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The Influence of Airlines' Marketing Mix Elements on Passengers' Purchasing Decision-Making: The Case of FSCs and LCCs

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Abstract *For the time being, to recognize the airline business model, it is necessary to investigate how the aviation industry has evolved since the airline deregulation act of 1978. The study aims at investigating the influence of marketing mix elements (4Ps) for airlines on passengers' purchasing decision-making. A questionnaire was used to conduct this research. A sample of 600 air passengers participated in this study. The findings indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between the three elements of marketing mix, product, promotion and place, and passengers' purchasing decision-making. Additionally, the results showed that there is a significant negative relationship between price and passengers' purchasing decision-making. The results also revealed that the air service is generally the most important element of the marketing mix affecting the passengers' purchasing decision-making.*

Keywords: *Low Cost-Carriers (LCCs), Full Service Carriers (FSCs), 4Ps, Frequent Flyer Programs (FFPs)*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, influencing customer behaviors is very significant for companies which aim to be successful in such an intensely competitive environment (Yakup & Jablonsk, 2012). In the changing global economy (Marmullaku & Ahmeti, 2015), the aviation market has undergone a considerable change (Barbot et al., 2008) whereas this industry is considered one of the fastest growing industries (Doganis, 2010). As transportation has become an important part of human's life (Charoensettasilp & Wu, 2013), the air transport sector plays a vital role globally (Abdullah et al., 2016). In recent decades, there have been substantial changes in the structure of the global airline industry commencing with deregulation closely followed by the emergence of Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) (Sampaio, 2009; Graham, 2013; Whyte & Randall, 2014), which is certainly a successful business model in the air transport industry (Westermann, 2012), and has greatly increased the opportunities for affordable air travel by generating considerable opportunities for many destinations to tap into new markets (Whyte & Randall, 2014).

For the time being, the market is getting competitive in all aspects of survival of the firms (Amiruddin, 2013) and competitiveness between airline companies is getting raised (Acar & Karabulakb, 2015; Basfirinci & Mitra, 2015). Thus, In order to struggle the rivalry and to be sustainable, air companies have to take in consideration the cornerstones of air transport industry, apply a convenient strategy, and improve continuously (Fedosova, 2016). The highly air transport competition has grown extremely (Banerjee & Kanathia, 2006; Vidović et al., 2006; Button & Ison, 2008; Fageda et al., 2011; Hamidi et al, 2013; Acar & Karabulak, 2015; Bergantinoy & Capozzaz, 2015) since air transport deregulation in the US in 1978 (Driver, 2001; Vidović, Steiner, & Babić, 2006; Banerjee & Kanathia, 2006; Button & Ison, 2008; Gross & Lück, 2011; Detzen et al., 2012; Sarilgan, 2016). Thereafter, intra-EU in the 1990s (Schnell, 2003; Knorr & Žigová, 2004; Civil Aviation Authority, 2006;

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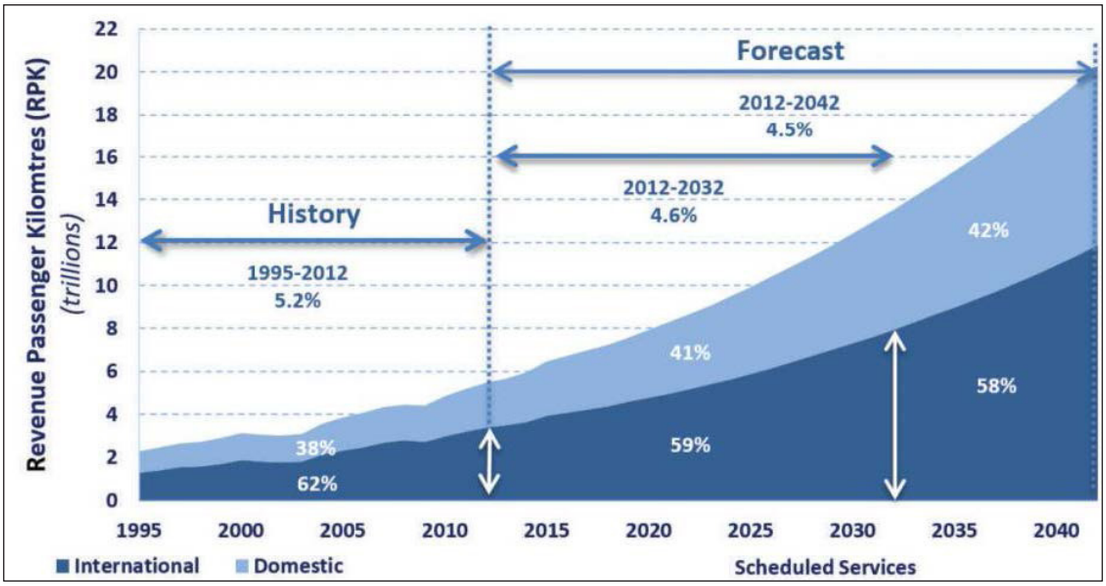
Banerjee & Kanathia, 2006; Graham & Shaw, 2008; Fageda et al., 2011; Diaconu, 2012; Westermann, 2012; Laurino & beria, 2014), and since then the cost of air travel in the US and Europe has fallen and the size of the airline industry has grown rapidly (Karivate, 2004). Also, the market competition in the aviation industry has been intense (Macário et al., 2007; Martín & Román, 2008; Belova, 2015), many countries began to relax the controls on the air transportation industry (Ko & Hwang, 2010).This has simplified entry into the air aviation market and led to a growth in the number of LCCs all over the world (Mentzer, 2011; Kawamori & Lin, 2013), such as West Jet in Canada, Air Asia in Malaysia, and Virgin Blue in Australia (Berrittella et al., 2009; The Economist, 2013; Giménez, 2013; Graham, 2013), which are characterized as possessed standardized fleets (Vidović et al., 2006; Malighetti et al., 2009), never offer frequent flyer programs (FFPs), provide an affordable service to their passengers, and might contain online booking. In addition, LCCs may charge extra for in-flight entertainment and non-essential services (Malighetti et al., 2009; Chou, 2015). Furthermore, although LCCs depend mainly on the use of secondary airports (Barbot, 2006; Vidović et al., 2006; Macário et al., 2007; Button, 2012, Jaap & Zuidberg, 2012; Choo & Oum, 2013) and continue to sell low-cost fares (Vidović et al., 2006; Hofer et al., 2008; Carmona-Benítez & Lodewijks, 2008; Malighetti et al., 2013; Marques, 2015; Kwoka et al., 2016), They have moved into many primary airports (Sabre, 2010; Button, 2012) in direct competition with FSCs (Dziedzic & Warnock-Smith, 2016). Furthermore, their route structures have grown from point-to-point to something that resembles hub-and-spoke systems (Kwoka et al., 2016). Therefore, direct rivalry among FSCs and LCCs are intensifying worldwide (O'Connell & Williams, 2005; Smyth & Pearce, 2006; Balcombe et al., 2008; Gross & Lück, 2011; Marques, 2015).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Air Transport Industry

The air transport industry is the global network of commercial aircraft operators, airports, air navigation service providers and the manufacturers of aircraft and their components. It is responsible for connecting the global economy, providing millions of jobs and making modern quality of life possible (ATAG, 2016), this sector is considered a great industry (Hanlon, 2007) With over 1,400 scheduled airlines, 26,000 aircraft in service, 3,900 airports and 173 air aviation services providers, the aviation industry has established an unmatched global network at the service of travellers and businesses in every corner of the world. It is also the safest and fastest means of transportation available; overcoming oceans and borders to connect people and support sustainable economic growth wherever aircraft fly (IATA, 2017). The air transport industry plays a vital role in global economic and social development (Oyewole et al, 2007; Hardy, 2009; Abdullah et al., 2016). Global airlines contribute to the world economic activity in terms of gross domestic product GDP (Abdullah et al., 2016). According to ATAG (2016)in 2014, the global airlines supported 62.7 million jobs worldwide, contributing $2.7 trillion to the global economy; if aviation were a country, it would rank 21st in size by 2034. Aviation market is considered the most significant segment in the economic progress of the country, especially, in moving people and goods from one place to another, be it international and domestic, mostly when the distances implicated are faraway (Archana & Subha, 2012). There is a significant increase in the number of air passengers worldwide. Current forecasts indicate that air traffic volumes will double by 2032, characterized by a 4.6 per cent annual growth rate for passenger traffic and 4.4 per cent for freight traffic (ICAO, 2017), as illustrated in figure 1). This growth holds tremendous economic potential which will support all states in achieving the UN's 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. In 2034, aviation will provide 99 million jobs and generate USD 5.9 trillion in GDP; a 122 per cent increase from 2014. The future growth of air transport will likely depend on sustainable world economic and trade growth, as well as declining airline costs and ticket prices. Other factors, including regulatory regimes (such as liberalization of air transport), technological improvements and fuel costs will also impact future growth (IATA, 2017).

From a long-term historical perspective, air transport has doubled in size every fifteen years and has experienced greater growth than most other industries. Since 1960, increasing demand for passenger and freight services, technological progress and associated investment have combined to multiply the output of the aviation industry bya factor of more than 30. This expansion of air transport compares favourably with the broadest available measure of world output (global GDP), which, when measured in real terms, has multiplied by more than five times over the same period (IATA, 2017).

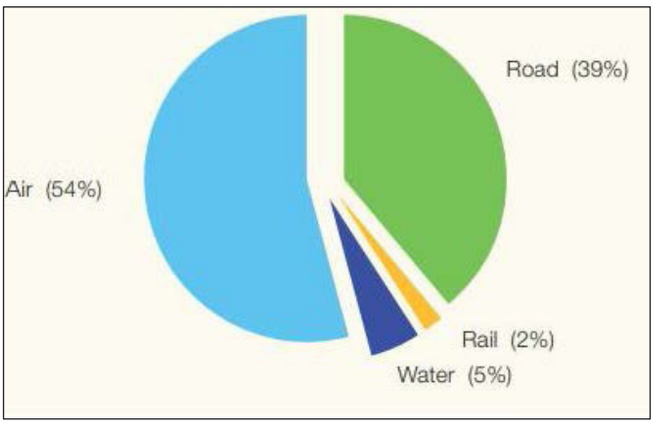


Source: ICAO, 2017

Fig. 1: Total Passenger Traffic: History and Forecast

Air Traffic Passengers (ATPs)

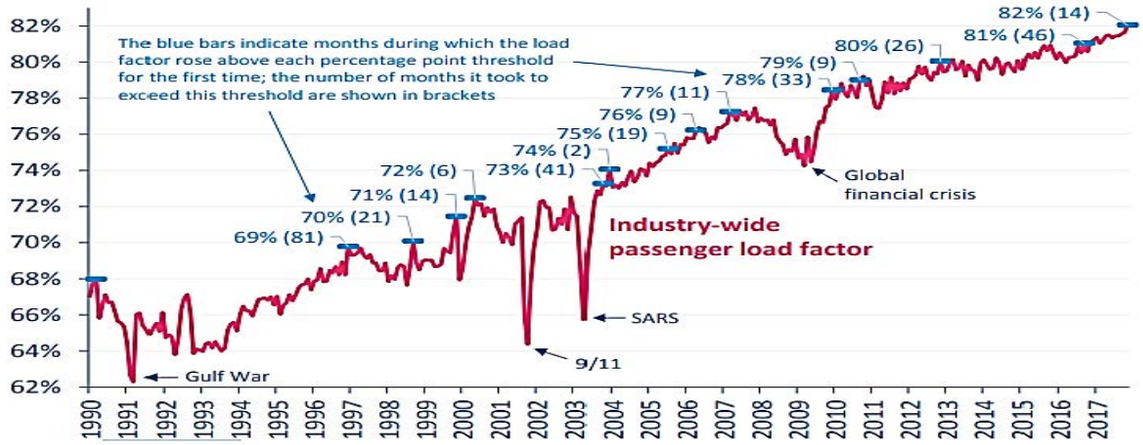
The air aviation sector is characterized by intense competition. Airlines are permanently doing their best to get better the services they provide to their passengers. In order to keep pace with the changes related to the liberalization, alliances between FSCs and LCCs (fadaga, 2012). LCCs with point-to-point networks have an advantage in terms of employees per ASKs that allows them to lower costs. In contrast, legacy carriers with hub-and-spoke networks have an advantage in terms of revenue per RPKs and LF that allows them to grow revenue. Their international lanes allow FSCs to increase the average flight stage, further enhancing revenue. This difference explains why traditional airlines do better in high-demand environments where they are better able to exploit opportunities to increase their load factors and revenue per revenue passenger kilometers (Chopra & Lisiak, 2006). Nowadays, the passengers have enormous options to choose the appropriate air carrier according to their needs. As a result of that, air transport companies are constantly working on the in-flight service improvement and renewal to differentiate themselves from rivals (Archana & Subha, 2012). According to IATA's statistics (2017), there were an estimated 3.8 billion air passenger departures globally in 2016; a strong increase over the 3.5 billion departures in 2015. Of these, almost 50% (some 1.9 billion) were domestic departures, 35% (1.3 billion) were international departures and the remaining 16% (604 million) were connecting departures. Furthermore, LCCs accounted for 27% of the overall seats flown globally in 2016, up from 19% a decade ago. The top three markets were unchanged in 2016, with the US clearly ahead of the pack, accounting for Around 815 million of the total number of global passengers. China and Japan are ranked 2 and 3, with 490 million and 141 million departures, respectively. The numbers of passenger departures in China increased by 10.3% in 2016. Moreover, air transport activities affect multiple sectors of the economy, especially tourism. The connectivity brought by air transport is at the heart of tourism development, providing substantial economic benefits for all those involved in the tourism value chain. Currently, approximately 1.2 billion tourists are crossing borders every year (IATA, 2017), In 2015, slightly over half of all overnight visitors travelled to their destination by air (54%), while the remainder travelled by surface transport (46%) – whether by road (39%), rail (2%) or water (5%). The trend over time has been for air transport to grow at a somewhat faster pace than surface transport, thus the share of air transport is gradually increasing, as illustrated in figure (2) (UNWTO, 2016). In 2016, tourism supported a total of 292.2 million direct, indirect and induced jobs globally and made up 10.2 per cent of world GDP, a total of USD 7.6 trillion. Through a synergetic relationship, aviation supports over 36 million jobs within the tourism sector, contributing roughly USD 892 billion a year to global GDP. Tourism-related GDP is projected to grow 4.0 per cent annually over the next decade, compared to 2.7 per cent growth of global GDP (IATA, 2017).



Source (UNWTO, 2017)

Fig. 2: Tourists Distribution by Means of Travel

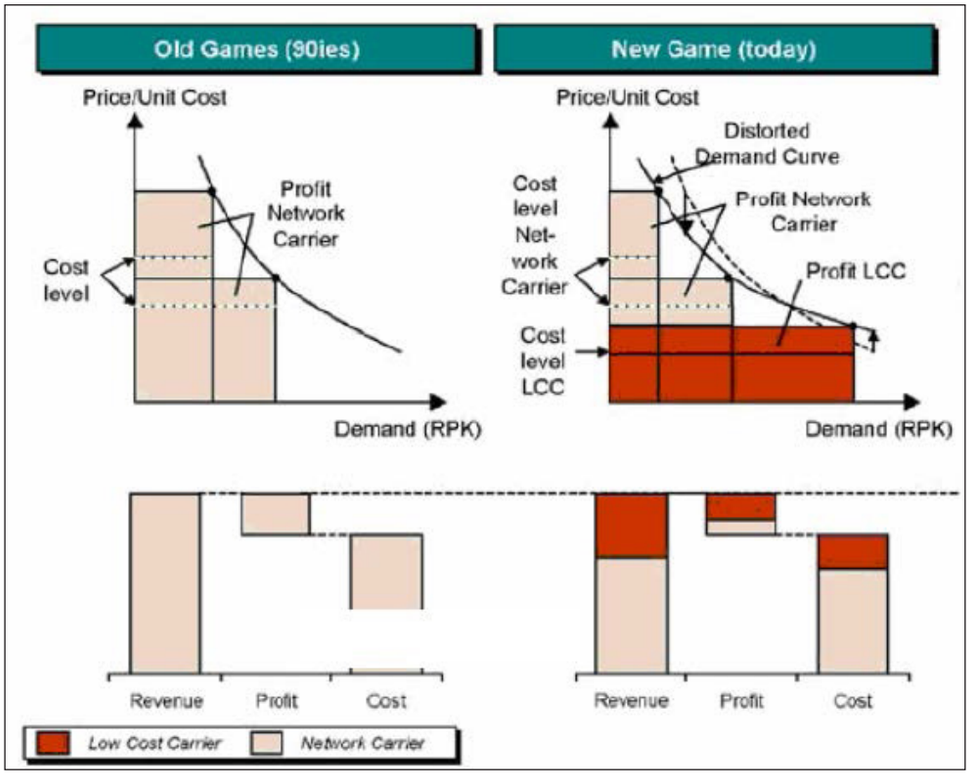
According to the subsequent figure (3), the industry-wide passenger load factor (LF) reached a new milestone in November 2017, exceeding 82% on a seasonally adjusted basis for the first time on record, and taking only 14 months since it first reached 81% to do so. The upward trend in the achieved load factor over time has been a necessary response from airlines to help offset a similar steady rise over time in the load factor required to deliver financial breakeven. On average since 1990, it has taken two years for the load factor to exceed each percentage point threshold, albeit with significant variation. The shortest period was in late-2003 during the post-SARS rebound, when the load factor took just two months to move from 73% to above 74%. At the other end of the scale, a combination of factors meant that it took nearly seven years for the series to make the jump from 68% to 69% in the early 1990s.Sustained high load factors have been a key factor behind the industry's improved financial performance in recent years, ensuring that the achieved load factor has remained above the breakeven level (IATA Economics, 2018).



Source: (IATA Economics, 2018)

Fig. 3: Load factor (LF) FY1990-FY2017

Consequently, a number of traditional airlines have launched LCCs' subsidiaries to grow their cost competitiveness (Macário et al, 2007; Fageda et al., 2011; Button, 2012; Homsombat et al., 2014) on short-haul routes by offering point-to-point services. Currently examples of this strategy in Europe are provided by KLM with Transavia, Lufthansa with German wings, and SAS with Snowflakes, in competition with other FSCs (Ko & Hwang, 2010; Fageda et al., 2011), and to defend their market share in the aviation industry (Ko & Hwang, 2010). The following figure (4) demonstrates the potential benefit for the entire industry. Traditional airlines maximized their revenues by segmenting their service offerings; the lowest regular fare class being dictated; offering a competitive price level by the relevant unit cost level. Lower areas of the demand curve were inaccessible as the carrier optimized connectivity (revenue potential) at the expense of productivity (cost level). As the crisis for legacy carriers unfolded, the demand curve was obviously distorted, reducing the high-yield demand (shown on the left-hand side) and increasing the demand for low-yield products (shown on the right-hand side). Provided the overall willingness to pay per market remained more or less constant, this effect would explain the disproportional success of LCCs over the last decade (Franke, 2004).



Source: (Franke, 2004)

Fig. 4: Revenue Potential through Higher Level of Efficiency by FSCs and LCCs

Marketing

Marketing is considered an integration function geared towards market-oriented corporate management (Kleinaltenkamp et al., 2015). In today's business world, the marketing process is based on the interaction between the customer and the business (Abayi & Khoshtinat, 2016), so it is important for marketers to recognize the significance of reactively adapting to customers through the marketing concept (Yelkur, 2000). Marketing is a significant part of the business strategy (Limcharoen, 2005) which authorizes any business to make an innovative new product or rises sales to customers (Kotler et al., 2012). So, B2B marketers use brand-building strategies to enable prospective customers to differentiate efficiently and confidently between the offerings within a competitive set (Brown et al., 2012). American Association of Marketing (2007) defined marketing as: "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives".

Marketing Mix

Marketing mix is a set of steps (Lancaster & Reynolds 2002; Armstrong & Kotler, 2011) anda collection of controllable elements (Kotler et al., 2004) manipulated by marketers in marketing programs designed to implement a target market strategy (Dibb et al., 2012) in order to create and encourage exchanges with consumers and customers (Blythe, 2009). These variables are known as the 4Ps (Wensveen, 2012; Bhasin, 2017) which are often viewed as controllable variables (Zineldin & Philipson, 2007; Ivy, 2008; Shiu et al., 2009; Pour et al., 2013). The 4Ps of marketing are as follows (Thomas, 2008; Rajagopal, 2016):

Promotion

Promotion is an attempt to communicate, introduce products or services to consumer, persuade the consumer to purchase and earn revenue (Sihite et al., 2015). Promotion, being an important element of mix service marketing, is considered from the aspect of declaration mix, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing instruments used by organization for advertisement and marketing (kadhim et al., 2016, p. 358). It is communicating information between the seller and potential buyer in the channel to influence attitudes and behavior. Thus, promotion is the part of the marketing mix that involves telling target customers that the right Product is available at the right Place at the right Price. Just as promotion must be fine-tuned for a specific target market, it must fit with the other variables of the

marketing mix and reinforce the strategy's differentiation and positioning (Perreault et al., 2012, p. 322).

Product

Product is considered the heart of marketing (Alipour et al., 2015) and the major component of marketing mix elements. As decisions in the other elements of the marketing mix rely on the product (Kashani & Turpin, 1999), it is occasionally difficult to exactly define, and this creates a challenge for marketers (Rajagopal, 2016). Product represents services, goods, ideas or what organizations are marketing (Mahmood & Khan, 2014; Kotler & Armstrong, 2016; Rajagopal, 2016). It was defined by (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, 2010) as "anything which is offered to a market to attend, acquire, use or consume and it may satisfy the consumers". In the service industry, the product is intangible by nature. Similar to a physical product, service products perform the similar function. However, they are limited in measurement. They cannot be measured like physical products (kadhim et al., 2016, p. 358).

Place

Place, which is also called distribution (Ivy, 2008; Mohammad, 2015), refers to the method in which products such as goods or services are distributed for use by customer (Thomas, 2008; Rajagopal, 2016), so it is about getting the products to the customer. Some examples of distribution decision include (NetMBA, 2010):

- Distribution channels
- Distribution centers
- Market coverage
- Reverse logistics
- Warehousing
- Inventory management
- Transportation

Price

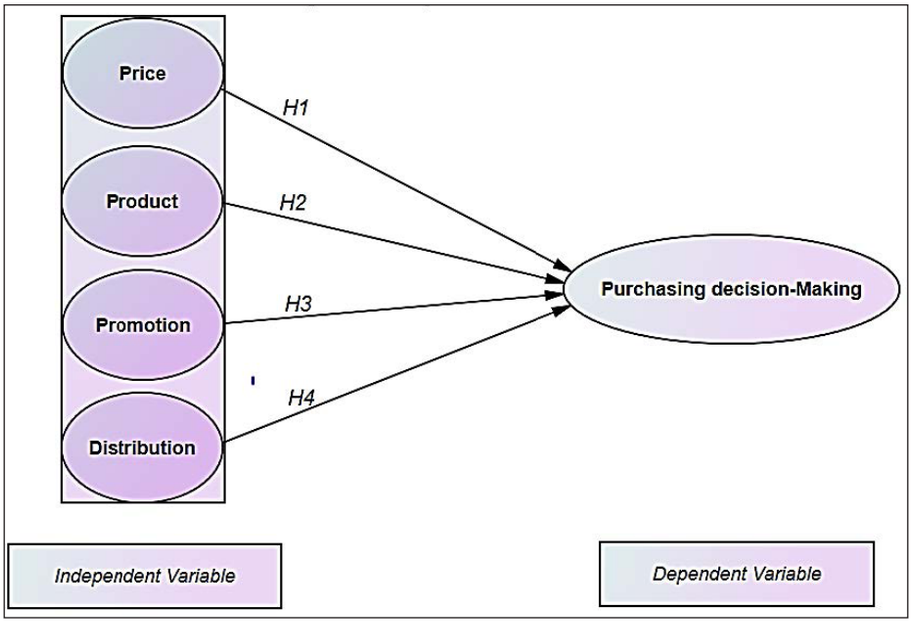
Price is one of the elements of the marketing mix that companies use to achieve their marketing Objectives (Manafzadeh et al., 2012). It is a sensitive and flexible element of the marketing mix (Bennett, 2010; Pride & Ferrell, 2014) because it can be modified quickly in response to changes in the market (Bennett, 2010). Price is what customers pay to get the product (Kotler et al., 2004; Chaffey et al., 2006; Lamb et al., 2012). price is an essential element of marketing mix (Hollensen, 2006; Malaval et al. , 2014) and the only element of the marketing mix that brings revenues to companies (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2006; Holloway, 2008; Rao, 2009; Mohammad, 2015; Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). It is also considered by the customer as one of the important factors (Simarmata et al., 2016) and has long been considered a main predictor of customer choice (Kim et al., 2012; Muralidharan et al., 2014).

Purchasing Decision-Making

Customer behavior is a widely studied field. Understanding it completely is impossible, because it is related so closely to human mind. However, forecasting how a human behaves in purchasing situations can be estimated through previous purchasing decisions. Consumers make buying decisions every day and many people do not even know the factors that drive them to this decision. Buying a coffee comes almost automatically and does not need much information search. There are characteristics behind every buying decision that can come from cultural, social, personal or psychological factors. Each of these factors includes dimensions that can be used in marketing. Marketers can use these factors so subtle that consumers might not even recognize it. Consumers might think that "I have always bought this same brand or product", but they do not recognize that the affecting factor behind this decision can come from their family (Lautiainen, 2015, p.4). Purchasing decision was defined by Vrat (2014) as "the process of buying and effective purchasing aims at obtaining the right material in the right quantities, with the right quality, from the right resource, at the right time, and at the right price. This calls for interaction with marketing, engineering, and manufacturing functions". According to Wongleedee (2015), the elements of the marketing mix, in additionto (Suroto et al., 2013) the psychological, cultural, personal, and social variables simultaneously affect the purchasing decision process.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

There are 4 elements that served as independent variables under the marketing mix, namely price, product, promotion, and place. Meanwhile, the dependent variable reflects the results of the research, which is passengers' purchasing decision-making. Those elements are used as the research setting in examining the relationship between marketing mix elements (4Ps) and passengers' purchasing decision-making, as illustrated in Figure 5.



Source: Made by the researcher

Fig. 5: Conceptual Framework

The research is based on these hypotheses:

H1. Airline price significantly influences passengers' purchasing decision-making.

H2. Airline service significantly influences passengers' purchasing decision-making.

H3. Airline promotion significantly influences passengers' purchasing decision-making.

H4. Airline distribution significantly influences passengers' purchasing decision-making.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study basically adopted the quantitative approach to test pre-determined hypothesesand produce generalizable results. The questionnaire is considered an appropriate strategy to gather demographic information of those travelling on board of FSCs and LCCs, and to ask general questions about passengers' experience, satisfaction, and loyalty level to the FSCs and the LCCs.Terms were defined firmly to avoid confusion or interpretation so all survey participants would start with a similar understanding of a term, which would leave less chance and variation in personal interpretation. The Questionnaire is broken into five different sections including section A: travel experience, section B: purchasing decision-making process, section C: passengers' airlines selection, section D: evaluation of the airline, and section E: demographic and general information.

PILOT STUDY

In this study, pilot questionnaires were distributed on 30 passengers who travelled on board of Egypt air, Nile Air, and Air Arabia to check how they understand the questions and to improve its construct and face validity. Afterward, questionnaire was revised to be the final one and ready for collecting data.

SAMPLING

The participants were selected randomly from the domestic and the international passengers who travelled on board of Egypt Air as a FSC and the flag carrier airline of Egypt, as well as the passengers who travelled on board of Air Arabia & Nile Air as the pioneers of LCCs in the Middle East. The questionnaire was distributed during the period from August 2017 to February 2018, through branches of Egypt Air, Nile Air and Air Arabia, besidesonline formats. Questionnaire collected are 600 ones(308 of those who travelled on board of Egypt Air as well as 292 of those who travelled on board of Air Arabia and Nile Air), with response rate of 76% as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Distributed Questionnaire	Received Questionnaire	Response Rate
768	600	78%

The random sample technique was employed in this study to collect data from passengers due its advantage in collecting perceptions and to decrease the bias level in responses. To answer the questions of the study and to test the validity of the hypotheses, the quantitative analysis is employed. The data collected has been coded and put into a database using a statistical method. The study will use appropriate statistical methods and processers that have been made by using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), version 23.

RELIABILITY

To confirm the reliability of the applied questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha test was employed. The results show that Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.870, as shown in table 2. Because Cronbach's Alpha value exceeded 0.7, the researcher has concluded that the scale of the questionnaire is reliable (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.870	64

Source: Field Survey, 2018

FACTOR ANALYSIS

Table (3) shows that KMO values is 0.835greater than 0.8, this indicates that the sample size is adequate for all statistical analysis (Cerny & Kaiser, 1977).

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.835
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	33301.045
	df	2211
	Sig.	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2018

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part will elaborate more on the findings compiled from the questionnaire which distributed to the respondents who travelled on board of Egypt Air, Air Arabia, and Nile Air to investigate the influence of marketing mix elements (4Ps) on passngers' purchasing decision-making as well as the discussions

DEMOGRAPHIC AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Gender of the Participants

319 respondents of the 600 respondents who made the total number, identified themselves as males, and this represented 53.2 % of the whole sample size, while 281 females made up 46.8 % of the sample, as illustrated in table 4.

Table 4: Gender of the Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	319	53.2	53.2	53.2
	Female	281	46.8	46.8	100.0
	Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Purchasing Ticket Methods

By using 5 groups, the results show that most travelers depended mainly on travel agents to purchase the ticket, making up 38.3% (230 respondents). In the second place came online purchasing, making up 33.7% (202 respondents).

On the other side, purchasing tickets at the airport was the lowest way, with 3.7% (22 respondents), and this is illustrated in table 5.`

Table 5: Purchasing ticket methods

		F	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Online	202	33.7	33.7	33.7
	Travel agents	230	38.3	38.3	72.0
	Airline office	75	12.5	12.5	84.5
	the air-port	22	3.7	3.7	88.2
	Call Center	71	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The Chosen Airline

Three groups were selectedin study, the majority of which has travelledon board of Egypt Air (FSCs), making up 51.3 % (308 respondents). The respondents who travelled on board of Nile Air (LCCs) also represented a high number of respondents with 33.3 % (200 respondents), while the respondents who travelled on board of Air Arabia (LCCs) were the lowest group with 15.3 % (92 respondents) due to the relatively small market share in Egypt, as illustrated in table 6.

Table 6: The Chosen Airline

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Egypt Air	308	51.3	51.3	51.3
	Air Arabia	92	15.3	15.3	66.7
	Nile Air	200	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Hypotheses-Testing

The study includes 4 hypotheses which are based on the linear relationship and will be tested using multiple linear regression.

Table (7) shows Model Summary[b]

Table 7: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.690a	0.476	0.472	.72283

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table (8) illustrates the results of analysis of variance (ANOVA) to verify the significance of analysis model of Multiple Linear Regression.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	282.421	4	70.605	135.135	.000b
	Residual	310.874	595	.522		
	Total	593.295	599			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchasing decision-making

b. Predictors: (Constant), Place/Distribution, Promotion, Product, Price

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 9: Model Summary[b] as Well as the Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.569	.214		2.658	.008
	Price	-.212-	.056	-.254-	-3.758-	.000
	Product	.643	.054	.650	11.829	.000
	Promotion	.170	.044	.140	3.880	.000
	Place	.276	.072	.212	3.853	.000
	R	0.690				
	R^2	0.476				
Adjusted	R^2	0.472				

a. Dependent Variable: Purchasing decision-making

b. Predictors: (Constant), Place/Distribution, Promotion, Product, Price

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 7 shows that the value of the correlation coefficient between the independent variable (marketing mix elements) (4Ps), and the dependent variable (purchasing decision-making) is (0.690), and the value of the coefficient of determination (R2) (0.476), and value of the adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R2) (0.472), and the value of (F = 135.135) of table 8 and a statistically significant (0.000) which is lower than the level of statistical significance(α=0.05). This indicates that the combined independent variable (4Ps) is able to explain (0.472) of the

changes that happened in the dependent variable (purchasing decision-making), and the remainder is attributed to other factors.

Table 9 illustrates model summaryb of Multiple Linear Regression, as well as the regression coefficients (Coefficientsa)**.**

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Accordingly, it can be said that there is at least one independent variable of the independent variables that affects the dependent variable which can be a significant variable.

H1. Airline Price Significantly Influences Passengers' Purchasing Decision-Making

Regarding hypothesis1, from table 9, there is a presence of a statistically significant standard and non-standard coefficient of linear regression equation on the independent variable (Price), as the value of (t = -3.758) with a statistically significant (0.000) which is lower than the level of statistical significance (α = 0.05), which shows the rejection of the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative, which states: "Airline price significantly influences passengers' purchasing decision-making"; and so, there is a significance for the standard coefficient of linear regression equation whose value amounted to (-0.254), and non-standard (-0.212).

H2. Airline Service/Product Significantly Influences Purchasing Decision-Making

Regarding hypothesis 2**,** it turns out from table (9) that there is a presence of a statistically significant standard and non-standard coefficient of linear regression equation on the independent variable (Product), as the value of (t = 11.829) with a statistically significant (0.000) which is lower than the level of statistical significance (α = 0.05) which shows the rejection of the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative, which states: "Airline service/product significantly influences passengers' purchasing decision-making"; and so, there is a significance for the standard coefficient of linear regression equation whose value amounted to (0.650), and non-standard (0.643).

H3.Airline Promotion Significantly Influences Passengers' Purchasing Decision-Making

Regarding hypothesis 3, it turns out from table (9) that there is a presence of a statistically significant standard and non-standard coefficient of linear regression equation on the independent variable (Promotion), as the value of (t = 3.880) with a statistically significant (0.000) which is lower than the level of statistical significance (α = 0.05), that shows the rejection of the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative, which states: "Airline promotion significantly influences passengers' purchasing decision-making"; and so, there is a significance for the standard coefficient of linear regression equation which its value amounted to (0.140), and non-standard (0.170).

H4. Airline Distribution Significantly Influences Passengers' Purchasing Decision-Making

Regarding hypothesis 3, as it turns out from table 9 that there is a presence of a statistically significant standard and non-standard coefficient of linear regression equation on the independent variable (Place), as the value of (t = 3.853) with a statistically significant (0.000) which is lower than the level of statistical significance (α = 0.05),which shows the rejection of the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative, which states: "Airline distribution significantly influences passengers' purchasing decision-making"; and so, there is a significance for the standard coefficient of linear regression equation which its value amounted to (0.212), and non-standard (0.276).

The results of data analysis depict that hypothesis 1 is supported. The regression analysis shows a statistically significant relation (Negative) between price and purchasing decision-making. As Hypothesis 2 of the study is also supported by the results, as the results show that product has statistically significant positive relation with purchasing decision-making. The regression output of Hypothesis 3 also supports the hypothesis presented by the study suggesting a statistically significant relation (positive) between promotion and purchasing decision-making. The results of Hypothesis 4 suggest a statistically significant relation (positive) between distribution and passengers' purchasing decision-making as it was expected by the authors.

The study agreed with various studies, as it shows that passengers' purchasing decision-making is influenced by 4Ps (Product, Price, Promotion, and Place). As findings revealed that the product/Service is the most important element of the marketing mix (4Ps) affecting the purchasing decision, supported by study conducted by Sokolovsky (2012), and Nguyen et al. (2015).

The study is consistent with the previous study conducted by Quansah et al. (2015), who concluded that Consumers' purchasing decision is influenced by quality and price. The study also agree with the study conducted by Maneechot & Chirapanda, (2014) which discussed the factors that have an

effect on behavioral intention to buy LCCs electronic ticket. The outcomes indicated that marketing efforts and perceived advantages were the most important factors that influence the behavioral intention to buy low-fare carriers e-ticket.

This study does not agree with the study conducted by Henderson (2010) which concluded that price is the most influential factor in purchase decisions followed by stopovers, schedule of international flights and baggage allowance. It also does not agree with Satit et al. (2012) who concluded that only price and product were associated with customer decision-making over travel agents.

CONCLUSION

The study aims to investigate the influence of the marketing mix element (4Ps) on the passengers' purchasing decision-making. 600 of passengers were selected from passengers who travelled on board of Egypt Air (308 Participants), as a full Service carriers (FSC) and the flag carrier airline of Egypt, as well as passengers who travelled on board of Air Arabia & Nile Air (292 Participants) as the pioneers of low cost carriers (LCCs) in the Middle East. For the purpose of the study, a random sample was employed. The researcher initially identified a number of qualified respondents, i.e., respondents, who met the criterion of having had a recent air travel experience. The questionnaire was distributed during the period from August 2017 to February 2018, Through Branches of Egypt Air, Nile Air and Air Arabia as well as E-questionnaire, With response rate 78%. Based on multiple regression analysis, the findings indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between the three elements of marketing mix (Product, promotion and place) and passengers' purchasing decision-making. Furthermore, the results showed that there is a significant negative relationship between the price and passengers' purchasing decision-making. The results also revealed that the product was the most important element of the marketing mix affecting the passengers purchasing decision. In Contrast, the price was considered the most important criterion for the LCCs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FSCs

The first set of recommendations from the study is for FSCs:

- FSCs should reduce or eliminate the service which passengers do not need, possibly less luxurious travel options. This could cut costs by creating an airline environment, which costs less to run. Therefore FSCs can sell at a decreased price and still maintain profit margins. Increased sales due to the decreased price of the service whilst still maintaining profit margins helps FSCs to achieve a main aim to maximize profits.
- FSCs should highlight their safety records and the level of service quality they provide to passengers.
- FSCs should reward their loyalty card holders and FPPs with more favourable rates to increase their market share in the aviation market by attracting more passengers.
- FSCs should not compete on short-haul flights as LCCs, but on long haul flights where they have an inherent advantage in that they are better equipped to serve. Focusing on short-haul flights makes LCCs to maximize the daily usage of their smaller planes and flight crews. On the other hand, long-haul flights require bigger planes, more fuel and heavier cargo which most LCCs just can't accommodate.
- FSCs should offer a special promotional fixed period to other volume purchaser, including physical and online travel agents, which is more attractive than that of similar competition with LCCs to enhance their value from passengers' point of view. These promotions could be seasonal, day or time specific. In such a way it will not erode the revenue obtained from the full fare-paying passengers who want flexibility.
- FSCs should focus their target market and differentiate theirservices by examining the strengths/weaknesses, and key points of these and the LCCs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LCCs

The second set of recommendations from the study is for the LCCs business model:

- LCCs should utilize global distribution systems (GDSs) when selling products or services, utilizing GDSs is a must to succeed in the aviation market.
- LCCs should try to avoid allowing the pricing of their services to become more expensive. Price was considered the most important criterion for the LCCs.
- LCCs should follow a strategy, either reinvigorate their low cost differentiation strategy or innovate to keep their superiority in the aviation market, despite the bad times associated with a global economy or strategies implemented by main competitors.
- LCCs should seriously consider entering into alliances with other FSCs and LCCs. As the situation currently stands, LCCs cannot provide nearly enough destinations within their long-haul network to be a serious competitor. An alliance in the form of interlining agreements or code-sharing, while increasing administration costs, will immediately increase the size of LCCs' international network and make them a much more attractive option for passengers.
- LCCs should protect their public reputation and image. Protecting price and service quality, as discussed

above, will help with public reputation since this will help establish the LCC as a reliably low-cost and good service carrier. Reputation management will also help the airline become more acceptable in society, leading to a generalized social norm that LCC travel is acceptable.

- LCCs should create, maintain and publicize their loyalty programs (FFPs) to attract more passengers.
- LCCs should continue to offer their current broad range of destinations rather than trying to cut back on the number of destinations they serve. LCCs will have to adapt some of the core features of the low-cost business model to compete effectively over long-haul routes.
- LCCs should remain competitive by providing better air service and comfort to passengers, to maintain and increase their market share.
- LCCs' employees need to be retrained for a more efficient system that emphasizes increase in productivity.

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