Asian consumers. This reflects the TPB component where positive attitudes (customer satisfaction) towards the behaviour (using the airline service again and recommending it) increase the likelihood of that behaviour. The differences in how Western and Asian travellers evaluate service performance in their study highlight the role of subjective norms; cultural norms influence travellers' expectations and perceptions of service quality. For instance, Western travellers value service quality more, while Asian travellers are more price-sensitive. These cultural norms shape their attitudes towards different service performance dimensions and ultimately their behavioural intentions (Hagger *et al.*, 2022). Effective service strategy differentiation, as suggested by Brush (2019), can enhance perceived behavioural control by ensuring that airlines meet the specific expectations and needs of different cultural groups. This improves travellers' confidence in choosing the airline, knowing that their specific service preferences will be met.

Another study of relevance to the landscape in which this research is set was conducted by Wang *et al.* (2023), and investigated the influence of emotions in passenger recommendations. Particularly set in the post-COVID19 recovery era, their focus was to move away from direct performance indicators, whilst still acknowledging their merit, and look instead at how latent emotions (from flight experiences) contribute to assessment of experience

and recommendations to other potential customers of airlines. This gives another frame of reference to customers when determining whether or not to purchase a flight.

A recent study by Veeramani, Rou Yi, Yoong, and Mahmud, (2020), sought to determine factors that led to passenger choice of airline services based on customer satisfaction and their views of service performance in areas including flight fare, service quality, airline reputation and environmental concerns. It was clear that the biggest factor that influenced consumer attitudes in terms of how consumers perceived airline services and impacted on their choice of airline service was air fare, a direct contrast with reputation of the airline which was seen to be the least concern of travellers. In contrast to these findings, Siering, Deokar, and Janze, (2018), in recognising the powerful effect that consumer recommendations have on how consumers form attitudes towards services and how these influence intention to purchase, compared reviews of airlines on a web-based platform, and found value for money was not a major determinant and was even a negative influence on decision to purchase airline services. They did find that assessing sentiment related to different service aspects on performance metrics become important in consumer recommendations as knowing such aspects assures potential passengers from a risk-perspective.

Though different, the findings of both of these studies can be explained by TCV. Based on the premise that consumer choice is influenced by five primary values (functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional)

(Sheth *et al* (1991), the following extrapolates from each why consumers choose certain products or services over others.

Firstly, functional value, which relates to the practical benefits and performance of a product or service is expressed differently in both. Veeramani *et al.* (2020) found that airfare was the biggest factor influencing consumer attitudes and choice of airline services. This highlights the importance of functional value, as consumers are primarily driven by the cost-effectiveness of the service. Affordable fares are seen as providing the best practical benefit. In contrast, Siering, Deokar, and Janze *et al.*(2018) suggested that value for money was not a major determinant and could even negatively influence the decision to purchase airline services. Instead, functional value was more tied to specific performance metrics assessed through consumer reviews, indicating that consumers are looking for reliable and high-quality service attributes rather than just low cost.

Secondly social value, which pertains to the social benefits associated with a product or service, was again expressed differently in each study. Veeramani *et al.* (2020) found airline reputation, which can be seen as a component of social value, to be the least concern of travellers. This suggests that in this context, social value plays a minimal role in influencing consumer choice compared to functional value. Although not explicitly discussed, in the study by Siering, Deokar, and Janze *et al.*(2018), the influence of consumer recommendations on web-based platforms indirectly indicates the role of social value. Positive reviews enhance the perceived social value of an airline

by creating a favourable public image and encouraging others to choose the same airline.

Thirdly, emotional value which involves the feelings or affective states that a product or service can induce was found by Siering, Deokar, and Janze *et al.*(2018), who suggested consumer sentiment related to service aspects is critical. The emotional responses as captured in reviews influence future consumers' decisions by providing reassurance and reducing perceived risk. Emotional value was not directly addressed by Veeramani *et al.* (2020).

Fourthly, epistemic value, which relates to a product's or service's ability to provide novelty or satisfy a desire for knowledge, was again seen differently. Siering, Deokar, and Janze *et al.*(2018) found the emphasis on assessing sentiment and performance metrics reflects an epistemic value. Consumers look for detailed information and insights about service quality to make informed decisions, indicating a desire for knowledge and assurance. The environmental concerns discussed in Veeramani *et al.* (2020) could be seen as epistemic, and consumers interested in the environmental impact of their travel may seek airlines that offer more sustainable options, driven by a desire for knowledge and novelty.

Finally, conditional value could be seen in both studies, and pertains to specific circumstances or contexts that enhance the desirability of a product or service. Conditional value might be inferred from Veeramani *et al.* (2020) in terms of the importance of air fare, where in specific conditions, such as economic constraints or budget travel, low air fare becomes particularly crucial. The role of reviews and sentiment analysis could be seen in Siering

Deokar, and Janze *et al.* (2018) as conditional value, particularly in the context of web-based platforms where reviews are readily accessible and consumers may rely heavily on this conditional source of information to make their decisions.

However, Bellizzi, Eboli, and Mazzulla, (2020, 2022) found that service performance is not necessarily commensurate with developing positive attitudes towards airline services and customer satisfaction, and they suggested they need to be evaluated in distinct ways – examples cited include pre-flight safety briefings that passengers are constrained to do: a sign of a ‘good service’ but not one that causes satisfaction. It may be that the inherent mediation hypotheses within the TPB offer some clarity (Sutton, 2002) as they include economic influences.

Another study which linked customer satisfaction alongside attitudes towards services, intention to purchase and service performance was conducted by Park, E. *et al.* (2019), which categorised influences on intention to purchase further airline services as ‘hindrances’ and ‘motivations’. Their results demonstrated similar findings for both low-cost carriers (LCCs) and full-service cost carriers (FSCs) with the exception being that service performance judgements regarding cost was a significant consideration for customers of LCCs yet affective satisfaction was more significant for customers of FSCs, supporting earlier results seen in a study by Kucukaltan and Topcu (2019). Kotler and Armstrong (2021) suggest consumers deliberate and determine the costs and benefits of a product based on perceived value, hence TCV may offer an explanation for this trend.

A more recent study based in Saudi Arabia investigated the service quality elements of full-service Saudi domestic airlines (Saudi Airlines, Flynas and Flydeal) (Al Awadh, 2023). Using the five criteria of service quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Taylor and Baker, 1994; Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 1994) that form the framework for the SERVPERF (*ibid.*) model used in this study, Al Awadh, (2023) revealed that Reliability received the highest weight, with Assurance, Responsiveness, Empathy, and Tangible receiving lower scores incrementally. Further scrutiny of their results revealed that flights being on time was the most important factor for passengers when considering service performance of the different airlines under study, closely followed by check-in efficiency, and the flights and its facilities were safe. The researcher compared results for passenger perceptions of all three airlines and reported that Saudi Airlines was 'the best', with Flynas considered 'second' and Flydeal 'last'. The implications of their findings for this study are that the SERVPERF model has delivered results that can reveal which elements are important to consumers of airline services, but the study did not offer insight into consumer attitudes towards other services operating in Saudi Arabia including LCCs, nor did it cover any of the independent variables used in this study.

The findings of Al Awadh (2023) can be explained using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The TPB posits that an individual's behaviour is driven by three key factors: attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Attitude towards the behaviour refers to the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behaviour. In this study, passengers' attitudes towards the airlines are influenced by their

perceptions of service quality. The SERVPERF model's dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) directly impact these attitudes in the following way. Firstly, 'reliability' received the highest weight, indicating that consistent and dependable service (such as flights being on time) is crucial for forming positive attitudes. Passengers view reliable services as essential, which shapes their overall favourable attitude towards the airline. 'Assurance and safety', or the importance of feeling assured about the service and the safety of the flights contributes significantly to passengers' positive attitudes. Safety and security are fundamental concerns, and high performance in this area enhances trust and satisfaction. 'Responsiveness, empathy, and tangibility' although weighted lower than reliability and assurance, still contribute to passengers' attitudes, thus responsive service (e.g., efficient check-in processes) and empathetic staff (e.g., understanding and addressing passenger needs) play a role in shaping perceptions. Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behaviour. In the context of airline choice and evaluation, subjective norms are influenced by societal and cultural expectations, as well as recommendations from friends, family, and peers, and these include 'cultural expectations, whereby for passengers in Saudi Arabia, societal expectations may emphasise the importance of national airlines and the quality of service they provide. 'Word-of-mouth and recommendations' likely reflect the influence of subjective norms, as passengers' perceptions and choices are influenced by the collective opinions and recommendations of others, reinforcing the preference for airlines with higher perceived service quality. As for perceived behavioural control,

passengers' perceived behavioural control in this study is shaped by their previous experiences with the airlines and the perceived reliability of the services. Factors like on-time flights and efficient check-in processes were seen to enhance passengers' perceived control over their travel experiences. High scores in assurance and safety also enhance perceived behavioural control, as passengers feel secure and confident in their choice of airline.

Stereotypes can be categorised as a form of attitude, and several studies explore their relationship with consumer behaviour. Attitudes involve affective elements (how a person feels about a service), behavioural elements (how a person acts towards a service) and cognitive elements (how a person thinks about a service) (Baron, Branscombe and Byrne, 2009). However, stereotypes can be seen as predominantly based around cognitive elements, as they are associated with a fixed belief that a person forms about persons or services (Alcock, Carment and Sadava, 2005; Baron, Branscombe and Byrne, 2009). Importantly for the arena of market segmentation, stereotypes once acquired are held firmly, therefore airline services must heed consumer opinion. Gidaković and Zabkar (2021) investigated the stereotypes consumers form about services and how they perform based on the trust, value and loyalty model (TVLM). Findings revealed the key role that consumer trust in service brands has in terms of their use and purchase of services, and demonstrated that stereotypes regarding the 'warmth' and competence displayed by service personnel within the airline services industry (as well as the others investigated) have become negative during the last 15 years, but at the same time, customer satisfaction in the overall services studied generally increased. This has direct significance for the current study, which also

investigates service performance and consumers' attitudes towards airline services. In seeking a theoretical understanding of these findings, it is interesting to compare findings with those from an early study by Sniehatta (2009). In an investigation of students' planned use of sports facilities using TPB, the author demonstrated changed attitudes but not behaviour or intention (with behavioural belief intervention) and improved intention and subjective norm but not changed behaviour (under normative belief intervention). This mirrors the findings of Gidaković and Zabkar (2021) in terms of improved satisfaction but negative perception of service performance, and gives merit in this study investigating service performance within a Saudi context, given the expected increase in the sector under government reforms, as discussed earlier.

Kucukaltan and Topcu (2019) investigated key indicators that airline passengers use when determining which airline company to purchase services from: flight-related factors, company-related factors, price-related factors, loyalty/reward programme related factors and customer-satisfaction related factors. Results indicated that price and customer satisfaction indicators are the major drivers of passengers' intent to purchase services from selected airlines, mirroring some of the findings from Veeramani *et al.*, (2020) (price). These findings offer scope for further investigation in the Saudi setting for this current study. In seeking a theoretical understanding, it is crucial to acknowledge that the fundamental aim of their study was to understand the judgements and attitudes underpinning consumer decision-making, which is readily explained by the TCV (Tanrikulu, 2021). This theory offers utility particularly when interpreting consumer purchasing choice

(Kotler, 2020). Proponents of TCV posit that humans have the proclivity towards perceived value when deliberating and determining costs and benefits – in this instance, of purchasing an airline ticket (Kotler and Armstrong, 2021).

A key concern raised by Kucukaltan and Topcu (2019) when developing the methodology for their study lay in the mixture of qualitative and quantitative elements within criteria that passengers consider when selecting airline services. For instance, when a passenger is asked to rate the importance or otherwise of 'airport lounges' they are not asking passengers to rate distance of the lounge from the gate or comfort of seats within the lounge. The lines were blurred, pair-wise comparisons were made without considering inter-relationships between criteria. Certainly this concern is taken into section 4.4.1 where the deliberations are presented prior to developing the research instruments.

### **3.4 Hypothesis Development**

Having reviewed an extensive body of literature, this section presents the hypotheses for testing to determine the impact of the independent variables on Saudis' attitudes towards airline services, both alone and in the presence of service performance as a moderating variable. The discussion is aligned with key components of the theoretical framework, with each hypothesis predicated on one or the other of the chosen theories (TPB or TCV), highlighting the importance of attitudes in shaping intentions and behaviours.

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), consumer behaviour is driven by behavioural intentions, which are influenced by attitudes towards the

behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Animosity can be considered an attitude; Katz (1960) determined four functions of attitude, thus understanding what functions they serve will ultimately help service providers to develop services around customers' needs (Cocolas *et al.*, 2020). At the time of writing, no study was seen to have investigated the relationship between this attitude (animosity) and Saudi consumers' attitudes towards airline services in the current changing situation. A nuanced exploration of that relationship, particularly when service performance is introduced as a moderator may contribute to a deeper interpretation of how influences affect consumer behaviour of Saudi users of airline services in such changing times.

While previous studies have examined the role of consumer animosity in various contexts, there is a notable gap in research focusing specifically on the airline services in Saudi Arabia. For instance, Areiza-Padilla (2021) showed that consumer animosity varies by product, service, or brand but did not explore its impact on attitudes towards airline services or purchase intentions in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Ali (2021) found that consumer animosity leads to negative product judgments and boycotting motivations in conflict regions, yet this was not specific to Saudi Arabia or its airline services.

The influence of consumer animosity on behaviour has been established in other contexts. Hoang *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that consumer animosity, combined with consumer ethnocentrism, affects willingness to buy. Westjohn, Magnusson, Peng, and Jung (2021) also found that consumer animosity significantly negatively impacts the willingness to buy products and services.

In line with TPB, which emphasises the importance of attitudes in shaping behavioural intentions (Hagger *et al.*, 2022), this study hypothesises that:

H1. Consumer animosity significantly influences Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.

There is limited previous research investigating consumer ethnocentrism within the Saudi Arabian context, particularly regarding consumers' use of airline services in the region. Studies examining consumer ethnocentrism in other purchase arenas, such as purchasing foreign goods, have identified limitations with commonly used research models, such as Hofstede's dimensions of national culture, which have been shown to evolve over time (Beugelsdijk, Maseland, and Hoorn, 2015).

In terms of the utility of TPB when investigating the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and attitudes, TPB suggests that consumer ethnocentrism, characterised by a preference for domestic over foreign products due to national loyalty, can significantly influence consumer attitudes. This suggests ethnocentric consumers are likely to hold favourable attitudes towards domestic airline services based on national pride and perceived cultural compatibility. An interesting study in the retail sector by Kaur *et al.* (2019) found that perceived behavioural control was the strongest predictor in whether a person would purchase a product or service as it reflects a consumer's beliefs regarding access to resources and opportunities needed for purchase. Of note for this study, the relationship both attitude and subjective norm were strongly influenced by the introduction of consumer ethnocentrism, suggesting that TPB is a good fit for exploring this concept.

To address the gap identified in section 3.3.2, and drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape individuals' intentions and behaviours (Ajzen, 1991), the second hypothesis for this study was developed:

H2. Consumer ethnocentrism significantly influences Saudis' attitude towards airline services

As with the previous themes, there is limited prior research investigating consumer religiosity within the Saudi Arabian context, specifically in relation to consumers' use of airline services. Studies examining consumer religiosity in other purchase arenas, such as the adoption of takaful (Sarfraz and Kurshid Mian, 2022), have shown religiosity to mediate events. However, traditional values may have a negative effect, suggesting some blurring between religiosity and ethnocentrism. Additionally, airlines are under pressure from stakeholders to reduce emissions (Sher *et al.*, 2021). Minton and Geiger-Oneto (2020) found that religiosity significantly influenced consumers' views and behaviours on sustainability, with extrinsically religious consumers being less likely to act sustainably than intrinsically religious consumers.

This context is underrepresented in the extant literature and merits further inquiry regarding consumer attitudes towards airline services, as these attitudes affect consumer intention to purchase airline services. One study based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, conducted by Auf, Salleh, and Yusoff (2016), investigated religiosity as a mediator between media or word-of-mouth recommendation and consumer buying behaviour. Their findings revealed that religious orientation strongly mediated the relationship between media or

word-of-mouth recommendation and consumer buying behaviour in the car market. However, generalising these findings to other industries or across Saudi Arabia is debatable due to the limited sample size and unclear validation of the religiosity measurement instrument.

Given these findings and the identified gap in knowledge, the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) is used here as the framework for hypothesis development. TCV posits that consumer choice is driven by multiple consumption values: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991). In this context, religiosity aligns with self-oriented versus other-oriented values and external versus internal values (Holbrook, 2005), which correspond with intrinsic and extrinsic expressions of religiosity (Çavuşoğlu et al., 2021).

Therefore, the third hypothesis was developed, linked to TCV, emphasising how religiosity can impact consumer attitudes by aligning with the different consumption values identified in the TCV framework:

H3. Consumer religiosity significantly influences Saudis' attitude towards airline services.

Finally, the previous section identified a gap in the literature regarding the moderating role of service performance in the context of Saudi Arabian airline services. Limited studies have explored how service performance influences the effects of consumer animosity, ethnocentrism, and religiosity on consumer attitudes. For instance, Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, and Pratama (2020) found that willingness to buy is affected by consumer animosity and ethnocentrism, with product judgment moderating this relationship. They suggest that if the

product is perceived as 'good enough,' marketing efforts can rebrand it to ensure positive product judgment, encouraging purchase despite underlying animosities. This can be explained through the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) as an example of perceived value being a trade-off between benefit and sacrifice (Hyun and Fairhurst, 2018). In other words, consumers may purchase a product despite animosity towards the producer or country of origin because of its perceived value.

In this study, the moderating effect of service performance on consumers' attitudes towards airline services was examined. Exceptional service performance can create emotional connections with customers, leading to stronger perceived value and positive behavioural intentions. When customers feel valued, understood, and cared for by the service provider, they are more likely to develop loyalty and engage in repeat business. Thus, service performance as a moderator is examined in relation to its effect on the relationship between animosity, ethnocentrism, and religiosity (independent variables) and consumer attitude towards airline services (dependent variable). Therefore, based on the Theory of Consumption Values (Hyun and Fairhurst, 2018), the following hypotheses were developed:

H4. Service performance moderates the relationship between consumer animosity and Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.

H5. Service performance moderates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.

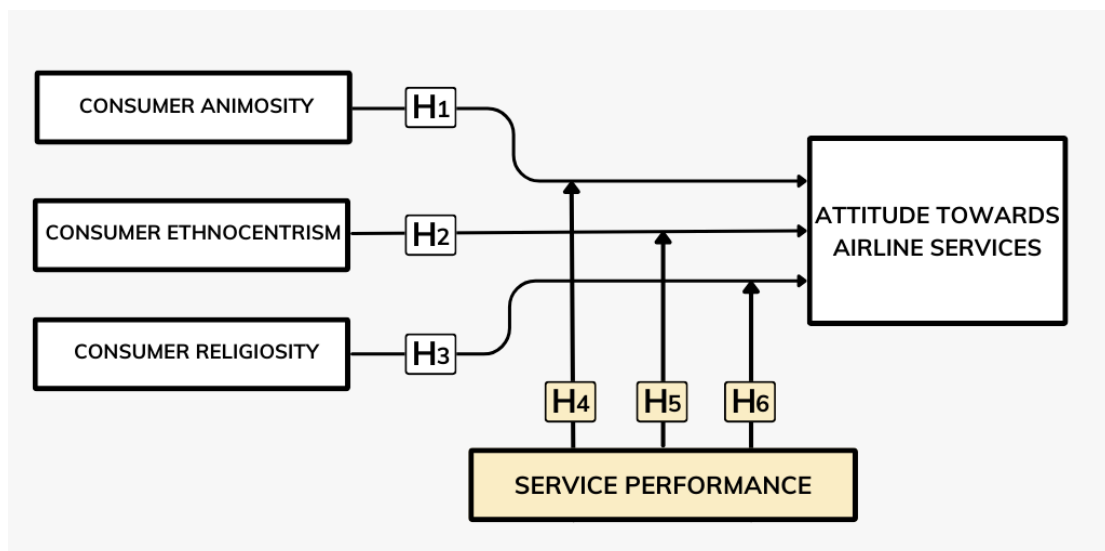
H6. Service performance moderates the relationship between consumer religiosity and Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.

### 3.5 Research Model

Having deliberated evidence in the form of findings from the literature, the next stage was to construct a research model, which can be seen as a structured representation of how the variables are hypothesised to relate to and react with each other. The research model rests alongside the theoretical framework and guides an investigation by providing a visual representation that is used as a frame of reference for the methodology, ensuring continuity of process (Robson and McCartan, 2016; Kemp *et al.*, 2018).

In order to test the hypotheses for this study, and in keeping with the theory of planned behaviour and the theory of consumption values, the following is the initial model prepared for this study:

Figure 3.1: Research Model



(Source: Author's own design)

When this research model was first planned, the intention was to conduct a fixed design study with the three independent variables shown and with

service performance as a moderator. However, during the course of conducting the literature review it became apparent that other factors may interfere with the hypothesised relationships. Robson and McCartan, (2016), suggest that before a study is conducted the conceptual model guides further thought and planning into conducting a study; as a novice researcher, I became curious about the other factors that may be at play and that might contribute to the causality of what might be discerned as a result of the proposed study, and took that curiosity to my reflexive research diary. For instance, one study measured the effects of consumer animosity, consumer ethnocentrism and allocentrism on intention to purchase, with brand image and religiosity as mediators of those relationships (Kusumawardani and Yolanda, 2021). No consideration was given in that study to potential nuisance factors, confounding influences that might have produced the effects seen (Nielson and Raswant, 2018). Therefore, a decision was taken to identify control variables for the current study in an endeavour to improve the internal validity of the research by reducing the potential for misleading associations from being reported (Marsh, 1982). The three control variables selected are detailed in the next chapter (section 4.5.5), and a new conceptual model was produced (see Figure 3.1).

### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

Having completed a thorough literature review of known studies, limitations in current studies and a conspicuous gap in knowledge have been evidenced that informed the hypothesis development for this study. The first independent variable under consideration was animosity, which is well-documented in

previous research (Cheah, Phau, Kea and Huang, 2016; Abdul-Latif and Abdul-Talib, 2020; Tao *et al.*, 2022). This review demonstrated consumer animosity has been linked to factors like ethnocentrism and religiosity. Previous studies revealed consumer animosity is deeply rooted in historical conflicts and can influence purchasing decisions, particularly in the presence of increasing animosity levels. Culture plays a crucial role, tying negative ethnicity to consumer avoidance of imports from perceived antagonistic nations. Boycotting, a form of political consumerism, is often driven by media and political intervention and can significantly impact consumer behaviour.

Despite extensive research on consumer animosity, limited studies focus on its impact on consumer attitudes towards airline services, especially in the Saudi Arabian context.

The second literature review section explored consumer ethnocentrism, the evaluation of other cultures through the lens of one's own cultural preconceptions, which was shown to have garnered substantial attention in various fields over the past five decades. Ethnocentric consumers may actively avoid purchasing foreign-made goods due to concerns about their country's economy or potential unemployment. Of interest in this study, consumer ethnocentrism plays a significant role in the airline industry, where passengers often demonstrate a preference for their national carriers to support domestic economies and enhance global competitiveness. This preference is rooted in feelings of loyalty and the belief in the superiority of domestically produced goods and services.

However, as seen in this section, studies have revealed variations in ethnocentric tendencies across different countries and consumer segments. Studies have highlighted the influence of cultural values, consumer perceptions, and service provider characteristics on consumer preferences and satisfaction. This review saw mixed evidence. While previous studies have provided valuable insights into consumer ethnocentrism, there remains a need for further research to explore these dynamics comprehensively.

The third independent variable, religiosity, was seen in this review to have long played a central role in shaping human behaviour and decision-making, with various doctrines and formal religions dictating individuals' practices and beliefs. In the realm of consumer behaviour, studies have shown that religious affiliations can significantly influence consumer tendencies and decision-making processes. For instance, research by Mansori (2012) suggests that religiosity influences behaviour by affecting one's beliefs and choices. This influence is evident in consumer preferences, as seen in studies where individuals may avoid or boycott products associated with religious beliefs different from their own. Studies have explored the nuanced relationship between religiosity and consumer behaviours within specific religious groups. Mansori (2012) and Mathras *et al.* (2016) revealed distinct shopping behaviours among followers of different religions, highlighting the complex interplay between religiosity and consumption patterns.

Religiosity remains a fundamental aspect of consumers' value systems, shaping their consumption decisions and behaviours based on teachings and beliefs. Furthermore, studies have differentiated between intrinsic and

extrinsic religiosity and their respective impacts on consumer attitudes and behaviours. Recent research has also explored the role of religiosity in consumer attitudes towards sustainability and ethical consumption, with studies having shown that religiosity influences consumers' views and behaviours regarding disposal of goods and adoption of ethical products and services, with implications for industries such as airlines under pressure to reduce emissions. However, there remains limited research specifically investigating consumer religiosity within the context of Saudi Arabian geography and its influence on attitudes towards airline services, highlighting the need for further inquiry in this area.

Overall, limited research was retrieved on the impact that consumer animosity, ethnocentrism and religiosity have on consumer perceptions of service performance and consumer attitudes towards airline services within the geographical region of Saudi Arabia. Individual studies have examined specifically these variables either in isolation or in combination (e.g. Abdul-Latif and Abdul-Talib, 2020) or in combination with other variables unrelated to this study (e.g. Tao *et al.*, 2022). These findings suggested there is yet to be a systematic examination of the interplay between the selected variables.

This chapter has also provided the theoretical framework through which the variables will be examined and analysed. In selecting the Theory of Consumption Values alongside the Theory of Planned Behaviour, it was anticipated that any shortfall would be addressed through the other's lens.

Chapter Four details the research strategy and methodology used to undertake this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**T**his chapter presents an outline of the methodology for this thesis. It provides full justification for the chosen research methodology that was used to achieve this study's aims and objectives of examining the influence of ethnocentrism, animosity, and religiosity on Saudis' attitude towards airline services, and to examine any moderating effect of service performance, by testing the hypotheses developed in the previous chapter. Incorporating an evidence base for the choice of paradigm, design and strategy for conducting this study assisted the planning and enabled the data collection and analysis to proceed on an informed basis underpinned with the chosen paradigm. The chapter is presented using progressive decision - making, with justification and rationale for each methodological choice given founded on both theory and previous studies. Beginning with the overall philosophical landscape in which this study is sited, it then deliberates choices around the research design and strategy before discussing ethics.

At all times, the deliberation reflects the ontological and epistemological stances that are carried through to data collection and analysis, thus maintaining congruity. The theoretical lens developed in Chapter Two is ever-present; each section reflects on the utility of the method under debate with two-theory lens (TPB and TCV).

### 4.1 Research Paradigm

Most researchers begin their design by determining which philosophical stance will become the bedrock of the project. Indeed, authors such as

Coates (2021) suggest that the philosophical arguments that researchers deliberate provide the essential foundation of the study being conducted, and that all those undertaking research must be aware of and recognise the different philosophical perspectives, and they should be deliberated and justified in the earliest stages while reporting and conducting research. A research philosophy, or paradigm, is a conceptual framework founded on concepts about the nature of knowledge and the world in which we live. Crucially, the paradigm reflects the researcher's worldview and therefore serves as a guide for how the researcher will conduct a study; Halfpenny (1997) suggests the research philosophy enables researchers to make sense of the variables in a dynamic way that then gives gestalt to the research choices they make whilst prescribing the steps the study will follow. It unveils how individual thoughts and beliefs influence the research design, findings, and interpretation (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). Authors such as Robson and McCartan (2016) and (2021) maintain that the paradigm becomes the central point of reference for determining which individual methods will be the most apt. Having a consistent research philosophy is crucial in empowering a researcher to outline the fundamental principles of theoretical thought, a system of discernment, frame of reference, and self-awareness. Understanding philosophy is essential because research in the social sciences including the business field can only be interpreted in a meaningful manner when there is transparency regarding the choices that were made that influence the findings of the investigation. Philosophy gives the broad principles of theoretical thinking, a way of cognition, perspective, and self-awareness, all of which are utilised to get knowledge of reality as well

as to design, perform, analyse, and interpret research and its findings (Liew, Grisham, and Hayes, 2018). Creswell and Cresswell (2017), posit that determination of the philosophy to be used is made and justified at the earliest possible stage.

Along with underpinning the planning, carrying out, examining, and analysing of research and its findings, the guiding philosophical principles are essential to the process of acquiring robust information about the real world. This study investigates how religiosity, ethnocentrism, and animosity each inform a person's perception of service performance, which becomes a moderator when examining how that service performance influences Saudi people's attitude towards airline services. Knowledge of the impact of these variables on people's views toward airline services will be developed as a result of unpicking and measuring the interrelationship between these variables. This information will be important for the business sector since it makes it possible to improve services and raise the overall level of customer satisfaction. However, such knowledge needs to be acquired via a robust methodology that is consistent with the paradigm, offering congruence to the study (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

Taking this construct further, Baškarada and Koronios, (2018) suggest that when researchers are able to pinpoint the key ontological and epistemological assumptions from the philosophy of social science literature, it enables them to project and follow-through their methodological choices in what can only be deemed a consistent way. Authors such as Shepherd and Challenger (2013) have suggested that the very concept of research paradigms is influential in

management research studies, yet Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) remind us that business and management researchers do not agree on a single, optimal paradigmatic or philosophical position and that business scholars have debated for decades which is the most fitting paradigm through which to conduct research.

The following sub-sections conceptualise this study's choices of paradigm in more detail and build the rationale for the final selection.

#### **4.1.1 Debating the Philosophical Assumptions**

There are four central paradigms that underpin the research process: positivism, interpretivism, realism and pragmatism. Each paradigm is associated with a selection of methods; crucially, decisions about methods and procedures must remain consistent and congruent with the paradigm itself. Each paradigm is also associated with a set of assumptions that are described in terms of ontology (the nature of reality and knowledge), epistemology (how the knowledge is acquired or gained), axiology (the role of values and assumptions in the research process), rhetoric (the way language is used in research, particularly when presenting the results) and methodology (how the research will be undertaken within the frame of reference of the paradigm) (Creswell and Cresswell 2017; Patton, 2015). Berryman (2019) suggest these assumptions shape what researchers ask and how they ask the questions (data collection). Bonache, and Festing (2020) suggest research paradigms are highly influential in management studies but there is no 'ready fix' - researchers do not concur on one position. One metaphor for the paradigm is that it is a net which contains the ontological, epistemological,

and methodological beliefs that researchers bring into the landscape of the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Patton, (2015), reminds us that they can overlap, making it crucial for clarity that these are elucidated. Therefore, alternative inquiry paradigms are also explored as part of this deliberation, demonstrating any overlap but also to avoid falling into the trap of readily choosing “normal” empirical science thus undervaluing the potential contribution of other methods (van Es, Schäfer and Wieringa, 2021). In order for the justification of the rationale for this study’s selected paradigm to be sound, it was paramount that alternative inquiry paradigms were not just explored but were also demonstrably understood: enabling the choice of methodology and method to remain congruent with the selected paradigm throughout becomes a marker of high-quality research (Heidenreich, Eisemann, Katalinic, and Hubner, 2003; Park, Konge, and Artino, 2020; Stenfors Kajamaa and Bennett, 2020) and has impact on the strength of the final research design.

In addition, the assumptions inherent within the different paradigms being considered became a particular consideration for this study when juxtaposed with the two-theory lens used. As seen in section 3.2, the theoretical framework was constructed using two different yet complimentary theories - the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV). TPB does not consider values yet TCV does; although simplistic, this illustration lends weight to the deliberations and determinations that now follow. Each section presents the ontology, epistemology and axiology of each research paradigm.

#### 4.1.1.1 Positivism

**Ontology:** Alvesson (2009) reminds us that the word positivism derives from 'positum', meaning facts are posited in front [of the researcher]. Within the positivist research paradigm, ontologically, reality is singular and objective, it is devoid of influence from 'social actors' (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The positivist research paradigm is associated with an ordered, regular external world (Nyein *et al.*, 2020). Some of the earliest philosophic assumptions about the nature of reality aligned with positivist thought. It began to form into what we now understand as positivism in the eighteenth century with Hume, who determined an empirical basis for reality being that which can be observed (Corry and Mckenna, 2019). This was further developed by others such as Comte (1896) who stated that human actions could be understood by scientifically examining the 'observable', as they are governed by 'social laws' in the same way that nature is governed by events the natural world. This interpretation was extended and used by later positivists who were able to apply scientific interpretations to observing reality empirically but with the assumption that some of our knowledge cannot be directly observed; this became known as logical positivism (Hanfling, 2003). In a sense this appears to be a paradox (introducing the unobservable to a paradigm based on empiricism), yet for the purpose of this study and in determining the paradigm to follow it became crucial to recognising that some of what was to be investigated involved passengers' subjective opinions; certainly the TCV element of the two-theory lens directly incorporates the value consumers attach to potential purchases (Sheth *et al.*, 1991).

One of the primary goals of positivist research is to generate and examine “explanatory associations or causal relationships that ultimately lead to prediction and control of the phenomena in question” (Park, Konge, and Artino, 2020, p 690). Because positivism is founded on the assumption of a single, tangible, reality it allows such explanation and prediction to operate naturally. This is well explained by Hoyle, Harris and Judd (2009) who state causal inferences rely on temporal precedence (in other words, for X to cause Y, X must precede Y in time), association (in other words, X and Y are correlated), and lack of confounders (there are no other factors besides the identified factors that can affect the outcome; X is the only cause of Y within the space identified).

**Epistemology:** Epistemologically, positivism is driven by natural law; concerned with the generation of factual knowledge through examination and empirical inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), the argument is that facts can only be obtained using scientific methods, for instance, through examination (Park, Konge, and Artino, 2020). However, this becomes blurred in real world research, and post-positivists have argued that whatever is known as a result of generating scientific knowledge through experimental inquiry may yet be disproven by future researchers, meaning there is always an element of doubt (Corry and McKenna, 2019). Robson and McCartan (2016) describe this as the infallibility of evidence — that when knowledge is generated as part of a search to develop universal causal laws, scientific laws are not based on constant conjunctions as there are irregularities in events in the world.

Moreover, positivists state that appropriately developed knowledge “is truth—that is, it is certain, congruent with reality, and accurate” (Park, Konge, and Artino, 2020, p 691). However, there needs to be a separation between any research participant and the researcher, so positivists operate in dualism where participants and researchers can actually be separated (dualism) and where strict procedures are followed there is no bias (objectivity) (Firestone, 1987).

**Axiology:** In positivist research, researchers are independent of any subjects within the research (Robson and McCartan, 2016). The study itself is conducted without the influence of values, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Park, Konge and Artino (2020) suggest somewhat strongly that because positivism demands objectivity, then individuals’ subjective values and experiences are dismissed as unimportant.

#### **4.1.1.2 Interpretivism**

**Ontology:** Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest our understanding of interpretivism emerged during what they termed the paradigm wars of the 1980’s. At that time, growing concern was expressed by constructivist thinkers about the ‘dehumanising’ of scientific research and the need to centralise the human experience whilst using equally valid scientific enquiry (Dean, 2018 p.3), and a new way of thinking was mooted. Ontologically, unlike positivists who believe in singular truth, interpretivists believe that there are multiple socially constructed realities (Creswell and Creswell (2017).

**Epistemology:** Epistemologically, interpretivists believe knowledge can be constructed to have subjective meanings and comprises social phenomena; it is inductively developed into a theory or 'pattern of meanings' through interaction with that which is being researched (Haradhan, 2018). This pattern of meanings is examined, often repeatedly 'sifted through' until the researchers are able to generate new knowledge: crucially, the data the researchers interact with remains in context in order to impress the 'knowability' of such new knowledge within the frame of reference of that being studied (*ibid.*).

**Axiology:** Central to the process of inductively developing new knowledge is the paradigm's axiology: that researchers reflect on values and bias, a process which forms an integral part of such examination and interpretation (Robson and McCartan, 2016). In stark contrast to positivist researchers, Creswell and Creswell (2017) note that due to interpretivist researchers' personal experiences, they are inquisitive about "participants' interpretations" of the scenario being examined. Interpretive research is value bound; the researcher is part of what is being researched (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

#### **4.1.1.3 Realism**

**Ontology:** Somewhat different to both of the previous philosophies, realism was described by Thomas Reid (1710-1796), one of the earliest proponents, as the philosophy of common sense (Nichols and Yaffe, 2014). Realist philosophers and researchers believe ontologically that reality is independent of the human mind and that natural and social phenomena can be explained

in terms of the fundamental underlying forces and structures of the universe as we perceive it. Realism's initial premise rose from a fundamental critique of empiricism (positivist research and knowledge). Indeed, whilst Thomas Reid's early work founded reality in what we can perceive with our senses, which in one sense is empiricist as this involves the observable, his thinking evolved to build on the fundamental premise that the structure of language can help build generalisations of human behaviour and cognitions (Nichols and Yaffe, 2014).

Centuries later, arguing that science would not make sense if it were merely the constant conjunction of one type of event against another, Bhaskar (1975) suggested instead that any causal forces observed in the laboratory are part of forces that exist outside of the sterile laboratory (research) environment. This would indicate that there are many interacting causal forces that operate without producing 'exception-less regularities' (Elder-Vass, 2022). Interestingly, when this is placed within a social science setting, it contraindicates the somewhat naïve earlier version of realism [which set out that the world is independent of human beliefs about it] as it becomes apparent that the *social* world is not independent of beliefs about it and that social structures themselves depend on humans recognising this and interacting (Elder-Vass, 2022).

Although realism aligns in many respects with qualitative research as values are considered (axiology), its inherent ontology is rooted in the observable, more in line with positivism (Sousa, 2010).

**Epistemologically**, explanations for what we experience and ideas and hypotheses that we generate from inquiry are scientifically reasonable

(Hürlimann, 2019). The "observation-theoretic" dichotomy is used in this definition of realism to describe the difference between what can be observed and what cannot be observed but is nevertheless real. Critical Realism is somewhat nuanced; theorists using the philosophy suggest the 'social world' can only be understood if its inherent structures are understood (Dean, 2006). Archer (1998) suggested the epistemology inherent within critical realism becomes a reinforcement of the value of knowledge that exists when the world that the research is set in is constantly changing. Researchers using this approach turn their focus to studying what they deem as the "crucial reasons" for ever-changing phenomena. Approaches to investigating embrace the recognition that each construct and subject involved in a research study is able to change the researchers' understanding and those conducting study under its umbrella often adopt multi-level designs. In fact, Yin (2003) has suggested this has led to researchers selecting case-study method as it provides an opportunity for a broad, holistic theorisation of events under study within a dynamic, living environment.

**Axiology:** in realism, as with qualitative research, values are considered (Sousa, 2010). Where Thomas Reid's thinking evolved to build on the fundamental premise that the structure of language can help build generalisations of human behaviour and cognitions (Nichols and Yaffe, 2014), this development sees the potential for an axiological shift away from positivism as behaviour and cognitions are reflective of values (Constantino *et al.*, 2021).

#### 4.1.1.4 Pragmatism

**Ontology:** The final paradigm considered when planning this study is pragmatism (Morgan, 2014). This paradigm has its roots in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America, when philosophers became animated by the scientific developments around the theory of evolution (Pearce, 2020). William James (1842-1910) articulated the dilemma philosophers faced – the knowledge that scientists ('tough-minded' empiricists) had demonstrated the way humans have evolved but it alienated the 'tender minded' (thinkers, religions) in its exclusion of values. He saw pragmatism as a philosophy that could mediate between the two opposing worldviews (Legg and Hockway, 2021). This co-existence of opposing worldviews is reflected in its ontological stance: reality is not singular, it is actively created in the situation that humans are in at the time, is ever changing, and meaning is derived from the practical consequences of accepting [the situation] (Pearce, 2020; Legg and Hockway, 2021; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

**Epistemology:** Perhaps considered one of the most diverse of the philosophies used in research, Bernstein (1989) describes five varying themes within pragmatism's worldview which contribute to its epistemological stance. The first is that it is anti-foundationalist — in other words, it questions the necessity for knowledge to be based on a known foundation of truth. The second is the acceptance of fallibilism — in other words, whilst holding worthwhile knowledge we must accept the possibility of it being false. The third relates to the social nature of 'the self' which acknowledges the critical community of 'inquirers' that 'the self' is part of. In addition, the fourth theme is

that of unpredictability, the radical contingency which explains [accounts for] human actions. The final theme is plurality, which allows for multiple perspectives and explanations to be considered so a shared understanding may be achieved. Epistemologically, pragmatist philosophers saw their view of knowledge as a return to common sense. The epistemological focus within pragmatism is the inquiry itself, unlike other philosophies which view knowledge acquired to be the end point (Legg and Hockway, 2021). Inquiries are carried out in a 'fruitful way' based on practical experience, and this carries through to the methodology that pragmatic researchers select in their research designs (*ibid.*).

Axiology: Although the pragmatist's maxim is a form of empiricism (Wilson, 2016) there are elements that rest with the naturalistic narrative — in axiological terms, the researcher's professional and personal life experience and values become part of the interpretation of any data generated (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019).

#### **4.1.2 Justification of Choice of Research Philosophy**

Having deliberated the four paradigms, the researcher felt that the scientific stance with empirical investigation of facts, of 'observable' phenomena, offered the optimal choice.

In fact, having deliberated the alternatives, the examination and interpretation of qualitative data underpins why that approach was not ultimately considered suitable for this study. The data analysis process for naturalistic inquiry methods such as case study, interviews and participant observation is often a four-stage process. Beginning with line-by-line manual coding, it progresses

to thematic analysis thereby capturing the key themes according to the initial conceptual framework. This process is exemplified by the interactive approaches which are continually applied in what becomes a labour-intensive activity of reading and re-reading transcripts and coding the data to develop contextual understanding. Topics under naturalistic inquiry are often complicated, and Charmaz (2006, p51) advocates for coding strategies to be utilised to ensure “the data speaks to the research topic”. Consequently, new themes are generated through the repeat sifting that was not within the initial framework, which leads to new associations (theme collaborations). After the initial open coding, the researcher moves on to “focused coding”, defined as “using the most significant or/frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data” and the codes “are more directed, selective and conceptual than word-by-word, line-by-line and incident-by-incident coding” (Glaser 1978, p61; see also Charmaz, 2014 and Charmaz, 2006, p57). The focused coding enables the research to move away from a linear process, but focus more on answering the questions, through a comparative and iterative process: at all stages of this process is an element of normativity (Jarvis Thomson, 2008). Normativity becomes a tricky concept for any research that is not within the qualitative paradigm. Within the philosophy of research, normative has come to be associated with the evaluation of a concept and indeed statements about the findings (Strauss, 2017). More importantly, and particularly within research based in the Social Sciences platform, normative statements are abound with moral judgement and assumptions, resting directly within the axiology of research knowledge; they involve value statements (Jarvis Thomson, 2008).

This naturalistic approach did not fit with the researcher's worldview; it was clear from the in-depth review that selecting a paradigm that was fit-for purpose was key to building a research design and methods that would meet the challenges ahead and deliver a robust study. Positivism typically yields results that can be measured and analysed, as well as trends that may be observed (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Using this paradigm to underpin the research methodology followed the approach of many of the previous studies seen in the literature (e.g. Westjohn, Magnusson, Peng and Jung, 2021; Alsaad, Elrehail and Saif-Alyoufis, 2022), which suggests it has reasonable utility. Likewise, the ontology, epistemology and axiology of the paradigm support the underlying premise of the study (the variables are observable and measurable, causal relationships are likely to be found (or disproven) and the data gathering is anonymous therefore there is no researcher influence) (Saunders Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p.119). Perhaps more importantly, the objective stance inherent within positivism aligns with and is congruent with the author's own beliefs about the nature of research needing to be based on scientific measurement yielding findings that are not open to one's subjective interpretation.

The four research philosophies discussed in detail within this section are summarised in table 4.1 overleaf:

Table 4.1 Comparison of Four Research Philosophies in Management Research

	Positivism	Interpretivism	Realism	Pragmatism
Ontology	Real, external, objective and independent of social actors	Socially constructed, subjective	Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist)	The meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it
Epistemology	Scientific method, observable and measurable facts, law-like generalisations, Numbers, Causal explanations and prediction as contribution	Subjective meanings and social phenomena.	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism).	Focus on real world issues, practical application of knowledge, exploring the connection between knowing and action
Axiology	Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance	Research is value bound; the researcher is part of what is being researched.	Research is value-laden; the researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences, and upbringing.	Research accommodates multiple values and viewpoints, including the researcher's own concerns
Data collection techniques most often used	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative, but can use qualitative	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative	Methods chosen must fit the subject matter, quantitative or qualitative	Suitable for mixed methods; used in social sciences

Source: Saunders Lewis and Thornhill, (2019, p.119)

The following section discusses the major considerations undertaken when determining which research approach was selected. As with the previous section, following a detailed discussion, key points are summarised in Table 4.2.

## **4.2. Research Approach**

In addition to the paradigm, another consideration is the research approach: those elements that incorporate the processes and tools utilised to undertake a research study. Closely aligned to the paradigm, the research approach is shaped by processes of reasoning that remain congruent with both the underpinning philosophy and the ensuing research design upon which the study is conducted. Halfpenny (1997, p. 53) reminds us that paradigms are separate from approaches, approaches are separate from procedures; using this interpretation, the following presents the deliberations taken when choosing the research approach as part of the justification for the overall choice of research design and methods. This involved considering the deductive, inductive and abductive paths of reasoning.

### **4.2.1 Deliberating the Research Approach**

Researchers who work within the positivist paradigm investigate quantifiable evidence that necessitates testing hypotheses constructed using existing theory (Hürlimann, 2019). This uses a process of deductive reasoning; researchers use facts to analyse the implications of the hypotheses tested, create an assumption (or hypothesis) based on existing theory and then design a research method to test the hypothesis. In other words, a deductive

method draws conclusions based on premises or propositions and focuses on inquiries that narrow in on increasingly particular levels as they progress (Armat *et al.*, 2018). The positivist paradigm with deductive reasoning is utilised most frequently in the course of scientific inquiries. The researcher examines the work that other individuals have completed, reads about the concepts that have been established regarding the phenomenon that is the subject of the research, and then tests the assumptions that have been formed from the theories that have been examined.

Inductive reasoning, by comparison, is an approach used by researchers who follow naturalistic inquiry. It is a form of logic that offers up a 'measure of support' for a conclusion, unlike deductive reasoning that offers full support for a conclusion that based on scientific inquiry 'must be true' (empiricism) (Hawthorne, 2018). When carrying out research, a researcher who employs inductive reasoning will initially concentrate on acquiring data that is important to the topic that piques their interest (Liew, Grisham, and Hayes, 2018). In the inductive approach, extensive data are gathered in order to facilitate inquiry and the researcher independently analyses the data from comprehensive perspective. The researcher examines the accumulated material in search of recurring patterns and makes an effort to formulate a hypothesis that might explain these recurring themes. Using inductive reasoning, the researcher attempts to address the question of what the underlying rationale is for the patterns of information that keep appearing. According to Liew, Grisham, and Hayes (2018), the researcher progresses from specific experiences to a collection of assertions that are more widely applicable to those experiences. In this view, inductive reasoning can be characterised as the process of

moving from information to theory, which can also be thought of as the process of moving from the specific to the general.

The third approach, abductive reasoning, attempts to address what users of the approach deem as inadequacies with deductive and inductive reasoning (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Whereas empiricism, with its deductive logic, is criticised for having a lack of clarity around the theory used for making hypotheses, naturalistic research, with its inductive logic, has been criticised because no amount of data will necessarily lead to theory building (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Abductive reasoning, by comparison, takes 'incomplete observations' and makes 'best predictions' using a pragmatic approach. Researchers look for the best possible explanation for their findings. Timmermans and Tavory (2012) suggest that researchers should look to abductive reasoning because it can use social actors' intellectual positions (such as in qualitative inquiry) whilst still aiding empirical enquiry.

As part of the process of determining which paradigm and which approach to base this study on, it was essential to compare not only the philosophical assumptions of each paradigm but also the paths of reasoning that accompany the paradigms as well as determining the type of methodology that rests with each. Table 4.2 below provides a summary of the three approaches and includes a precis of how data is used with each.

	Deductive	Inductive	Abductive
Logic	In a deductive inference, when the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true	In an inductive inference, known premises are used to generate untested conclusions	In an abductive inference, known premises are used to generate testable conclusions
Generalisability	Generalising from the general to the specific	Generalising from the specific to the general	Generalising from the interactions between the specific and the general
Use of data	Data collection is used to evaluate propositions or hypotheses related to an existing theory	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes, and patterns and create a conceptual framework	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns, locate these in a conceptual framework and test this through subsequent data collection and so forth
Theory	Theory falsification or verification	Theory generation and building	Theory generation or modification; incorporating existing theory where appropriate, to build new theory or modify existing theory

Table 4.2 Distinction between deductive, inductive and abductive paths of reasoning. Source: Saunders *et al.* (2019, p.145).

#### 4.2.2 Justification of Choice of Research Approach

Robson and McCartan (2016) suggest that research in the real world is changing remarkably in recent decades, giving examples such as the advent of the internet opening new possibilities for data collection and analysis, with enhanced ethical considerations required, and with very real concerns about sustainability forming the landscape of all research going forward. The hegemonic ethical paradigms followed by ethics committees all centre around protecting the welfare of individuals who participate in research, be it in terms of their rights or their physical and psychological welfare (Samuel and Richie, 2022). However, there are calls for the committees' remit to widen and include protecting the community (Cragoe, 2019) and the environment (Samuel and Richie, 2022) when conducting research. Extrapolating these concerns to the current study was a consideration: survey methodology was being considered including online links, the proposal had to stand up to the rigour of the ethics committee, and the logistical considerations necessary for conducting this study across two distinct and different geographical locations — Wolverhampton, UK, for the majority of the research process and Saudi Arabia for data collection — to ensure its sustainability became an important factor. To address these concerns, one element of the approach was to ensure carbon offsetting when purchasing the tickets for travelling for the data collection stage.

When selecting the choice of approach, reviewed studies were also examined to determine other researchers' outcomes using different approaches; this brought the deliberation from the theoretical arena to the practical arena.

From the literature review, for instance, Tabassi, Esmaeilzadeh and Sambasivan (2012) adopted a positivist approach using survey methodology to gather data from a random sample at various shopping outlets. Such methodology enabled the authors to maintain their objectivity throughout the study without being influenced by the participants' lived experience. In direct contrast, another study that was reviewed used grounded theory, an interpretivist approach that combined interviewing with extensive sifting and coding of transcripts in order to generate theory from the narratives of the participants (Toussaint, Cabanelas, and González-Alvardo, 2021). In keeping with the interpretive paradigm, their approach included discussion of participants' values and analysis was conducted using inductive reasoning. As this study aimed to investigate how religiosity, animosity and ethnocentricity affect the perceptions of service performance by Saudi airline passengers and influence their attitude towards airline services, a research design had to be constructed that was fit for purpose, that would be attainable within the available timeframe, and crucially, that had demonstrable utility as evidenced within the literature review. Robson and McCartan (2016 p.80) remind researchers to link their research question to their research strategy at every stage; a deductive approach was more suitable for this study than an interpretive one as it matched several criteria for such methods. For instance, in terms of axiology, the research was to be undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher was independent of the data and maintained an objective stance. Likewise, in terms of reasoning, the data collected was to be used to evaluate hypotheses related to actual services used using existing theory (in this case, TPB and TCV) (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2). This choice can be also

justified by returning to the stated aims and objectives of this study, which list four constructs measurable via deduction, as seen in reviewed previous studies (e.g. de Jong, Behrens, van Herk, and Verhoef, 2022; Stamolampros, Dousios, and Korfiatis, 2020):

- To investigate the effect of animosity in Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.
- To investigate the influence of ethnocentrism in Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.
- To investigate the impact of religiosity on Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.
- To investigate any moderating role of service performance in Saudis' attitudes towards airline services.

#### **4.2.3 Marrying approach with the chosen theoretical framework**

A recent Cochrane review by Ramírez-Angulo and Londoño-Roldán (2020) illustrates the methodological repercussions inherent within consumer behaviour research studies that rest in the decision related to which research approach is to be used. Linking the theoretical frameworks developed by researchers directly to the paradigmatic landscape in which studies are structured and conducted, the authors describe the choice and consequences as being in two arenas. The positivist, the predominant paradigm in which consumers are seen as rational human beings, and the 'non-positivist', the interpretive / post-modern arena where consumers are seen as individuals who construct meaning that is founded on their cultural and lived experience (see also Pachauri, 2001).

As seen in section 3.2, this study uses a two-theory lens through which the literature review was conducted and which also allowed for the discussion and interpretation of the findings in later chapters. Each theory, as deliberated in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, rests within the behaviouralist category, and each provides a nuanced understanding of the consumer's behaviour whilst mitigating for shortcomings in the other. For instance, one of the main premises of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) rests in the notion that the volitional behaviour of humans is central to the function of the intention to perform that behaviour and perceived behavioural control (PBC) (Sniehotta, Pesseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014). This has been demonstrated in studies such as Camacho, Ramírez-Correa, and Salazar-Concha (2022), which revealed the positive influence of perceived behavioural control on consumers' intention to purchase. Intention in such contexts is integral to attitude towards the purchase (behaviour), involves some behavioural control, yet is part of a person's norms, mores and values.

And yet authors such as Conner, Gaston, Sheeran, and Germain, (2013) have called into question how TPB excludes the effect of unconscious influences on behaviour and does not address the crucial role of emotions beyond anticipated affective outcomes. This study therefore adopted the theory of consumption values (TCV) in addition to TPB to offer a more versatile theoretical lens. TCV views consumer behaviour through a values-based perspective (Sheth *et al.* 1991; Tanrikulu, 2021), suggesting that humans have the proclivity towards perceived value when eliciting choice [of products] (Kotler and Armstrong, 2021).

Returning to the review by Ramírez-Angulo and Londoño-Roldán (2020), we are reminded that much of the focus of consumer behaviour research has been around experimental designs and surveys, with statistical modelling entering the field to support the positivist perspective (Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler, 2010). They cite a growing presence of studies delivered using qualitative methods and highlight the apparent division between researchers adopting either/or strategies (positivist [quantitative] / interpretive [qualitative]).

As seen in section 4.1.2, this study justifies the choice of positivist paradigm based on several factors including the work of previous authors and the desire to offer objective analysis of results. Taking into consideration the need to deliver a methodology that is congruent with the paradigm (positivist) and the underpinning theoretical framework (TPB / TCV), this study heeds the findings of Ramírez-Angulo and Londoño-Roldán (2020, p103) in deeming that a deductive approach in this setting will enable a better (*sic*) description of consumer behaviour [related to the variables consumer animosity, ethnocentricity, religiosity alongside service performance]. The following section now presents the research design, including a detailed synopsis of the use of survey in research.

### **4.3 Reflexivity in Quantitative Research**

The concept of reflexivity in the research process has long been associated with interpretive or qualitative studies (Olukotun *et al.*, 2021). However, there is growing awareness among the wider research community of the need to understand and acknowledge the effect of personal bias on each stage of the quantitative, empirical study process (Ryan and Golden, 2006; Kirkinis *et al.*,

2021). This section outlines the process of reflexivity in quantitative inquiry and details its consideration and operationalisation within the stages of the conducting and writing up of this thesis.

Early use of the term 'reflexivity' referred to a process of critical self-reflection by researchers on the subjectivities that shape our worldview (Wilkinson, 1988). Lazard and McAvoy (2020) describe this as researchers asking what is the research process, am I influencing it, and if so, how? Furthermore, Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall (2023, p2) juxtapose positionality with reflexivity, suggesting where positionality becomes the ontology of what we know (the nature of reality and knowledge), then reflexivity becomes "what we do with what we know".

Willig (2013) determined that the process of reflexivity is more than reflection; it involves active, critical thinking about why a study is being undertaken, how it is being undertaken, and constantly checking back on the value of a study, its utility and ethics. Indeed, reflection and reflexivity may be viewed as on a continuum, or spectrum (Shaw, 2010). Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall (2023) suggest that reflection is retrospective, whereas reflexivity is a conscious and active process that begins when the early ideas for conducting research emerge, through the planning and conducting of a study, and crucially, after it is completed / prior to dissemination. They go on to suggest that the scope of reflexivity offers greater utility in the research process as a guide during the research process across all epistemologies and methodologies.

Turning directly to quantitative research and the argument for conducting this study in a reflexive manner, it is important to consider the focus of the study is on consumer attitudes. Attitudes by their very nature are subjective; section 1.1.5 outlined how consumer attitudes form part of a consumer's belief systems, capturing deeply subjective thoughts, feelings and intuition (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Attitudes influence behaviour and are central to a person's consumption values (Kotler and Armstrong, 2021). It can be argued that quantitative research is concerned with determining patterns; these patterns include not only 'scientific' behaviours (say, of chemicals under control conditions) but also 'human' behaviours, particularly in survey responses. Farran (1990, p 101) argues that a scientific epistemological approach to gathering and studying patterns of behaviour, responses and attitudes does not equate with it being more robust or reliable, as quantitative methods may become "divorced from the context of their construction and thus lose the meanings they had for the people involved". The 'people involved' include the researcher, whose positionality and subjectivities and therefore biases in the process of conducting research must be taken into account as they are central to the ethics of beneficence and non-maleficence within research (Jamieson, 2020).

Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall (2023) suggest that when quantitative researchers engage in reflexive research practice, other practices that may impact on a study's credibility are avoided. Examples of such reflexivity include making a formal positionality statement, or keeping a reflexive journal through which to engage critically with one's own beliefs, biases and judgements whilst thinking about the research process. Kerr (1998) describes

one act that can question the integrity of research that can be avoided in this way: HARKing, or hypothesising after results are known (without statistical correlation or correction). Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall (2023) argue that the questioning of ones biases and unchecked assumptions becomes a constant process through the use of a reflexive journal which prompts researchers to shift their understanding (see also Barrett, Kajamaa, and Johnston, 2020).

The following are the steps taken during this study that aimed to ensure reflexivity in practice; they are intentionally written in the first person to reflect the personal nature of reflexivity:

- As with most quantitative research, this study began with a consideration of the topic of debate, about what was already known about the subject and about what gap remained that led to the research being proposed. Through using a reflexive journal, and integrating reflexivity into the process of designing the study, I asked myself questions such as ‘how am I influencing the choice of subject?’ Lazard and McAvoy (2020) argue this personal dialogue raises a researcher’s insight and can be adopted in quantitative research methods.
- I knew that there should be critical engagement with the literature for this study, but it was important to maintain a reflexive approach to the selection of articles and to the authors, not just to them being published in ‘gold standard’ journals. This study is set in Saudi Arabia, at perhaps one of the most dynamic times in its constituted

history. It was important then to reflect on the influences on me when selecting pieces to critically engage with, such as my own religiosity, to avoid bias. I knew, for instance, that in many science fields, white authors and men are over-represented in citation lists (Bertolero *et al.*, 2020), therefore it was important to aim for balance. Intentionally sourcing Saudi studies was to set the literature review within the socio-geographical landscape, and not out of my own ethnocentric bias; it was to 'hear' the Saudi voices then compare with other regions. Using a reflexive diary helped bring a thoughtful appreciation towards finding supporting evidence.

- When designing data collection methods, and indeed, when conducting data collection, embedding reflexivity into the process ensured assumptions about the type of question to be asked and the nature of the airports selected for conducting the survey were addressed. Walker, Read, and Priest (2013) suggest that reflexivity during the design of quantitative data collection instruments and then when conducting data collection itself affords researchers the opportunity to check unconscious bias that might influence participants and encourages transparency. This is reflected on as appropriate to this study in Chapter 5.
- Embedding reflexive engagement with data in the analysis stage and interpretation of research ensures researchers have a “well-articulated understanding of their own positionality and agenda for the research at hand” (Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall (2023, p. 8).

To achieve this, I made field notes during data collection, and during data analysis; these are reflected on in Chapter 5.

These steps are summarised in the following table:

Table 4.3 Selected prompt questions used to embed reflexivity in all stages of the quantitative research process in this study.

Stage of research	Broader reflexivity prompts
Research question and design	<p>Why do I want to research this group (Saudi airline services users)?</p> <p>To what extent am I “within” the participant group that I am researching?</p> <p>Am I an “insider” or “outsider” researcher (or do I occupy both positions?)</p> <p>What can I give to this group?</p> <p>Should I be the one to research this group, or am I taking space away from someone else?</p>
Data collection	<p>Am I intruding on these passengers? How can I make this as non-coercive as possible?</p> <p>How can I make this research accessible to the population?</p> <p>Do participants understand what their data will be used for?</p> <p>Have I thought beyond traditional ethics? Am I acting ethically?</p> <p>Could my collection methods be problematic?</p>
Data analysis and interpretation	<p>Am I aware that people have given me this survey data and that they may not know me?</p> <p>Who are these people behind the data?</p> <p>Could my analysis of the dataset reproduce existing inequalities?</p>
Conclusions and framing	<p>How does my use of evidence reflect my biases (I am an active Muslim and proud to be a Saudi National) as a researcher and as an individual with my own life, wants, emotions, needs?</p> <p>What do I gain from this research? What does the population I have studied gain?</p> <p>Is there a disconnect between the two questions above? If so, I must consider the first few questions in this table again.</p>

Adapted from Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall (2023, p. 10).

To summarise, this section has outlined the rationale for adopting the process of reflexivity whilst planning and conducting this study; as a technique ordinarily associated with qualitative methods, it recognises the work of researchers including Farran (1990), Walker, Read, and Priest (2013), and

Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall (2023) in recognising its place in quantitative methodology. This chapter now progresses to outline the research design, following which the research strategy is presented.

#### **4.4 Research Design**

Research involves a systematic process of collecting data with a clear purpose (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The research design assists a researcher to provide in-depth explanations of the problem or scenario they are investigating in their research information (Tabassi, Esmailzadeh and Sambasivan, 2012). A research design is a strategy for answering the research question entirely based on theoretical premises, entailing the individual collecting data, analysing it, preparing it, and then presenting it in a way others can comprehend. Intricately linked to the underpinning paradigm, the design guides and informs methodological choice to aid maintaining a congruent approach throughout the study (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

The first step in choosing a design is to re-visit the study aims and objectives - in this case, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence of ethnocentrism, animosity, and religiosity on Saudis' attitude towards airline services and test the associated hypotheses. Any design will address the "what" and the "why" questions raised by the themes. As the author did not want to attempt to influence the variables in any way, which would be more consistent with an interpretivist approach, and aimed instead to identify and measure the relationships between the already-selected variables, a quantitative, fixed, deductive research design was an appropriate choice. A fixed design is developed ahead of a study (Robson and McCartan, 2016) and

is essentially theory-driven. As seen in chapter three, the theoretical framework was established following a critical review of the literature and theories that other researchers had utilised. The scope of the research design is to provide a basis for future research and facilitate an extensive understanding of the study's research question within Saudi Arabia. The research design selected is a cross-sectional survey, and the scope of the study is within an anticipated timeline selected for the study.

#### **4.4.1 Survey design in research**

In terms of conducting this study, and in terms of building the justification for and the structure of the fixed, deductive research design outlined in the Section 4.4.1, survey methodology appeared to be a suitable approach. Surveys are ubiquitous and are everywhere (Robson and McCarten, 2016). Lavidas *et al.* (2023) suggest that web-based questionnaires have become more popular over the last two decades and list advantages over paper-based surveys such as convenience, quick turn-around and cost-effective (see also Aerny-Perreten *et al.*, 2015 and Park, K. *et al.*, 2019). The utility of surveys is widespread and can reach a large population with data gathered of use for many utilities such as market research and general census activity (Check and Schutt, 2012). Yet use of survey within research, and indeed as the main method, requires careful planning and deliberation (Ponto, 2015). To ensure success of the data collection and therefore facilitating the delivery of robust results for analysis, several considerations were deliberated regarding the use of survey in this study.

As seen in the literature review, many of the previous studies reviewed adopted survey methodology as part of their design (e.g. De Nisco, Massi, and Papadopoulos, (2020); Suham-Abid, and Vila-Lopez, (2020)). However, as was also seen in Chapter Two, the use of survey methodology was not without its limitations and inconsistencies. For instance, de Jong, Behrens, van Herk, and Verhoef, (2022) investigated the impact code sharing had on customer choice of airline when an alien [overseas] airline was code-shared with a domestic airline. They measured 'value' — the value that customers attributed to the overseas airline when code-shared with their own, familiar, home country's airline. However, the theoretical framework was rooted in statistical derivation as it measured outcome using the Random Utility Model. It was hard to elicit 'value' in their analysis when the questionnaire and the results from the questionnaire appeared to measure likelihood of purchase and purchase intention based on responses to the seemingly value-free questions using an algorithm [multinomial logit models]. Another study by comparison that was also considered in Chapter Two was conducted by Alsaad, Elrehail and Saif-Alyoufis (2022) using online survey methodology. Investigating intention to purchase ethical goods, the study was considered suitable for review for this thesis as it used religiosity as an independent variable and was set within the geographical landscape of Saudi Arabia, giving two distinct points of reference and comparison for this study when attitudes towards Airline Services was being considered. Of note, their survey was internet-based due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that was initially a consideration when planning the design for this research project. The survey instrument developed by Alsaad, Elrehail and Saif-Alyoufis (2022) was

constructed in a way that clearly identified [and asked the participants to self-reflect upon] values, and the measurement, although also statistical as it counted incidence of responses and measured variance using structural equation modelling, informed distinct analysis that captured personal values as influenced / moderated by religiosity and moral certitude. Asking the questions in the manner the authors did was consistent with TPB, their underpinning paradigm; when compared with those asked using Random Utility Model (RUM) in the previous example, it demonstrates that the term 'survey' is used with many incarnations.

Historically, surveys in research have been associated with gathering large amounts of data from large samples of the population under study, often in multi-centre studies or indeed national census (Ponto, 2015). Surveys have also provided invaluable in arenas such as market research and also within social science and psychology (Singleton and Straits, 2009). During the pandemic, one study found benefit in a medical setting of using a web-based survey approach for post-operative questionnaires that sought to evaluate aspects of post-operative recovery (Descamps *et al.*, 2023).

Survey research in recent years has become more rigorous, using scientifically tested strategies to reduce error and bias. Error in survey research can be loosely categorised into five main themes: coverage, sampling, measurement, reporting and non-response (Ponto, 2015; Singleton and Straits, 2009; Check and Schutt, 2012; Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2014; Ponto, 2015). In building the research strategy for this study, these themes were investigated in order to provide a robust approach to the delivery

of the data collection phase and indeed, to reduce the potential for error that might skew any results:

#### Coverage:

Alvarez and VanBeselaere (2005) describe coverage as the extent to which the sample group is representative of the whole population under study, with coverage error reflecting the deviation between the two. When determining the demographic data for a point of reference when designing this study, it was noted across the various publicly accessible databases that whole numbers of travellers is collected but extrapolating finer demographic details such as Saudi Nationals from the total travelling population was not possible as that level of data could not be retrieved ( <https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/1006>; <https://datasource.kapsarc.org/>). In other words, assessing the proportion of Saudi Nationals travelling from total numbers was not possible at that time. Mulry (2008) suggests the predominant error with coverage rests with the target population not coinciding with the selected sample group, leading to under-coverage (and in some instances, over-coverage). Davies (2008) suggests over-coverage may result when responses are counted more than once or when additional subjects are erroneously included within the population.

#### Sampling error

The risk of sampling errors commences in the design stage of any research: selecting subjects that are non-representative of the target population affects external validity (Robson and McCarten, 2016). Patton (2002) reminds us that quantitative methods achieve 'breadth of understanding'; selecting a limited

sample (omitting key age ranges for instance) likewise affects outcome and validity. Other sampling errors include heterogeneity, where the sample group have too many individual characteristics for the elements under study to be representative; whereas Lipsey (1990) provides power calculations to determine the ideal sample size to avoid such errors, Robson and McCarten (2016) bring the issue into the realm of 'real world research' by reminding researchers of the need for piloting surveys and large sample groups.

### Measurement

Ponto (2015) suggests the largest source of measurement error relates to questionnaires 'asking the wrong questions'. In part that is related to the framing of the question and error in producing the template – for instance, asking a question requiring a yes/no answer ["Have you travelled with Flybe previously?"] but offering responses that do not match ["Male  Female "]. Likewise, to remain congruent with the research paradigm, the use of open-ended questions versus closed questions may be a source of error. If surveying 1,000 cancer victims about their experience of the McMillan cancer support services but aspiring to achieve a quick turnaround of data indicating, say, 600 people would like the services delivered within the home, then open-ended questions will generate screeds of qualitative data. This illustrates why a mis-match (incongruence) between philosophy and design is a direct cause of measurement error.

### Reporting (response) error

In addition to the example above ['asking the wrong questions'], response errors tend to be generated when the 'wrong answer' is given to the 'right

question'. There are a myriad of roots of such an error: user-based examples include literacy, sight problems (from 'forgotten reading glasses' to sight impairment), cognitive deficiency, language barrier and a misunderstanding of what is being asked. Other errors are rooted in poor facilities (lack of good lighting for reading the questionnaires, sound disturbance, no internet provision, lack of designated space for completing the survey etc.), researcher skills (lack of experience in conducting surveys, poor timekeeping, lack of preparation) and invariably, a poor questionnaire design (Ponto, 2015; Robson and McCarten, 2016; Bhandari, 2022).

#### Non-response

A non-response error can be seen when a proportion of the chosen sample do not return their survey items (questionnaires), return a partially completed questionnaire or refuse to participate. This may be precipitated by reasons including inappropriate questions for the target group and a general decline in the public's willingness to participate (Tourangeau, 2006). Other reasons for non-response can be caused by technical problems, particularly with internet surveys when the participant may not respond due to a lack of access to the Internet (Check and Schutt, 2012), or with postal surveys when mail goes missing. Some argue that non-response bias is more of a validity concern than non-response itself; an example would be when surveying a population about say a workplace issue but the managers refuse to participate, hence the survey becomes invalid (Tourangeau, 2006).

Strategies used in this study to reduce such errors are outlined in Section 4.5. The research design selected for this study is a cross-sectional survey, and the scope of the study is within an anticipated fixed timeline. The next sections lay out the elements of the design and approach as they align with the research process.

## **4.5 Research Strategy**

In the previous section, the research design was justified based on the chosen research paradigm and methodological approaches reviewed in existing literature. This section now seeks to map out the strategy for conducting the study using methodology that is consistent with the positivist paradigm and the research design. The research methodology forms a sequential process, justifying the tools and techniques that comprise the means of progressing from broad assumptions to procedures for conducting research that spans sampling, data collection, data analysis and evaluation. At all times this is predicated on the characteristics of the research issue being investigated and the underpinning paradigm and theoretical framework.

The following sections present the strategy and research instruments to test the study hypotheses.

### **4.5.1 Research Population and Sampling**

When conducting any research, identification and selection of the sample and the population from which it is drawn is key to achieving methodological rigour. Breakwell, Smith and Wright (2012 p. 95) suggest that “the underlying motivation of sampling is to make statistical inferences from samples to

populations". The population was the first consideration in the sampling process to enable decisions to be made on the type of sampling applicable to the population that remained consistent with the paradigm and research design.

The dependent variable (Saudis' attitude towards airline service) in this study is measured from the population of Saudi Nationals who use airline services. It would not be feasible to survey every person using airline services in Saudi Arabia due to the sheer volume of passengers per year (26.98m in 2020; Knoema, 2022). In determining the sample there are several methods used in survey methodology; these fall under the broad category of probability samples and non-probability samples. Simple random sampling (probability) was not felt useful for this study design, as it involves selecting people at random from the population. Because the nature of airline services, and airports in particular, is that people using airports are not necessarily travelling, and this survey was conducted by handing out information sheets and links to the online survey to people travelling or buying tickets to travel, it could not be guaranteed that everybody receiving the sheet was a passenger.

Systematic sampling is another form of sampling that involves extracting every 'nth' person from a list – again, as the population [from which the sample was selected] present on the days the survey was conducted was not predictable, there was no 'list' from which to select, say, every 5<sup>th</sup> person. Nor was there a guarantee that those selected would actually be travelling, thus the margin for error is high. Non-participation becomes a major concern which impacts on generalisability in later stages (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

Non-probability sampling is based on the premise that the probability of selection from the population of study isn't known (Bryman and Bell, 2015). One such approach is quota sampling, a method of selecting representatives of a population; however, there is inherent bias in this approach, as the researcher would need prior information about subjects in addition to 'Saudis using airline services' (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Similar concerns arise with dimensional sampling, a method of refining a quota sample through selecting a proportion who match certain criteria; because of this bias, both types were excluded.

Having deliberated sampling methodologies, this study followed Wang, Wong, Naryanan and Chee (2020) and chose a sampling frame based on homogenous sampling. This method uses a sample population whose members all have the same traits – in this instance, all participants were Saudi adults using airline services; a purposive approach was applied, where researchers believe that it is possible to obtain a representative sample through sound judgment, allowing them to save time and money (Prior *et al.*, 2020). To determine sample size, this study followed recommendations by Li (2016) who recommended a minimum of 100 for questionnaire / survey research; furthermore, Chan *et al.* recommend a ratio of the observed variables to the sample size between 1:10 and 1:15. The sample group was therefore selected from Saudis travelling from five Saudi airports, with the total number of participants set at 500 passengers: 100 questionnaires were administered at each selected airport. In terms of expected response rate, Holtom, Baruch, Aguinis and Ballinger (2022) reviewed response rates to surveys in published studies and found a significant increase from 2005 (48%

average) to 2020 (68%). Factors increasing response rate included robust design and researcher motivation. These factors were taken into the questionnaire design stage in 4.5.2; based on Holtom *et al.* (2022), an expected response rate of 68% was anticipated.

Saudi Arabia is home to 46 airports, some of which are brand new terminals, categorised as domestic, regional, international, military, and reserve airports (International Air Transport Association, 2022b). It was important to select airports that provided services for domestic passengers, as the focus of the study was on Saudi citizens, but as information was being sought about their experience of both domestic and foreign airline services, five main airports serving domestic flights as well as international flights were chosen to capture this. The selected airports cover the different regions of Saudi Arabia: Riyadh Airport in the Saudi Capital City serves the central region, King Fahd Airport in Dammam city serves the eastern region, King Abdulaziz Airport in Jeddah City serves the western region, the airport in Medina City serves the north, and the airport in Taif City serves the south (International Air Transport Association, 2022b). Figure 4.1 shows the domestic airline routes, with the five selected airports highlighted in blue:



Figure 4.1 Airports selected for the study (adapted from [airlineroutemaps.com](http://airlineroutemaps.com) 2023)

Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport is known as KKIA (capital city) RUH. With many daily domestic flights, the airport serves to act as a gateway to the rest of the country (SKYbrary Aviation Safety, 2021), as it receives passengers who are transferring to locations across the nation. This indicates that their customers will have the opportunity to experience various airline services and form opinions regarding how they are treated and served.

Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport, JED, sees over 200 nationalities represented among the millions of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims passing through each year (Al Hudhaif, 2021). This suggests that the airport caters to religious travellers, including many from other regions in Saudi Arabia and those from other countries who are attending religious ceremonies.

King Fahd International Airport, Dammam City, DMM, is served by roughly 27 of the world's most renowned airlines (SKYbrary Aviation Safety, 2021). Dammam serves domestic passengers and is a connecting point for travellers traveling between the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The airport was constructed to incorporate a residential neighbourhood, reflecting its domestic function, and a mosque with contemporary Islamic architecture with space for two hundred worshippers.

The Prince Muhammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Medina is evidence that the Saudi Arabian government prioritised the private sector's participation in the country's economic development (SKYbrary Aviation Safety, 2021). Serving many domestic travellers, the financial and socio-environmental development invested has enabled the country's civil aviation sector to have ideal investment variables. There has been a substantial expansion in the use of air travel in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Because of its location and status as an OPEC member and a Muslim state, Saudi Arabia stands out as an exceptional nation in the context of the rest of the Muslim world. Investors are confident in the industry's capacity for growth and prosperity, which is one reason they are drawn to invest in it. This

airport sited in Medina attracts many domestic travellers who commute for business, commerce and family purposes, but it also serves domestic and international religious tourism purposes for travellers visiting the Prophet's Mosque nearby (SKYbrary, 2021).

Taif International Airport, located in Taif City, TIF, is around 120 kilometres from Mecca in the north-western corner of the Taif Province (SKYbrary Aviation Safety, 2020). Between five and eight million passengers utilise the facility on an annual basis. This airport, along with the King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah and the Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Medina, are the global airports that serve pilgrims traveling for the Hajj and Umrah. As a result of Taif's location in close proximity to a Miqat point, many visitors from adjacent Saudi cities as well as neighbouring Gulf States have been using Medina airport. Umrah travellers frequently select the airport as their point of departure en route to Mecca because of its convenience.

#### **4.5.2 Data Collection**

Data collection in research is either a single process or a combination of watching (observation), asking (questioning) or testing (Robson and McCartan, 2016). This study was conducted using a positivist design, and a range of tools was investigated before selecting those used to measure the variables and test the hypotheses. There are two major data collection processes: secondary and primary. Secondary data collection methods include the collection of data that is already published, such as through consulting databases, articles and journals (Orsini *et al.*, 2020). Primary data

collection methods include observations, recording, and the use of questionnaires. This study utilised self-administered questionnaires to collect relevant primary data using closed-ended questions. It was important to avoid any common method bias, so the questionnaires were anonymous and they used validated scales that avoided any crossover between the variables (Mackenzie and Podsakoff, 2015).

Cross-sectional survey methodology involves collecting the data at a single point in time; the period of collection was limited to six months for operational purposes. There was no interviewing, which is considered integral to a qualitative design; instead, an anonymous questionnaire was constructed to capture demographic data in addition to travellers' attitudes around religiosity, ethnocentricity, animosity, and service performance in the context of choice of airline using summated rating (Likert) scales (Willits, Theodori and Luloff, 2016) (See Appendix B). As with other studies (including Tabassi, Esmailzadeh and Sambasivan, 2012), the questionnaires were distributed via the airports' public areas.

The original English questionnaire was translated into Arabic, the native language of Saudi participants. Sha and Immerwahr (2018) suggest that translating questionnaires into the native language of participants reduces error and contributes to the accuracy in responses and encourages participation. Tsai *et al.* (2017) suggest that one of the researchers is fluent in the language of translation. As the researcher is a native Arabic speaker from Saudi Arabia, there were no concerns about fluency but it was essential to maintain content equivalence, semantic equivalence and conceptual

equivalence (*ibid*). To that effect, peer back-translation was used; a fellow PhD student, also fluent in Arabic, translated the items back to demonstrate accuracy (Regmi, Naidoo, and Pilkington, 2010).

Recognising that some of the passengers who would be approached to participate may be under time pressure (rushing to the boarding area), an online link was provided using a barcode on the questionnaire. Such links have become common in research in recent years and have been seen to have many advantages (Andrade, 2020; Menon and Muraleedharan, 2020). For instance, there are many free platforms such as SurveyMonkey© which are easily accessible, they can attain global reach quickly, particularly when embedded in social media posts, and there are rarely administration costs (Andrade, 2020). More recently, disadvantages have been noted, particularly with generalisability (*ibid.*). In addition, they can only be completed by respondents with adequate literacy skills, and those surveys with open access may be widely distributed but there is no method of ensuring every return has been completed by a member of the target population (Menon and Muraleedharan, 2020; Ameen and Praharaj, 2020). To address potential problems, the online link was created using Jisc survey and was only embedded onto the paper questionnaire; as these were hand-delivered within the airport setting it was highly likely that the link would only be used by those with the sheet. To maintain congruence, the online survey was identical to the printed version. The link is printed on the front sheet (information sheet) of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). With the target population set at 100 participants at each airport (see previous section), the questionnaires were distributed by hand, and where passengers stated a preference for web-

based return, the bar code was scanned onto their mobile phone and the paper questionnaire corresponding to that passenger was removed from stock to prevent surplus returns.

Self-administered questionnaires were used to provide data for the study using Likert scales that were developed in the past to measure participants' attitudes (Willits, Theodori and Luloff, 2016). Often using a five-point scale, they can be used to measure a large number of items with responses moving from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. They have been the mainstay of opinion survey methodology, but alternatives are also popular. These include the Thurstone scale (containing many items, rated by experts), and the Guttman scale (similar to the Thurston but evaluated by their response to the strongest item) (Kiliç, Uysal and Kalkan, 2021). In recent years, emoji have become an increasingly popular feature used in rating scales but there are limited studies currently to determine validity of the instrument and generalisability of results obtained (*ibid*). Emoji are small icons which are intended to represent emotional cues or ideas (Merriam Webster, 2022). However, recent studies have demonstrated that males and females interpret emojis differently (Prada *et al.*, 2018), rendering consistency to be questionable. As this study was conducted in Saudi Arabia and the questionnaires were in Arabic, it was decided to use the tried and tested lens of Likert Scales to provide commonality in understanding the questions and responses.

With one exception, the Likert scale used in this research had five points of measure as follows: 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree, 3. Neither agree nor

disagree, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly Agree. Question 2 of Religiosity was scored 5 = Very Often, 4 = Often, 3 = Occasionally, 2 = Rarely, 1 = Never (see Appendix 2).

**Demographic measures** - this is the profile of the respondents using 8 items such as age, gender, education level, and income.

**Religiosity** is the degree to which one adheres to religious principles and regulations in one's daily activities; it is bound to attitudes, behaviour and values (McAndrew and Voas, 2012). Over the years several constructs, scales and survey items have been used to measure religiosity that emerge from dimensions such as 'orthodoxy', 'devotionalism' and 'belief' (*ibid.*). For this study, the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) (Huber, 2003) as modified by Huber and Huber (2012) was utilised. The modified scale was found to be particularly suited to Muslims (*ibid*), who represent the majority in Saudi Arabia; moreover, intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity has been seen in the literature review to be a salient feature in several studies. This scale measures public practice (extrinsic religiosity) and private practice (intrinsic religiosity) as two of its domains of religiosity, thus providing a further frame of reference for commentary in the results section. The other domains are intellect, religious experience and ideology. The full instrument was used, with three questions representing each domain chosen, such as 'How often do you take part in religious services?' (public practice), and the items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (See Appendix 2).

**Animosity**- As with religiosity, several constructs, scales and survey items have been used over the years to measure animosity that emerge from

specific dimensions. Klein, Ettenson and Morris (1998) developed an instrument founded on the concepts of war animosity and economic animosity as they applied to consumers. Nes, Yelkur and Silkoset (2012) extended this to politic and diplomatic animosity (suggesting that politic animosity may surface despite animosity-evoking policies of target nations having no direct impact on home country). The items for this variable were adapted from the study by Nijssen and Douglas (2004). Their study had 11 items using a five-point Likert scale with “1” indicating “strongly disagree” and “5” indicating “strongly agree” to measure animosity including people's negative feelings or emotions about a country's airline. As the original study was set in The Netherlands, looking specifically at German influence, the items were adapted by utilising Saudi Arabia and The West as alternatives. In this study, the variable was examined using the economic animosity set. This involved six questions such as “The West has too much influence on Saudi Arabia and the Saudi economy”, again using 5 items on a Likert scale. With this and other scales in this study, where scales were developed by previous authors, only those directly relevant to this study were chosen (after Gillanders and Barker, 2019). This is discussed further as part of chapter 7 in terms of commentary on the rigour of the overall research and learning for future studies.

**Ethnocentrism** - Ethnocentrism is the practice of assessing the culture of others in light of one's cultural norms and values. Ethnocentric people see their group as the centre of the universe and judge other groups based on their own group's standards. Shimp and Sharma (1987) developed a model, CETSCALE, to measure consumer ethnocentrism using 17 items and the scale has been tested in numerous studies over the years. More recently,

Jiménez-Guerrero, Gázquez-Abad, and Linares-Agüera (2014 p. 187) re-visited the scale in a systemic review of the literature followed by a survey of 378 German consumers to test its ongoing dimensionality. Their findings confirmed its reliability (Cronbach's alpha 0.918) but suggested that "results may be quite different depending on the extent to which the original conditions under which the scale was developed change." To that effect, this study chose six items from the original CETSCALE that were directly applicable to consumer choice in Airline Services, ensuring that original intent was maintained whilst only modifying the language to suit the Saudi Arabian context (after Gillanders and Barker, 2019). Questions were presented such as "Saudi Arabian consumers should always travel with Saudi Arabian airlines instead of foreign airlines" And were again measured using 5 items on a Likert Scale.

**Airline service performance** - this is the inclusion of a consumer's perception and views towards an airline service. The items for this moderator variable were adapted from the SERVPERF model (Taylor and Baker, 1994; Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 1994) which is based solely on the assessments (perceptions) of the client regarding the performance of the services (SERVicePERFormance). In it, quality is not measured through the differences between expectations and performance (Salomi *et al.*, 2005). Instead, it presents 22 sentences or statements regarding the perceptions on the performance of the service, thus eliminating those that correspond to the assessment of expectations. Each statement is drawn from 5 themes; Al Ahadwa (2023) suggests that because the measures have been used across several sectors, the instrument has enhanced utility for airline services if

modified for relevance to the sector. A starting point is having a clear definition of the five themes, and these are drawn from Taylor and Baker, (1994), and more recent focus groups of industry experts and service users in the study by Al Ahadwa, (2023):

**Tangible elements**, which measure the physical facilities, communication material, equipment and the employees. This dimension is considered to comprise all check-in and boarding services, the baggage handling services, waiting times at the gate, the appearance of contemporary aircrafts, providing clean facilities, and a wide range of in-flight entertainment and dining options.

**Responsiveness**, which measures the willingness to help customers and the swiftness and agility of the service provided to customers. It also involves keeping passengers informed and up-to-date on service times and delays, and responding quickly to complaints and requests.

**Reliability**, which measures the organisation's capacity to comply with what is promised and doing so without error, in other words, provide a dependable and accurate level of service delivery. It includes on-time departures/arrivals and efficient service.

**Safety and Assurance**, which measures the informed knowledge and operational expertise of employees. Importantly, it involves courtesy of the employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. Importantly, it also incorporates all safety considerations, both in providing safe planes but also meeting governance standards aimed at keeping passengers and staff safe.

**Empathy**, which measures the meticulous, compassionate and individual attention given to passengers, the accessibility to information to ensure easy travel scheduling, the capacity to listen and to understand each passenger's individual and unique needs. Statements include items such as "Saudi-based airline services flight attendants' behaviour toward delayed passengers is understanding".

**Attitude towards Airline Service** was measured using a model originally based on SERVQUAL criteria (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Extended in more recent work, it comprises five statements: **Overall Service Quality** (Dabholkar, Shepherd, and Thorpe 2000) — The overall service quality provided by this airline is excellent; **Price Satisfaction** (Matzler *et al.*, 2006) — I am highly satisfied with the price I paid for this flight; **Overall Satisfaction** (Cunningham, Young, and Lee 2004) — I am highly satisfied with this airline; **Intention to Repatronize** (Dabholkar *et al.*, 2000) — I would travel with this airline again; **Intention to Recommend** (Dabholkar *et al.*, 2000) — I would recommend this airline to others.

#### 4.5.3 Pilot Study

In fixed-design surveys, pilot studies are considered an essential stage in the study process, particularly if questionnaires or other survey instruments are being used for data collection in business-related inquiry (Doody and Doody, 2015; Robson and McCartan, 2016). A pilot study is conducted by distributing the data collection instrument to a limited subset of the intended population; this process enables researchers to evaluate its efficacy and pinpoint any potential problems or areas for enhancement (Robson and McCartan, 2016;

Malmqvist *et al.*, 2019; Ames, Glenton, and Lewin 2019). Through the implementation of a pilot study, researchers can acquire useful insights that contribute to the improvement and enhancement of the questionnaire or survey prior to its implementation on a larger scale.

Within the scope of the current study project, the author conducted a preliminary survey to assess the dependability and accuracy of the questionnaire (Malmqvist *et al.*, 2019). As they were not in Saudi Arabia at the time, the pilot was conducted within the UK, this made selecting a representative mini-sample challenging. The researcher therefore contacted a small cohort of Saudi Arabian peers within the University and asked for help with the piloting of the survey. For consideration as part of the pilot study, they were asked if they had utilised Saudi-based airline services in the last ten years (representing current usage post-Vision 2030, and prior to the reforms where possible); when attending the local Mosque for prayer, the researcher took the opportunity to place a notice asking for help using the same criteria [Saudi citizens who had utilised Saudi-based airline services in the last 10 years]. Seven people replied and were deemed suitable. They were asked to complete the questionnaire and make comments on aspects such as ease of understanding and completion, accessibility (font size, inclusive language) and quality of translation. 2 of those who completed the pilot from the peer group at the university were also involved in checking the translation (see previous section). This pivotal stage in the research process allows researchers to reveal significant insights throughout the data collection phase. It was observed that certain participants, particularly the Saudi students studying in the UK, showed some hesitation in responding to the questions

related to the religious aspect of the survey (see also Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour 2014). For instance, the question number 3 — How many times do you pray every day? — was modified to ‘How many times do you pray in the Mosque every day?’ The observation has raised important concerns about the clarity and sensitivity of the questions in this area, suggesting that targeted revisions and refinements are necessary (Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour 2014).

In response to these findings, a series of targeted modifications were implemented to improve the component of the questionnaire related to religiosity. The researchers in the study by Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour (2014) made improvements to the wording of the questions, using a more polished and easily understandable manner to enhance the participants' comprehension. In addition, Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour (2014) made deliberate modifications to certain questions in order to decrease the perceived intrusiveness of the inquiries and improve the overall cultural sensitivity of the instrument; this principle was adopted in this study. The intentional modifications were crucial for resolving the difficulties found in the pilot project and were intended to enhance the quality and dependability of the data gathered in the subsequent, larger-scale data collecting endeavours (Malmqvist *et al.*, 2019).

The pilot study in this research, as in any study, played a crucial and vital role. The pilot study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness and appropriateness of the questionnaire, specifically regarding the section on religiosity. This allowed the author to make specific improvements that

ultimately enhanced the quality and reliability of the collected data (Malmqvist *et al.*, 2019). In particular, the final section of the questionnaire measured consumer attitudes using the SERVQUAL criteria (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). However, the heading “Overall Choice of Airline Service” without using the word ‘attitude’ was selected following feedback from the pilot testing as it was felt by those participating to capture the intent of the items in ‘simple’ language that would be acceptable to those completing. The process of pilot testing, identifying issues, and making necessary modifications is a key characteristic of rigorous research design. This process ensures that the final data collection instrument is suitable for its intended purpose and capable of producing meaningful and reliable results (Doody and Doody, 2015; Thabane *et al.*, 2010).

#### **4.5.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis for this study was conducted using a combination of descriptive and regression analysis. Such analysis allows the researcher to identify patterns and trends in the responses of participants (Kemp *et al.*, 2018). The combination of descriptive and regression analysis enables the researcher to systematically summarise the data collected, outlining and describing the relationship between variables and any trends and variability.

Demographic data was collected using the first set of questions on the survey instrument (gender, age, level of education, employment status, salary range, region of residence, frequency of travel, reason for travel and type of airline service used most frequently). In some fields, it has been suggested that unless demographic data is a primary focus, it should be kept to a minimum

(e.g. in the field of medicine, Story and Tait (2019). However, in this study, one of the target audiences will be the airline industry, who may benefit from a closer profile of their service user to inform customer service operations, marketing and sales. To that effect, the demographic data was tabulated in a way that would optimise its use for strategic and marketing purposes. Patel and Bansal (2018) suggest that collecting demographic variables, such as age, income, gender, and education, may be examined for use as a means of segmenting the consumer population which facilitates the development of fruitful marketing strategies. Given the changes discussed in Chapters One and Two in Saudi Arabia's rapidly developing airline services industry, such demographics may prove useful for policy and planning.

As there is one dependent variable (Saudis' attitude towards airline services), one moderator (service performance) and three independent variables (religiosity, ethnocentrism and animosity), regression analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) was conducted to allow an estimate of the importance of one or more of the variables compared to the others (Ghauri, Grønhaugh and Strange, 2020).

#### **4.5.4.1 Structural Equation Modelling**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a powerful statistical modeling technique that allows researchers to analyse complex connections and assess theoretical models. It outperforms traditional linear regression by incorporating latent variables and their relationships, making it suitable for examining intricate causal pathways and capturing unobserved notions (Fan *et al.* (2016). Structural equation modeling (SEM) as a multi-variate method

encompasses various techniques including regression analysis, route analysis, and factor analysis. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) allows researchers to acquire useful insights into the correlation between variables, analyse the influence of mediating and moderating factors, and assess the overall appropriateness of their theoretical models (Bentler and Chou, 1987; Abdul-Latif and Abdul-Talib, 2022).

According to Asparouhov and Muthén, (2009), SEM is primarily a confirmatory method rather than an exploratory one. Instead of utilising SEM to "find" an appropriate model, researchers can use SEM analysis to ascertain if a certain model is valid; yet, SEM analyses frequently incorporate some sort of exploratory aspect (Asparouhov and Muthén, 2009). By evaluating the degree to which the theoretical constructs are appropriate or fit with the collected data, structural equation modeling (SEM) seeks to examine the links between one or more independent and dependent variables. These factors might be hidden or measurable (observed or evident). While the latent variable is not directly assessed but rather through two or more observable factors, such as buying behaviour or personality, it is measured directly for the observed variable, such as income (Kline, 2015). Variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) is more advantageous than covariance-based SEM in certain situations due to its suitability for small sample sizes, resilience to non-normal data, flexibility for exploratory analysis, ability to handle complex relationships, and effectiveness in predictive modeling (Elbaz, 2013). The choice between variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) and covariance-based SEM is contingent upon research aims, data characteristics, and theoretical considerations. It is crucial to meticulously evaluate the benefits and

drawbacks of each technique in order to make an optimal conclusion about the model. Therefore, due to the complexity of the developed model Partial Least Squares (PLS) was used in this study to create a measurement model and a pathways analysis. Two components make up PLS structural equation modelling analysis: the measurement model recognises the relationship between the observed variables and their variables, while the structural model is concerned with the relationships between the variables (Elbaz, 2013).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a statistical method that aims to create a model and get insights into the significant relationships between variables. Researchers might utilise it to investigate intricate connections, encompassing both direct and indirect impacts, within a given theoretical framework. Structural equation modeling (SEM) evaluates the adequacy of the model's fit to the observed data by measuring the strength and significance of the correlations. This technique presupposes that the variables incorporated in the model are interrelated and that their connections are significant for understanding the fundamental phenomena or theory being examined. The establishment of significant connections between variables forms the basis of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), allowing researchers to verify and enhance their theoretical models (Asparouhov and Muthén, 2009).

WarpPLS 7.0's analysis was utilised in this investigation (Kock, 2015); the software was adopted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (R-squared), the analysis of variance was conducted as were other tests to determine / correct for any incidences such as skewness

and kurtosis. The following sub-section outlines in detail the rationale for the tests selected to ensure integrity during this process.

The first step of data analysis in this study was the demographic analysis in order to determine the characteristics of the participants in the survey. Demographic data is particularly valuable for one of the intended end-uses of this study, in that such data is aligned with consumer needs and wants. Kotler and Keller, (2016) describe this in terms of client conversion, suggesting that well-measured consumer demographics coupled with prospects in marketing strategy will increase new client population. With this study in particular, and the changing dynamic of the Saudi travelling population due to increased opportunities under the Vision 2030 aims (Tanis, 2022; TNA, 2022), this information is both pertinent and timely. The data is presented in tabulated form, with commentary and cross-reference to national statistics and previous studies.

According to Andreev *et al.* (2009), variable validity is used to determine whether, from the perspective of relationships between the variables and between the variable and their relative observed variables, the observed variables/items of the variable definitely measure what they are expected to. Reve (1979) emphasised that two validity categories are often examined in order to determine validity: discriminant validity and convergent validity. It is recommended that the measurement item's loadings on their assigned variables be an order of magnitude greater than their loadings on the other constructs (Head and Ziolkowski, 2010). With regard to discriminant validity, it is assumed to hold when the extracted variance is greater than the squared

correlation (Henseler *et al.*, 2009; Kock and Verville, 2012, Elbaz, 2013). To differentiate between notions that are meant to assess different phenomena, discriminant validity was used in this study.

The second step of data analysis in this study was to present descriptive statistics by conducting a series of normality tests then multiple regression analysis using WarpPLS 7.0 to test the relationships, correlation and significance between the dependent variable and the independent and moderator variables. The whole purpose of descriptive statistics is to determine patterns, to determine central tendency and to extrapolate from data how the variables are distributed and what happens when they tested against each other which ultimately determines their influence and indeed the significance of the relationships between them (Kennedy, 2008).

Before proceeding to the regression analysis, a normality test and a multicollinearity test was performed on the variables. A normality test shows whether the data has a normal distribution. A dataset is considered to be normally distributed when the skewness within the range  $\pm 1.96$  and kurtosis are within the range of  $\pm 3$ . However, if the data panel is outside the range it needs to be transformed. Data can be transformed using logarithm transformation or a square root transformation. It is important that the skewness and kurtosis are in the range of normality otherwise the results from the regression analysis will not be valid (Premaratne and Bera, 2017).

The multicollinearity test determines if there is a strong correlation only between the independent variables. If there is a strong correlation between the independent variables the Pearson correlation will not find significant

relationships between the dependent variable and independent variable. One method of detecting a multicollinearity is by analysing the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) which shows how much the variables are inflated. A VIF exceeding 4 shows that there is a potential multicollinearity problem while a value higher than 10 shows that there is a serious problem of multicollinearity. Another method of detecting multicollinearity is using the Pearson correlation. If the correlation between two variables is higher than 0.8 then there is a multicollinearity problem (Premaratne and Bera, 2017).

The regression equation is as follows:

$$ATT = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ANIM_i + \beta_2 REL_i + \beta_3 ETH_i + \beta_4 SPF_i + \beta_{10} IT_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Where:

$ATT_i$  = Saudi attitude towards Airline Services;

$ANIM_i$  = the effect when animosity is present;

$REL_i$  = the effect when religiosity is present;

$ETH_i$  = the effect if ethnocentrism is present;

$SPF_i$  = the moderator variable 1 if service performance is added, 0 if it is not included

$\beta$  = parameters;

$\varepsilon_i$  = error;

$i$  = the  $i$ th observation

Throughout the remainder of this section, and the results chapter, the formulae are not provided as they were set automatically within WarpPLS 7.0's analysis (Kock, 2015).

#### 4.5.5 Control Variables

It was important for the purpose of this study that the use of control variables was deliberated to determine their value in the context of studying the main variables. Nielson and Raswant (2018) suggest the three key areas of importance when researchers utilise control variables in studies are in the selection, use and reporting of their function, application and outcome. They state:

*As a minimum standard of practice (MSP), authors should justify the inclusion of each CV in the study and explain how and why it may exert a biasing rather than substantive influence in your model. This justification should be grounded in theory. (Neilson and Raswant, 2018, p963)*

Many researchers make use of control variables in an endeavour to fully understand the relationship between main variables in a study. Such variables are relevant to the dependent variable under investigation but are not a main consideration (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Control variables have been described as covariates or nuisance variables, and their primary purpose is to reduce any potential for confounding effects. Their use elucidates the relationship between the variables under scrutiny; in other words, the inclusion of control variables in a study effectively means that any observed relationship between variables is not due to any confounding effect (Spector and Brannick, 2011). They are assumed to disrupt or contaminate observed relationships, and where this occurs, the control variables are

removed to prevent such contaminations affecting the validity of the final outcome (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Control variables perform wider functions in any research study. Their use allows for wider generalisability of a study, as by accounting for any variability in the control variables they offer researchers a fuller understanding of what is occurring in the observed relationships (Spector *et al.*, 2000; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Control variables are a useful tool for both enhancing precision and offering alternate explanations to account for those observed relationships; this minimises confounding effects and may also facilitate replication (Stone-Romero, 2009).

For the purpose of this study, three demographic variables were chosen: age, gender and education. The unique geo-political and socio-cultural setting of this study, Saudi Arabia in the light of widespread change and reform under Vision 2030, presented a challenge in evaluating the independent, dependent and moderator variables without 'noise' from confounding factors (Marsh, 1982). It is known that the demographics of passengers is likely to change with restrictions such as elements of guardianship being lifted for women (Benny, 2021; Nihal, 2022). Country-wide, stated aims of Vision 2030 include improving the health of the nation, thereby increasing life expectancy to 80 from 74 (Vision 2030, 2017). In addition, education across Saudi Arabia is changing, with some improvements in attainment seen across the board during the five-year plans, but under the National Transformation Plan, access to education has been considerably widened (particularly for girls' sports education, Alhammami, 2022).

Moreover, the effect of some of the variables under study are known to differ by age, education and gender. For instance, in a study in Mauritius, men aged between 50 and 59 were seen to be more ethnocentric (Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2010). Similarly, male and better-educated consumers have been found to be more likely to display animosity to hostile-evoking countries, and age did not moderate this (Leonidou, Kvasova, Christodoulides, and Tokar, 2019).

The following sub-sections briefly describe the selection of these three individual control variables, their use, and how they were reported, following Nielson and Raswant's (2018) recommendations.

#### **4.5.5.1 Age**

The age profile in Saudi Arabia has changed in recent years. In 2022, 25.95% of the population were aged 0-14, 71.24% aged between 15 and 64, and 2.81% were 65 or over (Statista.com, 2024). Although the profile has largely remained static, there is a marginal increase over the previous ten years in the older bracket of 0.7%, perhaps reflecting the Government's actions towards its stated aims of increasing life expectancy (Vision 2030, 2017). In addition, Saudi Arabia has a rapidly growing overall population, rising from 4.09 million to 36.41 million between 196 and 2020 (World Data.info, 2024). Also, children and young adults (up to age of 25) represent 75% of the population (General Authority of Statistics 2022); 15-33 years olds represent 67% (*ibid.*) and it is known that there are more young adults travelling. In particular, with the expansion of tourism, it was found in a survey that 91% of young people would be interested in a career in tourism compared to 77% in

the petrochemical industry, indicating increased interest amongst younger people in the airline services industry (Red Sea Global, 2020).

Because Age-related issues are a topical issue, yet not a direct variable in this study, the merit in Age being of interest as a control variable met part of the criteria set within Nielson and Raswant's (2018) recommendations. Previous studies have identified age as a factor in consumer animosity, with, for instance, Japutra, Kumar Roy, and Pham (2021) finding that younger adults display more consumer animosity than older adults. Also, Khan *et al.* (2020) found consumers with different age profiles have unique and specific needs and preferences which elicit different consumption values and behaviours. This suggests there is a potential for age-related confounding factors in the current study, further supporting its selection. Finally, in terms of the theoretical underpinning for this study, TCV purports that humans act on their own perceived value when eliciting choice [of products and services] (Kotler and Armstrong, 2021). Based on Khan *et al.* (2020) finding, it is likely that Age has the potential to influence choice, therefore in considering it as a control variable, explanations for the results related to age were explored using TCV.

Responses regarding age were selected from the demographic section of the survey instrument, and their measurement is outlined in section 5.2. Analysis of their interaction with the main variables is presented and discussed in section 5.5.7.2.

#### **4.5.5.2 Gender**

Gender is a topical concept in Saudi Arabia, particularly as it has been known to represent a gendered, segregated and patriarchal society (Mobaraki and

Söderfeldt, 2010). And yet in the wake of Vision 2030 reforms and social transformations (Al-Dajani and Alsaqli, 2022), the current timing of this study would indicate that societal change related to gender issues have the potential to facilitate change in the way women in the country are able to use airline services or work within them. For instance, legislation in Saudi Arabia under Sharia law with its strict Wahhabi principles dictated that women could not travel alone without permission from a guardian, and were segregated in public spaces and organisations (Alfarran, Pyke and Stanton, 2019). Indeed, Alfarran (2016) reported that Article 4 of the Saudi Labour Law 2014 dictated that men and women could not work in the same workplace, and Jiffry, (2013) reported that physical walls were to be built in organisations to create gender-specific places for people to work and take breaks in organisations by building “segregation walls”. Alfarran, Pyke and Stanton, (2019) remind us that gender segregation was enforced within the workplace in accordance with Article 4 of the Saudi Labour Law 2014 meaning that men and women cannot work together in the same place. In addition, in 2013 the Ministry of Labour issued an edict requiring employers to build ‘segregation walls’ in mixed workplaces (Jiffry, 2013). However, since the 2016 reforms, women’s societal potential has increased, and authors such as Alhammami (2022) and Almathami, Khoo-Lattimore and Yang (2022) have found moderate changes that empower women in society, particularly within the workplace. Likewise, Turak, (2019) reported on the end to gender segregation in restaurants, heralding a new reality for women and men when eating out. Using Nielson and Raswant’s (2018) recommendations, this topical interest alone justifies considering gender as a control variable.

In terms of relevance and potential confounding factors for this study, authors have found differences in ethnocentric tendency between men and woman, with Josiassen, Assaf, and Karpen, (2011) finding women have a tendency to display such tendencies than men. This further supports its selection, as controlling for gender as an extraneous factor reduces the results being misinterpreted as being a consequence of gender.

Responses regarding gender were selected from the demographic section of the survey instrument, and their measurement is outlined in section 4.5.52. Analysis of their interaction with the main variables is presented and discussed in section 5.5.7.1.

#### **4.5.5.3 Education**

Another element of Saudi society that may provide the potential to confound results is education. Within the socio-economic landscape of Saudi Arabia post-introduction of Vision 2030, the modernisation of the education system (including building 719 new schools in 2018) is likely to see an increase in students in higher education and is already bringing overseas students into the country (AllahMorad and Zreik, 2020). School programmes had already changed during previous reforms, meaning fewer people leaving school at younger ages; despite having lower indicators than other OECD countries, there is an upward trajectory in participation in education (OECD, 2023) As seen later in Table 4.2, the demographic profile of the participants in this study revealed 11.8% of school leavers with High School Certificate or below, meaning there were 88.2% college and university graduates or above.

This relates directly to airline services, which has input into wider social processes including education; it has been highlighted that consumers' changing needs shape how airline services are developed and marketed (ICAO, 2017). When seen as a variable in other studies, education has been found to influence ethnocentrism; an early by Nishina (1990) found when consumers are more educated, they display less ethnocentric tendencies. More recently in a study on education as a moderator of purchase intention, it was found that social pressure to purchase goods in a host country become less relevant in people who live away from their home country in highly educated consumers (Aguilar-Rodríguez and Arias-Bolzmann, 2023). This suggests education may play a role in purchase decisions, and it raises the possibility of it confounding the results in this study.

Looking to theory, TPB posits that purchase intentions are affected by subjective norms, attitudes and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Education has been shown to shape subjective norms, hence giving a theoretical understanding of why this could affect the results in this study (Aguilar-Rodríguez and Arias-Bolzmann, 2023).

Responses regarding education were selected from the demographic section of the survey instrument, and their measurement is outlined in section 5.2. Analysis of their interaction with the main variables is presented and discussed in section 5.5.7.3.

## **4.6 Measuring Variables**

Central to this study is the measurement of Saudi passengers' religiosity, animosity and ethnocentrism and how they inform a person's perception of

service performance when deciding which airline to travel with. These constructs are deeply personal and can be considered 'attitudes' — beliefs, behaviours and feelings about objects or events etc. — which is considered under the umbrella of psychometric testing (Breakwell, Smith and Wright, 2012). The four principles that have to be present in any psychometric test to ensure it is fit for purpose and methodologically sound are reliability, validity, standardisation and equivalence (*ibid.*). Reliability is based on the theory of true scores. Any test performed will produce the same response regardless of who performs the test and the conditions/circumstances. Validity is the extent to which the test is fit for purpose whereas standardisation is the process by which an individual person's response (score) is interpreted, whether it is in relation to other peoples' scores or performance or how they will behave in practice. Equivalence: looks for consistency in the way that participants are treated when being tested in terms of are the same questions asked in every location or between different social groups

Measuring psychometric tests (and therefore attitudes) in quantitative empirical research follows the four principles above to determine the tool used. The basic measurement of psychometrics is founded on the theory of true scores (latent trait theory) which dictates that a respondent's answer is based on their true score or an error of measurement. All published tests require a measure of reliability, usually calculated with the correlation co-

efficient (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ )<sup>2</sup>. In determining which reliability test to use in this study (e.g. inter-rater reliability, test-retest reliability etc.), the parallel-forms method was selected. Two forms of the test are delivered and the correlation between two are measured. For each individual, two scores are obtained, one for each half. These scores are then correlated and adjusted for the change in test length by using the Spearman-Brown formula:

$$r_{kk} = k(r_{11}) / [1 + (k - 1) \cdot r_{11}]$$

Where:

$r_{kk}$  = the reliability of the test run  $k$  times

$r_{11}$  is the reliability of the original test (e.g. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ )

$k$  = factor by which the length of the test is changed.

$k$  is determined by dividing the number of items on the original test by the number of items on the new test. As a rule of thumb, tests of personality (including attitudes) should have a reliability score of over 0.7

A consideration when measuring validity is that it only exists within the context of the stated purpose of a test – for instance, an attitude test might be valid for testing attitudes but not for testing mood. Face validity is about the acceptability of the test items, content validity reflects the extent to which how it was specified for use matches the purpose for which it was used. Predictive validity is useful in settings such as supporting the recruitment process (does

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<sup>2</sup> Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is calculated:  $\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$  where  $n$  = number of items,  $\bar{c}$  = average covariance between item-pairs and  $\bar{v}$  = average variance

an interview schedule recruit the best candidate: if you test their performance a year in, was it the best choice?). Construct validation measures a new questionnaire (test) with pre-existing ones – is it as good as the others? For this study, the full version of the instrument (see Appendix 2) was piloted with post graduate students and feedback sought on the content; comments revealed the test to be easily understood and straightforward to complete, though as the respondents were in the UK and had not recently flown using a Saudi-based airline service it was impractical for full comparability.

Standardisation is the next step in establishing rigour in the questionnaire results. Norm-reform involves placing each participant's individual item score into rank order; using standard deviation demonstrates whether the test results are normally distributed (showing standardisation). A z-score for each response shows the distance in standard deviations that it is from the mean, normally ranging from minus 3.0 to plus 3.0 (-3 to +3) with a mean of zero.

Maintaining equivalence involved ensuring consistency in the way that participants were treated: the survey item is the same for men and women, domestic flight customers and international flight customers, old people and young people, people in Jeddah and people in Riyadh, etc.

#### **4.6.1 Measuring control Variables**

Marsh (1982) developed an elaboration approach to measuring control variables' effect which involves sub-dividing data from an established relationship between two variables on the basis of a third variable, known as a test or control variable. The original relationship between the two variables without the presence of the control variable is known as the zero-order

relationship; when that relationship is then compared in each sub-group in the presence of the control variable, the relationship is known as the partial relationship (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Researchers examine the pattern of effects on the zero-order relationship between the two groups of subdivided data to determine, interpret and understand what is happening. Where control variables contaminate the observed relationships between the other variables, they are removed to preserve the study validity (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Spector and Brannick, 2011).

The control variables Gender, Age, and Education (EDUC) were examined for their direct and prospective impact on the dependent variable Attitude (ATT).

#### **4.7 Research Ethics**

In conducting this study, the researcher followed the research ethics guidelines outlined in the University code of conduct (See Appendix A – ethical approval). The participants were issued with information regarding the study and advised that the data collected is anonymous and would only be utilised for academic purposes. The information sheet formed the first page of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). In addition, the author ensured that the questionnaires do not include any identifying information by requiring respondents to withhold their names. The participants' identities were concealed during the data processing and presentation to protect their privacy, and afterwards, backups of the data were secured using full data protection guidance.

## 4.8 Summary

In summary, this chapter has described the methodology for this research study, following the positivist research design and describing stages in the research process including the research instruments and the mechanism and strategy for data collection and analysis. The following chapter will present the results of this exercise, outlining the statistical analysis conducted to measure the responses from the participants.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

**W**hereas Chapter Four presented the methodology for this study, this chapter aims to present the results of the data collection exercise. The focus of this chapter rests in the testing and presentation of the quantitative data generated from the questionnaires distributed and returned. Following a summary of responses received and commentary of the response rate, the next section includes descriptive data for each variable examined in the study's main model, as well as demographic information on the participants, including gender, age, and employment status. These are carried forward into the discussion and conclusion chapter as they provide a backdrop for interpreting some of the descriptive data. Following a data summary, descriptive results as they relate to the model and hypotheses are presented. The measurement models' variable consistency, convergent and discriminant validity are then established. An examination of the structural model analysis is conducted and presented.

### 5.1 Survey Response Rate

The response rate of any study is an essential factor in assessing the reliability and generalisability of the findings. As discussed in Section 4.5.1, the sample group was selected from Saudis travelling from five Saudi airports, with the total number of participants set at 500 passengers. In the field, exactly 100 questionnaires were administered at each selected airport. Respondents were offered the choice of completing the survey at the airport or via the web using the barcode printed on the form (see Appendix 2). In

determining the number of participants needed, the following calculation was used; please note, statistics are not generally available for the numbers of Saudi Nationals flying, only total number of passengers on flights, therefore the survey population was determined around practical and logistical reasoning (Lakens, 2022) using the 5 major Saudi airports rather than a percentage of passengers flying.

Li (2016)'s recommendations, which stipulate that questionnaire/survey research must involve a minimum of 100 participants, were taken into consideration while determining a suitable sample size. The ratio of the observed variables to the sample size was also determined by taking into consideration the recommendations made by Chan *et al.*, (2022). At each of the five airports that were chosen, 100 questionnaires were sent to a sample group of 500 Saudi travellers. This strategy selected participants from a variety of Saudi Arabian airports in an effort to ensure diversity.

The questionnaire was designed with an anticipated 68% response rate in mind. It was based on elements such as robust design and researcher motivation — factors that have been demonstrated by Holtom, Baruch, Aguinis, and Ballinger (2022) to favourably influence response rates. The researcher projected that 68% of the disseminated questionnaires would be completed and returned by participants when designing the survey. This estimate was based on the observations made by Holtom, Baruch, Aguinis, and Ballinger (2022), who pointed out that a number of elements included in the questionnaire design — like a strong structure and increased researcher motivation — were probably going to have a favourable effect on the

response rate. Therefore, the researchers estimated that 340 out of the 500 questionnaires given across the five selected airports would be completed and returned by the Saudi passengers taking part in the survey, assuming an expected 68% response rate.

Every questionnaire item that was administered in printed form to be completed at the airports was returned. At each location, a number of passengers scanned the barcode using their mobile telephones and stated they would complete the survey within the timescale given; for those, the corresponding number of printed forms was removed from the stock to prevent excess number of responses.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, 477 printed sheets were administered and returned, with 23 passengers scanning the barcode to complete online within the specified time frame. All 477 printed sheets were returned, completed, and none of the passengers who scanned the bar codes completed the web-based questionnaire. This gave an overall 95.4% response rate. Of the 477 completed questionnaires, 51 were removed due to human error (including more than one box completed or missing data), leaving an adjusted response rate of 85.2%. It is important to note that this achieved response rate is relatively high, which enhances the representation of the sample. However, it is also essential to consider potential limitations associated with non-response bias and acknowledge the potential impact it may have on the generalisability of the findings (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

The validity and reliability of data obtained can be seriously compromised by missing data or over-completed boxes in a questionnaire. This can have an

impact on the interpretation and outcomes of the study. In the context of the given questionnaire, some people may choose to disregard or offer incorrect answers to questions that delve into personal beliefs and religious practises (such as Section B: Religiosity questions 3, 4, and 9). These investigations explore personal domains that people could find delicate or would rather keep secret, which could ultimately lead to incomplete or inaccurate data that distorts the final results. Therefore, 51 questionnaires were discarded on the basis of such data credibility concerns. Table 5.1 indicates responses received:

Table 5.1: Surveys issued and returned:

<b>AIRPORT</b>	<b>PRINTED ISSUED</b>	<b>RETURNED – BY HAND</b>	<b>WEB ISSUED</b>	<b>RETURNED - WEB</b>	<b>REMOVED DUE TO ERRORS</b>
<b>Riyadh Airport</b>	99	99	1	0	11
<b>King Fahd Airport</b>	99	99	1	0	8
<b>King Abdulaziz Airport</b>	97	97	3	0	12
<b>Medina City</b>	92	92	8	0	7
<b>Taif City</b>	90	90	10	0	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	n=477	n= 477	n=23	n=0	n=51

Potential reasons for this interesting zero response to the electronic survey are taken into the discussion chapter for deliberation. The remainder of this section presents an overview of the demographic profile of the participants,

## 5.2 Demographic results

The first section of the survey instrument collected demographic information on the survey population. Demographic data is widely utilised, especially in marketing, where surveys are used to segment the consumer population for more effective marketing methods (Bearden and Etzel, 1982; Patel and Bansal, 2018, p311). Of note, the availability of some data deemed sensitive in Saudi Arabia is not in the public domain due to its governance being rooted in the neo-patrimonial society (Asquer and Alzahrani, 2020); for instance, government and Royal pronouncements are seen as fact (Alfarran, Pyke and Stanton, 2018). When carrying out the literature review for this study, certain demographic characteristics were not obtainable, such as the gender of travellers which is not published in the reports available via the General Authority for Statistics (2022) and Kapsarc.Org (2023). In this study, three demographic characteristics of Saudi respondents, gender, age, and educational level, are examined as control variables to determine their potential influence on the dependent variable attitude (ATT). Table 5.2 presents a comprehensive demographic summary of all valid survey responses that were received and included in the analysis.

Table 5.2: Demographic profiles of respondents:

	N=	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	253	59.3
Female	173	40.6
<b>Age</b>		
18-28 years	125	29.3
29-39 years	202	47.4
40-50 years	61	14.3
Above 50 years	38	8.9
<b>Education</b>		
Primary certificate	12	2.8
High School Certificate	37	8.6
College degree	105	24.6
Undergraduate Degree	218	51.1
Postgraduate degree	54	12.6
<b>Occupation status</b>		
Employed Full-Time	332	77.9
Employed Part-Time	67	15.7
Seeking opportunities	8	1.9
Retired	12	2.8
Prefer not to say	7	1.6
<b>Income range</b>		
Less than 3000 SR	16	3.8
3001-5000 SR	52	12.2
5001-8000 SR	87	20.4
8001-10000 SR	155	36.4
10001-20000 SR	89	20.9
Above 20000 SR	27	6.3
<b>Home location</b>		
Central Region	94	22.0
Western Region	122	28.6
Eastern Region	65	15.2
Southern Region	89	20.9
Northern Region	56	13.1
<b>Reason for using airline services</b>		
Business	79	18.5
Leisure	37	8.7
Personal reasons / Commuting	310	72.7
<b>Type of airline used most often</b>		
Domestic Airline	354	83.0
Foreign Airline	72	16.9
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>N= 426</b>	<b>% 85.2</b>

As seen in table 5.1, there were a total of 173 women (40.6%) and 253 men (59.3%) who completed the survey. Madinah was the only airport that had

more female travellers who agreed to complete the survey. By far the largest percentage of passengers who participated fell into the 29-39 age bracket ( $n=202$ ; *Male 129, Female 73*). Following studies such as Xin and Seo (2019), another factor considered within the demographics was educational level achieved. Table 5.1 also reveals that the majority of participants were educated to undergraduate level ( $n=218$ , 51.1%) with 54 (12.6%) having postgraduate qualifications and 105 (24.6%) having college qualifications. Of the remaining, 37 (8.6%) had achieved High School certificate, with the remaining 12 (2.81%) attaining Primary School Certification. Of note, 11 of the 12 respondents who had achieved Primary School Certificate as their highest level of education were in the age bracket of over 50, potentially reflecting the changes within the Saudi Education system in recent decades. Two of these respondents were working full time, the remaining were retired with the exception of the respondent in the 29-39 age bracket who was listed as a part time worker and one person who preferred not to disclose their employment status. Again following authors such as Xin and Seo (2019), another characteristic considered was salary measured per calendar month (pcm). A total of 16 participants earned 3,000 SR or below ( $n=7$  female, 9 male), 52 earned 3001-5000 SR ( $n= 20$  female, 32 male), 87 earned 5001-8,000 SR ( $n= 32$  female, 55 male), 155 earned 8001-10,000 SR ( $n= 73$  female, 82 male), 89 earned between 10,001 and 20,000 SR ( $n=32$  female, 57 male) and 27 respondents earned over 20,000 SR ( $n=9$  female, 18 male). Of note, the data collection for this study was completed in 2023; the minimum legal wage in 2023 was 4,000 SR pcm as set in April 2021 (General Directorate for Statistics, 2023). The respondents who declared earning below minimum

wage also disclosed they were either retired or 'seeking opportunities'. As can also be seen in Table 5.1, the majority are working full time (n=332) with 67 part-time and 12 retired; 8 respondents are 'seeking opportunities', and 7 preferred not to disclose. The majority of responding passengers (122) identified the Western Region, incorporating the provinces of Makkah and Madinah, as their home region, with 94 residing in the central region (incorporating Riyadh and Qassim provinces). There were 89 responding passengers who stated their home region was in the South (incorporating four provinces, Najran, Asir, Jizan, and Baha). The remaining passengers' home regions were distributed between the East (65) incorporating one province, and the North (56) incorporating the provinces of Northern Border, Hail, Tabuk and Jouf. By far the main reason respondents cited for travelling on the day of data collection was personal / commuting (n=308), with 81 citing business travel and 37 citing leisure. It was clear from the responses received that the majority of passengers had expressed a preference for domestic airlines, and chosen the same for their travel on the day that the data was gathered (n=354 compared to n=72 overseas airlines).

### **5.3 Descriptive Statistics of the main variables**

The descriptive statistics of the variables discussed for the main questionnaire questions are presented here. The primary variables that constitute the key factors under examination are Animosity (ANIM), Ethnocentrism (ETH), Religiosity (REL), Service Performance (SPF) and Consumers Attitude Towards Airline Services (ATT).

### 5.3.1 Animosity

Three of the constructs here are chosen, with the responses being SD (strongly disagree), D (disagree), N (neutral), A (agree), and SA (strongly agree):

Table 5.3: Descriptive statistics of Animosity (ANIM):

(ANIM); 3 Items	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total		Mean
	F <sup>3</sup>	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Western companies are unreliable trading partners.	40	9.4	364	85.4	12	2.8	7	1.6	3	.7	426	100	4.01
Western companies often outsmart Saudi companies in business deals.	25	5.9	385	90.4	11	2.6	3	.7	2	.5	426	100	4.00
Western companies are doing business unfairly with Saudi companies.	11	2.6	377	88.5	16	3.8	112	26.6	112	26.6	426	100	3.85

Table 5.3 presents descriptive data for three statements that assess animosity towards airline services. The mean assessments indicate a moderate level of

<sup>3</sup> F = Frequency

animosity among the participants. Regarding the assertion that "Western companies are unreliable trading partners," a small proportion (9.4 per cent) strongly disagreed, while the majority (85.4 per cent) disagreed. The majority of respondents disagreed with the statements "Western companies frequently outwit Saudi companies in business transactions" (90.4%) and "Western companies are doing business unfairly with Saudi companies" (88.5%) In general, while there is some animosity against foreign firms, a significant portion of the participants did not strongly endorse the hostile sentiments.

### 5.3.2 Ethnocentrism

Once again, three of the constructs here are chosen, with the responses being SD (strongly disagree), D (disagree), N (neutral), A (agree), and SA (strongly agree):

Table 5.4: Descriptive statistics of Ethnocentrism (ETH)

(ETH); 3 Items	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
A real Saudi should always buy Saudi-made products and services.	9	2.1	328	77.0	9	2.1	66	15.5	14	3.3	426	100	3.59
It may cost me in the long run, but I prefer to support Saudi Arabian products and services.	17	4.0	312	73.2	0	0	82	19.2	15	3.5	426	100	3.54
Foreign airline services should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into Saudi Arabia.	25	5.9	296	69.5	22	5.2	57	13.4	26	6.1	426	100	3.55

The descriptive data for three statements linked to ethnocentrism is shown in Table 5.4. The mean assessments suggest a moderate level of ethnocentrism among the participants. Regarding the statement "A true Saudi individual should always purchase goods and services manufactured in Saudi Arabia," a small percentage (2.1 per cent) expressed a contrary opinion, strongly disagreeing, while the majority (77.0 per cent) disagreed. Regarding the statement "Endorsing products and services from Saudi Arabia may have adverse future consequences," the majority of respondents (73.2 per cent) disagreed. In relation to the assertion that "Foreign airline services should be subject to substantial taxation to reduce their presence in Saudi Arabia," a majority of respondents (69.5 per cent) disagreed. Overall, the data indicates that while there is some ethnocentrism, a significant portion of participants disagreed with the statements associated with ethnocentrism.

### **5.3.3 Religiosity**

Once again, three of the constructs here are chosen, with the responses this time being NAA (not at all), NVM (not very much), M (moderately), QB (quite a bit) and VMS (very much so):

Table 5.5: Descriptive statistics of Religiosity (REL) Statement:

(REL); 3 Items	NAA		NVM		M		QB		VMS		Total		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
How important is personal prayer for you?	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	.2	425	99.8	426	100	4.99
In your opinion, how probable is it that a higher power really exists?	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	.9	422	99.1	426	100	4.99
How important is it for you to be connected to a religious community?	0	0	2	.5	6	1.4	7	1.6	411	98.6	426	100	4.94

Table 4.5 presents the descriptive statistics for three questions pertaining to religion. The mean assessments indicate a notable level of religious devotion among the participants. Regarding the inquiries "How important is personal prayer to you?" and "In your opinion, how probable is it that a higher power really exists?", an immense majority of respondents (99.8% and 99.1% respectively) conveyed a substantial level of importance or conviction. Similarly, when asked about the importance of being connected to a religious community, a significant majority of participants (98.6 per cent) highlighted the relevance of being affiliated with a religious body. Overall, the data suggests a notable degree of religiosity among the participants, as evidenced by the elevated average ratings for all three claims.

### 5.3.4 Service Performance

Table 5.6 presents the descriptive statistics for eight service performance statements:

Table 5.6: Descriptive statistics of Service Performance (SPF):

(SPF); 8 Items	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total		Mean	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Saudi-based airline services' flight attendants handle requests promptly.	32	7.5	276.3		174.0		322		75.6	28	6.6	426	100	2.32
Saudi-based airline services flight attendants' approach to unexpected situations is calm and measured.	17	4.0	296.8		122.8		349		81.9	19	4.5	426	100	2.23
Saudi-based airline services are truly providing committed services.	3	.7	153.5		204.7		243		57.0	14	3.4	426	100	1.79
The service attitude of Saudi-based airline services' check-in attendant (ticket reservations and sales) is of a high standard.	2	.5	9	2.1	7	1.6	317		74.4	91	21.4	426	100	1.85
The accuracy of Saudi-based airline services' daily operations (such as baggage handling, announcements etc.) is high.	12	2.8	378.7		5	1.2	327		76.8	45	10.6	426	100	2.16
Saudi-based airline services flight attendants' knowledge in answering questions is good.	10	2.3	163.8		184.2		341		80.0	41	9.6	426	100	2.09
Saudi-based airline services flight attendants' behaviour toward delayed passengers is understanding	12	2.8	225.2		112.6		332		77.9	49	11.5	426	100	2.09
Saudi-based airline services give individual attention to passengers.	1	.2	153.5		112.6		348		81.7	51	12.0	426	100	1.98

As can be seen in this table, the average scores indicate that the respondents had varying opinions regarding the performance of airline services located in Saudi Arabia. Regarding the assertion that flight attendants of Saudi-based airline services swiftly address requests, a substantial majority (75.6 per cent) of participants concurred, while a minority (6.3 per cent) expressed disagreement. In relation to the assertion that flight attendants from a Saudi-based airline handle unforeseen circumstances in a composed and calculated manner, a significant majority (81.9 per cent) concurred, while a small minority (2.8 per cent) expressed disagreement. The statement "Saudi-based airline services are truly providing committed services" had 34.0 per cent of respondents strongly agreeing and 57.0 per cent agreeing. Overall, the data suggests that the respondents had mostly positive opinions of the prompt handling of requests and the calm response to unexpected situations by flight attendants.

### **5.3.5 Consumers Attitude towards Airline Services**

Table 5.7: Descriptive statistics of Attitude towards Services (ATT):

(ATT); 5 Items	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
The overall service quality provided by Saudi-based airline services is excellent.	11	2.6	17	4.0	18	4.2	292	68.5	88	20.7	426	100	1.99
I am highly satisfied with the price I paid for the most recent Saudi-based airline services flight I took.	63	14.86	60	14.1	38	8.9	259	60.8	6	1.4	426	100	2.80
I am highly satisfied with Saudi-based airline services.	13	3.1	66	15.5	20	4.7	311	73.0	16	3.8	426	100	2.41
I would travel with Saudi-based airline services again.	12	2.8	40	9.4	16	3.8	356	83.6	2	.5	426	100	2.30
I would recommend Saudi-based airline services to others.	29	6.8	22	5.2	37	8.7	281	66.0	57	13.4	426	100	2.26

Table 5.7 presents the statistical data that describes five statements that reflect consumers' attitudes and perceptions regarding the services provided by Saudi-based airline services. The average ratings are a composite of both favourable and unfavourable opinions expressed by the participants.

Regarding the assertion that Saudi-based airline services offer outstanding service quality, a majority (68.5 per cent) agreed, while a significant portion (20.7 per cent) strongly agreed. Regarding the statement "I am highly satisfied with the price I paid for the most recent flight I took with a Saudi-based airline," some polarisation was seen: a considerable percentage (60.8 per cent) agreed, while a significant fraction (28.9 per cent) either strongly disagreed or disagreed. Regarding the statement "I am highly satisfied with the services provided by Saudi-based airlines," a significant majority (73.0 per cent) agreed, while a smaller proportion (15.5 per cent) expressed disagreement. Overall, the data suggests that there is a diverse range of opinions regarding the services provided by airline carriers operating in Saudi Arabia. While several individuals expressed satisfaction with the service quality and overall experience, some were dissatisfied especially regarding the overall cost of their journey.

#### **5.4 Structural Equation Modelling Analysis (SEM)**

As seen in detail in Section 4.5.4.1, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was selected as a means of conducting the data analysis in this study (Fan *et al.* (2016). As also stated earlier, a variance-based method was selected rather than a co-variance method. This decision was based on several factors, including that it allows for more flexibility in the model, that it provides for a more straightforward interpretation of results and it is computationally efficient (Bentler and Chou, 1987; Elbaz, 2013; Abdul-Latif and Abdul-Talib, 2022). Because SEM is a multi-variate method encompassing various techniques (Bentler and Chou, 1987), this section provides a comprehensive analysis of

the results following the application of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as used in this research study, focusing on the relationships and interactions between the variables of interest.

#### **5.4.1 Measurement Model in PLS-SEM**

The researcher employed WarpPLS 7.0's analysis in this investigation (Kock, 2015). WarpPLS 7.0 regression was employed as the algorithm. Stable3 was the resampling technique used. The model data contained 426 examples, 5 variables, and 22 indicators. The structural connection model includes these 22 items since they are sufficiently valid and dependable; other items were eliminated (32 items) because of their high VIFs, p-values greater than 0.05, and loadings less than 0.5. The descriptive statistics for each construct are shown in the next section (Table 4.7). The concept validity of the research model (discriminant validity, convergent validity, and average variance extracted; AVE) for the measurement models, as well as its internal consistency and reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), come next. Construct validity, which includes discriminant and convergent validity (construct validity) and construct reliability are discussed for the measurement model (Zahl-Olsen *et al.*, 2022).

##### **5.4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics for the Main Constructs**

Table 5.8 presents a detailed summary of the descriptive data for each concept used in this study. The provided information includes the name of the construct, its specific type (in this case, reflective), the number of objects used to measure the construct, and the number of items eliminated from the starting pool. Three items were eliminated from both the animosity and

ethnocentrism constructions, while the religiosity construct had 12 items deleted in total. The rationales for removing elements are not provided for the final two structures. The service performance construct comprised 8 items, whereas 14 items were excluded. In contrast, the attitude build incorporated all 5 features without any omissions. These descriptive statistics provide a thorough overview of the measurement process, including the number of items that are included and excluded from each construct. Overall, out of the original 54 elements, only 22 items were utilised to assess the constructions of interest. The choice to exclude items was made based on factors such as the features of psychological measurement, the strength of relationships between variables, and the consistency with the concept being assessed. These criteria guarantee that the selected items accurately capture and represent the targeted concepts in the study (Ponto, 2015; Kock and Verville, 2012).

Table 5.8: Model Summary:

Construct	Types of construct	Number of items used	Number of items Deleted	Reason for Deletion
Animosity (ANIM)	Reflective	3	3	
Ethnocentrism (ETH)	Reflective	3	3	VIFs are Higher than
Religiosity (REL)	Reflective	3	12	5 or 10, and loading
Service performance (SPF)	Reflective	8	14	less than 0.5
Attitude (ATT)	Reflective	5	0	

#### **5.4.1.2 Discriminant Validity of the Measurement Model**

As seen in Section 4.5.4.1 the selection of discriminant validity was justified for this study, predominantly because it is assumed to hold when the exact variance is greater than the squared correlation (Kock and Verville, 2012) and because it has utility in differentiation between notions in the scenario of assessing different phenomena (Elbaz, 2013). Certain variables were eliminated using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) method because their Variance inflation factors (VIFs) exceeded 5 (Chong, Nazim, and Ahmad, 2014). According to Kock (2015), p. 63, "VIFs should be lower than 5; a more relaxed criterion is that they be lower than 10." Because they would not assess the variables as accurately as anticipated, these indicators were therefore insufficient for the analysis.

As can be seen from Table 5.9, all of the remaining reflective items and observed variables have factor loadings greater than 0.5 thresholds, indicating that the measurement model's convergent validity is sufficient. This study has appropriate discriminant and convergent validity since, when examining the item loadings between constructs, none of the indicators or items had a substantial loading.

A popular method for examining an instrument's discriminant validity as well as a construct's convergent validity is the combined loadings and cross-loadings technique (Cudeck and Odell, 1994; Kline, 2015). The indicator loadings and cross-loadings are more than 0.5, as Table 5.9 demonstrates. As long as the accompanying p-value is significant, the construct is legitimate and the indicators are internally consistent if the indicator-loading value, which

ranges from -1 to 1, is more than 0.5 (Kline, 2015). In order to prevent erroneous findings, the values across the construct in a given row must be less than 0.50, which means that the value throughout the construct must not be significant. As can be seen, the results shown in Table 5.9 demonstrate sufficient discriminant and convergent validity for the assessment items ( $p = <0.001$ )

Table 5.9: Combined Loadings and Cross-Loadings:

	ANIM	ETH	REL	SPF	ATT	Type	SE	P Value
ANIM4	(0.770)	0.010	-0.006	-0.115	0.066	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
ANIM5	(0.777)	-0.059	0.000	0.088	-0.075	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
ANIM6	(0.860)	0.045	0.005	0.024	0.009	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
ETH4	0.032	(0.838)	0.008	-0.021	0.046	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
ETH5	0.007	(0.939)	0.008	-0.038	0.040	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
ETH6	-0.037	(0.899)	-0.016	0.059	-0.085	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
REL13	-0.016	-0.037	(0.776)	0.030	-0.041	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
REL14	-0.009	0.055	(0.852)	-0.015	-0.004	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
REL15	0.024	-0.022	(0.817)	-0.013	0.043	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
SPF7	0.018	0.086	0.027	(0.636)	-0.394	Reflective	0.045	<0.001
SPF8	0.032	0.069	0.025	(0.713)	-0.382	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
SPF12	0.055	0.085	0.036	(0.697)	-0.226	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
SPF15	-0.080	-0.051	-0.018	(0.681)	-0.011	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
SPF16	-0.047	-0.052	-0.033	(0.838)	0.161	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
SPF17	0.033	-0.069	-0.032	(0.775)	0.244	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
SPF18	-0.049	0.009	0.005	(0.756)	0.286	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
SPF19	0.046	-0.053	0.000	(0.717)	0.206	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
ATT1	0.047	0.023	-0.001	0.227	(0.763)	Reflective	0.044	<0.001
ATT2	0.030	-0.017	0.026	0.010	(0.881)	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
ATT3	-0.030	0.039	0.018	-0.044	(0.850)	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
ATT4	-0.034	-0.038	-0.013	-0.078	(0.866)	Reflective	0.043	<0.001
ATT5	-0.008	-0.004	-0.029	-0.087	(0.888)	Reflective	0.043	<0.001

**Notes:** **(REL)**= Religiosity, **(ANIM)**= Animosity, **(ETH)**= Ethnocentrism, **(SPF)**= Service Performance, **(ATT)**= Attitude, **(SPF\*ANIM)**= interaction term of ANIM and SPF, **(SPF\*ETH)**= interaction term of ETH and SPF, **(SPF\*REL)**= interaction term of REL and SPF, **(Gender)**= control variable, **(Age)**= control variable, **(Education)**= control variable.

One of the fundamental tenets of SEM is that it aims to differentiate between the direct and the indirect relationships between the variables in a study. (Kline, 2015). Returning to the discussion in the previous chapter, this study has used SEM to model the associations between the observed variables of ethnocentrism, animosity and religiosity as they interact directly with consumer attitudes towards airline services, and then to identify what influence, if any, service performance has as a moderator of those attitudes. SEM not only offers a measurement of the relationships' existence, but it can also determine the strength and the direction of those relationships, thus identifying and modelling relationships that are statistically significant and theoretically meaningful (Kline, 2015). To that effect, we employed the square roots of the AVEs to examine the association between the latent variables in order to assess a study's discriminant validity (Kock and Verville, 2012).

The square roots of the variables' AVEs are displayed in Table 5.10. There is a diagonal between the correlations. The square roots of the AVEs for each latent construct should be greater than any correlation involving that latent construct in order to guarantee discriminant validity (Kock, 2015). Given that the p-values for the indicator loadings are less than 0.05, it can be said that the measurement model's validity is sufficient (Andrade, 2019).

Table 5.10: Correlations among Latent Variables:

	ANIM	ETH	REL	SPF	ATT
ANIM	(0.803)	0.038	0.020	-0.037	0.027
ETH	0.038	(0.893)	0.037	-0.024	0.002
REL	0.020	0.037	(0.816)	-0.019	0.070
SPF	-0.037	-0.024	-0.019	(0.729)	0.515
ATT	0.027	0.002	0.070	0.515	(0.851)

Note: Square roots of average variances extracted (AVEs) shown on diagonal

According to Table 5.10, the square roots of the AVEs for every construct are higher than the maximum squared correlation between that construct and any other construct. Stated otherwise, the AVEs' individual square roots have the highest value among all the correlations displayed, either above or below them. This indicates that every construct has unique properties. It is therefore possible to conclude that the study constructs assess the same things that the questionnaire was designed to test and that the latent variables have adequate discriminant validity. Additionally, all of the constructs have full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs) obtained, which are utilised to examine overall collinearity and discriminant validity (see Table 5.11) (Kock, 2015).

Table 5.11: Full Collinearity for all Variables

Full Collinearity (VIFs)					
Constructs	ANIM	ETH	REL	SPF	ATT
Full VIFs	1.013	1.020	1.035	1.384	1.400

The complete collinearity for all five constructions is less than five, as Table 5.11 demonstrates. This suggests that there is adequate discriminant validity for the reflective constructs since sufficient complete VIFs are satisfied. Furthermore, Elbaz (2013) states that the indicators weight for the indicators/items, VIFs, and their p-value may be used to demonstrate testing discriminant validity. The weights of the indicators are shown in Table 5.12 (see Appendix Six). The p-values of all indicators are less than 0.05, indicating that the weights associated with the variables have significant p-values for all indicators. This suggests that the measurement indicators for the Reflective variables were appropriately created.

#### 5.4.1.3 Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model

According to Henseler *et al.* (2009), convergent validity is the ability of a group of indicators to represent the same underlying constructs through unidimensionality. The convergent validity is analysed by obtaining each indicator's factor loadings and cross-loadings on its corresponding variable (see Table 5.12). Because of the strong item loadings (i.e., all indicators are

larger than or equal to 0.5) on their corresponding latent variables, Table 5.13 shows that the scale of measurement exhibited convergent validity:

Table 5.13: Structural Loading and Cross Loading

	ANIM	ETH	REL	SPF	ATT
ANIM4	(0.770)	0.030	0.030	-0.101	0.004
ANIM5	(0.777)	-0.029	-0.025	0.020	0.009
ANIM6	(0.860)	0.086	0.041	-0.011	0.049
ETH4	0.059	(0.838)	0.046	-0.019	0.024
ETH5	0.046	(0.939)	0.045	-0.037	0.025
ETH6	-0.001	(0.899)	0.008	-0.007	-0.043
REL13	-0.004	-0.025	(0.776)	0.005	0.021
REL14	0.021	0.104	(0.852)	-0.045	0.055
REL15	0.031	0.005	(0.817)	-0.005	0.094
SPF7	-0.024	0.050	-0.016	(0.636)	0.144
SPF8	-0.025	0.019	-0.032	(0.713)	0.167
SPF12	0.006	0.036	-0.013	(0.697)	0.249
SPF15	-0.080	-0.038	-0.014	(0.681)	0.334
SPF16	-0.064	-0.069	-0.042	(0.838)	0.508
SPF17	0.008	-0.083	-0.044	(0.775)	0.512
SPF18	-0.048	0.013	0.034	(0.756)	0.556
SPF19	0.016	-0.048	0.017	(0.717)	0.464
ATT1	0.044	0.018	0.048	0.544	(0.763)
ATT2	0.051	-0.013	0.084	0.450	(0.881)
ATT3	0.001	0.031	0.070	0.412	(0.850)
ATT4	-0.002	-0.025	0.053	0.395	(0.866)
ATT5	0.022	0.002	0.043	0.403	(0.888)

Henseler *et al.* (2009) and Hair *et al.* (2010) suggest the use of the AVE as a standard for evaluating reflective indicators' convergent validity. To indicate acceptable convergent validity, an AVE value more than 0.5 is required; this

indicates that, on average, a latent concept can explain more than half of the variation of its indicators (see Table 5.14).

Table 5.14: Testing Convergent Validity Using Average Variance Extracted (AVE):

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)					
Construct	ANIM	ETH	REL	SPF	ATT
AVE	0.803	0.893	0.816	0.729	0.851

Table 5.14 shows the AVEs for the study variables. All are above the 0.50 threshold, meaning that the measurement variables show sufficient convergent validity.

#### 5.4.1.4 Construct Reliability Measurement Model

Reliability, in the words of Kock (2015), is a gauge of the effectiveness of a construct's instrument, which is essentially a series of question-statements. If various survey respondents understand the question-statements (or other measures) associated with each concept in the same way, then the measuring tool has reasonable reliability (Kock, 2015). The measurement model's internal consistency is an issue of construct dependability (Andreev *et al.*, 2009: 6; Elbaz, 2013). In this study, two methods were used to estimate internal consistency: (1) Cronbach's alpha; and (2) the composite reliability, which must be greater than 0.7 to be deemed acceptable, 0.80 to be sufficient, and 0.90 to be good (Kock and Verville, 2012).

Table 5.15: Reliability Coefficients for the Constructs:

	ANIM	ETH	REL	SPF	ATT
Composite Reliability Coefficients	0.845	0.922	0.856	0.900	0.929
Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients	0.724	0.871	0.748	0.873	0.904

The variables' composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients are shown in Table 5.15. All of the variables have excellent composite reliability coefficients (0.845 to 0.929), above the recommended threshold of 0.7 for each of the constructs. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.724 to 0.904 for all constructs. Therefore, it can be said that the measuring tools employed in this investigation are sufficiently reliable.

### 5.5 Results of the Structural Model

Ten model fits and quality indicators are provided by the WarpPLS 7.0 software used in this investigation (see Table 5.16). The statistical model's fit and quality indexes strongly supported the study results. The validity and reliability of the research results were assessed by evaluating the fit and quality indices of the study's statistical model. The study revealed an average path coefficient (APC) of 0.125, showing a moderate positive correlation between the independent factors and the dependent variable ( $P = 0.002$ ). The mean R-squared (ARS) value of 0.182 indicates that the independent variables as a whole account for 18.2% of the variability in attitudes towards airline services ( $P < 0.001$ ). The mean adjusted R-squared (AARS) was 0.165 ( $P < 0.001$ ), suggesting a little possibility for enhancing the model. The mean

block VIF (AVIF) and mean complete collinearity VIF (AFVIF) were 1.205 and 1.111, respectively, both falling within the acceptable range ( $\leq 5$ ) and approaching the optimal threshold of 3.3. The Tenenhaus GoF (GoF) score of 0.394 is classified as small to medium ( $\geq 0.1$ ), suggesting a moderate level of global goodness-of-fit. The Sympton's paradox ratio (SPR) of 1.000 satisfies the condition of being greater than or equal to 0.7, indicating that there is no evidence of Simpson's paradox. The R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR) of 1.000 signifies that each independent variable makes a distinct and separate contribution to the explained variance, satisfying the condition of being equal to or greater than 0.9, which is considered acceptable. The statistical suppression ratio (SSR) of 0.556 is below the allowed threshold ( $\geq 0.7$ ), suggesting that there is some indication of statistical suppression. The NLBCDR, which measures the direction of causality between two variables, was determined to be 0.889. This value above the acceptable criteria of 0.7, indicating the existence of non-linear interactions. The model's fit and quality indices strongly corroborate the study results, suggesting a substantial relationship between animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity, and attitude towards airline services, including the moderating influence of service performance. Thus, it can be said that this study has defined the 10 criteria for the model fit and quality indices.

Table 5.16: Model Fit and Quality Indices:

Criterion	Assessment	Supported
Average Path Coefficient (APC)	0.125	Supported
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.182	Supported
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.165	Supported
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.178	Supported
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	1.111	Supported
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.394	Supported
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	Supported
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	Supported
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	0.556	Supported
Non-linear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	0.889	Supported

Note: Average path coefficient (APC)= 0.125, P=0.002; Average R-squared (ARS)= 0.182, P<0.001 Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)= 0.165, P<0.001; Average block VIF (AVIF)= 1.205, acceptable if  $\leq 5$ , ideally  $\leq 3.3$ ; Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)= 1.111, acceptable if  $\leq 5$ , ideally  $\leq 3.3$ ; Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)= 0.394, small  $\geq 0.1$ , medium  $\geq 0.25$ , large  $\geq 0.36$ ; Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)= 1.000, acceptable if  $\geq 0.7$ , ideally = 1; R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)= 1.000, acceptable if  $\geq 0.9$ , ideally = 1; Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)= 0.556, acceptable if  $\geq 0.7$ ; Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)= 0.889, acceptable if  $\geq 0.7$

The previous criteria of the model fit indices (see Table 5.16) can be illustrated according to Kock (2015) as follows:

Table 5.17: Model Fit and Quality Indices Illustration:

Index	Description	Threshold
Average Path Coefficient (APC)	The regression values of independent variables on the dependent ones	P=0.002
Average R-squared (ARS)	The variance explained in the Dependent variable by the independent variables	P<0.001
Average Adjusted R-squared (AARS)	Corrects the spurious increases in R- squared coefficients due to predictors that add no explanatory value in each latent variable block	P<0.001
Average block VIF (AVIF)	Checks the vertical collinearity in the model's latent variable blocks	acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	It checks the multicollinearity of the whole model	acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	A measure of a model's explanatory power and global goodness of fit	(GoF)=0.394, small $\geq 0.1$ , medium $\geq 0.25$ , large $\geq 0.36$
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	A measure of the extent to which a model is free from Simpson's paradox instances	acceptable if $\geq 0.7$ , ideally = 1
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	A measure of the extent to which a model is free from negative R- squared contributions	acceptable if $\geq 0.9$ , ideally = 1
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	A measure of the extent to which a model is free from statistical suppression instances	(SSR)= 0.556, acceptable if $\geq 0.7$
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	A measure of the extent to which bivariate nonlinear coefficients of association provide support for the hypothesised directions of the causal links in a model	(NLBCDR)=0.889, acceptable if $\geq 0.7$

Figure 5.1 shows the findings of the path coefficient analysis, illustrating the hypothesised effects of the structural model and the relationships between the variables:

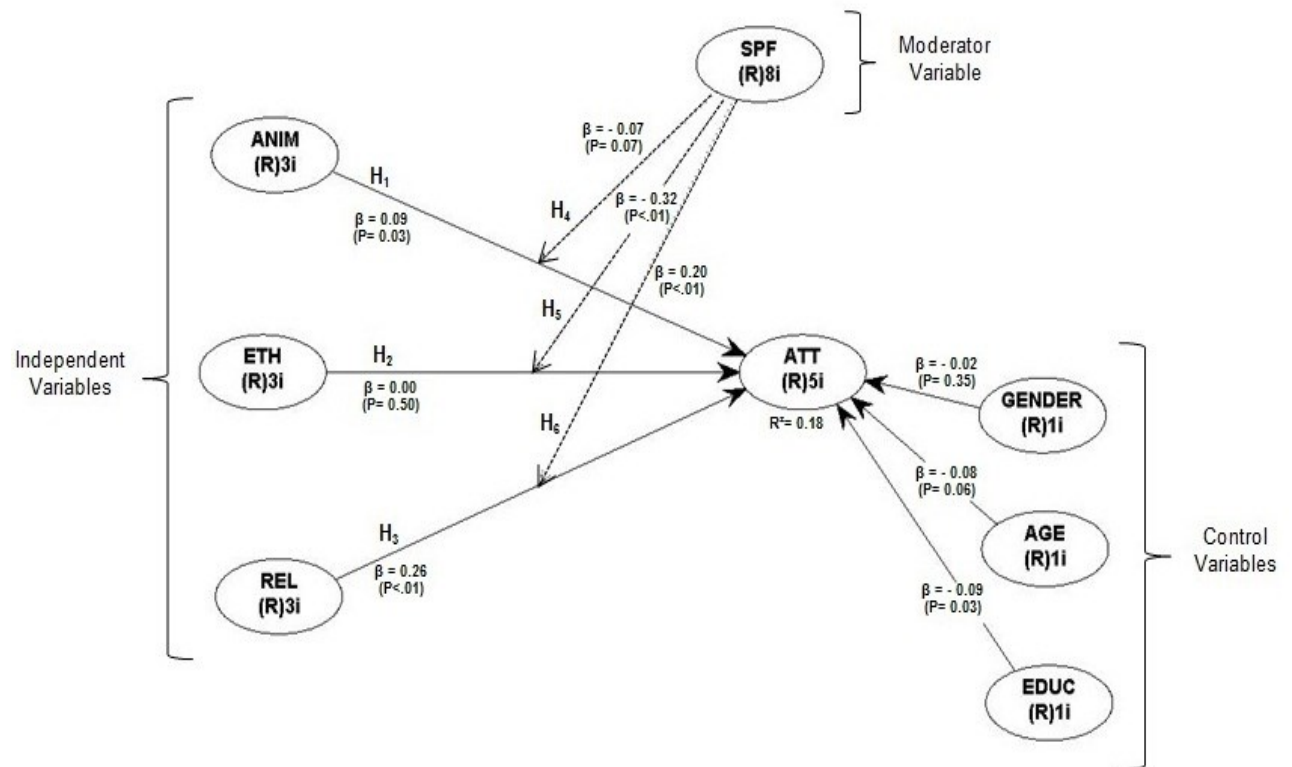


Figure 5.1. The Results of the Structure Relationship Model

Partial least squares SEM analysis findings are shown in Figure 5.1 and Tables 5.15 and 5.16. According to Elbaz (2013), evaluating the R-squared values ( $R^2$ ) and investigating the effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) of a model's constructs are two ways to measure explanatory power. An exogenous construct's substantive impact power can be calculated in the manner described below: Henseler *et al.*, (2009: 303) defines effect size  $f^2$  as:

$$(R^2_{\text{included}} - R^2_{\text{excluded}}) / (1 - R^2_{\text{included}})$$

Values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 can be interpreted as suggesting that an external construct has a small, medium, or high influence at the structural level (Kock, 2015).

The study consisted of assessing the direct relationship between three independent variables, which are: (1) Animosity (ANIM), (2) Ethnocentrism (ETH), (3) Religiosity (REL), as hypothesised (H1, H2, and H3) and Saudi Airline Services' users and their attitudes (ATT) towards airline services, and then how the three variables interacted with the moderator variable service performance (SPF), assessing three indirect relationships hypothesised (H4, H5, and H6) on influencing the consumer's attitudes (ATT) towards airline services. Additionally, three control variables were used Gender, Age and Education (EDUC) to examine the potential influencing on the main dependent Attitude (ATT).

### **5.5.1 Direct effects of animosity (ANIM)**

The first hypothesis deals with the direct impact of the variable animosity (ANIM) on consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services. The results of the analysis statistically demonstrate that animosity (ANIM) has a significant and positive effect on consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services, ( $\beta = 0.090$ ,  $p < 0.030$ ). Additionally, the effect size of animosity (ANIM) on consumer's attitude (ATT) is small ( $f^2 = 0.005$ ) suggests that this is a weak and limited relationship. This means that animosity (ANIM) has only a minor impact on shaping consumer's Attitude (ATT) towards airline services. Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported, the direct relationship between animosity (ANIM) and attitude (ATT) is shown in Figure 5.2.

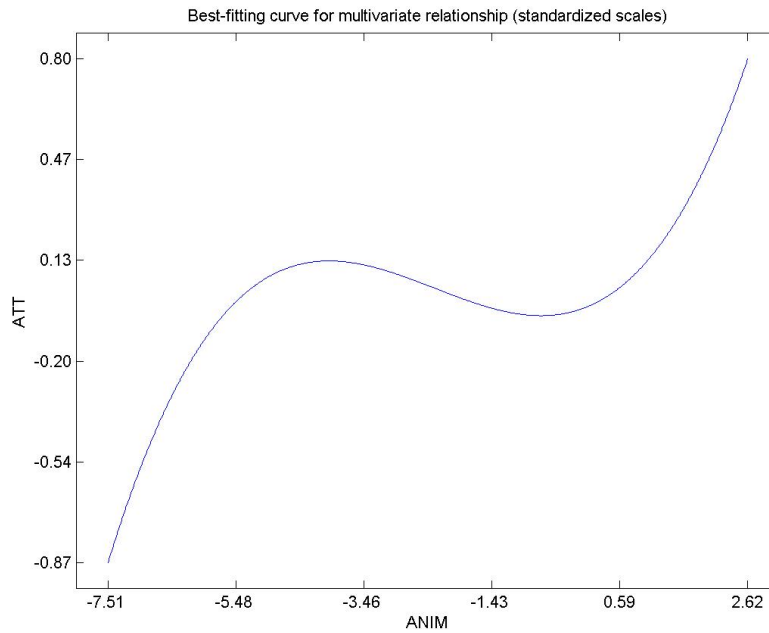


Figure 5.2 Relationships between Animosity (ANIM) and Attitude (ATT)

When presenting these type of associations, linear relationships are seen as a line, suggesting an increase in one variable leads to an increase (if positive value) or decrease (if negative value) in the other variable (Kock, 2017). Non-linear relationships provide a more nuanced view of the associations. As can be seen in Figure 5.2, the link between animosity (ANIM) and attitude (ATT) is linear. What is seen is a distorted S curve, in other words, a combination of two U curves connected at an inversion point, which represents the moment the relationship changes direction. This indicates that, perhaps surprisingly, as there is more animosity, consumers express more favourable attitude towards airline services, but this is not sustained. In other words, when there is already a low degree of animosity, even a marginal rise in the presence of animosity results in a substantial improvement in customers' attitude towards airline services. Nevertheless, as the degrees of anger increase, the effect on customers' attitude becomes less significant, indicating that the connection

between animosity and attitude becomes less important as animosity reaches larger levels. Consequently, when animosity increases, there is a greater influence on consumer's attitude in the beginning. Nevertheless, when animosity (ANIM) continues to escalate, the impact on attitude becomes less noticeable. The implication of this distorted kind of interaction is that when hatred grows, customers first perceive deterioration in the quality of airline services and have poor encounters that lead to a more unfavourable attitude. Nevertheless, when hostility continues to escalate, consumers eventually reach a point where their mindset becomes partially immune and overwhelmed by the adverse consequences of enmity. Currently, more escalation in animosity can have a reduced effect on customers' attitude (ATT), leading to a less prominent alteration.

### **5.5.2 Direct effects of ethnocentrism (ETH)**

The second hypothesis deals with the direct impact of ethnocentrism (ETH) on consumer's attitude towards airline services. The results of the analysis are statistically demonstrated that the variable ethnocentrism (ETH) has an insignificant effect on consumer's attitudes (ATT) towards airline services, with  $\beta = 0.000$ ,  $p < 0.496$ . Additionally, the effect size of ethnocentrism (ETH) on consumer's attitude (ATT) is seen as  $f^2 = 0.000$ , suggesting that there is no relationship. This means that ethnocentrism (ETH) has no impact on shaping the consumer's attitudes (ATT) towards airline services. Thus, hypothesis 2, the direct relationship between ethnocentrism (ETH) and consumer attitude (ATT), was rejected as shown in Figure 5.3.

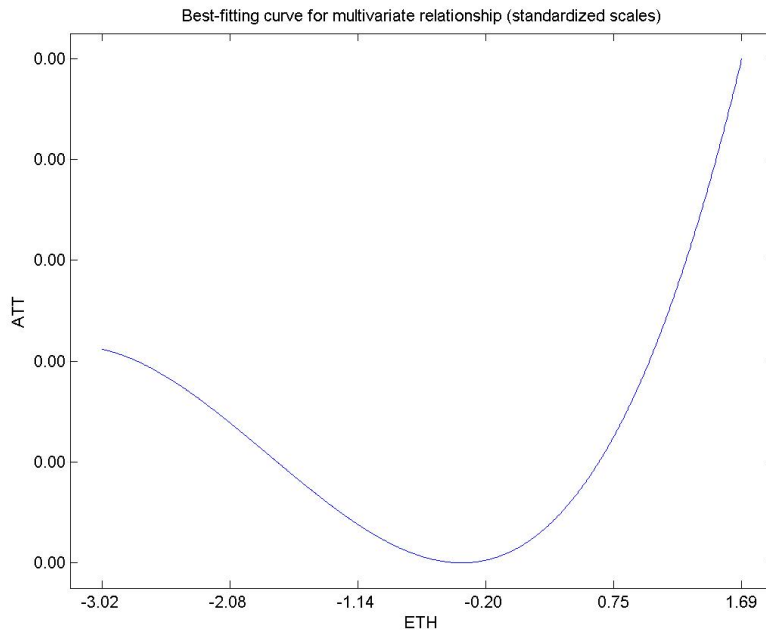


Figure 5.3 Relationships between ethnocentrism (ETH) and attitude (ATT)

Figure 5.3 demonstrates a linear relationship between ethnocentrism (ETH) and attitude (ATT) towards airline services. As ethnocentrism intensifies the perception of airline services does not exhibit a continuous or expected change.

### 5.5.3 Direct effects of religiosity (REL)

The third hypothesis deals with the direct impact of the variable religiosity (REL) on consumers' attitude (ATT) towards airline services. The results of the analysis are statistically demonstrated that religiosity (REL) has a significant and positive effect on consumer attitude (ATT) towards airline services, with  $\beta = 0.261$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Additionally, the effect size of religiosity (REL) on consumer attitude (ATT) is small ( $f^2 = 0.025$ ), suggesting that there is a weak and limited relationship. This means that religiosity (REL) has only a minor impact on shaping consumers' attitudes (ATT) towards airline services.

Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported, the direct relationship between religiosity (REL) and attitude (ATT) which was nonlinear, as shown in Figure 5.4.

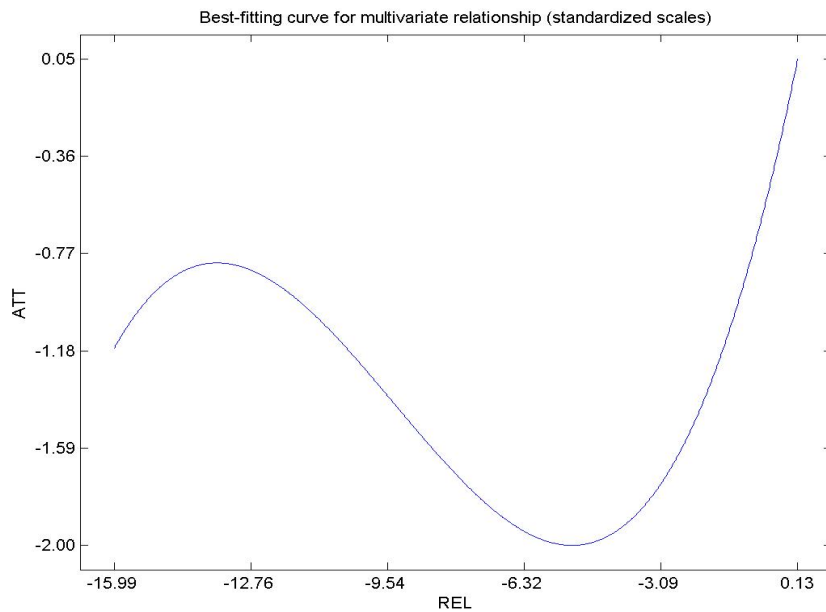


Figure 5.4 Relationships between religiosity (REL) and Attitude (ATT)

Figure 5.4 demonstrates that the study reveals a substantial and favourable impact of religiosity (REL) on consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services. The observed trend indicates that when religiosity (REL) rises, there is a corresponding increase in consumer attitude towards airline services. Nevertheless, the connection between religiosity (REL) and attitude (ATT) is characterised by a non-linear pattern, indicating that it is not a straightforward, linear relationship. It is therefore crucial to acknowledge that the relationship between religiosity (REL) and attitude (ATT) is not a straightforward, linear one. On the contrary, it displays a non-linear trend, suggesting that the influence of religion on customers' attitude is intricate as it does not adhere to

a linear relationship. This implies that there are specific degrees of religiosity that impact customers' perception of airline services.

#### **5.5.4 Moderating Effects of Service Performance (SPF) on (ANIM-ATT)**

The fourth hypothesis deals with the indirect impact of service performance (SPF) as a moderator in the relationship between consumer animosity (ANIM) and consumer attitude (ATT) towards airline services. Service Performance (SPF) is hypothesised to significantly moderate the effects of animosity (ANIM) on attitude (ATT) towards airline services. The analysis of the interaction effects shows there is an insignificant impact on the consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services, with  $\beta = 0.072$ ,  $p < 0.068$ . Moreover, the size of the interaction effects of (SPF) and (ANIM) on consumer attitude (ATT) towards airline services is ( $f^2=0.011$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 4 was rejected, the moderating effect of (SPF) in the relationship between animosity (ANIM) and attitude (ATT) in the data, which was a nonlinear relationship, as shown in Figure 5.5 and is not proven.

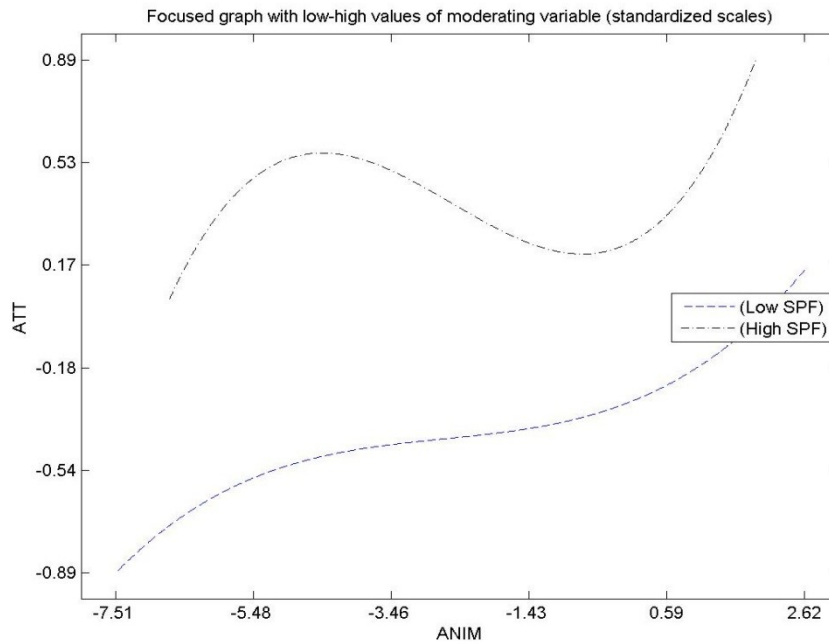


Figure 5.5 Moderating Effects of (SPF) on the Relationship between (ANIM-ATT)

Figure 5.5 shows that the slope that moves from low to high levels of service performance does not demonstrate a significant shift in the link between animosity (ANIM) and attitude (ATT). According to the findings of the research, there is no significant moderating influence of service performance (SPF) on the link between animosity (ANIM) and attitude (ATT) in respect to airline services. This indicates that the influence of animosity (ANIM) and attitude (ATT) towards airline services is not considerably altered by service performance (SPF).

### 5.5.5 Moderating Effects of Service Performance (SPF) on (EHT-ATT):

The fifth hypothesis deals with the indirect impact of service performance (SPF) as a moderator on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism (ETH) and consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services. Service

Performance (SPF) is hypothesised to significantly moderate the effects of ethnocentrism (ETH) on attitude (ATT) towards service. The analysis of the interaction effects shows there is a significant and negative impact on consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services, with  $\beta = -0.319$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . In addition, the size of the interaction effects of (SPF) and (ANIM) on consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services is ( $f^2=0.106$ ). Thus, hypothesis 5 was supported, the moderating effect of (SPF) on the relationship between animosity (ANIM) and attitude (ATT) in the data, which was nonlinear, as shown in Figure 5.6 is substantiated.

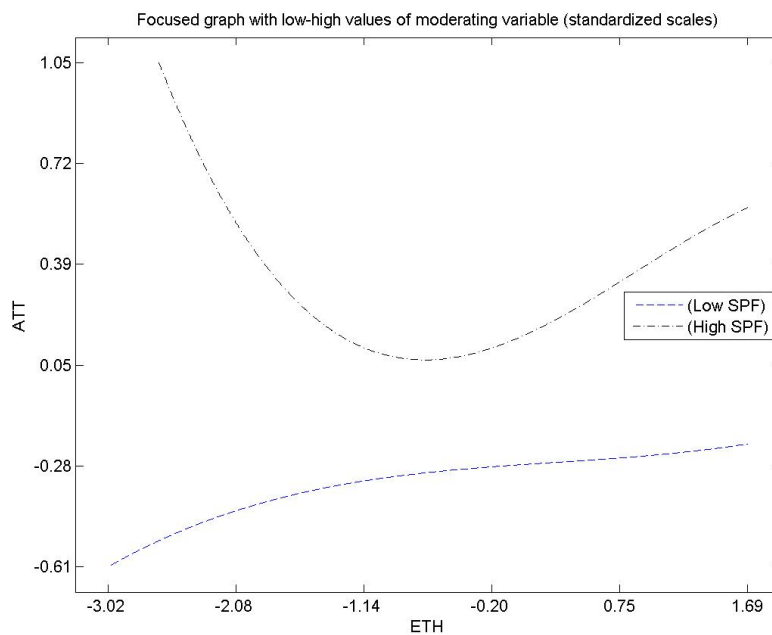


Figure 5.6 Moderating Effects of (SPF) on the Relationship between (ETH-ATT)

The graph in Figure 5.6 demonstrates a significant moderating impact of service performance (SPF) on this association. There is a significant shift in the relationship between ethnocentrism (ETH) and attitude (ATT) as the

degree of service performance (SPF) increases. As the quality of service (SPF) improves, the detrimental effect of ethnocentrism (ETH) on individuals' perception of airline services becomes more apparent. This implies that superior levels of service delivery have the ability to alleviate or counterbalance the adverse impacts of ethnocentrism (ETH) on customer attitude (ATT).

#### **5.5.6 Moderating Effects of Service Performance (SPF) on (REL-ATT):**

The sixth hypothesis deals with the indirect impact of service performance (SPF) as a moderator on the relationship between consumer religiosity (REL) and consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services. Service Performance (SPF) is hypothesised to significantly moderate the effects of religiosity (REL) on attitude (ATT) towards airline services. The analysis of the interaction effects of (SPF) and (REL) reveals there is a significant and positive influence on consumer's attitude (ATT) towards airline services, with  $\beta = 0.203$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Additionally, the size of the interaction effects of (SPF) and (ANIM) on consumer attitude (ATT) towards airline services is small ( $f^2=0.022$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 6 was supported, the moderating effect of (SPF) on the relationship between religiosity (REL) and attitude (ATT) in the data, which was nonlinear, as shown in Figure 5.7.

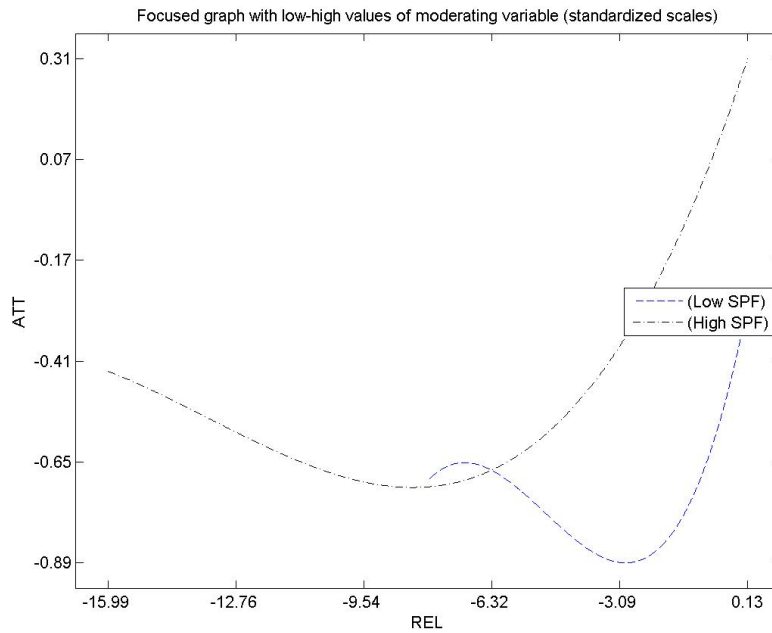


Figure 5.7 Moderating Effects of (SPF) on the Relationship between (REL-ATT)

The graph in Figure 5.7 demonstrates a significant and favourable moderating influence of service performance (SPF) on this association. The inverse relationship between religiosity (REL) and attitude (ATT) indicates that as religiosity (REL) rises, the attitude (ATT) towards airline services also tends to improve. The nonlinearity of the connection suggests that the change in attitude does not follow a consistent or proportionate pattern with the growth in religiosity (REL). On the contrary, the curve indicates the possibility of fluctuations in the pace of change and other patterns of evolution as religiosity grows. These findings suggest that the level of service performance (SPF) has a significant role in shaping the relationship between religiosity (REL) and attitude (ATT) towards airline services.

### **5.5.7 Control Variable Findings:**

The control variables Gender, Age, and Education (EDUC) were examined for any direct interaction effect and prospective impact on the dependent variable Attitude (ATT) and any potential influence on the relationships between the variables. and to determine if they had altered or confounded the results in any way (Marsh, 1982). The findings are shown below.

#### **5.5.7.1 Effects of Gender (GENDER):**

The analysis of the data collected shows that gender as a control variable has an insignificant and negative effect on consumers' attitudes (ATT) towards airline services ( $\beta = -0.018$ ,  $p < 0.351$ ) and the effect size is  $f^2=0.000$ . The direct relationship between (GENDER) and (ATT) was linear. This suggests that there is no discernible nonlinear relationship between gender and attitude (ATT). Moreover, the data indicates that the impact of gender (GENDER) on attitude (ATT) is both negligible and adverse. Gender has a negligible influence on a consumer's opinion towards airline services, with a minor effect. The data indicates that there is a small decline in service user attitude (ATT) towards airline services when gender rises, however this decrease is not statistically significant, as shown in Figure 5.8.

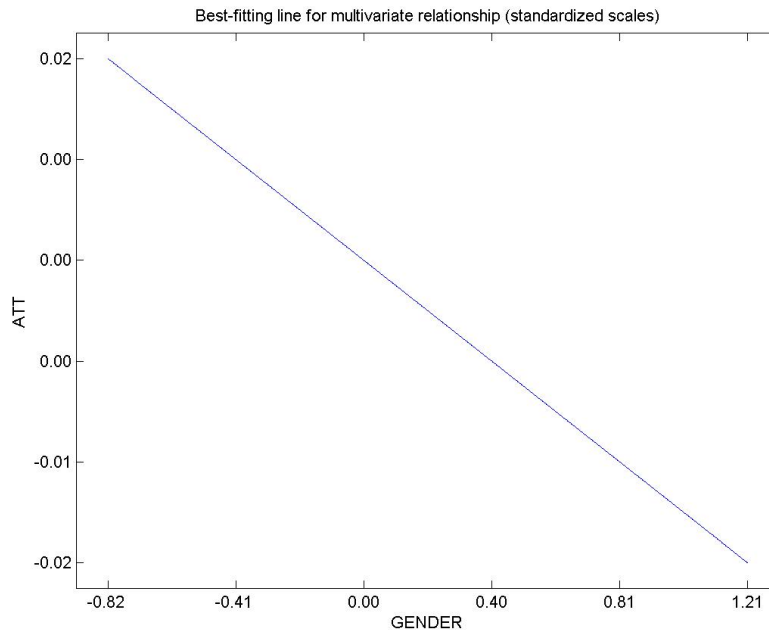


Figure 5.8 Relationships between GENDER and Attitude (ATT)

This can be interpreted as gender not having a confounding effect on the variables, and it therefore did not need to be removed from the model (Marsh, 1982; Nielson and Raswant, 2018).

#### 5.5.7.2 Effects of Age (AGE):

The analysis of the data collected shows that age as a control variable has an insignificant and negative effect on consumer attitude towards airline services ( $\beta = -0.075$ ,  $p < 0.058$ ) and the effect size is  $f^2=0.005$ . The direct relationship between (AGE) and (ATT) was nonlinear. According to Figure 5.9, the impact of age on attitude is both statistically negligible and negative. This indicates that (AGE) does not have a substantial influence on consumers' attitude (ATT) towards airline services. The link has a minimal effect size, suggesting a weak and restricted connection.

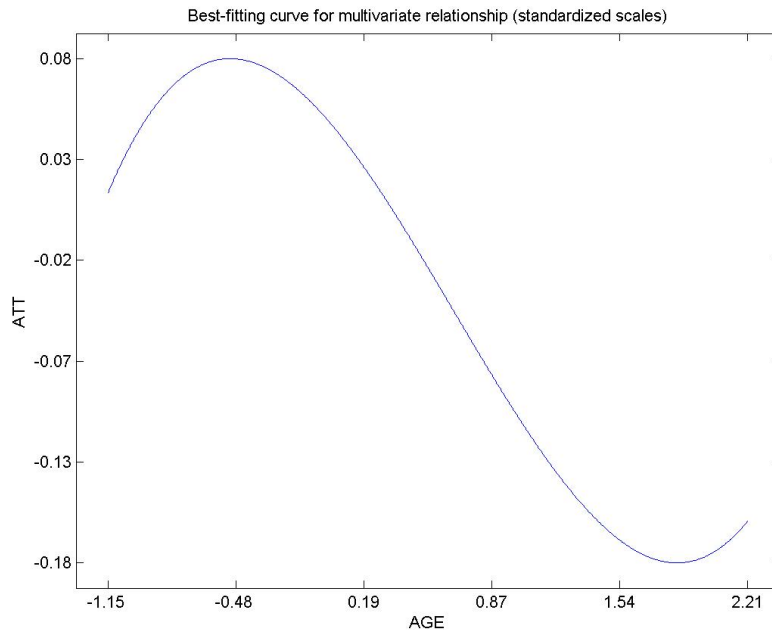


Figure 5.9 Relationships between AGE and Attitude (ATT)

This can be interpreted as age not having a confounding effect on the variables, and it therefore did not need to be removed from the model (Marsh, 1982; Nielson and Raswant, 2018).

### 5.5.7.3 Effects of Education (EDUC):

The analysis of the data collected, show there is a significant and negative nonlinear relationship between education (EDUC) and attitude (ATT), with  $\beta = -0.088$ ,  $p < 0.033$ , but the effect size of this relationship is minimal ( $f^2=0.007$ ).

This means that as education (EDUC) increases, the attitude (ATT) towards airline services tends to decrease, indicating a relatively weak and limited relationship between education (EDUC) and attitude (ATT). This illustrates a negative relationship between higher levels of education (EDUC) and a reduction in overall attitude (ATT) towards airline services, as shown in Figure

5.10

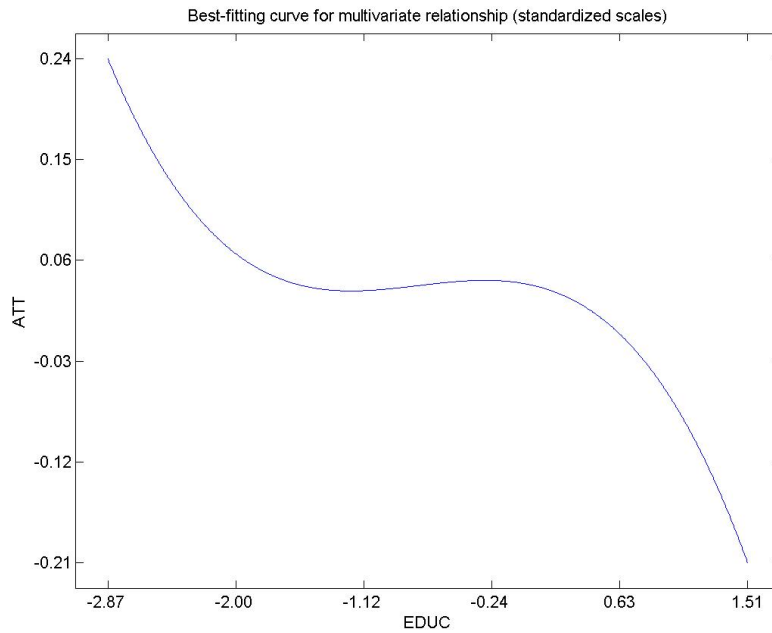


Figure 5.10 Relationships between Education (EDUC) and Attitude (ATT)

In this scenario, because of the significant and negative relationship between education and attitude, but with a minimal effect size, this can be interpreted as education potentially having a confounding effect on the dependent variable (attitude towards airline services). However, the ten model fits and quality indicators provided by the WarpPLS 7.0 software used and shown in Table 5.16 demonstrate that the statistical model's fit and quality indexes strongly supported the study results.

Nielson and Raswant, (2018) remind authors it is essential for congruent interpretation of reliability that information about the influence of controls on study findings is provided. In particular, they suggest “inadequate justification and reporting of controls render any extension difficult” (Nielson and Raswant, 2018, p.959). Therefore, this study finding of negative and significant between education and attitude was supported, but as it presented a minimal effect

size and the model fit was supported, this study follows Nielson and Raswant's (2018) recommendation that EDUC stays in the model as a control variable to prevent distortion of results or providing misleading findings, and is discussed further in Chapter Six.

The results as detailed for each hypothesis and control variables above, are summarised and presented in Table 5.18:

Table 5.18: Summary results of hypotheses testing:

Independent / Moderator Variables	Dependent Variable	B	P Value	f <sup>2</sup> sizes for total effects	Effect for H	Hypotheses supported / not supported
Animosity (ANIM) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	0.090	0.030	0.005	H1	Supported
Ethnocentrism (ETHN) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	0.000	0.496	0.000	H2	Rejected
Religiosity (REL) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	0.261	<0.001	0.025	H3	Supported
(SPF*ANIM) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	-0.072	0.068	0.011	H4	Rejected
(SPF*ETHN) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	-0.319	<0.001	0.106	H5	Supported
(SPF*REL) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	0.203	<0.001	0.022	H6	Supported
(GENDER) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	-0.018	0.351	0.000	CV	Rejected
(AGE) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	-0.075	0.058	0.005	CV	Rejected
(EDUC) →	Attitude towards Airline Services	-0.088	0.033	0.007	CV	Supported
<b>R<sup>2</sup> Coefficient for Dependent Variables</b>						
Dependent Latent Variables		R <sup>2</sup> Coefficient			Assessment	
Attitude towards service		R <sup>2</sup> = 0.18			Weak Effect	

Table 5.19: The Predictive Relevance of the Independent Constructs

Q <sup>2</sup> Coefficient for Independent Variable		
Dependent Variables	Q <sup>2</sup> Coefficient	Assessment
Consumer's Attitude towards Services	Q <sup>2</sup> = 0.200	Weak Effect

### 5.6 Predictive Validity (Relevance)

It is necessary to evaluate the predictive importance of the independent variables (Stone-Geisser's Q<sup>2</sup> test) (Table 5.18) in addition to the previously mentioned criteria/measurement model fit and quality indices (Roldán and Sanchez- Franco, 2012). According to Kock (2015), a model is predictively relevant if its Q<sup>2</sup> is more than 0, and it is not predictively relevant if its Q<sup>2</sup> is less than 0. According to Kock (2015: 101), the Q-squared coefficient is a nonparametric statistic that is often computed using blindfolding. Sometimes, the Q-squared coefficient is described as an R-squared resampling counterpart. It frequently has a value comparable to that metric. The independent constructs' predictive significance is shown in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19 shows that each latent variable block in the model has Q-squared coefficients for its predictive relevance (validity) associated with it. These coefficients are all larger than zero, indicating that the model has predictive relevance. The results are summarised in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20: Summary of Results

Number of Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Supported/ Rejected
H1.	Consumer <b>animosity</b> significantly influences Saudis' attitudes towards airline service	Supported
H2.	Consumer <b>ethnocentrism</b> significantly influences Saudis' attitudes towards airline service	Rejected
H3.	Consumer <b>religiosity</b> significantly influences Saudis' attitudes towards airline service	Supported
H4.	<b>Service performance</b> moderates the relationship between <b>consumer animosity</b> and Saudis' attitudes towards airline services	Rejected
H5.	<b>Service performance</b> moderates the relationship between <b>consumer ethnocentrism</b> and Saudis' attitudes towards airline services	Supported
H6.	<b>Service performance</b> moderates the relationship between <b>consumer religiosity</b> and Saudis' attitudes towards airline services	Supported

## 5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the full results of the study. Beginning with survey responses and demography, it progressed to reveal the descriptive statistics

of the main variables, with the specific outcome of the Structural Equation Modelling, demonstrating the model's fit and quality indices strongly corroborating the study results. This chapter also presented the outcome of testing the three control variables of gender, education and age (AGE EDU and GEN), demonstrating no confounding influence on the dependent variable, consumer attitudes towards airline services. The PLS-SEM statistical analysis (WarpPLS 7.0) was use in validating the study's model, and the results show that there are direct and indirect influences on the consumer's attitude towards airlines services with a mixed moderation effect of service performance.

The following chapter combines in-depth discussion of these results. Beginning with a summary of the main findings, it provides commentary on the outcome of testing the direct relationship between the variables and the moderation effect of service performance. Crucially, it provides this commentary through the two-theory theoretical framework of the theory of planned behaviour and the theory of consumption values, concluding with discussion around the study's contributions, suggestions for further study and study limitations.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Introduction

**T**he role of any discussion in research is distinct from other sections; its task is to discern what is ‘new’ about the results — what hasn’t been seen before, what has — and therefore supporting others’ findings or methodology. Importantly, it is part of the dissemination that is at the heart of motivation to conduct research. Tarling (2006) suggests that disseminating research maximises its impact, benefitting a range of stakeholders from academics to end-users, and those who ‘simply want to know’.

To that effect, this chapter provides a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the findings obtained in this study examining the impact of animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity, and the moderating effect of service performance on Saudis' attitude towards airline services. It also includes commentary on the results of any impact of the control variables Age, Education and Gender. This chapter synthesises the main findings and explores their implications within the context of existing literature and within the context of Saudi Arabia as it undergoes unprecedented change in the face of Vision 2030. It views the findings through the twin-theory theoretical lens; this commentary provides end-users the opportunity to determine the theoretical merit of both the findings and the integrity of the research process, as the theoretical framework has underpinned the entire process.

## 6.2 Summary of Main Findings

The aims and objectives of this study were fulfilled, including the examination of the effect of religiosity, ethnocentrism, and animosity on Saudis' attitudes towards airline services, as well as the understanding of the moderating role of service performance. A literature review identified gaps in knowledge, and hypotheses were developed accordingly. The survey design with structural equation modelling as chosen for the methodology yielded demographic findings and the following main findings:

- Consumer animosity alone influences consumer attitudes towards airline services.
- Consumer ethnocentrism alone does not significantly influence consumer attitudes towards airline services.
- Consumer religiosity alone influences consumer attitudes towards airline services.
- Service performance does not moderate the relationship between consumer animosity and consumer attitudes.
- Service performance moderates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and consumer attitudes.
- Service performance moderates the relationship between consumer religiosity and consumer attitudes.

The current study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence within the specific context of Saudi Arabian consumer attitudes towards airline services. The following sections discuss each individual result using the theoretical framework of this study. Of note, in Section 3.2, it was outlined that

this study acknowledged Sniehoffa, Pesseau, and Araújo-Soares' (2014) evidence that areas that the TPB cannot fully address may be explained by a second model, the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) (Sheth *et al.* 1991; Tanrikulu, 2021). Therefore, each result is interpreted using the theory on which it was hypothesised; in addition, further explanation is given where it differs using the second theory.

### **6.2.1 Influence of Consumer Animosity on Consumer Attitudes towards Airline Services**

The first hypothesis (H1) was predicated on the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and posited that consumer animosity significantly influences Saudis' attitudes towards airline services. The findings confirmed this hypothesis, revealing that consumer animosity has a positive impact on attitudes towards airline services. This suggests that even when Saudi consumers experience higher levels of animosity, they tend to hold more positive attitudes towards airline services. This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Khatoon and Rehman (2021), who also found a positive relationship between animosity and consumer attitudes.

However, this is a direct contrast with other findings, particularly with research studies that have investigated consumers' buying behaviours and avoidance of products and services, which has been found to grow in the presence of increasing animosity levels (Ali, 2021). Also, Manna'a and Rahmati (2021) found that consumers expressed animosity towards countries characterised by historical wrangles; consumers avoided buying or gave negative reviews towards imports or services from nations they perceive as rivals. Another

study had similar findings; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2004) found respondents from industrialised nations were more likely to be unwilling to buy products or utilise services from developing or underdeveloped countries.

This is explained by Rose, Rose, and Shoham (2009) as being founded on cultural attitudes and norms that bind negative ethnicity antecedents. An explanation for the differing result in this study can be found when viewing the outcome through the theoretical lens

As a starting point, TPB posits that an individual's behaviour is directly influenced by their intention to perform that behaviour, which in turn is shaped by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Sniehotta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014). In the context of this study, the perhaps surprising finding that consumer animosity positively influences Saudis' attitudes towards airline services can be interpreted by considering attitude — despite experiencing animosity, Saudi consumers might still develop positive attitudes towards airline services if they believe that using these services is beneficial, convenient, or necessary. This could be due to practical reasons such as the lack of alternative travel options, the necessity for travel, or the perceived quality and reliability of the airlines. Also, social influences and norms play a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours Hagger *et al.*, (2022). In Saudi Arabia, the cultural and social environment might emphasise the importance of air travel for business, education, or religious purposes (e.g., Hajj and Umrah). These social pressures could lead individuals to develop positive attitudes towards airline services (*ibid.*), even if they harbour animosity towards the service providers'

countries of origin. Likewise, airline services may carry significant social value in Saudi Arabia. Air travel could be seen as a status symbol or a social necessity, especially for business travel or religious pilgrimages. Positive social perceptions and the desire to conform to social expectations might lead consumers to develop favourable attitudes despite their animosity. Emotional connections and experiences related to air travel, such as comfort, safety, and the excitement of travel, can create positive emotional values that might counterbalance the negative feelings associated with animosity (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000). The perceived benefits and values associated with airline services might overshadow the negative feelings of animosity, leading to the observed positive relationship (Kotler and Armstrong, 2021).

As for Perceived Behavioural Control, if Saudi consumers feel that they have little choice but to use certain airline services due to limited alternatives or logistical reasons, their perceived control over the decision to use these services might be low. This can result in a cognitive dissonance where, despite their animosity, they rationalise their choice by developing a positive attitude towards the services they are using (Sniehotta, Pousseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014).

Further insight may be added by considering the result using elements of TCV; Saudi consumers might perceive high functional value in airline services, such as efficiency, convenience, and safety. The functional benefits of reliable and necessary transportation might outweigh their animosity towards the service providers' countries, leading to positive attitudes (Sheth *et al.*, 1991). Likewise, airline services may carry significant social value in Saudi

Arabia. Air travel could be seen as a status symbol or a social necessity, especially for business travel or religious pilgrimages. Positive social perceptions and the desire to conform to social expectations might lead consumers to develop favourable attitudes despite their animosity. Emotional connections and experiences related to air travel, such as comfort, safety, and the excitement of travel, can create positive emotional values that might counterbalance the negative feelings associated with animosity (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000). The perceived benefits and values associated with airline services might overshadow the negative feelings of animosity, leading to the observed positive relationship (Kotler and Armstrong, 2021).

### **6.2.2 Impact of Consumer Ethnocentrism on Attitudes towards Airline Services**

The second hypothesis (H2), also predicated on TPB, proposed that consumer ethnocentrism significantly influences Saudis' attitudes towards airline services. However, the findings did not support this hypothesis, indicating that there is no significant relationship between ethnocentrism and attitudes towards airline services among Saudis. This finding contrasts with the study conducted by Awasthi and Kumar (2022), who found a positive association between ethnocentrism and consumer attitudes. It also contrasts with research conducted by Al-Medabesh and Ali (2014), who found that when consumers are ethnocentric, they view their own cultural attributes and products as superior, thus avoiding imports. Similarly, Karoui and Khemakhem, (2019), found consumers tend to buy domestic products and

commodities whilst rejecting imported goods and services from other regions. This was seen in particular from consumers in industrialised nations.

Whilst the discrepancy in this result may be attributed to contextual differences or variations in sample characteristics, further interrogation of this finding is important, in part due to the unique situation within Saudi Arabia at this present moment in its history. The launch of Vision 2030 and its inherent reforms and proposals (Vision 2030, 2017; 2022) has seen the skies 'opening up' with new airports and routes, which when juxtaposed with the changes in social mobility under guardianship laws is likely to lead to higher passenger numbers. Indeed, we saw in Chapter Two how the Saudi Arabian government is supporting the airline industry's expansion in an effort to boost the local economy in its move from oil-based revenue (Benny, 2021). The government seeks to achieve this goal through continuous policymaking and partnering with likeminded agencies and airlines across the globe (Kamel, 2022). However, until recently the 5 main airline services available in Saudi Arabia were its domestic airlines, such as Saudia, thus any financial profits were directly supporting the government not private industry. This is changing; only recently have Wizz Air been granted a license, with others following suit to invest, and they are projected to be transporting a million passengers a year via 22 routes from Saudi Arabia into European cities (Harper, 2022).

Returning to the results of this study, it is likely that consumers — i.e., users of airline services — who have a low level of ethnocentrism will be less likely to have the attitude that domestic flights and services are superior to foreign brands. Turning to the theoretical model of this study for an interpretation of

this, TPB posits that attitudes towards a behaviour are influenced by beliefs about the outcomes of the behaviour. In this case, while it was hypothesised that ethnocentric attitudes would lead to a preference for domestic airlines, the findings suggest that Saudi consumers' attitudes towards airline services are not significantly shaped by ethnocentrism. This could be due to a perceived equivalence or superiority in the quality, safety, and reliability of foreign airlines, which may diminish the impact of ethnocentrism on their attitudes. Also, social influences and norms play a critical role in shaping behaviour. The progressive stance seen with Vision 2030 (Vision 2030, 2017; 2022) may create social norms that favour openness to foreign services, thereby reducing the influence of ethnocentrism on consumer attitudes. Importantly for this theory, the increased availability and perceived advantages of foreign airlines, such as more routes, competitive pricing, and modern services, could enhance perceived behavioural control. Consumers may feel more in control of their travel choices, making them less reliant on ethnocentric preferences.

Supporting these interpretations but using a different frame of reference, TCV would posit that Saudi consumers may prioritise the functional value offered by foreign airlines, such as better service, more destinations, and competitive pricing, over the ethnocentric preference for domestic airlines (Ramkissoon, Nunkoo, and Gursoy, 2009); this practical consideration can outweigh ethnocentric attitudes. Also, the influence of Vision 2030 and its progressive social reforms may create a social environment that values international engagement and modernisation. This social value can mitigate the influence of ethnocentrism on consumer attitudes as again, it may change the priorities

that Saudis attribute to different values (*ibid.*). The opening of new routes and the entry of foreign airlines provide Saudi consumers with novel travel opportunities, enhancing the epistemic value (Hyun and Fairhurst, 2018) and reducing the impact of ethnocentrism. TCV clarifies consumer motivation in their intention to purchase a product or service (Kotler, 2020). Sheth *et al.*, (1991) suggest such attitudes as seen in the survey responses in this study may predict consumer motivation for selection of newer airlines. The axiomatic propositions inherent with the consumption values behind such motivation to purchase are said to be from one of three mechanisms – consumer choice is influenced by multiple consumption values, the consumption values make a differential contribution in any given choice situation, and the consumption values are independent (Sheth *et al.* (1991). In the case of interpreting this study, multiple consumption values appear to be at play, not just the one that suggest ‘home produced is best’.

In finding no association between ethnocentrism and attitudes towards airline services, this study suggests that the move to expand consumer choice in airline services is likely to reduce Saudi airline services consumers’ first choice of services away from domestic products and tempt them to explore further afield. This finding has addressed a significant gap in current literature, as the research has been conducted in the unique context of Saudi Arabia post-introduction of Vision 2030, where customers are being introduced to foreign markets and cultural changes have facilitated travel. It also makes a methodological contribution related to the 6 items selected from CETSCALE (Shimp and Sharma, 1983) by demonstrating its utility in the Arab region, and

the merit in the translation methods used in this study for the scale, supporting the validity and robustness of its use.

Further research is warranted to investigate the underlying reasons for this non-significant relationship and explore potential contextual factors that may influence the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer attitudes in the Saudi Arabian context.

### **6.2.3 Role of Consumer Religiosity on Attitudes towards Airline Services**

The third hypothesis (H3) predicated on TCV posited that consumer religiosity significantly influences Saudis' attitudes towards airline services. The findings supported this hypothesis, indicating that consumer religiosity has a positive impact on attitudes towards airline services. This suggests that Saudi consumers with higher levels of religiosity are more likely to hold positive attitudes towards airline services. However, the relationship seen in the results implied that there are specific degrees of religiosity that impact customers' perception of airline services. Taking this finding to the literature for comparison provides some indication of the intricate nature of the relationship between religiosity and consumer attitudes. For instance, authors such as Mansori (2012, p301) have demonstrated how religiosity directly influences individuals' worldviews, which has a direct influence on their consumer behaviour.

TCV posits that consumer choice is driven by multiple consumption values: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991). In this context, religiosity aligns with self-oriented versus other-oriented values and external versus internal values (Holbrook, 2005), which

correspond with intrinsic and extrinsic expressions of religiosity (Çavuşoğlu *et al.*, 2021). Sheth *et al.* (1991) suggest that consumer choice is influenced by five major factors: functional, social, conditional, emotional and epistemic values. As seen in the descriptive statistics, there was a significant positive response to the questions, reflecting how we saw in earlier chapters that 99% of the population are Muslim (Worlddata.info, 2022). For highly religious consumers, airlines that offer services catering to their religious practices (e.g., halal meals, prayer facilities) provide significant functional value. This functional value can positively influence attitudes towards airlines. Religiosity often entails community and social identity, so services that reflect and respect religious practices may enhance social value. Airlines accommodating religious needs can create positive emotional experiences, reinforcing the consumer's identity and beliefs. For religious consumers, the epistemic value might come from experiencing services that align with their faith, reinforcing their beliefs and practices. In the context of Saudi Arabia, the socio-political environment and Vision 2030 reforms may create conditions that make religious alignment more significant. This conditional value impacts how religiosity influences attitudes, with higher religiosity magnifying the importance of religious congruence in service offerings. It is likely that social and epistemic values, rooted in their faith, have driven the participants' responses. Indeed, this supports the work of Auf, Salleh, and Yusoff (2016) and Mansori (2012) who suggested that religious individuals translate their faith and values into final behavioural actions.

When extrapolated to the arena of this study, such attributes would also dictate the respondents' willingness and desire to identify and acquire

services associated with companies from specific countries in the wider Middle East or the Islamic world.

Some additional interpretation is offered using TPB. When seen through the theoretical lens of this study, the TPB view is that volitional human behaviour stems from intending to perform a behaviour and perceived behavioural control (PBC) (Sniehotta, Pesseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014). Authors such as Mathras *et al.* (2016) found religiosity to be a driver in consumer boycott of products and services, suggesting strong perceived behavioural control in choosing services that align with their beliefs.

The current study contributes to the literature by further highlighting the importance of religiosity as a factor shaping consumer attitudes in the specific context of airline services in Saudi Arabia.

#### **6.2.4 Effect of Service Performance on Consumer Animosity**

The fourth hypothesis (H4), predicated on TCV, proposed that service performance moderates the relationship between consumer animosity and attitudes towards airline services. However, the findings did not support this hypothesis, indicating that service performance does not significantly moderate the relationship between animosity and attitudes towards airline services among Saudis. This is at odds with previous findings, including Mkedder and Bakir (2003), which found using the CETSCALE measure that service performance can moderate the impact of the animosity element of the scale on consumer attitudes towards products and services. Likewise, Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, and Pratama, (2020), found willingness to buy is affected by consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentricity, and that

product judgement moderates that relationship. However, they suggest that if consumers have the attitude that a product or service is 'good enough', then marketing companies can re-brand to promote elements consumers report as 'good enough' thus encouraging positive consumer attitudes that will encourage purchase despite any consumer animosity.

This may be explained through TCV as an example of perceived value being a trade-off between benefit and sacrifice (Hyun and Fairhurst, 2018). In other words, consumers may purchase a product despite animosity towards the producer or country of origin because of its perceived value. While high service performance should enhance functional value, in cases of strong consumer animosity, the perceived functional benefits are overshadowed by negative emotional and social values associated with animosity. Thus, even if the service performance is high, the functional value alone is not sufficient to alter negative attitudes stemming from animosity. Animosity can diminish social value, particularly if the service is associated with a group or country towards which there is animosity (Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, and Pratama, 2020). In such cases, high service performance cannot compensate for the loss of social value, as consumers prioritise social affiliations and norms over functional benefits. Animosity generates strong negative emotions, which can significantly influence consumer attitudes. High service performance might not be able to counteract these negative emotions. The emotional value associated with animosity is likely to dominate, preventing any positive impact from high service performance. High service performance might not change attitudes if the situational context (e.g., political or historical animosities) (conditional value, Sheth *et al.*, 1991) is particularly strong.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour may be able to add a more nuanced perspective. Consumer animosity can lead to negative attitudes towards services associated with the source of animosity (Saeb Farhan and Mohammad, 2018). The hypothesis posited that high service performance might alter these negative attitudes, but the findings suggest that animosity is a strong enough factor that even excellent service performance does not significantly change attitudes. This indicates that animosity overrides positive beliefs about service outcomes. Also, PBC refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behaviour (Sniehotta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014). This study has revealed that even if service performance is high, its moderating effect is diminished because the animosity provides a strong perceived control over the rejection behaviour.

It is important to note that the absence of a significant moderating effect may be context-specific to the Saudi Arabian airline industry or may be influenced by other unexplored factors. Indeed, confounding factors that others have found include personal feelings and cultural influence, which is unique to each region. Future research could investigate these factors to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between service performance, animosity, and consumer attitudes.

#### **6.2.5 Effect of Service Performance on Consumer Ethnocentrism**

The fifth hypothesis (H5), also predicated on TCV, suggested that service performance moderates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and attitudes towards airline services. The findings supported this hypothesis, indicating that service performance has a significant moderating effect on the

relationship between ethnocentrism and attitudes towards airline services among Saudis. This implies that the quality of service provided by airlines can influence the impact of ethnocentrism on consumer attitudes. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Al-Sulaiti and Fontenot (2020), which also found a similar moderating effect of service performance on ethnocentrism.

In looking to interpret this finding through the theoretical lens of this study, using TCV, emotional value is derived from the affective states a service induces (Sinha and Desarbo, 1998; Sweeney and Southar, 2001). High service performance can generate positive emotions, such as satisfaction and delight (Brush, 2019), which can counterbalance the negative emotions associated with ethnocentrism. This supports the findings of earlier research by Isa, bin Saud, and Ismail, (2016), who found that consumer loyalty to home products and services cannot be explained by ethnocentrism alone, as service performance and product / service characteristics are more important to discerning consumers' values. This positive emotional value can lead to more favourable attitudes towards the airline services. Likewise, high service performance increases the functional value of airline services, making them more attractive even to ethnocentric consumers. When the service performance is exceptional, the practical benefits can outweigh the preference for domestic products, leading to more positive attitudes (Veeramani *et al.*, 2020).

TPB offers similar insight; consumer ethnocentrism, which reflects a preference for domestic products and services, influences attitudes towards airline services. The finding of this study indicates that high service

performance can positively influence these attitudes. When airlines provide excellent service, it enhances consumers' beliefs about the positive outcomes of using these services, thereby mitigating any negative bias associated with ethnocentrism. Likewise, high service performance can positively impact subjective norms by enhancing the perceived social acceptability of using foreign or less ethnocentric services. If consumers observe that high-quality services are socially endorsed, this can lessen the impact of ethnocentrism on their attitudes. It is clear that elements such as positive previous experience (for instance, ease of booking flights) would mitigate ethnocentric tendency and customers would be willing to purchase products or use services (Esmail, 2018). The theory posits that attitudes towards a behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are crucial determinants of an individual's intention to engage in that behaviour, which in turn influences actual behaviour (Sniehotta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014). Contextualising this with the growing number of services to choose from and restrictions on solo travellers changing within contemporary Saudi Arabia, this study has revealed these factors will encourage Saudis to 'shop around' and have confidence in new services regardless of their ethnocentric tendencies when service performance is factored in. The current study therefore extends this understanding within the specific context of Saudi Arabian consumer attitudes towards airline services.

#### **6.2.6 Effect of Service Performance on Consumer Religiosity**

The sixth hypothesis (H6), which was also predicated on TCV, stated that service performance moderates the relationship between consumer religiosity

and attitudes towards airline services. The findings supported this hypothesis, suggesting that service performance significantly moderates the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards airline services among Saudis. This implies that the quality of service provided by airlines can influence the impact of religiosity on consumer attitudes. This insight holds substantial implications for the airline industry, particularly in culturally homogenous markets like Saudi Arabia, where 99% of the population identifies as Muslim. Airlines operating in this environment must recognise that service performance not only affects satisfaction but also enhances the alignment between consumer attitudes and their deeply held religious values. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Stenberg and Bosved (2023), which also found a similar moderating effect of service performance on religiosity. Given that we had already seen that religiosity had a positive impact on consumer attitude, this amplification by a moderator becomes something of note for the industry as a whole.

In a sense, religiosity becomes a cross-cultural consideration in any research study; 99% of the population in Saudi Arabia follow the Muslim faith, but other studies in similar settings (e.g. Essoo and Dibb, 2004) have had similar findings yet with different religions. Given the cultural context of the study (i.e., Saudis' choice of airline services), taking into account cultural nuances, values, and norms can help contextualise the findings, ensuring their relevance and applicability to the target population (*ibid.*). Airlines can leverage this by designing service touchpoints that reinforce values of trust, care, and respect, reflecting both other-oriented values (Łowicki and

Zaeinkowski, 2021) and self-oriented values, such as efficiency and aesthetics (Holbrook, 1999), known to influence consumer behaviour.

Because religiosity can be described as a powerful attribute that influences several personal traits and personal characteristics, including ethical beliefs and materialism, there is merit in looking to TCV for an interpretation of this result. Holbrook (2005) suggested that using self-oriented v other-oriented values and external v internal values is an important angle from which to study consumer values and behaviour. Religiosity elements in the study instrument included asking about the importance of belonging to a religious community. This is representative of other-oriented values which grow in such communities (Łowicki and Zaeinkowski, 2021). However, Holbrook's earlier work (1995; 1999) described values that can be directly viewed as being service-performance related and which can explain consumer behaviour, such as efficiency and aesthetics (Holbrook, 1999).

Also, emotional value is derived from the affective states a service induces. High service performance can generate positive emotions, such as satisfaction and trust, which are particularly important for religious consumers who may view positive service experiences as consistent with their values of care and respect (Agarwala, Mishra, and Singh, 2019). This emotional value can lead to more favourable attitudes towards airline services. Airlines seeking to cultivate brand loyalty and advocacy in religiously observant markets should therefore focus on creating excellent service experiences that affirm these consumers' core values.

One particular element of TPB is relevant here; consumer religiosity influences attitudes by incorporating religious beliefs and values into evaluation of services. High service performance can enhance positive attitudes by reinforcing the belief that choosing these services aligns with religious values of quality and reliability. This is particularly significant in a context where consumers' religious beliefs are strong, such as in Saudi Arabia, where 99% of the population follows the Muslim faith (World Data, 2022).

### **6.2.7 The use of control variables in this study**

As stated by Neilson and Raswant (2018), one of the key areas of importance is to report on the use of control variables in any study, and in particular, the outcome with any inferences that can be made on whether they made a biasing or substantive influence on the model and therefore on the overall results.

As seen in the results, gender and age had an insignificant and negative effect on consumers' attitude towards airline services; there was no confounding of the results, which justified the model fit. When compared to the reviewed literature, this finding has also been seen in other studies. For instance, in a French study of factors influencing consumer behaviour, neither gender nor age as control variables influenced consumer behaviour (Fall Diallo *et al.*, 2013). This was also found in a later study where gender and age were control variables in a study investigating influences on consumers' attitudes towards brands (Jeon, 2022).

Turning to education as a control measure, in finding a significant negative relationship with a minimal effect size between education and attitude towards airline services, this can be interpreted as education potentially having a confounding effect on the dependent variable. However, the inclusion of education as a control variable had no significant impact on the relationships observed between the independent variables, moderator variable, and the dependent variable. Others have had similar results, such as Sari and Sener (2022) who found no interaction effects between education and the other variables in a study that examined consumer attitudes on service quality and how they influenced intention to recommend airline services to others.

From an industry perspective, these findings suggest that demographic segmentation strategies based on age or gender may have limited effectiveness in influencing consumer attitudes in this sector. Instead, airlines could benefit from focusing on behavioural and psychographic factors, such as religiosity and perceived service quality, as more actionable drivers of consumer loyalty and satisfaction.

### **6.3 Commentary on Zero Response Rate of e-returns**

As this study notes, comprehensive analysis of retrieved forms ensures the quality and trustworthiness of acquired data, even when certain questions were left unanswered. According to Hair *et al.* (2010), missing value analysis is essential for research to address incomplete replies, thus protecting data from biases caused by many unanswered questions (Kline, 2015). In addition, in order to assess the merit of the study, any confounding factors encountered (e.g. contest and convolution) need to be evaluated (Brammer, Branicki,

Linnenluecke and Smith, 2019). In this study, it was also essential to consider potential limitations associated with non-response bias and acknowledge the potential impact they may have on the generalisability of the findings.

Although robust checking of the electronic system included checking elements such as the barcode working and clarity / fit for purpose checks using Android and Apple systems (Ponto, 2015), it was noteworthy that none of the web returns were completed: the whole cohort of participants who agreed to complete their forms electronically did not return their survey items. Tourangeau (2006) suggested this may be as a result of factors such as asking inappropriate questions for the target group, although this seems highly unlikely due to the full return of all the paper-based forms, with marginal errors. Cranford *et al.* (2008) found the majority of non-response to web-based survey was attributed by participants to being 'too busy', 'forgot' and 'not interested'. Check and Schutt (2012) suggest technical problems, particularly with internet surveys.

For the purposes of this study, in determining potential reasons for the zero response to the electronic survey, the author returned to section 4.4.1. As stated, non-response can be seen as one of the five main themes relating to main errors in survey research — coverage, sampling, measurement, reporting and non-response — (Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2014; Ponto, 2015). Strategies in this research to minimise such occurrences had included selecting a homogenous sample (following Wang, Wong, Naryanan and Chee, 2020), pilot testing the questionnaire and making required adjustments (Robson and McCarten, 2016) and following robust protocol when designing

the instruments (Ponto, 2015). This included accessing the survey platform on return from Saudi Arabia and after the given deadline for responses, and no technical problems were detected. However, one technical consideration may have been that the system was only checked in the UK. Although the translation of the survey items was certified, and the pre-printed forms were clear, the electronic version was not tested within Saudi Arabia, therefore there may have been an interface issue or incompatibility that was not predicted. This raises the possibility of regional compatibility issues or interface challenges due to the use of the Arabic language. Suggestions for future research would be to prepare any electronic systems, particularly where there is a different alphabetic system (Arabic in this instance, but others such as the Cyrillic languages, Sanskrit and character-based word forms such as Korean or Chinese are considered here) within the country where the survey is to be conducted to reduce compatibility concerns. Future industry research initiatives relying on digital survey tools should ensure in-country testing to avoid such oversights.

Another, perhaps simpler explanation may be related to temporal or unanticipated, on-the-day factors. Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno and Hernández (2020) describe unexpected events such as natural disasters, political scandals and even sports events as potential causal factors for unexpected outcome in public opinion surveys. They acknowledge that such events, or change in context, can threaten the validity of results, but also acknowledge that other scholars may indeed capitalise on occurrences to identify causal effect on swaying public opinion. They go on to suggest that

As a result of being exposed to certain events, some people might become more likely to refrain from responding to particular survey questions (item nonresponse) or even be less likely to participate in surveys altogether (unit nonresponse) (Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno and Hernández, 2020, p 170).

With regards to such a scenario, two factors of note were simultaneously occurring during the data collection stage of this research, one anticipated, and one an unexpected major event. It was conducted during Ramadan 2023, which undoubtedly impacted on some of the travellers – rushing to catch flights to visit family before Eid, fasting, hot climate – all of which may have impacted on their motivation to complete the forms at a later stage (see for example Cranford *et al.*, 2008). Secondly, on the World stage, there was a major outbreak of civil war in Sudan that coincided with the time the author was at the airport. Saudi Arabia became a rescue hub, with many displaced persons being evacuated predominantly by ship to its major ports (CMI, 2023). There was limited use of air transport directly to Saudi Arabia for operational reasons, but many people gathered at airports to await domestic arrivals from other transit points and the atmosphere was noticeably tense whilst the author was distributing the surveys. Future inquiry may be valid in terms of investigating the impact that the evacuation may have had on electronic survey response rates.

## **6.4 Contributions to Knowledge**

In moving to consider the contributions to knowledge this study has provided, it considers such contributions against specific metrics used in the research

education framework for research with impact: significance, reach, and influence on policy and practice (UKRI, 2022; 2023).

Perhaps the most significant contribution to knowledge, therefore, rests in combining the use of the two theories — TPB and TCV. In doing so, this study has brought a clear and practical utility to the models and demonstrated the efficacy of one addressing shortcomings in the other. The combined use of two well-validated models widened the theoretical lens in this study, providing a deeper rationale to each result, and at the same time provided insights from the frame of reference on one that the other could not fully offer. For example, in explaining the findings of this study on consumer animosity, which showed its small effect size on consumer's attitude ( $f^2 = 0.005$ ) suggesting a weak and limited relationship, clarity was sought through viewing the result as a component of TPB (intention being conceptualised as part of a person's attitude towards the use of airline services). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) assumes that attitudes towards a certain behaviour are shaped by underlying beliefs. Ethnocentrism is described as being about value judgements and beliefs about others' culture being somehow inadequate compared to one's own (McCornack and Ortiz, 2017), yet from this study, TPB has not adequately explained why consumer ethnocentrism failed to show the predicted significant relationship with attitudes towards airline services. TPB posits that individuals form attitudes based on expected outcomes and normative influences, hence this study predicting that consumer ethnocentrism would have an effect on Saudi consumers' attitudes towards airline services, but it does not account for contextual factors that might weaken the role of ethnocentrism in shaping consumer preferences.

There are currently many contextual factors at play in Saudi Arabia, as seen in previous chapters. Vision 2030 is expanding opportunity, and given the increasingly globalised nature of airline travel for Saudi nationals, where pragmatic considerations such as price, convenience, and service quality may now be overriding national loyalty, the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) offers a more suitable interpretative lens. TCV suggests that consumer choices are guided by functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional values (Sheth *et al.*,1991). In this context, the lack of a significant ethnocentrism-attitude link could be attributed to the predominance of functional values (e.g., efficiency, safety, and cost-effectiveness) over ideological attachments. This finding highlights the importance of integrating multiple theoretical perspectives when examining consumer decision-making in airline services, as TPB alone may not fully capture the nuanced trade-offs consumers make in service-oriented industries, and the finding contributes to consideration and deliberation of the utility of TPB as a sole model for future researchers.

Of note, this study contributes to the existing literature on TCV through its empirical examination of the relationships between the three independent variables on consumer attitude toward airline services when the moderating effect of service performance was introduced. Emotional value stems from the affective states a service may induce, therefore when high service performance generates positive emotions (e.g., satisfaction and trust), such positive service experiences resonate with religious consumers' values of care and respect (Agarwala, Mishra, and Singh, 2019). This study therefore provides further evidence of the use of TCV within the theoretical framework

being a good fit for the research model, demonstrating its utility for future researchers.

The second contribution rests in the significance of the study and research aim. Based in times of great change in Saudi Arabia, the information evolving from the findings has provided a unique cultural perspective, and the economic relevance at this time is clear. The demographic data presented in the results chapter resonated with some of the stated aims of Vision 2030 to increase access to education and improve the education system; the majority of participants had been educated to undergraduate level and beyond (63.1%). This has implications for airline services with an increase in students travelling both into the country to state of the art universities with new resources, or indeed out of the country to further their education overseas (Vision 2030, 2022). Examples already seen in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia include over 75,000 male and female students are currently studying in over 30 countries; although down from the initial launch of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' programme for foreign scholarships, there is a strong post-covid recovery momentum, fuelled by Vision 2030 goals and resources (ICEF Monitor, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022).

Thirdly, the research process was conducted with congruence to the quantitative philosophy. Moreover, the experience of conducting data collection during the time of Ramadan and an unexpected humanitarian crisis in Sudan (CMI, 2023) brought its own unique practical and methodological challenge, and the zero-return from the electronic-based forms was evidence

of this. The knowledge acquired and shared about the consequences for this study will benefit others in similar circumstances and enable mitigation.

The final contribution to knowledge at this stage rests in the results of testing the hypothesised relationships. Determining the nuances of the relationships as demonstrated in Table 5.20 contributes to the academic field, adding to the volume of literature. The lack of significant direct relationships between ethnocentrism and attitudes towards airline services and between service performance as a moderator of the relationship between consumer animosity and Saudi attitudes towards airline services highlights the need for further exploration of contextual factors that may influence this relationship. The particular contextual factors here are related to the timing of data collection – Vision 2030 and the policy changes afoot that are expanding Saudi's choices, which addresses a current gap in the literature. Moreover, the chosen methodology contributes towards overall recognition of the importance of the theoretical placement of variables and the use of the CETSCALE in Arab regions. For instance, Omar *et al.* (2024) found ethnocentrism had a direct effect on brand equity in the airline services, but had no moderating effect between service failure and service recovery strategies. The choice in this study to consider ethnocentrism as an independent variable and not a moderator is validated by their results and starts to address a gap in the recent literature by adding to ongoing debate about where and how ethnocentrism exerts an influence. As for the use of CETSCALE (Shimp and Sharma, 1983), the use of the selected six items and the back-translation demonstrated its utility for this geographical region.

In terms of reach and impact, there is potential to advance the knowledge acquired through these findings both within the airline industry itself in practical ways (such as marketing) and in academia. Future studies could investigate cultural or societal aspects that shape the formation of ethnocentrism and its impact on consumer attitudes in the Saudi Arabian context.

### **6.5 Implications of Small Effect Sizes for Theoretical Advancement**

Although several hypotheses in this study produced statistically significant but weak effect sizes, these findings are still valuable for advancing knowledge in the field of consumer behaviour and airline services. Indeed, Funder and Ozer (2019) suggested small effects in social sciences often reflect the complexity of human behaviour, and then will accumulate over time or across different contexts to produce meaningful impacts. Turning to this study, this is particularly relevant in consumer attitude formation, where many small influences develop from one's formative years then converge to shape decision-making processes (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005).

In this study's results, although both consumer animosity and consumer religiosity exhibited weak positive effects on consumer attitudes, these results nonetheless demonstrate that even subtle factors can have cumulative or situational importance. Meyer and Oppenheimer (2019) suggested that small effects often identify emerging trends or nuances that larger effects might overshadow, thus providing early insights for future theoretical exploration.

Importantly, findings such as these seen here encourage more theoretical debate and refinement: weak effects do not negate influence; instead, they

suggest complex underlying mechanisms, perhaps moderated by cultural, temporal, or demographic variables (Prentice and Miller, 1992). This study may contribute to refining the Theory of Consumption Values and the Theory of Planned Behaviour by showing that religiosity and animosity, while not dominant forces, remain consistent influences across different settings and populations.

These small effects also hold sector and industry relevance. As Kotler and Keller (2016) argue, incremental adjustments in understanding consumer behaviour can lead to significant cumulative improvements in service design, marketing, and customer engagement strategies. Airlines can use these findings to tailor their services and marketing, particularly in highly sensitive or value-oriented markets like Saudi Arabia.

Finally, acknowledging small effect sizes aligns with the reality described by Greenwald, Banaji, and Nosek, (2015) that large behavioural shifts rarely result from singular, large influences but rather from the interplay of numerous smaller ones. This study adds to the ongoing academic debate by reinforcing the legitimacy and value of small yet significant findings for both academic advancement and practical application.

## **6.6 Implications for Airline Services Management**

The findings of this study have implications for airline services management. They offer valuable insights into understanding and managing consumer attitudes in the airline industry, particularly in Saudi Arabia. The information can be utilised to improve service delivery and meet the evolving needs and expectations of customers. In the context of this study being conducted within

Saudi Arabia in the period during the roll-out of the National Transformation Plan (Vision 2030, 2017; 2022), airline services are expanding. This affords such services a new opportunity to build trust amongst their target client base that could be leveraged to increase passenger numbers. Airline services management knowing that religiosity influences Saudi consumers' attitudes towards their services allows them to consider and recognise the importance of religious values amongst their customer base. This may encourage the incorporation of specific elements in their service: prayer rooms, incentivised travel to Umrah and Hajj, and targeted marketing, for instance.

Also, the moderating effects found of service performance on the relationships between ethnocentrism/religiosity and attitudes towards airline services highlight the significance of delivering high-quality service experiences. Airlines should prioritise service excellence and focus on exceeding customer expectations, as positive service encounters can mitigate the negative impact of ethnocentrism and amplify the positive effect of religiosity on consumer attitudes.

In looking at the responses to the final items of the questionnaire, the majority of respondents were happy to recommend Saudi-based airlines to others, and satisfied with the price of services. This suggests there is value in airline services facilitating and strengthening the process for customers to review services and publishing them through sites such as Trust Pilot and Google Reviews.

## **6.7 Implications for Policy Makers**

Policy makers can benefit from the findings of this study when making decisions and developing initiatives related to Vision 2030 and the development of the airline sector. The insights gained from this study into consumer attitudes towards airline services offer a nuanced view of customer attitudes towards airline services, thereby informing policy-making processes and helping shape strategies that promote the growth and sustainability of the industry. For instance, it was seen that even when consumers hold animosity towards airline services, their attitudes towards those services are not affected. This supports endeavours to introduce overseas airline services through competitive tendering and contracting for routes. The majority of respondents in this study stated they would recommend Saudi-based airline services, and service performance was seen to moderate relationships through amplification of the effect on consumer attitudes, therefore policy initiatives that support the ability of airline services to respond to customer feedback would promote continued custom.

## **6.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented a discussion of the main findings of this research. It opened with confirming the hypotheses related to consumer animosity and religiosity, both of which were, as predicted, shown to have a positive impact on consumer attitudes to airline services, whereas consumer ethnocentrism was seen to have no influence. It then proceeded to discuss the moderating effect of service performance on the relationship between the independent variables and consumer attitudes to airline services, demonstrating its

importance in mitigating cultural and religious biases. The discussion compared findings to previous studies, and made commentary on the use of control variables which had no confounding effect on the service model. Importantly, this chapter outlined the implications of these for policymakers and academia; the following chapter progresses this discussion by concluding with a detailed account of the practical implications of the findings, alongside commentary around Vision 2030 as a driver of change, suggestions for future research and limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Introduction

**W**hereas Chapter Six discussed the findings of this study, then extrapolated and expanded upon the study's implications for knowledge, Airline Services Management and policy makers, this chapter now concludes the thesis. Beginning with a discussion of the wider implications of the research as it relates directly to Vision 2030, it then offers summarising commentary on the practical implications of the research before presenting study limitations and suggestions for further research. It is important for any research that a process of reflection is incorporated into the discussion and reflection on the findings as that process helps determine whether and how it meets the needs of end users within industry and an academic setting. This reflection will include commenting on amplifying factors that featured whilst I was conducting this research (e.g. anticipation and actionability) and confounding factors encountered (e.g. convolution) (Brammer, Branicki, Linnenluecke and Smith, 2019).

### 7.2 Vision 2030 as a Driver of Change

At this juncture there is merit in commentary on the wider implications of this research and its findings for Saudi Arabia at this moment in its history. This study, as with most research, began with a specific aim: to examine the impact of a set of independent variables on a dependent variable and to examine whether or not service performance moderated the relationships under consideration. The researcher had considered the methodology and the

execution of the study in a linear fashion — first set the scene, then review the literature, then build a strategy, then conduct the survey, then analyse the data, then determine the findings — however, what was not anticipated was how this process would place the author face to face with the impact of Vision 2030 as it is evolving and affecting Saudi citizens, society in general, businesses (specifically the new airports and airline services), and the Ministry of Education (as study sponsors).

In the opening chapter, the concept of “cultural tourism” (Georgieva, Oriade, and Rahimi, 2017) was discussed. The participants in this study were intentionally selected from the cohort of Saudi passengers travelling from selected airports on the days the surveys were conducted, thus this study does not claim to have captured data about the variables from an international perspective. Most passengers travelling on those dates who responded stated they were commuting / travelling for personal reasons or on business, while 8.7% of respondents were travelling for leisure reasons. In the context of Saudi Arabia, it is highly likely that those travelling for personal reasons were preparing for Eid with family, and ‘leisure’ travellers were seeking, in part, some form of cultural attraction including trying regional food, visiting archaeological sites, different shopping opportunities and museums etc. The demographics may have been weighted differently if data collection had not been during Ramadan, when it is likely that more travellers would have been in the ‘Leisure’ and Business’ categories.

This opens a dialogue around the impact of the pillars of Vision 2030 related to the three themes of Ambitious Nation, Thriving Economy and Vibrant

Society (Vision2030 Office, 2017) and how the findings of this study may reflect some progress towards the National Transformation Plan (NTP). Religious tourism and being the heart of the Islamic world are central to the NTP (Alammash, Guo, and Vinnikova, 2021). Indeed, culture is increasingly used by cities around the world to boost their attractiveness (Zhang, Leung and Bai, 2023), and increased touristic footfall, particularly during religious festivals (Eid, Hajj, and Umrah, for instance) has been anticipated in terms of infrastructure development, transportation, telecommunication expansion innovations, and the preservation of technology (National Transformation Program, 2018). As seen in this study, more female passengers travelling at Medina City airport, closest to the Prophet's mosque may represent NTP goals through changed restrictions on women's rights to travel without a guardian, and may also represent more women participating in religious tourism, though both would need to be determined by further study. Alammash, Guo, and, Vinnikova, (2021, p. 14) suggest that "religious tourism is a significant and justifiable aspect of the heart of Islam"; this present study has demonstrated the importance of religiosity as a factor shaping consumer attitudes in the specific context of airline services in Saudi Arabia, thus supporting further the NTP and its aims.

One of the perhaps perplexing findings in this study was that even when Saudi consumers experience higher levels of animosity, they tend to hold more positive attitudes towards airline services. Looking to Vision 2030 as a driver of change may contribute some of our understanding of this dynamic. Clearly TPB offered a rationale, in that volitional human behaviour (in this context, consumer behaviour) is comprised of both intention [to perform] and

perceived behavioural control, however, at a practical level and unpicking the intricacies of this finding set against the other variables under study and within the landscape of Saudi Arabia in the early years post-Vision 2030 launch introduces another perspective. The Vision combined with the National Transformation Program 2020 (NTP) have set over-arching and far-reaching goals and objectives aiming to transform the country into a sustainable, diverse nation. Islam is central to the programme, a religion that teaches تَسَامُح [tasāmuḥ] tolerance. This study demonstrated that religiosity was high amongst its participants, reflecting perhaps that the values of tolerance and acceptance as taught through Islam mitigate for consumer animosity, giving further evidence for its embeddedness within Saudi culture and the NTP.

Sustainability is also central to Vision 2030 (National Transformation Program, (2018). This study has found evidence of the sustainability agenda at various points of the inquiry, for instance, in the recruiting of a diverse range of professionals to lead on sustainability agendas (Benny, 2021), the launch of Riyadh Air with its enhanced sustainability initiatives, and consumers who demonstrate high intrinsic religiosity being more likely to follow sustainable consumption patterns (Minton and Geiger-Oneto, 2020; Sher *et al.* 2021). Sustainability itself is a multi-layered concept (Oriade *et al.*, 2020), and may be seen from the UN SDGs as meeting the needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs (UN DESA, 2023). Organisationally, sustainability is embedded throughout the hierarchy and throughout the supply chain, and can be summarised as comprehensive with a focus on long-term value creation and maximisation of the ESG agenda (environment, social and governance) (Abdullah *et al.*, 2024). Oriade *et al.*,

(2020, p4) suggest sustainability is concerned with “organisations and individuals taking some responsibility for their actions on their surroundings”. This links directly with the moderating variable of this study, service performance, and with consumer attitudes: previous literature revealed stakeholder pressure (including consumers) placed on airline services to reduce their carbon footprint (e.g. Veeramani, *et al.*, 2020). Likewise, sustainability is linked to quality, with Al Awadh (2023, p.4) arguing customers should consistently receive high-quality services from airlines in the “challenging global competitive environment of today” which maintains airlines’ sustainability. Attributing some of the findings of this study to the Vision’s sustainability agenda may merit further study, as on the surface, the high score for religiosity set against previous studies that suggest intrinsic religiosity as seen in sustainability endeavours would suggest some link.

### **7.3 Summary of the Practical Contributions of this study**

This study makes several key practical contributions to industry practice, business strategy, and policymaking, particularly within the context of Saudi Arabia’s rapidly evolving airline services market under Vision 2030, as well as offering globally relevant insights.

#### **7.3.1 Implications of Consumer Animosity for Airline Strategy and Policy**

The finding that consumer animosity positively influences attitudes toward airline services — contrary to expectations — highlights the complexity of consumer decision-making in Saudi Arabia. Despite geopolitical tensions or negative perceptions toward certain countries, consumers continue to choose

airline services associated with those nations. These factors may be due to necessity, limited alternatives, or perceived functional and social value. For airline executives, this suggests that reputational challenges that are aligned with national or political animosity can be mitigated when airline companies offer superior service quality, convenience, and brand positioning that highlights a service's reliability and functional value. For policymakers, particularly in Saudi Arabia, this indicates that encouraging open skies policies and facilitating partnerships with airlines from diverse regions will not be undermined by animosity; instead, consumer pragmatism and service quality will increase demand. The findings of this study suggest international airline brands entering or expanding in the Saudi market should focus on demonstrating cultural sensitivity and high functional value, confident that animosity alone will not hinder consumer uptake.

### **7.3.2. Ethnocentrism and Consumer Choice in a Transforming Market**

The finding that consumer ethnocentrism does not significantly influence Saudi consumers' attitudes toward airline services becomes a crucial insight for both policymakers and industry in Saudi Arabia's changing socio-political landscape. In other markets, ethnocentrism often predicts preference for domestic providers (e.g. Joakim and Felix, 2023), however, Saudi consumers appear increasingly open to foreign brands. This openness is likely a result of Vision 2030's progressive policies, growing consumer sophistication, and expanded travel options. For airline industry leaders, this suggests that entering the Saudi market should not be approached with caution because of anticipated local bias. Instead, there is a clear opportunity to compete on

quality, price, and route availability. From these results, policymakers can be confident that liberalising the aviation sector and attracting foreign carriers supports diversification goals without facing major cultural resistance. This also points to the importance of continued investment in consumer education and international engagement policies that shape norms around choice and openness. Additionally, this study demonstrates the relevance and robustness of CETSCALE (Shimp and Sharma, 1987) in the Arab context, providing a validated tool for future consumer research in regional policymaking and business strategy.

### **7.3.3 Leveraging Religiosity in Service Design and Marketing**

The significant positive influence of consumer religiosity on attitudes toward airline services demonstrates the important role of religious congruence in both policy and business decisions in regions such as the predominantly Muslim Arab states. Airlines that accommodate religious practices — such as providing halal meals, prayer spaces, and culturally respectful services — stand to significantly enhance their brand reputation and customer loyalty in Saudi Arabia. This is supported by authors such as Ling, Phang and Salleh (2024) who suggest that effective marketing strategies must consider the different impacts that subjective norms such as those associated with religiosity have on consumers, and leverage them to align with consumer perceptions across different sectors. This leads to the suggestion from this study that for those airlines operating in or targeting Saudi markets, a thoughtful service design that aligns with consumers' religious values is important. Marketing strategies should communicate respect for and

alignment with Islamic practices to strengthen consumer trust. Where policymakers are seen to be endeavouring to support the development and promotion of culturally and religiously attuned services, this aligns with both Vision 2030's goals of expanding international connectivity and preserving cultural identity. Crucially, this insight can inform regulatory guidance and incentives for foreign airlines seeking to operate in Saudi Arabia. On a global scale, airline alliances and partnerships can use these findings to refine segmentation and tailor offerings for Muslim-majority markets.

#### **7.3.4. Service Performance as a Moderator: Strategic Focus for Airlines**

The findings on service performance as a moderator reveal that while it does not mitigate the effects of consumer animosity, it significantly moderates the influence of ethnocentrism and religiosity. This has direct implications for airline service strategies: airlines can overcome latent biases or cultural barriers through exceptional service delivery. Indeed, Chung (2014) reminds firms to fully understand consumers' cultural norms and collective identity when both planning services but particularly when addressing service failures to deliver context-specific services. High-quality service can convert consumers who may otherwise prefer domestic providers or be hesitant due to religious concerns. Policymakers should encourage competitive service standards through regulatory benchmarks and certification schemes that support quality-based competition rather than protectionism.

#### **7.3.5. A Framework for Policymakers and Industry**

Taken together, these findings provide a framework for Saudi policymakers to continue liberalising the aviation sector with confidence that consumer choice

is shifting from protectionism to pragmatism, influenced by functionality, quality, and cultural alignment rather than rigid nationalism or animosity. For airlines applying for operational licenses in Saudi Arabia, this research offers actionable insight: success in the Saudi market will be driven by culturally sensitive, high-performance service models, not nationality-based loyalty.

### **7.3.6. International Relevance**

Although grounded in the Saudi context, these findings contribute to a global understanding of how complex cultural values (religiosity, ethnocentrism, and animosity) interact with service industries. For international policymakers and airlines, the results encourage market-entry strategies that prioritise cultural adaptation and functional excellence, even in markets where political or ethnic tensions may exist. This study also supports cross-cultural marketing efforts by highlighting that consumer decisions are ultimately shaped by a nuanced balance of values and practical considerations, which businesses can influence through targeted strategy and high service performance.

### **7.4 Limitations of this Research**

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the cross-sectional design of the study limits causal interpretations of the relationships examined. Future research could adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causal relationships and explore the dynamics between animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity, service performance, and consumer attitudes over time. This would also map the impact of change such as the Vision 2030 national transformation plan as its

roll-out continues, thus being of interest to policymakers in particular. Secondly, the study focused solely on Saudi Arabian consumers, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to other cultural or national contexts. Future studies should include diverse samples from different countries to enhance the external validity of the findings. Moreover, the study utilised self-reported measures, which are subject to social desirability and recall biases. Researchers could employ objective measures or observational data to complement self-report measures and strengthen the validity of the findings. Additionally, the study relied on quantitative data, neglecting qualitative insights that could provide a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving the relationships examined. Future research could incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to capture rich and nuanced perspectives from consumers. Furthermore, the study focused exclusively on animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity, service performance, and consumer attitudes, neglecting other potential factors that may influence consumer perceptions and behaviours in the airline industry context. Future research could explore additional variables, such as cultural values, perceived value, or brand image, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer attitudes towards airline services.

Another limitation of the study includes the research being conducted during Ramadan and during the international crisis in Sudan, with the Saudi airports excessively busy as transit hubs, which may have influenced the findings. This particularly affected response rate, with zero response with the online forms. Future research should consider conducting studies during more representative periods. For industry stakeholders conducting market research

in volatile or culturally significant periods, this study underscores the importance of adaptive planning. Airlines and related services should consider timing and external contexts when deploying digital surveys and may benefit from hybrid data collection methods that account for regional sensitivities and real-time events.

The limitations specific to each variable are outlined in their respective sections.

## **7.5 Suggestions for Future Research**

In keeping with UKRI (2023) approach to assessing impact of research, the final task of this study is to make evidence-based recommendations for further research. This study has identified key findings. In demonstrating that consumer ethnocentrism does not directly influence consumer attitudes towards airline services, yet service performance moderates that relationship, this study suggests there are further questions to be asked. Likewise, the fact that consumer animosity does influence consumer attitudes, yet service performance does not influence that relationship merits further exploration for the finding to be fully understood.

Further research is warranted to investigate the underlying reasons for these relationships and explore potential contextual factors that may be influencing the relationship between the selected variables in the Saudi Arabian context. For future research, consideration is suggested for qualitative inquiry to be used as a means of exploring some of the nuanced perspectives that may be of benefit to policymakers, the industry and to academics. For instance, when reflecting on the data collection process it was acknowledged that the

researcher was male and did not feel comfortable approaching lone women travellers with the survey. There are many cultural factors at play in that scenario, and it is crucial to capture the vast changes underway in Saudi Arabia at these times as a result of Vision 2030 and the reforms; using interview methodology or focus groups with female facilitators would broaden the reach and the impact of this research and reduce the potential for sampling bias / internal conflict (Alhojailan, 2020).

Another consideration for further research would be to adopt the same methodology but to use more intricate comparison between the variables, and to introduce new variables as moderator. Service performance was seen to moderate some but not all elements; it has not been considered as a mediator in this study nor was it considered as an independent variable, but both would add a more nuanced view.

With the development of new airports, the shift from an oil-based economy and the changing socio-demographic landscape (including the development of the new cognitive city, The Line, stretching across the Tabuk region; NEOM, 2024), future research may well reveal new social mores and norms that shape Saudi attitudes towards airline services.

One school of thought that merits further inquiry is related to the finding that consumer animosity emerged as a significant determinant of attitudes towards airline services. The aviation sector as a whole is one of the main contributors to global warming and this is known to have affected consumer attitudes towards services, particularly with 'flight shaming' by concerned passengers (BCG (2020). Authors such as Galhoz, Ramos and Biscaia (2024) have found

that communicating environmental efforts positively influences consumer loyalty. Another study by Garrick (2024) demonstrated in a UK based retail sector study that cause-related marketing has a positive influence on 'brand experience'. Moreover, in a recent study Omar *et al.* (2024) demonstrated how when an airline service focuses on all areas of corporate social responsibility (CSR) this can mitigate consumer animosity – described by the authors as customers' negative perceptions and emotions [about an airline]. There is merit therefore in investigating whether marketing that promotes how airline services are addressing environmental issues will influence consumer attitudes towards services in the new 'open-skies' reality of Saudi Arabia.

## **7.6 A final note on reflexivity in quantitative research**

One particular element of contribution in this respect rests with the concept of reflexivity and its application to quantitative research, as outlined in section 4.3. This section now comments on the impact of following a reflexive approach during the process of completing this thesis. Whilst reflexivity is a conscious, active process, during which one's own beliefs are acknowledged (Shaw, 2010), this section is presented from a reflective perspective. Indeed, this process can lead to insights about how the research was conducted and what may have been 'missed' during the original research stages (Shaw, 2010; Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall, 2023). Part of this is intentionally delivered as first-person narrative.

A starting point for reflection is with the Research Education Framework (REF) (UKRI, 2023), which was used by me as a novel researcher as a guide to achieving academic quality and rigour in this study. One of the early

questions raised in my reflexive journal was “Am I an “insider” or “outsider” researcher (or do I occupy both positions?)”. I recognised that as a Saudi Citizen who is also a frequent user of local airline services this may influence my personal attitudes towards those services. Moreover, as somebody who actively follows the Muslim faith and who is proud of my country’s achievements, particularly with initiatives since the introduction of Vision 2030 that have had a direct impact on me (such as the ability to travel to study, and improved healthcare for my family), I recognised the responses I would choose from the research instrument were I completing the questionnaire would indicate my own religiosity and ethnocentric tendencies to be marked. So I felt like an “insider” researcher. And yet, by using the reflexive journal, it felt I could step out of that feeling and remain objective, an “outsider”. Another aspect of the study where working in a reflexive manner helped maintain the congruence of the quantitative approach was making sense of the data. As a novice researcher I turned to peers and supervisor for guidance related to the use of statistical tools, but the demographic data left me curious and reflective. Finding, for instance, that more men completed the survey than women was not surprising to me, but more women travellers agreeing to complete the survey than men at Medina intrigued me. However, following the path of curiosity at that stage of the research would potentially have led to my use of the evidence reflecting my biases and not the stated aims of the research. Giving airspace to those biases within a reflexive diary provided the means of being objective but also allowed for those extraneous facts to be collated and explored in further, post-doctoral study.

In considering whether there were any 'amplifying' or 'confounding' factors (Brammer, Branicki, Linnenluecke and Smith, 2019) during the course of this research, I considered this through a reflexive lens in my research diary. Clearly from the data analysis perspective, the results seen in chapter five evidenced no confounding within the testing of the variables. However, I was curious to understand whether the atmosphere at the airports had influenced the data collection stage in any way. Several of the people in the terminal (particularly at Taif and Riyadh) appeared anxious and it was clear they were waiting for people arriving from the South after evacuation due to civil war in Sudan. I made a note at the time about this in my journal, and recognised that it had not influenced who I approached as they were predominantly in the arrivals area and I was approaching people heading for the departure area.

To summarise, the use of reflexivity in this quantitative research study has added a layer of rigour. The landscape of using such techniques in quantitative methodology is new (Walker, Read, and Priest, 2013; Barrett, Kajamaa, and Johnston, 2020) but this study has added to the field.

## **7.7 Study Summary and Conclusion**

In the backdrop of Saudi Arabia's socio-political landscape and the evolution of its airline services sector, understanding consumer attitudes towards airline services becomes imperative for stakeholders and policymakers alike. This study delved into the intricate interplay of consumer animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity, and service performance as a moderator, aiming to shed light on their influence on consumer attitudes and their implications for the airline industry within the Saudi Arabian context. This socio-political context of Saudi

Arabia, coupled with the history of airline services in the region, set the stage for this study. Previous research on ethnocentrism, religiosity, animosity, service performance, and consumer attitudes provided a foundation for understanding the complexities of consumer behaviour in this unique cultural milieu.

Drawing upon the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this study employed a robust theoretical framework to explore the factors shaping consumer attitudes towards airline services in Saudi Arabia. TCV elucidates the role of personal values in consumer decision-making, while TPB provides insights into the influence of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on behavioural intentions.

Utilising Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as the primary analytical tool, this study employed a rigorous research methodology to analyse survey data collected from Saudi consumers. The survey instrument was designed to measure consumer animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity, service performance, and attitudes towards airline services, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the research variables.

The findings of this study revealed several key insights into consumer attitudes towards airline services in Saudi Arabia:

Consumer animosity emerges as a significant determinant of attitudes towards airline services, highlighting the importance of addressing negative perceptions and sentiments.

Contrary to expectations, consumer ethnocentrism exhibits a negligible influence on attitudes towards airline services, suggesting that cultural biases may play a less prominent role in consumer decision-making in this context.

Consumer religiosity demonstrates a notable impact on attitudes towards airline services, underscoring the significance of religious beliefs and values in shaping consumer preferences.

Service performance is found to be a critical factor in moderating the relationships between consumer ethnocentrism and religiosity, highlighting the importance of service quality in mitigating cultural and religious biases.

The findings of this study have significant implications for airline services management and policymakers in Saudi Arabia. By prioritising service excellence and addressing consumer animosity and religiosity through tailored strategies, stakeholders can enhance consumer perceptions, improve competitiveness, and contribute to the realisation of Vision 2030 objectives. This study also identified limitations. While this study provides valuable insights into consumer behaviour in the airline industry within the Saudi Arabian context, future research endeavours should explore additional factors influencing consumer attitudes, such as cultural norms, social influences, and marketing strategies. Moreover, longitudinal studies could provide a deeper understanding of how consumer attitudes evolve over time in response to changing socio-economic conditions.

In conclusion, this study served as a comprehensive exploration of consumer attitudes towards airline services in Saudi Arabia, uncovering the nuanced influences of animosity, ethnocentrism, religiosity, and service performance. By leveraging these insights, stakeholders can formulate targeted strategies to enhance service quality, improve consumer satisfaction, and drive positive change in the airline industry within the Saudi Arabian context.

## **7.8 Final Comments**

In the dynamic landscape of Saudi Arabia, characterised by the ambitious Vision 2030 agenda aimed at transforming the nation into a thriving global hub, understanding the intricate interplay of consumer attitudes towards airline services is paramount. Through meticulous examination, this study has shed light on the nuanced influences of consumer animosity, consumer ethnocentrism, consumer religiosity, and the moderating role of service performance on Saudi consumers' attitudes towards airline services.

The findings underscore the significance of consumer animosity as a potent determinant of attitudes towards airline services in Saudi Arabia. Despite the multifaceted nature of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer religiosity, their individual effects on attitudes were found to be nuanced, with ethnocentrism demonstrating a negligible influence and religiosity showing a notable impact.

Furthermore, the role of service performance emerged as a critical factor in shaping consumer attitudes. While service performance did not moderate the relationship between consumer animosity and attitudes, it played a pivotal role in moderating the relationships between consumer ethnocentrism and

religiosity, underscoring the importance of service quality in mitigating the effects of cultural and religious biases on consumer perceptions.

As Saudi Arabia continues its journey towards economic diversification and global integration, the insights gleaned from this study hold significant implications for policymakers, airline operators, and service providers. By prioritising service excellence and addressing consumer animosity, ethnocentrism, and religiosity through tailored strategies, stakeholders can foster positive consumer perceptions, enhance competitiveness, and contribute to the realisation of Vision 2030 objectives.

In the broader research landscape, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on consumer behaviour in the context of emerging economies and cultural diversity. By unravelling the intricate dynamics of consumer attitudes towards airline services in Saudi Arabia, it paves the way for future research endeavours aimed at deepening our understanding of consumer behaviour and driving impactful interventions in diverse cultural contexts.

One contemporary note rests with the political and civil unsettling times that the World finds itself in. Consumer animosity in the wake of Russia–Ukraine war has gained significance in consumer behaviour research, with sanctions affecting the supply chain and fuel prices. The dreadful situation in Palestine and other areas, including the humanitarian crisis that influenced gathering data in this study, are ripe for protest and boycott within the politically active consumer community. The climate crisis fuels the challenges travellers face when using airline services, making their decision-making more critical. Thus examining the critical influence of the variables chosen here in the wake of

such national and international events is all the more pressing due to their potential impact on the evolving airline services in Saudi Arabia.

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## Appendix One: Ethics Forms

### a) Airport Authorisation Sample (Jeddah):



To whom it may concern

We inform you that the scholarship researcher / Fahad Saeed Albishi, at University of Wolverhampton, national ID No. 1084529906, submitted a request to allow the collection of data related to his academic research for his Ph.D degree.

This requires the distribution of questionnaires to users of airline services at Saudi airports, between 8/03/2023 until 18/04/2023, and we inform you of our approval.

Data was collected and done under our supervision.

This Certificate has been issued based upon his request without any liabilities to Jeddah Airports company.

Best wishes,

Heba Atif M Abozenadah  
  
11/5/2023  
Learning and Development Manager  
  
CR 4030421924 03

## b) University Authorisation



Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences Ethics Committee

Form 3 16th November 2022

Ethics Approval Application 2022/23

**Researcher – Fahad Albishi**

Level of Research – Category A

Director of Studies Dr Ade Oriade

**Title of Research - THE IMPACT OF ANIMOSITY, ETHNOCENTRISM,  
RELIGIOSITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE ON SAUDIS' ATTITUDE  
TOWARDS AIRLINE SERVICES**

Decision: Your ethics application has been approved

Dear Fahad,

The Faculty Ethics Committee has approved your application. Please ensure that you are conversant with the latest guidelines on recruiting research participants and data security. See the Ethics Guidance web pages <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/ethics-guidance/>

If you make any substantial changes to your research, you will have to complete a new request for ethical approval. This letter only relates to ethical issues and has no bearing on other aspects of your research, such as methodology and theoretical framework. Please do not hesitate to contact the relevant representative for your subject on Faculty Ethics Committee if you have any questions.

We wish you the best with your research.

Yours Sincerely,

Jason Jawando On behalf of the FABSS Ethics Committee

## Appendix Two - Questionnaire



<b>Survey No:</b>	
<b>Airport Code:</b>	

**WHAT BELIEFS HAVE I THAT MIGHT INFLUENCE ME WHEN DECIDING WHETHER TO (BUY/USE) FROM A SAUDI-BASED AIRLINE SERVICE?**

Statement of information and consent to participation

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the perspectives held by Saudi passengers on religion, animosity, and ethnocentrism along with service performance influence their attitude towards airline services. We are inviting Saudi passengers who commonly travel by airplane to complete our survey, which is fully anonymous. If you complete this survey after reading this page, your consent is implied, therefore we do not need you to sign this form. The research project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences at the University of Wolverhampton, UK;

[FABSethics@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:FABSethics@wlv.ac.uk)

*You are encouraged to give your views freely and accurately and please note that your name will not be indicated on any document associated with this research.*

Supervisor: Prof Yong Wang  
E-mail: [e-mail address redacted]  
TEL: [redacted]

DoS Supervisor: Dr Ade Oriade  
E-mail: [e-mail address redacted]  
TEL: [redacted]

Ph.D. Researcher: Fahad S. Albishi  
[e-mail address redacted]  
TEL: [redacted]



Online

**All information provided in this questionnaire will remain absolutely confidential.**

Research title: (THE IMPACT OF ANIMOSITY, ETHNOCENTRISM, RELIGIOSITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE ON SAUDIS' CHOICE OF AIRLINE SERVICES IN SAUDI ARABIA).

The questions below will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you very much for your cooperation and assistance, without which this study will not succeed.

### Section (A): Demographic profile

1	What is your gender?	MALE <input type="checkbox"/>	FEMALE <input type="checkbox"/>
2	What is your age group?	18-28 <input type="checkbox"/>	29-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-50 <input type="checkbox"/> OVER 50 <input type="checkbox"/>
3	What is your highest educational level achieved?	Elementary School <input type="checkbox"/> High School Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> College Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate <input type="checkbox"/>	
4	What is your current employment status?	Employed full-time <input type="checkbox"/> Employed part-time <input type="checkbox"/> Seeking opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Retired <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>	
5	What is your monthly income range?	Less than 3,000SR <input type="checkbox"/> 3,001-5,000SR <input type="checkbox"/> 5,001-8,000SR <input type="checkbox"/> 8,001-10,000SR <input type="checkbox"/> 10,001-20,000SR <input type="checkbox"/> Above 20,000 SR <input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Where is your home located in Saudi Arabia?	Central Region <input type="checkbox"/> Western Region <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Region <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Region <input type="checkbox"/> Southern Region <input type="checkbox"/>	
7	What is your main reason for using airline services today?	Business reasons <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure reasons <input type="checkbox"/> Personal / commuting <input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Which type of airline do you use most often? <i>(please select one option)</i>	Domestic Airline <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Airline <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Section (B): Religiosity

*Please mark the response that most closely matches your beliefs						
		Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
1	How often do you think about religious issues?					
2	How often do you take part in religious services?					
3	How many times do you pray in the Mosque every day?	1	2	3	4	5
4	How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God allows for an intervention in your life?					
5	How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God lets something be communicated or revealed?					
6	How often do you keep yourself informed about religious questions through radio, television, internet, newspapers, or books?					
7	How often do you pray spontaneously when inspired by daily situations?					
8	How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God is present?					

Please mark the response that most closely matches your beliefs.*		Not at all	Not very much	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much so
9	To what extent do you believe that God exists?					
10	How interested are you in learning more about religious topics?					
11	To what extent do you believe in an afterlife — e.g., immortality of the soul, resurrection of the dead or reincarnation?					
12	How important is it to take part in religious services?					
13	How important is personal prayer for you?					
14	In your opinion, how probable is it that a higher power really exists?					
15	How important is it for you to be connected to a religious community?					
<b>Section (C): Animosity</b>						
To what extent do you agree with the following statements (please tick only one box).*		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The West wants to gain economic power over Saudi Arabia.					
2	The West has too much influence on Saudi Arabia and the Saudi economy.					
3	While doing business with The West one should be careful.					
4	Western companies are unreliable trading partners.					
5	Western companies often outsmart Saudi companies in business deals.					
6	Western companies are doing business unfairly with Saudi companies.					
<b>Section (D): Ethnocentrism</b>						
To what extent do you agree with the following statements (please tick only one box).*		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Saudi people should always use Saudi-based Airline Services instead of overseas operators.					
2	Saudi people should only use airline services from overseas if they are unavailable in Saudi Arabia.					
3	Purchasing foreign airline services is un-Saudi.					
4	A real Saudi should always buy Saudi-made products and services.					
5	It may cost me in the long run, but I prefer to support Saudi Arabian products and services.					
6	Foreign airline services should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into Saudi Arabia.					
<b>Section (E): Service Performance of Airline Services</b>						
To what extent do you agree with the following statements (please tick only one box).*		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Saudi-based airline services use up-to-date equipment & technology.					
2	Saudi-based airline services have comfortable and clean seats.					
3	Saudi-based airline services' buildings and facilities appear professional.					
4	Saudi-based airline services' flight attendants are well-presented.					
5	Saudi-based airline services' flight attendants are courteous.					
6	Saudi-based airline services handle delays professionally.					
7	Saudi-based airline services' flight attendants manage requests promptly.					
8	Saudi-based airline services flight attendants' approach to unexpected situations is calm and measured.					

<b>CTD. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (please tick only one box).*</b>		<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
9	Saudi-based airline services flight attendants are always willing to help.					
10	Saudi-based airline services' Flight Safety record is good.					
11	Saudi-based airline services depart and arrive on time.					
12	Saudi-based airline services are truly providing committed services.					
13	Saudi-based airline services have consistent ground/in-flight services.					
14	The professional training of Saudi-based airline services' flight attendants is of a high standard.					
15	The service attitude of Saudi-based airline services' check-in attendant (ticket reservations and sales) is of a high standard.					
16	The accuracy of Saudi-based airline services' daily operations (such as baggage handling, announcements etc.) is high.					
17	Saudi-based airline services flight attendants' knowledge in answering questions is good.					
18	Saudi-based airline services flight attendants' behaviour toward delayed passengers is understanding					
19	Saudi-based airline services give individual attention to passengers.					
20	Saudi-based airline services understand passengers' specific needs.					
21	Saudi-based airline services have a convenient ticketing process.					
22	Saudi-based airline services have a good customer complaint handling procedure.					
<b>Section (F): Attitude Towards Airline Service</b>						
<b>To what extent do you agree with the following statements (please tick only one box). *</b>		<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1	The overall service quality provided by Saudi-based airline services is excellent.					
2	I am highly satisfied with the price I paid for the most recent Saudi-based airline services flight I took.					
3	I am highly satisfied with Saudi-based airline services.					
4	I would travel with Saudi-based airline services again.					
5	I would recommend Saudi-based airline services to others.					

[ Thank you very much for your cooperation and time ]

## Appendix Three – Translation Certification

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Certified Translation  
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Certified Translation  
رقم الإشتراك : 300849

السرعة  
**العالمية**  
للترجمة المعتمدة  
س.ت. ٤٠٣٠٣١١٢٨١ - ترخيص رقم ٥٥٤

### CERTIFICATION

AI-alameya Translation, Jeddah Saudi Arabia, Which is Licensed as an Authorized Translator By Virtue of License No. 554 hereby Certifies that, the translation of the document / Documents Annexed Here to which are Stamped for identification only is A Complete and true translation Without any Responsibility for the Contents thereof.

### إشهاد

يشهد مكتب السرعة العالمية للترجمة بجدة بالمملكة العربية السعودية المرخص له بمزاولة مهنة الترجمة المعتمدة بموجب الترخيص رقم ٥٥٤ أن ترجمة الوثيقة / الوثائق المرفقة والمختومة لأغراض تعريفها فقط هي ترجمة صحيحة وكاملة دون أدنى مسئولية عن محتوياتها

المدير العام  
General Manager


سرعة  
للترجمة  
**العالمية**  
For Translation  
Al-alameya  
س.ت. ٤٠٣٠٣١١٢٨١ - ترخيص رقم ٥٥٤  
C.R. 4030311281 License 554

المملكة العربية السعودية . جدة . جوال ٥٧١٩٣٩٤٨٣  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Jeddah - Mobile: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]

## Appendix Four – Translation Example As Issued



UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON  
KNOWLEDGE • INNOVATION • ENTERPRISE

رقم الاستبيان: \_\_\_\_\_  
رمز المطابق: \_\_\_\_\_

**ما هي المعتقدات التي اعتقد أنها قد تؤثر علي عندما أقرر ما إذا كنت (سأشتري) / استخدم من خدمات الخطوط الجوية المتواجدة في السعودية؟**

**بيان المعلومات والموافقة على المشاركة**

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في كيفية تأثير وجهات النظر التي يفتاها المسافرون السعوديون حول الدين والعداء والنزعة العرقية إلى جانب أداء الخدمة على اختيارهم واستخدامهم لخدمات الخطوط الجوية في السعودية. نحن ندعو الركاب السعوديين الذين يسافرون بالطائرة عادة لإكمال الاستبيان ، والذي يكون مجهول الهوية بالكامل. إذا أكملت هذا الاستطلاع بعد قراءة هذه الصفحة ، فإن موافقتك ضمنية ، وبالتالي لا نحتاج منك التوقيع على هذا النموذج. تمت الموافقة على مشروع البحث من قبل لجنة الأخلاقيات بكلية الفنون والأعمال والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة ولفرهامبتون. بالمملكة المتحدة: FABSSethics@wlv.ac.uk. نشجعك على إبداء آرائك بحرية ودقة وملاحظة أنه لن يتم الإشارة إلى اسمك في أي وثيقة مرتبطة بهذا البحث. ستبقى جميع المعلومات الواردة في هذا الاستبيان سرية تمامًا.

مؤلف البحث: البروفيسور بونغ وانغ  
مؤلف البحث: الدكتور ليمي ابراهيم  
باحث دكتوراه: فهد سعيد البيشي

عنوان البحث: ( تأثير العدالة. العرقية. التمييز وأداء الخدمة على اختيار السعوديين لخدمات الخطوط الجوية المتواجدة في المملكة العربية السعودية)  
• سيتم استخدام الأسئلة أثناء الأبحاث الأكاديمية فقط. شكرًا جزيلًا لكم على تعاونكم ومساهمكم التي بدونها لن نتج هذه الدراسة.

**القسم (أ) الملف الشخصي الديموغرافي**

1	ما هو جنسك؟	<input type="checkbox"/> ذكر	<input type="checkbox"/> أنثى
2	ما هي فئتك العمرية؟	<input type="checkbox"/> 18 - 28 سنة	<input type="checkbox"/> 29 - 39 سنة
3	ما هو أعلى مستوى تعليمي حقيقتك؟	<input type="checkbox"/> شهادة الابتدائية	<input type="checkbox"/> شهادة الثانوية العامة
4	ما هو وضعك الوظيفي الحالي؟	<input type="checkbox"/> أعمل بدوام كامل	<input type="checkbox"/> أعمل بدوام جزئي
5	ما هو نطاق دخلك الشهري؟	<input type="checkbox"/> أقل من 3000 ريال	<input type="checkbox"/> 3000 - 5000 ريال
6	أين يقع منزلك في المملكة العربية السعودية؟	<input type="checkbox"/> المنطقة الوسطى	<input type="checkbox"/> المنطقة الغربية
7	ما هو الذوب الرئيسي لاستخدامك خدمات الخطوط الجوية اليوم؟	<input type="checkbox"/> الأعمال	<input type="checkbox"/> وقت الفراغ
8	ما نوع شركة الطيران التي تستخدمها في أغلب الأحيان؟	<input type="checkbox"/> شركة طيران محلية	<input type="checkbox"/> شركة طيران أجنبية

**القسم (ب) التدين**

يرجى وضع علامة على الرد الأكثر تطابقًا مع معتقداتك

1	كم مرة تفكر في القضايا الدينية؟	لا أبدًا	نادراً	في بعض الأحيان	في كثير من الأحيان	كثير جداً
2	كم مرة تشارك في الشعائر الدينية؟	لا	1	2	3	4
3	كم مرة تصلي في المسجد كل يوم؟	لا	1	2	3	4
4	كم مرة تواجه مواقف تشعر فيها بتدخل الله في حياتك؟	لا	1	2	3	4
5	كم مرة تواجه مواقف تشعر فيها بأن الله يريد إيصال شيء ما أو كشفه؟	لا	1	2	3	4
6	كم مرة تطلع على الأسئلة الدينية من خلال الراديو أو التلفزيون أو الإنترنت أو الصحف أو الكتب؟	لا	1	2	3	4
7	كم مرة (تدعي/تصلي) بشكل عفوي بسمي الله المواقف اليومية؟	لا	1	2	3	4
8	كم مرة تواجه مواقف تشعر فيها بوجود الله؟	لا	1	2	3	4

يرجى وضع علامة على الرد الأكثر تطابقًا مع معتقداتك

9	إلى أي مدى تؤمن بوجود الله؟	لا إطلاقاً	ليس كثيراً	باعتدال	قليلاً جداً	كثير جداً
10	ما مدى اهتمامك بمعرفة المزيد عن الموضوعات الدينية؟	لا	1	2	3	4
11	إلى أي مدى تؤمن بالحياة الأخرة - على سبيل المثال ، خلود الروح أو قيامة الموتى أو التناسخ؟	لا	1	2	3	4
12	ما هي أهمية العسكرة في الخدمات الدينية؟	لا	1	2	3	4
13	ما هي أهمية الصلاة الشخصية بالنسبة لك؟	لا	1	2	3	4
14	في رأيك ، ما مدى احتمالية وجود قوة أعلى بالفعل؟	لا	1	2	3	4
15	ما مدى أهمية أن تكون متصلاً بمجتمع ديني؟	لا	1	2	3	4

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القسم (ج) العدائية					
وافق بشدة	وافق	محايد	لا اوافق	لا اوافق بشدة	
					إلى أي مدى توافق على العبارات التالية /يرجى تحديد مربع واحد فقط).
					1 الغرب يريد كسب القوة الاقتصادية على المملكة العربية السعودية.
					2 الغرب له تأثير كبير على المملكة العربية السعودية والاقتصاد السعودي.
					3 أثناء التعامل مع الغرب يجب أن يكون المرء حذراً.
					4 الشركات الغربية شركاء تجاريون غير موثوق بهم.
					5 غالباً ما تتفوق الشركات الغربية على الشركات السعودية في الصفقات التجارية.
					6 الشركات الغربية تتعامل بشكل غير عادل مع الشركات السعودية.

القسم (د) العرقية					
وافق بشدة	وافق	محايد	لا اوافق	لا اوافق بشدة	
					إلى أي مدى توافق على العبارات التالية /يرجى تحديد مربع واحد فقط).
					1 يجب على السعوديين دائماً استخدام خدمات الخطوط الجوية السعودية بدلاً من المشغلين الخارجيين.
					2 يجب على السعوديين استخدام خدمات الخطوط الجوية من الخارج فقط في حالة عدم توفرها في السعودية.
					3 ( شراء / استخدام) خدمات الطيران الأجنبية يعتبر عدم وطنيه.
					4 السعودي الحقيقي يجب أن ( يشتري/يستخدم) دائماً المنتجات والخدمات سعودية الصنع.
					5 قد يكلفني ذلك على المدى الطويل ، لكنني أفضل دعم المنتجات والخدمات السعودية.
					6 يجب فرض ضرائب على خدمات الخطوط الجوية الأجنبية بشكل كبير للحد من دخولها إلى المملكة العربية السعودية.

القسم (هـ) أداء خدمة شركات الخطوط الجوية					
وافق بشدة	وافق	محايد	لا اوافق	لا اوافق بشدة	
					إلى أي مدى توافق على العبارات التالية /يرجى تحديد مربع واحد فقط).
					1 تستخدم شركات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية معدات وتكنولوجيا حديثة.
					2 خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية لديها مقاعد مريحة ونظيفة.
					3 مباني ومرافق خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية تبدو احترافية.
					4 مضيفين خدمات الطيران المتمركزة في المملكة العربية السعودية حاضرون بشكل جيد.
					5 مضيفين خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية مهذبون.
					6 خدمات الخطوط الجوية التي تتخذ من المملكة العربية السعودية مقراً لها تتعامل مع التأخيرات بشكل احترافي.
					7 يتعامل مضيفين خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية مع الطلبات على الفور.
					8 نصح مضيفين خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية في المواقف غير المتوقعة هادئ ومدروس.
					9 مضيفين خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية مستعدون دائماً للمساعدة.
					10 سجل سلامة الطيران لخدمات الطيران التي تتخذ من المملكة العربية السعودية مقراً لها جيد.
					11 تغادر خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية وتصل في الوقت المحدد.
					12 تقدم خدمات الخطوط الجوية التي تتخذ من المملكة العربية السعودية مقراً لها بالفعل خدمات ملتزمة.
					13 خدمات الخطوط الجوية التي تتخذ من المملكة العربية السعودية مقراً لها لديها خدمات ( أرضية / على متن الطائرة)متسقة.
					14 التدريب المهني لمضيفين خدمات الطيران في المملكة العربية السعودية على مستوى عالٍ.
					15 الموقف الخدمي لمرافق إجراءات السفر الخاصة بخدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية (حجوزات التذاكر والمبيعات) على مستوى عالٍ.
					16 دقة العمليات اليومية لخدمات الخطوط الجوية التي تتخذ من المملكة العربية السعودية مقراً لها (مثل تناول الأمتعة والإعلانات وما إلى ذلك) عالية.
					17 معرفة مضيفين خدمات الطيران في المملكة العربية السعودية في الإجابة على الأسئلة جيدة.
					18 يتفهم المضيفين في خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية سلوك الركاب المتأخرين.
					19 تولى خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية اهتماماً فردياً بالركاب.
					20 خدمات الخطوط الجوية التي تتخذ من المملكة العربية السعودية مقراً لها تفهم احتياجات الركاب الخاصة.
					21 خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية لديها عملية حجز تذاكر مريحة.
					22 خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية لديها إجراءات جيدة للتعامل مع شكاوى العملاء.

القسم (و) الإختيار العام لخدمة الخطوط الجوية					
وافق بشدة	وافق	محايد	لا اوافق	لا اوافق بشدة	
					إلى أي مدى توافق على العبارات التالية /يرجى تحديد مربع واحد فقط).
					1 جودة الخدمة الشاملة التي تقدمها شركات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية ممتازة.
					2 أنا راضٍ للغاية عن السعر الذي دفعته مقابل آخر رحلة طيران قمت بها في المملكة العربية السعودية.
					3 أنا راضٍ للغاية عن خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية.
					4 سأسافر مع خدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية مرة أخرى.
					5 أوصي بخدمات الخطوط الجوية في المملكة العربية السعودية للآخرين.



[ شكراً جزيلاً لتعاونك و وقتك ]

## Appendix Five – Table 3.2 (Summary of literature reviewed)

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**SEARCH TERMS FOR THE DIFFERENT SEARCHES CONDUCTED:**

UWS Library Catalogue Search and other databases including Google Scholar, EBSCO, Econlit and JSTOR

SUBJECT FIELD: Airline\*; Business\*

YEARS: 01/01/2016 – 31/12/ 2019; 01/01/2018 – 31/10/2022

ANY FIELD CONTAINS Animosity AND/OR Religio\* AND/OR Ethnocentr\* AND/OR SERVPERF\* AND/OR Service\* AND/OR Perform\* AND/OR Consumer\* AND/OR Passenger AND/OR Customer AND/OR Attitude AND/OR Choice AND/OR Saudi\*

SOURCE: Peer Reviewed Journals

TYPE: Articles, Dissertations

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**KEY FOR TABLE:**

Some studies were selected with product purchase/selection rather than airline services due to perceived gap in literature AND where their use of variables offered value for the current study; variables of interest for the literature review for this study are noted as: ANIM= Animosity, REL = Religiosity, ETH = Ethnocentricity (independent variables); SPF = Service performance (moderating variable); ATT = attitude towards airline services

Conducted with airline services setting being a primary concern/ Conducted with Saudi Arabian context / Inclusion

INITIAL HITS* (combined total all searches)	64, 180	HITS AFTER REPETITIONS EXCLUDED	< 12,000	HITS AFTER INITIAL SIFTING FOR RELEVANCE	122	30 FULL PAPERS SELECTED AFTER RETRIEVAL	
Author(s), Year, Title and Journal	Variable for this study	Final Sample size, Country and Period	Theory applied	Dependent Variables	Independent Variable	Source of data	Results
de Jong, G., Behrens, C., van Herk, H., and Verhoef, E. (2022). Airfares with codeshares: (why) are consumers willing to pay more for products of foreign firms with a domestic partner? Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 193, 1–18. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2</a>	E SP CA	N=502  June 2018  Australia	Random Utility Theory	Dependent Variable: Willingness to pay	Independent variable:  Ethnocentrism [expressed as home-country bias]  Codeshare Misconception	Survey of passengers who flew long-haul via one of 2 routes and who live in the Eastern States of Australia	The authors found that passengers who were highly risk-averse were willing to pay a premium approximately two times higher than the standard fare if they were flying to a less familiar destination when the foreign carrier

					Moderator / mediator: Risk Attitude		was code-sharing with their own, familiar domestic airline. The authors suggest this is because partnerships between airlines have a strong impact on customer valuation as they reduce perceived uncertainties and risks associated with alien carriers. They further suggest home country bias may spill-over to foreign partners of domestic firms. <i>P1</i>
<b>Westjohn, S.A., Magnusson, P., Peng, Y. et al. Acting on anger: Cultural value moderators of the effects of consumer animosity. <i>J Int Bus Stud</i> 52, 1591–1615 (2021).</b>	E A SP CA	Database: 1998-2018  2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage – experimental design x 3: n=86 – 99 for each groups	Cultural Values Theory	Dependent Variable:  Willingness to buy	Independent variable:  Animosity  Consumer Ethnocentrism* *Described in terms of collectivism within the Chinese culture  Moderator / mediator: Cultural Values	Part one: database of 47 studies  Part two: Incorporated three distinct experimental groups: 86 non-student participants, 99 non-student participants and 85 non-student participants	Effect of consumer animosity on willingness to buy is significantly stronger than on product judgement; ‘collectivism’ mitigates this effect, as seen in the Chinese sample in the experimental stage of this multi-methods study
<b>De Nisco, A., Massi, M., and Papadopoulos, N. (2020). Partners or Foes? Cross-Country</b>	CA E SP	N=303  Italy	Theory of Attitude Specificity	D Product beliefs and reciprocity	I Economic animosity,	Online graduate Survey	“.. Results show that both animosity and ethnocentrism negatively

<b>Consumer Animosity, Ethnocentrism, and Nationalism in Times of International Crisis. Journal of Global Marketing, 33(3), 207–222.</b>	2019	Realistic Group Conflict Theory	Consumer ethnocentrism Moderator variable: Nationalism	affect consumer acceptance of products associated with a disliked country but are not related with cognitive beliefs about these products. Findings also reveal that nationalism has a significant moderating effect by amplifying the influence of both animosity and ethnocentrism on willingness to buy.”			
<b>✓Stamolampros, Dousios, D., &amp; Korfiatis, N. (2020). Evaluating domestic bias on airline passengers’ ratings: The moderating effect of cultural value orientation. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 87, 102466–. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102466">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102466</a></b>	E A SP CA	N=380,000 online reviews 185 countries 2015-2018	Hofstede’s framework	Dependent Variable:  Domestic bias	Independent variable:  Service performance  Moderator / mediator:  Cultural value orientation	Online Tripadvisor Reviews	“.. domestic passengers provide statistically significantly more positive ratings for overall satisfaction, customer service, ground service rating, and check-in and boarding. All of the above exhibit a significant positive relationship with local passengers when compared to international passengers. For all aspects that include service interaction, the effect of the domestic customer is positive. For standardised services with less or no

							human interaction the results are mixed, with positive and negative signs for cleaning, legroom, inflight entertainment and price. Results suggest that cultural dimensions moderate the tendency of local passengers to rate their airlines higher than international passengers do.”
<b>Suham-Abid, &amp; Vila-Lopez, N. (2020). Airline service quality and visual communication: Do Iraqis and Germans airline passengers’ perceptions differ? <i>Total Quality Management Journal</i>, 32(1), 183–200.</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-04-2019-0105">https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-04-2019-0105</a>	E SP	400 respondents  Iraq and Germany  between 2018-2019	Hall’s theory of Cultural Influence	Dependent Variable  Service Judgement	Independent Variables  Service Performance (expressed via Service Quality Perceptions and Visual Identity Perceptions)  Ethnocentricity	2 x focus groups; 400 questionnaires	“ .. for service quality dimensions, the presence of an ethnocentric effect has been demonstrated, since when a passenger is evaluating a company, he/she assigns a better mark if the company belongs to his/her own country. For visual identity perceptions, cultural context explains perception differences”
<b>Gidaković, P. and Zabkar, V. (2021). How industry and occupational stereotypes shape consumers’ trust, value and loyalty judgments concerning service brands. <i>International Journal of Service Industry</i></b>		N=476  USA  Timeframe not stated	TVLM model	Dependent Variable:  Trust, Value and Loyalty Judgements	Independent Variables: Stereotypes (Industry; Occupational)  Mediator/Moderat	Survey	“... The results suggest that both occupational and industry stereotypes influence consumers’ trusting beliefs and trust judgments, although only the effects of industry

<b>Management, 32(6), 92–113.</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-12-2020-0447">https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-12-2020-0447</a>					or Variable: Trusting Beliefs	stereotypes are transferred to consumers' loyalty judgments."	
<b>Kucukaltan, B., &amp; Topcu, Y. I. (2019). Assessment of key airline selection indicators in a strategic decision model: Passengers' perspective. [Assessment of key airline selection indicators] <i>Journal of Enterprise Information Management, 32(4), 646-667.</i> doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/JEI-M-08-2018-0178</b>	SP CA	Stage 1: 199 studies, 32 indicators  Stage 2: 17 experienced passengers  London-Istanbul route	AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process)	Attitude towards Airline Service	32 indicators: Price Related factors and Customer-Satisfaction-related factors	Stage 1: Systematic Review + structural modelling (computer-based) Stage 2: questionnaire	Results indicate "... AHP indicate[s] that "price-related factors" and "customer satisfaction-related factors", respectively, are more important dimensions for passengers while selecting the best airline company"
<b>Ali, B.J. (2021) Impact of consumer animosity, boycott participation, boycott motivation, and product judgment on purchase readiness or aversion of Kurdish consumers in Iraq <i>Journal of Consumer Affairs 55 pp. 504–523.</i></b>	A SP	N=1,100  Jan-June 2020  Kurdistan	Consumer Wellbeing (CWB)	Independent Variable  Purchase readiness or aversion	Consumer Animosity  Product judgement  Boycott participation	Online Survey	"... The findings of this research illustrate that consumer animosity positively impacts boycott participation and motivation, but it negatively impacts product judgment, while product judgment positively impacts purchase readiness. Boycott participation positively impacts purchase aversion, but it negatively impacts purchase readiness. Boycott motivation positively impacts purchase aversion."

<p><b>Auf, M. A. A., Salleh, S. B. M., &amp; Yusoff, R. Z. (2016). The relationship between word of mouth and consumer buying behaviour mediating by religious orientation in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. <i>International Review of Management and Marketing</i>, 6(4), 1034-1038.</b>  <a href="https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/367441">https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/367441</a></p>	<p>R SP CA</p>	<p>N=395  Riyadh, Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>Dependent Variable:  Consumer buying behaviour</p>	<p>Independent variable:  Word of mouth  Moderator / mediator:  Religious orientation</p>	<p>Questionnaire</p>	<p>“... Religious orientation plays a significant mediating role between word of mouth and media in the field of consumer buying behaviour”.</p>
<p><b>Sarfraz, A. and Khurshid Mian, A. (2022) The impact of values on consumer adoption of takāful with mediating role of religiosity and moderating role of confusion. <i>Journal of Islamic Marketing</i>. [Online] 13 (10), 2126–2143.</b></p>	<p>R</p>	<p>N=768  Pakistan  2021</p>	<p>Dependent Variable:  Adoption of takāful</p>	<p>Independent variable: Values  Moderator / mediator: Confusion Religiosity</p>	<p>Questionnaire</p>	<p>“... The result reveals that religiosity mediates and confusion moderates the relationship of tradition value and consumer adoption of takāful. However, tradition value shows a negative effect on consumer adoption of takāful. Moreover, confusion negatively moderates the association between tradition value and consumer adoption of takāful”.</p>
<p><b>Karoui, S., &amp; Khemakhem, R. (2019). Consumer ethnocentrism in developing countries. <i>European Research on Management and Business Economics</i>, 25(2), 63-71.</b>  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iemeen">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iemeen</a></p>	<p>E</p>	<p>N=152  Tunisia  2017-2018</p>	<p>Dependent Variable:  Willingness to purchase</p>	<p>Independent variable:  Ethnocentricity  Moderator / mediator:</p>	<p>Questionnaire</p>	<p>“... The results of the analysis show that country of origin and conspicuous consumption moderate the intensity of the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism</p>

<a href="#">.2019.04.002</a>					Country of Origin		and the inclination to buying domestic products”.
<b>Abdul-Latif, SA and Abdul-Talib, A. (2020) An examination of ethnic-based consumer ethnocentrism and consumer animosity. In <i>Journal of Islamic Marketing (2020)</i></b>	E A	325 respondents  2019	Social Identity Theory	Consumption of ethnic products	Consumer ethnocentrism and consumer animosity	Questionnaires	‘Ethnic-based consumer ethnocentrism can negatively affect product judgment and product judgment can affect consumers’ willingness to buy’.
<b>Mansori, S. (2012). Impact of religion affiliation and religiosity on consumer innovativeness: the evidence of Malaysia. <i>World Applied Sciences Journal</i>, 17 (3), 301-307.</b>	R	Malaysia		Dependent Variable:  Innovativeness	Independent variable:  Religiosity  Moderator / mediator:	Questionnaire	“The results showed that religiosity has negative impact on innovativeness. Furthermore, the result indicated that Buddhists have significantly lower innovativeness compared to Muslims, Christians and Hindus in Malaysia”
<b>✓Alsaad, A., Elrehail, H. and Saif-Alyousfi, A. (2022). The Interaction among Religiosity, Moral Intensity, and Moral Certainty in Predicting Ethical Consumption: A Study of Muslim Consumers. <i>International Journal of Consumer Studies</i>. 46 (2022) pp. 406-418 IJC. 10.1111/ijcs.12688.</b>	R	N=333  Saudi Arabia	Cognitive theory	Dependent Variable: Ethical consumption intention	Independent variable: Religiosity Moral intensity  Moderator / mediator: Moral certainty	Online questionnaire	“.. reveals that religiosity and moral intensity are significantly associated with moral certainty which, in turn, predicts ethical consumption intention. Even though religiosity and moral intensity are crucial predictors of moral certainty, the interaction between them has not

						been proven, indicating that the association between religiosity and moral certainty does not depend on moral intensity. This implies that religiosity is a strong predictor of moral certainty even when recognition of aspects of ethical consumption is minimal.”
<b>Çavuşoğlu, S., Demirağ, B., Durmaz, Y. and Tutuş, G. (2021). Effects of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on value-expressive and social-adjustive attitude functions towards product intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Journal of Islamic Marketing. 10.1108/JIMA-02-2021-0045.</b>	R SP	Turkey & Portugal  N= 800	Dependent Variable:  Consumer Attitudes towards products	Independent variable:  Religiosity  Moderator / mediator:	Questionnaires	“.. Results of the analyses show that the intrinsic religiosity of Muslim Consumers living in Turkey and Christian consumers living in Portugal negatively affects the value-expressive and social adjustive attitude. Extrinsic religiosity, on the other hand, has been found to have a positive effect on the functions of value-expressive and social-adjustive attitudes within the consumers of both countries”.
<b>Nassè, T,B, (2021). How and Why Religiosity Fashions Muslim Consumer Behaviour in a Multi-Faith Geography. In American</b>	R SJ	Burkina Faso  2018-2020	Dependent Variable:  Consumer	Independent variable:  Extrinsic Religiosity	Questionnaires	“... the findings demonstrate that Muslims’ extrinsic religiosity is strongly

<b>Journal of Market Research 7(1) pp1-9</b>		N=235		behaviour	Moderator / mediator: Personality traits		related to consumer behaviour”
<b>Areiza-Padilla, J.A. (2021) Decreasing consumer animosity: The relationship between fast food businesses and social conflicts in Latin America and the Caribbean, <i>Cogent Business &amp; Management</i>, 8(1), pp.1-21</b>	CA	December 2019-April 2020		Dependent Variable:  Foreign Restaurant Image	Independent variable:  Individualism National Identity Ethnocentrism  Moderator / mediator:  Consumer Animosity	Questionnaires	“.. Results show there is a negative and significant relationship between individualism and consumer animosity; the positive and significant relationship between national identity and consumer animosity; the positive and significant relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer animosity
<b>Veeramani, S., Rou Yi, W., Yoong, H. M., &amp; Mahmud, B. (2020). A Study on Determinants that affect Klang Valley (Malaysia) consumer preference in airline industry. IOP Conference Series. Materials Science and Engineering, 780(7).</b>		Malaysia  N=384  2019		Dependent Variable: Consumer preference	Independent variable: Flight fare Service quality Airline Reputation Environmental Concern	Questionnaires	“...Results show that the independent variables such as airline reputation, service quality, environmental concern and especially flight fares have most significant relationship toward the consumer preference of airline transport
<b>Minton, E.A. &amp; Geiger-Oneto, S. (2020). Making one’s religious self feel better about luxury use: The role of religiosity in choice of disposal option for luxury goods. <i>Journal of Consumer Behaviour</i>, 19(6), 581–593</b>	R	1) n=9 9 2) n=4 03 3) n=3 77		Dependent Variable:  Disposal	Independent variable: Religiosity  Moderator / mediator: Emotions		“Consumers who are high in intrinsic religiosity are generally more likely to use sustainable methods of disposal [of purchased luxury goods] in comparison to consumers

	USA		Identity-fit		<p>who are high in extrinsic religiosity.</p> <p>Priming emotions [guilt and shame] produces a higher likelihood of using sustainable methods of product disposal for intrinsically religious consumers but not for extrinsically religious consumers.</p> <p>Intrinsic religiosity positively influenced response and interaction with such programs.</p> <p>Lastly, a consumer's perceived identity-fit was shown to mediate the relationship between religiosity and the likelihood of interacting with social media campaigns promoting luxury disposal programs”</p>
<p>Siering, M., Deokar, A. V., &amp; Janze, C. (2018). Disentangling consumer recommendations: Explaining and predicting airline recommendations based on online reviews. <i>Decision Support Systems</i>, 107, 52–63.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2018.01.002">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2018.01.002</a></p>	S CA	<p>N= 3x1,000 reviews</p> <p>195 airlines</p>		<p>Content analysis of secondary data (online reviews)</p>	<p>“..the sentiment expressed within airline reviews has a significant influence on the question of whether a reviewer recommends a specific airline or not. Furthermore, the reviewer's perception of</p>

						the specific aspects of the service offered, i.e. the sentiment expressed regarding aspects like food or ground service, also has a significant influence on the expressed recommendation”.	
<b>Tao, M., Lahuerta-Otero, E., Alam, F., Aldehayyat, J. S., Farooqi, M. R., &amp; Zhuoqun, P. (2022). Do Religiosity and Ethnocentrism Influence Indian Consumers’ Unwillingness to Buy Halal-Made Products? The Role of Animosity Toward Halal Products. <i>Frontiers in Psychology, 13</i>, 840515–840515.</b>	A SP CA	n=512  India	Jan-April 2021	Dependent Variable:  Unwillingness to buy halal products	Independent variable: Boycott Attitude Consumer Ethnocentrism Patriotism Religiosity  Moderator / mediator:  Product Judgement	Online Survey	“.. Findings show a positive impact of boycott attitude, religiosity, and ethnocentrism on Indian consumers’ level of animosity and thus their unwillingness to purchase halal products. Furthermore, consumer animosity acts as a mediator of the relationship between boycott attitude, religiosity, ethnocentrism, patriotism, and reluctance to buy halal products.”
<b>Hoang, H.T., Bich Ho, K. N., Tran, T. P., and Le, T. Q. (2022). The extension of animosity model of foreign product purchase: Does country of origin matter? <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 64</i>, 102758</b>	CA E			Dependent Variable: Willingness to Buy	Independent variable: Animosity Ethnocentrism Cosmopolitanism Moderator / mediator:  Product Judgement		“... specifically, consumers’ product judgment is influenced by animosity and cosmopolitanism, while consumer’s willingness to buy is impacted by animosity, and consumer ethnocentrism”

## Appendix Six - Weights of all indicators

Table 5.12: Weights of all indicators

	ANIM	ETH	REL	SPF	ATT	Gender	Age	EDUC	SPF*ANIM	SPF*ETH	SPF*REL	Type	SE	P Value	VIF	WLS ES
ANIM4	(0.398)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	1.3801	0.306
ANIM5	(0.401)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	1.4011	0.312
ANIM6	(0.444)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	1.6651	0.382
ETH4	0.000	(0.350)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	1.8921	0.294
ETH5	0.000	(0.393)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	3.7111	0.368
ETH6	0.000	(0.376)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	2.9691	0.338
REL13	0.000	0.000	(0.389)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	1.3871	0.302
REL14	0.000	0.000	(0.427)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	1.6691	0.364
REL15	0.000	0.000	(0.409)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.046	<0.001	1.5341	0.334
SPF7	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.150)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.048	<0.001	2.6741	0.095
SPF8	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.168)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	3.2211	0.120
SPF12	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.164)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	1.8001	0.114
SPF15	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.160)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	1.5571	0.109
SPF16	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.197)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	2.7481	0.165
SPF17	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.182)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	2.2801	0.141
SPF18	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.178)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	2.2551	0.134
SPF19	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.169)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	1.9341	0.121
ATT1	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.211)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	1.7791	0.161
ATT2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.243)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	2.9911	0.215
ATT3	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.235)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	2.6691	0.199
ATT4	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.239)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	3.6791	0.207
ATT5	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.245)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.047	<0.001	4.0911	0.218
Gender	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(1.000)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.042	<0.001	10.0001	1.000
Age	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(1.000)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.042	<0.001	10.0001	1.000
EDUC	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(1.000)	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.042	<0.001	10.0001	1.000
SPF*ANIM	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(1.000)	0.000	0.000	Reflective	0.042	<0.001	10.0001	1.000
SPF*ETH	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(1.000)	0.000	Reflective	0.042	<0.001	10.0001	1.000
SPF*REL	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(1.000)	Reflective	0.042	<0.001	10.0001	1.000

