Airline Customer Experiences: A Study of Touchpoints and their Role in Shaping Purchase Intent Among Frequent Flyers on Long Haul Flights

Fahad AlKhashti

PhD

University of Salford

Salford Business School

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VII.   List of Abbreviations

Terminologies	Abbreviation	Key Authors
Moment(s) of Truth	MoT / MoTs	Bitner (1995) Lecinsiki (2011)
Zero Moment of Truth	ZMoT	
First Moment of Truth	FMoT	
Second Moment of Truth	SMoT	
Third Moment of Truth	TMoT	
Final Moment of Truth	FiMoT	
Peak-End Theory	PET	Fredrickson and Kahneman (1993)
Theory of Planned behavior	TPB	Ajzen (1985)
Theory of Reasoned Action	TRA	Fishbein (1967)
Service Quality	SQ	Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985)
Customer Experience	CX	Carbone and Haeckel (1994)
Customer Experience Management	CEM	Plessis and Vries (2016)
Full-Service Carriers	FSCs	
Low-Cost Carriers	LCCs	
Service Quality (Measurement)	SERVQUAL	Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry (1988)

VIII.   Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this study has been to examine the impact of airline touchpoints on customer purchase intent, particularly for frequent flyers on long-haul flights. Specifically, it aimed to assess the complexities of customer decision-making that are shaped by a range of airline interactions and 'moments of truth' (MoTs) that occur during the customer journey stages.

Methods

The study employed an exploratory research design, rooted in the interpretivist paradigm. It outlines a qualitative research approach, emphasising the rationale behind the methodological choices. 31 participants were selected through purposive and snowballing methods. To elicit information relating to the overall experience, touchpoint expectations, and outcomes, in-depth interviews using the sequential incident technique were conducted. This chapter also details the interview questions, criteria for participant selection, and data analysis methodologies. Moreover, ethical considerations, research limitations, and potential data collection risks are also addressed, ensuring a comprehensive and transparent research process.

Findings

The analysis has revealed five essential touchpoint elements in the customer journey: 'employee-customer interaction', 'process', 'technological', 'product interaction', and 'atmospheric'. Each touchpoint has exhibited varying degrees of impact at different stages of the journey. For example, 'technological' and 'process' touchpoints have held significant influence during the pre-purchase phase, while 'employee-customer interaction' have proven to be vital post-purchase. The study further emphasises the significance of MoTs and the peak-end theory (PET) in shaping passenger experiences. Most MoTs arise during the post-purchase phase, especially during in-flight, boarding, and check-in experiences. Further insights were also revealed that relate to employee-customer interactions as well as crisis management, among others. Furthermore, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) has been deployed to demonstrate that these touchpoints significantly shape customer attitudes, norms, and behaviours, which are crucial in determining purchase intentions. Notably, the study uncovered diverse impacts of touchpoints on various customer segments, emphasising the need for tailored strategies in airline customer experience management.

Originality

This research has contributed to existing literature by incorporating psychology and marketing theories, such as the peak end theory, and the theory of planned behaviour, into the airline industry context. It has offered fresh perspectives on customer experience and MoTs, highlighting the interplay between psychological factors and marketing strategies in shaping purchase decisions. The study's unique contribution lies in its focus on the airline industry, providing actionable insights for enhancing customer experience and influencing purchase intent.

Keywords: Customer Experience, Touchpoint Elements, Purchase Intent, Peak-End Theory, 'Moment of Truth', Theory of Planned Behaviour.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Introduction*

The commercial airline industry is amongst the most vulnerable in the transportation sector. Amongst the indicators of the challenges in the industry are the numerous bankruptcies by airlines and governments' bailouts. Koptseva, Paristova and Sycheva (2022) believe that the industry is virtually synonymous with consistent losses and bankruptcies. Some of the elements that account for this observation include the unwillingness of unprofitable airlines to close due to vested shareholders' interests, especially governments and the resultant inconveniences to passengers, as well as job losses. Additionally, both fixed and variable costs are substantial, with companies having to lease inputs they cannot afford, a concern that is exacerbated by volatile fuel price movements and demanding labour forces (O'Connell, 2018). Exogenous events such as natural disasters, accidents and political instabilities have an immediate impact on an airline's reputation and resultant performance. Another challenge identified by Davis and Nag (2020) is the airlines' reputation relating to poor service and irritations in their travel in areas such as checking-in, food and refreshments, and complaint handling, which have implications on the customers' perception of quality of service. The increase in competition exposes airlines to loss of clients even further, resulting in mitigation measures such as loyalty programs and service quality improvements as performance and competitive measures.

It has thus become imperative for airlines to focus not only on attracting customers, but also enhancing loyalty and ensuring repeat purchases of services by passengers. Furthermore, research concurs that retention is comparatively more profitable and less costly compared to finding new customers, with the study by Climis (2016) revealing that a 3% growth in customer retention could significantly increase profits by nearly 10% in select industries, including travel

and hotel. However, these statistics have been affected by global issues such as climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic. The explanation was that customers are more likely to visit a given destination again when they perceive the experience they went through as positive. Jiang and Zhang (2016) postulate that clients' reasons for the return include satisfaction based on expected performance, making it relevant to establish mechanisms for promoting customer experience for airline passengers.

1.2 *Background to the Study*

Airline researchers have acknowledged the insufficiency of research, solutions, and best practices in ensuring airlines' optimal performance in their customer's realm, especially with airlines currently undergoing dynamic changes in operations, which is also shifting travel trends across the globe (Joseph and Varghese, 2019). Airline passengers have high expectations regarding the quality of service they receive (Tahanisaz and Shokuhyar, 2020), therefore, in order to achieve future profitability and differentiation, airlines should focus on the concept of "customer experience" (Laming and Mason, 2014) and understand the customer journey in its entirety. Previous studies have focused on the importance of customer experience in the performance of a business venture (Brun *et al.,* 2017). Various researchers, including Ren *et al.* (2016) and Adhikari and Bhattacharya (2016), have emphasised the need to ensure the satisfaction of customers in various aspects. Extensive research has also been conducted on improving client satisfaction and service delivery. However, there is a need to investigate customer experience in an airline context (Laming and Mason, 2014).

Customer experience is progressively being recognised as an indispensable phenomenon in business management practice, with Andreini *et al.* (2019) attributing this to the significance of the concept in a company's endeavors to build and sustain relationships with customers. As Lemon and Verhoef (2016) discuss, studies exploring and highlighting the concept's

importance and the associated opportunities available to companies in building robust and sustained positive experiences have been conducted. Since the 2000s, research regarding customer experiences from the perspectives of value for companies and customers gained prominence, as evidenced by contributions of Addis and Holbrook (2001), Milligan and Smith (2002), and Smith and Wheeler (2002) amongst others. Such studies investigated the aspect of consumption from various conceptual standpoints. This is considered an all-inclusive phenomenon demonstrated when a person interacts with a company or its offerings at different points of contact. According to Brakus (2009), such interactions influence how a customer acts or reacts towards that specific company in the future.

A look into theories on which customer experience is anchored shows three main research domains. For instance, some researchers investigate the concept from the notion that customer experience is actualised through a purchase journey This view is supported by amongst others, Verhoef *et al.* (2009) in their customer experience research as well as Rawson, Duncan and Jones (2013) in their research on customer experience from a managerial standpoint. From these studies, a major contribution is the recognition that a customer journey is composed of distinct touchpoints.

Other authors, for instance Klaus and Maklan (2013) approach the concept by studying elements such as quality of service and customer satisfaction. As such, it is perceived that the outcome of a customer's evaluation of an experience has implications on satisfaction (Rose *et al.*, 2012), loyalty (Stein and Ramaseshan, 2020), and advocacy actions (Kuppelwieser *et al.*, 2021) and these are some of the basis for customer lifetime value to a company and profitability. The third perspective adopted by researchers such as Carbone and Haeckel (1994) and Bleier, Harmeling and Palmatier (2019) revolves around the approaches companies have taken to cultivate and nurture customer experiences.

There is a paucity of literature that specifically focuses on long-haul flights and frequent flyers in relation to customer experience. However, some studies have examined customer experience in long-haul flights. Laming and Mason's (2014) study, for example, delves into the application of the customer experience concept within the long-haul airline industry. Customer experience, though lacking a universally clear definition, aims to ensure satisfaction throughout a passenger's journey, fostering brand loyalty and advocacy. The research employed International Air Transport Association (IATA) data, surveying 18,567 passengers across fifteen major full-service airlines on Europe-Middle East-Asia routes over a year. Cabin features and crew played pivotal roles in enhancing satisfaction, while inflight food and drink influenced loyalty and advocacy. Interestingly, factors such as airline continent, individual airline, and flight class did not significantly impact passenger satisfaction, suggesting that the core elements of customer experience are consistent regardless of these variables.

Accordingly, this study centers on long haul flights and frequent flyers due to their paramount significance in the airline industry. Long haul flights encompass a comprehensive passenger journey, providing ample touchpoints for customer interaction and evaluation, as highlighted in previous research. Moreover, focusing on frequent flyers ensures an in-depth analysis of customer purchase intent, as their recurring engagement with airlines offers insights into loyalty, advocacy, and decision-making dynamics, making this cohort an ideal target for understanding the impact of touchpoints on airline customers.

1.3   *Research Problem*

Various authors have explored customer experience in an airline context, focusing on distinct phenomena. For instance, Ban and Kim (2019) investigated customer experience and satisfaction, resulting in the identification of six vital aspects: food and refreshments, cabin crew, value for money, seat comfort, ground service and entertainment. They discovered that

with the exception of entertainment, all factors contributed towards passengers' satisfaction and the likelihood of a recommendation. Laming and Mason (2014) conducted a similar study, consequently identifying issues such as cabin features, cabin crew, and food and beverages. Chauhan and Manhas (2017) found that customer experience is multidimensional as it is characterised by amongst others, customers' views on safety, comfort, novelty, hedonism and recognition.

Smith and Wheeler (2002) conducted a study on customer experience and observed that airlines acknowledged the significance of the concept, with some companies even remodelling their structure to enhance customer experience, as was the case for South West and British Airways. Other studies have acknowledged that airlines attempted to improve customer experience by differentiating their offerings (Springer, Azzarello and Melton, 2011; Kamaladevi, 2010). In fact, numerous airlines have dedicated customer experience departments, with the attention being on passengers rather than products and services. Tivasuradej and Pham (2019) discuss that customer experience is a major differentiation strategy, a satisfaction factor and a tool for generating business growth and customer loyalty.

Indeed, the management of the airline passenger experience is highly complex. This is because of many factors including different airline objectives, employee attributes, airport factors, immigration and security functions amongst others. According to Laming and Mason (2014), some of the elements are beyond a single airline's control, which translates to even more complexities as airlines pursue customer experience improvements. Even Driver (1999) contended that differentiation within airlines is a sophisticated endeavour, which he attributes to the minimal opportunities as airports are shared and aircrafts are identical.

A popular measure implemented in airline studies is the measure of service quality. This is especially through the SERVQUAL framework. This framework helps in measuring the

degree of congruence between an actual and the expected experience. While the framework is effective in evaluating the gaps between delivered service and the expectation, Laming and Mason (2014) explain that this framework is ineffective in evaluating customer experience given that customer experience revolves around customer satisfaction at every distinct element associated with the journey.

1.4 *Research Aim, Objectives and Questions*

1.4.1 *Research Aim*

In order to evaluate customer experience with the motive of generating repeat purchases and driving loyalty, an individual satisfaction rating is necessary for all touchpoints in which a passenger and an airline engage. This is inclusive of stages such as booking, checking-in, in-flight, landing, and transfer amongst others. The individual constituents and insights can then be assessed to establish the extent to which they contribute to passengers' purchase intent, which has to be actualised by customer experience improvement. Therefore, the aim of the research is to examine touchpoints and their shaping role on purchase intent among the frequent flyer passengers on long haul flights by analysing the passengers' post hoc accounts.

1.4.2 *Research Objectives*

Despite the existing research on touchpoints, the lack of insights on touchpoint elements' characteristics and their significance at each stage of the journey, focusing on air travel experiences, presents an opportunity for further research (Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016). As such, it is imperative to establish the critical touchpoint elements that have a significant influence on customers' perceptions and behaviours. In this regard, the first objective is;

RO1) To identify the touchpoint elements that define the quality of frequent-flyers' experiences on long-haul flights.

Stein and Ramaseshan (2016, p.4) define touchpoints as "moments of truth between the customer and any part of the company", however not all touchpoints are considered to be 'moments of truth' as some touchpoints may not contain impactful or significant experiences. In fact, even Rosenbaum *et al.* (2017) urged managers to gather information about the customers and to distinguish between the significant and less relevant touchpoints during the customer journey (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). Authors such as Verhoef et al. (2004) consider the peak-end theory when evaluating the customer journey, stressing the importance of the peak and end experience for satisfaction formation, and call for future research on airline flights.

In the 'moment of truth' and peak-end theory literature, the need for identifying customers' experiences in their customer journey has been acknowledged by Terra and Casais (2021) and Doi, Doi and Yamaoka (2022) respectively. However, from the literature, there is a lack of adequate knowledge of their effectiveness and application in explaining passengers' behaviours. As such, it is important to examine passengers' 'moments of truth' and determine the peak-end theory's applicability in evaluating passengers' overall experience with an airline. Therefore, the second objective is;

RO2) To illustrate the effectiveness of 'moments of truth' and applicability of the peak-end theory in evaluating frequent flyers' experiences on long-haul flights.

According to De Keyser *et al.*, (2020), customer-brand exchanges and interactions through touchpoints could have profound and influential negative or positive outcomes. Ideally, the desire for companies is to advance in developing and sustaining positive impressions through the exchanges at the touchpoints. These impressions may then lead to outcomes such as satisfaction and help shape the customer's purchase intent. A well-established theory to predict customer behaviour is the theory of planned behaviour. Despite

the extensive research on the theory regarding repurchase intention and resultant managerial implications, the challenges airlines are still facing necessitate more research. Authors such as Chen, Li and Liu (2019) observed that an airline's high quality of service incentivises repurchase intention. However, there lacks research that integrates past experience while also considering the peak-end theory and 'moment of truth' perspectives, and as such, by performing the study, the significance of the intensity of events in travelling experiences in informing repurchase intentions and actual repurchase could be established. Thus, the third objective is:

RO3: To examine frequent-flyers' experiences of service provided on long-haul flights and their subsequent purchase intent.

The literature underscores the pivotal role of customer experience (CX) in shaping purchase decisions. Historically, the essence of CX lies not in the products but in the gratifying experiences they confer (Abbott, 1955). From a comprehensive standpoint, experiences encompass sensory, cognitive, affective, physical, and social identity facets when interacting with companies (Schmitt, 1999). This holistic approach acknowledges both retailer-controlled and external factors in sculpting the overall customer experience (Verhoef et al., 2009). For frequent flyers, their interactions with airlines, especially on long-haul flights, can be influential in shaping their purchase intent. Utilising the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this research aims to delve deeper into how these experiences influence their behavioural intentions.

1.4.3   Research Questions

Based on the above research objectives, the following research questions are derived to guide the study's assumptions, processes and activities used in the research.

RQ1) What are the touchpoint elements that define the quality of frequent-flyers' experiences on long-haul flights?

RO2) To what extent are 'moments of truth' effective and the peak-end theory applicable in understanding how frequent-flyers evaluate their experiences on long-haul flights?

RO3: How do frequent-flyers' experiences of service provided on long-haul flights shape their subsequent purchase intent?

To contribute towards the research aim, this study adopts a methodology grounded on the need to identify as much data as possible since it allows for deeper probing in the effort to verify inferences and assessments. As such, maintaining an exploratory perspective was prioritised to provide an avenue for potentially profound phenomena to be identified. This was specifically enhanced by the adoption and incorporation of two main qualitative methods namely consulting of literature review and use of in-depth interviews.

1.5 *Research Gaps*

The table below summarises the main research gaps and opportunities of specific studies that were necessary in forming the research questions.

Table 1: Research Gaps and Opportunities

Author(s)	Contribution	Research Gap / Opportunity
Stein and Ramaseshan (2016)	Identified seven distinct touchpoint elements that occur throughout the customer journey and categorised their significance in a general retailing context.	Research is necessary to determine the elements' significance at each stage of the customer journey in an airline context; focusing on air travel experiences only.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016)	The authors develop a greater understanding of customer experience and the customer journey in this age of increased complex customer behaviour. They accomplish this by examining existing definitions and conceptualisations of customer experience as a concept, as well as providing a historical overview of customer experience's roots in marketing to bring together what is currently known about the topic. Moreover, they propose key areas for future research regarding customer experience.	The authors suggest the importance of identifying the critical incidents or 'moments of truth' throughout the customer journey.
Verhoef *et al.* (2004)	The authors' results stress the importance of the peak and end experience for satisfaction formation.	The authors call for future research on airline flights.
Laming and Mason (2014)	The authors focus on comparing airline carriers and measuring customer satisfaction levels at certain individual touchpoints.	To measure satisfaction levels throughout all the touchpoints to determine the peak moments while examining the theory's

		(peak-end) applicability in an airline context.
McKechnie *et al.* (2011)	The authors discuss partitioning an air travel service encounter into touchpoints building upon LeBel's (2005) framework.	The authors' findings suggest that touchpoints are sufficiently distinctive when partitioning a service encounter. Therefore, indicating a need to focus on the touchpoint elements as well as the critical 'moment of truth' touchpoints.
Wünderlich and Hogreve (2019)	The authors focus on configuring customer touchpoints with a thorough analysis of service encounter satisfaction in an airline context.	Based on their findings, the authors call for research that does not focus solely on linear causal relationships when examining customer experiences, rather, they suggest studies should investigate the patterns of touchpoints that need to be in place in order to lead to valuable customer experiences.
Lam and Hsu (2006)	The authors tested the theory of planned behaviour antecedents on behavioural intention with the addition of past behaviour to	To examine the theory of planned behavior from a 'moment of truth' and peak-end perspective, and investigate how passenger experiences at airline

	predict the choice of travel destination.	touchpoints shape their purchase intent.
Moran et al., 2014	Introduces the FiMoT concept, emphasizing the need to explore MoTs' hierarchy and impact in the airline industry, revealing a gap in current literature regarding their influence on the FiMoT and strategies for optimization, critical for securing customer loyalty.	Existing literature lacks a detailed exploration of why specific Moments of Truth (MoTs) in the commercial airline industry are more influential in shaping passenger perceptions and their impact on the Final Moment of Truth (FiMoT), highlighting the need for a comprehensive analysis and strategies to optimize these critical moments for securing customer loyalty.
D'Arco et al., 2019	Notes the lack of research on the significance of ZMoT in the tourism and hospitality sector, underscoring a gap in knowledge.	Identifies a glaring research gap regarding the role and importance of ZMoT within the tourism and hospitality sectors, particularly in the context of airlines, where consumer choices are abundant and pre-booking research is extensive.

1.6 *Addressing and Contributing to Existing Scholarship*

This study contributes to customer experience literature by linking touchpoint elements and purchase intent. It examines the concept of customer experience by using existing knowledge with the intention of enhancing its understanding and application. Already, the concept of customer experience has been examined in different contexts; Manthiou and Klaus (2022), for instance, examine it in the tourism industry while Alt *et al.* (2021) explore it in the insurance sector. These acknowledge the significance of focusing on touchpoints, consequently calling for the segmentation of digital touchpoints with customers. In the commercial airline industry, the construct is exhibited in the works of McKechnie *et al.* (2011), who conclude that partitioning an air travel service encounter into touchpoints enhances the connection between the service encounters and service quality. This study takes a more pragmatic approach by exploring the application of the touchpoint concept with a focus on their distinct elements and purchase intent.

More specifically, extant customer experience research has captured the concept from diverse perspectives, resulting in numerous ideologies and frameworks explaining its rationale as well as methodologies for its actualisation. Amongst these is the 'moment of truth' concept, which delineates the distinct stages that customers undergo along their customer experience and opportunities available for companies to influence the interaction with their customers. Furthermore, the concept of touchpoints has received significant attention, with researchers identifying their role in modelling the nature of customer experience. The peak-end theory, while initially developed outside the customer experience realm, can be appropriated in research to generate insights for the improvement of customer-business interactions. As such, this research adopts these elements and establishes the extent to which they are existent in the airline-customer spheres.

1.7 *Research Limitations*

The results of this study should be understood while being cognisant of its limitations. For instance, most of the participants' account of their experiences incline towards the negative dimension, whereby the proportion of participants' narratives revolved around dissatisfaction. This was an organic development since the researcher had not specified the polarities of experiences the customers underwent. While it could be deduced that negative experiences have a profound impact, participants' bias could have influenced them to overlook the positive experiences regardless of their impact but focus on the undesirable experiences. However, as the researcher sought after the most memorable experiences, it was relevant to maintain the participants' choice of experience, since the study wanted to utilise high-quality and organically emergent data. Additionally, the participants' thought process was not captured, and therefore, the shortcomings and biases of their thought process could have influenced the outcomes of the research in unspecified means.

According to Norris (1997), some of the aspects that account for the limitations include a researcher's assumptions and biases. Furthermore, the role of a researcher is to make observations on data and use their research capacity to derive meanings and themes. In this regard, the researcher is at liberty to assign significance to the phenomena they perceive as important according to a study's objectives. This notion suffices for this study, where the researcher subjectively identifies the aspects of experiences that satisfy the categorisations of the 'moments of truth' as well as sentiments and episodes that represented the peak and end dimensions of the peak-end theory.

1.8 *Thesis Outline*

The thesis contents are organised as follows; the introduction delves into the scholarly field and frameworks on which the study is based. In this chapter, literature on customer

experience, as well as 'moments of truth', touchpoints, theory of planned behaviour and peak-end theory paradigms are discussed. Additionally, the case for this study is established through the aims, objectives and questions. The ways through which this research contributes to extant scholarship and the study's limitations are also captured in the introduction.

In the second chapter, the study's context is described. As the research focuses on the commercial airline industry, amongst the considered elements include its history, nature and scale of operations, as well as performance and pricing. The literature review is the third chapter, whereby existing knowledge on customer experience is presented. Amongst the discussed scholarly areas, include customer decision-making processes, customer experience management and customer journey.

The methodology chapter outlines the processes and assumptions employed as the researcher embarked on satisfying the objectives of the study, with a sample of frequent flyers between the ages of 22 and 44 years of age. Following the recommended research practice, the researcher introduces and justifies the selected philosophy. In this chapter, the methods of data collection and analysis, as well as their critique and justification based on the study's purpose are outlined. The findings and discussion chapter contain the descriptions and interpretation of the findings in relation to the research objectives and extant literature. Finally, the conclusion chapter highlights and remarks on the findings and discusses implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER II: INDUSTRY CONTEXT

2. *Introduction*

2.1. *History*

This study explores customer experience within the commercial airline industry. The commercial airline industry belongs to the more expansive aviation industry. In this section, elements of the contexts are discussed. The aviation industry encompasses a multitude of entities concerned with the operations of an aircraft. Amongst the entities are aircraft manufacturers and aerospace firms, aircraft operators, researchers, as well as regulators. The modern era of the industry is dated back to the late 19th century, with the development of rigid and semi-rigid airships (Petrescu *et al.*, 2017). These were disruptive innovations that transformed the transportation industry as they enabled the movement of cargo passengers in the air and over long distances, especially because of the formation of airlines such as Czech Airlines, KLM and Qantas, which are still in operation. While airlines began as private ventures, government ownership became widespread, especially between the 1930s and 1980s, after which extensive privatisation began. Mergers, acquisitions and alliances have been a major trend. The table and figure below show examples of stakeholders in the aviation industry as well as the share of airline passenger traffic by region.

Table 2: Stakeholders in the Aviation Industry

	Category							
	Airspace users	Community	Regulators	Policy makers	Airports	Manufacturers/ Suppliers	Associations	Other service providers	Human resources
Examples	• Airlines • General Aviation • Military	• Passengers • Environmental regulators • Neighbours • Consultants • Insurance firms • Universities • Researchers and publishers	• European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) • International Civil Aviation Organisation • Joint Aviation authorities (JAA)	• Ministry of transport in respective countries • International air transport association (IATA) • Ministries of defence in different countries	•Regional airports, •National airports •International airports •Airstrips	•Aircraft firms (Boeing, Airbus, Bombardier) •Fuel suppliers	•IATA •Association of European Airlines (AEA) •Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA)	•Aircraft maintenance •Aeronautical information service •Meteorological service providers	•Pilots •Flight attendants •Air traffic controllers

Figure 1: Share of airline passenger traffic by region (2019)
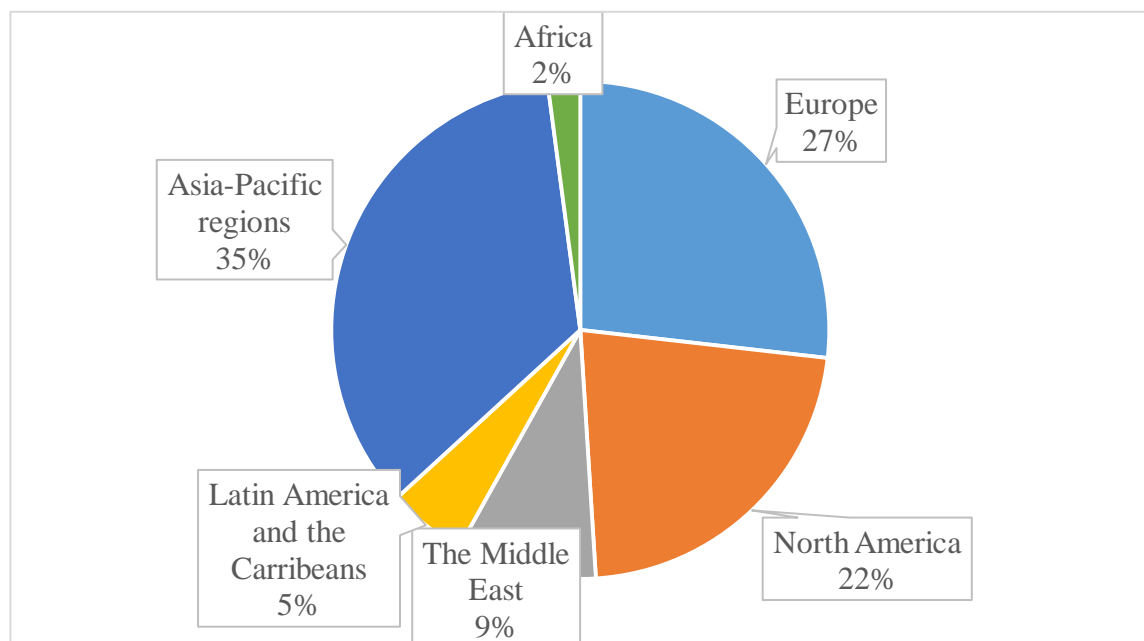
Adapted from: *International Civil Aviation Authority (2019)*

2.2. *Nature of Operations*

In terms of the nature of operations, the industry is segmented into two; military aviation and civil aviation (Waitz, Lukachko and Lee, 2005). Military aviation involves the use of aircrafts for warfare-related activities that include aerial warfare, logistical support and reconnaissance. A country's armed forces and the relevant partners and contractors are responsible for military aviation. Civil aviation is composed of two categories. The first is general aviation, which is constituted by non-scheduled flight operations, regardless of whether they are commercial or private. Operations under the general aviation category include training, photography, weather reporting, air chartering and recreational flying. Scheduled flights on the other hand, are implemented by following a pre-established flight calendar that is released around 330 days prior to departure. The prospective passengers plan their travelling around the schedule. These airlines fall under full-service and low-cost carriers. In this thesis, they are termed commercial carriers.

2.3. *Pricing in Airlines*

With pricing being an important element of competition and customer attraction, understanding the mechanisms adopted and the rationale is important. Pricing in the industry is contingent on two main considerations depending on the characteristics of the market and competition landscape, with airlines modifying their handling of these elements following their corporate philosophy (Wehner *et al.*, 2018). Fare is determined by a system that considers the duration between the time of ticket purchase and departure of the flight. In one scenario, the tariff system adopted by full-service carriers considers the passengers' predisposition to accept the conditions and caps the lower side of charges. If a customer is unwilling to accept the limiting terms, the charges increase. The tariffs are per the classes and service packages.

While the full-service carrier fare structure is complicated, usually, it is categorised into restrictive or discounted, and non-restrictive (Williams, 2020). In the restrictive context, only

a few or no changes in reservations are allowed. As such, there are several classes depending on the different combinations of restrictions. For instance, the possibility of changing the date of the return journey, refund period and advance payments influences the classes. Non-restrictive tariffs on the other hand, are mostly applied for the ideal classes; first, business, and economy. These classes give customers the liberty to change some attributes of the travel experience without charges, and even cancel their purchase for a full refund if the terms and conditions apply.

Dynamic pricing is another strategy. It is based on the purchase and departure times, as well as the speed of sales for a particular flight (Wittman and Belobaba, 2019). Passengers that purchase comparatively earlier in advance are charged a lesser amount than passengers that purchase closer to the departure time. Additionally, the general speed of sales, which is influenced by amongst others, the travel demand of a certain route and the availability and quality of other service providers influence the actual fare. However, this system is mostly adopted by low-cost carriers.

2.4.   *Scale of Operations*

Airlines are categorised differently, with definitions varying across the globe. Nonetheless, in terms of scale, airlines can be classified into international, national and regional (Eriksson and Steenhuis, 2015). International airlines are the largest, most popular, and most extensive airlines. They operate the largest aircrafts and generate extensive revenues or register profound losses. International airlines direct their resources and efforts towards providing global-scale services whereby they provide transportation services over long distances. Because of their extensive operating scale, their workforce is comparatively large, covers more destinations and operates from multiple hubs.

National airlines are the second largest and use both large and medium-sized planes. They focus on operations within a particular country, although they transport to international destinations as well. In many instances, national airlines fly to some destinations depending on the seasonal changes in demand. National airlines have a smaller fleet size as compared to international airlines (Abdelghany and Abdelghany, 2018). Regional airlines focus on providing services in areas with low demand levels, especially areas underserved or completely unserved by either national or international operators. Some of the regional airlines are affiliates of bigger operators and are intended to provide connecting flights between the hubs from which the bigger airlines operate. Moreover, while airlines differ according to scale of operations, there is variance depending on how they do business. The adopted business models could be used to represent the type of airline.

2.4.1. Full-Service Carriers (FSCs)

The full-service business model involves providing an extended range of services in the pre-flight and on-board stages, whose price is included in the ticket price (Lim and Lee, 2020). FSCs also referred to as traditional carriers, provide transfer or transit transport services, as well as linkages between their network and other carriers. FSCs have a hub and spoke configuration, whereby they connect major cities, through hubs, and their constituents also termed as spokes. Therefore, as Sezgen, Mason and Mayer (2019) remark, the network of full-service carriers is sophisticated, extensive and flexible, which facilitates a high level of possibilities for configuration. The FSCs products are usually of high quality and include in-flight meals, baggage check, cabin ambience and in-flight entertainment as standard. The airlines have a large capacity, and as such, use networks of travel agencies to market and sell their tickets, and according to the figure below, represent the leading airlines by brand value. Some of this capacity is used for other services, such as charter flights and mail transport. These

services are typically international or intercontinental, with most of the operators being national carriers. The services are provided based on the different classes, such as economy, business, and first class. Full-service carriers provide both passenger and cargo services and mainly operate on domestic or international extent (Lim and Lee, 2020).

Figure 2: Leading Airlines by Brand Value Globally In 2022
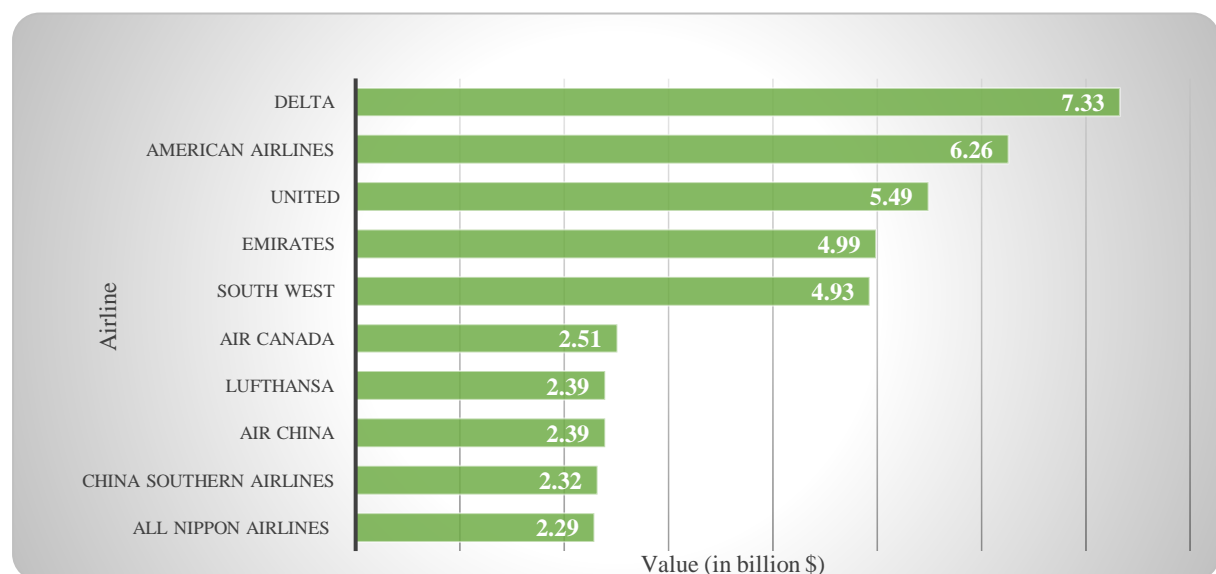
Source: *Adapted from Statista (2022)*

2.4.2. Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs)

The specific models, strategies and tactics adopted by low-cost carriers differ across the airlines and regions. However, the underpinning theme is a focus on the reduction of operational costs and fares, especially in comparison with other legacy and full-service carriers (Gross and Lück, 2016). For an airline to be considered a low-cost operator, IATA has published several indicators that an airline has to display either fully or to some extent. These include short-haul operations, a target on price-sensitive customers, provision of low fares,

simple management structure, single service class, and short aircraft turnaround. The airlines strongly leverage price competition and are owned by private sector businesses. While they differ in the nature of the services they provide, some of their features include an absence of secondary non-essential features such as entertainment and recliner seats. These airlines also avoid high-cost airports and prefer airports with comparatively lower landing fees. To minimise costs further, as described by Swidan, Merkert and Kwon (2019) these airlines hedge fuel costs, assign staff multiple responsibilities to reduce workforce and prefer online-ticket sales to reduce the cost of support services.

Moreover, not all low-cost carriers adopt the strategies associated with the low-cost model. In fact, some airlines attempt to differentiate their offerings by focusing on a distinct factor (Serio, Tedeschi and Ursino, 2018). For instance, some low-cost airlines have in-flight entertainment, while others use allocated seating. Others provide free services. Even some airlines charge fares associated with low-cost airlines, and present themselves as such, but have high operating costs. Furthermore, local laws may determine the extent to which some processes are implemented or absent. This is the case for airlines governed by the Irish aviation authority, whereby the window blinds cannot be detached from an aircraft as a cost-saving measure. The result of these aspects is airlines whose philosophy subscribes to the traditional full-service carrier and low-cost carrier models. This is achieved by using a smaller fleet or aircraft to minimise wastage as well as providing limited services (Whyte and Lohmann, 2020).

Indeed, the low-cost model revolves around ensuring value for money. Consequently, the tickets are comparatively cheaper. However, passengers have to pay for additional services such as in-flight meals and extra baggage weight when the services are available and provided. Low-cost carriers have gained prominence over the last three decades, whereby they have

changed the dynamics of the air travel sector, specifically by disrupting the strategies adopted by flag carriers.

Figure 3: Market share of the low-cost airlines (2006-2020 in %)

Source:
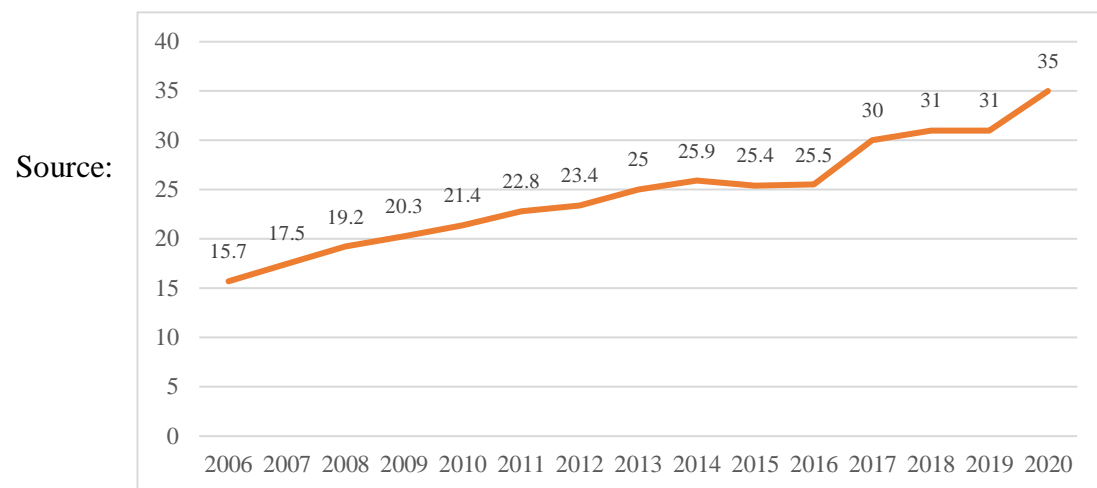
Adopted from Statista Research Department (2022d)

As the supply of low-cost carriers grows, differentiation becomes an important success determinant, since price competition alone may undermine an airline's performance and ability to sustain operations (Acar and Karabulak, 2015). Nonetheless, ultra-low-cost carriers develop and implement more extreme models of low-cost operators. The fares charged by ultra-low-cost carriers have minimal inclusions, although the services provided as add-ons are more.

Since low-cost carriers majorly attract customers and compete on price, their pricing methodologies are very dynamic. As such, discounting is widespread. However, as manifested by operators, while the advertised fares may be comparatively low, they are not inclusive of taxes and additional charges (Wittman and Belobaba, 2019). In fact, some airlines advertise some flights as free but include other charges, taxes and fees. In some contexts, the seats are priced differently to attract customers, with first buyers benefiting the most, as the prices

continually rise as the occupancy increases. In fact, in some contexts, the fees increase to and even exceed the charges of full-service providers.

As the figure above illustrates, low-cost airlines have quickly grown their share of air travel in the globe, and as of 2020, commanded 35% of the total seat occupancy. Market liberalisation has partially accounted for the growth of these airlines. This is because the deregulation of domestic aviation markets across the globe, as well as the ability to effect air-service contracts, have revealed opportunities to offer unique services in accordance with customer demands. For instance, the growth in low-cost European airlines such as Ryanair and EasyJet has been attributed to the creation of the European common aviation area in 2006. This explains the higher proportion of low-cost carriers within the European air travel segment in comparison to Asia and Africa. This is depicted in the figure below, which shows the profit performance of leading operators in the segment, which is dominated by airlines in Europe and the Americas.

The rise in economic activities has accounted for the exponential growth of low-cost airlines as well (Hanson *et al.*, 2022). For instance, following the strong recovery from the 2009 economic downturn, economic performance has proliferated disposable incomes, especially in the middle-income groups. Furthermore, airline transportation acts as a facilitator of economic growth, since it facilitates connectivity and transfer of goods, people, technologies and thinking amongst others.

Figure 4: Net profit of leading low-cost airlines in 2019 (in million $)

Southwest Airlines 2,300
RyanAir 719
Jetblue 569
Easyjet 443
Spirit Airlines 335
Wizz Air 312
Gol 164
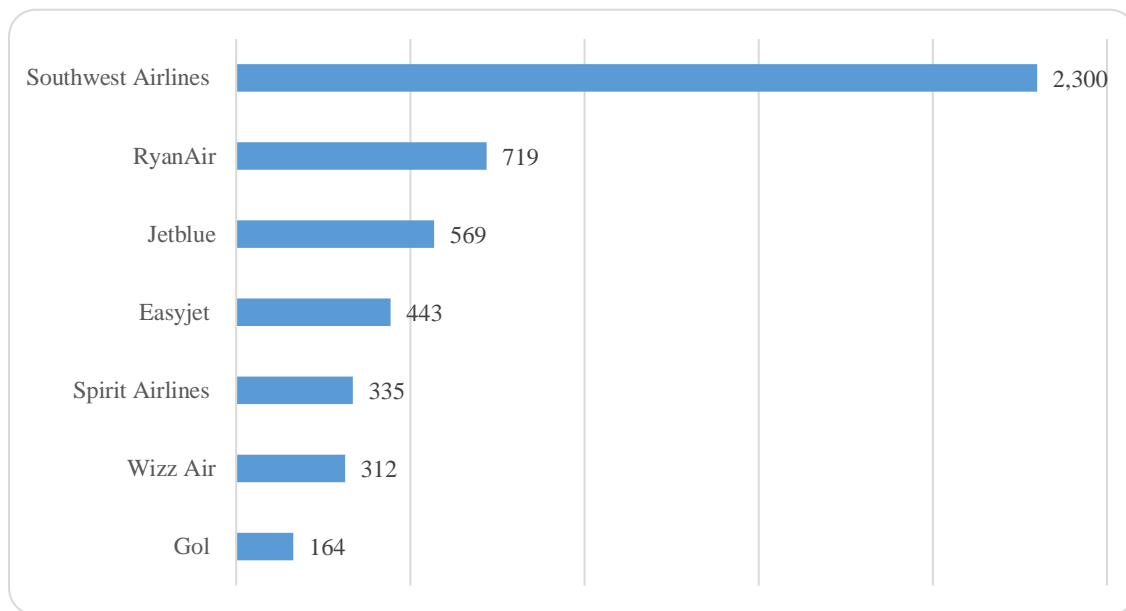
Source: *FlightGlobal (2019)*

To summarise, the tables below show examples and comparisons of FSCs and LCCs, including operational scales and models.

Table 3: Examples of FSCs and LCCs

Full Service Carriers (FSCs)	Low Cost Carriers (LCCs)
• Air China (China)	• Airasia (Malaysia)
• All Nippon Airways (Japan)	• Alaska (United States)
• American Airlines (United States)	• Easyjet (Switzerland)
• British Airways (England)	• Icelandair (Iceland)
• China Eastern Airlines (China)	• Jetblue (United States)
• China Eastern Airlines (China)	• Jetstar (Australia)

• China Southern Airlines (China)	• Norwegian (Norway)
• Delta Airlines (United States)	• Ryanair (Ireland)
• Emirates (United Arab Emirates)	• Southwest Airlines (United States)
• Lufthansa (Germany) Turkish Airlines (Turkey)	• Westjet (Canada)
• United Airlines (United States)	

Table 4: Comparison of FSCs and LCCs

Feature	FSCs	LCCs
Strategy	• Differentiation	• Cost-leadership/ minimisation
Operational scale	• Large in operational scale with several geographically dispersed hubs and feeder routes	• Typically smaller, although a few operators are noticeably large, such as Ryanair and Southwest Airlines
Operational model	• Predominantly medium and long-haul routes, although also services short-haul routes • Moderate utilisation of seat capacity • Slow turnaround • High margins	• Mostly service short-haul routs • Similar aircraft to optimise maintenance • Rapid turn around • Comparatively lower margins

	• Different aircraft models, engines, and capacities	
Market	• Customers seeking differentiated services • Competes with other FSCs • Uses major airports • Control over ground services • Provides several inflight services that are included in the fare	• Price-sensitive passengers • Basic quality of service • Minimal services, that if provided, are charged separately • Outsourced ground operations • Users of secondary airports • Minimal flight flexibility
Management of travel experience	• Use of travel agents • Tickets and seats are pre-arranged • A sophisticated reservation system because of several feeder routes	• Booking is simple, and may be performed directly or using online platforms • No use of travel agents

2.4.3. Chartered Carriers

Chartered services belong to the non-scheduled category of commercial aviation. Traditionally, charter services are represented by air taxis and business aviation operations, specifically through private jets (Whyte and Lohmann, 2020). Nonetheless, chartering involves hiring an aircraft for transportation to locations not covered by the operators' regular schedules.

These can be categorised into four. Private chartering involves hiring an entire plane. Public chartering involves an airline providing services to destinations not usually covered, primarily because of seasonality. Chartered services may also involve the transportation of cargo, especially for clients that have temporary transportation needs or emergencies.

As discussed by Wu and Peng (2014), affinity chartering involves passengers forming a group and hiring a plane, as exemplified in the transportation of performers of music and sports fans. In most scenarios, these firms do not sell tickets to passengers directly, rather, they are compensated by travel agencies, tour operators, organisations and governments with which they have an agreement. In terms of attributes of service, charter carriers fall between FSCs and LCCs, since while they focus on cost reduction, they provide other services that are traditionally included in the ticket price of FSCs.

2.4.4. Cargo Airlines

Figure 5: Worldwide air cargo traffic (2004-2022 in metric tons)
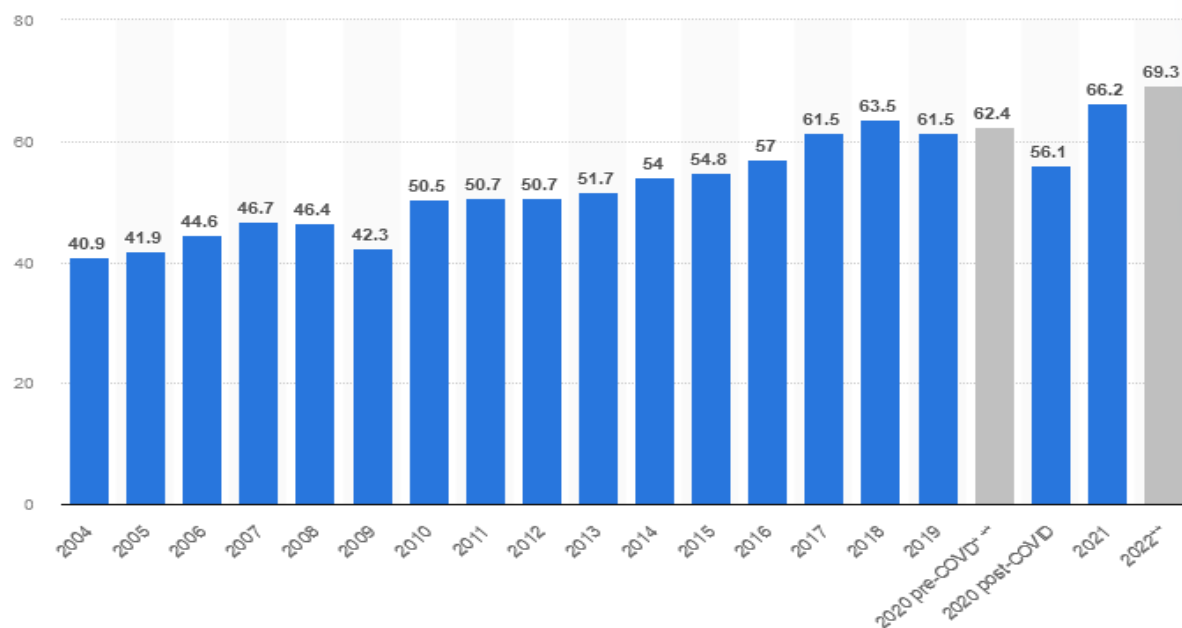
Source: *Statista (2022)*

As illustrated in the figure above, the cargo segment of air transportation has been expanding over the past decades. Cargo airlines are involved with the transportation of goods. They are also referred to as freight carriers. While some freight carriers are owned independently, some are subsidiaries or sub-units of bigger airlines that primarily deal with passenger transportation. As such, they are vertically integrated (Whyte and Lohmann, 2020). Some cargo airlines operate in a traditional model, whereby their services only encompass the transportation of cargo. For others that provide integrated services, ground and non-flight processes are under the management of the carrier, for instance, FedEx and UPS airlines.

2.5.   *Operational Performance*

The commercial airline industry has been expanding, as evidenced by the increasing number of flights and passenger volume depicted in the figures below. Despite the pandemic's impact on the industry, IATA expects overall passenger numbers to reach 4 billion in 2024 (IATA, 2022). According to IATA (2016), the growth is projected to be sustained whereby the number of passengers will total 7.2 billion globally by 2035, with a compound aggregated growth rate of 3.7% annually. Indeed, various factors that have been contributing to the soaring air travel are expected to hasten the expansion further. For instance, rising domestic product (GDP) and the resultant disposable incomes culminate in a higher demand for airline services because of their suitability for business and leisure travel. Growth from emerging economies is expected to induce the most profound impact, as there are opportunities to grow until a change in living standards loses its influence. Furthermore, these markets are far away from reaching maturity.

Figure 6: Number of flights in millions (2004-2021)
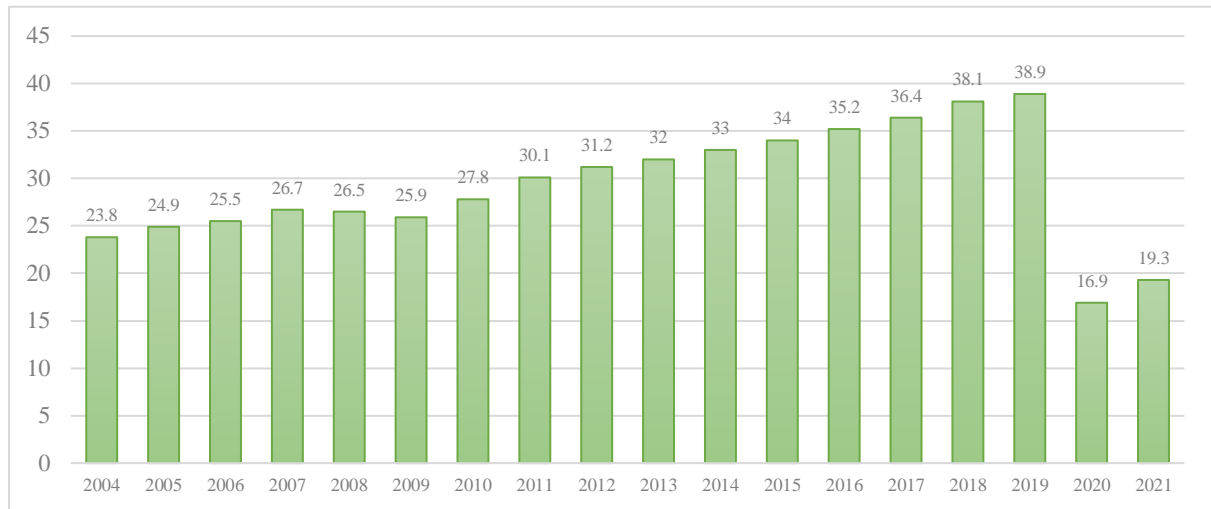
Figure 7: Number of scheduled passengers in billions (2004-2021)
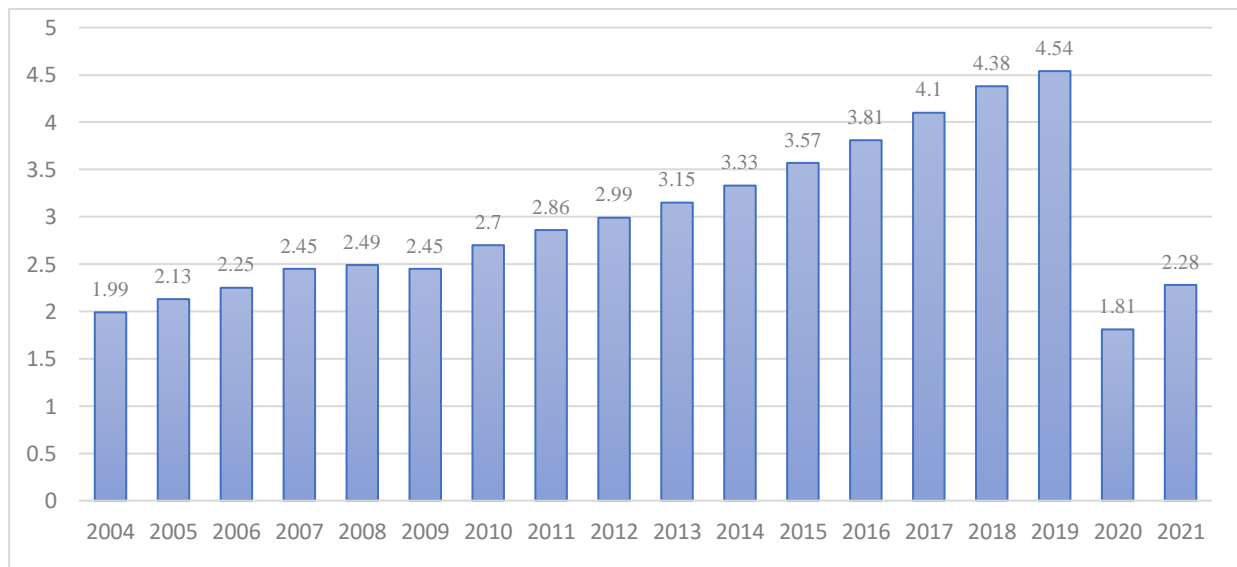
Globalisation has also accounted for increased air travel. As Díez-Pisonero, (2019) postulates, globalisation results in an increase in average travel distance for businesses and tourism. This is specifically if the political and social environments are supportive of the objectives of travelling and the facilitation of the travelling experience. Additionally, an increase in the working-age population correlates with demand for travel, which is not replicated for populations that are predominantly younger or older. Consequently, as Medina-Muñoz, Medina-Muñoz and Suárez-Cabrera (2018) observe, countries witnessing a demographic change where the working-age population grows, are likely to experience a noticeable growth in traffic that is remarkably different from the countries where the industry has matured or old-age dependency ratio is increasing, such as Germany, China and Brazil. As the figure below shows, currently underserved markets are predicted to represent the most significant growth in the commercial airline industry.

According to Thompson (2013), the cost of travel has been on a downward trend specifically because of competition, economies of scale, and the entry of low-cost airlines. As fare becomes cheaper, the proportion of a population that can afford increases, and if they purchase tickets, traffic increases. This partly explains why despite air travel prices falling by more than 50% in some countries, airlines' revenues and profits have been increasing. Furthermore, efficiency-driven programs have helped counteract the implications of the increased cost of fuel and human resources.

Figure 8: Projected % annual growth rate in passenger air traffic by region (2019-2040)
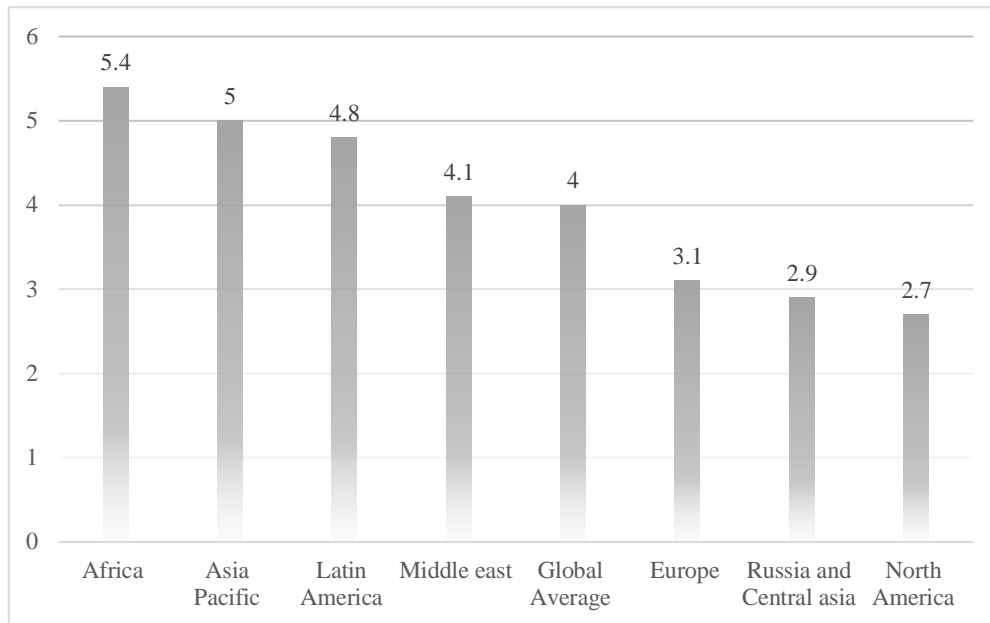
2.6.   *Financial Performance*

A review of the industry's performance, as shown in the figures below, illustrate that it has been steady over the past 20 years, which suggests the likelihood of continued growth into the future. In 2003, airlines generated around US$322 billion, a figure that grew to US$838 billion in 2019 and was projected to reach US$872 billion in 2020. Between 2009 and 2019, revenue grew by an average of 5.3%, a development mainly attributed to the expansion of cargo operations. The 2020 pandemic paralysed the operations of the airlines. As a result, the revenues were inadequate to cover the cost of operations, with the airlines incurring a US$137.7 billion loss in 2020 post-covid. In 2021, losses amounted to US$51.8 billion globally. Losses have been projected to decrease as the signs of recovery have already been evidenced. This is attributed to the apparent relative return to normalcy in business and leisure

activities. Furthermore, governments all over the globe introduced countercyclical fiscal policies to facilitate the steady recovery of the industry.

Figure 9: Worldwide commercial airline revenues (2003-2022) in US$ billions
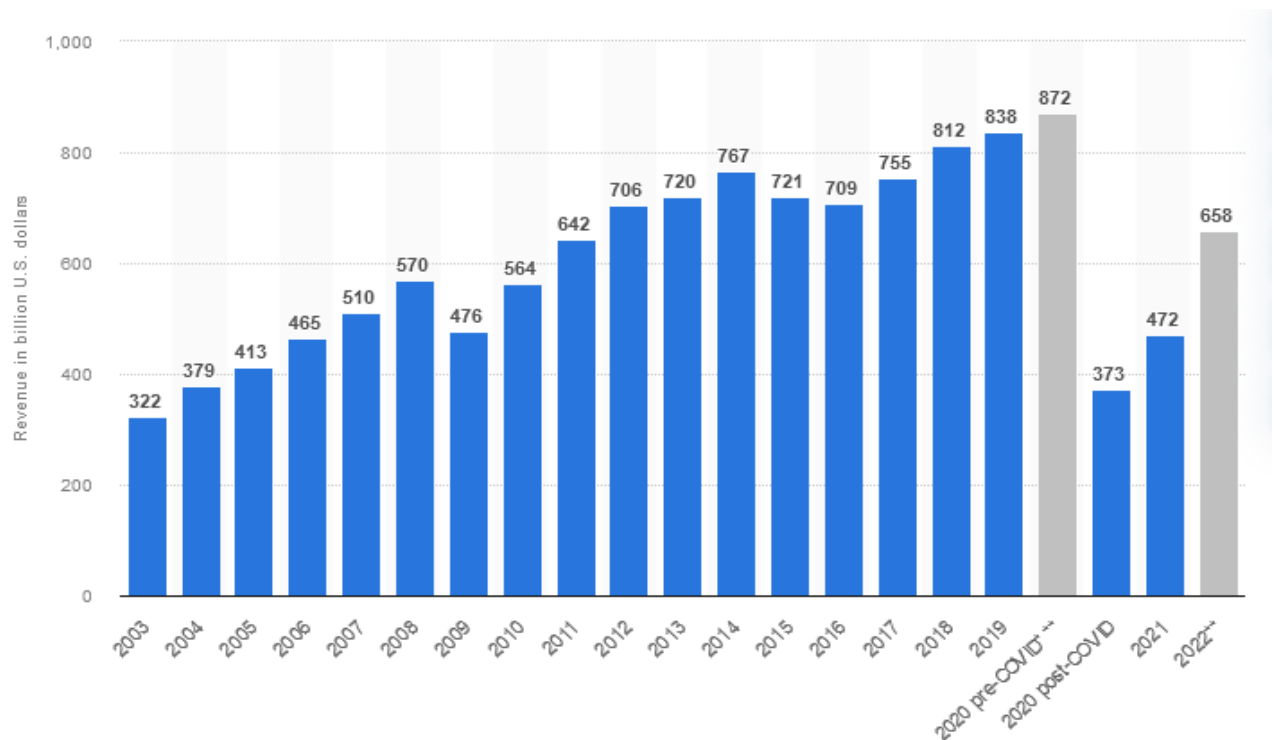
Source: *Statista Research Department (2022a)*

In May of 2022, ICAO's study of air traffic at the global level revealed an ongoing recovery of the sector, a notion that has been attributed to growing confidence in air travel, as well as the adoption of measures to foster regional connectivity and facilitation. For instance, between January and April 2022, the number of passengers and flight departures was 65% and 30% higher compared to the period between January and April 2021. Additionally, within the same period in 2022, seat capacity increased by 32%, with the association predicting a stronger rate of recovery for the rest of 2022 compared to 2021.

Figure 10: Worldwide commercial airlines net profits (2006-2022) in US$ billions

At the regional level, revenue and profit performance have varied, depicted in the figure below. This has stemmed from the differences in how the regions have recovered post-covid, as well as the sale of operations in the countries. For instance, domestic seat capacity in North and South America has already been restored to the levels before the pandemic, a development that has been replicated in Australia, India, and Brazil (ICAO, 2022). Seat capacity in the European area is expected to recover, as the trajectory has been established as positive. The ICAO predicts a probable likelihood of recovery of total airline seat capacities within and between North America, South America, Europe and the Middle East to the pre-pandemic level by the end of 2022. In Africa and Asia Pacific, however, achieving total recovery is expected to be more challenging, with the return to pre-pandemic levels expected in 2023-2024 in Asia pacific and later in Africa. Nonetheless, the indicators of recovery are highly reliable,

especially because of re-opened travelling for business and tourism, as well as the organic growth in connectivity and global seat capacity.

Figure 11: Profit performance of commercial airlines by region (2010-2022)
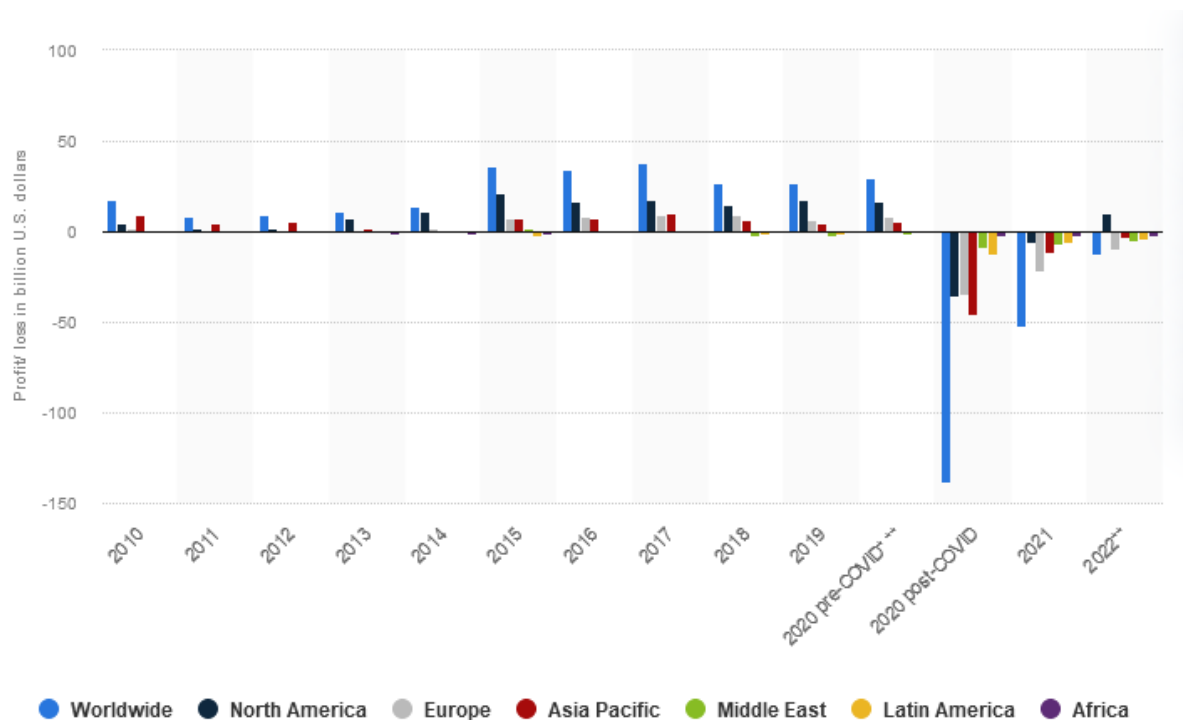
2.7.   *Customer Experience and Service Marketing*

In the commercial airline industry, companies heavily invested in customer relationship management (as demonstrated by their loyalty programs) and were unwilling to invest in customer experience as the concept was considered fairly new and poorly understood (Laming and Mason, 2014). Today, the growing awareness of the significance of customer experience to the industry is exhibited by new organisational structures implemented by some airlines such

as Etihad Airways by introducing a customer experience department (Laming and Mason, 2014). There is a need, however, to strengthen the concept of customer experience and the industry in the literature as more widespread is research that focuses on the quality of service (e.g. Chen and Chang, 2005; Liou *et al.,* 2011; Nadiri *et al.,* 2008; Zins, 2001) (Laming and Mason, 2014). While service quality, particularly applying SERVQUAL, is good for investigating the gap between service delivery and expectation, it is not an effective means of measuring customer experience (Laming and Mason, 2014), which requires the customer's subjective perspective.

Furthermore, airline products consist of tangible and intangible elements. Tangible aspects include; the boarding lounge, aircraft type and cabin layout i.e. seating, lavatories, in-flight meals and entertainment, etc., whereas the airline's frequent flier program is considered an intangible aspect (Camilleri, 2018). It is indeed challenging for airlines to achieve differentiation in the industry with essentially common environments, practically identical aircrafts and similar airports with limited control over critical elements of the customer journey (Driver, 1999; Laming and Mason, 2014). Examples of successfully achieving differentiation in the industry through the components of customer experience are specified in the literature, however, these are only limited to short case studies or certain examples and not around the concept of customer experience (Laming and Mason, 2014).

Services marketing refers to the marketing of intangible products such as experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organisations, information, and ideas (Witell et al., 2016). Witell et al. (2016) further contends that it involves the application of marketing principles to services, rather than physical products, and requires a different approach due to the unique characteristics of services, such as intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability. The marketing of services often involves strategies such as direct marketing, relationship

marketing, and the services marketing mix, which consists of seven elements known as the 7Ps (Anyadighibe et al., 2021). Additionally, service encounter is considered the core of any service marketing issue and significantly affects service quality control, service delivery systems and customer satisfaction (Hsu, 2018).

Moreover, services marketing literature traditionally characterises intangibility as a key distinction between services and goods (Ali and Garg, 2017; Hole, Pawar, and Bhaskar, 2018; Sethi, 2017), but the importance of physical elements of service consumption cannot be understated. In fact, while airlines offer a primarily intangible service (transportation from one location to another), the experience is also heavily influenced by tangible elements such as the aircraft's interior, seating comfort and quality of meals. Airlines need to carefully balance these tangible aspects with the intangible elements such as customer service, safety reputation (Lee et al., 2020) and punctuality (Kucukaltan and Topcu, 2019) to enhance overall customer satisfaction.

Customer experience in the context of services marketing encompasses the customer's subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the firm, including communication, service and consumption encounters (Kim and Choi, 2016). Joshi et al. (2017) defines customer experience as the sum of observations, perceptions, feelings, and thoughts arising from interactions and relationships between users and their service provider. This shift in marketing focuses on the customer's perspective and their overall experience, emphasising the importance of experiential marketing in creating customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pencarelli, 2017). Moreover, experiential marketing, which aims to provide customers with a memorable and emotional experience, plays a crucial role in shaping customer behaviour and satisfaction (Shah et al., 2019). It involves creating value for clients through a holistic approach, allowing for communication and interactivity with customers to enhance their experience (Guzovski et al., 2022).

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In the service industry, such as hospitals, customer relationship management and patient-centered management systems are essential for shaping the customer experience and satisfaction (Wang and Wang, 2016). Additionally, the study of customer service experience among academic personnel revealed significant correlations between perceived market orientation, self-efficacy, and customer service experience, highlighting the importance of organizational capabilities in shaping customer experience (Mamat et al., 2022).

As previously mentioned, while extant research exists on customer experience and the commercial airline industry, a deeper understanding of the concept is required (Laming and Mason, 2014), with authors mainly focusing on airlines in relation to service quality (Herjanto *et al.,* 2021), airports (Halpern and Mwesiumo, 2021), as well as distinct themes such as safety (Kim and Lee, 2022). Customer experience is amongst the dimensions encapsulated under the customer journey paradigm, whereby processes and outcomes of the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages have implications on consequent consumer behaviour (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). This is worth recognising given the probable decision-making process a customer would undergo in the future when a similar need arises. Indeed, in an attempt to enhance the quality of service, authors including Laming and Mason (2014), McKenchnie *et al.* (2011) and Wunderlich and Hogreve (2019) have examined the customer journey by identifying touchpoints and satisfaction. In another realm of research, Verhoef *et al.* (2004) adopt the peak-end theory to evaluate experiences in relation to registering satisfaction with airline services, while Lemon and Verhoef (2016) examine customer experience as a concept as well as 'moments of truth'.

Despite the above progress in examining customer experience, there is a lack of studies that evaluate the touchpoint elements and 'moments of truth' in an airline context, despite the

emphasis on service quality. This is worth considering given the significance attached to the role of experience in determining customers' purchase intent as well as their disposition to participate in behaviours that could either benefit or negatively impact an airline in the future.

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. *Introduction*

This chapter discusses in detail the concept of customer experience (CX), the historical contributions that led to the formation of CX such as; the decision-making process, customer satisfaction and customer engagement, as well as a critique of different perspectives of CX, highlighting the role and benefits of the concept. Moreover, this chapter discusses customer experience management (CEM); conceptualising the concept within CX for context to further justify the research focus on touchpoints within the customer journey and stages. Finally, this chapter discusses the theoretical framework and perspectives; highlighting the Peak-End Theory (PET) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

3.2. *Customer Experience: A Review*

In early literature, Abbott (1955, p. 40) focused on the notion that "what people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences" (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). From a multidimensional perspective, Schmitt (1999) states five types of experiences that include sensory, cognitive, affective, physical and social identity while interacting with a company (Bolton *et al.,* 2014; De Keyser *et al.,* 2015; Lemke *et al.,* 2011). These five types of experiences are defined by Verhoef *et al.* (2009) as the 'holistic CX' as experience is viewed from an overall perspective when it comes to the customer's response to the retailer. This experience is formed not only by the factors which the retailer controls (i.e. service interface, price, retail atmosphere), but also by the factors outside of the retailer's control (i.e. external

influences) (Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016; Verhoef *et al.,* 2009). Moreover, the literature suggests that there are multiple perspectives on CX. Pine and Gilmore (1998) separate the idea of experience from products, indicating that a customer purchases an experience to enjoy memorable events (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Alternatively, Schmitt *et al.* (2015) suggest an integration between all service exchanges and CX. Current business practices have indeed expanded on CX as encompassing every facet of what a company has to offer as well as the customers' responses to any contact with a company, whether direct or indirect (Meyer and Schwager, 2007).

Moreover, given this holistic view, CX consists of personal interactions between the company and customer at specific points during the experience, this is called touchpoints (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). A collection of these touchpoints at different stages of the customer journey builds on the entire experience outcome with marketers aiming to combine touchpoints across online and offline environments (Homburg *et al.,* 2017). Lindberg and Vermeer (2019) define CX as a multidimensional concept that focuses on a customer's emotional, behavioural, cognitive, sensorial and social responses to what a company has to offer during the entire customer journey. This definition is indeed a more specific and inclusive approach to the concept.

3.3.   *Critique of CX Concept/Definitions*

A review of existing CX definitions shows variances that seem to represent different phenomena. Evidently, the current literature does not support a single definition. As such, there is confusion as to whether CX is a response to a firm's offering, a viewpoint that is adopted by Meyer and Schwager (2007), or an evaluation of its quality, which is implied by Kumar *et al.* (2014). This suggests that in some research, there is an overlap between the professed CX

phenomena and other distinct variables that influence satisfaction. Furthermore, other studies such as Pine and Gilmore's (1993) view experience as a product's attribute rather than the customers' evaluation and response to it, which shows a conflict with the popular understanding of experience as a subjective notion.

Table 5: Definitions and Characterisations of CX

Author (s)	Definition/conceptualisation of customer experience	Field/context of research	Purpose of Study
Pine and Gilmore (1998)	An event or episode that is not only engaging, but also memorable.	Experiential marketing	Examining how to create memorable customer experiences
Brakus *et al.* (2009)	Subjective internal responses following a customer's interaction with brand's stimuli element (packaging, brand design)	Branding	How to enhance CX using brand-based stimuli
Rose *et al.* (2012)	Psychological state, subjective response, evaluation, or perception due to interaction between a customer and an online object	Online Marketing	CX improvement through online interaction factors
Teixeira *et al.* (2012)	Customer's subjective internal responses due to their interactions with an organisation along customer journey touchpoints.	Service design	Improving customer experiences through service design

Vargo and Lusch (2008)	Subjective phenomenon that is depicted by responses regarding the overall service process.	Service-dominant logic	To provide a comprehensive and customer-centric perspective on CX and the associated value-in-use
Verhoef *et al.* (2009)	Customers subjective response to both direct and indirect interactions with a specific retailer	Retailing	To enhance CX by optimising retailing elements
Arnould and Price (1993)	Personal subjective experiences that result from a person's interaction with others, objects, or their environment	Consumer Research	To identify the symbolic meaning and experiential elements of experiences during consumption
Grace and O'Cass (2004)	Personal assessment, response or reaction that results from a customer's direct or indirect contact with organisation-related elements.	Service Marketing	To enhance customer experiences by transforming service encounter elements

Another critique of the CX literature relates to the nature of experiences. This is because most literature subscribes to the aspect of an experience being memorable or extraordinary, with authors such as Klaus and Maklan (2011) observing a difference in which studies treat

ordinary experiences in comparison to extraordinary experiences. However, when they look at an offering, the focus is on its ordinary or extraordinary nature, as is the case for experiential events (Schouten *et al.*, 2007), or those that are habitual or mundane (Carú and Cova, 2003), rather than the actual customers' response to these stimuli. Since Brakus *et al.* (2009) observe that the intensity of a customer's response could be anywhere within the weak-strong spectrum, it is this intensity that could be the indicator of whether an experience is ordinary or extraordinary, with the weaker response representing an ordinary response, while the stronger experience represents an extraordinary experience. As such, there is a likelihood of a customer having an extraordinary experience even when the offer given is mundane.

3.4. *The Role and Benefits of CX*

The significance of CX has been examined by numerous authors. For instance, Mascarenhas, Kesavan and Bernacchi, (2006) investigate the role of CX in promoting loyalty, consequently remarking that positive physical, emotional and value chain aspects of customer interactions are likely to enhance customer loyalty. Sheng and Teo (2012) observe that desirable customer experiences, as exemplified through utilitarian and hedonistic aspects of products and services highly contribute towards brand equity. They postulate that it is only through the CX domain that the usefulness, aesthetics and entertainment value of an offering could be made explicit. Yi and Gong (2009) are of the view that through improvements to enhance CX, a company is likely to develop high-quality relationships with customers as the social exchange phenomenon manifests.

According to Yang, Liu and Li (2015), a customer's evaluation of their experiences influences has a profound impact on attitudes towards various dimensions including the brand, the product or service, the staff, as well as self. Acquiring, advancing or transforming an attitude has the propensity of influencing behaviours, and while some may benefit a company,

others could be detrimental. Indeed, Yi and Gong (2009) discuss that the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with regard to a distinct experience in shaping future behaviours such as repurchasing, eventually contributed to improved financial performance.

Moreover, CX is a critical determinant of a company's innovation trajectory. As Yi and Gong (2009) state, employees could be considered partial employees, whereby their feedback and input are assimilated into a company's innovation initiatives. As such, CX, regardless of its valence, introduces knowledge and reliable insights to a company, which could be exploited to inform product, service and process improvements. By soliciting and responding to customers' accounts of their experiences and employing appropriate actions, a company reinforces its relevance in the market. Indeed, Keiningham *et al.* (2020) state that CX priorities could inform business model innovation. Customers' assessment of their experience could be used even at the functional level, as it could provide insightful knowledge that could be adopted in developing customer service capacities (Khan, Garg and Rahman, 2015).

3.5. *Contributions to Customer Experience*

Historically, CX was not treated as a separate concept but, rather, as a component related to satisfaction and service quality (SQ) (Verhoef *et al.,* 2009). Today, the significance of CX as a self-sufficient and cohesive concept is both acknowledged and accepted in the marketing field (Bueno *et al.,* 2019). To further understand the concept, Lemon and Verheof (2016) trace the origins of CX back to the 1960's when the initial theories on consumer behaviour and marketing were established, examples of this would be Kotler (1967) in Lemon and Verhoef (2016).

Figure 12: Contributions to CX

Time Frame	Topic Area	Representative Articles	Contribution to Customer Experience
1960s–1970s	Customer buying behavior: process models	Lavidge and Steiner (1961); Howard and Sheth (1969)	• Encompassed path to purchase • Broad, experiential focus • Conceptual linkage models • Considered customer experience and customer decision making as a process
1970s	Customer satisfaction and loyalty	Oliver (1980); Zeithaml 1988; Bolton and Drew (1991); Gupta and Zeithaml (2006)	• Identified key metrics to begin to assess overall customer experience • Empirical linkage models to identify key drivers • Assessed and evaluated customer perceptions and attitudes about an experience
1980s	Service quality	Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988); Bitner (1990, 1992); Rust and Chung (2006); Bitner, Ostrom, and Morgan (2008)	• Incorporated atmospherics and environment • Early journey mapping through blueprinting • Linked marketing and operations—focus on quality • Identified the specific context and elements of the customer experience
1990s	Relationship marketing	Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987); Morgan and Hunt (1994); Berry (1995)	• Expanded to B2B contexts • Identified key attitudinal drivers • Broadened the scope of customer responses considered in the customer experience
2000s	Customer relationship management	Reinartz and Kumar (2000); Verhoef (2003); Bolton, Lemon, and Verhoef (2004); Reinartz, Krafft, and Hoyer (2004); Rust, Lemon, and Zeithaml (2004); Payne and Frow (2005); Kumar and Reinartz (2006); Neslin et al. (2006); Kumar and Shah (2009)	• Enabled return-on-investment assessment • Identification of key touch points and drivers • Data driven • Incorporated multichannel aspects • Identified how specific elements of the customer experience influence each other and business outcomes
2000s–2010s	Customer centricity and customer focus	Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma (2000); Gulati and Oldroyd (2005); Shah et al. (2006)	• Customer perspective throughout organization • Embedded the customer and customer data deeper into the organization • Focused on redesigning customer experience from customer perspective
2010s	Customer engagement	Libai et al. (2010); Van Doorn et al. (2010); Brodie et al. (2011); Kumar, Peterson, and Leone (2010); Kumar et al. (2013); Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014)	• Recognized value of nonpurchase interactions • Incorporated positive and negative attitudes, emotions, and behaviors • Conceptual platform to incorporate social media • More clearly recognized the customer's role in the experience

Source: Lemon and Verhoef, (2016, p.75)

The figure above indicates that the earliest studies (1960s to 1970s) offer a foundation for CX that is created through the customer's buying behaviour. It is acknowledged in both the academic CX literature as well as the managerial-oriented CX literature (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Indeed, early models such as Howard-Sheth (1969) heavily influenced current research on CX. The concept is an evolved understanding of the traditional model of the 'purchase process' introduced by Patterson in 1965, which discussed the stages between the individual and company before purchase (Laming and Mason, 2014). The purchase and post-purchase stages were further developed in the literature to make up the entire customer journey. The stages then develop into interactions that provide reactions which further convey experiences (Ryder, 2007). To further understand CX, the customer decision-making process must be discussed.

3.5.1. *Customer Decision-Making Process*

Figure 13: The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell complete model of customer decision-making
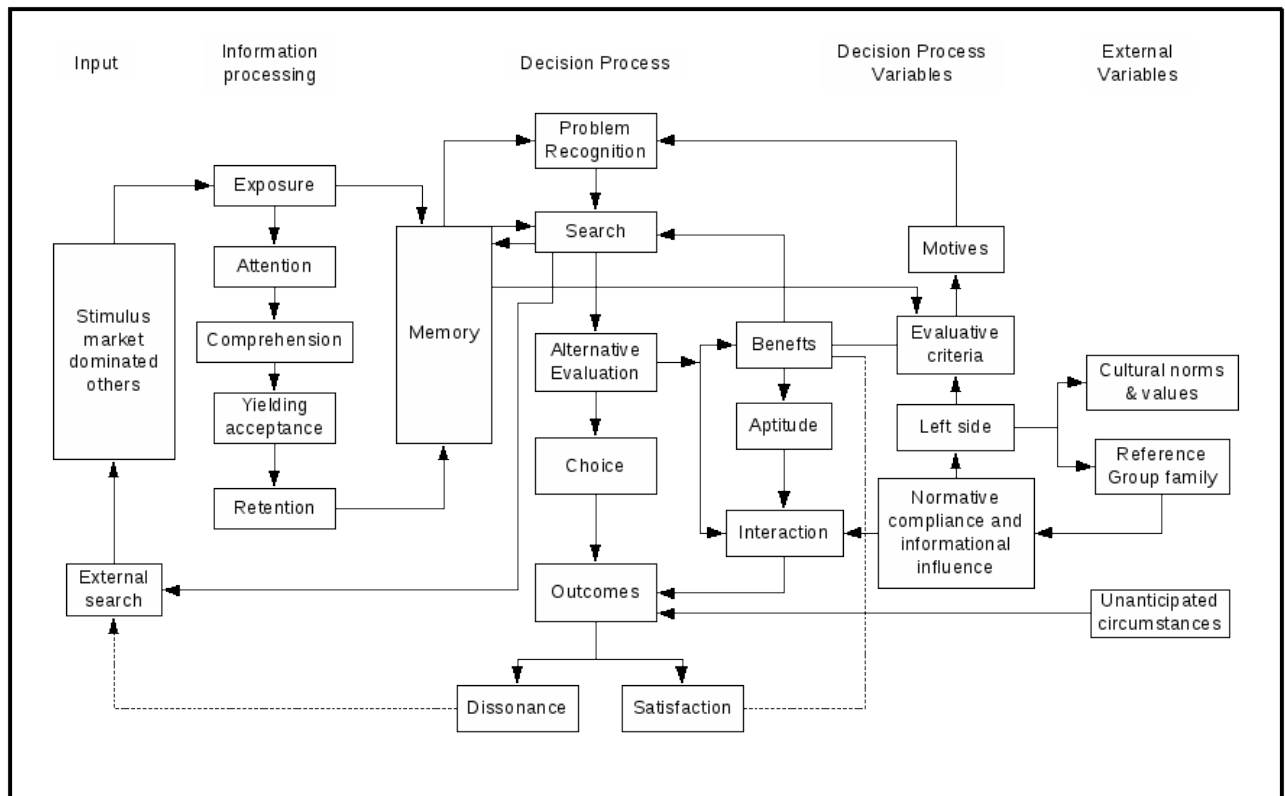
The figure above is the complete, revised version of the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (EKB) model of customer decision-making or purchase process. The revised version as compared to the earlier model, is much similar to the Howard-Sheth model of consumer behaviour. Indeed, the introduction of the new variables and their correlation with the decision process presents a more realistic model. It is also important to acknowledge that these steps imply a rational approach whereas customers are not always rational.

Moreover, the EKB Model is often referred to as the traditional model, which has faced various critiques and revisions (Ashman and Solomon, 2015). For example, Olshavsky and Granbois (1979) investigated the idea that an extensive amount of our purchases does not

actually involve making any decisions. Authors such as Jacoby (2002) argued that the model is too marketer dominated and that it lacked a broader perception of sociocultural aspects. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the model's significance as the EKB model still provides valuable insights into customer decision-making however, with aspects that need investigating (Ashman and Solomon, 2015).

The model consists of five consecutive steps where information is processed before purchase decisions are made. When put in an airline context, the first stage begins with the need or problem recognition, e.g. the need for travel and considering what airline to travel with. This is followed by a search for solutions which involves obtaining information from numerous sources; both the external environment, e.g. peer recommendations, as well as internal self, e.g. memory and past experiences (Osei and Abenyin, 2016). The third stage involves the evaluation of alternatives that is subjected to the customer's individual criterion in assuming the preference, e.g. comparing airlines based on flight schedule versus ticket price. Once the decision is complete, the customer moves onto the fourth stage where the purchasing of the chosen alternative takes place, e.g. purchase of an airline ticket. The final step involves the outcomes of the choice made which may result in the discord or satisfaction of the customer; unexpected circumstances may also influence this stage, e.g. flight getting cancelled due to weather conditions.

3.5.1.1. *Need Recognition*

Jisana (2014) demonstrates that this is the most critical step, and also the first step of customer decision-making towards a product. Further demonstration by Stankevich (2017) illustrates that this step involves identification of a problem or the need for a given service or product. The need recognition step allows the customers to evaluate what they miss in the present moment which creates the gap compared to what they desire (Tidwell, 2015). The gap has to be fulfilled often and the customers will indulge in seeking information of various

products and services to determine which product they desire most. In this particular stage, marketing is very important in stimulating the gap of the customers.

In the commercial airline industry, most of the passengers move from one place to another, where they are motivated by both push and pull factors (Engel *et al.,* 1968). The push factors may be referred to as the motivational factors or the desires that an individual develops. Similarly, the pull factors play a crucial role in the choice of the passenger to a certain destination. For example, when a customer is feeling the need to travel (current situation), would choose the airline (the need recognised) to satisfy the travel need (the desired state). Similarly, Engel *et al.* (1968), identify two main factors that play a crucial role to customers in activating their actions, where the need must be sufficiently of great significance to them and also, the solution must be what the customers can afford. Therefore, after the identification of the need by the customer, they move to the process of deciding to seek further information regarding which product or service will satisfy their desires the most. This process is known as the information search stage (Tidwell, 2015).

3.5.1.2. *Information Search*

According to Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015), just after identifying the need or the problem by a customer, they move to the phase of seeking further information of the range of the products or services that will satisfy their demands. O'Brien (2015) indicates that this stage is critical as customers will only retrieve information that is reliable and those that can satisfy the needs of the customers. The information search stage also enhances the knowledge on the differences in quality and quantities offered by various companies. When searching for information about a particular product, customers can take two different forms, which consists of both external and internal information (Engel *et al.,* 1968). Internal information refers to a context that a customer will get from his/her own knowledge. External information can be obtained from other customers and even communication from the markets. The level of

involvement that a customer has will highly impact the way they will have to look for information relating to a certain product. Airline services are classified in a group of making a greater purchase, which means that the level of information search for service providers is high in this category. There are different sources which customers can use when obtaining information such as from peers, among others (Hussain, 2017). Many airline companies invest in technology; advertising on every media and social media outlet, where customers may easily access such information. Moreover, there are various contexts under information search, some which include relying on memory to retrieve information.

Recall is a form of internal information search where individuals depend on their memory to retrieve information. For instance, when a customer's perceived past experience of a certain product or service is positive, they may rely on their memory for making a similar acquisition decision as memory triggers might include satisfaction or dissatisfaction of various products (Azevedo, 2012). Past experience shapes in developing an inclination or a habit of replicating selections that were rewarded and evading selections that were not. Indeed, repeated experience with selections and their outcomes allows past learning to guide future expectations (Biderman *et al.,* 2020). It stands to reason that given a similar circumstance; customers are more likely to select in a similar way when their decision has a positive outcome. On the contrary, customers tend to avoid repeating previous mistakes (Dietrich, 2010). Therefore, the memory of a customer will dictate whether the searched information through past experiences will satisfy their needs; whether they are willing to use similar services for a specific company, or if they will change to prevent their past experiences (Azevedo, 2012).

Airlines offer a variety of services to their customers, where services compete in the luxury, cargo and passenger domains. These varieties will influence the customer to determine whether they will choose to use the company's services or avoid them (Janssen and Shelegia, 2015). Indeed, the customer's satisfaction will measure up to their future abilities to use the

company's service if the need arises. However, when a customer is not happy with the services, they may have to seek further information, i.e. searching for reviews and competitors. A negative experience may result in a negative memory trigger every time the customer comes across the company when searching for information (Azevedo, 2012). Therefore, it would be imperative for airlines to establish productive marketing strategies that are motivated in forming positive customer experiences throughout the passenger journey.

Furthermore, the type of information search that customers look for in a product or service will mutually depend on their belief about it. From an international marketing standpoint, national culture may be a crucial factor that influences customers' choice behaviour. It indicates what communication methods are appropriate as well as the degree and nature of search behaviour, a way of directing customers' thinking (Chen and Gursoy, 2000) and SQ evaluations.

3.5.1.3. Evaluating Alternatives

This is the third stage that a customer will get involved in after searching for enough information regarding the product or service. Karimi *et al.,* (2015) illustrate that despite the choice of a company leading in both services and products, there are alternatives that have to be evaluated. Customers always want to make the best decisions regarding their choice of consumption and often seek to satisfy their needs despite the amount of information they have regarding a company (Goswami, 2020). Alternatives may be compared based on previous levels of satisfaction by customers to determine whether the competitors will surpass the services and products offered by the company of their choice (Goswami, 2020). Moreover, it is clear that customers will always have to opt for the best alternative that is available for them as there are different airlines that are involved in the delivery of the same services. When one has searched for enough information, they should consider the alternatives available and be in a position to choose the best alternative that will suit their needs.

Therefore, an evaluation criterion is important for the customer to decide on an airline carrier. This is a method that a customer may use in finding out the best airline service provider to use. There are many considerations that will be put in the evaluation criteria that include factors such as the affordability and flexibility of the service provider. They are also associated with ranking the alternatives according to their significance or performance (Laming and Mason, 2014). Indeed, the benefits that a certain alternative offers to its customers will play a role in making the final purchase decision. Therefore, the evaluation of alternative airlines consists of analysing; their services, previous experiences with the airline, as well as the obtained information from other sources and external influences (Filieri *at al.,* 2015).

3.5.1.4.   *Purchase Decision*

After evaluating the available alternatives, the customer will have to make a final decision to purchase. In this category, there are three major steps when trying to make the final purchase. The first one will be identifying the choice to purchase. The next one will be the intent of making the purchase, which is an integral part of the purchase decision, and lastly, implementing the purchase (Hussain, 2017). The three steps; particularly the role of purchase intent, are vital in completing the purchase whether online or by visiting the actual store or office.

As competition has been growing and customers' desires and preferences change dynamically, the notion of purchase intent has become widespread in both business and scholarly spheres. According to Singhal, Jena and Tripathy (2019), marketing strategies highly revolve around enhancing the customers' purchase intent. Purchase intent is a culmination of a company's prior and current marketing actions and activities and is exemplified by customers' inclination to engage in an exchange transaction with a brand. Furthermore, Arora *et al.* (2021) present it as a predetermined intention for the definitive purchase of an offering. As Hofmann (2021) adds, purchase intent may help identify or influence actual

consumer behaviours in the future, purchasing included. Nonetheless, there is no assurance that purchase intent would culminate in actual purchase since some factors that include a change in perceptions, motivations and circumstances may arouse reconsideration. Furthermore, a change in customers' needs, customers being provided with new information, the creation and discovery of new alternatives and unavailability of the desired offerings may alter a customer's decision.

Nonetheless, purchase intent remains an important aspect as it is a direct antecedent of customer purchase and, is determined by factors unique to customers and the environmental context. Amongst these environmental factors include insufficient time to dedicate to purchase and financial limitations, which inhibit the translation of the intention to an actual purchase. In short, purchase intent represents a customer's disposition to obtain a given product or service and the probability of this being achieved. Peña-García *et al.* (2020) presents purchase intent as the likelihood of a customer purchasing an offering after evaluation.

Airlines often market their products and improve their service delivery with a motive to enhance the purchasing decision of customers. The companies must improve their marketing strategies to entice their customers as products or services offered should be both a variety and highly competitive to pass the alternative evaluation stage of the purchase process (Filieri *et al.,* 2015). Moreover, when individuals tend to make a purchase decision, they will choose a particular type of airline service because of the expectations that they have set forth for that service provider. This is basing on the differences alongside other service providers in the industry. The ability to make a purchase will also rely on various factors, one of them being the customer's preference itself. Indeed, the preference of a customer will play a crucial role in choosing the type of airline service (Ban and Kim, 2019). For instance, airlines such as

Singapore and Air New Zealand are considered two of the most preferred airlines by passengers because of the exemplary services they provide (The Independent, 2019).

3.5.1.5. *Post-Purchase Evaluation*

As Liu *et al.,* (2019) observe, amongst the sources of the purchase decision is the outcome of the post-purchase evaluation. As discussed by Balakrishnan, Foroudi and Dwivedi (2020), even before customers use an item, there is a risk of them experiencing cognitive post-purchase dissonance, whereby they may become anxious regarding the perceived risks of the purchased offering, the level of involvement as well as the rigorousness of the purchasing exercise. As such, dissonance implies that customers may start questioning a purchase before they even use it, which may have further implications on their level of expectation and consumption activities.

Moreover, after making the actual purchase, the level of satisfaction that a customer has obtained will play a crucial role. When a customer is satisfied, they will be in a position to come back again to receive services from the same company, which may further result in their loyalty. This stage also sets the base for customers to recollect the memory of their experience to identify potential future interactions with the company that offered the products or services (Stankevich, 2017). Therefore, airlines may consider being wary of this stage to determine whether their passengers were satisfied or not, and the factors that led to dissatisfaction.

3.5.2. *Customer Satisfaction*

Furthermore; after discussing the customer's buying behaviour based on the decision-making process model, figure 12 indicates studies (1970s to 2000s) heavily focused on process outcomes such as customer loyalty and satisfaction, while also linking them to the customer's assessment of an experience (e.g. Bolton *et al.,* 2004; Verhoef, 2003). In general, research and practices heavily focused on concepts such as customer satisfaction while lacking a holistic

view of the entire CX. Moreover, while research is scarce on how CX relates to other customer-focused concepts (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), Al-Dmour *et al.* (2019) highlight the direct positive influence of CX on satisfaction (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). Researchers in the service literature began investigating service encounters (which are distinct from touchpoints) and relating it to customer satisfaction. Authors such as Bitner (1990) recognised the importance of managing each individual service encounter to enhance overall satisfaction. Therefore, it is important to discuss customer satisfaction as the regular concept companies use to evaluate their success and gain competitive advantage.

Customer satisfaction has remained a key focus area in many social and behavioural research studies (Chen *et al.,* 2012). The concept has been widely researched and is amongst the most popular terms in marketing. Indeed, satisfying customers is critical because it affects their future buying behaviour. Park *et al.* (2018) argue the extent to which customers are satisfied is a critical determinant of the perception of the company and any consequent behaviours towards that company. Moreover, customer needs are diverse and elastic, making the concept of customer satisfaction a highly subjective concept, one that requires cumulative service evaluation by constantly measuring and monitoring satisfaction levels.

According to Yi (1990), customer satisfaction is multidimensional and develops over time. Numerous studies have stated that satisfied customers improve the profitability of companies as a result of gaining new customers as well as having repeat purchases from existing customers (Izogo and Ogba, 2015; Prayag, 2007; Radovic-Markovic *et al.,* 2017). According to Kotler (2003, p. 36), "satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations". This statement is also supported and defined as the customers' favourable or unfavourable feeling resulting from their assessment of the

correspondence between their expectations and the overall performance of the product or service (Al-Msallam, 2015; Hapsari *et al.,* 2017).

Figure 14: Expectancy Confirmation Model

Source Oliver (1997, p. 110)

The figure above shows the Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT) and is arguably the most significant theory applied to customer satisfaction as it has received the widest acceptance in literature (Ekinci *et al.,* 2008). Structured by Richard Oliver, the theory was fully developed in 1980 and assesses the creation of expectations and the disconfirmation of those expectations through performance comparison. For example, if an airline passenger perceives the quality of service purchased to surpass their needs, wants and expectancies, the level of satisfaction towards the airline will be high (positive disconfirmation). Otherwise, if the passenger perceives the quality of service purchased to not meet their needs, wants and expectancies, the level of satisfaction towards the airline will be low (negative disconfirmation) (Suhartanto and Noor, 2012). It is important to acknowledge that the theory implies a rational approach whereas customers are not always rational. What may be perceived as excellent SQ can sometimes end up in negative disconfirmation and a dissatisfied passenger, and vice versa.

Moreover, it is far more difficult to achieve customer satisfaction in the service sector (Li *et al.,* 2017) as multiple factors and layers are involved such as SQ (Farooq *et al.,* 2018).

Perceived SQ as explained by Oriade and Schofield (2019), encompasses a person's assessment of the general performance of a particular service. The perception is dependent on the variance/congruence between the individual's expectations and their assessment of the actual performance. SQ improvement has been assimilated into many company functions, thereby becoming an integral constituent of the total quality management domain. Indeed, the primary notion of total quality management is mainly inclined toward the development and implementation of measures to enhance customer satisfaction in products, processes and services. Accordingly, many companies have developed quality programs that solicit and measure customers' evaluation of quality being provided in relation to specific attributes, given the role of quality in retaining and attracting customers, as well as building competitive leverage. At the beginning of the 21st century, it was observed that many companies competed on the bases of SQ of given offerings, an observation that suffices regardless of the type of industry. Therefore, delivery of quality services and performing necessary improvements have become the default way to encourage customer satisfaction, with Rita, Oliveira and Farisa (2019) identifying that it influences customer retention as well as word of mouth.

Furthermore, achieving satisfaction in the airline sector may be regarded as a strategic issue because the provision of excellent SQ is vital for continued growth in the sector (Atilgan *et al.,* 2008). Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways and Singapore Airlines rank among the top-rated in the world, primarily due to enhanced customer satisfaction (Millington, 2018). As Agrawal and Gowda (2022) observed, failure of an airline to provide services that passengers perceive as high quality, especially amongst high-income and educated passengers, highly affects the passengers' assessment of the airline and induces negative behavioural intentions. In fact, even older studies including An and Noh (2009) and Subha and Archana (2012) empirically identify that the airline's quality of service is admitted as a primary factor of satisfaction and even loyalty. Studies such as Ringle, Sarstedt and Zimmerman (2014), identify passengers'

perceived safety as the primary determinant of their satisfaction with an airline's service amongst leisure passengers; an observation that was rejected by Maxwell and Bright (2016). Recent research by Law, Zhang and Gow (2022) confirms that SQ, which was constituted by brand credibility, loyalty programs and the uniqueness of service, positively influenced customers' satisfaction. Thapa, Devkota and Paudel (2020) found that departure and arrival reliability is the main factor of SQ and thus, significantly accounted for customers' satisfaction.

Indeed, there is extensive debate regarding the linkage between SQ dimensions and customer satisfaction. However, the overarching perspective is that quality is an important antecedent, with airline studies revolving around establishing a linear relationship between the characteristics of the services provided by airlines and the general SQ and/or customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The assumption is that if the service attributes perform well, then there is an increase in the customer's perception of service and a higher likelihood of the customer registering satisfaction, as characterised by the ECT. However, the services provided by airlines are unique, in that they embody a delicate aspect of intangibility, whereby there are numerous interactions between passengers and the service providers in a sequential manner. This is characterised by services, such as ground, boarding and in-flight services. Thus, the characteristics of airline services which are exemplified by separate functions and features, may not inherently culminate in satisfied passengers constantly as there may exist other factors that filter the perception to what is considered excellent SQ. This shows that while the concept of customer satisfaction remains a crucial measure of SQ in the commercial airline industry, the entire process of achieving it remains elusive. Therefore, airlines must focus on the concept of CX instead and aim to satisfy their passengers at every touchpoint (Laming and Mason, 2014).

3.5.3. *Customer Engagement*

Finally, studies (2000s to present) in figure 12 indicate a more customer-centric approach to CX. Concepts such as customer engagement emerged and have been linked to CX through different interactional touchpoints, whether it is between service employees or customers (Lemon and Verheof, 2016). Customer engagement may be defined as the attitudinal or behavioural extent to which a customer interacts with the company. This concept is important to consider given that several channels and touchpoints are highly interactive, thus, making customer engagement an important aspect of the overall CX despite having studies neglecting this connection (Malthouse and Calder, 2011).

Moreover, one of the factors that drive customer engagement is consistent service. During flights, it is important to maintain high levels of customer engagement as it has a significant influence on the customer's experience (Korhonen, 2019). Social media outlets are also becoming more relevant to engage with the customer. Airlines should be quick to respond on social media as customers' constantly demand instant feedback (Camilleri, 2018). Similarly, customers may also be co-creators of their own CX, as this is also related to customer engagement. An example of this would be airlines using social media influencers to showcase their flight experience and share it with their followers. Therefore, it is important for companies to manage customer expectations with other stakeholders, both internally and externally (Lemon and Verheof, 2016).

Furthermore, while there is no consensus on a clear definition of CX, the researcher concludes that CX encompasses the customer's emotional, cognitive, sensorial, behavioural and social responses to what a company has to offer (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), with much of the literature highlighting the concept's subjective and emotional nature (Bosio *et al.,* 2017; Johnston and Kong, 2011). Indeed, while the concepts mentioned above have all contributed to CX in the literature, recent studies are now underlying the importance of touchpoints and

how complex it is to manage these touchpoints during the entire customer journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

3.6. *Customer Experience Management (CEM)*

Schmitt (2003) defines Customer Experience Management (CEM) as the process of strategically managing a customer's entire experience with a company or product; with authors describing it as an evolved concept of relationship marketing (Schmitt, 2003). Indeed, several practice-oriented authors have indicated the importance of managing these experiences through different touchpoints (Edelman and Singer, 2015; Rawson *et al.,* 2013) whether through online or offline channels (Bosio *et al.,* 2017). Moreover, managing CX remains a challenge for airlines as some factors may be out of the airline's control, such as airport customs (Laming and Mason, 2014). While research lacks in properly understanding CEM, practitioners appraise the concept as one of the most promising marketing advances in consumer industries (Homburg *et al.,* 2017); with airlines recently joining the trend of employing CX managers (Palmer and Bejou, 2016). Lemon and Verheof (2016) identify three aspects of CEM: (1) customer journey and touchpoint design, (2) the role of alliances and network partners and (3) the internal organisation.

3.6.1. *Customer Journey and Touchpoint Design*

An important component of the customer's journey is the touchpoint. Lindberg and Vermeer (2019) define touchpoints as points of contact between the customer and company that both individually and collectively impact the customer's experience. Several touchpoints appear during the customer journey that is within the stages of pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019; Rudkowski *et al.,* 2018). Lemon and Verheof (2016), state that when moving through the journey, the customer is exposed to multiple touchpoints

that each have effects on purchase and other customer behaviours. Customers, therefore, evaluate and interpret these touchpoints either individually or collectively and may even allow social interactions to influence in shaping their experience (Ponsignon *et al.,* 2017).

In the case of airlines, Thompson (2006) states that commercial airlines are not achieving excellent CX at each touchpoint. In a cross-industry study, the results state that only 18% of passengers assumed that airlines delivered an outstanding CX (Laming and Mason, 2014). This suggests that airlines face challenges in taking control of each touchpoint during the passenger journey hence, the need for more research to be conducted on CX and understanding it from the passenger's perspective. In the service literature, Berry *et al.* (2002) recognised that service maps or blueprints are important to define the steps of service encounters. Companies, therefore, will have a better understanding of the journey once they design and blueprint the potential touchpoints. Airlines such as Qatar Airways follow this customer-centric approach and aim to satisfy their passengers through every touchpoint (Qatar Airways, 2015).

Moreover, it is important to realise that the customer journey does not end after a cycle is complete but rather, enters a new cycle that is altered by past experiences and future expectations (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). This, therefore, leads to a more complex outlook in which experiences lead to storage of memories which in themselves, may be considered touchpoints as well (Arnould and Price, 1993; Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). This impact on memory indicates that prior experiences influence repeat purchases, therefore, making customer decisions more routinised (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). Furthermore, the effects of past experience on customer expectations and satisfaction have been researched and discussed (Bolton and Lemon, 1999; Lervik-Olsen *et al.,* 2015; Rego *et al.,* 2013; Van Doorn and Verhoef, 2008). Arnould and Price (1993) state that extraordinary experiences have ongoing effects. In 2010, KLM introduced an innovative way to connect with the customer. The airline

would check their passengers' social media posts to identify their purpose for travel and then surprise their passengers with personal gifts while they wait for their flight (Airline Trends, 2010). The effect of this experience alone generated an additional 17,528 followers on Foursquare, over 250,000 views on YouTube and a Twitter reach of 2.6 million for the airline (Marketing Mag, 2012).

3.6.1.1. Touchpoint Elements

Researchers in the marketing literature usually consider the qualities of touchpoints and how they affect certain evaluations (Bart *et al.,* 2014; Gomez *et al.,* 2004). Stein and Ramaseshan, (2016) identify seven distinct touchpoint elements which include- "atmospheric, technological, communicative, process, employee-customer interaction, customer-customer interaction and product interaction" (p. 33). The authors indicate that touchpoints consist of varying combinations of the elements stated which may differ based on the retail channel and stage in the customer journey. The definition of the elements (Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016) are shown below.

Figure 15: Definitions of Touchpoint Elements

Touch point elements	Definition
Atmospheric	The physical characteristics and surrounding customers observe when interacting with any part of the retailer.
Technological	A customer's direct interaction with any form of technology during an encounter with a retailer.
Communicative	One-way communication from the retailer to the customer, including both promotional and informative messages.
Process	The actions or steps customers need to take in order to achieve a particular outcome with a retailer.
Employee-customer interaction	The direct and indirect interactions customers have with employees when interacting with any part of the retailer.
Customer-customer interaction	The direct and indirect interactions customers have with other customers when interacting with any part of the retailer.
Product interaction	The direct or indirect interactions customers have with the core tangible or intangible product offered by the retailer.

Source: *Stein and Ramaseshan* (2016, p.12)

3.6.1.1.1. Atmospherics

According to Stein and Ramaseshan (2016), atmospheric elements refer to the physical features and surroundings that customers observe when interacting with the retailer. Airlines' in-store and plane layouts, colours and scents may provide visual and sensory stimuli to the customer. Cabin conditions, as exemplified by the quality of decorations, seat layout and cleanliness, are identified by Rungsrisawat, Namdej and Jermsittiparsert (2019) as having profound impacts on brand image as well as customer loyalty. This is also observed by Han (2013), who discuss that space/function in aircraft, specifically with regards to the seat layout, leeway for adjustments and electrical devices such as reading lights and air-conditioning nozzle, influence the assessment of the in-flight experience (Loureiro, 2017). In digital settings, features such as the website design and graphics may also play a significant role in the customer's shopping experience. Therefore, atmospheric elements lead to positive customer responses and higher engagement levels (Foster and McLelland, 2015) which may further contribute to the overall evaluation of the passenger journey.

3.6.1.1.2. Technological

According to Stein and Ramaseshan (2016), the technological element refers to a customer's direct contact with any form of technology while interacting with a retailer thus, having an impact on CX. Such elements may be present at several touchpoints during the passenger journey and include technologies such as the airline's website and social media, check-in kiosk, point-of-sale technology, etc. Burke (2002) states that new technological innovations may enhance CX. Therefore, airlines should always seek to invest in technological advancements to be differentiated in the industry.

3.6.1.1.3. Communicative

According to Stein and Ramaseshan (2016), communicative elements refer to the one-way communication from retailer to customer. These promotional or informative messages may be sent to customers throughout the customer journey using numerous retail channels (i.e. TV / social media advertisements, billboards, SMS, email, etc.). Airline advertisements tend to reflect on the natural development in social norms, values, tradition and culture. During the 1920s, the aim of airline advertisements was to educate the public and make them aware of air travel. Nowadays, the majority of airline advertisements emphasise the comfort and safety of air travel, focusing on luxury and innovation aspects (Curtis *et al.,* 2017). Therefore, marketers should be wary of how the advertisement's content affect individual perceptions of the airline.

3.6.1.1.4. Process

According to Stein and Ramaseshan (2016), process elements refer to the various (physical and/or digital) actions or steps a customer takes to reach a particular outcome with the retailer. The authors further clarify that the procedure that customers take to reach a certain outcome, plays a significant role in forming their perceptions and evaluations of retail experiences. For instance, Zaki Ahmed and Rodríguez-Díaz's (2020) study identifies that the check-in process is a critical 'procedural' touchpoint. Other process-related instances include baggage handling, and as Koenig, Found and Kumar (2019) contend, a failure that culminates in lengthy waiting times, discharge of baggage to another outlet, or loss of baggage results in customer dissatisfaction. Another example of the process element in the passenger's journey would be the procedure of booking an airline ticket. Indeed, the customer may face difficulties in the purchase process as factors such as the website's ease of use or in-store waiting time may contribute to their overall evaluation of the journey.

3.6.1.1.5. Employee-Customer Interaction

Based on Stein and Ramaseshan's (2016) findings, the direct interaction between the employee and customer is a crucial aspect when tackling different touchpoints, particularly during in-store purchases. However, as easily as employees can aid in forming a pleasant experience, uncooperative or highly assertive employees might be seen as offensive which may then lead to a negatively perceived CX (Jones, 1999). Hansemark and Albinsson (2004) agree that employee-customer interactions may either improve customer satisfaction or diminish it. Therefore, employees at such positions should be trained to appropriately cater to customer needs.

Furthermore, it is most likely that the customer's experience with the employee helps decide whether the customer returns to the brand. The employees can be helpful by offering the customer valuable insights and assisting them throughout their journey. Indeed, by receiving personal guidance from well-trained, experienced employees, a positive and memorable CX may be formed (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016). According to Gountas *et al.,* (2007) positive perceptions of the employee's service conduct may result in overall customer satisfaction and loyalty. The impact of employee interactions on customer satisfaction is acknowledged by researchers such as Ahmad, Wasay and Ullah (2012) who found that employee motivation that is expressed in customer interactions positively impacted satisfaction. Sung and Park (2021) also discovered that both positive verbal and non-verbal aspects of communications with customers positively impacted customer satisfaction and return probability.

In an airline context, the significance of interaction with flight attendants is acknowledged in the literature. For instance, Sezgen, Mason and Mayer (2019) observe that the interactive behaviour of the flight attendants is an important determinant of passenger satisfaction. In their analysis of service climate, Cheng, Hong and Yang (2018) acknowledge

that flight attendants' behaviour is the major interpersonal component that is easily perceptible to passengers and contributes to their evaluation of SQ. In fact, research by Daswati *et al.* (2022) and Karatepe and Talebzadeh (2016) conclude with acknowledging the significance of employee behaviours by evaluating flight attendants' psychological capital and the service climate, given their role in influencing the quality of service.

Response-time of the flight attendants is also an important determinant of passenger satisfaction. Response time represents the duration between when a passenger establishes an interaction and when the attendants reply in terms of information or action. Ahmed *et al.* (2020) discuss that while flight attendants have to respond, the quality of response is paramount, especially in incidences when a passenger expresses an ongoing or possible service failure. Even Suchánek and Králová (2019) contend that the extent to which a passenger request is fulfilled is significant in influencing relationship quality.

Moreover, Opatha and Rathnayake (2018) are of the view that the knowledge of flight attendants is also an important factor that leads towards building a positive relationship with the passenger. Park, Lee and Nicolau (2020) contend that flight attendants need to possess sufficient knowledge to execute their duties and provide passenger services. In this regard, Bahadur, Aziz and Zulfiqar (2018) recognise interpersonal skills such as active listening and empathy as important influencers of relationship quality with passengers. In fact, empathy is one of the main constituents of the AIRQUAL model; a scale utilised to measure airline SQ (Alotaibi, 2015), and represents the extent to which an airline is willing to offer personalised care and service to every passenger. For this to be active, the airline attendants need to possess and exhibit a high level of empathy, which is exemplified by their disposition and capability in understanding and responding to the needs, wants, feelings and preferences of passengers. As Leong *et al.* (2015) confirm, this is likely to enhance not only satisfaction but also loyalty,

which is illustrated by regular repeat purchases, as well as a sentimental connection with the company.

Indeed, airline employees have the greatest opportunity to impact passenger perceptions (Street, 1994). Wunderlich and Hogreve (2019) reveal that passenger-attendant interactions contribute to 32% of the overall satisfaction with the airline and conclude that satisfaction with flight attendants increases the likelihood of the overall service being evaluated as satisfactory. This suggests that these employees are highly capable of influencing the passenger's journey and forming 'moment of truth' experiences that affect the passenger's perception of the airline (Frost and Kumar, 2001).

3.6.1.1.6. Customer-Customer Interaction

Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) define the customer-customer interaction element as the direct or indirect contact between the retail customers. Indeed, such social interactions can have a significant influence on CX and are commonly observed in the pre-purchase stage. This may be because when customers are seeking for information and/or assessing a specific product/brand, they regularly depend on word-of-mouth feedback from acquainted sources (i.e. peers) or consult with individuals that have previous experiences with the product/brand (Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016). Airlines should seek to offer exceptional service for passengers to become brand advocates and recommend the airline to others.

3.6.1.1.7. Product Interaction

Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) define the product interaction element as the several interactions; both direct and indirect, that customers have with products and services offered by the brand. This can be related to the products' assortment, quality and how customers interact with the products both physically or digitally and may be represented by the aspects

that are servicescape in nature (Wünderlich and Hogreve, 2019). Moreover, product interaction; whether the encounters are direct or indirect, play a significant role in the retail experience throughout the customer journey (Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016). The authors describe that when the product is of good quality, it is highly likely that customers would enjoy the items, purchase them and return to make future purchases.

In an airline context, product interaction may refer to interacting with the products and services an airline offers i.e. in-flight meals, entertainment, etc. This is illustrated by amongst others, food SQ (Herjanto *et al.,* 2021) and beverages (Han, Lee *et al.,* 2020), with authors acknowledging the emotional and cognitive appraisal to which the services are subjected, consequently influencing CX. The in-flight entertainment falls under the product interaction category, with Pappachan (2021) identifying that entertainment system functionalities are important determinants of airline SQ. In fact, Jin and Kim (2021) contend that entertainment features, including video systems, in-flight wi-fi and feeds for personal electronic devices are indispensable for airlines, with even luxury carriers regularly improving entertainment features to enhance the experience and retain passengers.

3.6.1.2. *Touchpoints VS Service Encounters*

Part of the reason there lacks a universal understanding of what CX encompasses is the theoretical confusion resulting from a wide range of viewpoints. Kumar *et al.* (2014) are among the authors that have limited the concept to a distinct context, specifically service encounters. A review of the literature on the concept of service encounters shows that Shostack's (1985) conceptualisation of the term is dominant. As Schostack (1985) contended, a service encounter represents a time whereby a customer is in direct interaction with a service. As Bolton *et al.* (2022) discuss, currently, the service encounter notion captures phenomena such as processes,

actions and communication most of which revolve around solving problems between the participating parties or seeking information.

Touchpoints, as discussed by Singh *et al.* (2017), are represented by the interfaces of interactions, with the authors mentioning websites, stores and kiosks as touchpoints. Bleier *et al.* (2019) contend that companies are focused on designing and managing service encounters in the specific touchpoints, and as Verhoef *et al.* (2009) discussed, customers' experiences differ substantially across the interfaces in which they occur, with the authors acknowledging stores as a single touchpoint, while Bleier *et al.* (2019) views websites as touchpoints. Kuehnl, Jozic and Homburg (2019) add that the role of companies is to ensure that such touchpoints are integrated, effective and thematically consistent. As such, touchpoints provide a context for the actualisation of service encounters between a company and its customers.

Moreover, the touchpoint elements play a significant role in shaping customer experience as illustrated in some service marketing literature (Bascur and Rusu, 2020; Both and Steinmann, 2023), affecting how customers perceive and interact with a brand throughout their journey. The following discussion explores how various touchpoint elements influence CX, integrating relevant service marketing citations and their postulations.

The concept of atmospherics, as outlined by Stein and Ramaseshan (2016), encompasses the physical elements and surroundings that customers encounter. In the context of airlines, this encompasses store and aircraft layouts, colours, scents, and cabin conditions. Rungsrisawat, Namdej, and Jermsittiparsert (2019) emphasised the significant impact of cabin conditions on brand image and customer loyalty. Similarly, Han (2013) noted that aspects such as seat layout and onboard amenities significantly influence in-flight experience. Foster and McLelland (2015) argue that atmospheric elements contribute to higher engagement levels and influence the overall evaluation of the passenger journey. These elements form part of the

'servicescape,' the physical environment in which service delivery occurs, and influence customers' mood and behaviour.

The technological element, as described by Stein and Ramaseshan (2016), refers to customer interactions with technology. In the airline industry, this includes interactions with websites, social media, check-in kiosks and in-flight technologies. Burke (2002) suggested that technological innovations enhance customer experience (CX), underlining the need for ongoing investment in technology to differentiate in the industry. The ease of use and functionality of these technological interfaces play a crucial role in shaping the overall service experience and customer perceptions of the airline.

Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) define communicative elements as one-way communication from the retailer to the customer, encompassing advertisements and promotional messages. These elements not only inform but also shape customer expectations, thereby influencing their service experience. Curtis et al. (2017) emphasise that airline advertisements, in reflecting social norms and values such as comfort and safety, play a pivotal role in shaping these perceptions. Consequently, effective communication is integral to building trust and positively impacting customer perceptions.

Transitioning from communicative to process elements, Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) describe the latter as the steps customers undertake to achieve desired outcomes with a retailer. This transition highlights the interconnectedness of different aspects of CX. Zaki Ahmed and Rodríguez-Díaz (2020) pinpoint the check-in process in the airline industry as a critical touchpoint, while Koenig, Found, and Kumar (2019) illustrate how failures in processes, such as baggage handling, can lead to customer dissatisfaction. The efficiency, clarity, and ease of these processes are pivotal in forming positive customer perceptions and experiences.

The interaction between employees and customers is another crucial component of CX, as noted by Stein and Ramaseshan (2016). Gountas et al. (2007) and Sung and Park (2021) underscore the significance of employees' service conduct in fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty. In the airline context, the behaviour of flight attendants, observed by Sezgen, Mason, and Mayer (2019), emerges as a significant factor in passenger satisfaction. These interactions often create 'moments of truth' where the quality of service is evaluated, profoundly impacting CX. This discussion, however, could benefit from a deeper exploration of how these 'moments of truth' vary across different customer interactions and cultural contexts, offering a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in CX.

Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) also emphasise the significance of customer interactions, which can play a crucial role in shaping the CX during the pre-purchase stage. Word-of-mouth feedback from peers or individuals with prior brand experiences often influences customers' perceptions and decisions.

Regarding product interactions, as Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) discuss, direct and indirect interactions with offerings, such as in-flight meals, entertainment, and onboard services, can impact CX. Herjanto et al. (2021) recognise the importance of these product aspects in the airline industry. Additionally, Jin and Kim (2021) highlight the functionality of in-flight entertainment systems as a factor influencing CX.

3.6.2. The Role of Alliances and Network Partners

The role of external influences and partners are becoming significant during the customer journey (Chandler and Lusch, 2015). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) explain different network perspectives and conclude that service delivery networks incorporate all services that influence CX. The authors identify three key forms which include a customer-coordinated network where the customer directs all external activities associated with the experience, i.e.

online reviews. This results in low control and higher ambiguity for the company as C2C (customer-to-customer) interactions are common. The second form includes the service-coordinator-based network in which the customer outsources the planning of external activity, i.e. travel agency. This also remains a low-control-high-ambiguity factor for companies as coordination is limited. The third form includes the company-coordinated network where the company directs and coordinates all aspects associated with the experience, i.e. advertisements. This indicates high control and lower ambiguity as well as additional perceptions into the entire CX. Indeed, airlines would benefit to have a higher influence on service delivery networks to reduce ambiguity at all costs.

3.6.3. Internal Organisation

In managing CX, companies need to develop an effective response orientation at every touchpoint (Homburg *et al.,* 2017). Monitoring these touchpoints would lead the company to identify several optimisation potentials. Lemon and Verheof (2016) stated the example of Disney in managing the customer's journey. The brand introduced the 'Magic Band' wristband device for users to purchase and use during their Disney World visit. These personalised devices help manage the customer's park access and touchpoints by providing information about park rides, waiting time and additional services that add to the overall experience. The customer may also order food and merchandise offered by the brand. Indeed, these fresh technological approaches may also be implemented in the future for airlines to introduce a similar concept of the wristband. An idea would be for the passenger to receive the band in the check-in counter and wear it until they reach their destination. The band may display interactive features such as a trip planning tool designed to fit the entire journey. These internal company innovations and customer-centric approaches to experience is important for companies to achieve brand differentiation (Tivasuradej and Pham, 2019).

3.7.   *Customer Experience within Customer Experience Management Framework*

Implementing a capability for good CEM in an enterprise and improving the customer experience continuously are not simple matters. According to Meyer and Schwager (2007), CX does not improve until it becomes a top priority and until a company's work processes, systems and structure change to reflect this customer-centric priority. Rae (2006) agrees that companies are starting to focus on the importance of CX and the complex mix of strategy, integration of technology, orchestrating business models, brand management and executive commitment. Based on an inductive study, Plessis and Vries (2016) suggested the development of a holistic CEM framework. The objective of the CEM framework is to provide guidance to practitioners on how to align an enterprise to be more customer-centric, and how to implement principles of customer-centricity in an enterprise, which should lead to an enhanced experience for their customers. The figure below shows the implementation of CX into the CEM framework as conceptualised by Plessis and Vries (2016).

Figure 11: Customer Experience Management Framework

Implementation of the customer experience process			
Phase	Actions / Guidelines	Tools / Techniques	Desired outcomes
1 — Customer understanding	1.1 Define the segment. 1.2 Define customer needs and requirements for the journey (after Step 2.2).	The customer canvas.	Defined customer segments, prioritised for maximum business benefit. Understanding of customer needs and expectations.
2 — Design customer journey	2.1 Define the macro journey. 2.2 Define the micro journeys, including customer perspective, enterprise perspective, and support requirements (systems, people and information). 2.3 Define the moments of truth (highest value) aligned to the expectations defined in Step 1.2. 2.4 Map the positive experience versus negative experience of outcomes or service failures, as well as the detection mechanisms.	Action research; Value chain mapping/Process mapping; Service blueprint; Journey mapping; Moment mapping; Poka-Yoke/ Fail-safeing.	Defined high level journey for a customer segment. Defined lower level journey for a particular customer segment. Identified moments of truth. Identified failure points, resolutions, and detection mechanisms.
3 — Customer experience measurement	3.1 Define internal (process) measurement points, or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for future measurement. 3.2 Define external (customer) measurement points (KPIs) for future measurement, and implement escalation mechanisms. 3.3 Benchmark key customer processes against competitors.	Combination of customer (perception) and enterprise (descriptive and outcome) measures. Benchmarking.	A process dashboard measuring all key customer processes and moments of truth. Feedback mechanisms to monitor customer feedback continually. Defined competitor performance on key processes.
4 — Customer experience change implementation	4.1 Identify gaps in experience design versus current organisational capability. 4.2 Differentiate between new enterprise actions and existing actions, and prioritise improvement initiatives. 4.3 Establish working groups to implement initiatives, monitor progress, and give feedback to executive process owners.	Gaps identified from the failure/mitigation analysis defined in Step 2.4; Prioritisation matrix; Action research focus groups; Cross-functional process owners.	Defined initiatives for improving customer experience. Prioritised list of initiatives, according to impact on customer satisfaction and customer dissatisfaction. A mobilised, cross-functional working group with delegated authority to implement customer experience initiatives.

Source: Plessis and Vries (2016)

As the figure outlines, designing the customer journey is an important phase in a company's efforts to enhance CX. As Plessis and Vries (2016) describe, defining the customer

journey in terms of systems, information and people is paramount. They also call for defining the 'moments of truth' which should include aligning an offering's performance with the customers' expectations. As they add, mapping the experiences in terms of negative or positive valences and intensities as well as episodes and outcomes of service failure enhances a company's ability to enhance CX.

3.7.1. Customer Journey

Lindberg and Vermeer (2019, p. 34) define the customer journey as "the individual experience that a customer has when interacting with touch points in the path from a pre-purchase to a post-purchase setting". The recent focus on CX and the customer journey suggests that companies are broadening their perception of the purchase process. Indeed, initial theories and incorporating models began in the 1960s that discussed the customer's decision process and experience. These theories remain influential and have gained a strong foothold in several pieces of literature including multichannel research (Neslin *et al.,* 2006), path-to-purchase modelling (Li and Kannan, 2014) as well as CEM (Schmitt, 2003) (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). These early decision-making process models focused on the purchase process itself (see figure 12). What evolved is a more detailed perspective to every stage of the customer journey as the process models provided the foundation for what is now known as the customer purchase journey; which is the process a customer partakes, across all touchpoints and stages that make up their individual CX (Lemon and Verheof, 2016).

Furthermore, consistent with previous studies (e.g. Howard and Sheth, 1969; Neslin *et al.,* 2006; Pucinelli *et al.,* 2009), CX is now conceptualised and integrated into three overall stages in the journey; pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase (Lemon and Verheof, 2016). Multichannel researchers (e.g. Neslin *et al.,* 2006) have adopted this by considering the traditional purchase funnel moving the customer from the 'search' phase (considering

alternatives) to the 'purchase' phase (purchasing the product). Service management researchers (e.g. Bitner *et al.,* 2008) also adopted this by focusing on service encounters at different stages and how each component in the service blueprint design contributes to the overall experience.

3.7.1.1. *Pre-Purchase Stage*

The first stage, pre-purchase, incorporates all aspects of the customer's interaction with the company before a purchase transaction i.e. the beginning of a need to consider satisfying that need with a purchase (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Pieters *et al.,* 1995). Through what are called 'leading experiences' (Bosio *et al.,* 2017), the customer recognises their need to travel and then considers the airline to travel with. It is especially important for airlines to consider the customer's needs during this stage. For example, airlines such as Etihad caters to the need of parents with children by training its stewardess in the art of childcare. These flying nannies occupy the children with activities which would allow parents to relax, especially during long-haul flights (Etihad Airways, 2019). It is these customer-centric approaches that differentiate airlines from one another. Moreover, external influences such as C2C interactions may heavily influence this stage. A customer might be convinced to book with a specific airline, however, after talking to a friend, might suddenly change their mind.

Communicative elements such as advertisements and offers may also be crucial during this stage as it sets the airline apart from competitors. Qatar airways uses a global strategic approach to their advertisements to attract new customers and improve their global image. The airline collaborates with major foreign plane companies such as Boeing to deliver exceptional TV commercials (Qatar Airways, 2017). Similarly, airlines such as Kuwait Airways combine their offers with banks by giving a 10% discount on flight fares, when using the bank's credit card (Kuwait Airways, 2020). Indeed, it is important for airlines to take into consideration the

different customer segments (Konuş *et al.,* 2008) as collaborating with other companies may prove to be beneficial to capture a larger market audience.

3.7.1.2. *Purchase Stage*

The second stage, purchase, includes all customer interactions with the company during the purchase stage itself i.e., purchasing the ticket. This stage has received considerable attention in the marketing literature as it focuses on how marketing activities such as the 'service environment' and 'marketing mix' may influence the customer's purchase decision (e.g. Berry *et al.,* 2002; Kotler and Keller, 2015) (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This stage is also important digitally (Elberse, 2010) as process and technological elements such as the airline's website and mobile app interactivity can 'make or break' a customer's decision to purchase.

Furthermore, additional features may be added to this stage such as allowing passengers to choose their meals and seats. These elements may be included as flight 'add-ons' to stimulate purchase behaviours in favour of the airline's offerings. Alternatively, many customers will prefer booking through the airline's office and may also have experiences that leave a significant impact on their purchase decision, i.e. counter employee being rude, long waiting queue, etc.

3.7.1.3. *Post-Purchase Stage*

The third stage, post-purchase, includes all customer interactions with the company after the purchase stage and is usually considered the 'consumption' stage (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). It may arguably be the most important stage of the customer journey in an airline context, as it includes the journey at the airport as well as the in-flight experience. This

stage also creates the loop of the cycle creating past experiences and memories that may affect the pre-purchase stage (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019).

The researcher considers the in-flight experience to be the 'main course' of this stage, as airlines are actually making passengers engage with their product. Indeed, product interaction elements such as seating and in-flight meals may be significant during this stage, however, a smile or greeting from an airline attendant may have an even higher impact on the passenger's experience, regardless of travel class. Moreover, the passenger may experience a superb journey however, upon arrival, their baggage gets lost, and the airline does not provide a decent after-service, which ultimately impacts the entire journey. It is for this reason that experience is considered subjective, as each passenger evaluates their journey differently. Airlines may then seek to understand the passenger's perspective in the form of evaluation surveys to make the airline aware of what needs to be improved; a passenger-complaints dept. may be considered crucial for airlines to retain their passengers.

Indeed, given the stages above, it is clear that CX is closely linked to the concept of touchpoints and the customer journey (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). Lindberg and Vermeer (2019, p. 60) translates the concept of CX as "two simple words that encompass the complex interaction that leads to reactions, expectations and the formation of lasting perceptions". This definition is crucial for researchers as well as practitioners to understand the customer journey. McColl-Kennedy *et al.* (2019) created a conceptual framework that incorporates CX at different touchpoints with value creation elements. This then translates to the customer's emotional and cognitive responses. Lindberg and Vermeer (2019) then realised that these responses do not merely occur at definite points in time, however, at an incessant pace that is difficult to define or control. Take for example a passenger missing their transit flight due to a delay caused by the airline. The negative reaction during this stage may linger on even after

the passenger lands. As a result, this may have a subconscious effect (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019) on the passenger during the next early stages of their journey with the airline.

While there are some companies that do focus on customer journey analysis to understand the customer's choices for touchpoints in multiple purchase stages (Verhoef *et al.,* 2016), it is nevertheless suggested that companies create an even more detailed customer journey map, not just to list all the potential touchpoints, but also, to understand the specific elements that encompass a touchpoint. Indeed, there is a need to investigate this in an airline context and determine the significant touchpoint elements at each stage of the passenger journey.

Moreover, with regards to the customer journey, marketing strategies adopted by airlines such as Emirates is different from the one used by British Airways, suggesting differences in the market niche (Filieri *et al.,* 2015). The variety of customers in the market may indicate different methods in obtaining information as well as forming decisions. According to Chen and Gursoy (2000), passengers' use of information sources is heavily influenced by their past travel experiences. This suggests that customers use their memory of what they had achieved from their past experiences, hence, create a reliance on specific products or services they consume (Janssen and Shelegia, 2015). However, research is necessary to understand whether the passengers' perceived past experience is the primary motivator for making a purchase decision to travel with an airline, regardless of external information sources. Therefore, exploring this in relation to the customer's buying behaviour, specifically, the TPB variables, presents an opportunity for further research.

Furthermore, airlines should seek to understand that touchpoints are continuous and ongoing. Several companies realise that this is necessary to direct customers' decisions during their journey such as pairing products during the checkout process or recommending similar products other customers purchased (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). Airlines should also realise

that the interactions made at specific touchpoints during the customer journey creates value for the passenger (Barwitz and Maas, 2018; Bosio *et al.,* 2017). An example of this would be airlines sending class upgrade offers to their passengers after they purchase their tickets. It is, therefore, imperative for airlines to create value not by simply fulfilling needs, but by creating and delivering exceptional experiences throughout the entire customer journey. The value created will then affect the customer's purchase and loyalty decisions (Etkin and Sela, 2016).

A strategic touchpoint that airlines use to create value and retain customers are loyalty programs. It is here that the role of value creation may be driving the customer journey forward and onto a new cycle (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). However, despite the loyalty, a circumstance may occur that may shift the passenger's perspective of the airline. Lindberg and Vermeer (2019) state an excellent example that if the customer has thousands of loyalty points and due to a mistake, the airline removes all the points from the system and cannot reimburse the customer due to company policy. This may considerably affect the customer's experience and therefore, might discourage the customer to ever travel with that airline again. This is why it is critical to investigate and determine some of the trigger points or 'moments of truth' during the passenger journey.

3.7.2. *Customer Experience - Creating Value through 'Moments of Truth'*

'Moments of truth' (MoTs) are critical interaction instances between a customer and a company that gives the customer an opportunity to form an impression about the company (Moran *et al.,* 2014). The terms critical incident and MoT refer to the service encounters or touchpoints which are of vital significance to the customer's assessment of the SQ (Korhonen, 2019). Indeed, these encounters are make-or-break moments when a company has the opportunity to match or exceed the customer's expectations or disappoint them by failing to meet their expectations (Wilson *et al.,* 2012). Former president of Scandinavian Airlines, Jan

Carlzon, takes credit in originating the concept of MoT. Carlzon turned the once failing airline around to be one of the most reliable airlines in the industry, ensuring that every MoT be a positive one for the customer (Sarpong, 2016). Furthermore, MoTs also create competitive advantage, as each company is given an opportunity to form memorable experiences that differentiate them from other brands. It is also crucial to identify when and where these MoTs occur and ensure that they are properly managed in a company (Korhonen, 2019).

Indeed, Carlzon contended that every contact between a customer and a product or service provider carries details that are absorbed by the customer and evaluated to inform their perception of the company and its offerings. Every contact episode acts as an opportunity for a MoT to be experienced. After this observation, authors and marketers including Stirzel and Di Nisio (2021) have explored the unique moments in customers' journeys that are likely to be decisive in forming a customer's perception. Moreover, the notion of MoT was then developed in 2005 by Procter and Gamble for it to be relevant to retail marketing. Hence, they formed the term 'First Moment of Truth' (FMoT) to suggest the significance of the first seven seconds in which a customer is exposed to a product in-store and makes a decision on what brand to purchase. Next, the notion of 'Second Moment of Truth' (SMoT) was formed by Procter and Gamble to refer to the customers' experience of the product/brand and consumption stage (D'Arco *et al.,* 2019). Lafley, the former CEO of Procter and Gamble, described the new challenge of companies as winning the two MoTs.

With the introduction of smartphones, customers are capable of pre-experiencing a product as technologies are enabling the formation of a credible, customer-directed information cycle. Some companies absorbed this new knowledge and reformed it in accordance with the nature of interactions with customers. For instance, in 2011, Google identified 'Zero Moment of Truth' (ZMoT) as one of the elements that made it unique relative to competitors (Lecinski, 2011). This phenomenon, which is a result of customers' technological empowerment, involves

the individual's search online to gather information about a certain product, service or brand before making a purchase decision (D'Arco *et al.,* 2019). This was fitting as Google's relevance is manifested when customers recognise they have a need to search for anything. This provides an advantage as it influences people's perceptions of the company before they even interact with the company. However, the extent to which the interaction result influences a customer's personal truth is subject to argument. Nonetheless, MoTs should have an impact even in the long run, thereby enhancing their memorability.

According to Goernemann and Spiekermann (2020), long-term memory is developed when individuals go through sensory significant events, experiencing emotions or repetition. This is because humans are better in reminding scenarios that have an emotional impact, or those that that have been internalised due to regular exposure. The authors add that emotional stimulation induces a unique psychological condition that excites the areas of the brain that deals with memory encoding and recalling. When compared to neutral episodes, emotions are easier to recall even regularly and are associated with more information and accuracy. In this regard, researchers on cognition categorise based on two aspects; valence and the intensity of arousal. It is therefore plausible to argue that a passenger's experience with an airline plays a significant role in the formation of their personal truth if experienced regularly or when the experience induces an emotion.

The phrase MoT, when looked at exhaustively, shows that regardless of the long-term aspect of truth, there is a connotation of other moments. In daily life, humans flow gradually through moments, and most of these moments are neutral and stable. However, this flow is exposed to disruption by moments that are considered intense or out of the ordinary that break the flow from neutral to unique, which is likely to create a long-lasting memory in the person. Badiou (2013) argues that for these events to represent a noticeable, impactful moment that qualifies to be a MoT, it has to create new perspectives and inspire the people experiencing it

to reposition themselves or transform behaviour in the long term. These events also open the room for new phenomena that can transform reality. Additionally, moments can be explained using implications and consequences, and as such, while it can be predicted, it cannot be truly foreseen, and thus, can only be defined retrospectively.

Indeed, some MoTs mark paramount turning points in a specific customer's journey. A single event may be so profound that it induces change immediately, while in some scenarios, the change is developed gradually as it builds and evolves over time. The entire period, while having been completely meaningless, culminates in an individual whose perception and behaviours have changed. It may not be dramatic, but the last experience in a series of many may act as the final driver of change in perceptions and behaviour. Thus, it could be argued that the reason customers may change their perception of airlines is not only through the associated behavioural intentions over time, but also through sudden events.

Moreover, consumer behaviour has seen significant changes in the airline sector, especially after the upsurge of the internet, mobile technologies and social media. Instead of being restricted to traditional methods of purchase, modern-day passengers have a plethora of channels to choose from (D'Arco *et al.,* 2019). This suggests that consumer behaviour is changing as a result of expanding digital capabilities as many customers are using the internet to gather information on brands and products before deciding on a purchase (Venkatesan *et al.,* 2007). Customers also turn to their peers and check for user generated content (ratings, reviews, etc.) instead of relying on marketers for brand or product information (D'Arco *et al.,* 2019). D'Arco *et al.*'s (2019) study found that younger demographics rely on online tools and social media instead of traditional methods to collect information (e.g. travel intermediaries), which remains a favoured method for a more mature demographic.

As CX continues to incorporate various interrelated components, there has been a transition in marketing practice as characterised by a transition to omni-channel from a multi-

channel orientation. In the multi-channel approach, companies control different channels and touchpoints in isolation from each other. As Hickman, Kharouf and Sekhon (2020) posit, a company's offering is usually the focus of the multi-channel approach. The omni-channel approach, on the other hand, does not inherently emphasise the channels to extend product awareness, rather, the priority is on the CX, which companies optimise by leveraging online and offline touchpoints. As Sarılgan *et al.* (2022) hypothesise, the omni-channel approach results in the identification of additional touchpoints, which are important in informing a company's initiatives that are developed to boost CX, thereby, influencing performance and even competitive advantage. Furthermore, Zhang *et al.* (2021) confirm the ability of an omni-channel approach to reinforce a company's supply chain resilience.

The significance of enhancing CX along the distinct journey is explained by Hu and Olivieri (2021), who contended that social media provides an effective channel for stating and maintaining dialogue with both the existing and potential customers. In the pre-purchase stage, companies use social media platforms to inspire passengers and entice them to interact with the company with the intention of getting customers to purchase, which illustrates the concept of ZMoT in practice. This is through, amongst others, the use of audio and visual content on platforms such as Instagram. Nevertheless, in the pre-purchase stage, customers conduct extensive reviews on sites including TripAdvisor. These sites are resourceful for companies that seek to optimise their quality of service, especially since they contain user-generated information regarding their evaluation of service while establishing correlations with performance, as well as compare with experiences provided by rivals. Klein *et al.* (2020) support this notion and add that companies need to form memorable touchpoints with the customer consistently across multiple channels.

Indeed, MoTs created during a brand experience produce user generated content that may be positive or negative, which are heavily being indexed to show in search engine results,

therefore, indicating an initial MoT (ZMoT) for customers seeking information (Moran *et al.,* 2014). In Ertemel and Başçi's (2015) study in Turkey, the authors state that ZMoT is the most important phase across several sectors in the decision-making process, however, research is needed to explore the significance of ZMoT in the airline sector.

Figure 17: The new mental model of the decision-making process
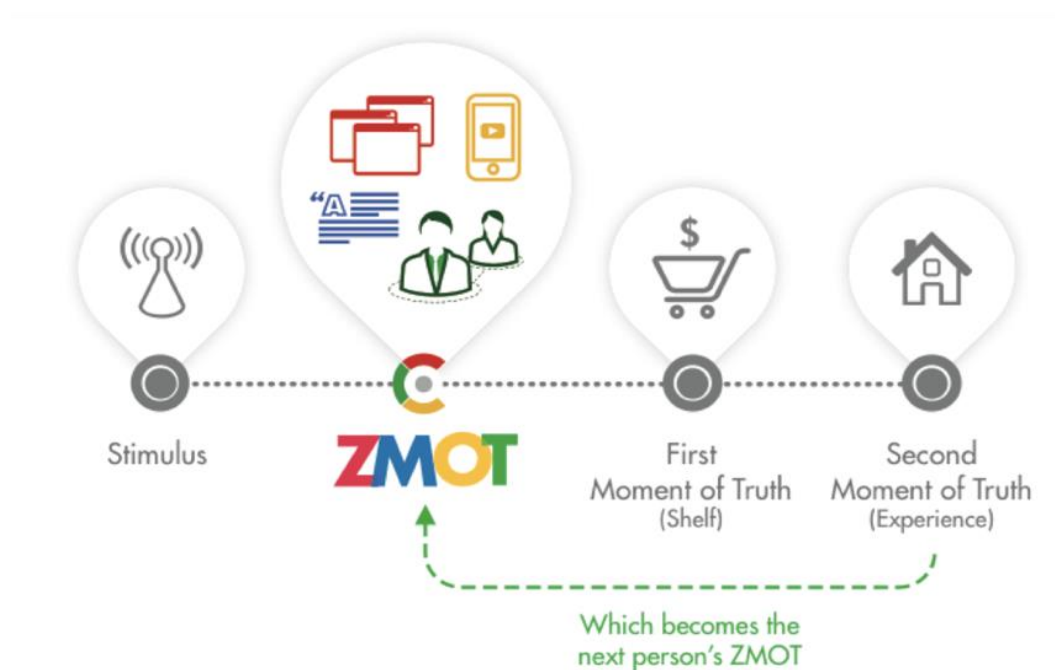
Source: Lecinski (2020, p. 17)

In the figure above, the author indicates the customer's SMoT in influencing the next ZMoT. However, research lacks in understanding the significance of ZMoT in the tourism and hospitality sector (D'Arco *et al.,* 2019). This absence becomes even more pronounced when we narrow our focus to the airline industry. Airlines, more than many other service providers, operate in a competitive environment where consumers have a plethora of options and the ability to extensively research before booking. Therefore, understanding the ZMoT is not just beneficial—it is critical. Key questions remain unanswered which this study explores: What

drives a consumer to gravitate towards a specific airline during their ZMoT? How do past experiences—both positive and negative—shape their subsequent ZMoTs? How do external factors such as peer reviews, price fluctuations, route convenience, and brand reputation play into this? The literature's current state, while acknowledging the importance of customer experience, seems to skirt around the profound impact of ZMoT in the airline sector. This oversight presents a compelling opportunity for further research. Expanding our understanding of ZMoT will not only provide a more holistic view of the customer's journey but also empower airlines with actionable insights to tailor their strategies effectively. In essence, while the concept of ZMoT has been considered in the literature, its depth, nuances, and specific applicability to the airline context are areas ripe for exploration.

Moreover, following the introduction of the two MoTs, a 'Third (Ultimate) Moment of Truth' (TMoT) was proposed to represent the customer's reaction or feedback towards a product, service or brand and their consequent decision to share that experience (Moran *et al.,* 2014) i.e. becoming brand advocates via social media or word of mouth. However, since TMoT is a term to represent the customer's overall evaluation as a result of their journey, the term 'Final Moment of Truth' (FiMoT) is proposed instead as several MoTs may occur beforehand.

Indeed, despite the four additions to the MoT concept the customer may experience several other MoTs that occur at different touchpoints throughout their journey. For example; during the passenger journey, the ZMoT occurs as the customer searches online for the most suitable airline. This could be based on several factors (i.e. peer recommendations, past experience, etc.). Next, the FMoT may occur when the customer stumbles upon an attractive travel offer and decides to purchase a ticket with the specific airline. The actual experience of the product purchased is regarded as the SMoT (e.g. journey from and to the airport). According to Löfgren *et al.* (2008) there can be several SMoTs throughout the customer

journey or every time the product is consumed. However, as SMoT refers to the 'Second Moment of Truth', there may exist a third MoT, a fourth MoT, etc. therefore, it does not seem applicable to label SMoT to every MoT that occurs throughout the customer journey.

Moreover, several MoTs can occur during the experience phase of the passenger such as; an unpleasant check-in or in-flight encounter, etc. The overall end evaluation and feedback of the experience is regarded as the TMoT (Moran *et al.,* 2014) however, the researcher proposes the term FiMoT as there may exist more than four MoTs within the customer journey, depending on each individual experience. A FiMoT example may be the passenger's positive experience with an airline resulting in positive word of mouth and positive influence for the next stage of ZMoT. That said, there seems to be a gap in the commercial airline industry in understanding why certain MoTs are more prominent than others and if that has an effect on the customer's overall evaluation (FiMoT). While the MoTs framework is acknowledged and frequently discussed, there's a conspicuous absence of depth in exploring the hierarchy or prominence of these moments in an airline context, which this study further explores. Are certain MoTs inherently more influential in shaping a passenger's perception of an airline? For instance, does an in-flight meal experience carry more weight than the ease of ticket booking? Or is the check-in process more pivotal in shaping the overall experience compared to the post-flight communication? The overarching question that remains inadequately addressed is the impact of these MoTs on the Final Moment of Truth (FiMoT), which represents the customer's holistic evaluation post their journey. How do individual MoTs contribute to this culminating judgment? And more importantly, how can airlines prioritise and optimise these moments to ensure a favourable FiMoT? Given the fiercely competitive nature of the airline industry, where customer loyalty is both coveted and challenging to secure, understanding the dynamics of MoTs and their influence on FiMoT is not just an academic endeavor—it is a business imperative. The existing literature, while touching upon the significance of MoTs, falls short

of providing a granular analysis specific to the airline industry, paving the way for a compelling avenue of research.

3.7.3. Service Failure

According to Awa, Nwobu and Igwe (2021), airlines are exposed to breakdowns regardless of the service provider's commitment to providing high-quality service. As such, there is likelihood of customers expressing dissatisfaction through remarks and complaints intended to elicit acknowledgement of failure, corrective action, and a promise and assurance that issues are addressed. A service provider's response represents their effort to identify and fix the perceived shortcomings, minimise their harmful implications, restore reputation and enhance the likelihood of customers returning. Such actions reposition customers' trust in the service provider (Lin and Chou, 2022) and undermine the sharing of negative perceptions and experiences as well as receive possible litigations by entities focused on customer interests. Airlines are thus intended to accurately anticipate, prevent and mend service failures given the significantly higher expenses in attracting than retaining customers, especially in a competitive market. Furthermore, customers are more predisposed to desire predictable and long-term engagements with a certain provider compared to switching to other providers. This is paramount, since as Tom, Dieck and Han (2022) discuss, CX encompasses all the contexts in which a customer interfaces with a company, considering not only the key touchpoints but also the extent to which the experiences were memorable and personalised.

Additionally, when service fails in satisfying customers, the lifetime value associated with a customer reduces, given that dissatisfied customers are more likely to avoid a disappointing provider. As studies by Abd Rashid, Ahmad and Othman (2014) found, on average, a customer shares a negative experience with more than 10 people, while satisfied customers only expressed their perceptions to around 5 people. An older study by Michel, Bowen and Johnston (2009) identified that dissatisfied customers require as many as 12

satisfying experiences to override the negative impacts of unpleasant experiences. Dealing with such experiences encompasses utilitarian and monetary actions such as discounts and refunds. Other interventions are symbolic, including service providers being empathetic; showing a higher level of respect and apologising to the customer.

As the airlines operate in a dynamic and competitive environment, they attempt to leverage resilience with their passengers in the event of service failure. Manu and Sreejesh (2020) conclude that competitiveness is restored and even enhanced if an operator genuinely and voluntarily learns from previous failures in their provision of services and commits to transforming the complaints into input for innovation. This explains why complaint handling personnel aggressively seek out and attempt to fix problems even when not reported by customers. However, complaints management scholars demonstrate weak generalisability across industries and contexts, as presented by different frameworks in the financial sector (Chauhan, Akhtar and Gupta, 2022), airlines (Sigurdsson *et al.,* 2021) and hospitality (Parikh and Dutt, 2021).

Moreover, when it comes to addressing service failures, studies show varied responses. For instance, Sengupta *et al.,* (2018) propose apologising to dissatisfied customers, while Awa, Nwobu and Igwe (2021) and Belanche *et al.,* (2020) propose acknowledgment and accepting accountability for failed service provision. Sarkar, Sarkar and Sreejesh (2021) discuss prompt response, while Belanche *et al.,* (2020) advocate correction of failure and empowerment of the employees. Manu and Sreejesh (2020) opine that being attentive and explaining to customers is effective in service failure contexts. Other authors discuss showing efforts to fix the situation while being empathetic (Ahmadi, 2021); to follow-up with customers in writing (S, Paul and Unnithan, 2022) as well as compensation and facilitation (Tahir, 2021).

The study by Morgeson *et al.,* (2020) has found that a company's ability to handle customer complaints increases customer satisfaction and loyalty, which they describe as post

complaint repurchase intention. Research has identified that some customers are willing to excuse failures but are unlikely to forgive a service provider if they do not fix the issue, especially within a given duration (Sreejesh, Paul and Unnithan, 2022). The willingness and commitment to resolving complaints provides opportunities for the company to manifest the relevance of its relationship with customers, boost loyalty and enhance its brand image. This is because the successful response transcends the specific context of service failure, with customers assuming the same diligence is applied to other concerns, while some solutions to historical service failures have already been addressed. Indeed, speedy responses reduce the opportunities available for a customer to synthesise a negative sentiment.

Airline transactions are associated with a high level of involvement and risks given the personal significance and nature of the services, a focus on timeliness and employee-passenger social interactions, are all important in informing practice. However, since passengers constantly look for information and express dissatisfaction about service episodes that are infrequent, risky and expensive, it is plausible to argue that both symbolic and utilitarian interventions would be advised to overcome customer dissatisfaction and increase likelihood of repeat customers.

3.8. *Rationalisation into the Focus on Touchpoint Elements and 'Moments of Truth'*

Touchpoints, as described by Dhebar (2013) represent the interactions involving an organisation or its brands, and a customer. The elements that characterise these interactive avenues and episodes are acknowledged to have a profound influence on customers' perception of a brand, thereby determining the extent to which a customer perceives an experience as negative or positive. Authors such as Bart et al. (2014) and Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) postulate that companies that are effective in managing their customer experiences pursue this objective by using numerous perspectives across different channels, with the deduced insights

leveraged to develop measures that ensure touchpoint element expectations are met. Thus, examining the customer journey and the manner in which passengers interact with airlines is an essential component in understanding how they can contribute towards customers' perceptions and behaviours. This is because insights from studying the touchpoints could be assimilated in the development of business strategy and management of returns on investment (Hogan, Almquist and Glynn, 2005) and enhance the brand image (Singh and Ovsak, 2013).

Moreover, in relation to the MoTs, a look into recent literature does not show an exhaustive investigation of the concept in an airline context. Outside the industry, however, Baum (2020) acknowledges the significance of the 'Zero Moment of Truth' (ZMoT), specifically in facilitating customers' access to informational content that guides their decision making for optimal satisfaction of their needs. Baum (2020) consequently recommends optimising initial points of contact, such as websites and providing a quality service to leverage word of mouth. Bicer (2020) evaluates MoT within the context of smartphone purchasing decisions, confirming the presence of the different MoTs, but remarks that the ZMoT is the most decisive in a customer's journey. Though these studies present ZMoT to be the beginning of the pre-purchase stage, it may be argued that there is no beginning at all considering the nature of experience and that it never ends (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019).

The 'First Moment of Truth' (FMoT) represents the initial seconds of a person's exposure to a certain offering in their journey to satisfy their needs. In an airline context, this could be illustrated by seeing an attractive offer to purchase an airline ticket. The 'Second Moment of Truth' (SMoT) represents the consumption activity and experience. Indeed, the SMoT is considered critical, however, as mentioned earlier, there may exist a third or fourth MoT during the passenger's journey. Therefore, the term SMoT would only be used to describe the passenger's first MoT after purchase. Moreover, what happens post-purchase represents

the actual consumption of the airline's service and, as the review of the literature indicated, inherently has most of the touchpoints in terms of process, servicescape and people (Wünderlich and Hogreve, 2019). The MoTs within these touchpoints create an avenue for memorable experiences to be registered by passengers, with the peak experience memories possibly influencing the passengers' future behaviours the most.

Furthermore, a look into extant literature including Park, Lee, and Nicolau (2020) reveals a recognition of the unique nature of the commercial airline industry including intangibility, perishability and the difficulty in quantifying the quality, which implies profound and instantaneous assessment by customers. The 'Third Moment of Truth' (TMoT) or as previously termed by the researcher, the 'Final Moment of Truth' (FiMoT), encompasses the outcomes of a product or service consumption (Goernemann and Spiekermannm, 2020). Research on this stage is extensive, but not inherently within the phrase TMoT. In fact, research on customer satisfaction, engagement, retention and loyalty is highly cognisant of this stage. Moreover, it would also be important to consider the opportunities for the actualisation of the Peak-End Theory (PET) at this stage as part of the study's objectives is establishing the theory's applicability with regard to understanding how passengers evaluate their experiences. Investigating this would help ascertain the extent to which the theory is applicable within the phenomenon being examined.

3.9. *Theoretical Framework and Perspectives*

3.9.1. *Applying Peak-End Theory for Context: A Justification*

3.9.1.1. *The Peak-End Theory: A Review*

The PET is a psychological phenomenon defined by psychologist Daniel Kahneman who provides evidence in his studies (Kahneman *et al.,* 1993; Redelmeier and Kahneman, 1996) that experiences are evaluated on the peak and the end of a journey, and not what happens

in between. This means that people assess experiences on the basis of two memories, during the peak and at the end. The peak represents the most memorable and intense experience, which may be positive or negative. Additionally, the end is important for the overall evaluation of the experience in its entirety (Van Hagen and Bron, 2014).

According to Park *et al.* (2018), the successful application of the PET has been acknowledged by researchers. The theory is based on an understanding that a person could evaluate an experience based on the most intense episode, rather than averaging the assessment outcomes of all the distinct aspects of an experience. As described by Heath and Heath (2019), peak moments are achieved when several conditions are satisfied. These include undergoing an experience, such as happiness and surprise, gaining new insight, experiencing pride and feeling a connection. The most impactful experience is registered when these conditions are achieved.

Moreover, one of the determinants of customers' attitudes and behaviours towards a company is their assessment of a prior experience with that brand. In the event such an assessment is positive, the likelihood of customers exhibiting positive dispositions and behaviours is increased. This is the rationale behind the brand's need to create memorable experiences for customers. In Hamby and Jones' (2022) study, the authors evaluate the role of affective messaging and state that by leaving an engram in customers' minds, customers are more likely to remember distinct experiences that had a stimulating effect. This is amongst the aspects that enhance brand recall. To ensure this memory trace, brands focus on creating impressions by using appearance, smells, tactile surfaces and taste. Other brands leverage on teaching customers a memorable and distinct piece of knowledge, while others interact with and assign customers specific tasks.

As Park *et al.* (2018) observe in their analysis of the tourism industry, even in instances when companies are able to create positive emotional memories for their customers, the PET provides an explanation. The theory posits that the remembered experiences are overridden by those that have the highest arousal and the residual emotional state, rather than the cumulative assessment of the entire experience (Strijbosch *et al.,* 2019). Therefore, a customer's memory of an event could be negative if the highest peak is attributed to a negative feeling. The theory also emphasises the role of the final experience in influencing whether the memory of a customer retains a positive or negative evaluation. As Park *et al.* (2018) postulate, the representative memory is highly determining of future events, and as such, in interactions with customers, companies manifest this notion by manipulating the closing episode.

3.9.2. *Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of Peak-End Theory for Study Context*

Verhoef *et al.* (2004) stated that a positive peak experience improves satisfaction. Authors such as Anderson (2000) argue that the end experience is the most prevalent in the customer's evaluation of the overall experience. While the theory has been criticised for fusing a complex mental assessment into a simplistic framework (Kemp *et al.,* 2008), customers regularly base their memory or evaluation of experience on both the peak and the end moment (Gao *et al.,* 2020). The peak experience may indeed be a MoT that is considered critical in forming the lasting end assessment. Moreover, the figure below is an example of an airline passenger's in-flight journey.

Figure 18: Airline In-Flight Passenger Journey
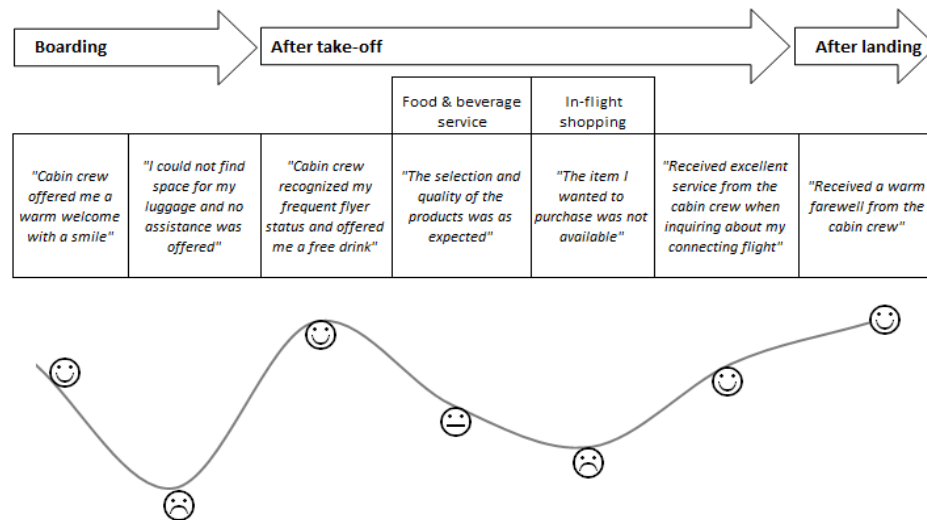
As previously mentioned, the PET suggests that the customer's evaluation of an experience is primarily formed according to the highest (peak) point, which could either be positive or negative, and the ending (end) of the journey. As shown in the figure above, the author applies the theory to the passenger's in-flight experience. The highest point occurred during the boarding touchpoint and represents a negative experience, however, after landing, the encounter or touchpoint ends in a positive way. Therefore, it is important for airlines to realise that if a customer experiences a negative MoT; which may be considered their peak experience at the time, it may not be too late to repair the damage caused and form a positive MoT experience in the end. For example, due to the flight being delayed, a passenger misses their next transit flight as well as the chance to celebrate their birthday with their loved ones. While on the next flight, the airline crew surprises the passenger with a special birthday cake which may indeed, alter the passenger's negative perception of the airline based on their previous negative (peak) experience. Such opportunities may be used to show how good an

airline is in managing the MoTs that occur throughout the passenger journey and, could go a long way to help build long-term customer loyalty (Sarpong, 2016).

Moreover, the theory is also being used by many companies such as IKEA in their service design (Van Hagen and Bron, 2014). Van Hagen and Bron (2014) state that it is not required to maximise the satisfaction of customers on all service delivery aspects if the company identifies the peak moments. Therefore, by recollecting MoT experiences from airline passengers and exploring the theory's applicability, certain patterns may be found to understand passengers' evaluation of service and their purchase intent; that would also help airline managers adjust their business strategies.

Consequently, after recollecting MoT experiences, additional sub-questions would be answered. We know that MoTs are the impactful moments that leave a significant impression on the customer and that the peak experience is the most impactful moment of that journey. However, are the MoTs that occur throughout the customer journey as important as the peak experience? At what stage of the airline passenger's journey does the peak experience and MoTs usually occur? Indeed, each customer journey presents a unique element and is different from one another despite the same service or product being offered (Bosio *et al.,* 2017). A few positive experiences at one stage of the journey could be erased by one negative experience that could be outside of the airline's control. These MoTs therefore, influence the different stages of the customer journey (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019) and need to be taken into account when developing a solid customer journey framework.

The concept of moments of truth also features in services marketing literature (Bock, Wolter, and Ferrell, 2020; Kurtuluş and Cengiz, 2020), and so is the peak-end theory (De-Frutos-Arranz and López, 2022). The impact of 'moments of truth' and the applicability of the

peak-end theory play a critical role in shaping customers' evaluations of their experiences, especially in the context of CX.

'Moments of Truth' are pivotal interactions where customers form critical judgments about a service or product. These moments significantly influence their overall perception and future behaviour towards a brand. According to Meyer and Schwager (2007), CX encompasses every facet of a company's offerings, as well as customers' responses to any contact with the company. In this context, each 'moment of truth' represents a significant touchpoint in the customer journey that can either enhance or detract from the holistic CX. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) note that CX comprises personal interactions at specific points during the experience, highlighting the importance of these critical moments. Furthermore, Pine and Gilmore (1998) emphasise that customers are seeking engaging and memorable experiences. This notion aligns with the concept of 'moments of truth,' as these critical interactions often become the memorable aspects of the customer journey, influencing their satisfaction with the brand.

Alternatively, the peak-end theory, which posits that individuals judge an experience largely based on its most intense points (the peaks) and its end, is highly relevant in evaluating CX. This cognitive bias means that even if a customer's overall journey is satisfactory, their final evaluation may be disproportionately influenced by specific high or low points and the concluding experience. Verhoef et al. (2009) describe CX as a subjective response to both direct and indirect interactions with a retailer, suggesting that the peak moments and the final interaction play a critical role in this subjective evaluation. Bolton et al. (2014) and De Keyser et al. (2015) discuss the multidimensional aspects of CX, including sensory, cognitive, affective, physical, and social identity experiences, all of which can contribute to the peak moments in a customer's journey. The peak-end theory implies that the most emotionally charged (peak) experiences, along with the final interaction (end), will disproportionately influence the customer's overall assessment of their experience.

Integrating 'moments of truth' with the peak-end theory offers a comprehensive understanding of how customers evaluate their experiences. The 'moments of truth' can often be the peak experiences that customers remember most vividly. For instance, a particularly positive or negative interaction with a staff member (a moment of truth) could serve as a peak in the customer's overall journey. Similarly, the final interaction with the brand, as emphasised by the peak-end theory, can leave a lasting impression, influencing the customer's overall evaluation of the experience and their future behaviour, as discussed by Yi and Gong (2008). This understanding aligns with the findings of Sheng and Teo (2012), who note that desirable CX contributes significantly to brand equity, suggesting that effectively managed 'moments of truth' and a positive final interaction can enhance a brand's value in the eyes of the customer.

3.9.3. Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior for Context: A Justification

3.9.3.1. Theory of Planned Behaviour: A Review

One well-established framework to comprehend and predict people's behaviour in different contexts is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991 as an extension of TRA (Theory of Reasoned Action).

Figure 19: Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) Model
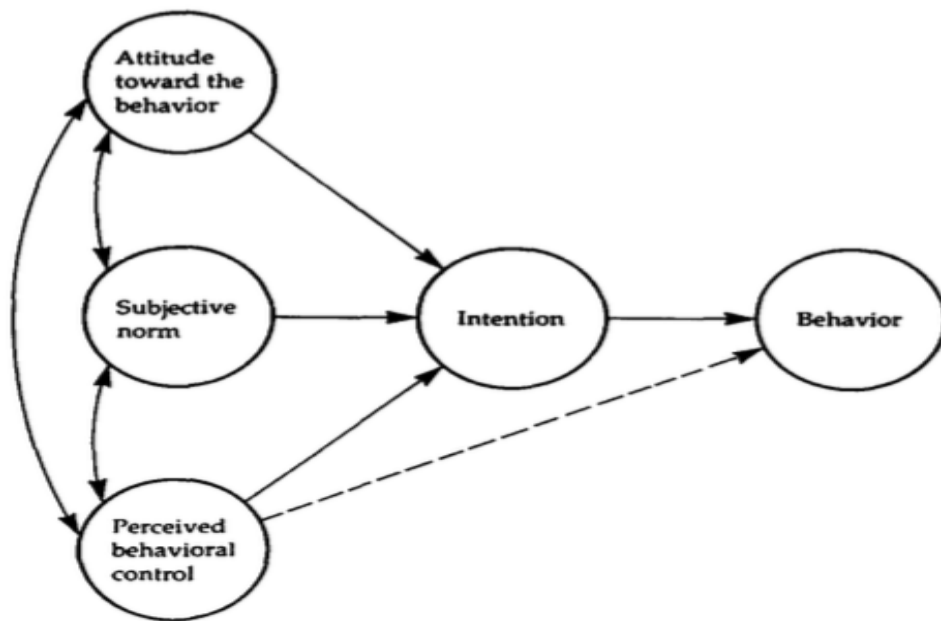
Source: Ajzen, (1991, p. 182)

The theory describes the relationship of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control towards the intent to conduct a particular behaviour (Bitter *et al.,* 2014). It is a model that has been used to explain why individuals make some decisions or engage in a particular line of behaviour; hence, useful in understanding consumer behaviour. Moreover, this is a model that can influence the ability of an individual to purchase a particular product. That is, when customers are following the traditional decision-making process, they all have the target of making sure that they will experience positive outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, the customer's behavioural intent to consume a product or service is influenced by; their attitude towards that certain product, service or brand; what others say regarding the product, service or brand and finally; their ability to purchase the presented product or service (Liobikienė *et al.,* 2016).

3.9.3.2. *Dimensions within the Theory of Planned Behaviour linked to the Current Study*

3.9.3.2.1. *Behavioural Intention*

Behavioural intention is described as a measure of the extent that an individual will partake in a particular behaviour. It is necessary to analyse the behavioural intention to use as consequently, it will become the direct cause of actual use (Rahman and Samarahan, 2020). When linking the variable to the purchase process, the behavioural intent to purchase a product or service is highlighted in the purchase stage (Hussain, 2017) after completing the information search and evaluating the alternatives. According to Venkatesh and Davis (2000) there is a strong association between actual behaviour and behavioural intention. However, research is necessary to explore the behavioural intentions of airline passengers using the entire TPB model (Kim and Lee, 2019).

3.9.3.2.2. *Attitude*

Although the conceptualisation of attitude varies across many disciplines based on previous research, the general conclusion is that attitude can be described as the extent to which an individual has a favourable or unfavourable assessment or appraisal of the behaviour. Indeed, it has been argued that attitude is an important antecedent of behavioural intention as customers increase their willingness to purchase a product or service when they form a positive impression (Rahman and Samarahan, 2020). When linking the variable to the purchase process, attitude may arguably be formed at any stage as customers may form an impression before, during and/or after consuming the product or service. Confirming the positive correlation between intention to use and attitude have been outlined in several studies (e.g. Chen *et al.,* 2007; Liu *et al.,* 2009; Rouibah *et al.,* 2009). Indeed, it has been implied that an individual may achieve a positive outcome when they have a positive attitude towards engaging the specific behaviour. In the tourism sector, the influence of passenger attitude regarding revisit intention

has also been explored and linked to past experience (Huang and Hsu, 2009). Therefore, it is necessary to explore this in an airline context as well regarding re-use of an airline's services.

3.9.3.2.3. *Subjective Norm*

Subjective norms can be described as the perceived social pressure to engage or not to engage in a behaviour by the individual (Ajzen, 1991). This suggests that individuals may not have complete control over their own actions. Similarly, subjective norms can also be described as a utility of normative beliefs, an individual's perception of whether significant members of society approve or disapprove a certain behaviour (Rahman and Samarahan, 2020). When linking the variable to the purchase process, subjective norms may be emphasised during the pre-purchase stage, where customers are searching for information and evaluating the alternatives due to societal influences (i.e. peers) in making the purchase decision. Moreover, previous studies have verified the influence of subjective norms on behavioural intention (e.g. Riemenschneider *et al.,* 2011). For airline passengers, subjective norms influences decision-making with regards to airline and destination choice as many studies indicate the significant impact it had on passenger intention to use in both full service and low-cost carriers (Kim and Lee, 2019). However, the question remains as to whether or not subjective norm is a significant antecedent to intention in an airline context if past experience is present.

3.9.3.2.4. *Perceived Behavioural Control*

Perceived behavioural control refers to the perceived difficulty or ease of conducting the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). When individuals face less obstacles and have more opportunities and resources, they in turn would have a better perceived control over their behaviours. Therefore, it is frequently seen as detrimental in influencing behavioural intention. Moreover, perceived behavioural control is also presumed to reflect past experience. As stated by previous

research, experience plays a significant role in the customer's perception as their confidence increases when they purchase the same product or service (Rahman and Samarahan, 2020). Therefore, when linking the variable to the purchase process, it may be argued that perceived behavioural control can occur at any stage for example, during the purchase stage, customers may perceive the process of conducting a purchase to be easy or difficult. However, the customer may be more motivated to conduct the purchase behaviour (or not) based on their previous experience thus, requiring further research in an airline context.

3.9.3.3. *Critiquing the Theory of Planned Behaviour*

While the theory has been implemented in research for many years (Rahman and Samarahan, 2020), Sommer (2011) describes the TPB as an incomplete model as there is a 72% gap which remains unexplained. Conner and Abraham (2001) stated that in order to improve the theory's predictive power, additional constructs should be added. Indeed, several researchers have explored and expanded the theory further by including additional constructs such as past behaviour (e.g. Wong and Mullan, 2009). In a study conducted by Ouellette and Wood (1998), past behaviour was discovered to have a direct effect on the formation of behavioural intention and the actual behaviour. There is also evidence in numerous studies that past behaviour frequently predicts future behaviour directly however, the inclusion of the construct has stimulated an intense discussion in literature (Sommer, 2011). Therefore, the role past behaviour plays in predicting future behaviour remains unclear.

Based on previous research in this specific field, past behaviour seems to have several variables, one which includes past experience (Sommer, 2011). Although it was not included in the theory, past experience is presumed to have some impact on future behaviour as Ajzen (2005) himself acknowledges that it is a significant variable that influences the original TPB antecedents. In the tourism sector, authors such as Lam and Hsu (2006) explore the effect of

past behaviour on TPB antecedents to predict the choice of travel destination however, research is required in an airline context to explore the effect of past experience on TPB antecedents. Therefore, considering MoT and PET perspectives, it is necessary to analyse the effect of past experience and explore the theory's antecedents, specifically within the airline context.

In an airline context, the TPB has contributed in analysing the intention of passengers in safety issues, environmental issues and low-cost carrier choice behaviours (Kim and Lee, 2019). According to Pan and Truong (2018), the TPB model can be used to explore passengers' repurchase intentions of an airline service. Indeed, while the theory's antecedents play an important role in predicting the customer's behaviour; especially during the pre-purchase stage of the journey, there are mixed views in the literature that suggest the theory is not an accurate framework for CX as it is merely based on social cognition (Jones *et al.,* 2004). Nevertheless, it is worth to explore the theory in relation to past experience to further indicate the possibility of past experience being the primary motivator for making a buying decision and predicting future behaviour (Jacobs *et al.,* 2018).

3.9.4. *Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of Theory of Planned Behaviour for Study Context*

While airline studies have explored the significance of past experience in influencing a customer's behaviour (e.g. Jiang and Zhang, 2016; Pan and Truong, 2018), these studies lack an understanding of the effect that the recollected experience has on purchase intent using the TPB; whether past experience is indeed the primary motivator for purchasing a ticket with an airline carrier. As remarked by Ahmmadi, Rahimian and Movahed (2021), TPB provides a resourceful framework for evaluating and assessing human perceptions and predicting behaviour in different contexts. As previously discussed, the theory proposes that a person's

behavioural intentions are contingent on an interplay of several aspects, namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

According to Ajzen (1991), attitudes represent a person's positive or negative disposition relating to participating in a specific behaviour. As observed by Tran and Nguyen (2022), research has identified that people who believe that engaging in a particular behaviour that is considered rewarding, are more inclined towards participating in that behaviour and vice versa. Thus, attitudes encompass a person's assessment of consequences. This attitude, as explained by Bhatia (2018), is based on belief and expectation. Thus, by exploring this dimension, it would be possible to identify the extent to which airline passengers' past experiences shape their attitudes regarding travelling with the airline in the future based on their assessment.

Moreover, the customer's service experience directly shapes their attitudes towards a product or service. Mustaffa et al. (2016) and Ferguson, Paulin and Bergeron (2010) highlight the personal and subjective nature of these experiences, indicating that a positive service encounter can lead to favourable attitudes. Furthermore, Grewal et al. (2009) and Klaus and Maklan (2012) emphasise the crucial role of exceptional customer experiences in achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty, suggesting that a customer's positive evaluation of their service experience will likely increase their intention to purchase. Additionally, Vargo and Lusch's (2008) service-dominant logic underscores the experiential aspect of value creation, further reinforcing the idea that positive experiences can enhance the perceived value of a service or product, thereby positively influencing attitudes and purchase intentions.

Subjective norms represent a person's assessment of the expectations by others to engage in a behaviour and the significance they attach to this expectation (Ham, Jeger and Frajman Ivković, 2015). Karimi and Saghaleini (2021) argue that it is social pressure in relation to engaging in a specific task, implying that people do not inherently have total authority over behaviours. The extent to which a person is willing to comply with the implied or explicit expectations regarding engaging in a specific behaviour influences their intention, and consequently, their actual engagement. Thus, by exploring this dimension, it would be possible to identify the ways in which peers or relatives can influence airline passengers' decision to travel with the airline in the future, even after their past experience.

Moreover, the role of subjective norms in the TPB is underscored by the interactive nature of service experiences and the influence of networks and communities. Schau et al. (2009) and Cova and Dalli (2009) discuss how customers engage in sharing and co-creating experiences within communities. These shared experiences often form a basis for social norms and expectations regarding a service or product. As Hammervoll (2014) points out, the interactive aspect of service provision, where mutual input from provider and customer is required, can also influence subjective norms. When customers perceive that their peers or social groups view a service or product favourably, based on shared service experiences, their intent to purchase can be significantly affected.

Perceived behavioural control entails an individual's perception of their ability to successfully execute a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). As described by Aitken *et al.* (2020) by including perceived control dimensions, the TPB attests to the cognitive-self-regulation in informing intention and behaviour, thereby factors behaviours that transcend personality traits and entities in the environment. According to Sharma, Mishra, and Nandre (2022), behaviour control revolves around a person's acknowledgement of their self-efficacy and is exemplified

by a person's level of confidence in conducting a certain behaviour. Thus, by exploring this dimension, it would be possible to identify the extent to which past experience influences airline passengers' confidence in choosing to travel with the airline in the future.

Indeed, the customer's service experience can also impact their perceived behavioural control, a key element of the TPB. Leick et al. (2022) highlight the collaborative nature of service provision, involving networks of suppliers and partners, which can influence a customer's perception of accessibility and ease of use of a service. A seamless and supportive service experience can enhance a customer's belief in their ability to effectively use a service, thereby increasing their perceived control over the purchasing process. Furthermore, Fuentes, Smyth and Davies (2019) and Siltaloppi and Nenonen (2013) emphasise the shift towards viewing experiences as collective, co-created phenomena. This shift suggests that customer experiences that are co-created and supported by the provider can enhance the customer's sense of efficacy and control, thereby positively influencing their purchase intentions.

3.9.5. *Conceptual Framework*

Due to the objectives of this study, the researcher's conceptual framework focuses on touchpoint elements, MoTs, PET and TPB. The framework below illustrates how the concepts and theories are integrated as part of the customer experience, thereby shaping the purchase intent.

Figure 20: Author's Conceptual Framework
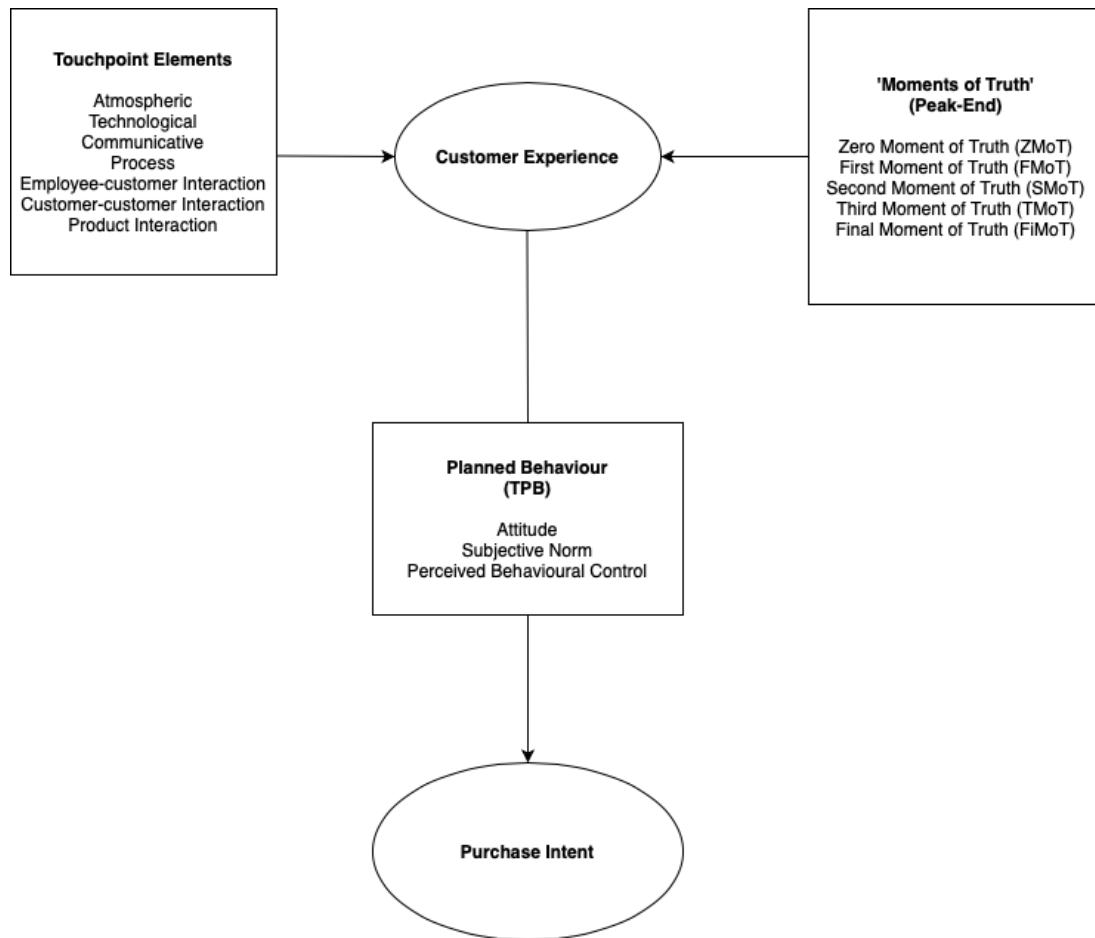
The conceptual framework captures the research topic, which pertains to the examination of touchpoints and their shaping role on purchase intent. The first objective relates to the examination of the touchpoint elements, so the first part of the conceptual framework addresses it. The second objective is to explore the impact of 'moments of truth' and the applicability of the peak-end theory in passengers' evaluations of experiences. This is captured in the second part of the conceptual framework. The 'peak' emotional moment could occur at any of the 'moments of truth', so it is integrated accordingly. The final objective is to investigate how passenger experiences with airline services shape their purchase intent, as interpreted through the lens of the theory of planned behaviour.

An investigation in the foundation of CX reveals that previous theories provide sufficient ground for the development of the concept (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). However, theoretical frameworks are yet to be established and validated. Most of the studies have emerged from industry and scholarly studies are few (Jain *et al.,* 2017). There is also no consensus on how to measure CX (Bueno *et al.,* 2019). Therefore, there is a strong need to establish a well-developed framework that can be generalised across industries as CX has become a key focus in the marketing discipline (De Keyser *et al.,* 2015). Companies focusing on CX would also provide opportunities for theory development (Jain *et al.,* 2017).

To further elaborate on the conceptual framework, the framework draws heavily from the intricate fabric of service marketing theory, most notably the SERVQUAL model. SERVQUAL, a well-established model in service marketing, outlines five dimensions of service quality, namely, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Ladhari, 2009). While SERVQUAL's dimensions are not particularly included in the conceptual framework (justification p.114), they nonetheless serve as the foundation for evaluating service quality and customer expectations in the airline industry.

This literature introduces and explores in depth, the concept of customer experience (CX). The literature acknowledges the multifaceted nature of CX, emphasising its emotional, behavioural, cognitive, sensorial, and social components. These components, when viewed through the lens of SERVQUAL, provide a holistic understanding of how customers perceive and evaluate their experiences with a service provider, despite the criticism received (e.g. Laming and Mason, 2014). Specifically, touchpoints, defined as personal interactions between the company and the customer, emerge as critical junctures in the customer journey where service quality is assessed.

The framework's incorporation of the 'moments of truth' adds another layer of complexity to the understanding of customer experience. MoTs are pivotal moments in the customer's journey where their perceptions and expectations are significantly influenced. These moments can range from initial research (ZMoT) to the actual purchase (FMoT) and even post-purchase reflections. When juxtaposed with SERVQUAL, these moments can be seen as opportunities for service providers to excel in the aforementioned dimensions, particularly in terms of reliability, responsiveness, and assurance by the airline firms in this case. Accordingly, the intersection between the different 'moments of truth' and the customers' experiences with the touchpoints at different stages is undeniable.

Moreover, the Peak-End Theory integrated into the framework underlines the importance of specific touchpoints in shaping overall customer perceptions. While SERVQUAL emphasises consistent quality across all service dimensions, PET accentuates the significance of peak experiences and end evaluations. This is in line with the literature's assertion that while all touchpoints matter, certain pivotal moments, especially those that evoke strong emotions, have a disproportionate influence on the overall evaluation. For example, during a 10-hour flight, a passenger might receive consistent and satisfactory services throughout. However, if they encounter a particularly memorable incident, such as an exceptionally warm gesture from a cabin crew member during a turbulent phase, or a considerable delay in receiving their pre-ordered meal, these specific experiences would disproportionately shape their overall perception of the flight, overshadowing the consistent quality they experienced for the majority of their journey. Such peak moments, whether positive or negative, tend to stay etched in memory, influencing the final evaluation more profoundly than the cumulative experience.

The reason for considering TPB in the thesis is the acknowledgement by several authors including Carrera *et al.* (2012) and Pan and Truong (2018) that intention and behaviours are not inherently random. The argument is that touchpoints provide an avenue to enhance the customer's experience and satisfaction through instances or MoTs that shape factors such as attitude towards an airline, which could be leveraged to inform airline passengers' behaviours. Other variables such as national culture, can influence the behaviour based on the SQ expectation and what touchpoint elements are deemed significant for the individual. For instance, a Chinese passenger may place a high significance on the employee-customer interaction element, thereby influencing their SQ expectation and future behaviour. Indeed, by applying the theory and consulting recent research, this study seeks to identify the why and how the selected touchpoint elements and stated MoTs consequently shape passengers' purchase intent.

In essence, the conceptual framework amalgamates key tenets of service marketing with modern perspectives on customer experience. It recognises the evolution of service marketing theory, acknowledging the need for a more nuanced understanding that goes beyond traditional metrics. Accordingly, by integrating touchpoint elements, MoTs, PET and TPB, the framework offers a comprehensive lens through which the complexities of the airline passenger experience can be understood and evaluated. This synthesis not only reflects the current state of academic discourse but also paves the way for future investigations into the dynamic realm of customer experience.

3.10 Reasons for Theory Selection

The study on airline passengers' experiences and their subsequent purchase intent integrates two pivotal theories, the Peak-End Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior. The amalgamation of these theories in the research is not coincidental but stems from the inherent

characteristics of the air travel experience and the associated psychological responses of passengers.

In relation to peak-end theory, air travel experiences are unique in that they comprise multiple touchpoints, with each touchpoint having the potential to significantly influence a passenger's overall perception of the journey. The PET posits that individuals evaluate experiences based on the most intense (peak) moments and the final moments (Alaybek et al., 2022). Given that air travel includes various touchpoints with varying intensities of experiences, the PET provides a framework to discern which moments are most impactful in shaping passengers' evaluations. The literature underscores the relevance of peak moments, such as the in-flight experience or instances of exceptional service or mishap. Alternatively, the theory of planned behaviour elucidates the relationship between individuals' beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and actual behaviours. In the context of air travel, passengers' experiences (influenced by peak moments) shape their attitudes and satisfaction levels, which in turn influence their intentions to repurchase or recommend an airline's services. The TPB provides a holistic perspective, linking past experiences, present evaluations, and future behaviours.

3.11 Inclusion of PET and TPB versus other Theories

The decision to foreground the peak-end theory and the theory of planned behaviour in this study was a calculated one, ensuring alignment with the specific context and nuances of airline passenger experiences. However, it is worth elaborating on other notable theories that, while relevant in many service contexts, were side-lined in favour of the chosen theoretical duo. While PET and TPB are integral to the study, other theories, such as the expectation confirmation theory and service quality models, might have been considered. These theories, although relevant in the domain of service experiences, might not encapsulate the multifaceted nature of airline passenger journeys or might be redundant when combined with the selected

theories. The study sought to streamline its theoretical foundation to avoid overlaps in understanding the unique dynamics of airline experiences.

The expectation confirmation theory (ECT) is rooted in the premise that post-purchase satisfaction is determined by the gap between initial expectations and perceived performance (Oh et al., 2022). If a service or product surpasses or meets the initial expectations, satisfaction is typically high. In the context of air travel, passengers enter with a set of expectations: timely departures, courteous staff, in-flight amenities, and more. When these expectations are met or exceeded, they are more likely to report satisfaction; if not, dissatisfaction ensues. While ECT provides a robust lens to view customer satisfaction, it primarily hinges on the preconceived expectations and post-experience confirmation or disconfirmation. The airline industry, with its myriad of touchpoints and potential for fluctuating experiences, requires a more nuanced approach, one that can account for unexpected moments of delight or disappointment beyond just expectation confirmation, which PET aptly provides.

Moreover, service quality models, such as SERVQUAL, measure the discrepancy between customers' expectations and their perceptions of the actual service performance. The model evaluates service quality based on dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. While undeniably valuable for many service industries, applying such a model to the airline industry could be restrictive. Airline passenger experiences are not just about service quality; they encompass a journey, punctuated with moments that can significantly sway overall perceptions. The multifaceted nature of this journey, from booking to landing, is more than just a service quality evaluation. It is about moments that stand out (PET) and the resultant behaviours and intentions (TPB).

Given the rich tapestry of experiences in air travel, it was imperative for the study to adopt theories that could capture the depth and breadth of these experiences. While ECT and

SERVQUAL offer valuable insights into service satisfaction and quality, respectively, they might not wholly encapsulate the dynamism of airline passenger journeys. Moreover, combining them with PET and TPB could introduce overlaps and dilute the focus. For instance, while ECT and PET both touch upon satisfaction, PET's emphasis on peak moments offers a unique vantage point, especially relevant for the unpredictable nature of air travel. Similarly, while SERVQUAL evaluates service quality, TPB provides a comprehensive understanding of how these quality perceptions translate into future behaviours.

3.12 Limitations and Management of Limitations

A primary limitation of the PET is its potential oversimplification. It focuses on peak and end moments (Alaybek, 2022), and might consequently overlook other significant events or touchpoints in a journey. However, in the context of air travel, where the journey comprises distinct stages, the PET aptly captures moments that significantly deviate from the norm, which are instrumental in shaping overall evaluations. Likewise, TPB, while comprehensive, might not account for external factors or spontaneous behaviours. Air travel experiences are not always planned, and passengers might not always act based on intention due to unforeseen circumstances or external influences. To manage these limitations, the study employed a holistic approach by examining a wide range of touchpoints and moments of truth, ensuring that the data captured is expansive and not restricted by the theoretical frameworks.

Regarding the question of whether a complex mental evaluation can be examined using a simplistic framework like PET, the answer is arguably, yes. While PET is seemingly simplistic, it taps into the profound psychological principle that intense and final moments often overshadow other experiences. Especially in a setting such as air travel, where experiences can vary from mundane to intense, PET provides a lens to filter out the most impactful moments. This study requires both PET and TPB because air travel experiences are both episodic and consequential. While PET helps understand which episodes or touchpoints

are most influential, TPB bridges the gap between those experiences and the subsequent behaviours of passengers, be it repurchasing, recommending, or avoiding an airline service.

3.13 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, scholarly works on the CX domain have been outlined, including its conceptualisation, characterisation and management. From this analysis, it would be plausible to argue the domain has received significant attention, but research is still inexhaustive given the numerous perspectives. However, the benefits and the mechanisms through which customer experiences account for desirable organisational outcomes are evident, specifically because positive experiences contribute to customer satisfaction and desirable behaviours. Even negative experiences provide awareness of concerns that could be integrated into innovation objectives and processes.

The chapter has also examined the concept of touchpoints, PET and MoT. These aspects seem to be in their infancy, especially in relation to their application in customer affairs. Nonetheless, their inclusion in the study on the customer journey paradigm is continually incentivising renewed approaches as companies explore avenues and methodologies to create and sustain positive impressions amongst their customers. Segmenting the customer journey into touchpoints and MoTs as the reviewed literature implies, enhances a company's ability to recognise impactful yet typically superseded factors that may undermine efforts to improve customer journey outcomes.

Limited literature addresses the nexus of long-haul flights and frequent flyers concerning customer experience. However, there are a few studies that approach the issue from unique perspectives. Laming and Mason (2014) explored customer experience in long-haul flights, highlighting its goal of satisfaction throughout the journey for brand loyalty and advocacy. Their study surveyed 18,567 passengers across fifteen major airlines, revealing the

critical roles of cabin features and crew in satisfaction. In contrast, factors such as airline continent, individual airline, and flight class had minimal impact. Moreover, considering that the long-haul flights provide more touchpoints, and frequent flyers have more experience with the aforementioned touchpoints, the researcher made them the focus of the sample of this study, as illustrated in the discussion of methods in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

4.1. *Introduction*

This chapter discusses in detail the research design process and the methodological choice for this study. It highlights the philosophical paradigm, the research approach, as well as a justification of the methodological choice for the research objectives. Specifically, it explains why the sequential incident (interviewing) technique is considered appropriate for this research. Additionally, this chapter highlights the interview questions and participation selection along with an explanation of the data analysis. Finally, this chapter entails the ethical considerations, research limitations and potential risks when collecting the data.

4.2. Philosophical Perspectives and Assumptions

Philosophical paradigms may be defined as a collection of viewpoints that determine what should be examined, how to conduct research and how to interpret the outcomes (Bryman, 2008). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a paradigm includes the researcher's concept of reality and truth, namely, ontology, how a researcher comes to comprehend that reality or truth, i.e. epistemology, and what is considered valuable knowledge, i.e. axiology.

4.2.1. Ontology

Ontology may be described as the nature of truth and reality as well as the beliefs researchers have about the function of the world and the obligation held to certain viewpoints. Therefore, regarding ontological belief, the researcher must respond to the inquiry of reality's nature or essence (Almeida, 2013). Ontology includes the conceptions about the reality of and relationship between individuals, society, and the world (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Two divided points of view in ontology appear; objectivism, usually adopted by positivists and subjectivism or constructivism, usually adopted by interpretivists. An objectivist emphasises that the existence of social reality is independent of social actors, thus, viewing the world from an external lens with a single objective reality to any research circumstance or phenomenon, irrespective of the researcher's belief or viewpoint. Therefore, regarding both society and organisation, an individual may deliberate social entity as something in the same manner that physical researchers examine physical phenomena. Moreover, objectivists view individuals as being an exposed product of external reality, merely working as reacting contrivances that are restricted in their contribution as a researcher of social reality (Boru, 2018).

Contrastingly, sense and fact do not exist in some external world, but rather occur from the subjects' imposition of the object (subjectivism) or formed by the subject's exchanges with the world (constructivism). Subjectivists or constructivists, therefore, oppose the view of objectivism and regard social reality as a product of human imagination, assuming that individuals are able to discover meanings to the phenomena and occurrences that surround them, thus being able to structure reality within their experiences and insights about it. Indeed, objectivists and subjectivists' views on individuals and existence are divided, allowing for distinct ontological statements regarding the two extremes (Boru, 2018).

Regarding the ontological position of this study, the researcher assumes the subjectivist's view of reality, with a belief that a physical or natural world exists that is

examined by human beings to understand and adapt to their surroundings. The study theme which is examining airline passengers' experiences is, therefore, derived from the interpretation of reality in the social world having a subjectivist orientation. Moreover, the researcher recognises the significant involvement from the social actors that are involved in this study. The perspectives of such individuals would provide an opportunity to better comprehend the realities of the passenger journey in its entirety.

4.2.2. *Epistemology*

Epistemology is a study of knowledge and is regarded as what we consider to be true knowledge. Moreover, it involves creating a relationship between knowledge, truth, reason, belief and reality (Gordon, 2017) and promotes the justification of our beliefs (Holma and Hyytinen, 2015). Simply put, an epistemological problem examines the question of what is (or must be) viewed as suitable knowledge in an area of study provided with the notion that human beings desire to understand the world they live in. Positivists enter the world impartially, seeking absolute knowledge of the truth. The researcher and the subject of the study are separate entities. Therefore, meaning lies entirely in the subject under investigation, not in the researcher's judgment, and it is the researcher's goal to uncover this meaning (Scotland, 2012). On the other hand, interpretivists view that the world does not exist without our understanding of it (Grix, 2018). Meaning is not discovered, rather, it is created through the exchange of consciousness and the world. Thus, truth is an agreement produced by co-constructors (Scotland, 2012).

Regarding this study's epistemological position, the researcher assumes the belief that knowledge is founded and shaped by human experiences. The researcher estimates that there are some realities pertaining to individuals' experiences that may impact an airline's performance. Therefore, it mainly considers the need to discover meanings by analysing the passenger's construction of their reality, and the meaning they attach to such realities by

interpreting what has occurred during their journey with an airline. Indeed, by conducting an in-depth analysis, this research aims to answer the 'what' and 'why' questions based on the passenger's perspective and knowledge (experiences) gathered.

4.2.3. Axiology

Axiology is the study of human values and valuation mechanisms (Creswell, 1998). Lincoln *et al.* (2011) relates axiology to three philosophical areas of research; ethics, aesthetics and religion. For scholars, axiological assumptions refer to the values that impact our work yet are often disregarded, unacknowledged or incorrectly universalised. Indeed, values motivate an individual to do what is right and refrain from what is wrong. It is by comprehending the individual's values that help determine a motive in conducted activities (Frunză, 2017). Moreover, axiology seeks to comprehend the nature, impact and judgment derived from these values. The questions remain as to which values are considered more important, whether or not there are values that are considered better than others. According to Heron and Reason (1997), axiological questions such as what is considered to be 'intrinsically valuable knowledge', involves almost every aspect of research across various disciplines, including research questions, methodologies, ethics and quality principles. For these reasons, Lincoln *et al.* (2011) argue that axiology is part of the core foundational philosophical components of paradigm proposal and is just as significant as ontology and epistemology (Peers, 2018).

The positivist's axiological position is beneficence (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). It pertains to the necessity that all studies should be conducted with the purpose of maximising favourable results for the research project, humanity as a whole, and the participants of the study (Martens, 2015). However, because positivism places a strong emphasis on objectivity, it dismisses the significance of individuals' ideals and subjective experiences. Thus, requiring the researcher to remain objective and avoid interacting with the participants while collecting data (Park *et al.,* 2020). On the other hand, the interpretivist's axiological position is balanced

(Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). It entails that the study's results will reflect the researcher's values, with the purpose of presenting a balanced account of the findings. Interpretivists believe that the research process cannot be separated from the researcher's values. Thus, the researcher should embrace and express their values rather than discarding them (Ponterotto, 2005).

Regarding this study's axiological position, the researcher recognises that the study is somewhat influenced by the researcher's values. The data from this assumption may be interpreted as being 'co-constructed' between the researcher and the participants (for e.g. during the interview, expressed through the researcher's body language, phrasing and flexibility of questions) (Markula and Silk, 2011). Therefore, there is often a focus on employing reflexivity; which is the examination of one's own views and actions having an influence on the research, to limit researcher bias and recognise the influence of the researcher's views on this cocreation (Holloway, 1997). Indeed, scholars tend to highlight and embrace how research knowledges are co-constructed and regularly let their axiological contributions impact their work (Atkinson, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

4.3.   Research Paradigm Continuum

4.3.1. Positivism

The two essentially different and opposing views are positivism and interpretivism (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). Positivism aims to explain key practical issues, investigate assumptions and determine accurate causal connections through statistical examination (Kim, 2003). Positivism suggests that through an external existence, the social world and its features should be analysed from an objective lens, where the viewer is independent from what is being viewed or observed. This reality may be expressed by the components and measured accurately since there is only one reality (Onwuegbuzie, 2002). The researcher, commonly adopting a deductive approach, should therefore; concentrate on evidence, identify causality among

variables, prepare and examine hypotheses, and analyse concepts so that quantitative methods are implemented (Park *et al., 2020*).

4.3.2. *Interpretivism*

In contrast to positivists, interpretivists argue that any effort to explain social reality must be focused on the experiences of individuals of that social reality. Through qualitative methods, the focus will therefore be on attempting to explain what is happening to then formulate models, insights or theories from the information gathered; commonly adopting an inductive approach. In this regard, researchers interact with what is investigated and attempt to minimise the distance between one another (Boru, 2018). Therefore, reality can be viewed as being influenced by social constructions and is viewed subjectively (Lincoln *et al., 2011*). Interpretivism differs from other philosophical paradigms in that it aims to provide richness in the subjective insights obtained (Myers, 2019). It is more concerned with substantial context and views humans as distinct from physical phenomena in that they produce greater depth in meanings; based on the notion that human beings cannot be investigated in the same way that physical phenomena can. Interpretivism also includes the differences in cultures, situations and the times that lead to the formation of various social realities.

4.3.3. *Justification of Chosen Research Paradigm*

In this study, the researcher assumes the interpretivism viewpoint. The researcher recognises knowledge as the basis of the world's reality, where individuals learn, live, and experience. However, knowledge should be investigated by comprehending the role that individuals play in social reality. Therefore, the interpretivist position is significant in understanding knowledge through several individuals' perspectives. Furthermore, the researcher regards each participant's experience as insightful and unique to the individual. The various perspectives gathered from passengers is crucial not only to achieve the objectives of this research, but for airline managers to understand the passenger journey from the

passenger's point of view. Rather, it adds value to the repertoire of challenges airlines face regarding service encounters and customer satisfaction. Indeed, it is by performing an in-depth analysis of subjective customer narratives that rich and valuable information is obtained and therefore, the interpretivism paradigm is assumed as the philosophical stance.

Moreover, there are various qualities the study would adopt and benefit from through following the interpretivist paradigm. First, it would enable the researcher to investigate in-depth individual experiences as interpretivism considers the individual's meanings and role rather than investigating generalised measurements or causality. Second, it would enable the researcher to further explore these experiences by adopting qualitative designs and methodologies. Finally, it supports the usage of experience as being a highly significant contribution and factor to consider in scientific research. According to Moustakas (1994), experience is essentially integrated within subjects and objects leading to valuable outcomes and insights.

As a paradigm, interpretivism implies that reality is subjective and can alter depending on the individual. Therefore, this may lead to the assumption that participants would not provide general perspectives, but rather, perspectives based on their own individual truths (Scotland, 2012). According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), since the data acquired and analysed are primarily dependent on particular contexts, perspectives and values, applying the interpretivist paradigm would make it less likely for the findings to be generalised. However, Myers (2019) argues that the interpretivism paradigm is not concerned with attaining generality but rather, is concerned with providing substantial insights of particular contexts such as conducting cross-cultural research and studying variables affecting development through gathering various individual perspectives and interpreting the qualitative data. Therefore, adopting the interpretivist's viewpoint may lead to the formation of high-quality data as it is based on individual insights with consideration of several factors (Myers, 2019).

This unique perspective based on context and situation, provides interpretive researchers with the necessary depth of information that may not be apparent with paradigms such as positivism as the researcher is more focused on a particular topic rather than attaining generality (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020).

Moreover, in addition to positivism and interpretivism, there exist other philosophical paradigms such as realism and pragmatism (Allmark and Machaczek, 2018). Realism is a philosophical paradigm that emphasises logic and the views of the world as it is rather than the unknown beliefs. It provides that the actual entity of the world is seen, perceived and observed through our senses. For example, if a, b and c exist and have properties that include d, e and f, the existence will not change despite what an individual thinks, believes or perceives. Much like positivism, the paradigm is characterised by objectiveness and facts, hence, desires and feelings are considered subjective and secondary (Allmark and Machaczek, 2018).

Pragmatism is a philosophical paradigm that entails that the success of any plan stems from action and practice. It emphasises action, experience, practicality as well as logic and dictates that for an idea or proposition to be considered satisfactory, it must be practical and if not, should be rejected (Allmark and Machaczek, 2018). While there are some ontological commonalities between pragmatism and interpretivism in the construction of meanings through social interaction, the main differences lie in their epistemological and axiological orientations. The key feature of interpretivism is understanding, as a value of its own, with data generation being conducted through field work and interpretation. In pragmatism, constructive knowledge is highlighted, and understanding is seen as crucial in relation to the change of existence, with inquiry being the main type of investigation (Goldkuhl, 2012). Indeed, these paradigms were not considered suitable by the researcher.

4.4.   Methodological Approach Adopted to Obtain Knowledge

4.4.1. Research Design

A research design is the total procedures of gathering, analysing, understanding and reporting data during research. It consists of the overall strategy for connecting the theoretical research problems with the relevant and attainable empirical research. To sum up, the research design describes the procedure on the essential data, the application of methods to gather and analyse this data to then finally, answer the research questions (Wahyuni, 2012). There are three potential modes of research design, as described by Robson (2002): exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Its classification basis is dependent on the research area's intent, since each design serves a different purpose. For example, the purpose of a descriptive study is to give a picture of an individual, situation or occurrence to illustrate how things naturally occur and are connected to each other (Blumberg *et al.,* 2005). Descriptive studies, however, cannot clarify why an occurrence has occurred therefore, alternative study models such as an exploratory or explanatory approach are suggested.

While explanatory research is conducted in order to identify the nature and magnitude of cause and effect relationships, exploratory research is carried out when a phenomenon and an issue that has not been clearly identified is not sufficiently understood. Exploratory research does not intend to provide the final and definitive answers but rather, aims to provide a deep understanding of the research focus by exploring unclarified issues and subjects that are heavily under-researched. Indeed, this research mode forms the foundation for a more conclusive, definitive research and defines the preliminary research design, methodology sampling and method for collecting the data (Boru, 2018).

As discussed in previous chapters, the aim of the research is to examine touchpoints and their shaping role on purchase intent. To achieve this, the study drew upon subjective passenger perspectives and travel experiences, justifying the study's qualitative nature and the

need for understanding the experiences within the journey. Therefore, the researcher argues that the exploratory approach is the appropriate research design as it responds to the why, how and what aspect of the research questions to offer insights and discover the meanings behind these perspectives. According to Eisenhardt *et al.* (2016), this research type offers a better understanding of the problem and familiarity with the existing issue. Due to its features in the context of research, this design is important in exploring several passenger experiences at different journey stages.

Furthermore, this study adopted inductive reasoning to collect and integrate data. Ryder *et al.* (2019) argued that inductive reasoning does not disregard existing evidence and theories but rather, delves into the finer details of a research topic and assists in drawing conclusions made from observations. This research did not employ hypotheses since its aim is to investigate various ideas, concepts, theories and beliefs that are conveyed through customer experiences rather than to test and prove a theory. Indeed, inductive reasoning is characterised by a search for patterns and is considered data driven (Graneheim *et al.,* 2017) which reflects the very purpose of this study.

4.5. *Schools of Thought: Qualitative, Quantitative or Mixed Method*

In general, there are three methods for conducting a study; qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. A qualitative research approach is concerned with the feelings, opinions and behaviours of individuals while a quantitative approach is concerned with statistics and testing hypotheses. A mixed method approach combines both the qualitative and quantitative approaches into one study (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Moreover, based on the research design, objectives and questions, the study focused on collecting and analysing data by interacting with the participants and exploring their narratives, therefore, a qualitative research approach was assumed.

4.5.1. *Qualitative Research*

Qualitative research is a nonnumeric research method intended to provide the researcher with a way to perceive a phenomenon through observing or engaging with the research participants; explicitly identifying underlying opinions and motivations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Qualitative researchers are therefore, investigating phenomena regarding the meanings that individuals bring to them and/or describing phenomena as they occur in the natural environment; evaluating the patterns of information to determine developments or trends. Indeed, one of the main benefits of qualitative approaches is that they have the ability to produce substantial explanations of individuals' thought processes and seek to reflect on 'why' an event has occurred (Rahman, 2020). Below are some advantages as well as disadvantages to conducting qualitative research according to Rahman (2020);

4.5.1.1. *Advantages of Qualitative Research*

i) Qualitative research can monitor changing attitudes or perspectives among a target group, such as product or service customers, or attitudes in the company or business environment.

ii) Qualitative research approaches are not bound by the constraints of quantitative techniques as the data may still be considered beneficial even if the responses are not up to par with the researcher's expectations. Indeed, qualitative data adds context and meaning to which figures alone are unable to uncover.

iii) Qualitative research allows for a lot more flexibility. Researchers can easily modify questions, switch the setting, or change any other variable to improve responses if valuable insights are not captured.

iv) Researchers are able to be far more exploratory about the areas they would like to examine upon collecting qualitative data. Moreover, it allows for the researcher to instinctually prompt the data or questions to further obtain insightful information.

v)   Qualitative research has the advantage of being more focused. If performance is to be analysed across an entire company, then all elements, processes and individuals should be considered. Indeed, qualitative research allows for useful data to be obtained by sampling and concentrating on particular groups or individuals.

4.5.1.2.   *Disadvantages of Qualitative Research*

i)   The sample size can be a significant concern. For example, if data is gathered from 5 employees out of 200, this raises the question of whether the sample will accurately reflect the views of the remaining 97.5% of the company.

ii)   Sample bias is also another concern when conducting qualitative research as views of the participants may consciously or unconsciously reflect the researcher's anticipated outcome as a result of the selection of that sample.

iii)   Concerns that the participants are not being asked the proper questions. The only answers the researcher receives are from the questions that were thought of. In qualitative research, asking about 'how' and 'why' may be extremely useful, however, if researchers do not ask the right questions, that valuable insight may be overlooked.

The truth is that any research method has both advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of the limitations of each approach for effective data collection.

4.5.1.3.   *Limitations of Qualitative Research*

i)   It has a small sample size.

One of the major disadvantages of qualitative research is the limited number of perspectives gathered (Chetty, 2016). This is understandable as gathering and analysing 'quality' data takes time to process. Also, as with any research, there exists a timeframe of completing the work, therefore, limiting the number of individuals to gather data from.

Qualitative studies focus on gathering and analysing deeper insights rather than general quantitative statistics, which explains the increased time it would take to complete the research, thus, limiting the sample size. This limitation was handled by properly managing the research and setting a realistic completion time (see appendix 14) as well as selecting a sample size based on the data reaching saturation.

ii)   It is difficult to avoid unnecessary data.

During analysis, there existed data that may be considered unnecessary to fulfil the research objectives, since interviews frequently divert from the investigated primary topic (Al Maghaireh et al., 2016). This may seem inevitable with collecting qualitative data however, data that seems unnecessary or unrelated to the research focus may be considered an insight that would be beneficial to the researcher in some way or another. Therefore, the researcher has handled this limitation by constantly diverting the interview back to the research focus while also remaining flexible and open to valuable insights.

iii)   It is difficult to verify the results.

Since qualitative research is more open-ended, participants have more influence over the content of the data gathered. As a result, the researcher is unable to objectively evaluate and verify the findings to the situations indicated by the participants (Starman, 2013). While this may seem like a limitation, the different 'biased' perspectives gathered is the whole point. The qualitative researcher is not searching for an absolute 'verifiable' truth, rather, is concerned with the participants' perspective of that truth, despite not being able to verify their narratives.

iv)   It is difficult to explore causality.

Qualitative research requires careful planning to guarantee that the results obtained are accurate. There are no mathematical means to assess qualitative data. This type of study is more concerned with opinion and perception rather than statistical results (Bimrose and

Hearne, 2012). Therefore, it is difficult to replicate qualitative studies as all the acquired data are considered 'unique' perspectives. Indeed, this limitation could not be avoided as the purpose and function of qualitative research, which is perspective-based, is completely different from quantitative research which is measure-based. Where one seeks a deeper understanding of things, the other seeks statistical representations.

4.5.2. *Rationale for Adopting Qualitative Approach*

Indeed, this study's qualitative position involves conducting in-depth interviews with passengers from diverse backgrounds to answer the research questions and provide insights. The qualitative analysis in this research is justified not only from the significance of gathering passenger experiences and insights for the research evaluation but also, from its helpful contributions. These contributions include; first, providing useful comparison between the passengers' perception of the touchpoints within the journey and the service encounter perceived by the airline. Second, qualitative techniques are helpful in analysing the passengers' purchase behaviours based on their experiences with the airline. Finally, the qualitative approach provides an in-depth examination of passengers that would benefit airline managers in a highly competitive market. Therefore, the researcher argues that the qualitative approach provides a comprehensive outlook that is vital for this study and the commercial airline industry.

Moreover, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), the issues of reliability and validity are handled differently in qualitative studies compared to quantitative studies yet, remain significant aspects to both. This is because qualitative studies have no aim to establish a quantitative measure of reliability and validity. Stenbacka (2001) described reliability in quantitative methods as a goal of 'explaining' and in qualitative methods as 'creating understanding'. Indeed, while qualitative researchers are differentiated by having an interpretivist outlook when analysing the collected data, there remains an ongoing debate about

whether the terms validity or reliability are applicable to assess qualitative research (Noble and Smith, 2015).

4.6.   *Data Collection*

Considering the statements above, the researcher follows an exploratory (inductive) research design that is conducted through qualitative methods to investigate airline passenger experiences. Data for qualitative research may be gathered from various sources of information including; archive records, documents, surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, etc. (Yin, 2003). For example, qualitative survey research denotes a research methodology applied in gaining information about a subject matter (Rahman, 2020). For instance, if an individual operates a restaurant and wants to improve the business, a survey will be conducted to ensure the customers respond and rate their satisfaction with the restaurant and its menu. Focus groups are also a method put in place for qualitative data research. Focus groups occur between a small group of people who discuss their thoughts on a given subject (Noble and Smith, 2015). For instance, individuals can interact and exchange ideas on how the target customers can accept a product in business. The source of their information usually is research and personal experiences. In-depth interviews are also an effective method in collecting qualitative data and it involves a one-on-one interaction between the interviewer and participant to collect information concerning a topic (Roulston and Choi, 2018).

For the purposes of this research, the author found that conducting in-depth interviews was the most effective method for data collection as the research is concerned with understanding the passengers' perspectives and travel experiences. Indeed, communicating one-on-one through interviews can guarantee a collection of detailed personal experiences as participants may feel more comfortable sharing their narratives intimately rather than in a group setting.

4.6.1. Interviews

As mentioned, in-depth interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data and was complemented by a review of the several gaps in the study's literature that aided in formulating the appropriate interview questions. Interviews were selected as they provide the researcher with in-depth narratives containing experiences and insights. Therefore, it was considered appropriate for this research to obtain valuable and detailed information from passengers' perspectives.

Moreover, there are three methods of interview design that may be implemented to obtain valuable information. These include; structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Qu and Dumay, 2011). A structured interview refers to an interview where the interviewer asks planned and predetermined questions. It allows the interviewer to conduct the interviews quickly and helps in quantifying the research (Roulston and Choi, 2018). However, structured interviews lack flexibility as only specific questions are asked. On the other hand, unstructured interviews do not use a specific set of questions. The interviewer asks random questions based on the research topic (Roulston and Choi, 2018). Moreover, a semi-structured interview asks the participants being interviewed predetermined but open-ended questions. It allows an interviewer to ask open-ended questions rather than straightforward questions and answer format (Ramsden, 2016).

In this research, the interview questions were formed to be semi-structured as they allowed the research to gain from both structured and unstructured (open-ended) approaches. The structured aspect provided the significant questions that helped define the areas that need investigating whereas the unstructured aspect allowed the interviewee as well as the researcher to deviate productively in order to expand an idea more thoroughly. A total of 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted to reveal multiple CX narratives, however, participants

17 and 25 were later removed because they were ineligible for the long-haul flights that are the subject of this study. The participants were coded by number, and therefore, despite there being 29 participants, there are participants whose ID is Participant 31 and 30 respectively. The average interview duration was approximately 20 minutes. The interview transcripts are found in appendix 15.

Furthermore, the participants were guided and prompted through a sequence of touchpoints from the beginning to the end of their journey with the airline. The touchpoints that were selected represent the passenger journey with an airline in general. The participants were politely asked to answer the interview questions and their responses recorded with their permission. Moreover, interviews were carried out online through Zoom since most participants were spread across various continents. The global pandemic (Coronavirus) was also another reason why interviews were conducted online as there were travel as well as gathering restrictions. The researcher has audio recorded the interviews and saved the raw data from the recordings (.mp4 format) on a laptop computer (MacBook). The laptop is password protected and there were no challenges in accessing or transferring the data once recorded. There is also currently over 100GB storage on the computer to ensure space for the collected data.

Moreover, in order to answer the research questions, the author interviewed the participants using the sequential incident technique (SIT). The SIT adopts the story-telling approach of the critical incident technique (CIT) while also collecting regular and uncritical incidents. An understanding of the CIT is needed to further justify the use of the SIT method for this study.

4.6.1.1. Critical Incident Technique

There is an implied assumption that the incidents that occur at the touchpoints are the reasons why customers choose to switch service-providers. The most commonly used

technique employed to research such MoTs is the critical incident technique (CIT) (Edvardsson and Roos, 2001). The CIT is a qualitative research interviewing method designed to gather observations of human behaviour and has been described by service researchers as offering a number of benefits (Gremler, 2004). First, the information gathered is from the participant's viewpoint and their own narrative (Edvardsson, 2015). This provides a valuable source of information by allowing participants to determine their most significant incidents for the phenomenon being researched. Indeed, this also allows the participants to have a range of responses within the overall context of the study.

Second, there are no distinctive presumptions of what would be significant to the participant with the CIT; that is, the context is formed entirely from the viewpoint of the participant. Indeed, this technique represents the usual way individuals think and does not impose any given structure. Throughout the interview, participants are simply asked to recall particular incidents to provide a thorough account of their own experiences and may use their own language and expressions (Stauss and Weinlich, 1997). Therefore, CIT is an appealing research method as it can produce clear, concrete information and does not confine observations to a restricted set of behaviours or variables (Gremler, 2004).

Third, this research method is inductive in nature (Gremler, 2004). The CIT method is particularly useful when; the research topic has been scarcely documented, as an exploratory approach to increase awareness about a phenomenon that is under-researched, or when a detailed understanding is required when explaining a phenomenon (Bitner *et al.,* 1990). CIT may be especially useful when used in forming the conceptual framework (e.g. hypotheses) to be applied and tested in future research (Walker and Truly, 1992). The CIT approach does not encompass a rigid set of guidelines to be followed and does not depend on a limited number of fixed variables, but rather, is considered to be flexible in its approach and adjusted to satisfy the requirements of the research topic. To summarise, the CIT is an inductive approach that

requires no hypotheses allowing the researcher to generate theories or insights as patterns emerge from the responses (Gremler, 2004).

Finally, CIT may be used to form a detailed and comprehensive record of incidents and provide a valuable set of information (Gabbott and Hogg, 1996). Indeed, the participants' accounts collected when adopting this approach provide valuable information of personal experiences (Bitner *et al.,* 1994). CIT may be integrated easily to studies that seek to understand individuals' experiences, specifically, in service contexts. The verbatim narratives may provide vivid and substantial insights into a given phenomenon as well as form a remarkable impression on management when distributed throughout a company (Gremler, 2004).

The researcher, therefore, argues that given the above statements and the research objectives, it is considered appropriate to select the CIT as the study's interviewing technique. However, although the benefits of implementing CIT are extensive, the method received some criticism from academics with authors' criticising the method's accuracy and reliability (Chell, 2014). The CIT is considered retrospective in nature and has been criticised as having a structure that may be flawed by recall bias (Gremler, 2004). Likewise, other unwanted biases may form as a result of CIT such as, consistency aspects and memory intervals (Singh and Wilkes, 1996). An event may have occurred over a long period of time before the interview takes place which may lead the participant to reinterpret the incident inaccurately (Gremler, 2004). However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher is not searching for accurate accounts of incidents, but rather, is looking for the passenger's wisdom of hindsight, that is, the knowledge gained based on the passenger's perspective of the incident. For this research, the participants were asked to recall experiences within a three-year and six-month period, respectively.

In general, however, CIT has demonstrated to be an effective technique since Flanagan (1954) first developed it. Researchers in the service sector have noticed the technique to be a

valuable instrument as the analysis method presented by CIT frequently results in beneficial data that is more thoroughly distinct than many other qualitative methods. It encourages researchers to concentrate on a very particular phenomenon because it requires them to define their research aim and helps to distinguish the significant thematic elements and examples to support their results (Gremler, 2004).

Bitner *et al.*'s (1990) research on service encounters is an example of how valuable the CIT is to the service sector. Their study, examined from customers' perspectives and based on an analysis of 700 significant service encounters in three different sectors, have led the authors to identify three distinct categories of employee behaviour in service encounters as causes of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Prior to their study, much of what academics assumed about such assessments were limited to general concepts (i.e. SQ) and global evaluations of satisfaction. Indeed, the CIT allowed the authors to recognise significant themes that a simple literature search or quantitative study would not have been able to, specifically at a time when there was limited academic knowledge on service encounters and touchpoints (Gremler, 2004).

4.6.1.2. *Sequential Incident Technique*

Moreover, to build on the strengths of the CIT while overcoming its limitations such as, only collecting critical incidents, the sequential incident technique (SIT) was developed as a new variant of CIT (Stauss and Weinlich, 1997). The SIT is a process oriented qualitative interviewing method which enables the researcher to collect customer incidents that occurred during the consumption and service delivery process. This technique elicits the customer's thoughts and feelings by assuming the 'story-telling' approach similar to the CIT, however, also collecting usual, uncritical incidents in a sequential manner. Indeed, this allowed the researcher to collect the MoT experiences as well as a detailed perspective on what occurs during the touchpoint. Both the CIT and SIT have been adopted predominantly in service-quality contexts (Jüttner *et al.,* 2013) that include airline studies (Hu *et al.,* 2013) and have also

been adopted in CX and satisfaction contexts (eg. Ahola and Kujala, 2018; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016).

Furthermore, with regards to this study, participants were asked to recall a recent travel experience and were sequentially guided on a visualised passenger path through touchpoints which passengers usually follow during their journey, that is, from deciding to book a ticket with an airline to after landing and completing that trip. Within each touchpoint, the participants were asked to report any instances they recall and subsequently, to assess them as accurately as possible. This uncovered positive and negative experiences. The 'story telling' approach also enabled participants to use their own words when describing and assessing all incidents they remember (Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016).

The SIT was used to extract all incidents a passenger recalls in the course of their journey with the airline. Since the researcher focused on the passenger's perspective, not all incidents essentially correspond with the intended (service encounter) experience stimulus of the airline and, likewise, positive as well as negative proceedings were captured. The figure below shows an example of how the researcher has applied the SIT and guided the participants in recalling their experiences.

Figure 21: Example of SIT application
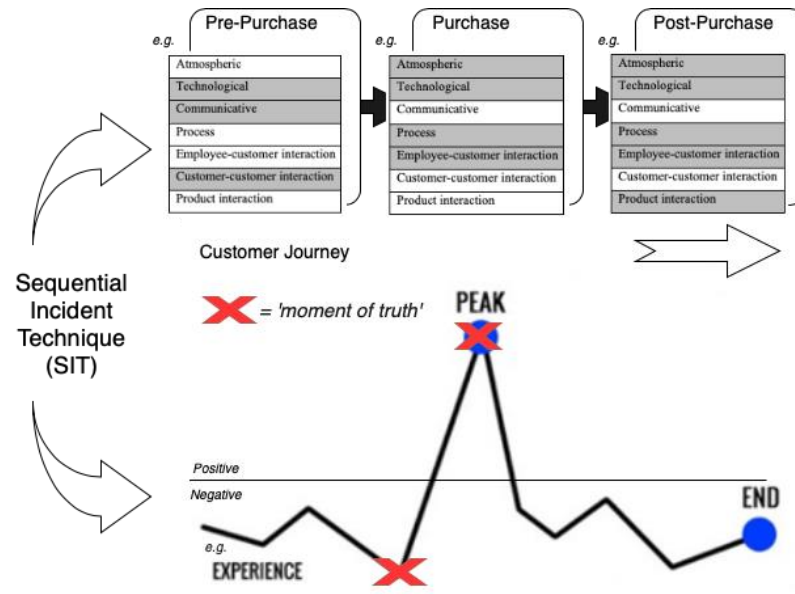
To further explain the figure, the upper section contains examples of the significant touchpoint elements that would be identified at each stage of the passenger journey. The bottom section contains an example of a passenger who experiences a negative MoT as well as a positive MoT which is also their peak experience. Moreover, the researcher applied the SIT to answer the research questions. Indeed, it is important to explain the process of forming the research questions in order to provide the rationale for applying the SIT to answer them.

The researcher defines CX as a multidimensional concept that focuses on the customer's emotional, behavioural, cognitive, sensorial and social responses to what a company has to offer during the entire customer journey. Indeed, the concept is an evolved understanding of the decision-making-process which involves the stages between the individual and company before purchase. The stages then develop into interactions that provide reactions which further supports the evolution of the concept. The process models provided the foundation for what is now known as the customer journey; which is the process a customer

partakes, across all touchpoints and stages that make up their individual CX (Lemon and Verheof, 2016).

Moreover, the researcher concludes that the customer journey is the customer's individual experience interacting through touchpoints from the path of pre-purchase to post-purchase. Thus, in order to aid in developing a solid customer journey framework, one must understand the touchpoints that occur throughout the customer journey. Indeed, recent research is currently investigating touchpoints and the customer journey in order to gain a deeper understanding of CX (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019). There is also a need to understand the critical touchpoints that occur within the customer journey, also known as the MoTs (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) have identified the elements that constitute a touchpoint and have categorised their significance in a general retailing context. This presented an opportunity for further research into investigating the touchpoint elements that define airline passenger experiences, which formulated the first research question. The second research question was further developed to determine the MoT's effectiveness and PET's applicability in understanding how airline passengers evaluate their experiences. The third research question was then developed to examine how airline passengers' experiences shape their purchase intent by using the TPB. Therefore, the researcher finds that by applying the SIT, the procedural manner of storytelling is actualised into answering the three research questions, as it may also be applied to collect critical incidents.

4.6.1.3. Pilot Interviews

The researcher conducted three unrecorded pilot interviews prior to the actual interviews with the participants in order to check for errors in structuring the questions. The pilot interviews were not recorded as the researcher only sought to practice their interviewing skills by evaluating the flow of the interview and structure of the questions asked. The

researcher believed it was necessary to conduct the pilot interviews to assess the questions and check how the participants answer before conducting the actual interviews; the following observations were made. First, when asking the participants questions relating to the booking or check-in touchpoint to obtain information regarding the touchpoint elements, some participants would not go into detail with the touchpoint or completely disregard the next touchpoint and instead, talk in a nonsequential manner about the critical incidents they faced. Second, some participants were subject to spontaneous recollection of narratives and suddenly, remember a previous experience with an airline that has nothing to do with this specific journey and try to link the two experiences together. Finally, asking about the return flight or the flight that did not contain any critical incidents seemed irrelevant and only wasted time during the interviews.

Moreover, what the researcher has changed and found useful in facing the issues mentioned above and applying them during the actual interviews was to first, acknowledge the participant's narrative and not interrupt them while they discuss it. Second, to politely ask the participant to backtrack their experience to a previous touchpoint and to discuss it in further detail to maintain the sequential manner of the interview. Third, to highlight the narratives that were not related to the research objectives to potentially capture insights that would benefit the research. Finally, to derive the information regarding touchpoint elements from the journey that contained the critical incidents (MoTs) in order to save time during the interview therefore, the question asking about the return flight or the flight that did not contain any critical incidents was erased. Regarding transit flight narratives, if after landing the passenger faced incidents; boarding, during or after their transit flight, the narratives would then be added to the boarding, in-flight and after-landing touchpoints, respectively.

4.6.1.4.   Interview Questions

The table below shows the interview questions. The rationale for selecting the questions with support from the literature are listed in appendix 10. Moreover, the interview questions fully reflect the research questions however, there was flexibility for extra information to be extracted from the interviews. Regarding the qualitative nature of the study, the purpose essentially is to let the participant talk freely about their experiences however, the questions are meant to be semi-structured, so some constraint was necessary to direct the interview accordingly. Before the commencement of the interview, the participant was made to feel comfortable by the researcher by first introducing and talking briefly about themselves. The researcher would then begin the interview process by asking the participant to recall a recent, impactful trip (negative or positive experience) with an airline and questions would be asked in the following order as shown below.

Table 6: Interview Questions

Q1: Within the last 3 years / 6 months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?
Q2: Could you please describe the reason for travel?
Q3: Could you please explain why you chose (airline x) specifically to travel with?
Q4: Could you please describe the booking process in great detail? (Probing questions would include: have you booked online or through other channels? For example, if booked online with the airline's website, could you please describe what you thought about the website while booking the ticket? Was it an easy process to navigate and book the ticket? Have you encountered any incidents during or after purchasing the ticket? What was more important to you during this process? i.e. website design, interactivity, etc.

Could you kindly rate the booking experience out of 5, with 5 being very pleased and 1 being not pleased)?

Q5: Could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

(This could be the departure or return flight depending on where the critical incident was)

(Probing questions would include: when entering the airport, have you checked-in using a counter, a kiosk machine, or have you checked-in online and are just dropping your bags? Were there any incidents that occurred during the encounter? What was more important to you during this process? i.e. waiting time, employee interaction, etc. Could you kindly rate the check-in experience out of 5? Did the airport itself have an impact on your experience? Why? Moving on, how was the boarding process? Did you spend a long time waiting for your flight? How did you spend that time? Could you kindly rate the boarding experience out of 5? Describe your experience entering the plane, what did you first notice? Please describe the entire in-flight experience after being seated. Were there any incidents that occurred? What was more important to you during this experience? i.e. plane atmosphere / design, crew member interaction, seat comfort, in-flight meals, in-flight entertainment, etc. Did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence? Did that have an impact on your experience? Could you kindly rate the in-flight experience out of 5? Please describe the process after landing. Have you received a farewell greeting from flight attendants? Were there any incidents after landing and passing the destination's border (or security check if flight is transit)? Did you wait a long time to receive your baggage? What was more important to you after landing? i.e. crew member interaction, baggage waiting time, etc. Did you receive a decent after service (in case of a lost baggage or anything specific)? Could you kindly rate the experience after landing out of 5?

Q6: Could you kindly rate your entire experience with (airline x), with 5 being 'very pleased' and 1 being 'not pleased'?
Q7: Do you feel like purchasing another ticket with (airline x) solely based on your past experience? Q8: Why?
Q9: How has this experience influence your attitude towards (airline x)?
Q10: In which way can peers or relatives influence your decision to re-purchase or choose another airline even after your experience?

4.7.   Participants and Sampling

The table below shows the demographic characteristics of the participants and the travel class purchased by each participant. The researcher interviewed a total of 31 participants; later removing two from the sample, showing different ages (22 to 44 years), genders, nationalities and travel classes booked, thus, acquiring a diverse range of perspectives. Indeed, interviewing participants from a variety of viewpoints has the potential to improve the dependability of results (Boru, 2018).

Table 7: Demographic characteristics of the participants and travel class purchased

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Travel Class
1	28	Male	Kuwaiti/French	Business
2	25	Male	Italian	First
3	29	Female	Algerian/Egyptian	Business
4	44	Female	Lebanese	Economy
5	24	Female	Spanish	First
6	38	Male	American	Business

7	33	Male	Emirati	Economy
8	22	Male	Kuwaiti	Economy
9	31	Female	Sudanese/Canadian	Economy
10	27	Female	Kuwaiti/Filipino	Economy
11	29	Male	Kuwaiti/American	Economy
12	31	Female	Bahraini/Saudi	Economy
13	27	Male	Nigerian	Economy
14	31	Male	Qatari	Economy
15	27	Female	American	Economy
16	42	Male	Kuwaiti	Economy
18	29	Male	Canadian	Economy
19	31	Female	Lebanese	Business
20	37	Female	Turkish	Economy
21	24	Female	British	Economy
22	32	Male	Australian	Business
23	26	Male	Kuwaiti	Business
24	30	Female	Kuwaiti	Economy
26	34	Male	Emirati	Economy
27	37	Male	Pakistani	Business
28	32	Female	Chinese	Business
29	33	Female	Indian	Economy
30	29	Female	Indian	Economy
31	24	Female	Kuwaiti	Economy

4.7.1. *Participant Selection*

Furthermore, upon selecting the first participants, the researcher considered the purposive sampling method. According to Etikan *et al.* (2016), a purposive sampling is an example of non-probability sampling in which the researcher relies on their own judgment when choosing the participants. The researcher then considered the snowball sampling method to select further participants based on referrals made by existing research participants. According to Parker *et al.* (2019), the two sampling methods are often combined in research. Moreover, the criteria for research participation are as follows:

The participants had to be of legal age. Collecting information from legal adults was important for their ability to provide informed consent. Informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle in research, ensuring that participants voluntarily agree to participate in a study, fully understand the risks and benefits, and can make decisions for themselves. Minors may not have the legal capacity to provide meaningful informed consent, and their decision-making capacity may be limited due to their age.

The participants also had to be English speakers. The choice to prioritise English-speaking participants in the study was multifaceted. Conducting interviews or surveys in English ensured a consistent and uniform data collection process, mitigating potential biases or inconsistencies stemming from translations. This uniformity was pivotal given the study's reliance on capturing personal experiences and intricate subjective evaluations; proficiency in English ensured participants could lucidly convey their experiences and emotions without language hindrances. Additionally, having all data in a single language streamlined the data analysis phase, particularly in qualitative evaluations, minimising potential interpretation errors.

They also had to be a passenger that travels at least four times a year. Frequent flyers possess a wealth of experiences, both positive and negative, offering invaluable insights into

various facets of air travel. Their frequent journeys allow them to provide a comparative perspective, discerning patterns, recognising anomalies, and presenting a balanced overview instead of basing opinions on isolated events. Given the dynamic nature of the airline industry, with its ever-evolving services, policies, and technologies, these frequent flyers are equipped to share insights on the latest industry practices and trends. Additionally, as the study centred on touchpoints and their impact on passenger perspectives and actions, frequent flyers, due to their consistent engagement with these touchpoints, brought a depth of understanding that less frequent travellers might not have offered.

The researcher has selected the participants based on their numerous travel experiences and whether they have encountered recent critical incidents throughout their passenger journey. The experience recalled was within a six-month period as this potentially informs a more detailed narrative based on the participants' recollection of their experience with the airline. However, due to the coronavirus and the travel restrictions that were present during the first stage of data collection, some participants were asked to recall trips that occurred within a three-year period (2019-present). The participants chosen, represent a group of individuals that come from different backgrounds in order to acquire a diverse set of experiences. Indeed, these differences in national cultures were crucial in finding distinct patterns of behaviours and perspectives relating to the customer journey. The participants consist of frequent flyers that faced several critical incidents with airlines.

4.7.2. Sample Size

In essence, the purpose of qualitative interviews is to investigate and explain phenomena in depth to uncover new concepts and themes. The researcher has conducted a total of 31 interviews as the data has reached saturation. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) define saturation as the point where no new information is uncovered by further data collection, as the early qualitative interviews have exhausted all the questions asked. Moreover; for further

justification in terms of the sample size, qualitative research specialists contend that sample size is dependent on a variety of considerations and that there is no simple answer to the question of 'how many' (Vasileiou *et al.,* 2018). According to Sandelowski (1995), qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to allow for the development of new, profound insights of what is being investigated, however, small enough to allow for a substantial case-oriented evaluation of the qualitative data.

Regarding principles, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that sample size selection be driven by the informational redundancy criteria, which states that sampling may be stopped when no new data is generated by examining more units. Following the rationale of informational comprehensiveness, Malterud *et al.* (2016) proposed the notion of information power as a practical guiding principle, claiming that the more information power a sample offers, the smaller the sample size required and vice versa (Vasileiou *et al.,* 2018). Therefore, following the notion of information power, the researcher considers the data gathered from the participants to be substantial and sufficient for the purposes of this research.

4.8.   Data Analysis

The data for this research was analysed using content and thematic analysis (NVivo) to identify the themes, patterns and insights (see appendix 11 for a table summary of the themes, insights and codes). The results pertaining to the research questions as well as the insights obtained from the interviews are discussed in great detail during the next chapters. Moreover, it is important to note the process of analysing the data after the interviewing process was complete. First, the audio files were saved on a folder with each file labelled participant 1, 2, etc. to maintain the participants' anonymity. Next, the recorded interviews were transcribed and re-checked to assess their reliability and accuracy of the transcription. Next, the responses were assigned to unique codes that would initiate the process of data analysis. According to Terry *et al.* (2017), the proves of coding enables a researcher to

recognise parts of the interview transcript that are important and directly address the research questions. Belotto (2018) further states that the foundation of thematic data analysis is to develop codes that assist in referrals and detailed exploration of the research topic. According to Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016), the thematic approach is a complementary method of analysing research data and integrates properly with the exploratory research design.

4.8.1. *Content and Thematic Analysis*

As previously mentioned, due to the exploratory nature of this study, content and thematic analysis were implemented as complimentary methods to interpret the transcribed data. Qualitative content analysis focuses on topic and context highlighting variation, such as similarities within and contrasts between aspects of the text. The early accounts of content analysis were developed solely for quantitative research and therefore, associated with the positivism paradigm. However, later accounts show that content analysis has evolved significantly to a more interpretive method within the qualitative research paradigm (Graneheim *et al.,* 2017). Thematic analysis is a qualitative technique for discovering, evaluating and presenting patterns in data. Due to its adaptability, thematic analysis does not necessarily follow a particular set of rules or procedures, however, it does require the data to contain relevant information that matches the original transcript (Braun and Clark, 2006).

There are several similarities in both qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis in which both focus on description and interpretation as well as consider themes and context when analysing the data (Vaismoradi *et al.,* 2016). For this research, both methods were used to analyse the interviews conducted and derive themes from participant responses based on their experiences as airline passengers. Themes are described as anything significant about the data in respect to the research aim that reflects a level of patterned response or interpretation within the set of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). By identifying repeating patterns, these forms of analysis provide not only meaningful data but also, an interpretation of the research

objectives. As a result, a detailed thematic description of the data may then be used to extract the most important and prominent themes (Blacker, 2009). In addition to the themes extracted, this research also revealed important insights related to each individual passenger experience.

Indeed, qualitative content and thematic analysis are flexible study tools that may be applied to a variety of theoretical models and allows for themes or patterns to be recognised in either an inductive or deductive manner (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The transcripts (see appendix 15) were analysed using Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase model, detailed below.

i. Data Familiarisation: This consists of the researcher reading and re-reading the data to become acquainted with it, paying special attention to any probable patterns.

ii. Initial Code Generation: Coding highlights the data that is valuable to the researcher, which in turn, may form the basis for evaluating recurring themes. The researcher has implemented systematic coding relevant to the study objectives via the software NVivo.

iii. Theme Search: This involves grouping codes into themes and identifying any data that pertains to that theme. When similar concepts appear repeatedly in the data, themes are formed. The researcher then began to identify and note potential themes as well as insights obtained from the interviews.

iv. Reviewing of Themes: At this stage, themes were reviewed in order to confirm whether they match the participants' views or perceptions as well as to ensure they are appropriate for coded extracts. A second review was also conducted to determine whether each theme was relevant to each idea that was conveyed, as well as to accommodate any missing information.

v. Naming and Definition of Themes: Each theme needed to be properly named and described so that the meaning of each theme could be clearly understood. The researcher has also identified and labelled the insights gathered as well.

vi. Report Production: This was accomplished by compiling the extract and using it to showcase the generated themes and insights to further discuss during the next chapters.

4.8.2. Inductive reasoning for this data analysis

This data analysis was deeply anchored in inductive reasoning. The study utilized a thematic analysis approach with NVivo, inherently inductive because it facilitates the organic emergence of themes and patterns from the data, rather than operating on predefined constructs. This analysis journey can be dissected into distinct inductive stages. Beginning with the collection of raw narratives from participant interviews, which formed the foundational specific observations. These were followed by the meticulous transcription of the recorded interviews, ensuring the accurate preservation of participants' expressions and experiences. The subsequent phase involved coding, wherein responses were demarcated with unique identifiers to spotlight significant portions of the transcripts, a process analogous to pinpointing specific patterns or instances in the data. This led to the pivotal act of theme derivation, wherein the aforementioned codes were amalgamated to discern broader themes, epitomizing the zenith of inductive reasoning. This aggregation gave rise to overarching themes and patterns reflective of the airline passengers' experiences. Such an inductive essence of thematic analysis is also championed by Belotto (2018) and Vaismoradi et al. (2016), who underscore the progression from discrete instances to expansive generalizations. Amplifying this inductive commitment was the researcher's employment of reflexivity, which ensured an unbiased derivation of themes. This approach allowed the data's intrinsic narratives to shine, undistorted by preconceived notions or biases, resonating the essence of inductive reasoning.

4.8.3. Iteration

The iterative process in data analysis:

Thematic analysis, as it was employed in this research, embodied the essence of iteration. The cyclical and repetitive nature of the analysis became evident. The process had

commenced with the transcription of recorded interviews, a meticulous task that had not concluded upon its initial completion. The transcriptions were revisited and rechecked to ensure reliability and accuracy. This act of returning to the data for validation could be seen as an early iteration, ensuring the narratives were captured with fidelity. After transcription, the narratives underwent coding. Here, unique codes were assigned to specific responses, helping to highlight significant aspects of the interviews. However, as thematic analysis progressed and the researcher gained deeper insights into the data, it was not uncommon for these codes to undergo modifications. They have been refined, merged, or even split to encapsulate the emerging themes more accurately. This act of recoding, influenced by the researcher's evolving comprehension of the data, underscored the iterative essence of the process.

The importance of coding in thematic analysis, as highlighted by Terry et al. (2017), further emphasised its iterative nature. As researchers continually engaged with the data, codes were adjusted and refined based on new insights. Upon initial identification, themes too were not static. They underwent a process of continuous refinement. As themes began to take shape, they could be redefined, merged, or, in some instances, discarded. The dynamism of this stage stood testament to the iterative layers within thematic analysis. Themes, much like codes, were revisited and reshaped as the researcher's understanding deepened.

Lastly, the researcher's reflexivity added another dimension to this iterative journey. Their commitment to maintaining objectivity and reducing bias necessitated regular revisits to the data. This ongoing engagement, where narratives were perpetually revisited and biases were continually checked, encapsulated an iterative process of reflection and refinement, ensuring the final themes were genuinely grounded in the participants' experiences.

4.8.4. *How the Conceptual Framework was used in Data Analysis*

In the data analysis process, several key frameworks guided the interpretation of findings. The touchpoints and MoTs were central, with the analysis focused on pinpointing various touchpoints in the airline passenger journey and discerning the moments deemed as 'truths' by passengers, thereby highlighting their most salient experiences. Simultaneously, the PET played a crucial role, helping to identify the standout moments for passengers—the peaks—and offering insights into how the end of their journey shaped their overarching perceptions. Complementing this, the TPB steered the exploration of the nexus between passengers' experiences and their purchase intentions, illuminating the congruence between their behavioral inclinations, attitudes, and the external determinants shaping their choices.

4.9. *Research Limitations*

The main limitation of this research was the selected sample size. The researcher opted for a smaller sample size due to time constraints and was subject to the data reaching saturation. However, the researcher interviewed as many passengers as possible and captured several insightful experiences. Another prominent limitation is nationalities. The researcher interviewed several participants with different nationalities, however, due to the time constraints of the research, would not be able to interview participants from every background that exists and receive their perspectives. Therefore, another limitation would be the biased selection of participants and the biased narratives collected according to nationality. Finally, the research interviews were conducted online instead of face-to-face due to the coronavirus and the travel restrictions. Face-to-face interviews have the advantage of building rapport prior to the interview and being less prone to distractions as well as portraying clearer social cues such as body language, pauses, articulation and tone (Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015).

4.10.   Validity and Reliability of Data

Validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and authenticity of scientific results (Le Comple and Goetz, 1982). Valid research should exhibit what actually occurs and a valid instrument should be able to measure what needs to be measured. There are several kinds of validity and many different names have been used to characterise them. Campbell and Julius (1966) defined two primary modes of validity that cover the several types and are referred to as 'internal' and 'external' validity (Brink, 1993). Denzin (1970), accordingly, utilised the distinction between internal and external validity to qualitative research. Internal validity refers to the degree to which research findings are accurate portrayals or depictions of reality rather than the impact of external factors. The degree or level to which such portrayals or depictions of reality are authentically applied across groups is referred to as external validity (Brink, 1993).

Reliability in research is concerned with the repeatability, consistency and steadiness of the subject or participant's descriptions as well as the researcher's ability to gather and record data in an accurate manner (Selltiz *et al.,* 1976). It refers to a research method's capacity to produce consistent results over multiple testing periods. In other words, it is required that a researcher using the same or equivalent techniques get the same or equivalent results on the same or equivalent individuals every time the method is used. It also requires the researcher's development of consistent reactions or patterns in applying the technique and counting or scoring its results and, that elements involving subjects and testing methods have been realised to reduce measurement inaccuracies.

When referring to standards for assessing the scientific value of qualitative research, many qualitative researchers avoid the terms reliability and validity and instead, use phrases such as applicability, confirmability, consistency and credibility (e.g. Leininger 1991). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the most appropriate terms in qualitative paradigms

are dependability or consistency, transferability or applicability, credibility, conformability or neutrality. This research considered the suggested terms when discussing the reliability and validity of the data.

4.10.1. Dependability

According to Saumure and Given (2008), dependability may be addressed by providing an accuracy of the study procedures and methods adopted to give other researchers the opportunity to gather information in similar manners. Therefore, to address dependability in this study;

i. The researcher has ensured proper record keeping as the study procedures and methods were all clearly stated, explained and included in the chapter.

ii. The reasons why the participants were selected was explained in detail.

iii. Research participants show different ages, genders, nationalities and travel classes booked, thus acquiring a diverse range of perspectives.

iv. The interview questions used to gather information from the participants were clearly organised and included in the research, along with the interview transcriptions.

4.10.2. Transferability

Transferability highlights the generalisation or replication of the study findings. The researcher may provide contextual data as well as a thorough explanation of the phenomenon in question in order to allow for study comparisons (Chowdhury, 2015). As such, to address transferability in this study;

i. The researcher provided substantial contextual data regarding the commercial airline industry and have focused on several customer-centric concepts; linking them to this context.

ii. The researcher has provided thorough explanations throughout the research; having collected several insights from a diverse group of airline passengers. Moreover, the

findings may be replicated to add sample groups with different nationalities as well as applying the study in other contexts.

4.10.3. Credibility

Credibility signifies the accuracy of study findings, where the researcher attempts to display a proper picture of the phenomenon being examined (Chowdhury, 2015). Therefore, to address credibility in this study;

i. Data and theory triangulation methods were implemented.

ii. The researcher's interview questions were formed based on the gaps in literature. The questions were clear and are related to the objectives of the study.

iii. Pilot interviews were conducted prior to the actual interviews. Efforts were made to reduce inaccuracies and biases upon collecting the data by making sure the answers were not influenced by the researcher and wording the questions accordingly.

iv. The researcher carefully analysed the inferences extracted from the data by implementing content and thematic analysis, categorising the responses into assorted themes to guide the findings' discussion and connect the findings to the literature.

4.10.4. Conformability

According to Chowdhury (2015), conformability may be addressed by ensuring that the study findings emerge from the data itself and are not influenced by the researcher's predispositions. Therefore, to address conformability in this study;

i. Data and theory triangulation methods were implemented.

ii. The researcher; employing reflexivity, ensured to remain unbiased throughout the process of data analysis by assigning interview codes and deriving the themes based solely on the narratives obtained.

iii. An in-depth methodological description was provided along with the research limitations and interview transcripts.

Furthermore, the researcher opted for triangulation to address the credibility and conformability of this study. In this regard, it was necessary to find ways of understanding and interpreting phenomena exhibited in the research, and as well, limit any biases the researcher possessed with regards to the investigation. This was critical since the motive was to generate conclusions and implications that could be useful in an airline management context, as well as future investigations of CX in the airline sector. Moreover, the researcher implemented data triangulation. This involved collecting data by obtaining the perspectives of different sources. Specifically, 31 passengers were interviewed, which is adequate for an exploratory qualitative research. In addition to data triangulation, the researcher consulted theories and frameworks, including TPB and PET. Through this, the phenomena investigated were given some scholarly underpinning, while providing credence for the consulted theories. This is through what Flick (2009) terms as theory triangulation. Through these two methods of triangulation as well as the remarks above, the researcher can state that dependability, transferability, credibility and conformability concerns were confidently addressed in this study.

4.11. *Ethical Considerations*

The ethical considerations are a vital aspect of the research and the researcher ensured the ethics form was submitted and approved in time before data collection. After conducting the interviews, the participants narrating their experiences were made anonymous. Anonymity ensures the participants are more comfortable and can freely offer their views (Ruane *et al.,* 2019). Moreover, the research embraced confidentiality and kept the information based on the provision of the participants. Confidentiality ensures that nobody assesses the information but the relevant stakeholders concerned with the information. The identities of each participant were concealed, and their data protected in password locked computers.

Furthermore, the researcher has taken into account the safety and freedom of the selected participants as a top priority. There was no coercion when collecting information for

the research as participants have given their consent before they began their interviews and have voluntarily participated. The voluntary involvement of participants guarantees the collection of accurate and valid information that supplements the research (Markovic *et al.,* 2018). Indeed, the participants were politely asked to submit consent forms (see appendix 13) as proof of their agreement to be involved. The participants were politely asked to read and carefully understand the basis of this research, why it is being carried out, how their involvement is key as well as the possible outcomes from collecting the information. The participants were politely asked to respond to questions that are related to this research only and are allowed to seek clarification or raise any issues at any point of the research. The interviewer focused on the research subject matter and only the relevant information was used based on the recordings. Furthermore, participants may withdraw at any stage of the research if they feel compelled to do so.

4.11.1. Risk Mitigation Strategy

Fortunately, there were no dangerous or harmful risks involved when collecting the data. If for any reason the passenger decided to withdraw from the interview, the researcher would search for other passengers eager to share their experiences and be interviewed. Moreover, the names of the airline companies were concealed after the interview and transcription as it is not important for the research purpose. Instead, other terms were written in the paper such as, airline x or airline y. This eliminates any potential risks involving airlines as well.

4.12. Chapter Summary

This section outlined a detailed framework for the methodological choice of the study. It provided clear justifications on the philosophical stance of the study, the research design and approach. The researcher found that an exploratory (inductive) qualitative research approach was the most suitable approach to fulfil the research objectives and ensure overall validity.

Moreover, this section has also set the measures to gather, analyse and report data. The researcher selected the participants based on the purposive and snowball sampling method and a total of 29 interviews were conducted as the data has reached saturation. The researcher implemented the SIT when conducting the interviews and a rationale for the methodological choice was provided. Furthermore, the data was analysed through forming themes and inferring the participants' responses. As a result, several insights were captured that are discussed in the next chapters. This section also discussed; the approach followed to improve reliability and validity of the study, the research limitations, the ethical considerations and risk mitigation strategy.

Chapter V: Presentation and Discussion of Findings

5.1. Introduction

This study examined the shaping role of touchpoints on purchase intent, as reported through post hoc accounts of long-haul airline passengers. Both content and thematic approaches to data analysis were used to generate the observations made in this chapter, with content analysis driven by the need to identify the common aspects in given touchpoints, while thematic analysis is used to facilitate a deeper evaluation of the data to identify the critical and impactful patterns in relation to passengers' stated MoTs. These insights were generated by using NVivo 11 software. The discussion of the findings is presented not only by the use of supporting sentiments amongst the interviewees (see appendix 15 for interview transcripts), but also by scholarly insights captured in the literature review. Additionally, this chapter will follow the order of the research questions; with the titles and subtitles derived from the researcher's conceptual framework.

5.2. RQ1: Touchpoint Elements

The first research question refers to the touchpoint elements that define airline passengers' experiences. The analysis reveals that out of the seven elements identified by Stein and Ramaseshan (2016), only five were relevant in the passengers' journey which include; 'employee-customer interaction', 'process', 'technological', 'product interaction' and 'atmospheric' elements. The 'customer-customer interaction' element was identified in some narratives; however, 'communicative' elements were not particularly expressed. The elements most significant during the pre-purchase and purchase stages were 'technological' and 'process'. The elements most significant during the post-purchase stage were 'employee-customer interaction' and 'process'. Moreover, the results show that the significance of the elements differs with each touchpoint throughout the passenger journey; and is presented and discussed below in the order from booking to the in-flight experience. The after-landing

touchpoint is not included in this section as it is only considered a touchpoint if there was an interaction made between the employees and passengers; maybe due to a lost luggage, therefore, is only considered in the sections where the passengers' MoTs are being evaluated.

5.2.1. Pre-purchase / Purchase Stage: Booking

Booking is inherently the first touchpoint during the passenger journey. It may be presented as the pre-purchase stage i.e. searching for flights and purchase stage i.e. making the actual purchase. The results found that out of the 29 participants whose interviews were retained, 22 participants have booked online directly through the airline's online platforms. With the remaining nine, two participants booked through the airline's physical offices while seven participants booked through travel agents or agencies. The most significant touchpoint elements during the booking process are 'Process' and 'Technological' elements. Process as a distinct touchpoint element is found in our study, consistent with Stein and Ramaseshan's (2016) findings as well as past research suggesting that customers' perceptions and assessments of service providers are heavily influenced by the process it takes to accomplish a specific outcome (Van Riel *et al.,* 2012). Technological as a distinct touchpoint element is also found in our study, consistent with Stein and Ramaseshan's (2016) findings as well as past research suggesting that the internet and technological advances now make it easier for the customer to engage with the service provider (Lin and Hsieh, 2011).

The results show that when booking online, the participants place high significance on simplicity and ease of use navigating, as well as information availability, with the majority stating the words 'easy' and 'straightforward'. This observation is detailed in earlier research including Lubbe and Louw (2010) where the authors postulate that the use of technologies to interface passengers as well as airlines' smooth processes communicate value to specific

passengers. Moreover, 18 of the participants using online booking argued that simplicity and smoothness of the entire process was an indispensable consideration, with the participants acknowledging the frustrations with complicated platforms;

Participant 4: *"...I care about it being simple and accessible, it's easy to navigate...straightforward..."*

Participant 21: *"...clear and simple the website is, and just booking and getting the process of paying for a package for example, everything has to be clear and concise as I don't want a website that's very complicated and not user friendly..."*

Therefore, simplicity and smoothness of the booking process is recognised as a critical touchpoint characteristic. The evidence for this could be linked to literature including Sandeep Kumar and Ashu (2020), who advise airlines to explore mechanisms to streamline the booking process, including optimisation through smart technology.

Moreover, the responsiveness of a website through which a customer booked the journey was viewed as an important consideration, with websites that provided relevant and useful information likely to be positively perceived by the customer. This observation is detailed in earlier research including Kourouthanassis *et al*. (2017), where the authors discussed the importance of passenger satisfaction with information. The nature of prioritised information seemed to differ amongst participants; while participant 31 wanted information on prices, participant 29 needed seating information. As implied by participant 13, the presentation of information also contributed to a website's simplicity. Nonetheless, the need for exhaustive, yet concise information was manifested through the following statements, consequently positioning information availability as an important touchpoint attribute. Information availability is identified by Sicilia and Ruiz de Maya (2010) who confirmed that

information availability improves attitude, even in contexts where information was excessive. However, the authors warned of cognitive processing challenges with regards to information overload, while the positive attitudes were sustained;

Participant 5: *"…what's most important to me is just having the information that I need there, because a lot of websites just have a lot of information that is unnecessary…"*

Participant 18: *"…When I'm on their website, the information needs to be straightforward and clear…"*

Indeed, amongst the justification for online booking included ease of the process, which was also expressed by participants that have booked through travel agents as well, further reinforcing Sandeep Kumar and Ashu's (2020) emphasis on process smoothness. Participant 9 stated that part of the reason for using agents included accessibility of support; if a passenger had questions as opposed to the difficulties when booking is done by the passenger personally through online platforms. It was perceived that agents completed many processes that are necessary, which participant 19 presented as a 'whole package'. These factors also accounted for participant 6 and 23 using travel agents to avoid complications. Additionally, participant 18 used agents as they provided them with discounts. Moreover, examples of participant narratives are shown below;

Participant 6: *"…I booked through a travel agency…was actually a very easy process because the travel agency really facilitates everything that you need…"*

Participant 9: *"…it's the accessibility, that I can call them and at any point to know that a problem will be resolved..."*

As depicted above, agents satisfied an important function in the booking stage. However, most of the participants in the study used online booking. From participant 14's

standpoint, the decision to use online booking was informed by its ability to provide the customer with an opportunity to identify the airlines that offered the service at a cheaper price. This shows that information availability with regards to the desired information is important, lack of which is viewed as a barrier to booking (Klein, Köhne and Öörni, 2004). Booking online also provided an avenue to compare different services by an airline such as the baggage allowance and flight times, which show that online booking was effective for customers that wanted to be prepared, to avoid probable inconveniences during the check-in touchpoint.

5.2.2. *Post-Purchase Stage: The Airport*

The need to explore the airport aspect in this study could be found in Prentice and Kadan's (2018) observation that airports with comparatively higher quality of service are more positioned to experience airport reuse, which could have impacts on the choice of airports that airlines serve as well. The airport acts as the main stage in which the touchpoints manifest during the passenger journey, only preceded by the booking touchpoint. It has been acknowledged by some authors including Halpern and Mwesiumo (2021) as having a substantial impact on the assessment of general air travel experience, with some airlines highly influencing the development of airports given the implications on the travelling experience. The implications of the attributes of airport were attested to in the study, with some participants being very explicit regarding the airport's impact, while they outlined their preferences. Specifically, 10 participants expressed their preference for smaller airports, and offered different explanations, including evidence from prior experiences. For instance, participant 1 explained the manner in which a big airport accounted for missing a flight. Indeed, the most popular argument for smaller airports was the less time spent on movement. Amongst the comments include;

Participant 18: *"...I prefer smaller airports to be frank as it's much easier to locate and walk to your gate, especially when you're late for a flight..."*

Participant 22: *"...they need to be smaller in size, I hate big airports, you get lost and you waste time, especially when you're late for your transit..."*

Indeed, the case for smaller airports was evidently given credence by the disadvantages of the bigger airport. In other words, individuals choose smaller airports because of the shortcomings with the bigger airports. Participant 16 mentioned the ease of accessing services, such as when seeking assistance. This was an important factor that highly influenced the passenger's satisfaction with the service;

Participant 16: *"...like I need to be able to locate where everything is when for example you need someone to talk to or you are late for a flight..."*

However, as participant 29 depicted, the benefits of a smaller airport could be undermined by the performance of other aspects such as inefficient processes. This illustrates the importance of airports addressing elements that may undermine the perception of passengers.

Moreover, 3 participants succinctly mentioned their preference for big airports. Unlike the participants who used the shortcomings of the bigger airport to validate their preference for smaller airports, participants who preferred bigger airports had specific motivating factors, such as the availability of services. This is an important observation that has academic foundation, such as Wang and Hong's (2011) mentioning of airports expanding to contain more services as a competitive advantage, showing that bigger airports could be preferred by passengers;

Participant 4: *"…it's always nice being in Hamad International Airport because it's huge, you can walk around, there are different places you can go to…"*

Participant 15: *"…I do prefer bigger airports, like if there are more options…"*

The need for more support for infrastructure and services as acknowledged by Wang and Hong (2011) was evidenced in other comments. Specifically, 6 participants presented several elements they perceived as important in the airport, with participant 19 expressing boredom due to minimal opportunities to engage in other activities. Participant 27 expressed the contrary, owing to the availability of services. Participant 6 talked of probable annoyance if an airport does not have facilities such as cafes and restaurants with participant 5 not feeling the time spent waiting for the flight due to these facilities being available. Participant 9 on the other hand, while acknowledging other factors, argued that clean washrooms was the most important factor, followed by the availability of charging facilities. Participant 30 made an interesting comment, that airports in the destination can give a sense of how the visit to the destination would be, thus raising the question as to whether the airport from which a passenger is departing could depict an overall feel of the travelling experience. Such views are in support of Halpern and Mwesiumo's (2021) argument that satisfaction with the airport quality is decisive.

5.2.2.1.   Check-in

Furthermore, the results found that out of all the participants, 20 participants checked-in using the counter with only 1 participant checking in using the self-check-in kiosk machine and the remaining 8 participants checking-in online. The most significant touchpoint elements during the check-in process are 'Employee-Customer Interaction' and 'Process'. Employee-

Customer Interaction as a distinct touchpoint element is also found in our study, consistent with Stein and Ramaseshan's (2016) findings as well as past research suggesting that in service environments, the interaction between customers and front-line employees has a substantial impact on the CX (Brady and Cronin, 2001).

From this study, the check-in was the first touchpoint whereby a remarkable focus on interpersonal correspondence was emphasised. This is because it involved direct interaction with employees and is thus a critical touchpoint. Based on the responses, the nature of the interaction between the check-in employees and passengers was very important, with comments revolving around the notion of how the passengers are serviced and treated by the check-in employees. Some of the participants mention the significance to which they attach the interaction quality, with participant 26 positing that it has profound effects on the entire flying experience. This is because it may signal how other employees in other travel stages would treat the passengers. Moreover, other examples of participant narratives are shown below;

Participant 9: *"...I like when I go to a counter and they're super helpful. We'll talk about my destinations, where I'm going..."*

Participant 13: *"...It's mainly how the employee treats me, because I don't mind sometimes like waiting in line..."*

Moreover, while the majority of concerns relating to baggage revolved around delay and loss, excess baggage accounted for some negative employee-customer interactions during check-in. Specifically, the unwillingness of the employees to extend a leeway for the allowed baggage was unpleasantly perceived by the passengers, which goes contrary to the notion of responding to customer needs as extant literature such as Clark and Myers (2018) remark. To

some participants, the strict compliance with the weight rules was excessive, especially if the extra weight was negligible from the passenger's perspective;

Participant 26: *"...they checked our baggage weight and we had an extra kilo or two over our allowance and the employee wasn't being lenient at all..."*

Participant 31: *"...I tried to talk to the manager and they didn't do anything, they didn't help me out, it was just an extra two kilos, so it wasn't that much of a big deal..."*

The participants seemed to attach lesser importance to excess baggage weight than the employees did, and consequently, perceived the employees as overreacting to a minute thing, which may be interpreted as inconsiderate customer care behaviour. Nonetheless, the experience was impactful for participant 12, who argued, that while it was a simple thing, it was decisive on the entire flying experience. Furthermore, while the weight policies are applied, participant 12 acknowledged that she had encountered numerous lenient employees regularly. Thus, especially from the passenger's perspective, it would be acceptable to assume that the passengers could have viewed the lack of consideration by the employees as a personal issue, given that they are aware of instances where marginally excess weight is allowed;

Participant 12: *"...I do have some extra weight or extra baggage. So, they, they give you some sort of leeway sometimes..."*

Participant 31: *"...I've had similar situations where they just let the situation off and it's passed by, it's just a kilo or two, it's not like five or six kilos..."*

Given that allowance for baggage weight is a common practice in the commercial airline industry, the unwillingness to extend that benefit to a passenger may undermine satisfaction, especially if a passenger had been accustomed to such leeway. This may have dire outcomes especially if the passengers view it from a discrimination point of view.

Timeliness during check-in was also mentioned as the most important factor by 16 participants and has been identified in numerous studies including Lucini *et al.* (2020) and Koenig, Found and Kumar (2019). Examples of participant narratives are shown below;

Participant 2: *"...Not having to wait in any kind of line, not having to, you know, just kind of go through that whole waiting period where I have to stand in line...That, to me is just terrible. It's my nightmare..."*

Participant 11: *"...I don't care if she interacts with me that much, as long as she's fast you know, and she's she's very efficient. I want her to be done really quick...."*

The way it was presented, was from a negative perspective, that while minimal waiting time was desirable, extended waiting time was highly disliked. The need to avoid possible lengthy waiting times resulted in some participants, including Participant 28 to use online check-in. Such a notion is made by Lin and Hsieh (2011), who affirm that technological developments provided substantially higher levels of efficiency, thereby helping minimise delays. Interestingly, lack of delays was not expressed with a level of enthusiasm exhibited for delayed experiences, albeit from the positivity perspective.

5.2.2.2.   Boarding

The boarding process shows a mixture of results between 'process' and 'employee-customer interaction' elements with the participants valuing the 'process' element and not having to wait a long time for their flights as well as 'employee-customer interaction' when an incident does indeed occur. This notion has undertones of the role of effective handling of problematic incidences and crises in passenger journeys by the airline employees, and as such, is an indispensable characteristic. Examples of participant narratives are shown below;

Participant 5: *"...they take forever to board everyone onto the plane. So, again, time being delayed..."*

Participant 4: *"...when I had told the guy that I need a chair, I'm going to faint, he told me, step out of the way because we're boarding the next flight..."*

Given the high stakes in the boarding processes, as evidenced by passengers missing their flights, it is important to be engaging during the touchpoint. However, the boarding process remains a source of confusion for passengers, despite boarding passes having been developed to enhance navigation in the airport and guide passengers as they move from a flight or a gate to another. This makes the characteristics of the touchpoint as highly determining of the quality of service.

5.2.3. *Post-Purchase Stage: In-flight*

The in-flight experience shows that the majority of participants place high significance on 'employee-customer interaction' and 'product interaction' elements, with some participants valuing 'atmospheric' and 'process' elements. Product Interaction as a distinct touchpoint element is also found in our study, consistent with Stein and Ramaseshan's (2016) findings as well as past research suggesting that customers experience the product as they explore, evaluate, consume and review products and services, which also include the direct encounters (e.g. product usage) (Hoch, 2002). Atmospherics as a distinct touchpoint element is also found in our study, consistent with Stein and Ramaseshan's (2016) findings as well as past research suggesting that the physical environment experienced by customers influences their responses and assessments (Turley and Milliman, 2000).

The significance of the nature of interaction with the airline employees was initially acknowledged in the check-in and boarding touchpoints. In this touchpoint, it was the most pronounced, being mentioned by 20 participants. This observation is in tandem with some of the arguments made in the literature review, and more specifically, the finding by Wunderlich and Hogreve (2019) that the interactions between employees and passengers account for most of satisfaction. Amongst the comments from which this reflection was made include;

Participant 10: *"...what's important to me are the crew and how they treat me…"*

Participant 13: *"...what's very important is definitely how the crew treats you… because you're being a brand ambassador…they should be like more kind…more friendly and not be like judgmental…they shouldn't be judgmental inside the airplane..."*

Based on the above sentiments, employee-customer interaction has the propensity of inducing a passenger's feelings regardless of whether they are positive or negative. As participant 13 discusses above, the employee interaction could establish how passengers view the treatment as friendly and welcoming, or even judgmental and hostile, thereby showing the volatility of interaction nuances and influence on experience.

Some of the participants provided situations whereby the nature of interaction with the employee contributed to a remarkable appreciation of service, despite the complications that necessitated the employee to act in that manner. This was the case especially for participant 23, who repeatedly attested to how well the employees interacted with the passengers under an abnormal circumstance. Literature on maintaining composure in challenging situations and not projecting displeasure to customers is extensive, resulting in Giacalone and Knouse (1990) advising companies to preempt this by ensuring employees are operating with an appropriate disposition. Nonetheless, while some such as participant 23 identified the implications of a

positive interaction, others mentioned the outcomes of an undesirable interaction. Moreover, participant 21's comments below illustrate that employees do not have to communicate verbally for the passengers to gauge the quality of interaction and the underlying factors;

Participant 21: *"...So, when the food came, she just literally threw the sandwich at me, like at my tray table and I just found that to be very, very rude...they were clearly talking about me. I just felt very uncomfortable..."*

Similarly, passengers may not explicitly communicate as well in the event of a negative experience, especially if the employees are behaving passively. Nonetheless, even if the feelings are not expressed audibly, there is an impact on the perception of the SQ provided by the employees.

Product interaction elements such as seat comfort was mentioned by 19 of the research participants. While some did not give the rationale, some justified their argument by mentioning that they usually prefer comfortable seats for long distance travelling, while others indicated that seats need to be comfortable as they tend to sleep on the flight;

Participant 19: *"...comfort of the seats are very important, especially in long flights, because if I don't have anything to watch or whatever downloaded on my phone or iPad, like I just want to sleep..."*

Participant 22: *"...Definitely the seat comfort, I usually book business or first because of the seats as I generally tend to sleep on flights..."*

The passenger's preference for seat comfort was expected, given that many airlines leverage on it to attract potential passengers, which shows that it is a prioritised attribute by passengers. Moreover, other product interaction elements such as the in-flight entertainment and food availability and quality was mentioned by 6 and 4 participants, respectively. This

corresponds with Pappachan's (2021) findings acknowledging the in-flight entertainment as having an influence on passengers' perceptions of air SQ as well as Lucini *et al.*'s (2020) findings that food and drink were prioritised factors for passengers. Amongst participant comments include;

Participant 26: *"...in-flight entertainment is very important because I usually can't sleep on flights, so it's important they have a good selection of movies and stuff..."*

Participant 31: *"...I do expect the food to be really good...Sometimes I get hungry and I forget to even eat, and if it's like a long flight, I do expect the food at least to be very delicious..."*

The impressions conveyed by the above comments demonstrate the preference for full-service experiences by passengers. It demonstrates that regardless of the selected class, expectations differ substantially across different passengers, implying that to minimise the risk of negative experiences and satisfy the passengers, attention has to be directed to different service constituents.

Atmospheric elements were implied through comments presented by 7 participants. Some of the words used included plane newness, cleanliness, colours, hygiene and interior design. These findings confirm the arguments by Rungsrisawat, Namdej and Jermsittiparsert (2019) that the physical environment of an airline highly impacted the passengers' perception of the airline. Some of the comments under this domain included;

Participant 5: *"...is the hygiene, if the seat I'm sitting in is clean, if the seat itself, does it have any food crumbs or anything..."*

Participant 29: *"...Next thing is, of course, the seats, are they clean enough? Is the carpet clean? Other seats clean? Is everything maintained well..."*

Through other comments and the above (participant 5 and 29), the implications of underwhelming impressions are indicated. It would be important to note that such concerns could be symptoms of deeper issues, which can be translated by passengers as the unwillingness to mind what could be considered the bare minimum expectation by passengers.

In addition to the above, process elements such as the responsiveness of the airline attendants and their ability to handle requests efficiently was acknowledged by some participants including 2, 5, 19 and 27. The role of responsiveness is noticed by Sammito, Cyrol and Post (2022) who contend that it is prioritised such that it substantially accounts for attendants' fatigue. While some of the explanations by the participants seemed to subscribe to the employee-customer interaction element, some participants explained the desired processes that seemingly implied this specific element. In fact, even participant 11 during the check-in touchpoint, clearly mentioned that interaction quality is not the focus, rather, it's the speed and efficiency of service that matters. For participant 19, speed and the interaction quality should be inseparable;

Participant 19: *"...if I want a glass of water or a drink or anything, that they cater to it and they bring it to me fast... they smile and they say here you go, I hope you have a pleasant flight or what not, like these things are very important to me..."*

Based on the above statements, it could be deduced that passengers assign significance to different service components and attributes. While some emphasise food and refreshments, others prioritise seat comfort and entertainment. Nonetheless, it is evident that decent employee-customer interaction is an important and virtually non-negotiable expectation.

5.2.4. *The Role of National Culture*

The increased globalisation has resulted in the spreading and infusion of cultures across the globe. In fact, cultural diversity has gained prominence as companies expand to foreign territories, where people migrate and economies integrate. The need to acknowledge and respond to cultural differences has culminated in researchers including Hofstede *et al*. (2010), Trompenaars (1996) and Purnell (2000) conducting extensive studies and models to explain cultural variances. The commercial airline industry is non-conventional, as it revolves around transporting people with different cultural backgrounds meeting for a rather short period. The literature review reveals that national culture is decisive, with Messner (2016) arguing that the passenger's background influences motivations, preferences and priorities, while Pantouvakis and Renzi (2016) acknowledge the role of passengers' nationality on the evaluation of SQ. Consequently, the authors advise companies to be cognisant of and responsive to critical cultural variances especially those to which norms, values and behaviours are attributed.

Moreover, the role of cultural differences in relation to influencing the experience and expectations of customers was identified in studies such as Canfield and Basso (2017), who are of the view that the assessment of quality of a service is significantly influenced by the customer's cultural background. Thus, it would be plausible to argue that evaluation and judgement of the customers relating to their experience of service differs depending on their cultural origins. Even as Robinson (2016) explains, the expected growth in the aviation industry due to increased activity, especially from culturally different areas such as Asia and Africa necessitate the acquisition of tools, resources and capacities to evaluate unique situations and adapt accordingly. Despite this however, through the review of the participants' responses, the role of culture was not explicitly widespread, which is interesting given that the different cultural differences amongst the participants were intended to reveal some probably

culture-based views on the airline's SQ. This was especially so with regards to informing the expectations of the passengers as well as perception on the attributes of the services experienced.

While the impact of culture was not exhaustively manifested, it was observed that cross cultural skills amongst airline employees did indeed have an impact on some of the passenger perceptions. Communication was acknowledged by some participants as having contributed to their evaluation of the airline service. As discussed by Caon *et al*. (2021), language is a constituent of cultural norms, helping communicate thoughts, expectations and behaviours. Thus, the inability to express as well as understand contributes to the quality of interaction. This notion was implied by the journey account of participants 7 and 12 and influenced their perception of the airline employees. Moreover, additional participant comments are shown below;

Participant 3: *"...And I felt like if I was the kind of person that don't know how to talk or maybe don't speak the same language, they would have made me think made me take a route or fly in a way or stay longer that I didn't want to..."*

Based on the sentiments of participant 7; who attributed their unwillingness to travel with the airline due to communication problems, it is plausible to argue that culture-based failures are likely to transform attitude and influence the passenger's repurchase intentions. As such, this confirms that experiences undermined by cross-cultural interactions are likely to influence attitude towards future engagement in a repeat of the encounter in an unfavourable way. It could be postulated that for participant 7, communication problems accounted for the peak experience, rather than the unpleasant issues being resolved, and in reality, contributed to the passenger's decision to use an alternative airline in the future, not because of the absence of the complications, but the inability to communicate;

Participant 7: *"...No, I wouldn't take like from my side, I'll take an Arab airline, it's easier for me to communicate with them, easier for me, easier for them to understand me..."*

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that cross-cultural skills amongst airline employees could determine how they manage issues when passengers have relational needs, are in ambiguous situations and require empathetic solutions to their concerns. In fact, Taguchi *et al.* (2016) describe that a person who is able to understand and deduce meanings and feelings attributed to cultural variances has a high level of perceptual acuity. However, the skills needed to convey positive attitudes towards the individuals and any instance where negative connotations are evidenced might undermine the perception by passengers. Participant 12 describes that flight attendants' attitudes shift depending on the destination travelled;

Participant 12: *"...I really believe that the destination and the crew on the flight towards that destination have a have a shift in the attitude..."*

The shift in attitudes as perceived by participant 12 impacted her to the point where she does not feel comfortable travelling to 'Western' destinations;

Participant 12: *"...If I'm going to a country that is more Western and the layovers are in different destinations that are not Muslim, I don't think I'd be comfortable with that anymore..."*

Therefore, despite the study's findings, given the global nature of the commercial airline industry and the increasing reach and integration of cultures, it would be paramount for airlines to be cognisant of the cultural differences, as violations could have detrimental effects on passengers' perception of quality of service. Thus, cultural intelligence should not only be desirable, but also a mandatory requirement for airline employees to highly influence their service delivery. In fact, the study by Suthatorn and Charoensukmongkol (2018) confirms this

observation, as the authors concluded that cultural competences influence service delivery, enhances employee confidence and reduces anxiety for airline attendants.

As described by Purnell (2000), employees with high levels of cultural intelligence have an essential function in linking divides and gaps in knowledge in a company. This is because they educate their colleagues on cultural variances, transfer knowledge to disparate individuals and contribute in building in interpersonal connections in the workforce. This is important, especially in the commercial airline industry, where both the employees and passengers have diverse cultural backgrounds. However, cultural intelligence transcends having effective social skills or emotional maturity. Ang and Dyne (2015) recognise some aspects that include cultural metacognition, cross-cultural skills and cultural knowledge. Metacognition revolves around the awareness of, and control over a person's learning and thinking when operating in a context that differs significantly from one's cultural background. It translates to being cognisant of cultural variations, analysing interactive situations and adapting actions to the context in question. Participant 4's remarks shows a lack of cultural metacognition amongst the attendants as illustrated by her comment;

Participant 4: *"...my job requires me to deal with a lot of people from different backgrounds...from different religions and...not to take it personally when someone says something that might agitate me...But I feel like none of that was done in my case..."*

Indeed, with companies extending their international reach to increase their customer base, cultural differences between customers will become even more pronounced. This issue will be replicated in airlines, which are continuously adding destinations across different regions. This study has identified the ways in which some cultural variances translate to different customer expectations and satisfaction. That notwithstanding, in accordance with extant literature, culturally insensitive interactions result in violation of beliefs, values and

norms. This could damage the CX as it increases the risk of confusion, frustration and irritation. Therefore, understanding the explicit, implied and subtle differences and the implications for customer service practice is paramount, more so for airlines targeting globally dispersed and culturally different customers.

5.2.5. *Section summary*

The findings related to the first objective addressed touchpoint elements in airline passengers' experiences, revealing that out of seven elements identified by Stein and Ramaseshan (2016), five were pertinent, 'employee-customer interaction', 'process', 'technological', 'product interaction', and 'atmospheric' elements. In the booking phase, 'technological' and 'process' elements were most significant. The research also highlighted the importance of a smooth booking process, emphasizing website simplicity and relevant information availability. This contribution enriches existing literature, emphasizing the diverse significance of touchpoint elements throughout the passenger journey and underscoring the critical role of technology and process during booking. The next section addresses the findings for the second research question.

5.3. RQ2: MoTs and PET

The second research question refers to the effectiveness of MoTs and applicability of the peak-end theory in understanding how airline passengers evaluate their experiences (see appendix 12 for illustrations of the ratings throughout the passenger journey). The results show that the majority of MoT instances occur during the post-purchase stage, specifically, the in-flight experience followed by the boarding and check-in experience. Moreover, the majority of the participants' ZMoTs are searches based on convenience with their FMoTs being purchases largely due to convenience.

As discussed in the literature review, the ZMoT represents the context where customers conduct research prior to purchasing a product or service. According to Ertemel and Başcı, (2015), it is a necessary and impactful stage, and raises the need for companies to ensure that the impression creates a stimulus in relation to the customer's desires and priorities as it could incentivise actions by the customer that could be rewarding to a company. In this study, only one participant reported having performed a prior evaluation of alternatives that culminated in the selection of the airline;

Participant 22: *"...I booked my ticket through their website by finding deals online, so that's why it led me straight to their website and have booked there..."*

This statement reflects the ZMoT in practice as discussed by Wolny and Charoensuksai (2016). The above comment depicts a touchpoint where an airline can induce passenger responses as they identify and pursue ideas, solutions and alternatives to address concerns that matter to them. As such, an opportunity is made apparent for airlines, where they could provide a relevant stimulus that is capable of directing employees towards their offerings, especially if the stimuli is based on something that is relevant, engaging or captivating for prospective customers, particularly in relation to the offerings by other providers.

Moreover, the notion of the actual 'moment of truth', which as described by Sharma, Mishra and Nandre (2022) encompasses the experience gap between purchase and the receipt or consumption of a product, is displayed by some participants. Based on this study, this stage could be situated after booking and before the in-flight experience, as the passengers had bought the service that they were to receive. The need to recognise this is based on the observation that some participants experienced peak moments in this stage; during the check-in and boarding touchpoints. Indeed, it would be worth considering whether these touchpoints

constitute the actual MoT, especially since it is not an in-flight scenario. Nonetheless, some of the participants whose peak moments could be linked to this stage included;

Participant 27: *"...so I was wearing shorts and slippers... boarding time came and they told us, business and first class, may you please come in. So, I went to the guy that works there, and he was like sorry sir, first and business class first, economy is later... I just felt really uncomfortable, like the way I was judged was not cool..."*

Participant 31: *"...I would give them... I would give them a three, because of the whole check-in experience..."*

These statements demonstrate that while the in-flight touchpoint is usually the focus of most airlines, it is necessary to be cognisant of the issues that could undermine a passenger's experience. Furthermore, Bakır *et al.* (2022) already admits that airports can affect passengers' attitudes, and since this precedes the in-flight experience, there could be residual negative dispositions that airlines might have to address to ensure that the flying experience is positively perceived, and not overridden by the negative events.

None of the participants attributed the intention to never use an airline to the problems experienced in the ZMoT stage. Some of the participants, however, identified a disconnect between the first and second stages, primarily in relation to the impact of information and expectations communicated in the first stage and actual experience in the second stage, which illustrated the airline's failure to deliver in accordance with the passengers' expectations. Moreover, there is a correlation between the participants' experiences at different touchpoints. The notion of the evaluation outcome of a service being contingent on the performance in relation to the expectations was evidenced. This is depicted by participants who acknowledged service failure in relation to expectations;

Participant 9: *"…I would say it just, like my expectations were high and it fell like really, really short after that experience…"*

Participant 27: *"…I honestly expected better out of the business class after having paid so much, it wasn't as expected at all…"*

The above comments are an illustration of the Expectation Confirmation Theory, whereby customers register dissatisfaction when performance of a product or service fails to match with the expectations (Oliver, 1977). Thus, it can be argued that a perception by a passenger of service failure during their journey is likely to precipitate a negative outlook, especially if the airline had explicitly presented or implied the deliverables when encouraging customers to purchase.

Moreover, it would be important to acknowledge that expectations may not be inherently based on the airline's promises in the FMoT; rather the passengers could have deduced the expectations based on amongst others, the affordability of tickets. Nonetheless, the extent to which experiences in the SMoT and TMoT confirm or deviate from the expectations established in the preceding MoT, highly impacts the FiMoT. This was presented as the passengers' reactions or feedback pertaining to their consumption experience, and is depicted by actions such as becoming a brand advocate or a critique (Noviaristanti, 2021). The passengers' FiMoT activities was explained by several participants, that which include participant 6;

Participant 6: *"…Well, I tell the story of that flight attendant being rude to me on occasion…"*

Such a comment is the reason many companies have invested in leaving a positive sentiment amongst customers, because if numerous prospect customers receive it, the implications could be disastrous. The need to avoid such narratives is the foundation of

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issuance of refunds and warranty replacements, and even customer engagement. This is to ensure that any concerns are resolved in-house, thereby preempting undesirable scenarios. Furthermore, Sheth, Jain and Ambika (2020) observe that customer complaint resolution should have a strategic function. Nonetheless, it could be proposed that failures in multiple MoT stages could highly induce sustained behaviours that could be detrimental to an airline, even when passengers do not need anything from an airline.

The positive aspect of the ZMoT is explained by participant 23, who mentioned that in the future, he is likely to narrate the unique experience he had with the airline in an attempt to convince peers and friends to fly with it. Based on the narratives, it is apparent that while the participants underwent the MoT stages, the in-flight experience is the most vulnerable to passengers' perception of quality of service, which makes sense given the multitude of expectations of customers in this touchpoint as listed by An and Noh (2009). Nonetheless, any touchpoint could act as an avenue through which MoTs are expressed and where the conditions of the PET are actualised. For some participants, such as participant 14 (who would not be let in the plane), and 30 (who was assigned to an affiliate airline), the negative peak episodes were registered at the check-in stage, the stage that accounted for the peak positive of participant 23;

Participant 23: *"...it's like one of those times that the safety is more important than anything else... I felt more like I'm home, like this is my airlines, even in my flight, I felt protected 100%..."*

However, most of the experiences encountered during the in-flight touchpoint were unfavourable. In most contexts the failure was attributed to the actions or inaction of airline employees, thereby affirming the argument by Pine (2020) that it is mainly through employee experience improvement that high quality customer experiences can be delivered, especially since employees' role in implementing designed experiences is profound. As such, employees

could exacerbate the intensity of the negative experiences. With the majority of peak experiences being associated with the in-flight stage, it is acceptable to qualify it as the touchpoint most susceptible to peak experience probability;

Participant 2: *"...he stops, he looks at me, he was like, do you want to eat something? And I'm like, what? No, I just want a glass of water. He's like, sure, coming up. And then he just never came back..."*

Participant 8: *"...And the crew members and the captain on board made us panic. And they didn't inform us in a calm way..."*

While experiences in a given MoT could have a profound influence on the passenger's perception of quality of service and their attitude, failure in different stages could lessen even the impacts of positive experiences. In the same sense, a positive experience could counteract negative experiences, a notion the participants expressed especially as they appreciated the employees that responded to undesirable situations adequately and effectively. Such promptness is advocated by Grégoire, Salle and Tripp (2015) in solving social media crises. Nonetheless, successive failures are likely to have multiplier effects on the passengers, as illustrated by participant 7;

Participant 7: *"...Everything, everything. Because when you have bad experience and the ground staff and the airport itself, at least when you go inside the airplane, you need something make me feel for me to forget what happened to me at the airport, you know, but it just added up, you know, from the airport to the airline to the cabin crew..."*

The above comment implies that while experiences undergone in specific MoTs have an impact, multiple sequential failures are likely to synergise and induce a strong feeling that could overwhelm a passenger's tolerance and create an intense perception about the service,

and the airline as well as the airport by extension. As such, while the MoTs are important, there is a need to abide by the understanding that CX is a comprehensive journey, not a journey composed of independent standalone stages that are not interrelated.

Based on the preceding analysis, the contexts and rationale that accounted for the passengers' change of attitude as well as future behaviours, were described. Different participants expressed the implications of episodes that could be classified as peak experiences on their future decision regarding travelling with the airline. An interesting observation was that the passengers were oblivious of the probability of having peak experiences in their journey. This is reflected in amongst others, their sentiments on the aspects they prioritised in their passenger journey in different touchpoints. However, there is an apparent disconnect between these factors and the scenarios that could have induced the peak experiences. For instance, while participant 22 presented seat comfort as the most important factor, the malfunction and resultant explosion of an engine is what accounted for his negative attitude and behavioural outcomes in relation to the airline, not uncomfortable seats. This observation is also evidenced by participant 8, who prioritised comfort and entertainment, but was to register frustration not because of the unavailability of the airline to provide such, but the aborted flight and the consequent actions by the employees.

The PET postulates that the cumulative rating of an experience is highly based on their peak episodes and the end, rather than the total or average of all the experiences (Kahneman *et al*., 1993). According to Park *et al.* (2018), a comparatively higher intensity of emotion regardless of the polarity, is likely to not only influence the evaluation of the service, but also make remembering the subtle and pronounced aspects difficult. In this study, the participants have described negative emotions vividly, thereby attesting to the influence of experiences on

the emotional state on the individuals undergoing objectionable or less than ideal situations. The emotional outcomes along the passenger journey are illustrated in comments such as;

Participant 14: *"…They said that because I look like a male and the passport says female…I was really upset and angry, I even cried because I felt like embarrassed…"*

Participant 24: *"…That shocked me, it shocked, shocked, shocked me to even bringing me close to tears, I was so shocked and sad and I felt left out, and I don't know, it was a lot of things…"*

An interesting observation was that even for efficient services in the booking, check-in and landing, the participants did not express emotions that could be positive peaks. In other words, negative events were more likely to induce a peak event than positive experiences were. This implies that airlines have to exceed passengers' expectations by a large margin to ensure that an encounter triggers positive emotion. As participant 19 intimated, despite the seamless process, she remarks "there wasn't anything special", a remark that confirms Habel *et al.*'s (2016) finding that services that customers lack motivation to evaluate do not substantially exceed their expectations, implying that average services do not inherently arouse attitude changing emotions. Despite the favourable ranking of the process, the participants had remarks that were relatively relaxed. This is illustrated through comments such as;

Participant 13: *"…It was, I would say… a five, because nothing like significant happened, you know…"*

Participant 19: *"…The boarding process was okay, like the plane got there on time, everything went smoothly and yeah, like there wasn't anything special…"*

Moreover, this study has identified that impactful experiences could be linked to specific touchpoints. Despite the PET postulating only the memories experienced in the peak and the end of experiences are memorable and impactful, it is important to recognise the

synergetic impact of different experiences. In fact, from this study, it is apparent that underperformance in some areas that the passengers did not initially prioritise could be impactful, which is possible as observed by Prakash, Jha and Prasad Mohanty (2012) in their examination of the applicability of scenario planning for SQ failure instances. For instance, the elements of seat comfort and the nature of interaction between passengers have profound implications, and in practice, some airlines already compete based on such factors. According to some participants, while some in-flight experiences are important, the role of consistency in performance across the various aspects is significant. Apparently, there is a correlation between the different elements, with underperformance in one likely to undermine the evaluation of another, consequently influencing outcomes. For instance, ensuring premium level comfort for passengers who prioritise comfort, but overlooking other elements such as responsiveness and the interaction quality could affect the ultimate evaluation of the service. According to some participants;

Participant 1: *"...Like, I would still feel bad if I had an amazing experience, like in terms of seats and comfort and food, but like really bad like an attitude or something with any of the staff members that would still like, set me off...I think stems from the experience I have with the staff members, with the airlines itself, with the plane, with the seats, with the whole thing..."*

Participant 29: *"...I think it's a combination of many things, like they all are correlated, so I think like you can have a smooth flight, but if you have a grumpy cabin crew, it does not work, the same goes like even if the flight is fine, but if cabin crew is nice and the flight is making noise, it doesn't really work..."*

While participant 6 was annoyed and made uncomfortable by a crying child on the flight, participant 9 deliberately singled out that crying children as a non-issue when flying. This shows explicit dissimilarity, implying that ensuring optimal satisfaction from the

passenger's perspective is herculean, as they prioritise different touchpoint elements and disfavour others with different intensities. Conclusively, in relation to the MoT stages, the ways in which the PET is applicable when passengers evaluate their journey has been manifested in this research as exhibited by passengers attributing their behaviours following an experience to specific events in their journey that peaked their emotions. Additionally, the feelings and perceptions at the end of an experience are identified as paramount, which has been widely accepted in literature on SQ failure recovery. However, while the peak episodes are dominantly influential, multiple experiences with the same polarity as the peak events could reinforce the perceptions of the peak events, thereby validating them and informing the emotions at the end of the experience. As such, this study shows the effectiveness of MoTs and the extent to which the PET is applicable in understanding how airline passengers evaluate their experiences.

5.3.1. Section summary

The findings related to the second objective probed the effectiveness of MoTs and the applicability of the PET in deciphering airline passengers' evaluations of their experiences. Findings indicated that the majority of MoTs transpired during the post-purchase stage, especially during in-flight, boarding, and check-in experiences. While the Zero Moment of Truth emphasised passengers' research before purchasing, the actual 'moment of truth' spanned from booking to in-flight. Notably, negative in-flight experiences overshadowed other touchpoints, underscoring the need for consistent high-quality service across all stages. The study confirms the pivotal role of peak experiences and their lasting impact on passengers' perceptions. The next section discusses the MoT insights found in the study.

5.4.   MoT Insights

Furthermore, in relation to the peak passenger episodes, the results have shown that there were some intense experiences faced by the passengers that have revealed insights that

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include; microaggressions, reciprocity, harassment complacency, employee-customer impact and crisis management. These insights are discussed below.

5.4.1. *Microaggressions*

Amongst the pronounced insights that emerged from the study is the prevalence of microaggressions, specifically those attributable to different racial backgrounds. This finding supports earlier studies including David and KangJae's (2017), who attest to the existence of racism and related behaviours in the industry. In fact, in the past, numerous incidences or racism in the travel industries have been recorded over the globe. For instance, according to Associated Press (2019), the department of homeland security in the United States embarked on investigating heightened concerns about racial profiling by the supervisors affiliated with Transport Security Administration. Earlier, in 2019, the office of the Inspector General in the United States had launched an investigation due to concerns of air marshals being ordered by the TSA supervisors to identify racial minorities and as well, subject individuals with tattoos, flashy jewelry and baggy wear to extra screening. In the United Kingdom, a report by McSmith (2011) illustrates widespread racism by British Airways employees and a lack of willingness by the management to address the concerns. This demonstrates that while the traditional widespread notion that people of colour should be discriminated owing to their inferiority has been substantially eroded, racism still exists, albeit in a modern subversive and subtle form. Despite the different subtle forms, a paramount issue necessitates action as the participants in the studies implied.

Over the past century, extreme forms of discrimination and racism have consistently been condemned, thereby minimising their occurrence. However, racism and systematic oppression continue to be exercised through less apparent, but nonetheless obvious practices termed as microaggressions. Introduced by Pierce (1974), microaggressions encompassed one

of the ways white individuals disparaged their coloured counterparts. Pierce (1974) argued that no matter how subtle and insignificant it might seem, cumulatively, microaggressions represent racism in its modern form. Sue *et al.* (2007a) describe microaggressions as short, popular and regularly spoken phrases associated with behavioural and environmental humiliations. Regardless of whether deliberate or unintentional, microaggressions communicate hostile, insulting and racist undertones towards people of a different colour.

The extant definitions have extended the breadth of microaggressions to encompass both conscious and unconscious elements that exemplify privilege, superiority, demeanour, discrimination and insults towards the numerous marginalised groups of people based on different identities such as race, gender, age, abilities and spirituality (Sue, 2010). A review of the responses captured in this study reveal two participants who underwent microaggressions explicitly to racial differences. The study also identified a participant who experienced microaggressions because of sexual and gender non-conformity. In discussing the responses and observations, the study leverages on the existing conceptualisations of the term, specifically by three major categories, micro-assaults, micro-insults and micro-validations as conceptualised by Sue *et al.* (2007b) from a race perspective.

According to Sue (2010), micro-assaults are explicit derogations mostly typified by verbal and non-verbal attacks on people who belong to a minority group with the intention of causing harm to the person(s) through intentional discriminatory behaviours, avoidant behaviour or even use of abusive names. For instance, use of words such as 'oriental' and 'coloured'. The discouraging of interactions between people of different racial backgrounds and intentionally attending to a person of another race at the expense of another qualify as micro-assaults. This phenomenon was observed in this study. For instance, participant 12

illustrates a micro-assault episode in one of her travels, specifically evidenced by the arrogance and preferential treatment of a person of a different and more privileged race;

Participant 12: *"…she looked at him and he said, that's the smell of Muslims…instead of going through that process of security…He waltzed through because he was wearing a suit and he looked, sadly to say, he didn't look brown…"*

From the above, it is apparent that micro-assaults incline towards the old-fashioned forms of racism and, as Sue *et al.* (2007b) contend, the likelihood of micro-assaults being deliberate and conscious is high, although most are exercised at private and isolated environments whereby the aggressor benefits from anonymity. However, as the response by Participant 12 shows, micro-assaults can be displayed in the public, especially when a perpetrator loses control or perceives the environment as hospitable and devoid of repercussions as illustrated by the comment below with regards to other passengers;

Participant 12: *"…no one said anything…no one did anything, nothing, not a word, not excuse me, sir, where are you going..."*

The notion of losing control is captured by Thomas' (2001) explanation of air range. He contends that air travel predisposes passengers to a multitude of psychological and physiological processes. Psychological aspects include problems such as anxiety, owing to problems such as flight delays, jet lag and travelling panic. When these are combined with indulgences such as alcohol and drugs, as well as medication, individuals lose control to the extent of disregarding the implications of their emotions and actions, including disruptive behaviours on other passengers (Bor, 2007). This lack of control might result in aggressors exercising their microaggressions towards passengers of other races. Regardless of the cause of micro-assaults, however, the impact on victims shapes the perception of services being offered, especially if the service provider intervention measures are absent or inadequate.

Furthermore, according to Sue (2010), micro-insults revolve around communications and actions that express insensitivity and rudeness with the motive of demeaning a person's identity and heritage. They are thus, a representation of delicate snubs that might not be apparent even to the perpetrator, but evidently convey an insult towards another person. For instance;

Participant 12: *"...It made me feel belittled and demeaned, especially since the airline itself is an Arabic airline and it belongs to a Muslim country..."*

As Schmidt (2018) adds, micro-insults are also illustrated by comments or questions that reveal an underlying message that a person of a different race does not qualify to receive a particular service or might have gained positions, privileges or rights through favouritism, affirmative actions or illegal ways. They may occur when a perpetrator fails to acknowledge the presence, contributions or viewpoints of a person of a different skin colour as explained by participants 9 and 12;

Participant 9: *"...But if they see you that they see your passport and then they see where you're born on your passport, it's always like you are not truly Canadian...so let's go put you through extra security clearance..."*

Participant 12: *"...I showed him my ticket and I said, this is my seat and he pretended like he didn't understand me because of the way I looked..."*

Participant 9 in particular expressed the normality of micro-insults that occur during the boarding process and extra security checks, picking and choosing certain people;

Participant 9: *"...I don't like boarding experiences a lot of the time... everyone should have the same amount of security and not like, instead of just like picking and choosing certain people..."*

The participant acknowledges the airport's international security protocols however, picking and choosing based on race and skin colour is not appropriate for the airline's image as well as it is considered offensive for the passenger to have to go through that on a regular basis, thus, affecting their entire experience;

Participant 9: *"...I understand it goes with international security, but...it'd be like, OK, so who are your what are your parents' names? It's like, why do you care who my parents are..."*

Moreover, as discussed by Sue *et al*. (2007b), micro-validations entail messages that negate, overlook or nullify the psychological experiences and realities of a person of a different background. This is illustrated when a person expresses a sentiment about a unique attribute that is not inherently associated with a person's background, for instance, country of birth and eloquence in speaking a given language amongst others. Sue *et al*. (2007b) adds that micro-validations might involve a person's rights being abused, and in the event they respond, they are dismissed for being perceived as oversensitive and petty. This diminishes the importance of the needs and preferences of the person being oppressed;

Participant 12: *"... then there is this guy in the window seat and I asked him again and he pretended not to understand me... he pretended not to understand because he wanted that seat... she just asked me to accommodate that man and sit in the middle seat..."*

These responses illustrate that microaggressions towards passengers could originate from both the employees and travelling counterparts as well. The scenario intensifies especially when microaggressive behaviours of other passengers and airline employees synergise. This is because it culminates in a sense of insecurity and helplessness;

Participant 12: *"...I kept giving the stewardess looks and I kept asking, like pressing a button...just showing that I'm uncomfortable...no one came to help, no one recognised that...it*

was horrible to the point where I had to make a call on the airplane just to feel a little bit safe…"

With the numerous airline operators doing business in an international scale, the likelihood of serving customers with different racial backgrounds increases significantly. As the participants illustrate, the willingness or inability to address race-based microaggressions could undermine the travelling experience of minorities, thereby affecting brand reputation and losing customers, especially if they undergo the psychological situations as evidenced in this study.

Furthermore, while the concept of microaggressions has been typically applied in studying and communicating issues on racism, it also applies to other minorities as explained by Sue (2010). One of the pronounced concerns of the study are attributed to microaggression scenarios relating to how a transgender passenger was attended to, specifically because of the minority group to which the passenger subscribed. This is not a new finding as Nordmarken (2014) remarks that besides illustrating stereotypes, a significant portion of microaggressions directed towards gender-nonconforming or non-binary individuals are an actualisation of conventional ways gender issues are conceptualised and communicated.

Moreover, because there lacks accurate information pertaining to the transgender phenomena, especially outside the scholarly and practitioner corridors, micro-aggressors misinterpret or misunderstand the identities to which gender-nonconforming, or for this case, trans people subscribe (Sadika *et al*., 2020). This is illustrated by the micro-aggressors invalidating the reality of the LGBTQ+ community, and in some instances, merging gender and sexual non-normativity. As such, microaggression is therefore illustrated by addressing people with sexual or gender non-normativities using; incorrect pronouns, avoiding using their current names, inquiring about their 'actual' identity and asking them for clarification

concerning their gender identities. As Nadal *et al*. (2012) add, microaggressions may be illustrated by intentional denial or failure to acknowledge the respective identity, names or pronouns. Below is an excerpt from the interview with participant 14;

Participant 14: *"…They said that because I look like a male and the passport says female…the staff were like calling me incorrect pronouns…"*

As McLemore (2015) states, micro-aggressors 'misgender' because they assume they are abler to know the true identity of a person, that their perception is more accurate and thus, valid in comparison to another person's knowledge of self; a notion Serano (2016, p. 90) terms "gender entitlement". As Bettcher (2007) explains, by mixing up gender identities, as well as exercising gender entitlement, micro-aggressors present nonconforming individuals as pretentious and deceivers who conceal their true selves. In some instances, micro-aggressors attempt to legitimise the identities but unfortunately, classify all transgender people together, whilst there are variances amongst them as well (Nadal *et al*., 2012).

According to Baros (2021), a widespread microaggression towards individuals who prefer they/them pronouns is that others show despair at a perceived dilution of language. In this regard, people claiming that they/them pronouns are wrong are favouring their understanding of language over the experience and realities of non-conforming individuals. The dearth in information about gender-neutral identities and forms of expression provide an opportunity for systematic mistreatment or even erasure (Davidson, 2016). For instance, honorifics used to express respect, including Mr., Miss, Madam are often a reflection of conceptualising gender from a binary point of view. These, however, do not suffice in contexts of addressing individuals who are non-binary, non-conforming or those exclusively using they/them pronouns (Pulice-Farrow *et al*., 2017). For instance, participant 14 remarked of numerous episodes when the pronouns used were incorrect;

Participant 14: *"...she was like speaking to me, like madame, sir, madame like in a loud voice and...inside the airport in Egypt, the staff were like calling me incorrect pronouns..."*

The intensity of microaggressions experienced by participant 14 as implied by the responses could be explained through the intersectionality theory. The theory posits that different minority identities could combine, and in event the identities are lesser appreciated in a given context, the impacts could have a profound effect on a person (Bower-Brown and Zadeh, 2021). Such identities include nationality, race, sex, sexuality and height amongst others. For instance, a person could be discriminated not only because of being a racial minority, but also because of being of a gender that is being oppressed, for instance female. It would be expected that given the global reach of the commercial airline industry, the plethora of identities in a regional, national and individual level provide an opportunity for the theory to manifest. This is demonstrated by participant 14;

Participant 14: *"...they were so rude to me...the employer was shouting, this is not you, this is someone else...Like I didn't want to be like seen, you know, because my issue is not like something simple, they're Arabic countries..."*

The aspect of intersectionality could explain the intense response participant 14 had towards the actions of airline employees and passengers. In fact, Turan *et al.* (2019) explain that intersecting forms of stigma have profound physical and mental implications characterised by high risk of vulnerabilities. This is depicted by participant 14, whose responses ranged from feeling shy and the need to be invisible when entering the plane to capture concerns of safety, leading the participant to feel depressed as illustrated;

Participant 14: *"...Everyone was looking at me like in a weird way, I was like feeling embarrassed and shy...I just I didn't want to be seen anymore. I just wanted to disappear from*

the airplane…regarding this incident. I was like not feeling safe anymore...I was depressed after this…"

Indeed, this study adds to and strengthens the extant reports pertaining to the existence of micro aggressions throughout the airline passenger journey. Through the analysis, it is evident that there are passengers that acknowledge being victims of micro-aggressive actions by employees and fellow passengers. This resulted in diverse responses and sentiments from the passengers, including anger, discomfort and even feelings of insecurity in and outside an airplane. These should be critical concerns for airlines to improve customer experiences, enhance satisfaction and promote retention.

Furthermore, the commercial airline industry plays a pivotal role in global affairs and in fact, is an instrument of integration of economies, countries and cultures. Its global reach creates opportunity for diverse contexts, given the different backgrounds of passengers. This study illustrates that this diversity could culminate in micro aggressions not only between passengers, but also from airline employees whose job revolves around ensuring the health, safety and comfort of passengers. If the participants themselves could identify the reasons for these micro aggressions, influential stakeholders, including airlines and policy makers, could even extend the fight against micro aggressions and prejudices even further especially in raising awareness and providing solutions from policy and practice standpoints.

5.4.2. *Reciprocity*

Another insight that emerged from this study is the concept of reciprocity. According to Cialdini and Goldstein (2004), reciprocity is actualised when individuals respond to positive treatment by performing a positive action towards the provider. As the authors add, reciprocity is attributed to the notion that parties in a relationship are more pleasant and cooperative when responding to actions by others. This is especially when the friendly actions of the initial party

do not display aspects of self-interest, an aspect associated with negative reciprocity. Conversely, there is a high likelihood of individuals to avoid responding or respond in a negative or even brutal manner to hostile actions. As such, Cialdini (2001a) remarks that reciprocity is an important factor in the creating and sustaining of exchanges and relationships. This section examines and discusses reciprocity as manifested in the study findings, using extant literature on the concept.

Reciprocity is an important component in social psychology. It has been studied in relation to relationships amongst people and communities as well as with other institutions such as business entities (Cialdini, 2001b). For instance, in explaining social exchange, Houston and Gassenheimer (1987) contend that reciprocity exists in virtually every exchange relationship, with the extent to which is manifested as being contingent on the social distance between the parties. The social distance is determined by the nature of relationship, with close distance being illustrated between family members while medium distance exists between friends and companies with which a person has an encounter. An example of maximum social distance is manifested between strangers. It would thus be acceptable to argue that the existence of a relationship between the passenger and service provider, in this regard an airline, provides an opportunity for a reciprocity phenomenon to manifest.

The affect theory could be used to explain the reciprocity aspect depicted in this study. The affect is anchored on the notion that in a social exchange, there are at least two parties, with each party providing a component valued by the other (Gregg and Seigworth, 2011). Thus, there is shared responsibility, because both parties share responsibility for the result. In the service industry, emotions highly influence how the parties view the relationship and the shared responsibility. In this regard, emotions that emanate from a social exchange determine the nature of relations, with the outcome reflecting not only on the person, but the entity the person

represents. If customers are provided a positive experience in a given location, the customers could generalise their perception across the entire company. This is evidenced in this study;

Participant 1: *"...because to me it's important to feel welcomed and to be treated respectfully and nicely because that goes well with the image of the airlines as a whole…"*

Participant 13: *"...However, if I wait and I end up with a rude employee, this is my problem. So to me, the attitude of the brand's representative is everything, you know…"*

According to Shostack (1977), the nature of exchange between customers and service providers is fluid. By servicer providers offering a unique or special element that is noticeable and appeals to a customer, there is increase in the likelihood of them coming back. As previously mentioned, the notion that may assist in understanding the concept of reciprocity, especially in the commercial airline industry is Lawler's (2018) affect theory. He posits that social units are origin of emotions that are influenced by the extent of jointness in an encounter. As Lawler (2018) discusses, jointness encompasses the degree to which in a service exchange, shared responsibility is actualised and influences the emotions in relation to the service outcomes. Thus, it would be important to first acknowledge that given the affect aspect, this could explain the prevalence of emotions during the touchpoints in this study. This is because virtually all participants discuss of how their emotions were influenced because of an encounter. Some examples include;

Participant 1: *"...He told me the next available flight was the next day… I was furious…I was bothered…so he got bothered, actually, he was angrier than I was…"*

Participant 2: *"…I was obviously furious…I glared at them from head to toe and I just walked out. I was very bothered because it didn't make sense…"*

As the above remarks by passengers imply, airline employees could have considerable influence on their emotional response to an encounter. Such emotions are paramount, as they determine the likelihood of a passenger responding positively to any future experiences with the airline. In fact, as Wu *et al.* (2008) discover, a positive encounter might incentivise recipients to reciprocate not only by adjusting the behaviour at the moment, but as well in the future through actions such as repeated purchases.

While the employee's behaviour is important in ensuring reciprocity by facilitating successful exchange, the customer also has a substantial role in the exchange process. Even Baron *et al.* (2010) argue that customers' actions in a service provision encounter could influence the degree to which their satisfaction is heightened or diminished. It can actually transform their perception of the value they receive. Thus, the attitudes and expectations brought by a customer into a service context could influence the delivery in a negative or positive manner. In fact, Ryan *et al.* (1996) explain that service providers are influenced by a customers' attitudes and behaviours. As participant 3 remarks;

Participant 3: *"...So he goes like, just because you're nice, I'm going to bump you into economy plus...And him doing that is just that interaction made me forget about the entire situation that happened, the entire waiting process..."*

Another aspect noticed in the research was passengers perceiving that their spending did not correspond with the quality of service received. This could be explained through the economic view of the social exchange theory, which postulates that a relationship between two entities is based on the notion that a party has a valuable element desirable to the other party. The impact is profound if there is incongruence in the value of exchanges, and reciprocity could offer some insights. Furthermore, Peng *et al.* (2020) explain that reciprocity is not only a critical human behaviour determinant, but also, resourceful in obtaining positive feedback

following a request. The authors add that reciprocity has the capacity to induce feelings of 'indebtness' even when the recipient did not invite a favour or does not like the individual who performed the initial favour. In fact, individuals are more inclined to deviate from acting based on personal interests in reciprocal situations, with actions that show magnanimity being accompanied by positive disproportionate levels of cooperation and kindness. On the other hand, actions that illustrate treachery are usually responded to by disproportionate levels of dislike, hostility or even vengeance, primarily because the reciprocal actions do not result in expected rewards;

Participant 2: *"...It's not about the luxury experience, it's not about your comfort. It's about just them and their own profit. So I felt like I was being used, like pay this much and it's a scam and it's a lie..."*

Participant 3: *"...But I booked for my trip to be first class. So, again, I had to argue about the fact that you're not giving me my right, you are not giving me the trip that I booked for, and that's not fair..."*

Indeed, this study confirms earlier studies on reciprocity, especially as it captures the profound impact that even an unintentional action (or inaction) could have influencing outcomes, as illustrated by participant 3 who was upgraded due to her mild response to the employee in a highly tense situation. The research also shows that the quality of service, as exemplified by passengers' perceptions, highly determines their disposition to become repeat passengers, which eventually benefits the airline. The concept of reciprocity shows that the airline employees and by extension, the airline as well as passengers have a shared responsibility in ensuring a satisfying experience. Indeed, while reciprocity could be seen from the point of view of the most conspicuous issues, such as becoming a loyal customer, even

minute actions during employee-customer interactions could have substantial impacts on the customer's experience.

5.4.3. Harassment Complacency

Furthermore, this study identified that during travel, passengers can experience severe and pervasive conduct by fellow passengers, thereby making their travelling experience be characterised by hostility, intimidation and abuse. Issues related to harassment in the commercial airline industry have been extensively covered in literature, with specific emphasis on airline employees being the targets of unhealthy conduct from passengers and fellow employees (Weziak-Bialowolska *et al*., 2020). Despite such widespread of harassment in the industry, Weziak-Bialowolska *et al*. (2020) argue that there is underwhelming response and solutions given that the challenges necessitate legitimate involvement of all individual airlines, industry regulators, country legislators, employees and passengers, which is complex given the global nature of the industry. In fact, as discussed by Feldblum and Lipnic (2016), the flight attendants have accepted that reporting incidents of harassment would be redundant or even counterproductive.

Feldblum and Lipnic (2016) add that the lack of national or even international systems for tracking incidences of harassment facilitate an enabling environment. Given the complacency illustrated in resolving harassment of attendants, it would be possible to assume that this situation is replicated for the airline passengers. This is a significant concern since harassment of passengers by either fellow passengers or the employees have profound implications on passengers' perceptions and behaviours, and as well, the assessment of service provided by an airline. These might culminate in the unwillingness of the passenger to be a repeat passenger, while also building damage to the airline's reputation.

Amongst the factors that contribute to the challenges in resolving harassment between passengers is flight attendant issues. This is because even if passengers report to the attendants, the likelihood of the issues being resolved is low, especially if they are belittled and harassed as well. The powerlessness of attendant position could be attributed to the traditional expectation for attendants to be subservient to passengers, as depicted by the need for women to be visually appealing to passengers. As Weziak-Bialowolska *et al*. (2020) remark, regularly, flight attendants are addressed with pet names or touch, and even cornered when passengers have special requests. Thus, interventions made by attendants are likely to be disregarded by some oppressive passengers, especially those questioning the attendants' occupation and the corresponding authority; given the need for attendants to be civil, empathetic and tolerant to passengers.

Furthermore, despite the awareness of the vice by relevant stakeholders, Weziak-Bialowolska *et al*. (2020) argue that flight attendants express lack of confidence in the management's willingness to support them with regards to their response to harassment of either passengers or colleagues. This is because the commercial airline industry prioritises customer service. As such, as a report by Feldblum and Lipnic (2016) outlines, an attendant's response to harassment is by ignoring the incident, diffusing or deflecting. Indeed, ignoring and avoiding integration with a harassing or abusive passenger is the most common default response. This was illustrated in this study;

Participant 12: *"…instead of asking him firmly, she just asked me to accommodate that man and sit in the middle seat. So that was that was very disappointing, especially coming from a woman…she wasn't going to make a scene…"*

The fight against harassment is an overwhelming endeavor. This is because the international nature of the industry results in extensive diversity in cultural backgrounds and

ideologies based on individual, national and regional differences (Karami *et al*., 2021). Thus, harassment and other vices during travel are reflective of the societies, thereby necessitating involvement of numerous stakeholders in an internationally synergetic approach. Given the complexity of achieving such an objective, and the fundamental role of the commercial airline industry in the modern society, they should attempt to preempt and resolve issues within their control to minimise the exposure of both passengers and flight attendants to harassment.

Moreover, sexual harassment is amongst the most impactful forms of harassment due to the manifold and serious outcomes. For instance, Chun *et al*. (2008) argue that sexual harassment is associated with psychological and physical outcomes, including irritation, agitation and stress. Additionally, victims of sexual harassment register feelings of degradation and powerlessness. This is recognised in the vulnerable victim hypothesis, which contends that individuals in comparatively low sociocultural status and power are more likely to be victims (Karami *et al*., 2021). In fact, this is evidenced in this study, which demonstrated that the impacts are profound, especially when individuals are in a confined space without options for escape. The comments of participant 12 below captures such feelings;

Participant 12: *"...I kept giving the stewardess looks and I kept asking, like pressing a button and just like you know, trying to ask for different things and just showing that I'm uncomfortable... And no one came to help, no one recognised that…"*

The need to address harassment of passengers by airlines has benefits that go beyond an individual passenger, since even witnessing exposure to sexual harassment could induce the bystander effect; which conveys that individuals are less likely to help someone in the presence of other individuals or if others could (Willness *et al*., 2007). This could affect not only other passengers, but also the employees especially if they are regularly exposed and might culminate in tainted brand reputation and public rebuke. Therefore, given the extensive impacts of

harassment, while awareness is important, even more beneficial would be the capacity to prevent and respond. This shows that training is an important consideration in reducing incidences of sexual harassment. However, there is an apparent lack of training for employees regarding addressing sexual harassment, especially when passengers are the victims.

Passengers are usually presented with briefings on safety, including providing information on how to report concerns. However, harassment, despite its intense ramifications, is not conveyed as an issue that passengers should automatically forward to the employees. Thus, just as Matusitz and Breen (2009) recommends, it is paramount for airlines to ensure that passengers understand that attendants are dependable, approachable and professionally equipped people to whom any unwelcomed behaviour from fellow passengers could be reported. However, as this study; through participant 12 shows, the attendant did not respond despite the prompts by the passenger. There was no attempt to re-seat, request the passenger to stop the behaviour, or even escalate the issue to captains for further actions after landing. As illustrated;

Participant 12: *"...Yes, he started harassing me. He started saying very uncomfortable things. He tried to touch me... and no one came to help... if that could happen to a grown woman, then that could happen to a child..."*

The notion of the bystander effect raises the need for empowerment of not only the airline employees, but as well the passengers. Outside the commercial airline industry, studies, including Potter and Moynihan (2011), have acknowledged that empowerment of people changes their attitudes about harassment and even their ability to curb it in ways that do not exacerbate the situation. This could be done when communication between airlines and passengers convey the welcomed role of passengers in the prevention and handling of issues revolving around harassment.

Moreover, transforming the airline climate and contexts that allow sexual harassment to happen is an indispensable element in reducing the vice. Adoption of functional and succinct anti-harassment procedures anchored on strong policies is one of the ways of addressing sexual assault, primarily because both the potential harasser and victims are made aware of the resultant actions. Roehling and Huang (2018) recognise that adoption of applicable policies and procedures that facilitate the spread of awareness regarding what constitutes sexual harassment increases reporting and minimises victim blaming. Effective handling of harassment issues would be preceded by; education on sexual harassment behaviours, deployment of reporting systems and accompanying procedures, outlining of responsibilities of flight attendants and promotion of respect of all passengers regardless of their backgrounds.

While only one participant discussed the sexual harassment encounter, her comments mirror the literature presentation of harassment as a complex issue, but regardless of the scenario and environment in which it happens, the implications on the victims are substantial. Even in presence of other passengers and airline attendants, the participant in this study mentioned how helpless and powerless she felt after being repeatedly verbally and physically abused. Such incidents have long-term impacts including disorders that could impair a person's individual and social attributes. Unfortunately, there is apparent dearth in interventions by relevant stakeholders in preventing and even responding to incidences of harassment, which explains the underreporting of such concerns. Adoption of protocols and standards for dealing with incidences of harassment, as well as creating and introducing prevention mechanisms would contribute towards the curbing of harassment.

However, for this to happen, data on incidents have to be obtained and analysed, which is a herculean undertaking given the airline publicity and passenger privacy concerns (Weziak-Bialowolska *et al.*, 2020). In fact, even preventive measures such as regularly reminding

passengers the airline's stand on harassment, as well as associated consequences, has negative connotations especially for vulnerable passengers, possibly resulting in a lesser desire to travel with an airline. Thus, harassment requires a holistic multi-stakeholder approach, inclusive of all governments and airlines, and since airlines are agents of global change, success in fighting harassment could be achieved at a global level over a relatively short period. It is nonetheless relevant to acknowledge the role of society in eradicating harassment behaviours, since the perpetrators are a reflection of the social and cultural norms active in a society (Trompenaars, 1996). Thus, the mandate goes beyond the airlines and passengers, to include entities involved in policy formulation and implementation.

5.4.4. Employee-Customer Interaction Influence

The fourth insight relates to the after-effects or impact the employee's words or actions have on the passenger. An important aspect captured in the job descriptions of flight attendants is their responsibility in ensuring the welfare, comfort and safety of passengers. According to Yelgin and Ergun (2021), the flight attendants have a profound function that involves balancing individual passenger concerns as well as company and industry level policies. In fact, tension between passengers and the flight attendants is commonplace, with attendants being equipped with strategies to manage passenger situations, including diffusion of situations with minimal disturbance. Given their responsibilities in ensuring a successful travelling experience for the passengers; empathy, exercising authority and conflict resolution is paramount (An and Noh, 2009). In this regard, checking on the passengers and responding to passenger requests in a way that improves the perception of the service provider. Thus, the interactions between flight attendants and the passengers is a crucial determinant of the resultant physical and psychological outcomes, ranging from expressions of satisfaction to trauma and even aggressive outbursts. This is implied in the following comments by participants;

Participant 4: *"...I started getting very, very angry and agitated. And when that happens, my body doesn't handle it well. So I immediately start feeling nauseous. I start feeling dizzy and I feel like I'm going to faint..."*

Participant 14: *"...They refused to let me in the airplane...I was really upset and angry..."*

The comments depict situations where the passengers feel angry and ignored, phenomenon that goes against extant literature on managing stakeholders (Yi and Gong, 2008). For instance, the entire marketing function is founded on the notion that customer orientation is a paramount determinant of a company's relevance and performance in a given context with the customer orientation playing a fundamental role in the marketing function. Therefore, its actualisation in the service industry is achieved through customer-oriented workforce and the accompanying interactions. This notion transcends even into the commodities segment. Nonetheless, with services being intangible and necessitating interactions, the disposition and behaviours of the workforce substantially influences the customers' assessment of the quality of service. This is especially true for airlines, as it is evident from this study that flight attendant interaction is an important theme, with participant 29 describing that effect;

Participant 29: *"...I think the cabin crew being nice and friendly is more important. For me, the pleasant behaviour really impacts you throughout..."*

Thus, the employee's level of customer orientation determines the performance outcomes and a company's long-term success. This means that the employees' role in the delivery of a service is integral, with an increase in customer orientation likely to result in positive or improved interactions. This outcome shows in a customer's assessment of the quality of service throughout their journey. Moreover, amongst the identified critical elements with regards to the interactions between the airline employees and the passengers was the possibility of discrimination and bias in air travel, and its negative impacts on the perception

of service. Specifically, the implicit prejudice phenomenon was manifested. According to Beeghly and Madva (2020), implicit prejudice and biases are demonstrated whereby thoughts and behaviours of a person are guided by assumptions and attitudes about which a person is unconsciously aware regarding a specific object. For participant 15, this was illustrated by the employee as well as the involved passengers assuming she would surrender her booked seat to another passenger that had a baby. She stated that if they would have asked her then she might have allowed it, however, they decided for her already. The participant continued by saying;

Participant 15: *"...It made me a little bit angry at the stereotype that if there is the mother with the baby that they would always get the privilege and they don't consider the other people... For example, if someone has a visible disability, I don't need to explain myself that I have the disability, but because they see you walking and being healthy and fine, they automatically assume that you are..."*

Other participants such as participant 27 have also described scenarios where the exercise of implicit biases by the employees were evident;

Participant 27: *"...I booked both ways business, so I was wearing shorts and slippers...I went to the guy...and he was like sorry sir, first and business class first, economy is later. I was like, yo, that's my ticket, you're judging me just 'cause I was wearing shorts and slippers? I felt really uncomfortable, like the way I was judged was not cool..."*

Participant 27's account illustrates the fragility of interactions pertaining to the impact of implicit biases and judgement on outcomes. This was especially unfortunate as the passenger was experimenting with the airline. Indeed, the unpleasant evaluation outcomes of the experiences above could be expected, especially since literature on customer care has recognised its existence, as well as the implications.

Moreover, another element evidenced under the employee-customer impact domain, is the impact of amicable communication. In numerous instances, participants describe scenarios where the employees were rude resulting in some passengers feeling disrespected and devalued. This seems to go against the best practices for customers' facing employees in promoting customer satisfaction. Evidently, employee incivility had substantial ramifications on passengers. Besides, the study by Porath, MacInnis and Folkes (2010) concludes that customers are more tolerant of employee incompetence than they are concerning rudeness, even if it happened between the employees. Participant 6, 13 and 29 recount the experiences, as well as the implications of the attendants' overreaction and aggressiveness, which included anger and embarrassment. Moreover, other participants intimated;

Participant 2: *"…They were just like…very, very disrespectful, and they had no regard to the fact that I was a passenger or that I was simply another human being…"*

Participant 16: *"…The employee over there was very rude, very disrespectful… I wasn't happy with everything, with their service, with their attitude..."*

This finding confirms the arguments in prior research including Sicilia, Caro-Jimenez and Fernandez-Sabiote's (2021), who found that employee emotions in the service recovery have noteworthy impacts. Furthermore, even an older study by Lee and Hu (2004) ranked rude employees as the third cause of customer complaints, only preceded by low SQ and lack of congruence between a service provided in comparison to the promised. Nonetheless, as this study confirms, regardless of whether the negative emotions and responses are precipitated by issues emanating from the processes or even the passengers, the impact on the passengers' perception of service is profound, especially because they feel devalued, as explained by participants 2 and 13. Moreover, feelings of devaluation may also emanate from instances

where the airline itself is to fully blame, as evidenced by participant 24 who was told to standby the gate while other passengers boarded as a result of overbooking the flight;

Participant 24: *"...she was like you have to wait until everyone has actually boarded so we can tell if there are any available seats... but if there isn't then you'll have to wait for the next flight. That shocked me, it shocked, shocked, shocked me to even bringing me close to tears, I was so shocked and sad and I felt left out... like it's not fair for the people, like what if they all show up? Do you not have a plan for that..."*

Moreover, one interesting observation was that with regards to the ability to address and resolve negative experiences, the notion of interaction quality became apparent. This is reflected in the comments, whereby, with exception of turbulence, for which participants excused the employees, the participants acknowledged how the behaviours of the employees could have made situations better. Even communication and updates alone were acknowledged by participants as important factors with regards to how they evaluated the service;

Participant 6: *"...I was like, you could have just saved me time that I had to wait, like all that I had to wait almost three and a half hours to get a response that I already knew and that three and a half hours could have been used to actually provide me with a second plan, which I ended up doing obviously..."*

Participant 23: *"...Actually, it was five because they explained everything to us, they let us know why they are doing this, everyone was so very kind and nice and they made us feel so safe..."*

Interaction quality permeates across all the touchpoints, from booking to after landing, as well as handling of complicated situations. Some of the impactful scenarios were unique. For instance, for, participant 18, the scenario that incentivised a negative evaluation of the

experience involved the attendant's response to the situation where the passenger requested a change of seat due to coronavirus concerns as the adjacent passenger was coughing. The attendants were unable to act satisfactorily with regards to the passenger's request. Nonetheless, based on the participant's arguments, while the contexts that induce peak situations are unique, how the airline employee responds is highly deterministic of the ultimate evaluation of the journey.

Indeed, the actions of the employee have profound impacts on the passenger's perception of an airline, especially in complicated scenarios. This is because while complications are unavoidable, the willingness and capability to address the anticipated and unanticipated problems highly determine the passengers' perception of an airline with regards to how prepared it is in handling probable travel crises in the future. This may provide the basis for continuing purchasing the service from the airline. Furthermore, research by Suarez Alvarez *et al.* (2010) identified that a company's ability to resolve complaints is an important constituent of relationship marketing, which is based on generating customers' emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses that may benefit the company. Specifically, participant 8 and 22 succinctly expressed the lack of communication during a safety crisis as the main factor to which they attribute their unwillingness to re-purchase the services;

Participant 8: *"...and they didn't inform us in a calm way. They actually made everyone on the plane panic and the landing was horrible. It was very scary. And ever since then, I have a fear of flying..."*

Participant 22: *"...they should have calmed the passengers down and instead they just left it there, like for the last eight hours of the flight, everyone was just quiet and people were screaming, people were panicking..."*

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Brady and Cronin (2001) found that the customer's perception of the service interaction quality is dependent on three main components. Amongst these is the employees' attitude, as depicted by their willingness to attend to the customers' needs. The notion of employee attitude in relation to the customer's perception of the interaction has been captured by numerous authors. For instance, Barrick and Mount (1991) opine that since extroverted people are usually associated with being sociable, person-oriented and affectionate, a customer views an employee who displays extroversion as welcoming and willing to socialise. Therefore, such a customer is less predisposed to feel as demanding or intrusive towards the employee. For instance, while participant 3 felt like a conversation with the employee would be desirable, participant 6's response to his requests were met with a dismissive response that was interpreted negatively by the participant;

Participant 3: *"...the interaction with the employee would make this entire waiting process better..."*

Participant 6: *"...if you had waited, you would have gotten the answers you needed without asking those questions..."*

Barrick and Mount (1991) discuss the notion of agreeableness, which is associated with kindness, sympathy and the willingness to help. Agreeable employees subliminally communicate to customers that their actions and acts of service are out of choice rather than a forced activity, even in scenarios where customers have faulted. Furthermore, the interactions are not characterised by confrontation and offence against the interacting parties. For instance, the participants reckon some scenarios show apparent lack of agreeableness and tolerance, to the extent of fights. These have the propensity of undermining the perception of interaction quality. This is reflected in the comments below, with participant 11 acknowledging satisfaction with their instances with agreeable employees;

Participant 1: *"…they're very disrespectful. I got into a talk back kind of fight situation with the guy working at the ticket station…"*

Participant 11: *"…they have to be sweet like and most of them really are and yeah…"*

Lawler (2018) discusses conscientiousness, which is illustrated when employees are viewed as dependable and responsible, especially in relation to their job responsibilities. Conscientiousness is also exhibited when individuals perform their functions in ways that surpass the minimum expected levels. Motowidlo *et al.* (2013) state that individuals who understand the kind of actions that have a positive impact in the management of interpersonal service scenarios, such as intentional listening, welcoming engagement or effective inquiry and negotiations, would more likely execute effective interactions. It is evident that participants in this study illustrate instances where conscientiousness was not evident, with an example detailed below;

Participant 4: *"…she smirked in a way that felt like it was it was condescending. It was it felt like she was in her mind saying, you know, oh, look at this person trying to get on the first class bus….it was it was rude it was disrespectful. No, nothing was said. There wasn't an exchange…"*

The notion of physical and psychological conditions of passengers is widely researched, and as such, airline employees are exposed to emotionally charged situations. Despite the irrationality of disputes, however, the outcomes should be favourable to the parties involved, a consideration that necessitates emotional stability. According to Lawler (2018), emotional stability is a critical determinant of relationship and interactions between engaging parties. In fact, Bahadur *et al.* (2018) state that the nature of interpersonal relations in the service sector elevate the role of emotional intelligence. In the commercial airline industry, emotional stability is a prioritised aspect of the airline employees as they are exposed to a triggering

environment characterised by a multitude of socio-psychological and physical factors. The comments by participant 1 and 4 below capture the importance of attendants' emotional stability in relation to their perception of interaction;

Participant 1: *"...He didn't speak to me in a way that made me feel like I was a customer. He made me feel like there was a personal relationship that was built on hate between him and I..."*

Participant 4: *"...sometimes you can you can really be at your worst. But the other person's reaction and how they deal with it can make the biggest difference..."*

Barrick and Mount (1991) present the tenet of openness to experience as amongst the most complex, yet impactful aspect in personality research. They discuss that openness to experience is depicted by the extent to which a person is imaginative, tolerant of new viewpoints and analytical. This element is paramount in the commercial airline industry given that interactions happen between individuals with different personalities and cultural differences. Thus, openness to experience and tolerance for people with different ideologies is indispensable. Participant 12, however, acknowledges that they do not feel comfortable traveling to a non-Muslim country, where most passengers are not Muslim, owing to the difference in attitudes displayed when interacting with the employees. Thus, the attitude towards unfamiliar situations, especially due to employee-customer interactions, influences the SQ as well as the CX.

The second component of interaction quality, according to Brady and Cronin (2001), is behaviour. The authors characterise behaviours as actions of helpfulness. Due to the service nature of the commercial airline industry, the behaviours exhibited by the employees towards passengers substantially determine their evaluation of quality of interaction. For instance, passengers have service expectations; owing to previous travels, the airline's marketing

instruments or word of mouth from other passengers. As such, interaction quality is influenced by how the employee responds in service delivery, such as the service being unavailable, as illustrated by participant 7 in relation to her expectation of a vegetarian meal. The service could also be influenced by expected speed, with participants such as 5, 6 and 14 strongly expressing their dissatisfaction with the expected level of service. Participant 1 describes the illustration of helpful behaviour by a flight attendant, while participant 2 complains of a service failure because of expected behaviour;

Participant 1: *"...So then he responded very quickly and started apologising and tried to fix the situation very quickly..."*

Participant 2: *"...Marketing and seeing them on TV and them faking to give you this amazing experience and this whatever, but in truth, it's nothing like that..."*

Additionally, interaction behaviours are illustrated by the manner in which employees respond to customer requests. These may relate to amongst others, customers' preferences, special needs or disruptive negative conduct from other people. This aspect was identified in this study, with the participants attesting to the apparent lack of willingness by the employees to attend to their requests relating to clarifications and processes, resulting in anger and disappointment;

Participant 2: *"...I kept asking them over and over, but there was no one there who was giving me service and in the end I lost it... something as simple as water. And I have to ask for it like six times..."*

Participant 6: *"...I was very taken aback by the reaction I got from the flight attendant, I was like, I was only asking you a question you didn't need to, like, raise your voice at me for asking a question..."*

The consequences of these responses may also leave an impact on the passenger as per the comments made by participant 6;

Participant 6: *"...I am a little more apprehensive when it comes to asking flight attendants for things because, you know, as a person with anxiety and stuff like that, a lot of it really takes a toll on you..."*

Furthermore, the concept of organisational citizenship behaviour may explain an employee behaviour based on a participant's narrative. As described by Barroso *et al*. (2004), citizenship behaviours are illustrated when the employee engages in voluntary actions that are not outlined or even implied in their employer's expectations but enhances a company's functioning and performance. This notion may be used to explain the role of such a phenomenon in ideal employee-customer interaction scenarios. Studies such as Yi and Gong (2008), acknowledge that unprompted and unsolicited actions by the employees influence the customer's perceptions of a service encounter. This aspect is demonstrated by participant 3 and shows the implications on the customer's feelings and outlook with regards to the prior scenarios;

Participant 3: *"...So he goes like, just because you're nice, I'm going to bump you into economy plus...do you want the window or the middle seat?...that interaction made me forget about the entire situation that happened..."*

The third component of interaction quality is expertise (Brady and Cronin, 2001), which is illustrated by the employees' knowledge and skills relating to the products and services being offered. For instance, as mentioned by Suthatorn and Charoensukmongkol (2018) in their study on cultural intelligence, effective listening and communication skills are indispensable in starting and maintaining interactions. It is through communication expertise that employees are able to solicit, invite and respond to the customer's issues. Additionally, lack of patience

between the parties involved undermines the interaction quality and outcomes. Resourcefulness is also another paramount aspect, especially as it enables addressing unexpected issues that relate to customers. In fact, given the sensitive nature of the commercial airline industry, lack of skills in interacting with passengers and/or providing and adapting solutions could worsen passengers' concerns. As evidenced from the participants' remarks, expertise and skills in relation to not only communication, but also other work practices resulted in highly emotive perceptions of the service;

Participant 1: *"...They don't know how to deal with customers, they don't. I feel like they don't do their jobs, they don't understand their jobs..."*

Participant 12: *"...They're trained to know what they were doing...just to see that go over their heads was just sad..."*

Furthermore, before the notion of touchpoints became relevant in recent marketing literatures (Lindberg and Vermeer, 2019), the concept of service encounters was prevalent within the customer relationship and service-marketing fields, with their management and assessment being captured by numerous authors. For instance, Crawford and Ostrom (1995), acknowledge the impact of regular interaction in relation to customer satisfaction, perceived quality of service, as well as customer loyalty. Another concept evident in service encounter literature is communication, which has previously been discussed in this study as a cultural aspect. In fact, in their study on non-verbal communication, Jung and Yoon (2011) state that in service encounters, communication is not just an element of customer service, but also the most essential and impactful dimension. This is attributed to its role in ensuring customers' preferences, requests and needs are not only relayed, but also attended to in the desired fashion. Thus, effective communication has the propensity of improving the customer's perception of interaction even after they encounter complications in the service. Participant 8 describes one

of her worst flights being characterised by minimal communication from the employees with participant 7 also facing communication issues;

Participant 7: *"…the customer service wasn't very friendly, wasn't very clear. They didn't know how to communicate…"*

Participant 8: *"…They didn't tell us about the weather problem…"*

Indeed, the role of communication is significant and consequently, the quality of interaction is influenced by the comfort expressed by passengers in communicating their concerns to the employees, to then be reassured that issues would be addressed. In fact, Hopp and Fisher (2020) have the view that communication is also influenced by the level of transparency illustrated by the employees, with dissemination of even negative information enhancing trust and interaction quality. Effective communication should culminate in reduced anxiety of the recipient, retain trust and respect amongst the involved parties, and even reduce the need for clarification. In fact, it could be argued that the regular request for information by participant 6 could be attributed to the inability of the employee to communicate. In another interview, the passenger was the agitated party;

Participant 2: *"…And I kept asking them over and over, but there was no one there who was giving me service and in the end I lost it…"*

Even when not intentional, communication could have a significant impact on passengers, as illustrated by participant 4. Upon her request on why the plane took longer time than usual to lift-off, an attendant responded. She was informed that an unexpected signal had been noticed. However, when this information was relayed in another style, by specifically being informed that the issue had to be fixed and confirmed by several engineers, the passenger

experienced some sense of comfort and calmness, to the extent of her not leaving the plane as she previously wanted. In fact, as she concluded;

Participant 4: *"...But the other person's reaction and how they deal with it is can make the biggest difference..."*

This illustrates that communication is a pertinent determinant of interaction quality. While positive information is important, it is evident that communication under pressure, especially when responding to complex inquiries by passengers, or relaying negative information, has the most profound impacts on the interaction quality. This raises the need for empathetic communication, which Bahadur *et al.* (2018) say could negate the undesirable impact of an uncomfortable or unsatisfactory service experience. In fact, communication has the capacity to increase commitment and loyalty, especially as it satisfies the informational requirements of the passengers while providing security. Thus, communication substantially contributes to the passenger's perceptions of interaction quality.

Moreover, with companies having acknowledged the significance of healthy relationships with customers, especially given the long-term operational and financial implications, interaction scenarios are decisive in influencing the resultant perception of not only the employee providing the service, but the airline as well. As this study illustrates, most participants had experienced negative interactions, with some of the interactions having negative psychological implications. In fact, the participants vividly express incidences of service failure with 14 participants deciding to never use the service provider again, with the example of participant 13; where she also advises others not to use the service provider based on her interaction experience, while others return due to lack of a better alternative as demonstrated by participant 1;

Participant 1: *"...So, no, I do not wish to purchase any of my ever future tickets with them. OK, but I might have to due to convenience…"*

Participant 13: *"...they exploded in my face… everyone was looking at me and it was so embarrassing…whenever anyone would tell me, like they're traveling with the airline…I would tell them about this experience and I'll be like, piece of advice, don't..."*

It is also evident that the commercial airline industry is exposed to individuals with different backgrounds, a notion that determines the impacts and perceptions of interaction quality and results. Nonetheless, from this study, it is evident that in interactions between employees and passengers, the disposition, behaviours and skills are fundamentals in the passenger's evaluation of not only the interaction quality, but also the overall satisfaction with the service. The notion of communication is also manifested by the participants, confirming that service providers' actions relating to pre-conceived expectations, unique passenger requests and provision of extra benefits to passengers highly regulate the passengers' perception of the quality of interaction, satisfaction and willingness to return.

5.4.5. Crisis Management

Among the precursors for an impactful experience is the ability to address the concerns regardless of the stage in which it happens. Even in scenarios where passengers experience turbulence, the inability of the employees to assure that the passengers were safe. This is especially with regards to problems and crisis management. This is because the ability of the airline employees to handle situations highly influenced the future travelling decisions of the participants. While some situations were paramount, the unwillingness and/or inability of the employees to address the problems were impactful. For instance, participant 20 remarked how she would never fly with a particular airline again because they lost her luggage, but more

importantly, because the airline employees were unhelpful and not cognisant of the passenger's concerns, which altered the view of the airline by extension.

Evidently, the ability of and/or its workforce to respond to and resolve a service failure is an important determinant of a passenger's decision to select an airline in the future. While this study identified some of the highly emotive episodes that could be qualified as MoTs, the participants' expressions regarding the inability of the airline to resolve the concerns could be classified as a MoT as well;

Participant 19: "...very apathetic, they weren't even concerned, they behaved very robotic and weren't giving me what a human being feels for another human being..."

Moreover, the airline industry is significantly different from other modes of transportation, specifically because of its unique characteristics such as the distance covered and travelling above ground. Additionally, the industry is highly cost intensive, vulnerable to safety and reliability concerns, and serves informed and consistently demanding customers. Awa *et al*. (2021) state that conflicts and disputes between airline passengers and employees are commonplace, an issue resulting from socio-psychological and physical triggers associated with travelling with planes. This is exacerbated when the airline employees are unequipped to not only prevent, but also resolve the disputes. In fact, Bor (2007) says that in some contexts, a rise in emotions of the customers may trigger employees' emotions as well, since they are human entities with distinct needs and feelings. Thus, when triggered, the employees might not have the threshold to respond and neutralise conflicts in an amicable way, especially as stipulated by an airline's policies and values.

Beverland *et al*. (2010) mention that in rare scenarios are conflicts and disputes personal, but both parties might perceive them as personal. This context might escalate to unmanageable disputes that could culminate in public relations and even legal complications.

Thus, the manner in which employees handle the minor issues such as passenger requests, as well as major aspects such as delays and cancellations of flights, is a paramount factor in determining the passenger's perception of the service. This is especially because while most sophisticated issues are beyond an airline's control, passengers remember how the airline employees responded, especially in relation to how it is assessed and perceived by the passenger.

This research confirms a finding in studies including Matusitz and Breen's (2009) that employees; especially in the service industry, are inclined to have a defensive reaction towards situations where customers express dissatisfaction and/or complain. This is aggravated when customers become agitated to the extent of seeking further action towards the service provider as a way to recompense for provision of an unsatisfactory service. The importance of effective crisis and complaint handling is attributed to the benefits that transcend beyond the situation in question. This notion is captured by Randall and Reffett (1989) who explained that customers' expression of dissatisfaction and complaints should be viewed as resourceful insights into areas a company should direct its focus towards, especially as the quality of service is indicative of the problems pertaining to the service, internal processes, or even changing customer dynamics.

Thus, the manner in which employees respond to customer complaints and causes of dissatisfaction determines whether the solutions identified would be amicable and maintain the relationship or undermine the relationship all together. Furthermore, in Goodman and Salesforce's (2015) study, the authors discuss that when dissatisfied customers do not express themselves, there is likelihood they have decided not to be repeat customers, and thus do not look forward to any improvements. Additionally, when customers are unable to communicate negative experiences to a company, they are likely to express their dissatisfaction to other

people. This could have substantial impacts on the company, since even decades old studies such as Arndt's (1967) acknowledge that negative word of mouth has stronger impacts than the positive variant. In fact, Weinberger *et al.* (1981) contend that the damaging impacts of negative word of mouth persists even when the message has been disproved. Therefore, handling of disputes and complaints by customers is an indispensable aspect that benefits not only the customer, but the company as well.

Lovelock and Wirtz (2016) discuss that despite the usefulness of the insights provided by customers through their sentiments on services, barriers might prevent customers from expressing their assessment of services. Amongst these include the inconvenience associated with the reporting and communicating procedures, the energy required and the lack of confidence in a company's willingness to remedy the situation or attend to the causes of dissatisfaction. Additionally, customers might fear that there would be a rude response towards their sentiments and complaints, to the extent of being scolded or shamed by the employees. Matusitz and Breen (2009) in their study in establishing the applicability of the self-efficacy model in complaining behaviour, state that there are customers that doubt the objectivity of their assessment with regards to the SQ, though this mostly applies in industries where the services are complex, technical or specialised. Some of these barriers to express dissatisfaction in this study are implied;

Participant 4: *"...they responded saying there was nothing that we can do about it..."*

Participant 6: *"...the flight was cancelled...three and a half hours could have been used to actually provide me with a second plan...But the flight attendant's response to me was just so rude..."*

According to Goodman and Salesforce (2015), companies with effective crisis and complaint handling cultures are more likely to experience increased customer satisfaction and

loyalty, even when solutions are unavailable or have underwhelming outcomes. This is especially demonstrated by the attention given to customers in all nodes of interaction, including offline and in-person. A company whose culture acknowledges the importance of both positive and negative feedback is more likely to monitor and identify issues at personal process levels and as well, proactively allocate resources and interventions to reduce repetition. On the other hand, companies that fail to acknowledge and respond to customer issues reduce trust and increase anxiety, which increases the likelihood of seeking a service from another provider since the current is underwhelming.

Moreover, according to Shooshtari *et al*. (2018), a negative concern by a customer has a long-term impact, and as such, it is paramount for companies to ensure that customers obtain closure with regards to their complaints. However, in some instances, companies perceive that customers think that after expressing their dissatisfaction, they were no longer important in the resultant processes, partly because further inquisition may result in more dissatisfaction. While this might be true, as illustrated by participant 4 who thought the attendants perceived her as nagging, this feeling by customers should be avoided by doing authentic follow-ups with the customer to ensure that any ideas implied by the customers are captured. In pursuing closure, customers are satisfied, while the company obtains insights into service improvement processes. In the commercial airline industry, it is evident that closure is perceived and approached differently as depicted in the following statements by participants. In fact, despite one airline compensating one participant following her complaint, the passenger did not achieve closure since she did not receive a proper response;

Participant 4: *"...So until today, no response to the complaint... I sent them several emails, they didn't really respond with anything..."*

Participant 13: *"...what they did is they offered me points...I'm not even a frequent traveller...they should have even at least asked if I'm a frequent traveller or not...I didn't even get a sincere apology from the airline..."*

Numerous studies, including Godwin-Charles *et al.* (2017) attest to the notion that companies with consistently effective issue and complaint handling processes enhance the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Despite the existence of studies and best practice principles, apparently, many companies have poor processes for handling customer issues, an element attributed to unwillingness, lack of attention and inconsistencies. One of the components is the reporting process, and according to some participants in this study, the lack of awareness about the point of contact was an important factor, with the participants regularly asking for the procedures and processes for filing a complaint;

Participant 4*: "...if I'd like to file a complaint, who do I email?...every other weekend I would go and I would try to find someone who I can file an official complaint..."*

Furthermore, the notion of employee empowerment for addressing employee concerns is endorsed by Godwin-Charles *et al.* (2017), who explain that the confidence and skill in which an employee handles an issue highly influences the customer's trust in obtaining a solution. In fact, Shooshtari *et al.* (2018) remark that customers do not receive the message of their concerns being handled elsewhere in a positive manner, that is, telling customers that their concerns would be escalated, rather than solved at the moment, affects their perception of willingness to resolve. This is because it is indicative of a company that does not prioritise timely resolution of its employee concerns. According to this study, the inability to solve employee issues in a timely manner had impactful effects on the passengers' perception of the individual employee as well, especially given the time-sensitivity of the industry;

Participant 1: *"...and I still didn't find anyone there. So I kept waiting for about forty-five minutes…I tried to find solutions around it because he would not offer me solutions…"*

Participant 8: *"...they weren't able to get us checked into a hotel or at least anywhere near the airport…they should have been able to know what to do if something like this would happen…"*

From analysing the narratives, several observations can be made. For instance, just as other studies have confirmed, this study shows that the speed of response to passenger issues determines the passengers' perception of SQ, especially in the long term. Despite this, however, even companies in the industry acknowledge that both positive and negative passenger feedback is important, but in practice, expression by dissatisfied passengers is not only not encouraged, but also dismissed. Furthermore, there is an apparent lack of suitable provisions and methods for passengers to express. Additionally, while airlines might have established systems for follow-ups, ensuring closure for the passengers is a different concern, especially as given that some participants did not feel adequately compensated for the airline's response. Having a culture that welcomes and responds to customer concerns enhances trust in a company, and in fact, companies should consider customers who express their dissatisfaction as resources for insights that can be adopted as part of service improvement, rather than ungrateful clients.

Moreover, the insight of crisis management relates to the CEM concept; discussed in previous chapters, that companies need to develop an effective response orientation at every service encounter or touchpoint (Homburg *et al*., 2017). Monitoring these instances would indeed lead the company to recognise several optimisation capacities. Indeed, different customers perceive various incidents of failure differently, but the greater the perception of service failure by a customer, the more the likelihood of experiencing a negative customer action. According to Weun *et al*. (2004), the severity of a failure can be represented by the

magnitude of inconvenience, loss or damage. As indicated by the participants in this study, in the commercial airline industry, problematic issues that need resolution range from as simple as delays in responding to a passenger's request for refreshments in-flight to days' long predicaments attributed to bad weather. Thus, with different failure issues affecting passengers differently, it is indispensable for airlines to establish the impact of negative unexpected scenarios on the passengers, especially with regards to implications on the long term;

Participant 4: "*…the captain was speeding, so I just I freaked out…I went to one of the air hostesses and I told her, you know, I would like to get off the plane, please…*"

Participant 10*: "...it does have an impact because I have a fear of flying..."*

According to Choi and Mattila (2008), controllability is one dimension of service failure, and encompasses the customer's belief pertaining to the party whose actions and responses could influence the origins and outcomes of failure. Customers usually evaluate whether an incident could be controlled by a service provider, or even whether the company could have proactively adopted relevant actions to address incidents and their outcomes. Controllability also captures the extent to which an issue could be deliberately induced or accidental;

Participant 3: *"...It's the airlines and the airport's responsibility to not make me miss my flight because this is a transit process…"*

Participant 4: *"...both of us had a role to play and they failed to play their role…"*

One of the evident issues in this study is that passengers respond to problematic issues in different ways, a phenomenon identified by Zourrig *et al*. (2009). Indeed, numerous responses have been captured regarding diverse incidences where there are critical breaches of service failure (neglect and sleeping corridors by participant 8) as well as repeated series of

failures (participant 2 asking for water for six times). Despite the significant breach in SQ by employees tasked with transporting participant 8, the participant does not explain the response towards the employees, while participant 12 becomes substantially emotive. Other participants expressed a relaxed response towards the infractions. This is indicative of the notion that passengers frame concerns differently, and this is shown by a participant who was wondering why other passengers were not responding as she was;

Participant 12: *"...no one did anything, nothing...I know they heard it because I heard it too, and I was like in the back of the line and no one said anything and he just walked in..."*

This has implications on how companies respond to customer complaints, necessitating the need for adapting the response to the distinct customer. This has been illustrated by Beverland *et al*. (2010) in their explanation that customers might frame a crisis or conflict from either a task or personal standpoint. The authors discuss that when customers frame tasks from a task point of view, their response towards a company's attempt to fix the situation is positive and constructive. On the other hand, when customers frame conflicts from a personal standpoint, there is a significant sense of injustice, and any actions by an airline to remedy the situation might be redundant or even dismissed. This shows that treating passengers as generally dissatisfied does not acknowledge the manner in which they perceive service failures and the response. Additionally, it is important to distinguish whether a crisis or service failure is viewed as an injustice by passengers or mere task failures, the former needs recovery strategies that are more individually centred, while the latter might necessitate just economic tactics.

Moreover, this study identified that in some instances, passengers may experience overwhelming psychological and physical episodes, as explicitly illustrated by participant 4. A

paramount element pertaining to handling passenger issues relates to passengers' health and wellness, and the manner in which employees respond;

Participant 4: "*…someone is panicking… It's your job to try to calm them down…when I had told the guy that I need a chair, I'm going to faint, he told me, step out of the way because we're boarding the next flight...*"

Airline passengers are predisposed to a plethora of physical and psychological issues attributed mainly to travelling stress, inadequate sleep and jet lag (Suthatorn and Charoensukmongkol, 2018). For instance, stress has detrimental implications that include impaired mental processes, compromised immune systems and even exacerbation of other psychological conditions. While it is good practice for passengers to reduce stress; consequently, increasing the likelihood of having a positive and enjoyable journey, it would be expected that flight attendants intervene accordingly if an undesirable situation, such as the one above, emerges with the intention of ensuring the passenger's psychological well-being.

Indeed, crises and passenger complaints are widespread in the commercial airline industry, an industry that is susceptible to natural and manufactured issues including but not limited to weather patterns, employee issues and individual passenger challenges. Nonetheless, the employees must be trained to resolve passenger issues as well as respond to critical psychological challenges associated with travelling. In fact, these issues account for the perception of flight attendant jobs being a physically and emotionally exhausting occupation. The attendants are tasked with providing refreshments for passengers, ensuring their safety and comfort, while also performing administrative duties amongst others. However, despite the understanding of the nature of the flight attendant occupation, the manner in which passenger issues such as cancellations, refunds, delays, lost luggage and typical services are attended to informs the passenger's perception of the service provided. As the analysis demonstrates, the

ability and willingness of an airline to guarantee a superb CX introduces a culture that; is effective in crisis management, is receptive of complaints and ensures resolution to the extent of passengers gaining closure.

5.5.   RQ3: TPB and Perceived Past Experience

Furthermore, the final research question refers to how airline passengers' experiences shape their purchase intent (as predicted in the TPB). According to the theory, behavioural intention is informed by three elements, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. This study has evidenced the ways in which these experiences influence the TPB antecedents; while confirming or altering the passenger's perception of the airline and affecting their purchase intent.

5.5.1.   Attitude

The results reveal that the passengers' attitude towards the airline was significantly influenced by their experience with them, confirming the influence of experience on attitudes as conjectured by Anshu, Gaur and Singh (2022). It was also evident that an airline has the opportunity to alter the passenger's attitude after they experience an undesirable encounter. This could be from either solicited or voluntary remarks regarding the service by the passenger. The intention would be to help identify instances of service failure and perform an action that alters the impression of the airline and revert the attitude towards never purchasing the airline's service in the future. This has been captured in the literature regarding post-purchase behaviour (Han *et al*., 2020), and represents the ultimate (final) 'moment of truth' (Tuten, 2019). This is depicted in expressions such as;

Participant 16: *"...after landing I sent an email to airline X to complain about what happened and to this day, haven't received a reply back from them…"*

According to Liu *et al.* (2021), in the post-purchase phase, a company's focus should be to ensure that a positive satisfaction impression has been inculcated in the customers' mind as it has the propensity of influencing their future behaviours that include but are not limited to, repeat sales. This results in Awa *et al.* (2021) advocating taking pre-emptive measures to avoid undesirable situations, or putting a plethora of effective remedial mechanisms to ensure that consequent behaviours are not

only beneficial to the company, but more importantly not detrimental. Furthermore, as the participants insinuated, it is the inability to handle negative incidents, rather than the incidents themselves, that accounted for the change in attitude and the resultant behaviours. The use of strategies that were unable to deliver this by the airline is depicted in the following statements;

Participant 1: *"...it took about four to five months to get back the money that I paid for that ticket. They charged me the cost of the flight that I missed and made it my responsibility, even though the check-in counter was actually closed way before the time they were supposed to..."*

Participant 13: *"...I don't need your points… No, I just, it's not going to work because I just came to you and I told you that I had a really unpleasant incident. So this is not the way to do it…"*

As the participants insinuate, it is the inability to handle negative incidents, rather than the incidents themselves, that accounted for the change in attitude and the resultant behaviours. The use of strategies that are unable to deliver this by an airline is insufficient in overcoming negative experiences.

5.5.2. Subjective Norms

The extent to which the passengers' experience with the airline influences their ability to be persuaded by their peers, friends and family, has been depicted in this study. 15 participants dismissed peers and family as some of the factors that could influence their decision, while 14 mentioned they could still be influenced, albeit because of circumstances;

Participant 21: *"...Umm… yes, yes they can…like if we were all going away for a trip or whatever, like yeah sure, I'd tag along with them…"*

Participant 24: *"…No actually, I wouldn't think I would be peer pressured into it…but if I'm in a group or I'm in a work situation, or it's a workplace or something that the work thing is the only time that I wouldn't have a say in it…"*

Evidently, despite passengers attesting to probable persuasion by other people to travel with an airline, the negative attitude is still maintained. This especially is the case if passengers have limited control over the journey decision making. However, based on these comments, subjective norms are not applicable in scenarios where passengers have ultimate control over the journey, such as when flying alone. For some participants, including participant 22, they would rather forego travelling with a group by travelling with another airline and meeting later. Other participants expressed the likelihood of neutralising the influence of peers, friends or family members by persuading them to fly with alternative airlines instead and reducing their influence by describing the reasons for not selecting that particular airline as apparent in the following statements;

Participant 18: *"…They can't influence my decision, if I had a really bad experience, I wouldn't be influenced. I'd influence them, it'll be the other way around…"*

Participant 29: *"…so I think I would influence them even if they are convinced that this airline is good…"*

As these statements imply, experiences could be so profound that they induce engagement in word of mouth marketing as evidenced in the study on airlines by Ahmadi (2018), in defending their strongly held attitudes. In fact, due to an undesirable encounter with an airline employee, participant 13 narrated that she would not only never use the airline again, but also advise other passengers against using their service. The passengers referenced above declare the likelihood of engaging negative word of mouth.

Moreover, some participants acknowledged that peers, friends or family could have an impact on them travelling with the airline with which they previously had a negative experience and have attributed this possibility to specific factors. As they remarked;

Participant 3: *"...I do listen to people's opinions when I know they are they have the same traveling style as me, so, yes they can affect my decision..."*

Participant 31: *"...For sure. They can definitely influence me; I'm the biggest people pleaser..."*

Based on the above statements, negative attitudes towards purchasing the services may not be actualised, that is translated into actual behaviours. However, the majority of participants acknowledged the inability of friends and family to convince them to use an airline whose services they had decided to never purchase. This seems to weaken the argument relating to the role of subjective norms according to Ajzen (1985) in the passenger's future decision on flying with the airline. For instance;

Participant 16: *"...No, they can't, once I made up my mind about them, it's very hard to convince me otherwise..."*

While the above comment represents the position of most of the participants, as they were less predisposed to conform to and comply with their peers and friends' influence to use an airline with which they had a negative experience, participant 4 expressed the same sentiment, but because of the positive privileges she benefits from the airline. This was an interesting phenomenon, although it is already present in research including Öhrner and Kerimova (2022), as they confirm that some customers may remain with, or return to a company even after a scandal. Nonetheless, as the participant explained;

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Participant 4: *"…No. So a lot of my friends try to get me on the Airline Y wagon and no, I I'm very, very loyal to Airline X. I'll just tell them I'll meet you there… I've seen how they deal with other things. I've seen how they deal with when the flight is overbooked… free upgrade. I have I have 50 kilos of luggage weight…"*

This illustrates that positive experiences, especially those that a passenger regularly undergoes, and has been sustained by a company, may favour an airline in instances where passengers go through a faulty experience.

5.5.3.   Perceived Behavioural Control

The notion of perceived behavioural control, as conceptualised in the TPB, represents both the person's sense of difficulty in engaging in a certain behaviour, as well as the acknowledgement of factors that may facilitate or undermine participating in the behaviour. These elements; having been influenced by the passenger's past experience, have been depicted in this study to some extent. By participants acknowledging the possible influence of better alternatives on their selection of an airline or due to convenience, the lack of alternatives, therefore affecting their level of confidence in repurchasing with the airline. Through this, the control belief of the perceived behavioural control as illustrated by Ajzen (1985) is observed;

Participant 1: *"…I don't wish for it, but I will only do it if I'm forced to, if there is no other option. Based on convenience…"*

Participant 10: *"…Um, no I won't. If I had no other option then I guess I would but in general, no…"*

Therefore, despite an airline's provision of an unfavourable service, the passengers may be forced to use an airline despite harbouring negative attitudes. Additionally, possible influence of the

passengers by their peers, friends and family to reconsider their stance to never fly with a certain airline also seems to subscribe to the control belief element of the framework. This is because some participants expressed possible lack of capacity to convince the other friends and peers about never using an airline, and abiding by their pressure, especially if they are flying together. This aspect shows both subjective norms and perceived behavioural control at play thereby depicting the components of the model.

5.5.4. Purchase Intent

The intent of this study was to establish the possibilities and implications of airline passengers experiencing situations that affect their choice of flying with an airline. Thus, identifying the reasons for which they selected their carrier was deemed resourceful, especially as it could give some insights relating to the effects of prior experiences. As detailed in this sub-section and shown in the chart below, the participants attributed their selection to numerous factors. From the analysis of the interviews, it was apparent that while the airline choice was identified once the passenger decided to travel, others had a preconceived selection prior to deciding to fly. This is evidenced by passengers that acknowledged their prior experiences as influential in their choice of airline. Nonetheless, the discussion of the factors is as follows.

Chart 1: Reasons for airline selection
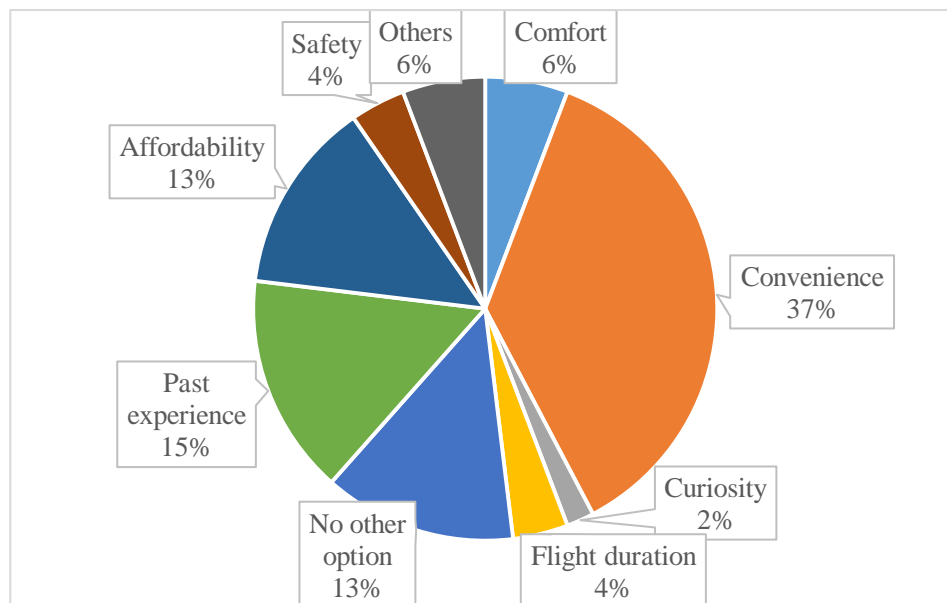
Convenience was by far the biggest determinant for the selection of a particular airline by the majority of the study's participants. 17 participants attributed their decision either partly or fully to convenience, as compared to past experience, which was the runner-up factor with 8 references. Convenience was so impactful that it influenced the decision of passengers who were loyal to other, but unavailable airlines, such as participant 13. Similarly, participant 1 chose to fly with a particular airline, not because he liked them, but because of the convenience the airline offered. Furthermore, Nenem, Graham and Dennis (2020) mention convenience as a paramount competitive advantage in their study on business passengers' decision making;

Participant 13: *"...Because it had the convenient time...they had a night flight and I needed a night flight usually in Airline Y. But Airline Y has an early flight, so I had to opt and use Airline X at the time..."*

Participant 15: *"...It's because it was...I have flown with them before and it was convenient at that time. That's why..."*

These statements show the overriding impact of convenience. In fact, as participant 15 remarks above, it can even make some passengers alter their selection of airline, especially if their preferred airline is unable to match. For participant 15, for instance, the prior experience with the airline, compounded with its convenience accounted for the selection of airline. This is in line with Berry and Carbone's (2007) assertion that companies can build loyalty by ensuring consistent delivery of satisfactory experiences.

Furthermore, the need to identify the extent to which past experiences informed the passengers' choice of airline was an important incentive for including 'the reason for airline selection' question in the interview. This is especially considering that probable insights could be derived regarding the actualisation of TPB prior to the episodes that the passengers underwent in the specific journey being investigated. Nonetheless, past experience was acknowledged as an important factor of airline selection, with some of the participants only acknowledging the element, while others added explanations that were other independent factors. In fact, some of the participants whose comments were coded under comfort, duration, safety, others' and even convenience nodes also expressed undertones of having a past experience with the airline, such as participant 15. Nonetheless, the focus on the past experience was derived from these statements amongst others;

Participant 28: *"...because I've flown with them before and I know they're a nice airline to fly with..."*

Participant 31: *"...I always choose airline X because I travelled with them before and they're a very good airline in general..."*

As observable from the above comments, virtually all participants did not provide distinct accounts in the past that influenced their choice of airline. For instance, participant 31 mentions that

the airline is 'good in general'. Participant 3 mentioned that they chose the airline because they had travelled with the airline several times before. This opens up the need for discourse as to when and why past experience becomes a major influencing factor, especially for participants who do not explain the benefits attributed to the past experience that they seek in their potential travelling experience with a given airline. Nonetheless, these observations, including the comment made by participant 1 below, confirm Khandelwal *et al.*'s (2016) argument that past experiences influence consumer attitudes and their future behaviours, as evidenced in the above comments as well;

Participant 1: *"...Well, that's because my experiences are based I'm sorry, my future experiences are based on my previous experiences..."*

Moreover, affordability was mentioned by 7 participants, and thus, was the third-most mentioned factor. This was especially for the economy-class passengers. On the contrary, participant 1 specifically invalidated affordability as a consideration. Nonetheless, studies including Shen and Yahya's (2021), acknowledge the significance of affordability as a driver of customer loyalty amongst low-cost airlines. Participant comments include;

Participant 9: *"...I'm definitely the type of person that's like what is the most affordable ticket..."*

Participant 30: *"...had booked in advance actually, just to make sure everything is within my budget..."*

This shows that despite prior experiences, affordability is effective in gaining passengers' attention and inducing purchase, especially if the passengers are price conscious. Furthermore, while the statements above justified the reasons why the passengers selected the airline carrier; showing the passengers prior purchase intentions, the statements below justify their future purchase intentions based on the experiences mentioned during the interview. The chart below illustrates the frequency of participants deciding to purchase or not purchase a ticket with an airline after their experience.

Chart 2: Participants' decision on re-purchasing after incident
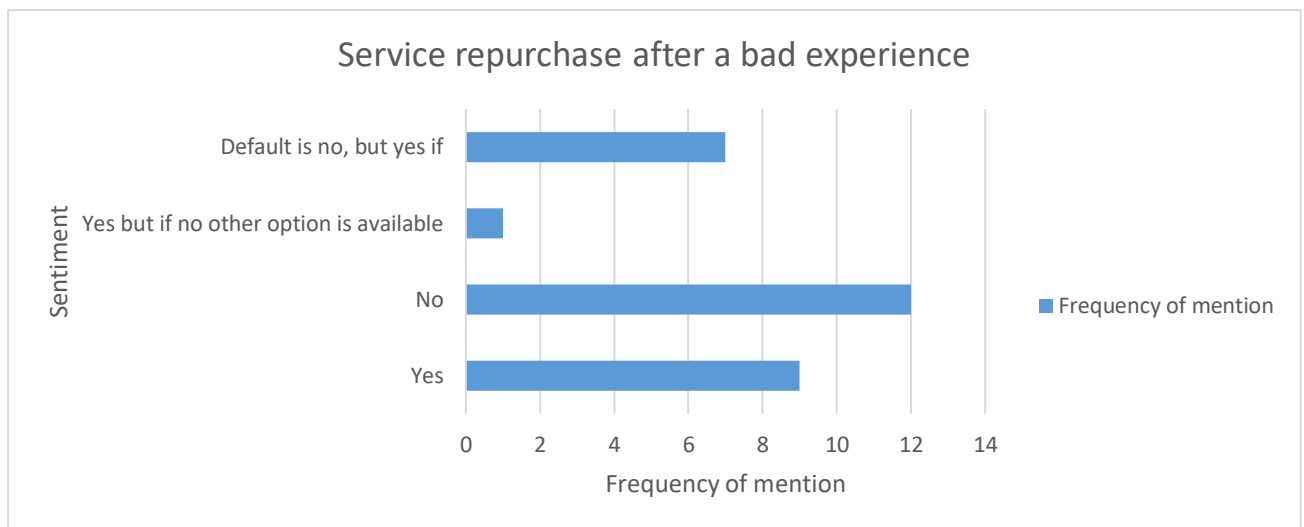
The majority of participants recounted instances of unpleasant touchpoints. In fact, participant 23 was the only one without a negative encounter across all stages. Nonetheless, the decision to never use an airline was evidenced. As depicted in the chart above, 12 of the participants that had negative experiences with the airline were less likely to travel with the given airline in the future, an aspect reflected in Ascarza, Netzer and Hardie (2018) in their analysis on why customers abandon a company silently as well as some of the following comments;

Participant 2: *"…I would not travel with them whatsoever…"*

Participant 14: *"…No, like I don't want to, like, use this airline anymore, especially after the incident that happened…"*

These sentiments show an unequivocal stance on passengers' decision on never using an airline following a single underwhelming experience. This shows that airlines are significantly exposed to negative passenger perceptions following even a single incident of service failure.

The notion of repeat service failure as the factor for passengers opting to never use an airline, not inherently the first instance, was observed. This was the case for participant 11 who had an

experience whereby the airline lost their baggage on several occasions, resulting in them solidly deciding to never use the airline again. This observation is worth noting, given its extensive implications on latter behaviours because as Wu (2012) discovered, consequence service failures have far reaching impacts, despite the reduced intensity of reaction, as the customers lose trust in a brand and acquire more justifications for engaging in negative behaviours. Moreover, after repeated service failures, participant 24 remarked;

Participant 24: *"...because that was the third time something like that happens with them, like a plane leaves without me, and none of the cases I was actually late, so I was always on time for the three different instances..."*

As implied in the above statement, passengers are likely to give an airline an opportunity for redemption, but repeated failures provide substantiation for the passenger's assessment and resultant behaviours.

It is important to note that some experiences, although isolated, were so intense that they incentivised the passengers to never purchase the service again. This was observed for participant 14 who had been discriminated because of their gender identity, resulting in intense anger and embarrassment. Participant 8, who narrated their experience when they slept in a corridor in Germany with minimal refreshments, also strongly mentioned that they would never fly with the airline. This finding is supported by earlier scholarly works, especially Weun *et al.* (2004), who found that severe service failures had far more influence on trust, commitment, satisfaction and also negative word of mouth than did comparatively mild failures;

Participant 8: *"...We had to stay at the airport for two whole nights...slept in the corridors of the airport... with paper beds and thin sheets to sleep on, and they gave us three vouchers a day for meals..."*

This remark depicts multiple service failures and, given the strong reaction to the first long delay, it would have been expected that the airline mobilised resources to ensure that the inconvenience was resolved. However, the issue was exacerbated by lack of efforts in providing even the simplest of concerns, thereby exacerbating the sentiment of the journey and the airline as well.

Additionally, participants who traditionally flew with an airline for specific benefits were more inclined to excuse some negative experiences if the expected benefits were provided, thereby maintaining their choice of airline; which could be expected especially in instances where options are limited. This notion is demonstrated by Cheng and Shen (2020) as they establish the factors that account for customers' distrust of a company. This is illustrated by participant 15, who despite undergoing an undesirable scenario, still preferred the airline as the suitable choice in the future because of the seats installed by the airline.

Furthermore, while most of the participants underwent undesirable encounters, some positive instances were observed in different stages. The experiences of participant 23, which could have been categorised as negative to some passengers (extra security screening) was positively perceived by the participant. Such a response by the passenger could have been expected, given that safety was the reason for which they selected the airline. Additionally, they had intimated that interaction with the employees is an important factor, and this was satisfied not only by the acknowledgement of, and apology for a lengthy process, but also exhaustive communication, just as Cheng and Shen (2020) recommend. This was the only interview in which the aspect that accounted for the selection of the airline, as well as the general travel factor were experienced and linked to the perception of the experience, as well as the future behavioural intention;

Participant 23: *"…They were extra cautious and the staff were explaining to us what was going on and calming us down, so yeah I would definitely fly with them again… They explained everything to*

us, the way I felt protected, I felt more like I'm home, like this is my airlines, even in my flight, I felt protected 100%..."

Based on participant 23's account of the experience, it was only through the employees' communication that they understood the rationale of practices that would have otherwise been interpreted as inconveniences if there were no explanations given. This shows that if a practice aligns with the passenger's priorities (as safety was an issue for the participant), communication is a useful means in intensifying the satisfaction with the airline's actions even further.

While the majority of the participants expressed their unwillingness to purchase the services of an airline with whom they had a negative experience, from the reviews, it is evident that participants who acknowledged the negative experiences as 'non-routine' were less likely to avoid the airline. This is because despite the negative experience, some participants identified the isolated incidences as the main factor that accounted for their perception of the service during travel but would not inherently make the participants avoid the airline entirely. Indeed, customers are willing to excuse companies for uncommon oversight (Palmer and Bejou, 2016). For participant 3, this is because the negative episode was satisfactorily handled, primarily through exhaustive updates and communication. Some participants pointed out the uncommon nature of the issues, and some excused the airline but ostracised the employees, while some mentioned the positives of the airline despite the shortcomings. Moreover, examples of participant comments are shown below;

Participant 3: *"...Because this was one incident from all the times that I've travelled. It's not something that would regularly happen..."*

Participant 6: *"...I mean, again, I really think it was it was a bad experience with that one flight attendant, so I wouldn't really judge an entire airline based on that..."*

Such comments show that consistency in the provision of a satisfactory experience is likely to offset the attitudes following unpleasant experiences.

Despite the negative experiences, it was observed that there is an impact of unavailability of options on the passengers' decisions to use an airline with which they previously had a negative experience, despite their desire to never use the airline; a perception that seems to subscribe to Ajzen's (1985) perceived behavioural control. This could partly explain the reason convenience accounted for most of the participants' selection of an airline. In fact, participant 1 identified convenience as a major reason they would reconsider the decision to never use an airline when peers and friends acknowledged such convenience and wanted to convince them to travel with the airline. This is also reflected in the comments made by participant 11;

Participant 11: *"...If I have to and it's a last resort, I would. Like I wouldn't cancel my travel plans if the only flight was Airline X, because I'm not that kind of person..."*

This notion of lack of options as a determinant of purchase intent had been identified as amongst the considerations that incentivised the passengers to choose the airline with which they later had experiences they recounted in the study. It would also be plausible that the need for convenience could also contribute to the participants travelling with the airline with which they had a negative encounter. Nonetheless, 12 participants unequivocally mentioning they would never travel with the airline again is strongly indicative of the impact of undesirable experiences on purchase intentions. As such, in accordance with the TPB as described by Ajzen (1985), it is acceptable to assert that negative experiences during the airline passenger journey have the propensity of undermining satisfaction and precipitating negative attitudes, thereby minimising intention for repurchase of experiences offered by a certain airline.

5.5.5. Section summary

The third objective explored the influence of airline experiences on passengers' purchase intent via the TPB framework. The findings confirmed that passengers' attitudes were significantly swayed by their experiences, validating the connection between experiences and attitudes. Negative incidents, especially if mishandled by airlines, drastically altered passengers' attitudes. While the TPB posits attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as determinants of behavioral intention, this study emphasised the paramount importance of effectively managing negative passenger experiences to foster positive attitudes and purchase intentions.

5.6.   *Expectation Confirmation Theory*

One of the observations in this research relates to the role of passenger expectations. This element has already been captured in numerous fields exploring the satisfaction paradigm. For instance, the expectancy-disconfirmation model postulates that satisfaction is an outcome of the interplay between expectations and performance. The theory has been explored by numerous researchers with Lin, Tsai, and Chiu (2009) mentioning its prevalence in marketing literature, consumer research, psychology, and even information systems. As conceptualized by Oliver (1977), the theory has four major components. The first is expectations, which encompasses the nature and characteristics that a person views as attached to an element or offering. Expectations, as discussed by Teas (1993), have a profound impact on users' perception of performance. When mediated by the disconfirmation component, expectations determine the extent to which satisfaction or dissatisfaction is registered after product or service use. Perceived performance encompasses a user's evaluation of the practical performance of an offering such as a product or service (Oliver, 1980). Assessment and perception of performance are linked to pre-use expectations. The perceived performance determines the extent to which expectations and beliefs are disconfirmed, thereby influencing satisfaction following the purchase or use of a firm's offering.

Disconfirmation of beliefs represents the evaluative processes a person undergoes regarding a certain element. The inputs into these processes include a person's expectations, and their discernment of actual performance (Oliver, 1977). In the event that a person's original expectations are surpassed, disconfirmation is positive and there is a positive influence on post-purchase and post-utilization satisfaction. When underperformance is observed in relation to expectations, disconfirmation is a negative valence, thereby increasing undermining the level of satisfaction, and even increasing dissatisfaction.

According to Oliver (1977), satisfaction represents the level of contentment or pleasure following the purchase or use of an item. The expectation confirmation theory provides that satisfaction is an outcome of the disconfirmation of beliefs and experienced performance. With disconfirmation of beliefs as the mediating construct, both expectations and experienced performance determine the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The magnitude and direction of the disconfirmation experience have a linkage to satisfaction.

The expectancy confirmation model has been acknowledged as resourceful tool, with older research including Oliver (1980), Bitner (1990), and Johnson et al., (1996) arguing that the model should be dominant in exploring the consumer satisfaction domain. Others such as Kaski et al., (2017) have explored the model, concluding that managers should pay specific attention to negative disconfirmation, as its effects on customer satisfaction are adverse and thus detrimental to the desirable post-purchase behaviors such as repeat purchases and word of mouth advocacy. However, research implies that the prevalence and impact of expectancy disconfirmation in relation to customers' satisfaction varies across industries and contexts, with the difference being more pronounced between product and service offerings (Riaz and Muhammad 2016; Kaski et al., 2017).

A look into the literature reveals that before Au and Tse's (2019) study, research lacks in examining the theory in an airline context, as most industry studies seem to focus on factors of

satisfaction and its mediating function on consumers' post-purchase responses. The notions of customer engagement, customer loyalty, service quality, and brand image have also been examined in the industry. Nonetheless, Au and Tse (2019) confirm that the framework is applicable to the industry in their investigation of airline delays.

As the study revealed in relation to touchpoints, there are elements and mechanisms that account for the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of passengers with regard to their expectations. Evidently, for most of the passengers, their expectations, even though initially not explicitly mentioned as expected, were unfulfilled. Furthermore, Oliver (1977) discussed that expectations may revolve around numerous standards of comparison including ideals, promises, industrial norms, or personal expectations. Nonetheless, customer experiences and desirable customer attitudes and behaviours may be achieved based on satisfaction with expectations, even if the expectations are implied.

5.7. *Changes to the Conceptual Framework*

The data analysis shed light on certain intricacies, leading to further elaboration in the initial conceptual framework, even if the findings match the original one. One notable evolution was the touchpoint elements' relevance in the airline context. Five out of seven elements were noted based on the findings with 'process' and 'employee-customer interactions' being the most influential. Additionally, the depth of the 'moments of truth' was brought into sharper focus. The analysis underscored the fact that MoTs vary in impact; for instance, experiences related to in-flight services or boarding protocols wielded greater influence on passengers' perceptions compared to other moments. Furthermore, an intricate interplay between the PET and the TPB emerged. The research pinpointed that 'peak' experiences held significant sway over behavioural intentions, a stark negative peak experience, for example, could overshadow and negate the positive behavioural inclinations engendered by other positive experiences, as shown in the new conceptual framework below.

Figure 22: Author's Amended Conceptual Framework
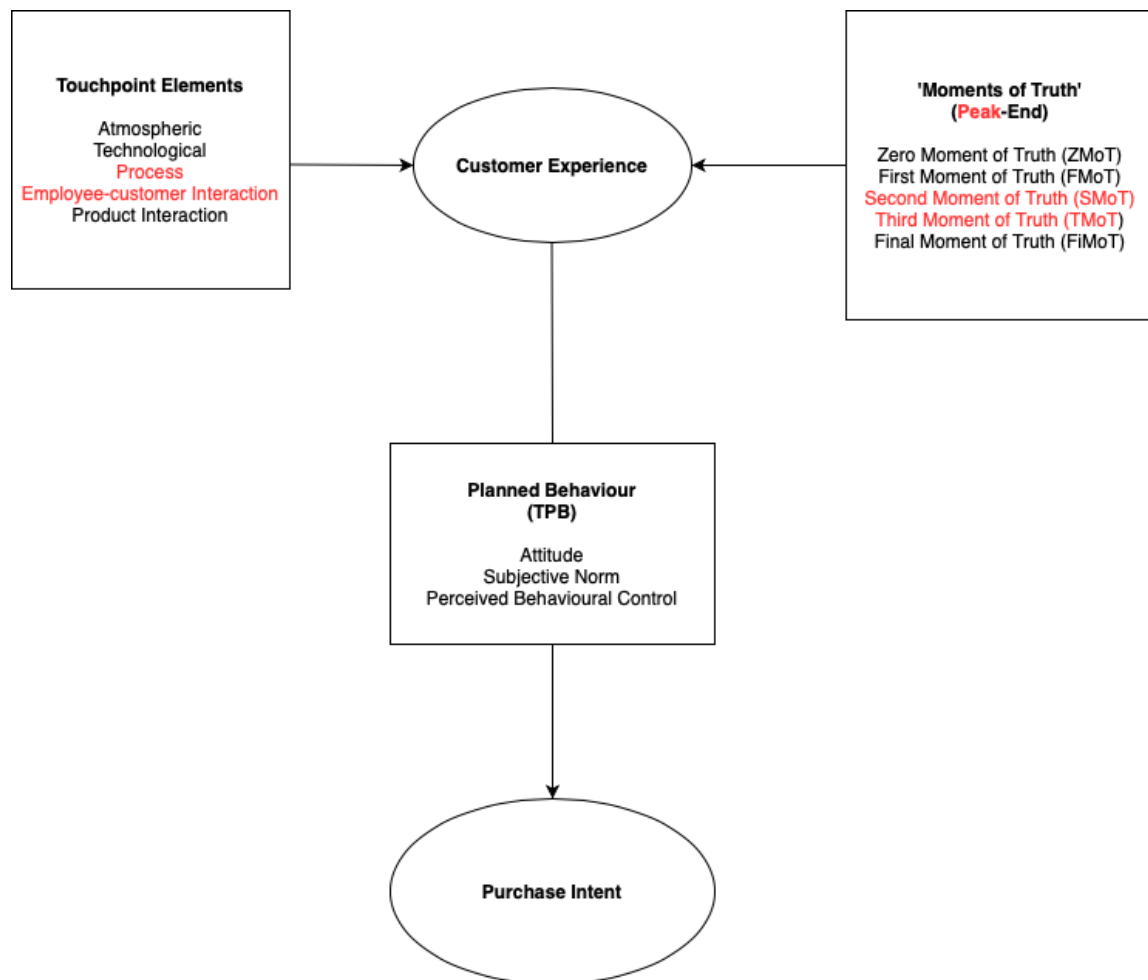
5.8.   *Findings Overview*

In this chapter, the data acquired from the study's participants through interviews has been compiled and analysed. The findings have been categorised based on the objectives that revolved around touchpoint elements, PET and the MoTs, as well as the TPB. With regards to touchpoint elements, it is apparent that customers have different expectations that vary as a customer moves through their customer journey phases. One observation in this study was a disconnect between the elements' customers prioritised, and those that actually had influenced their perception during a flight. This is an interesting observation since satisfying customers' expectations does not inherently result

in remarkable customer perceptions or behavioural change, as evidenced by customers being nonchalant when their expectations are satisfied.

The chapter has identified the effectiveness of MoTs and applicability of the PET in the airline's passenger journey. Just as the case for touchpoints, the elements that account for the intense feelings, are induced by incidences unexpected by customers, including harassment, micro-aggressions, and even undesirable unanticipated interactions with flight attendants and other passengers. Nonetheless, in line with the PET, such incidences are memorable and could be dominant in a customer's judgment of the travel experience and, is likely to shape their attitudes and behaviours towards traveling with an airline in the future. However, when customers register a peak emotion, airlines have the opportunity to develop a favourable and memorable end, as this has the propensity of influencing their attitudes and behaviours as the complaint and crisis handling capacities demonstrate.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

6.1.   Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by highlighting the key points of the research findings. The chapter is separated into distinct sections. The first outlines the main conclusions derived from the study. The synthesis is categorised under touchpoint elements and the peak-end theory, as well as major observations that subscribe to employee-customer interaction and problem management. The second sub-chapter describes the study's contribution, which are further classified into theoretical and practical contributions. The study's limitations are described in this chapter as well as implications for future research. The chapter culminates with a reflection of the research process and outcomes.

While there are different descriptions of customer experience, it could be argued that experiences are registered when customers acquire knowledge. From the literature review, definitions seem to emphasise mostly on customer response and the manner the experience emerges. Others viewed it with respect to consequence of customer experience, and others with regard to the attributes. The notion has been approached from several viewpoints namely sensation, perception, outcome, its creation and reaction among others. It could thus be observed that amongst the challenges in the development of passengers' experience is to integrate a multitude of stimuli to evaluate the tradeoffs encountered in creating value. As the study observed, the interactive dimension of CX has profound influence, and the way in which the stimuli is integrated and sequenced is essential in building customers' experience.

6.2.   Conclusions

6.2.1. Touchpoint Elements

An essential objective of this study was to identify the touchpoint elements that define passengers' experiences. It was observed that booking was a critical touchpoint, with participants assigning different attributes they perceived as desirable and paramount, as shown in section 5.2 of

the findings. Specifically, while the participants provided numerous features, two were dominant. The first was simplicity and smoothness of processes, whose significance could be explained by airlines improving processes such as the adoption of remote flight booking. The other central aspect was information availability, which is especially vital for passengers booking remotely. As such, the 'process' and 'technological' elements should be prioritised by the airlines. However, despite some of the airlines having a smooth and seamless booking process, as described by the participants, their view of the experience was unenthusiastic. On the other hand, some participants used agents to avoid probable booking complications. This implies that while the passengers may favour an airline's performance as per the expectations, albeit unenthusiastically, failure to match the expectations could be cataclysmic.

At the check-in and boarding touchpoints, 'process' elements were pronounced, specifically, the waiting time. This factor was expected given the extensive observations in research and practice revolving around the minimisation of waiting time, with authors such as Ayodeji and Rjoub (2021) calling for airport and airline management to make waiting time inconsequential. The 'employee-customer interaction' element was another critical consideration, with participants expecting employees at these touchpoints. This is an important element since it may signal the quality of service a customer may expect. Moreover, in a study conducted by Lu, Choi and Tseng (2011) regarding the check-in touchpoint, the authors acknowledged that Taiwanese passengers avoided online check-in because they prefer human interaction; showing how profound the interaction element is. The same authors identified that complications attributed to the interaction accounted for their use of self-check-in facilities such as online check-in.

Evidently, the in-flight experience is the primary offering that customers purchase. While the participants had explicit expectations for the booking, check-in and boarding touchpoints, their stance on in-flight expectations was more authoritative. Additionally, they provided their expectations in numerous domains. Nonetheless, 'employee-customer interaction' and 'product interaction' elements;

specifically, seat comfort, were identified as the critical in-flight touchpoint attributes. The notion of employee-customer interaction gains more strength if the passengers' need for efficiency and responsiveness are considered.

Furthermore, an interesting observation was that while this study attested to the role of experiences in determining future passenger actions, convenience was a significant factor in the passenger's decision-making on the selection of an airline. This was evidenced by some participants, despite having had a positive experience with an airline previously, convenience was the factor that accounted for the selection of the airline denoted in the experience; with past experience playing the role of a secondary reinforcing element. Thus, if other factors are considered, an airline providing a high-quality service may lose an opportunity to serve a customer because of the availability of a more convenient alternative. This implies a need for airlines to provide a substantially high-quality service such that its effects override the passenger's inclination to select a more convenient airline.

From the study, it could be deduced that the most intense touchpoints are encountered when production happens simultaneously with the consumptions, as compared to touchpoints in the initial stages. The proposition is that once the decision to travel has been formed and booking has been done, then prospective customers turn their interest to the touchpoints that accomplish an airline's offering. It could be argued that the touchpoints experienced before the departure lounge could be viewed as having relatively less significance. As such, airlines embarking on maximising service quality may benefit significantly if they concentrate their interests and investments on the improvements on the phase in which the customers express the most intense negative experience. Additionally, airline marketers may leverage on the explicit touchpoint aspects that are deduced from customer journey partitioning to segment and refine their customer-targeting methodologies.

6.2.2. Peak-End Theory (PET)

Another important objective of the thesis was establishing the applicability of the PET in understanding how airline passengers evaluate their experiences (Section 5.3). Indeed, the theory was depicted in this study, albeit from the negative perspective. As described in earlier chapters, it posits that people remember experiences primarily based on their feelings at the peak and the end of an experience. This notion was observed, with the participants focusing on the most intense episodes of their journey with the airline, while the prompt was to just describe their happenings in the journey. The participants narrate the highlights of the experience with exhaustive details, including the activities and emotions at a given time. Consequently, numerous participants attribute the highlights in these moments as the justification for their attitudes towards never using the stated airline.

This study illustrates airlines' challenges in delivering a positive peak event for passengers, especially if a favourable experience is expected based on an airline's communications or a passenger's past experience. To achieve a peak event, airlines must virtually deliver something unique for every CX, implying an iterative increase in passengers' expectations regardless of a previously registered peak event. As such, continuous innovation and adaptation have been advocated if airlines want to attract and retain passengers.

6.2.3. The Significance of Employee-Customer Interaction in Influencing Attitudes

Furthermore, amongst the findings is that throughout their journey with an airline, passengers assign different expectations to distinct touchpoints. However, it could be deduced that employee-customer interactions have substantial impacts on how the passengers evaluate the service regardless of the touchpoint in which the interactions are enacted as sections 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 all illustrate. It is evident that an interaction is highly indicative of the probable quality of service. This is regardless of whether the customers have decided to purchase an airline ticket or otherwise, and, depending on the nature of customer service provided by an airline or its agents, the interaction with prospective and current passengers could signal and create a more satisfactory experience. Moreover, the employee-

centred touchpoints are more tangible and manageable, as they offer an avenue for passengers to express their sentiments and expectations, and an opportunity for employees to gain reliable details about the desired passenger journey elements. This incentivises and justifies the actions towards responding to the expectations. Indeed, in a call for consistent SQ improvements, Jelcic (2014) mentions that a company's success in creating positive experiences is anchored on its ability to identify and respond to/or exceed the customer's expectations.

With regards to interaction quality, the implications of inconsistency were observed, as evidenced by the participants ostracising interactions in some stages while extolling others. While the positive interactions had a correlating outcome, the perceptions and responses by the participants in negative interactions were more intense. It could even be deduced that a small degree of a negative interaction could override accumulated positive experiences largely. This explains why Richardson (2010) discussed that the ability to communicate with customers in a way that maintains the message, tone and even wording in a consistent manner helps avoid incidences that could damage not only the experience, but also the brand as a whole. Furthermore, relationship building is facilitated by reliability and dependability, which are an outcome of consistent provision of a positive experience. Through interaction, amongst the most impactful tools, communication could be deployed to enhance the quality of service.

Furthermore, all participants expressed their desired quality attributes at every touchpoint during their passenger journey, and as Oliver (1977) argues, such expectations determine the extent to which service is perceived as satisfactory. As Elkhani, Soltani and Jamshidi (2014) hypothesised in their study on airline ticketing, if the attributes of an airline service are viewed as being of a high quality, the likelihood of the service being perceived as satisfactory is increased, and so are positive post-purchase feelings and actions. However, while the symmetric effects are important in understanding expectations and relationships, this study reveals that ignoring the asymmetrical implications of quality attributes on the passengers' satisfaction with service limits awareness of the

characteristics that are more susceptible to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. For instance, many participants mentioned lack of delay (not timely service) as the most important factor at the check-in touchpoint, but an agreeable waiting time did not generate remarkable levels of satisfaction amongst passengers. In fact, most of the passengers viewed lack of delay as absence of obstacles, as implied in comments such as 'nothing happened, it was a smooth process'. However, passengers may become significantly dissatisfied when their expectations of lack of delay is violated, implying that a given attribute could be more sensitive towards the negative valence than they are to the positive valence.

The asymmetrical influence of attributes on the perception of quality is evidenced when the airlines invest in the improvement of a given attribute but does not register a corresponding positive gain by the passengers, especially with regards to satisfaction or other attitudes and behaviours desired by the airline. By contrast, another attribute may induce more satisfaction after a corresponding investment directed towards it is improved. Nonetheless, it is evidenced that passengers' level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is highly influenced by their expectations. Given that the expectation is dependent on the attribute, and these expectations change over time, there are challenges in ensuring satisfaction especially when servicing passengers within the same travel class. These salient expectations can be captured especially if airlines separate the services based on class or operating models, such as low-cost carriers, whereby they can provide service depending on the expectations with some level of accuracy.

Considering the competitiveness and maturity of the commercial airline industry, the strategies and tactics airlines formulate and use need to be more sustainable. Traditionally, affordability has been viewed as the major component in directly influencing the passenger's choice of airline. Evidently, this is illustrated in this study, with some participants having acknowledged low prices as the main factor in the selection of an airline. However, price changes alone are inadequate to be leveraged for sustained competitiveness. Moreover, this study suggests the significance of understanding SQ from the customer perspective, which is an important endeavour given that even

earlier research such as Pike *et al.* (2010) attested to the role of SQ on satisfaction and inclination to repurchase. More particularly, with the exemption of a few participants, most of the sentiments presented in the findings are negative, especially as the participants recount dissatisfying episodes and the outcomes.

Moreover, the findings in this research are beneficial for airlines that pursue repeat customer relationships. Given that the airline service is composed of a sequence of processes, it is imperative for airline managers to be cognisant of every touchpoint likely to elicit a perception by passengers, including on-ground and in-flight, and establish the attributes that offer their passengers satisfying, dissatisfying or a mixed experience. Evidently, airlines have to prioritise certain aspects such as affordability, customer service, process efficiency and quality of interaction, failure to which the passengers may be easily dissatisfied if the critical attributes are inadequately provided. Even though attributes can be presented as satisfiers and dissatisfiers, operational strategies to improve standards are advised. For instance, with plane cleanliness being viewed as a profound satisfier, it is imperative for airline operators to emphasise the importance of hygiene. Accordingly, standards of hygiene need to be iteratively developed since despite the chosen class, a negative experience could be a contributing factor towards the selection of a rival airline in the future.

6.2.4. *The Role of Crisis and Complaint Management in Transforming Attitudes*

The participants recognised that their perceptions after their journey ended was profound, especially with regards to how problematic issues were approached. According to Hung, Huang and Chen's (2003) study, a poor experience has a profound impact on the customer's perception of the SQ, but evidently, customers are willing to provide a window for a company's redemption (5.2 and 5.4). This is specifically achieved through customers' request for assistance, feedback and complaints. As this study reveals, complaint handling is amongst the most impactful processes, a notion that has been captured by extant research that strongly advocate for resolving grievances and improvements to avoid recurrence. A company's inability to handle complaints related to service failures in a quick and

effective manner undermines a company's perception beyond even the subject of concern, since it denotes a company's lack of willingness or capacity to tackle any kind of underperformance.

Furthermore, some participants expressed the challenge in requesting action from the airline employees. This is a critical shortcoming since a company's mechanism to receive complaints should inherently be the first element, of which flawless operation should guarantee. Some participants did not know how to register their displeasure with the quality of service during and post-experiencing it. In fact, after giving up on the direct interaction with airline employees, some participants resorted to sending emails, to request for solutions and information on concerning issues even within the airport.

Indeed, the notion of some participant concerns going unaddressed was evidenced in this study, with participants narrating of their sentiments and complaints being ignored by the employees. As the participants' sentiments reveal, when customers communicate their displeasure and notice unwillingness by the employees to address it, there is detrimental impact on their confidence in the company. As Min, Jung and Ryu (2021) advise, the rapid acknowledgement of customer concerns implies a company's disposition to improve the experience, and confidence in resolving them. Documenting an acknowledgement of a complaint digitally, including its identification number and the responsible employee, as well as the reassurance that the issue is being resolved would be highly advised. At the time of this study, some of the participants were yet to receive confirmation that their complaint was being addressed, months later after they registered their discontentment and requested for actions.

With airlines operating in the service industry, the significance of timely assessment and investigation of complaints cannot be overemphasised. This is especially the case for short flights, where the employees have limited time to fix passenger complaints and discontentment upon violation of a service expectation. In critical situations, Metwally (2013) even recommends having a designated assessment specialist who can clarify the problem and advise the proper means of reparation, such as

an apology, reversion of an action or financial compensation. Upon assessment, priority should be assigned to the passengers' expectations. This is because for instance, one participant questioned the rationale for being given travel miles as compensation, which they were never to use. Indeed, if an airline was unable to assess and justify the expectation promptly, their actions were vulnerable to criticism.

Moreover, many participants were distressed with the lack of responsiveness of the employees, especially with regards to updates regarding their requests and complaints. It therefore can be deduced that keeping passengers updated with the developments in their requests or complaints highly determines their level of satisfaction, regardless of whether the explanations are given orally or in writing. The responses should provide a comprehensive explanation regarding all complaint details to illustrate to the passengers that the concerns are being handled properly and that resources are being mobilised. This is likely to enhance satisfaction with the response. To ensure that the satisfaction is achieved, complaint handling should not terminate at the response, rather, passengers should be offered an avenue to review not only the entire journey, but also the distinct episodes where complaints were evidenced.

Follow-up, as earlier authors such as Halstead, Dröge and Bixby Cooper (1993) discussed, could have a profound influence on loyalty. In fact, one participant reckoned that the airline did not follow-up with whether their compensation was acceptable or not. From this study, it could be deduced that the more serious or complex a passenger's concern is, the more the follow-up is important. However, the use of a template would be advised, since a traditional and repetitive approach could express that the airline addresses all passenger concerns fairly, and this could have helped avoid some of the participants feeling devalued. Furthermore, the follow-up should provide data on which system improvements should be anchored, since as depicted in this study, the recurrence of an undesirable event impacted the passengers to opt for other airlines.

6.3.   Contributions and Implications of the Current Study

6.3.1. Implications for Theory related to Customer Experience

This study has attempted to further develop the existing understanding regarding touchpoints that constitute a passenger's journey with an airline, with emphasis on identifying their significance from the passengers' point of view. Through this study, the extant literature on CX has been expanded, consequently depicting the features customers use to evaluate their experiences at the touchpoint level. Specifically, CX in the commercial airline industry is highly influenced by personal desires, which determine the significance of every touchpoint characteristic. Therefore, it is difficult to illustrate quantitatively all its nuances and respond to them without adopting a customer-centric standpoint. However, they do have profound implications on purchase intent.

Secondly, this research demonstrates that passengers' expectations change depending on the remembered touchpoint, with some elements being prioritised. This study also shows that incidences or MoTs could be so profound to induce a sensation that is referred in informing passengers' attitudes towards travelling with a certain airline. Additionally, this study illustrates that various episodes, as well as the sentiment at the end of passengers' experiences, are memorable and account for attitudes that may solely influence post-purchase behaviours, including re-purchase and word of mouth. Regarding the PET, this study concurs with the implications espoused by authors such as Nawijn (2010) that firms should develop and deliver memorable services to enhance passenger experiences and induce positive perceptions and behaviours.

Thirdly, this study adopts the TPB to interpret resultant customers' outlook, as exemplified by dissatisfaction inducing negative attitudes towards purchasing an airline's services in the future. While passengers' attitudes towards flying with an airline were transformed, they attested to the probability of flying with the same airline, thereby depicting the perceived behavioural control component. Regarding subjective norms, the study identified that while external pressure to fly with an airline

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despite a prior dissatisfactory experience was a non-factor, conforming to the pressure by others to travel together was identified.

6.3.2. Implications for Practice

Amongst the expectations of a research undertaking is that it would result in observations that could be implemented for improvement in the functioning of a society. As such, generating a useful understanding of the CX phenomenon that could be leveraged on specifically by airlines was an implied, but critical contributing factor in the decision to develop this research. Consequently, this study has identified some insights that could be considered by airlines in improving and transforming their customers' experiences. The first is that airline managers have to be cognisant of touchpoint elements valued by passengers and institute measures to satisfy the expectations and develop repurchase intentions amongst customers. In this regard, generating an intense positive customer response and ensuring non-violation of the expectations pre-empts negative post-purchase behaviours largely. Nonetheless, to develop a comprehensive awareness of passenger journey issues, this study shows that touchpoint mapping could be resourceful, but for this to be achieved, assessment must be from the passenger vantage point.

Another implication is the need for managers to acknowledge the high level of impossibility in providing an experience that satisfies all customers all the time. In fact, customers may perceive actions meant to benefit them as unsatisfactory, inconvenient or redundant. Despite an airline placing all measures to pre-empt dissatisfaction, an experience may be negatively perceived simply because of unpredictable passenger demands, contextual dynamics and even factors beyond an airline's control. However, as this study reveals, airlines must demonstrate their willingness and efforts in resolving even the novelest challenges if sustaining passengers' trust and healthy relationships are priorities. Furthermore, passengers are willing to absolve airlines of even the most dissatisfying incidents, especially if they are rare to occur. However, there is no assurance that the positive remedial actions would be appreciated in a profound manner since as Mobbs et al. (2015) posit, humans are

negatively conditioned and thus affected disproportionately after a negative encounter as compared to positive encounters. Therefore, managers may adopt a proactive approach in ensuring customers' expectations pertaining to touchpoint elements are met, while also installing mechanisms to address unanticipated customer concerns that may influence their purchase intent.

Indeed, in the current age where the role of customers is transcending mere purchasing to involve co-creation, it is paramount for airline managers to view their complete network of numerous touchpoints in a holistic fashion. In this regard, focusing and investing in touchpoints independently at an individual level without making a sweeping assumption on the overall quality of service is worth considering. In fact, establishing score cards for every touchpoint in a passenger's journey seems like a viable tactic to generate insights to inform initiatives and processes to promote CX.

6.3.3. Contributions to Existing Knowledge

Existing literature on airline customer experience has often highlighted touchpoints for their importance, yet a deeper exploration of their intricacies remained somewhat uncharted. This study notably ventures into this unexplored territory, unveiling the detailed touchpoints that passengers encounter, especially within the crucial pre-purchase and post-purchase phases. By drawing attention to elements that were previously underemphasised, such as the significance of booking platforms and post-flight engagements, this research paves the way for more comprehensive strategies to enhance the overall customer experience in the airline sector.

Building on this foundation, the study further delves into the 'Moments of Truth' (MoTs). While the concept of MoTs isn't new to the literature, the depth and granularity with which this research approaches them is commendable. Many academic works may generalise MoTs, treating them with an equal weightage. However, this research astutely underscores the heightened influence of specific experiences, such as in-flight services, offering both the industry and academia a more nuanced understanding to guide their practices and inquiries.

Venturing further into the theoretical realm, the research presents a nuanced interplay between two pivotal theories, the PET and the TPB. This interconnection, especially when contextualised within airline customer experience, is a noteworthy contribution, enriching the academic discourse. By highlighting how both positive and negative peak experiences can shape behavioural intentions, the study offers profound insights into the intricacies of customer psychology.

Moreover, while the individual discussions of PET and TPB in literature are not uncommon, this research stands out by emphasising their combined effect. A particularly significant revelation from the study is the overpowering influence of a stark negative peak experience, which has the potential to overshadow multiple positive experiences. This finding not only contributes a pivotal insight to the existing literature but also sends a clear message to airlines about the pressing need to proactively manage and mitigate such negative peak experiences.

6.4.   Limitations and Future Research

This study was qualitative in nature and thus depended on subjective accounts of the passengers. While the findings reached saturation, the observations cannot be generalised among all passengers, airports and airlines. Therefore, future studies need to perform more quantitative assessments to develop models and scales that can be used in understanding the touchpoints that can be adapted for enhancing customer experiences in a given airline, especially in relation to actual performance, satisfaction and consequent behaviours.

Moreover, the primary data used in this research was sourced from passengers with different national cultures and backgrounds, and these nationalities were not adequately represented for the observations to advance beyond being anecdotal. As such, it would be relevant to perform studies that focus on specific countries, with a number of participants that can provide adequate data that is representative of the national population. This would make the studies' managerial implications and

recommendations for experience improvements relevant for the airlines providing services to people in different cultures.

Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data may also limit the accuracy and reliability of the findings, as participants may only sometimes provide honest or complete responses. This is particularly true regarding sensitive or personal information, such as experiences with airline staff or services.

Finally, considering the applicability of the PET in this study, future research should attempt to establish the influence across different demographics, such as older passengers and those with disabilities. These people may be subjected to more demanding events, unlike other healthier and younger passengers. Additionally, since airlines have different models, strategies and cultures, it would be important to perform a study based on a single airline as more actionable and authoritative PET insights could emerge.

6.5.   Researchers' Reflection on the Study

This research process has been one of the biggest initiatives on which I have successfully embarked. Furthermore, the study's outcomes, specifically the contributions towards theory and practice, account substantially for the relevance of the undertaking. As such, an important motive was to ensure that the efforts of myself and other involved parties would not result in futility. This was an encouraging factor.

Amongst the observations I acknowledged was the importance of breaking up the research process. In some instances, I felt overwhelmed following exposure to many viewpoints, arguments and assumptions provided by numerous researchers. As such, it was demanding to organise all the fragments of ideas I had in my mind. I found that dividing the entire thesis structure into main constituents and dividing them into progressively smaller manageable parts lessened conflicts of ideas

and revealed areas of priority from the study. In my future research, I believe my capacity to pay attention to distinct phenomena without becoming overloaded with information will have improved.

Due to this research, I have familiarised myself with abiding by common research practices of which I had been initially insufficiently aware, such as asking suitable and personalised kind of questions. The experience equipped me with the confidence to establish the knowledge base relating to customer experience. I can thus strongly posit that exploring topics that are interesting to a researcher is amongst the most important determinants of maintaining the research drive amidst the challenges and disappointments, especially during a pandemic. This is because research demands rigorous efforts, adherence to research rules and practices, and utmost dedication. In fact, even as I feel indebted to others that have contributed to this research, I should not overlook any instances whereby I feel indebted to myself, even if just for the inspiration to engage in this research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Examples of Touchpoints
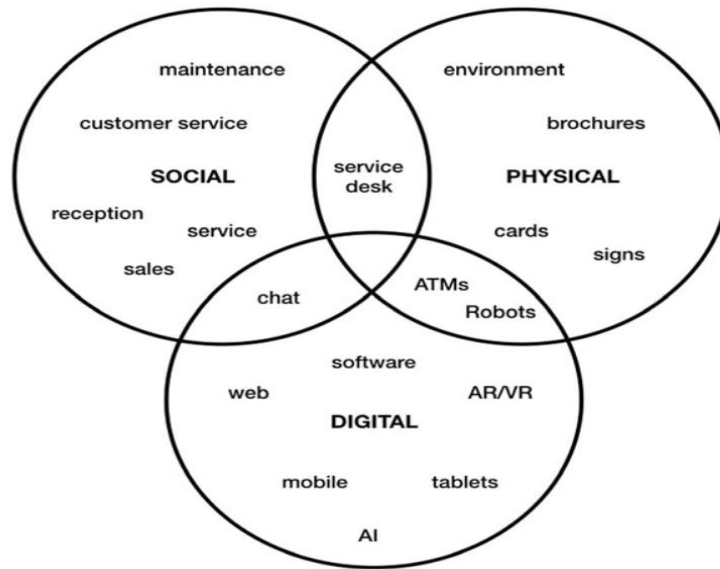
Source: Pfannstiel and Rasche (2019, p. 285)

Appendix 2: Examples of Touchpoint Elements and Definitions

Touchpoint Element	Definition
Atmospheric	The physical characteristics and surrounding customers observe when interacting with any part of the retailer.
Technological	A customer's direct interaction with any form of technology during an encounter with a retailer.
Communicative	One-way communication from the retailer to the customer, including both promotional and informative messages.
Process	The actions or steps customers need to take in order to achieve a particular outcome with a retailer.
Employee–customer interaction	The direct and indirect interactions customers have with employees when interacting with any part of the retailer.
Customer–customer interaction	The direct and indirect interactions customers have with other customers when interacting with any part of the retailer.
Product interaction	The direct or indirect interactions customers have with the core tangible or intangible product offered by the retailer

Appendix 3: Definition of 'Moments of Truth'

A 'Moment of truth' is an instance whereby a customer's impression of a brand is created or transformed following an interaction with a brand, its products or services (Lofgren, 2008).

Appendix 4: Definition of the Peak-End theory

The Peak-End theory dictates that an event is not judged by the entirety of an experience, but by prototypical moments or snapshots that are actually the average of the most affectively intense moment of an experience and the feeling experienced at the end. The remembered value of these snapshots determine the real value of an experience (Kahneman and Tversky, 2000).

Appendix 5: Definition of the Theory of Planned Behaviour

An individual's behavioural intention is influenced by an interplay between their attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and their perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991).

Appendix 6: Definitions of Customer Experience

Authors	Customer Experience Definition
Pine and Gilmore (1998)	Customer experience is a mental state that occurs when a firm intentionally uses its offerings to engage customers in a way that creates a memorable event
Schmitt (1999)	Customer experience is a sensation based on sensory, affective, relational, action, and cognitive reactions triggered by interaction with a stimulus
Schmitt (2000)	Customer experience is the perception of the company or brand that results from direct observation of or participation in events
Gentile et al. (2007)	Customer experience is a personal phenomenon that is evoked from a set of interactions between a customer and a stimulus, which provokes a reaction
Brakus et al. (2009)	Sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses originated by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments
Verhoef et al. (2009)	Customer experience construct is holistic and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the object
Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010)	Subjective, internal consumer responses as well as behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli
Iglesias et al. (2011)	Customer experience is a takeaway impression that is formed in the mind of the customers as a result of the encounter with the holistic offer of an object
Hsu and Tsou (2011)	Customer experiences are private events that occur in response to some stimulation and occur as a result of encountering, undergoing, or living through situations
Rose et al. (2012)	CE is a psychological construct, which is a holistic, subjective response resulting from customer contact with the retailer and which may involve different levels of customer involvement
Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou (2013)	Customer experience captures the individual's internal subjective response to the contact with an object
Nysveen et al. (2013)	Customer experiences are a function of a set of interactions between customers and some part of an organization
Nysveen and Pedersen (2014)	Customer experience is a set of perception about an object
Hamzah et al. (2014)	Customer experience is a set of specific brand values that are evoked by brand-related stimuli
Zhang et al. (2015)	Customer(co-creation) experience refers to the mental state of customers that results from their participation in the value co-creation process
Schmitt et al. (2015)	A self-generated internal psychological process as a result of interaction with an object
Lemon and Verhoef (2016)	Customer experience is a multidimensional construct based on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey
Tafesse (2016a)	Customers' multifaceted interaction with stimuli enabled through four interrelated processes of multisensory stimulation, bodily performance, social interaction, and discovery/learning

Source: Adopted from Waqas, Hamzah and Salleh (2021, p. 108)

Appendix 7: Interpretations of Experience

Authors	Definitions
Holbrook and Hirschman (1982)	"a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun" (p.132)
Csikszentmihalyi (1990)	"the best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something we make happen. "(p.3)
Carbone and Haeckel (1994)	"the aggregate and cumulative customer perception created during the process of learning about, acquiring, using, maintaining, and (sometimes) disposing of a product or service" (p. 18)
Pine and Gilmore (1998)	"experiences are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level" (p.99)
O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998)	"events or feelings that occur prior, during, and after participation" (p. 23)
Schmitt (1999)	experiences "… provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and relational values that replace functional values" (p. 26)
Gupta and Vajic (2000)	"an experience occurs when a customer has any sensation or knowledge acquisition resulting from some level of interaction with different elements of a context created by the service provider" (p. 34)
Terblanche and Boshoff (2001)	"all the elements that encourage or inhibit customers during their contact with a retailer" (p.35)
Shaw and Ivens (2002)	"a blend of an organization's physical performance, the senses stimulated and emotions evoked, each intuitively measured against customer experience across all moments of contact" (p.6).
Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004)	"creating an experience environment in which consumers can have active dialogue and co-construct personalized experiences" (p. 8)
Mascarenhas et al. (2006)	"a totally positive, engaging, enduring, and socially fulfilling physical and emotional customer experience across all major levels of one's consumption chain and one that is brought about by a distinct market offering that calls for active interaction between consumers and providers" (p. 399).
Berry and Carbone (2007)	"customers consciously and unconsciously filter a barrage of clues, in the form of experiences, and organize them into sets of impressions-some rational and others more emotional" (p.27)
Caru and Cova (2007)	"subjective occurrence that people go through pursuing a process of being immersed in an experiential context" (p.35)
Meyer and Schwager (2007)	"the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company" (p.2)
Getz (2007)	"How people describe experiences as they occur, and talk about them afterwards, remains in large part a mystery and therefore must be considerable interest to event researchers and producers" (p. 171)
Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007	"The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction" (p. 397)
Larsen (2007)	"A tourist experience is a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory" (p. 15)
Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009)	"subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments" (p.53)
Palmer (2010)	"on the one hand, experience is a learned outcome that is associated with predictable behaviors, whereas on the other it has come to be associated with processes whose novelty may result in unpredictable response by consumers" (p.197)
Bagdare and Jain (2013)	"the sum total of cognitive, emotional, sensorial, and behavioral responses produced during the entire buying process, involving an integrated series of interaction with people, objects, processes and environment in retailing" (p.792)
Bonaiuto et al. (2016)	"optimal experience… depicts the psychological mental state of a person who is immersed in an activity with energized concentration, optimal enjoyment, full involvement, and intrinsic interests, and who is usually focused, motivated, positive, energized, and aligned with the task at hand" (p.2)

Source: Godovykh and Tasci (2020, p. 4)

Appendix 8: Philosophical Perspectives and Paradigms

	Ontology – nature of reality	**Epistemology** – what constitutes acceptable knowledge	**Axiology** – role of value
Positivism	External, objective and independent of social actors	Focus on causality and law like generalisation, reducing phenomenon to simplest elements	Research is value-free. Researcher independent of the data and maintain objective stance.
Interpretivism	Subjectivism: socially constructed reality with multiple changes	Focus on details of situation, realities behind these details, subjective meanings motivating actions	Research is value-bound. Researcher cannot be separated from the research, hence, subjective.
Realism	Objectivism: reality exist independent of human thought and belief but interpreted through social conditioning	Focus on explaining within context or contexts.	Research is value laden. Researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing.
Pragmatism	External, multiple, view chosen that best answers research question	Relativism: combining different perspectives to help interpret the data.	Values play a large role in interpreting results, researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view.

Source: Adopted from Ebohon, Ajayi and Ganiyu (2021, p. 9)

Appendix 9: Different Sampling Methods

TYPE OF SAMPLING	STRATEGY
PROBABILITY SAMPLING	
Simple random	Each member of the study population has an equal probability of being selected
Systematic	Each member of the study population is either assembled or listed, a random start is designated, then members of the population are selected at equal intervals
Stratified	Each member of the study population is assigned to a group or stratum, then a simple random sample is selected from each stratum
Cluster	Each member of the study population is assigned to a group or cluster, then clusters are selected at random and all members of selected clusters are included in the sample
Multistage	Clusters are selected as in the cluster sample, and then sample members are selected from the cluster members by simple random sampling. Clustering may be done at more than one stage
NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING DESIGNS	
Convenience	Select cases based on their availability for the study
Most Similar/Dissimilar Cases	Select cases that are judged to represent similar conditions or, alternatively, very different conditions
Typical Cases	Select cases that are known beforehand to be useful and not extreme
Critical Cases	Select cases that are key or essential for overall acceptance or assessment
Quota	Interviewer select sample that yields the same proportions a s the population proportions on easily identified variables
Snowball	Group members identify additional members to be included i n the sample

Source: Adopted from Burton (2000, pp. 301-309), and Jackson (2015, pp. 96-100)

Appendix 10: Interview Questions with Justifications

Interview Question	Justification
9) Within the last 3 years / 6 months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?	The researcher would first ask the participants to recall any recent trips, preferably within the last 6 months, to potentially inform a more detailed recollection of events that occurred within their passenger journey. However, there are some participants that may have experienced memorable trips before the pandemic (within the past 2-3 years) as during data collection in early 2021, many people could not travel within the past 6 months due to lockdown restrictions.

	Therefore, this question is flexible in its timeframe of recollection up to sometime before the pandemic.
	Moreover, the researcher is searching for the passengers' wisdom of hindsight and is not concerned with how accurate the participant recalls an event. However, the researcher opted for a 6-month recall period for the increased likelihood the passengers would remember details concerning their narratives.
10) Could you please describe the reason for travel?	This question must be asked first in order to understand the reason why the participant chose to travel (i.e. business trip, leisure trip) as well as the travel class that was booked (i.e. business, economy); as this provides some background information before beginning the journey narrative.
11) Could you please explain why you chose (airline x) specifically to travel with?	This question is then asked for the participant to explain the reason(s) why they chose the specific airline to travel with (i.e. peer influence, past experience, convenient offer, etc.).

12) Could you please describe the booking process in great detail? (Probing questions would include: have you booked online or through other channels? For example, if booked online with the airline's website, could you please describe what you thought about the website while booking the ticket? Was it an easy process to navigate and book the ticket? Have you encountered any incidents during or after purchasing the ticket? What was more important to you during this process? i.e. website design, interactivity, etc. Kindly rate the booking experience out of 5, with 5 being very pleased and 1 being not pleased.) 13) Could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?	During the next three questions, the researcher implemented the sequential incident technique (SIT) method to ask the participant to describe the trip or experience (in great detail and in a sequential manner). This is to determine the touchpoint elements and any critical instances that occur at each stage throughout the participant's journey. Moreover, the interviewer would continuously probe the participant during their answer to help keep them on track to answer the research questions (and sub-questions) as well as to potentially identify new information. The following are the research gaps to be explored while interviewing the participant: • Categorising the touchpoint elements' significance at each stage of the customer journey. • Lemon and Verhoef (2016) suggest the importance of identifying the critical incidents or MoTs

(This could be the departure or return flight depending on where the critical incident was)

(Probing questions would include: when entering the airport, have you checked-in using a counter, a kiosk machine, or have you checked-in online and are just dropping your bags? Are there any incidents that occurred during the encounter? What was more important to you during this process? i.e. waiting time, employee interaction, etc. Kindly rate the check-in experience out of 5? Did the airport itself have an impact on your experience? Why? Moving on, how was the boarding process? Did you spend a long time waiting for your flight? How did you spend that time? Kindly rate the boarding experience

throughout the customer journey, hence, the need to investigate and identify the trigger points or MoTs that occur throughout the airline passenger journey.

- Verhoef *et al.* (2004) suggest the importance of the peak and end experience for satisfaction formation (with a call for future research on airline flights), hence, the need to investigate the theory's applicability when evaluating the passenger journey.

After each touchpoint is recalled, the researcher would ask the participant to rate their experience (out of 5). This is to identify the peak and end ratings to further investigate the theory's applicability. Likert scales may have 5 or 7 ratings but could also incorporate higher points (Mirahmadizadeh *et al.,* 2022). However,

out of 5? Describe your experience entering the plane, what did you first notice? Please describe the entire in-flight experience after being seated. Were there any incidents that occurred? What was more important to you during this experience? i.e. plane atmosphere / design, crew member interaction, seat comfort, in-flight meals, in-flight entertainment, etc. Did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence? Did that have an impact on your experience? Kindly rate the in-flight experience out of 5? Please describe the process after landing. Have you received a farewell greeting from flight attendants? Were there any incidents after landing and passing the destination's border (or security check if flight is transit)? Did you wait a long time to receive your

the researcher used the 5-point Likert scale because it is simple to comprehend as too many choices may overwhelm the participants.

Moreover, the researcher asked whether the airport itself had an impact on the passenger's experience as the airport itself acts as the main stage in which the touchpoints manifest. Furthermore, Halpern and Mwesiumo (2021) claim that airports have a substantial impact on the assessment of general air travel experience, which further explains the need to include the question and explore the reasons why airports have an impact on passengers. Additionally, the researcher included a question about whether the passenger experienced turbulence and if it had an impact on their flight experience after Budd's (2011) claim that turbulence is more likely to make the passenger feel anxious, therefore, having an impact on their overall experience. While there is not much airlines

baggage? What was more important to you after landing? i.e. crew member interaction, baggage waiting time, etc. Did you receive a decent after service (in case of a lost baggage or anything specific)? Kindly rate the experience after landing out of 5?	can do about weather conditions, they may still seek to improve the passenger experience and mitigate turbulence by investing in better plane models and having more comfortable seats (Budd, 2011).
14) Kindly rate your entire experience with (airline x), with 5 being 'very pleased' and 1 being 'not pleased'.	After completely applying the sequential incident technique (SIT), the researcher would then ask the participant to rate their overall experience based on the recalled trip (out of 5), whether they were pleased and if not, the primary reason they were not. This is to investigate the PET with the passenger's MoTs to give a clear final picture of the applicability and connection. Despite the study's qualitative nature, rating in the interview questions is necessary for

	this research to determine the levels of satisfaction at each touchpoint throughout the passenger journey as well as the overall evaluation at the end as the researcher has created a touchpoint graph for the purposes of RQ2 related to the PET.
15) Do you feel like purchasing another ticket with (airline x) solely based on your past experience? 16) Why?	Indeed, after the participant rates their experience, the researcher would then explore past experience as the primary motivator for making a buying decision. This is based on Jacobs *et al.*'s (2018) claim that past experiences influence the uncertainty and complexity for a customer to make the right consumption decision. These next questions are asked to further investigate how customer experiences at airline's touchpoints shape their purchase intent using the TPB, after Pan *et al.*'s (2018) claim that the TPB model can be used to explore customers repurchase intentions of an airline service; with this specific question relating to perceived behavioural control.

	This question may be interpreted as yes / no question however, it is immediately followed with a 'why' question for the participant to explain their answer in great detail.
17) How has this experience influence your attitude towards (airline x)?	This question was asked to investigate attitude having an influence on the customer's behavioural (purchase) intent, even after their past experience.
18) In which way can peers or relatives influence your decision to re-purchase or choose another airline even after your experience?	This question was asked to investigate subjective norms having an influence on the customer's behavioural (purchase) intent, even after their past experience. Furthermore, the interviewer understood the time it would take to answer all the questions and have informed the participants ahead of the interview of the estimated time it would take to complete the entire interview.

Appendix 11: Table of Themes, Insights & Codes

Themes / Subthemes / Insights	Codes	Examples
Employee-Customer Interaction Elements - Subtheme / Thematic Insight: 　Microaggressions 　Reciprocity 　Employee-Customer Impact	Helpful / Friendly employee Argumentative / Rude employee Interaction after-effects	*"...they were very helpful. They were very you know, they wanted to assist everyone..."* *"...the flight attendant's response to me was just so rude and so like out of the blue..."* *"...now I'm very cautious in terms of speaking up overall on flights because of that..."*
Process Elements	Waiting time	*"...The waiting time is very important because they're very slow..."*

	Navigation	*"...I literally had to go roaming around the airport until I heard my flight and the gate and it was different again..."*

- Subtheme / Thematic Insight:
 	
  Harassment
 	
Complacency
 	
  Crisis Management
	Service process	*"...I lost my bag, imagine I had to wait for like an hour and a half waiting for my bag. And then I just realized it wasn't there..."*

	Customer emergencies	*"...when I had told the guy that I need a chair, I'm going to faint, he told me, step out of the way because we're boarding the next flight..."*
Product Interaction Elements	Product quality	*"...obviously, that how comfortable my chair is...I want to make sure I'm at least comfortable..."*
	Direct product interactions	*"...Like the food, the meals...I also care about the entertainment system like on a plane, I really care about that..."*

Technological Elements	Website / app ease of use	*"...I'm not looking for a fun app just a professional one, easy to use and things are very clear..."*
	Self-service / online check-in	*"...I self checked in, scanned my passport and then the tags for the bags were printed and then I attached them to my luggage and went..."*
Atmospheric Elements	Website / app design and layout	*"...I do care about how the app looks. I do, because it makes me feel that this is a professional company that I'm dealing with..."*
	Plane design and layout	*"...like the way the plane looks like I feel like the newer it looks, the prettier it looks, you kind of feel like you're safer in a way..."*
	Plane model	*"...I feel more comfortable knowing that the that the plane that I'm in is a modern one..."*
	Plane cleanliness	

		"...I see and I notice how dirty or clean the plane is. But in that case, it was clean..."
Culture - Subtheme / Thematic Insight: Cultural Differences	Communication issues	*"...the customer service wasn't very friendly, wasn't very clear. They didn't know how to communicate... if you don't speak the language...then they don't take you this like seriously to their heart..."*
	Value placed on interaction	*"…I like when I go to a counter and they're super helpful. We'll talk about my destinations, where I'm going..."*
	Value placed on process	*"...It's about the process of having a seamless experience as I travel, having it be simple, having it be quick and easy..."*
	Familiarisation	*"...even children crying on the airplane doesn't faze me. I think it's because I come from such a large family..."*

'Moments of Truth' - Subtheme / Thematic Insight: Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)	(ZMOT) Convenience based search	*"...it was just the time, convenience. I don't really have a preference when it comes to airlines..."*
	(ZMOT) Experience based search	*"...I trust them because I have travelled with them many times before..."*
First Moment of Truth (FMOT) Second Moment of Truth (SMOT)	(FMOT) Convenience based purchase	*"...it was actually quite affordable with Airline X so that's why I chose them specifically..."*
-Peak/End Points Third Moment of Truth (TMOT)	(FMOT) Experience based purchase	*"...that was why I chose them to begin with, because I had previous experiences with them..."*
-Peak/End Points Final Moment of Truth (FIMOT)	(SMOT) Check-in	*"...I went to the check in area...they told me that I needed to have my boarding pass printed... I had the email, I had everything online. And that was a problem for an hour I had to deal with..."*

	(SMOT) Boarding	*"…I was texting my husband and I sent him a voice note and I'm just crying in the voice note, like they're not letting me on the flight…They got the paramedics… checked everything, blood pressure, all of that stuff…"*
	(SMOT / Peak) Booking	*"…On the phone, I was calling them, trying to arrange a flight way back…I was trying to find a way to fix my ticket and they didn't want to issue a ticket for me…and then…they wasted my money…"*
	(SMOT / Peak) Check-in	*"…So he goes like, just because you're nice, I'm going to bump you into economy plus… And him doing that is just that interaction made me forget about the entire situation that happened, the entire waiting process…"*
	(SMOT / Peak) Boarding	*"…I don't like boarding experiences a lot…you might hold a certain passport…then they see where you're born on your passport, it's always like*

		you are not truly Canadian. So let's go put you through extra security clearance…"
	(SMOT / Peak) In-flight	*"…one of the flight attendants was basically pushing the the cart…while I was sleeping, my legs were out…he tripped…then he screamed…it was really rude…everyone on the plane was actually looking at my direction and I felt embarrassed…"*
	(SMOT / Peak & End) After-landing	*"…I lost my bag, imagine I had to wait for like an hour and a half waiting for my bag. And then I just realized it wasn't there…"*
	(TMOT) Boarding	*"…I didn't like the fact that I had to fight for an hour to not fight, argue for an hour or two to to make them understand that I need to fly today…"*

	(TMOT) In-flight	*"...they had only two options, chicken or pork...when he came to me...He had only pork and I told him I can't eat pork...he didn't offer me to give me a vegetarian food. He just gave me a bread..."*
	(TMOT) After-landing	*"...they told us that we had to stay at the airport for two whole nights where we slept in the airport...in the corridors of the airport where they got us like paper beds and thin sheets to sleep on..."*
	(TMOT / Peak) Check-in	*"...They seem to be very compassionate and very understanding about how empathetic and stuff...They were very nice..."*
	(TMOT / Peak) In-flight	*"...the guy in the window seat started harassing me...He started saying very uncomfortable things. He tried to touch me. I kept giving the stewardess looks...I needed help and I didn't get it..."*

	(TMOT / Peak & End) After-landing	*"...we had to wait a long time for them, for us to leave the plane...they also take a very, very long time for your bag to come out..."*
	(FIMOT) Customer satisfaction / retention	*"...I would always I would always fly with them always, because they're just very, very professional..."*
	(FIMOT) Customer dissatisfaction / loss	*"...I don't want to, like, use this airline anymore, especially after the incident that happened..."*
	(FIMOT) Customer dissatisfaction / retention	*"...So, no, I do not wish to purchase any of my ever future tickets with them...but I might have to due to convenience..."*
Past Experience - Subtheme / Thematic Insight:	Attitude / perspective change	*"...Definitely. Because now I know Airline X, the staff. I know exactly how they're going to treat you..."*

Effect on Attitude Effect on Subjective Norms Effect on Perceived Behavioural Control	Attitude / perspective not changed	*"...Not yet, because it happened only once..."*
	Peers still influence	*"...Yeah, for sure. But because if I'm traveling in a group setting, everyone's like peer pressuring me on to book like on Airline X, because it's the most convenient or any other reason, there's a good chance that I'll cave in..."*
	No more peer influence	*"...Definitely not. And I will do everything in my ability to be able to try to sway them to not fly with them..."*
	Confidence in deciding to travel / not travel with airline again	*"...So no, I'll never purchase a ticket with them again..."* *"...No, I do not wish to purchase tickets with them in the future, but if I'm forced to due to convenience, I might..."*

	No confidence in deciding to travel / not travel with airline again	

Appendix 12: Passenger Journey (Ratings)

The following illustrations represent the passenger journey; from the booking process to after landing, where the participants were asked to rate each touchpoint out of five and provide a final rating based on the entire journey.
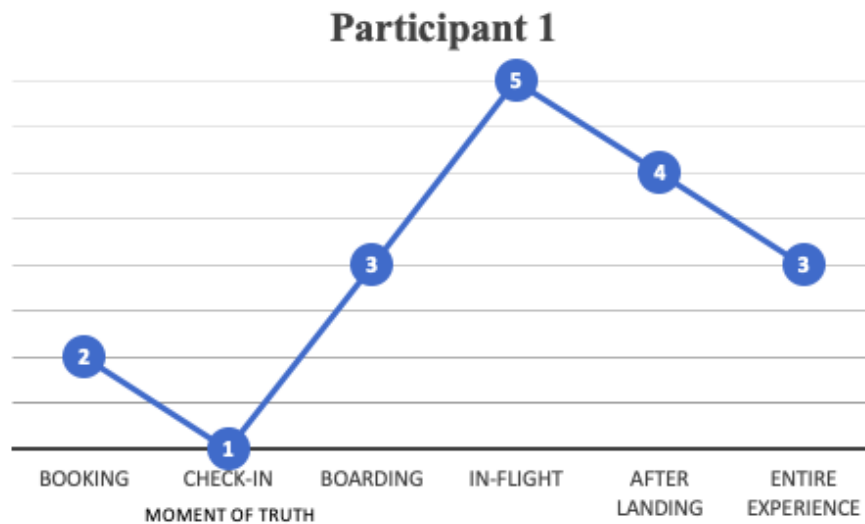
Participant 1 shows that their peak experience occurred during the check-in touchpoint as they encountered a MoT experience. The end experience (after-landing) was rated highly by the participant and, have rated their entire journey with an average score of 3. Here, the theory may

be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their

peak and end scores.
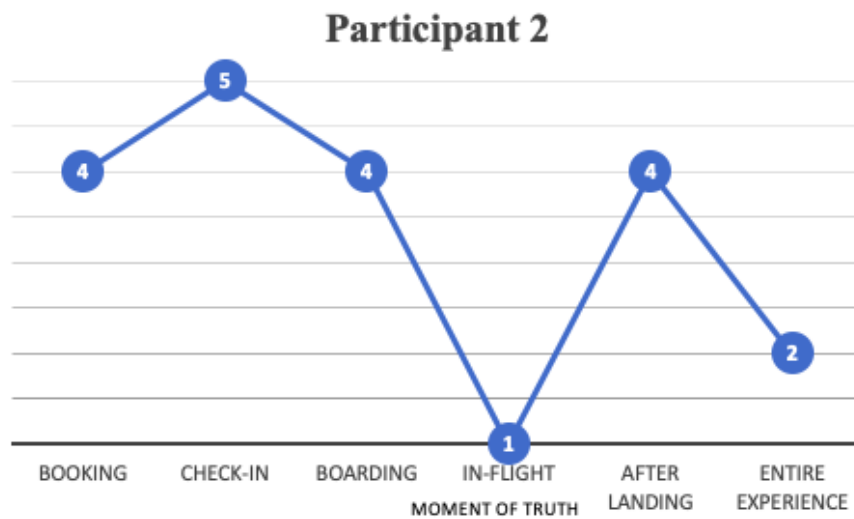
Participant 2

Participant 2 shows that their peak experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint as

they encountered a MoT experience. The end experience was rated highly by the participant and,

have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a

literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.

Participant 3

| | BOOKING | CHECK-IN | BOARDING | IN-FLIGHT | AFTER LANDING | ENTIRE EXPERIENCE |

MOMENT OF TRUTHS
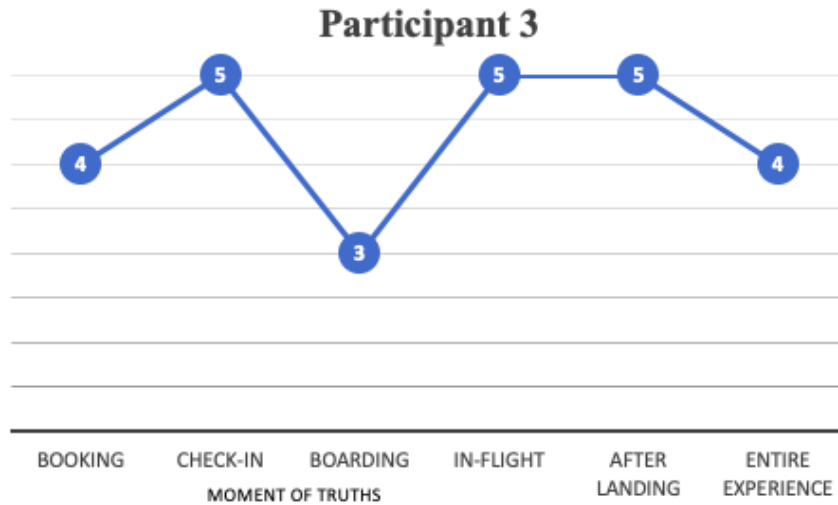
Participant 3 shows that their peak experience occurred during the check-in touchpoint as they encountered a MoT experience. Another MoT experience occurred during the boarding experience, however, has not greatly impacted the participant as shown by the scores. The end experience was rated highly by the participant and have rated their entire journey with a score of 4. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is based on the entire journey itself.
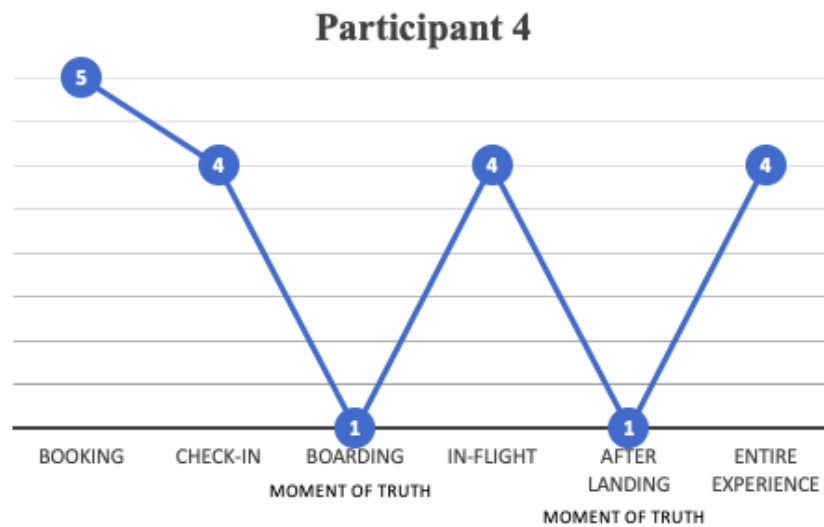
Participant 4

Participant 4 shows that their peak experience occurred during the end (after-landing). Despite having two MoT instances occurring during boarding and after-landing; while also having an equal score, the participant described the encounter that occurred after-landing to be more impactful based on the following narrative;

> Participant 4: *"…the one that happened after my my during my transit flight from Oman, that that was worse, I think that was the worst experience I've had…"*

Moreover, the end experience was rated poorly by the participant and despite this, have rated their entire journey with a score of 4. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is based on the entire journey itself.

Participant 5

Participant 5 shows that their peak experience occurred during the end (after-landing). Despite having two MoT instances occurring during the check-in and after-landing, the after-landing touchpoint was scored lower by the participant (indicating their peak). The end experience was rated poorly by the participant and, has rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.
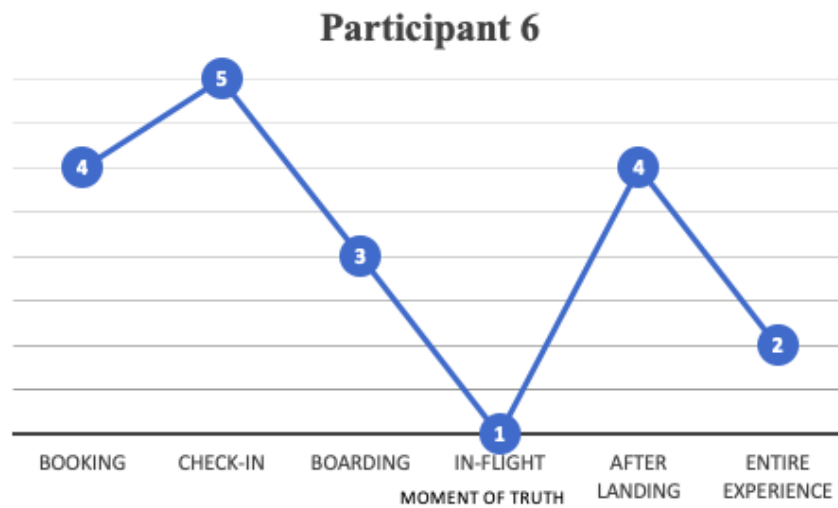
Participant 6

Participant 6 shows that their peak experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint as they encountered a MoT experience. The end experience was rated highly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.

Participant 7

	3	3	3	3	
2					2

BOOKING	CHECK-IN	BOARDING	IN-FLIGHT	AFTER LANDING	ENTIRE EXPERIENCE
MOMENT OF TRUTH			MOMENT OF TRUTH		

Participant 7 shows that their peak MoT experience occurred during the booking touchpoint. Another MoT experience occurred during the in-flight experience, however, has not greatly impacted the participant as shown by the scores. The end experience was rated averagely by the participant, however, has rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is only based on their peak experience.

Participant 8

Participant 8 shows that their peak experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint as they encountered a MoT experience. Another MoT experience occurred during the end experience (after-landing) which equally had an impact on the participant, however, the researcher considers the in-flight experience to be the peak based on the following narrative;

> Participant 8: *"...They actually made everyone on the plane panic and the landing was horrible. It was very scary. And ever since that, I have a fear of flying..."*

Moreover, equal to the peak touchpoint, the end experience was rated poorly, which led the participant to rate their entire journey with a score of 1. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.

Participant 9

Participant 9 shows that their peak experience occurred during the boarding touchpoint as they encountered a MoT experience. The end experience was rated highly by the participant and, have rated their entire journey with a score of 4. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.

Participant 10

Participant 10 shows that their peak experience occurred during the boarding touchpoint as they encountered a MoT experience. The end experience was rated poorly by the participant and, have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant in a sense that the participant's FiMoT rating may be based on the entire journey itself.

Participant 11

Participant 11 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the end (after-landing). The end experience was rated poorly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with an average score of 3. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is based on the entire journey itself.

Participant 12

Participant 12 shows that their peak experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint. Despite having two MoT instances occurring during boarding and in-flight; while also having an equal score, the researcher considers the in-flight experience to be the peak based on the following narrative;

Participant 12: *"...the guy in the window seat started harassing me...He started saying very uncomfortable things. He tried to touch me...I didn't feel safe ... I needed help and I didn't get it..."*

Moreover, the end experience was rated highly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.

Participant 13

Participant 13 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint. The end experience was rated highly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with an average score of 3. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.

Participant 14
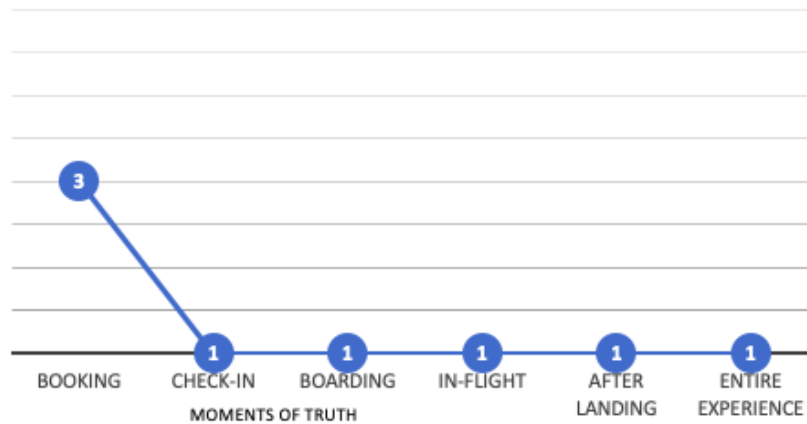
Participant 14 shows that their peak experience occurred during the check-in touchpoint. Despite having two MoT instances occurring during check-in and boarding; while also having an equal score, the researcher considers the check-in experience to be the peak as it started the series of negative experiences and also based on the following narrative;

> Participant 14: *"...when I wanted to check-in, it was really bad because I had the most like the worst experience of my life...I was really upset and angry, I even cried..."*

Moreover, the end experience was rated poorly by the participant and, have rated their entire journey with a score of 1. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.
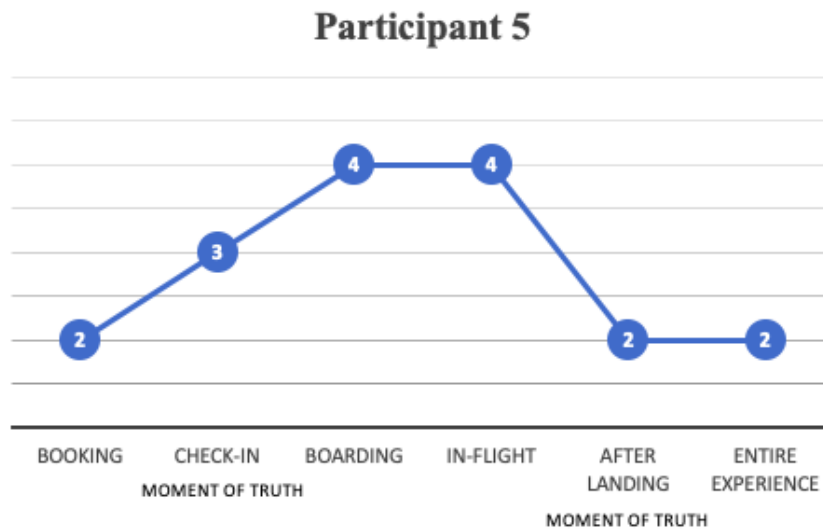
Participant 15

MOMENTS OF TRUTH
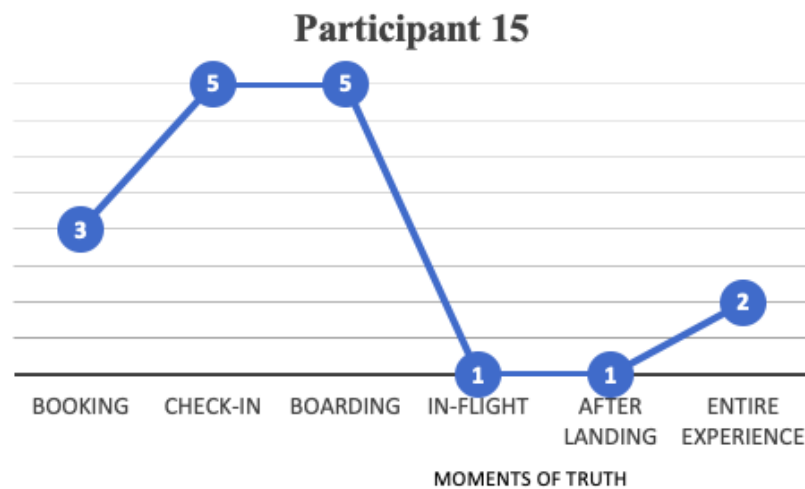
Participant 15 shows that their peak experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint. Despite having two MoT instances occurring during the flight and after landing; while also having an equal score, the researcher considers the in-flight experience to be the peak as it was where the intense incident occurred and the MoT after landing was based on that instance;

Participant 15: *"…it was crazy, it was crowded, and I just had a really bad experience in the flight, so that was also the cherry on top of it…"*

Moreover, the after landing end experience was rated poorly by the participant and, have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is based on the entire journey itself.
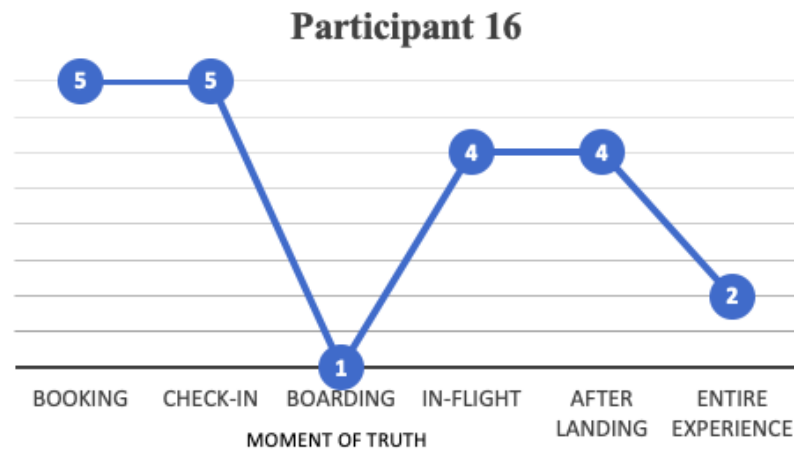
Participant 16 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the boarding touchpoint. The end experience was rated highly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.
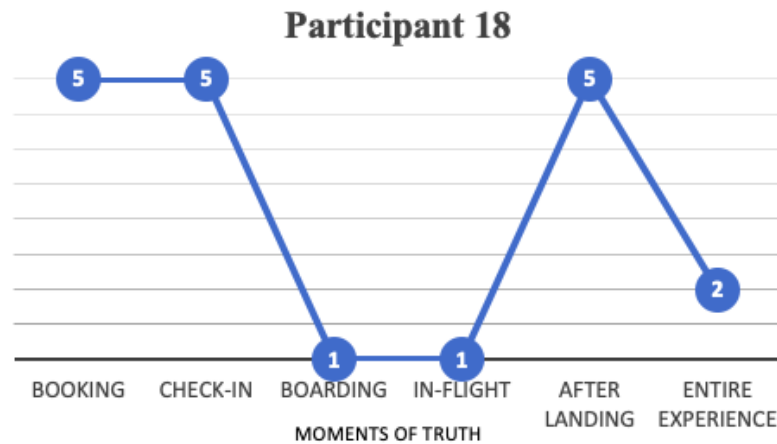
Participant 18

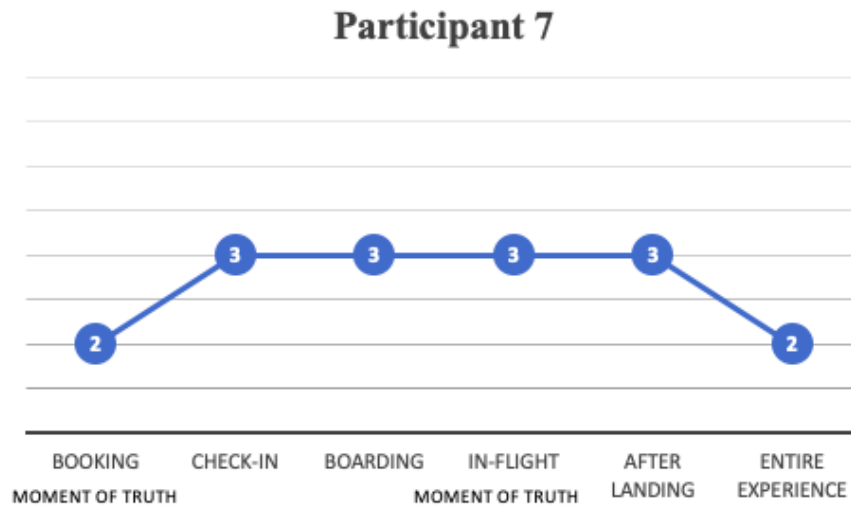Participant 18 shows that their peak experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint. Despite having two MoT instances occurring during the flight and before the flight; while also having an equal score, the researcher considers the in-flight experience to be the peak as it was where the intense incident occurred;

Participant 18: *"...I couldn't ever forget that experience because of it, because they wouldn't be considerate of the passenger's needs ..."*

Moreover, the end experience was rated highly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.
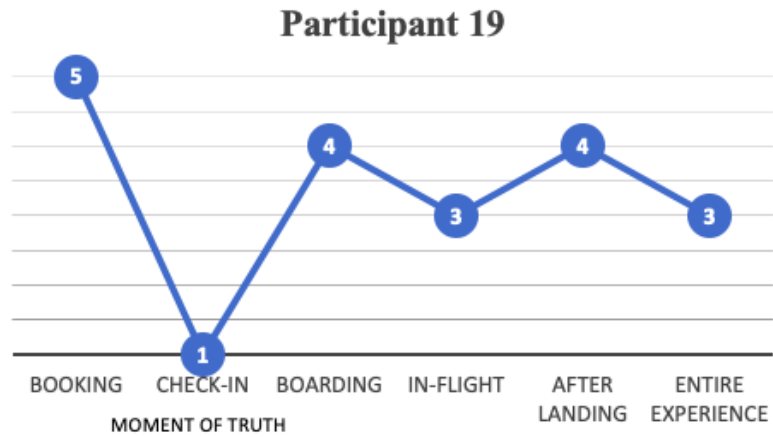
Participant 19

Participant 19 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the check-in touchpoint. The end experience was rated highly by the participant and, have rated their entire journey with an average score of 3. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.
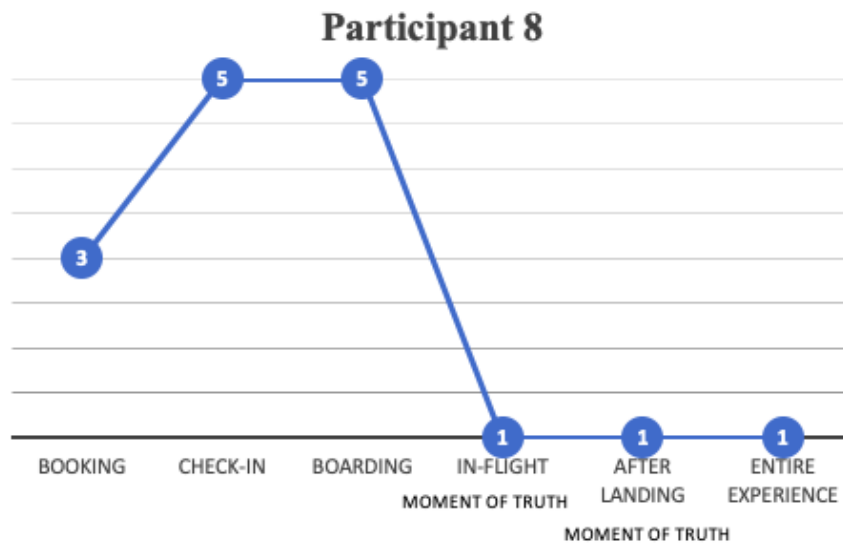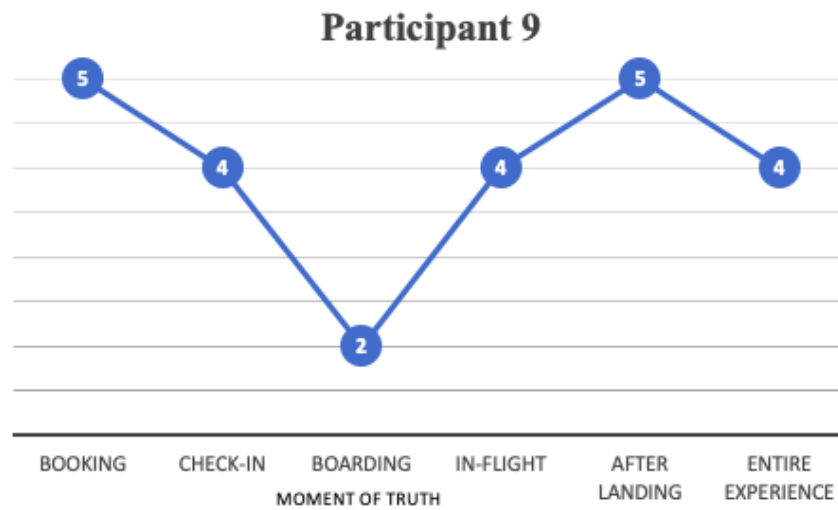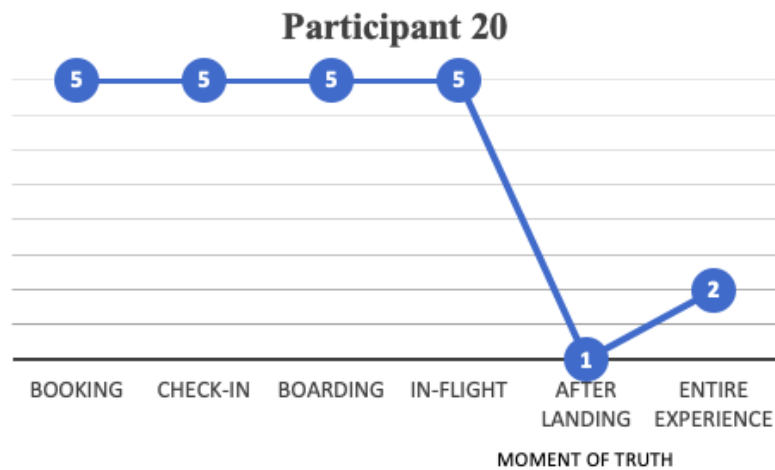
Participant 20

Participant 20 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred after landing, which is also their end experience. It was rated poorly by the participant and, have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is based on the entire journey itself.
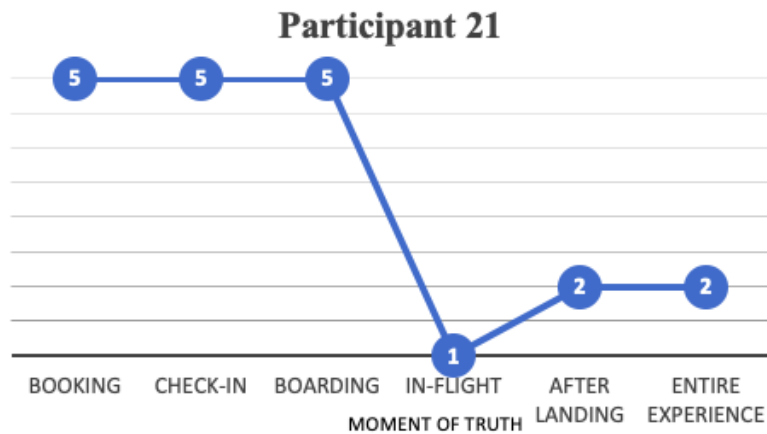
Participant 21

Participant 21 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint. The end experience was rated poorly by the participant, and, have rated their entire journey with a score of 2. Here, the theory may be considered applicable in a sense that the end experience influenced their rating of the entire journey.
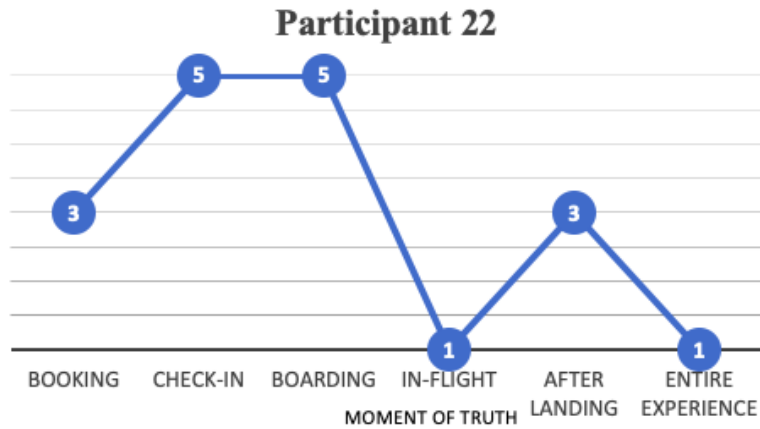
Participant 22

Participant 22 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint. The end experience was rated averagely by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with a score of 1. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is only based on their peak experience.
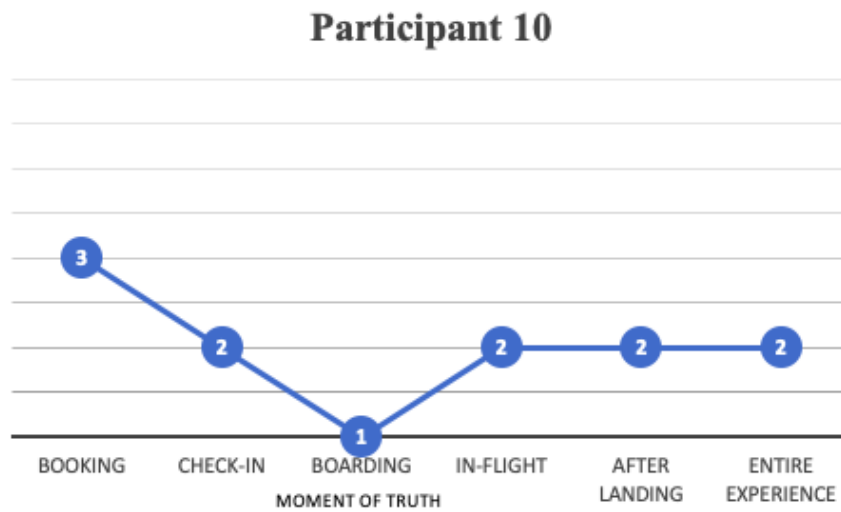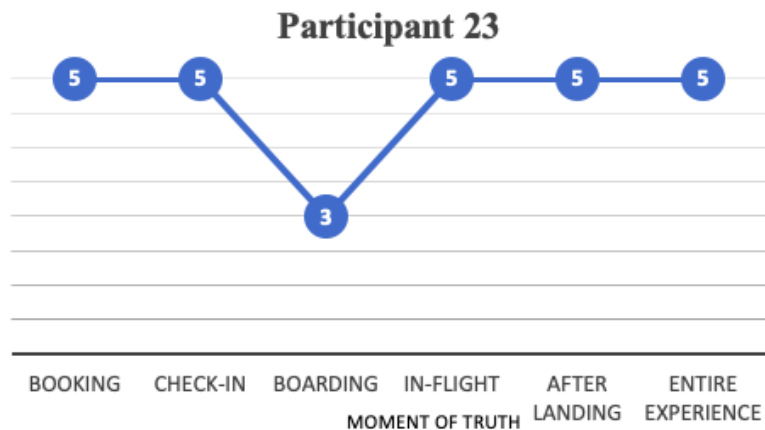

Participant 23

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Based on participant 23's narrative, the peak (MoT) experience occurred during the check-in touchpoint. The end experience was also rated highly by the participant, and, have rated their entire journey with a score of 5. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.
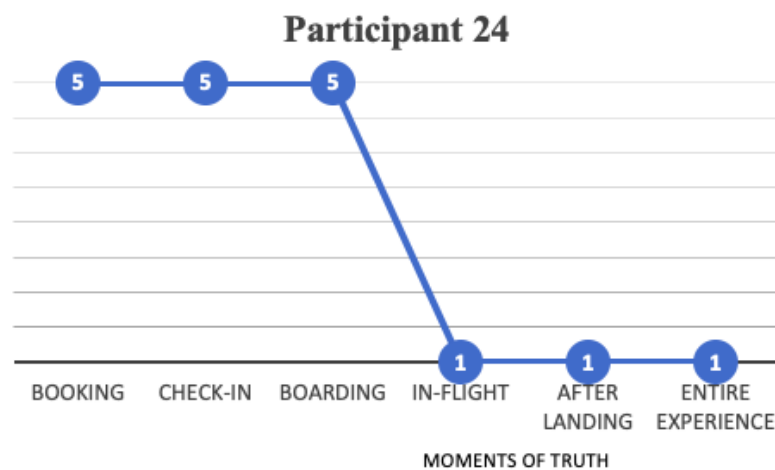
Participant 24

Participant 24 shows that their peak experience occurred after landing. Despite having two MoT instances occurring during the flight and after the flight; while also having an equal score, the researcher considers the end experience, the one after the flight, to be the peak as it was where the most intense incident occurred;

Participant 24: *"...I'm telling you, I haven't flown with that airline ever again or even thought of going through their airport since…"*

Moreover, the end experience was rated poorly by the participant, and, have also rated their entire journey with a score of 1. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.
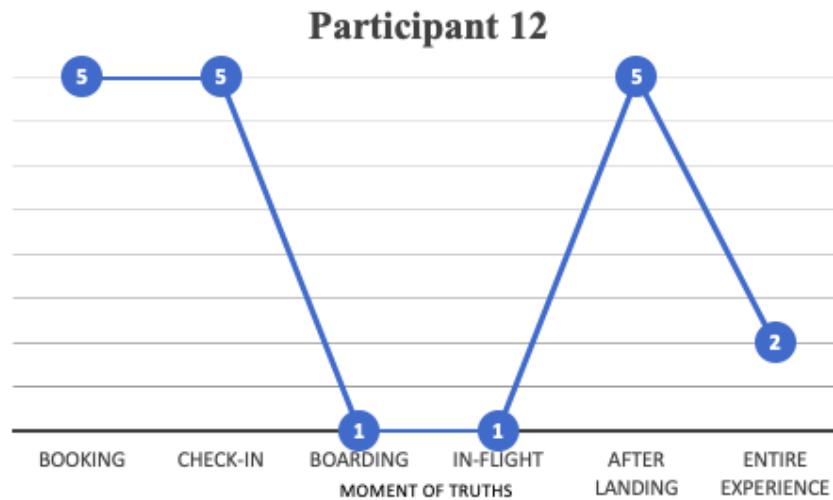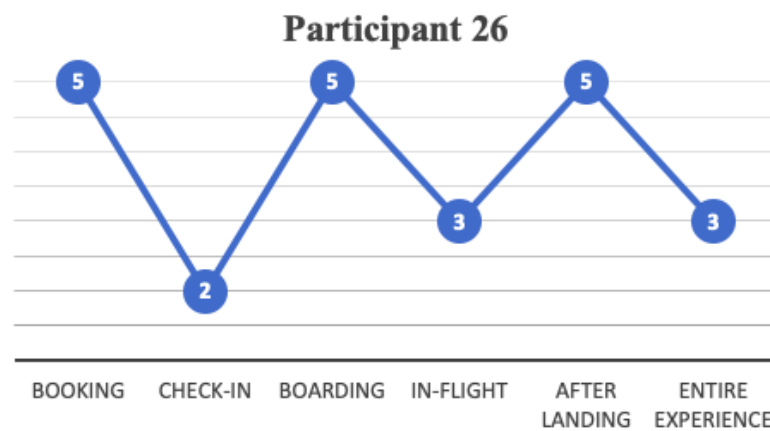
Participant 26

Participant 26 did not encounter a MoT experience and had an average flight in general, which shows in their end rating as they have rated their entire journey with an average score of 3. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant at all as it difficult to identify the peak experience.
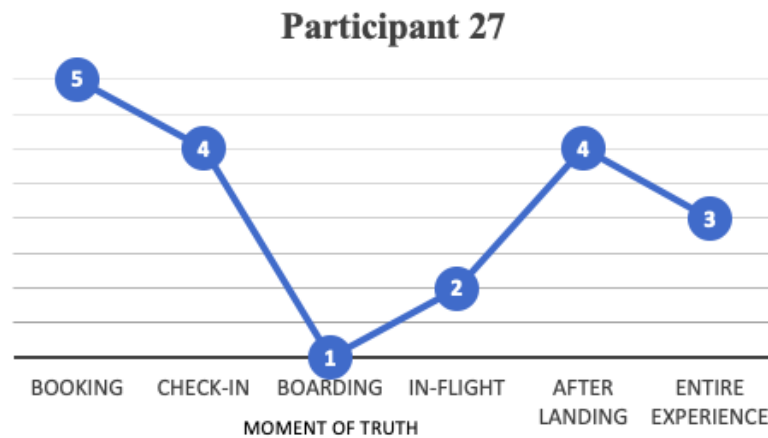
Participant 27

Participant 27 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the boarding touchpoint. The end experience was rated highly by the participant, and, have rated their entire journey with an average score of 3. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.
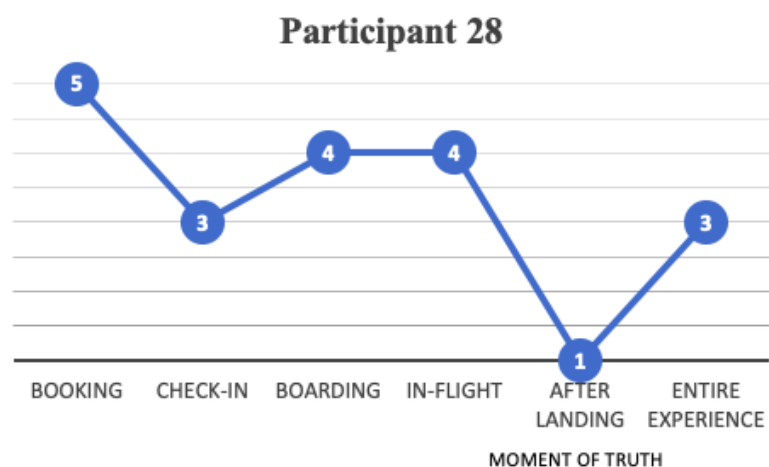
Participant 28

Participant 28 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred after landing, which is also their end experience. It was rated poorly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with an average score of 3. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is based on the entire journey itself.
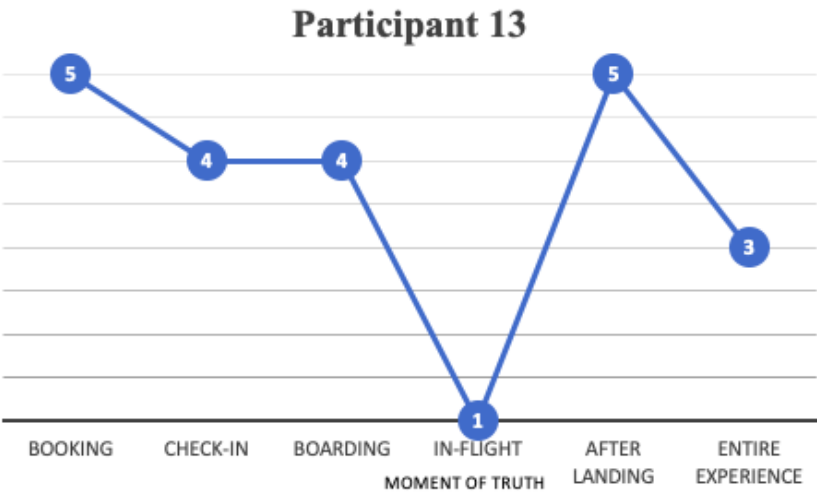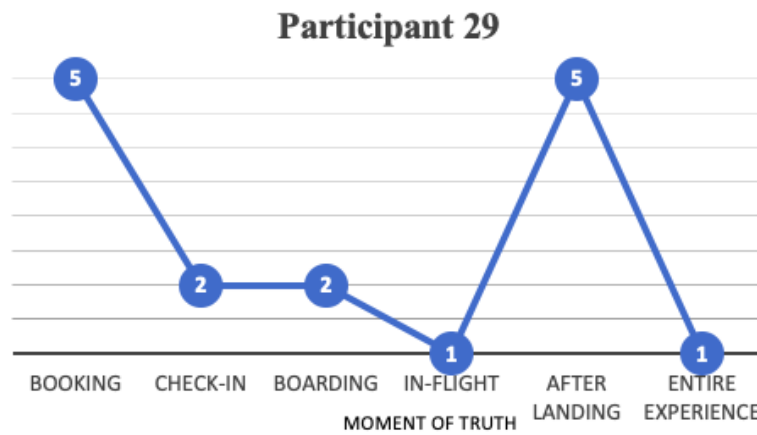

Participant 29

Participant 29 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint. The end experience was rated highly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with a score of 1. Here, the theory may not be considered relevant as the participant's FiMoT rating is only based on their peak experience.

Participant 30

BOOKING CHECK-IN BOARDING IN-FLIGHT AFTER LANDING ENTIRE EXPERIENCE

MOMENT OF TRUTH
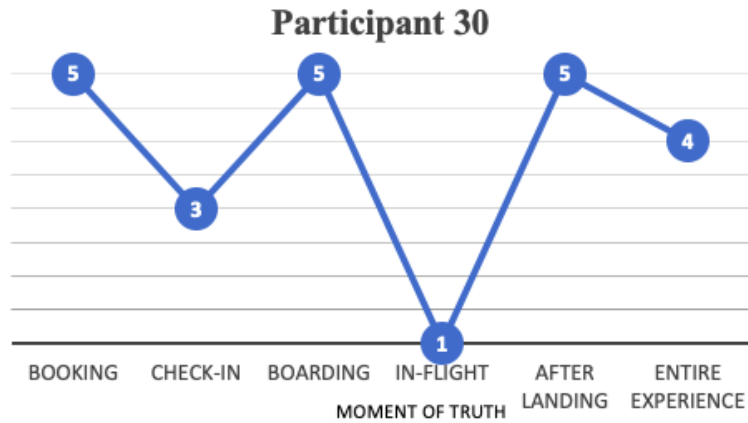
Participant 30 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the in-flight touchpoint. The end experience was rated highly by the participant, and, have rated their entire journey with a score of 4. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.

Participant 31

BOOKING CHECK-IN BOARDING IN-FLIGHT AFTER LANDING ENTIRE EXPERIENCE

MOMENT OF TRUTH
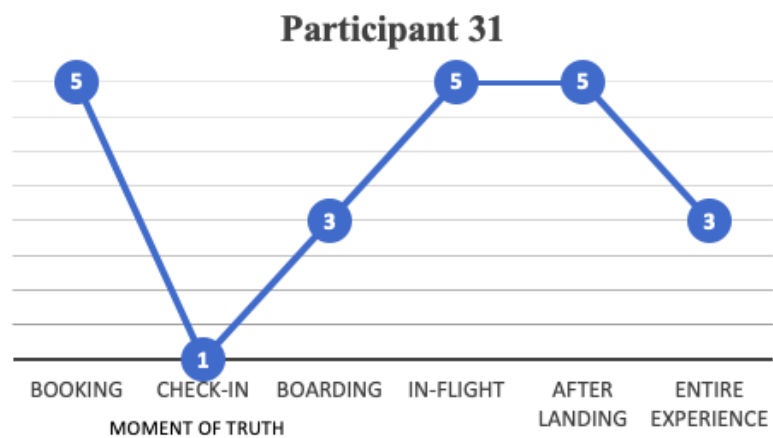
Participant 31 shows that their peak (MoT) experience occurred during the check-in touchpoint. The end experience was rated highly by the participant, however, have rated their entire journey with an average score of 3. Here, the theory may be applicable in a more a literal sense as the participant's rating of the entire journey is within their peak and end scores.

Appendix 13: Interview Consent Form

The participant consent form was created via Google Docs and the link shared with the participant prior to the interview.

Below is the template of the consent form:

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND AIRLINES: A STUDY OF TOUCHPOINTS AND THEIR SHAPING ROLE IN CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENT

Research purpose:

The aim of this study is to examine touchpoints and establish their shaping role on purchase intent by analysing post hoc accounts of airline passengers. Moreover, all identities are concealed and kept confidential with only details such as demographics (age, gender, nationality, etc.) being shared.

If there are any questions or complaints that arise, kindly contact the researcher via email:

Thank you.

Please respond to the consent below:

Required

Name of participant*

Your answer

I agree that I am of legal age*

Yes

No

I agree to partake in this research*

Yes

No

I understand that I can withdraw from the interview at any time with or without reason*

Yes

No

I understand that this study intends to keep all identities concealed and only share information

related to the research only*

Yes

No

I agree to be audio recorded for the purposes of this research*

Yes

No

I understand that extracts from this interview may be used and quoted*

Yes

No

I understand the nature and purpose of this study*

Yes

No

I understand that information revealed during this interview may be used in the study if

perceived beneficial*

Yes

No

Signature of Participant (with date)

PhD Progress - Gantt Chart — University of Salford MANCHESTER

Area	Task	Description	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Literature Review	Research	Literature Assessment & Write-up			
Research Design	Research	Methodological Research & Write-up			
Data Collection	Interviews	Airline Passengers			
Data Analysis	Content / Thematic Analysis	Concurrent with Data Collection			
Write-up	Phd writing	Formal Write-up			
Assessment	Admin	Learning Agreement & Ethics App.			
	Interim	August 20th 2020			
	Annual Report	Progress (APR) & Self Eval. (SER)			
	Internal	August 31st 2021			
	Viva	Date TBA			
Conferences	SPARC	2021-2022			
	External conferences (TBA)	2022/2023			
Training	Doctoral Training	Internal / External			
Phd Progress	Supervisor Meetings	Completed Meetings			

Year 1 months: OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP
Year 2 months: OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP
Year 3 months: OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP

Appendix 15: Interview Transcripts

Participant 1:

[00:00:01.380] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:04.530] - Participant 1

Good, how are you?

[00:00:05.970] - Researcher

Good, thank you. Could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:18.260] - Participant 1

OK. Hi, my name is Participant 1, I am twenty eight years old. And I'm excited to be a part of the study.

[00:00:27.290] - Researcher

Awesome, OK, so in the past three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:01:01.710] - Participant 1

Sorry about that. Yes, I have, OK, well, since we haven't really gotten to travel over the past year and a half yeah, I'll share one of my last trips. I was flying on Airline X, flying from London to Kuwait, and then I made it there exactly on time. There was a traffic accident or something like a car accident on the highway, the only highway taking you to Heathrow from central London. And so I was a bit late, so I picked up the phone. I called the airlines and asked them to to wait for me a bit just in case I was late for like a few minutes. They told me that that they obviously couldn't wait and that I had to be there exactly on time. At the time, I think it was six p.m. So anyways, I pulled up in front of the airport a few minutes before. By the time I ran and then got to the counter it was exactly six p.m. I got to the counter and they had already shut down and closed and there was nobody there. Needless to say that that they had shut down the counter a few minutes before six o'clock because there was no possible way that the whole counter would just be empty if they had just closed anyways. So I picked up the phone. I tried to call them. Nobody picked up even though I was there. I tried to call the main office there. Still nobody picked up the phone. And then I went to the ticketing, ticketing counter or desk or whatever it's called, and I still didn't find anyone there. So I kept waiting for about forty five minutes. Me and a bunch of other passengers who clearly had missed their flights as well because of the car accident that happened on the highway on the way, and so that they missed their flights because they were late as well. Anyways, by the time the guy got there forty five minutes later, I tried to tell him that I wanted to rebook my ticket. He told me the next available flight was the next day. I was furious because it was a one hour drive from my apartment all the way to the airport. And so I was probably going to have to drive all the way back and then catch the flight the next day. And so it was very dramatic, for me. So I tried to find solutions around it because he would not offer me solutions, so then he also shared that he wanted me to pay for another ticket, which bothered me even more. And so at the end of it, I remember looking around and then I found a flight

that was flying from London to Qatar. And then I just assumed that if I took that flight, I'd managed to find another flight that goes from Qatar to Kuwait, since that they're very close in proximity, I'm sure that there's like a hundred flights a day between both both countries. Anyway, so I went back to the counter. I told them I'd like to have a refund. He was like, why? So then I told him, because I was planning on booking a ticket with Airline Y and I was going to go there because I wanted to leave in that moment. And so he got bothered, actually, he was more p***ed off than I was. And what happened afterwards? Yeah, then he was like he told me basically in order to to in order to get a refund, I would have to send an email to the airlines and then just hope that they respond back on time, et cetera, which fueled me even more because he was very nonchalant and I was very stressed out, obviously, after missing a flight and trying to catch him there. So I took the email that I was supposed to, and then I went to Airline Y's airline desk, whatever thing, and they told me that there was a flight in about an hour and a half and that there are seats and I would just have to book and whatever I did that I share with sorry. And then I shared with them what happened with me. They seem to be very compassionate and very understanding about how empathetic and stuff. And and then afterwards I booked a new ticket with them. They were very nice. They even walked me to the Check-In counters and all the way to the gates, just talking about random stuff in my experience, and were very nice to me, even though they had nothing to do with Airline X itself and their horrible staff and horrible handling. Yeah. Anyways, I got on that flight, made it to Qatar, and then from there I took another flight to Kuwait, so I made it back to Kuwait and and actually, the same amount of time that I would have if I had taken directly Airline X anyways, the staff from Airline X, were just very rude, they're very disrespectful. I got into a talk back kind of fight situation with the guy working at the ticket station. Needless to say, it took about four to five months to get back the money that I paid for that ticket. And of course, when they did pay me back, they charged me the flight of the sorry, the cost of the

flight that I missed and made it my responsibility, even though the check-in counter was actually closed way before the time they were supposed to, and yea.

[00:06:33.150] - Researcher

Alright. So, like, OK, so let's backtrack a little bit like how long ago was this?

[00:06:42.070] - Participant 1

This was about a year and a half ago.

[00:06:43.670] - Researcher

A year and a half. Alright, and like what was the reason for for travel per say.

[00:06:52.200] - Participant 1

Well, I'm Kuwaiti, so I'm going back to Kuwait.

[00:06:56.280] - Researcher

OK, and can you please mention the travel class that you booked on essentially?

[00:07:04.930] - Participant 1

Business class.

[00:07:05.920] - Researcher

Business class? OK. Alright, and can you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:07:15.850] - Participant 1

Well, I mean, I don't I don't exactly like them. I don't favor them at all. But I chose to travel with them because they're convenient. It's just the direct flight to Kuwait instead of having to take a transit and going to another country, even though their tickets are more expensive than if I were to book a same class ticket, same everything on any other commercial, you know, company.

[00:07:43.760] - Researcher

OK, alright. So like you explained your your situation and what happened, could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:08:01.030] - Participant 1

I booked online just because it's simple, straightforward and easy. And then I was given, I think, a digital ticket to take to the airport.

[00:08:14.230] - Researcher

Alright. Did you book through their website or through a third party app?

[00:08:19.570] - Participant 1

Through their website directly.

[00:08:22.690] - Researcher

Can you please describe what you thought about the website while booking the ticket?

[00:08:26.860] - Participant 1

Well, I thought it was basic, I thought it was boring. I think it lacks a lot and I think at times it's very confusing to understand how to navigate through it, because when you book, a ticket they'll kind of show you what available flights are. And then it's it's not straightforward. It's kind of like a huge graph. And then you have to find the precise ticket that like the precise ticket that matches your choice. So it'll give you like a grid with a bunch of squares. And then on the top it will say these are departing ones. And then on the left hand side, it'll say these are what's it called, a return available ticket. And then you kind of have to match it in the middle somehow. It just is very confusing.

[00:09:30.040] - Researcher

OK, and what do you feel is more important to you during this process?

[00:09:44.250] - Participant 1

Well, I don't care about the website as much as I care for it to be just straightforward and simple and easy. I care more about the actual experience that takes place after that part.

[00:10:01.380] - Researcher

OK, and if you woud kindly rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased. What would you rate it?

[00:10:10.410] - Participant 1

I don't know, like a one point five. Alright, maybe a two if I'm being generous.

[00:10:18.000] - Researcher

Alright. So let's let's move on to the day of travel. So you mentioned your your situation with the check-in experience, after that, did you check-in using the counter or a kiosk machine or have you checked online and just dropping your bags?

[00:10:42.240] - Participant 1

No, I never really check in online because it's very confusing sometimes where you have to check in online and then you have to go drop off the bags. And then it's just it can be very dramatic. You know, I'd much rather go to the counter and check in there.

[00:11:06.840] - Researcher

What would you say was more important to you during this process?

[00:11:41.740] - Participant 1

When I called them on the phone on the way there, you know, they were not so helpful. I asked them to just, you know, maybe give me a little bit like a few more minutes, maybe five minutes. Right, because, again, there was an accident on the highway. And they still did not do that. They did not respond in a nice way, they just were very straightforward, very cutthroat with it. They basically just told me that these are their times, I either make it on time or I don't. So they weren't exactly so helpful and then my experience at that ticket desk was just terrible. The guy working there was not helpful. He did not try to compensate me in any kind of way. He didn't speak to me in a way that made me feel like I was a customer. He made me feel like there was a personal relationship that was built on hate between him and I. He even tried to make the experience of me getting a refund even harder than it should be by telling me that the only way I can get a refund is by sending an email and having to wait for them to respond, which eventually I got my money back, half of which was taken away. But anyways, about about six to seven months later is when I got my money back, so the entire experience from the very beginning of me calling them was terrible, to the face to face interaction, but that's not surprising with Airline X, to be honest. They've always been very messy in terms of how they interact with their clients or with the passengers. They've been known for not being the nicest. They're not really helpful and they will close their counters, a good, good 20 minutes before before they're even supposed to, to be honest, so that's not surprising at all and that's one of the main reasons I do not like to fly on their planes.

[00:13:46.240] - Researcher

Yeah, OK, so if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:14:02.560] - Participant 1

A zero.

[00:14:05.830] - Researcher

Alright, and do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:14:12.520] - Participant 1

Well, yeah, well, since the airport is extremely far away number one, that's why I missed my flight. The fact that there are no parking spots and that the Uber driver had to had to park super far away in order for him to let me out is the other thing, which meant I had to walk even further with suitcases to the door. And then the check-in counters were very far away from the door that I went in to the airport from, which could have contributed to why I missed my flight to begin with. Hold on sorry .. Yeah so like it contributed to why I missed my flight to begin with, besides the car accident on the highway.

[00:15:12.500] - Researcher

OK, could you please describe the boarding process after the check-in experience, with Airline Y ?

Well, I had mixed feelings about this because when I was originally checking in after rebooking a new ticket, I was very pleased with how nice the with how nice the staff were with me. They were amazing with me, very friendly, very nice, very welcoming, but yet very professional as well. That was a very seamless experience. And then by the time I got into the boarding process, this is where a bit of trouble came through, where they were, they were filling up the the economy seats first, if I remember correctly, and I had to stand there with the other business class passengers in a separate line waiting to board for like a good 20 minutes where I almost lost it because I had a very bad experience with Airline X that same day and I missed a flight and now I'm getting on another flight and I'm having to stand there forever. And then I lashed out on one of the one of the staff for not understanding why I had to wait longer. And why they had to fill up that plane from the back to the front first. That's why there are two doors on the plane and that's why there are two tubes, one that takes you to the front and one that takes you to the back, so it doesn't make sense. So then he responded very quickly and started apologising and tried to fix the situation very quickly by trying to get me to get on that flight faster by letting the business class passengers get in first. So he did do his job, even though I was very stressed out. Finally, once I made it into the plane and onto my seat, they were very lovely. They were very welcoming with me. And what proves this is that I was having a glass of champagne and then, for some reason, the pilot hit the brakes before taking off, like, really hard, so my glass fell on the floor and broke with the champagne spilled everywhere. And very quickly, I had a cabin crew run up to me and give me another seat to the front. And she sat me in and everything was just very great and then gave me another glass of champagne, even though she's not supposed to do that because we were right about to take off, so that really showed me that she just really cared about making

me feel happy, which I appreciated with everything, especially after having missing a flight and having a disastrous experience at the airport in Heathrow.

[00:18:58.700] - Researcher

Of course, of course, I can only imagine, and how would you rate the boarding experience out of five?

[00:19:17.110] - Participant 1

Like a three.

[00:19:19.000] - Researcher

OK, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:20:35.140] - Participant 1

I'm so so sorry, I was interrupted, anyways, I think I think the whole thing is connected. Like, I would still feel bad if I had an amazing experience, like in terms of seats and comfort and food, but like really bad like an attitude or something with any of the staff members that would still like, set me off, because to me it's important to feel welcomed and to be treated respectfully and nicely because that goes well with the image of the airlines as a whole and the whole experience for me as a, as a passenger and so and so to me, I I think it's all about my overall comfort and my comfort, I think stems from the experience I have with the staff

members, with the airlines itself, with the plane, with the seats, with the whole thing. Like, I think everything is connected.

[00:21:30.030] - Researcher

OK, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence? Do you feel like it has an impact on your experience?

[00:21:38.720] - Participant 1

Yes, for sure, like I did experience a lot of turbulence, but because I am actually a person who's afraid of turbulence and I do not like it and I freak out easily. But I remember because I was watching a movie and I was sitting in a massive seat and I was having really good food and I was really like into the movie and into the entire experience as a whole. I wasn't really paying attention to the turbulence like I knew it was there and I could feel it, but I wasn't giving the fear. It didn't matter in that moment because I was indulged in the entire experience as a whole, being in a comfortable seat, having nice drinks, having good food, where I was served with a small little candle. Right. With like like proper cutlery, good food with like a three course meal kind of situation. Towels. It was just a lovely experience that I wasn't even facing my fears in that moment. I didn't even give in to it because I didn't care.

[00:22:37.850] - Researcher

Wow, yeah, and if you would kindly rate thel in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:22:51.920] - Participant 1

The in-flight experience, I'd give them a five, if there was an option to give them a six, I'd give them a six out of five.

[00:22:58.160] - Researcher

Awesome, alright, could you please describe the process after landing? Were there any incidents after landing, during transit?

[00:23:29.880] - Participant 1

Luckily for me, this was like right before the whole covid situation. So people were too freaked out to travel like they were a bit like too worried to travel. I think so it was empty. But again, I did land at like. I don't know, like five a.m., so it was a bit empty, like it was good, security check was fine, they they they thanked me for choosing their airlines. They were helpful around every little part, around security. They were guiding me through the airport on to where to go and what to do and whatever. And then so my ticket from Qatar to Kuwait was first class. So I went to the first class lounge. And it was very lovely. I had a few cigarettes, they are one of the only they are one of the only what's it called international like transit points where you have a lovely smoking room, nothing c***py. It's a very nice smoking room, a lovely lounge where you are offered food and drinks inside the smoking room. So, you know, I had a coffee, had a few cigarettes, chilled out. You know, I was well rested already from the flight. I slept most of it. And so, yeah, I don't know. I think it was a great experience. Once I landed, I had no problems whatsoever.

[00:24:53.150] - Researcher

OK, that's great, and how is the flight after that back to Kuwait?

[00:25:03.440] - Participant 1

So the flight from Qatar to Kuwait, I mean, it was a very smooth ride. It was nice. It was sunny. It was a first class ticket. I was comfortable. Staff members were very nice to me, a bit turbulent because they had chosen to send off one of the smaller planes. But again, it wasn't even like an issue for me. I mean sure, the more high tech a plane looks, the more, the more a company invests its money into something that is a bit more glamorous and chic, the more on a psychological perspective for me, I feel more safe. So the bigger the plane, the more chic it is, the more comfortable, the more high tech, new, maintained it looks, the more I feel safe. But yeah, it was a smooth ride overall.

[00:26:26.460] - Researcher

Awesome, alright so you land and everything, you get to Kuwait. Have you experienced any incidents there? Did you wait a long time to receive your baggage?

[00:26:43.050] - Participant 1

I did wait a bit longer than I should, obviously, Kuwait, the airport, and, yeah, I had to wait a bit longer to get my bags, but that wasn't such a big deal to me. I was just so happy that I finally arrived. I was so happy that I finally arrived. That was good. I had no problems. Once

I arrived, I got through border control very smoothly. I picked up my bags. I just had to wait about 15 minutes for my bags, which isn't too long. I guess it's fine. And then yea.

[00:27:18.980] - Researcher

Allright, awesome, could you please rate your experience after landing out of five, like after getting your bags and everything.

[00:27:35.370] - Participant 1

Like a four.

[00:27:38.970] - Researcher

OK. Alright, now could you please rate your entire experience with Airline X and Airline Y with five being very pleased, one being not pleased?

[00:27:58.000] - Participant 1

Airline X, zero, Airline Y, five.

[00:28:07.530] - Researcher

Alright, OK. Do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience?

[00:28:20.090] - Participant 1

No, of course not.

[00:28:21.350] - Researcher

Alright, why is that?

[00:28:24.060] - Participant 1

Well, that's because my experiences are based I'm sorry, my future experiences are based on my previous experiences, very similar to to to buying any other product. If I bought a TV, that was that was c**p, why would I go out there and buy it again? The answer is no, based on multiple experiences with them as well as this one. No, I do not wish to purchase tickets with them in the future, but if I'm forced to due to convenience, I might.

[00:29:06.680] - Researcher

Oh, OK, so if there was like a convenient offer or anything like that, you would consider it?

[00:29:13.850] - Participant 1

No, it's not about money. It's not it's not that if it was just like the only route to get to somewhere directly without having to take a transit, I might consider. But overall, no. I do not like their staff members. I do not like how they treat people. I don't like their planes. I don't like the price points for their c***py services. And overall, I just think that they charge you, what, a luxury company would, except for a terrible experience and for a bunch of touch

points that are not professional, not comfortable and are not even like they're not even like satisfactory. So, no, I do not wish to purchase any of my ever future tickets with them. OK, but I might have to due to convenience.

[00:30:16.610] - Researcher

Alright, what about Airline Y?

[00:30:20.780] - Participant 1

Oh, I would always I would always fly with them always, because they're just very, very professional. They know what they're doing, they understand what customer service is, they understand respecting your customers. And even if they are faced with pressure or stress, and I've seen this with them because I have flown with them like a minimum of like 30 times 40, maybe even 50 times. So I have seen them when I'm having c***py experiences or bad experiences or negative experiences. And I've also seen them when I'm having seamless experiences and they just always come through, they will always try to find solutions to any of your problems. They are always respectful to you, their services are good and like down to the simplest thing is that even if it's a bit crowded at check-In or a bit crowded at passport control or crowded at like security checks, somehow it just manages to go by quick. They'll manage. Even if you see a lot of people, you will stand in that line and you will always pass through. But again, I cannot judge for everyone because I do not fly on coach or what's called economy. I don't do that. I only do first or business. So for that reason, maybe there's just a less amount of people. Like security checks and stuff, so maybe that's why, but overall, they are an excellent airlines. Great aircraft, great food, great service, big planes, high tech. I absolutely love them.

[00:32:02.320] - Researcher

OK, so do you feel like this particular experience influenced your attitude towards both airlines?

[00:32:13.570] - Participant 1

Oh, my God, yea definitely. Definitely. Definitely, definitely. Because now I know Airline X, the staff. I know exactly how they're going to treat you. I know that even if you ask for a refund, you are set to wait for six to seven months, even though they blamed it on covid. I don't understand how a refund takes six to seven months. And then when I called them, they kept tossing me to their different locations. So when I called the Kuwait office, which is supposed to be the headquarters, they deferred me to the London office. And then when I spoke to the London office, they deferred me back to the Kuwait office and it was endless. They don't know how to deal with customers, they don't. I feel like they don't do their jobs, they don't understand their jobs. I feel like like it's it's a joke. Like, it's literally a joke. So, no, I don't want to travel with them because their planes are old, well, their planes are not old. They're new. But they're made like they're styled in a way where they just look basic, and old. So, I mean, there could easily be like a bunch of older planes on Airline Y. For sure that they have older planes, I know that Airline X has newer planes way newer planes, but they're just created in a way where they look new and fancy and they they really, really push you into that experience. But when it comes to Airline X, it's like they they don't even take into consideration something that's called customer journey or experience. It's not even taken into consideration. Right. With how they treat their passengers with passport control. With ground staff, with like check-in people, like it's always a mess. It's always there is always going to be

a problem. If I travel on Airline X, there's always going to be a problem somewhere, even if there are no problems. But it's always just going to happen. So in that kind of way, yes, I feel like that experience does does affect my future choice. I do not wish to travel on that airlines ever again. Airline X that is. I don't wish for it, but I will only do it if I'm forced to, if there is no other option. Based on convenience.

[00:34:45.390] - Researcher

And do you feel like peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase after your previous experiences?

[00:34:52.970] - Participant 1

Yeah, yeah, for sure. Yeah, for sure. But because if I'm traveling in a group setting, everyone's like peer pressuring me on to book like on Airline X, because it's the most convenient or any other reason, there's a good chance that I'll cave in. Yeah, for sure. But if it was up to me, no, I would definitely not.

[00:35:18.750] - Researcher

OK. Alright, OK. That's that's awesome. Thank you.Thank you so much for your time.

[00:35:25.760] - Participant 1

You're welcome. I'm so glad that I'm going to be a part of the study. And I hope you find the information that you need that's very relevant and helpful.

[00:35:35.340] - Researcher

Of course. Of course. Thank you. You have been so helpful. Thank you so much. Bye.

[00:35:41.300] - Participant 1

Bye.

Participant 2:

[00:00:00.420] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:03.050] - Participant 2

Hi, I'm fine, how are you?

[00:00:04.970] - Researcher

I'm good, thank you, can you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:12.460] - Participant 2

Alright, my name is Participant 2, I'm Italian, I live in Kuwait, I'm 25 years old and yeah.

[00:00:30.410] - Researcher

Awesome, so within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:43.620] - Participant 2

Yeah, I had a recent trip where I was flying from Kuwait to Dubai. On Airline X.

[00:00:55.710] - Researcher

How long ago was this?

[00:00:58.110] - Participant 2

This was about two years ago, and what happened was that I was really excited because I love the airlines and I thought it was amazing and I've always loved their services and I love their planes, and I was very disappointed on that flight because because because I had a negative experience. When I was on board after being seated in first class, mind you, I was one of two people. And the entire rest of the plane was totally empty. And what happened was that from the moment I got on the plane till about an hour and a half in, I was trying to get someone's attention in order to get a glass of water to drink. And I kept asking them over and over, but there was no one there who was giving me service and in the end I lost it. I lost it with them and I got into it with the cabin crew. And so yea, from that experience, I was very bothered because I had paid so much money for, I paid so much money for that ticket to begin with, not to get on board and not be treated well enough or not even be offered that bottle of water or a glass of water or anything of that sort. So it was very disappointing for me.

[00:02:35.200] - Researcher

Wow, OK, could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:02:40.070] - Participant 2

Tourism.

[00:02:46.940] - Researcher

Alright, can you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:02:55.810] - Participant 2

Because they're a good airlines, they're there, they're safe, I love their planes, I used to love their services, I thought they were great. And plus it's a direct flight. So it was really simple, even though I had the other option of choosing Airline Y. But the ticket prices were basically the same. So I decided to obviously go for the better one. And other than that, yeah, that was that was why I chose them to begin with, because I had previous experiences with them that were that were fine, that were good, some a bit negative, but generally good.

[00:03:31.980] - Researcher

Alright, could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:03:44.390] - Participant 2

Well, I booked online on their major website, like the main website, sorry. They're pretty good. It's a nice website. It's you know, it's very straightforward, it's clear. It's designed in a cute way. Not that that affects my my my choice to travel with them. For me, it was focusing on the experience as it is once I get to the airport and at every point where I have to interact with the company itself. But overall, because I just love their planes, I think their planes are huge, I think they're designed greatly and it gives you that luxury experience that you really want when you're just leaving for a quick getaway, you know, luxury and leisure and all that kind of stuff.

[00:04:31.650] - Researcher

OK, and during the booking process, what do you feel is more important to you?

[00:04:47.960] - Participant 2

Um, I think everything is a combination, but, no, I don't put most of my attention onto the website itself, that really doesn't matter to me. It's about the process of having a seamless experience as I travel, having it be simple, having it be quick and easy. Not having to wait in any kind of line, not having to, you know, just kind of go through that whole waiting period where I have to stand in line, where I have to follow a queue, where I have to do all these things. That, to me is just terrible. It's my nightmare.

[00:05:24.690] - Researcher

OK, so if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you rate it?

[00:05:33.820] - Participant 2

Four.

[00:05:34.810] - Researcher

OK. Great. Could you please describe the day of travel in great detail like what happened when you first got to the airport?

[00:05:52.240] - Participant 2

Well, I had booked the flight and then I had my driver drop me off to the airport, I got to the airport. I checked in using the counter, gave them my luggage, actually, I didn't even give them my luggage, I had a carry on.

Yeah, so I went to the counter, got my ticket, things were nice, it was fine, it was easy. And of course, loved it because having booked on first class, I would not have to wait in any kind of line. It wasn't crowded. It wasn't terrible, it was fantastic for me.

[00:06:27.823] - Researcher

OK, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:06:30.171] - Participant 2

It's the waiting time for sure, it's how long people have to wait for the organization of it.

[00:06:34.206] - Researcher

OK, and what would you rate the check-in experience out of five?

[00:06:37.210] - Participant 2

I'd give it a five.

[00:06:39.054] - Researcher

OK, and how was your boarding experience with them? Did you have to wait a long time for your flight?

[00:06:44.044] - Participant 2

No, I did not have to wait in a line or something, it was it was very seamless because I was first class. So at least they did one thing right.

[00:06:50.049] - Researcher

OK, and what would you rate the boarding experience out of five?

[00:06:53.034] - Participant 2

Like a four. Nothing amazing with it, nothing special, but nothing bad either.

[00:06:56.056] - Researcher

OK.

[00:06:58.050] - Participant 2

OK. So, got on the plane. That was fine, too. I felt a little bit like. Not questioning, but I was just a bit weirded out because I noticed that the entire first class was empty and it was just me and I kept looking around and I didn't see much of the cabin crew. I didn't understand what

was happening. So I sat there and I just waited. And then all of a sudden the plane starts moving and I'm like, OK. And I was really, really, really thirsty. And so I really wanted to have something to drink. And so I just waited. And then I even questioned I was like, I thought in first class they're supposed to put like a small bottle of water next to your seat or whatever or something like that. Except I looked for it. I couldn't find it. And every time a cabin crew would pass by me, they'd be zooming down. And every time I'd be like, excuse me, excuse me, and just keep running and zooming down, like giving me no attention whatsoever, which is not really a huge deal for me at first. But then I was a bit bothered because it was like, OK, we took off. Right, and I'm chilling there and I'm waiting, I was like, OK, you know what, maybe they're going to serve food, something's going to happen. And then I can get my, you know, my glass of water. And then they just kept zooming back and forth, no one giving me any attention and about. So the whole flight was supposed to be around an hour, 50 or maybe like two hours max I think I think after about forty five minutes of taking off, that's when they were just like some guy was zooming by me he stops, he looks at me, he was like, do you want to eat something? And I'm like, what? No, I just want a glass of water. He's like, sure, coming up. And then he just never came back. And then another cabin crew passes by like, hi, can I get a bottle of water, a glass of water? I'm really thirsty. Yea yea of course, of course. And then he never really showed up again. And then by the third or fourth, I think this was about an hour later, an hour and 10 minutes. When somebody passes by one of the crew members passed by, I got up, I followed them towards where the where the crew station at the front and I went in on it, I was like, I'm sorry. You know what, like I've been here for about an hour and a half and I've been trying to get a glass of water this entire time. I don't understand. What is this like a serve yourself kind of situation or like a DIY kind of thing? And it really bothered me because I was paying so much money for that ticket, for such a short flight to have something as basic as water not given to me. It bothered

me so much. And the worst part was it's not like they tried to compensate me in any kind of way. They were just like, oh, so sorry. Yeah, have a seat. And I'm like, no, I'm not done. So they were just very rude to me and disrespectful. Very, very disrespectful, and they had no regard to the fact that I was a passenger or that I was simply another human being, just wanting a glass of water. Right. I understand that they could have just been very busy somewhere like in economy where it was crowded, where all the crew were doing their job there or needed help or whatever it was. But that moment for me, kind of exposed the airline in a way where, yes, it's very luxurious and pretty, but behind that, it's just a bunch of, like, rude people that work on that airlines that are disrespectful. Right. That that that just are are are in no position to be working in any kind of customer service. Like, it's impossible. Like if you went to a restaurant and had that kind of treatment guaranteed, like people would probably get up and leave and not pay anything. Like every time you call on someone, they just ignore you over and over and over. It's disrespectful. And from that moment, I decided to never travel on the airlines again because it's a scam. It's a scam if I'm paying that much money and I'm not even being given water like something as simple as water. And I have to ask for it like six times. And then in the end, they still didn't give me my water by the time that we were landing that's when one of the crew members comes by. I'm so sorry. Here's your water. Would you like anything else? Would you like a glass of champagne? I'm like, no, I didn't even eat. I don't want anything. I just wanted to have water. So in that very moment, I just decided that I don't want to travel with them again. I don't want to come near that airlines. I do not like them. I think they have great planes. I think they have great designs and will build kind of an imaginary like experience for you through how they market themselves. But realistically, traveling on them, most of the cabin crew, have terrible, terrible, like an attitude towards their customers. And that's not something that I'm here for.

[00:11:38.590] - Researcher

Wow, I'm sorry that happened to you, so what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:11:42.080] - Participant 2

Well, that's the thing, I couldn't really look at anything, not the movies or anything because I was stressing trying to find someone who works there to get me water, you know what I mean? So if I'm having an experience like that that is hindering every other form of experience on the plane, then it's a big deal to me, you know?

[00:11:53.870] - Researcher

Yeah, and so did you experience, like, a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence? Does that usually have an impact on your experience?

[00:11:55.170] - Participant 2

Not really no, and it was a smooth ride overall.

[00:11:57.570] - Researcher

OK, and what would you rate the in-flight experience with them?

[00:11:59.510] - Participant 2

One. If there was a zero, i'd give them a zero.

[00:12:01.650] - Researcher

Wow, OK, and do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:12:04.110] - Participant 2

Yes, it does, obviously. So if the airport is boring and simple, like the airport, like the one in Kuwait, which is just, very small and boring. It's just it makes the waiting time more like annoying. So when you're booking a ticket or something or going to the airport, you will purposefully try to get there a bit later just so that you don't have to spend all of your time there. But on the other perspective of it. I feel like the bigger the airport, the more problematic things become, because, for example, once I got to Dubai, I was walking for a good thirty five minutes. I had to change terminals, and then I had to leave from that terminal and it was people and it was so crowded and it was just a lot for me. So so not only did I have the bad experience on the plane once I got there, too, it was like endless walking and walking and walking. And I didn't even have to wait for my bags. I just had a carry on. You know what I mean? So I think it's I think it's always a good balance to have. If you have a really big airport like they do in Dubai, you should have a service to make people walk less. So, for example, Qatar, a long time ago would have a bus pick you up from the plane and take you towards where your next flight is if it's a transit. So you don't even have to walk in the airport. And then once you get to that lounge, sorry, once you get to that terminal, you go into the door, you go upstairs directly and chill in the lounge. And then once your plane is there, you go downstairs directly. There's a gate right there that will pick you up and take you to the plane so you don't have to walk, you don't have to wait. You don't have to do anything but

creating a huge airport just for the sake of having a huge airport. Right. And having people, like, drag themselves through it for the longest time. That's so like so like, I don't know, like anticlimactic, and like, yeah, it's not so productive and defeats the entire purpose. By the time you get to the plane, you're exhausted. So you tear away the luxury part or that comfort that you're supposed to be feeling while you travel.

[00:13:56.770] - Researcher

OK, and so after the incident you had on the plane and after you landed, can you please describe what happened?

[00:14:00.030] - Participant 2

I was obviously furious and they thanked me and thank you for choosing us and all that c**p, I glared at them from head to toe and I just walked out. I was very bothered because it didn't make sense. Thank you for choosing you? Yes, I'm very thankful I chose an airline where I paid so much money for and in the end I wasn't even given water, I had to fight to get water, water, water, a basic human need, necessity, water. I literally had to wait for that. So yeah terrible. I will never fly on that airlines again I have decided because they are a scam, that whole experience proves it's a scam. Marketing and seeing them on TV and them faking to give you this amazing experience and this whatever, but in truth, it's nothing like that. That could have that couldn't have been the furthest thing from the truth. Anyways in the end I also waited a long time for my bags and wasn't too happy about that too you know, the aiport.

[00:14:39.970] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so out of five, what would you rate the process after landing?

[00:14:41.120] - Participant 2

Like a four. It was OK.

[00:14:43.140] - Researcher

OK, so if you would kindly rate your entire experience with Airline X, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you rate them?

[00:14:48.120] - Participant 2

I'd give them a two because I didn't have to wait in line and things were just very quick. Besides the flight experience itself, things were fine.

[00:14:53.190] - Researcher

OK. So do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your previous experience with them?

[00:14:56.640] - Participant 2

No, I do not like that airlines, solely based on my experiences in the past, even though they are marketed greatly, they're a good company, they're huge, I hear very lovely stories from my friends and family members, but to me, I would not travel with them whatsoever. It's just

based on the overall experience, I don't enjoy having to walk for hours in an airport. I don't like their airport, it's way too big, it doesn't cater to my comfort, because if you're marketing yourself as a luxury, like an airline that's luxurious, that's all about your experience. It's all about making you happy as a customer. It's all about this and that. And then you end up buying your first class ticket and you pay so much money for that. They're very, very expensive. When in the end, you notice it's not about you. It's not about the luxury experience, it's not about your comfort. It's about just them and their own profit. So I felt like I was being used, like pay this much and it's a scam and it's a lie. Right. Whether it's how big the airport is and how much you have to walk endlessly, right. Which defeats the purpose, what's the point of having a first class lounge that's a forty five minute walk from your gate where it'll take you like forty five minutes to get there and then forty five minutes to go to your gate. That's like wasting I don't know how long. It's a huge airport. That's number one. Number two, the customer experience. Sorry, my, my my personal experience with the staff that work for the airlines has always been negative. And I've seen this with myself and I've seen this with friends and family members alike, but on different levels. I've had family members that got into fights with the cabin crew for simply just their attitude. Or someone like me who wasn't even offered any service, I wasn't offered services, basically, that's what happened to me. It's not just about not having water that I wasn't offered any kind of service like waiting. About an hour later to offer me food after taking off when we're supposed to land in less than an hour, that's that's that's horrible. That's so disrespectful and it's so wrong. So it's that and then having to get to security and then having to go through security and having it just it's it's too complicated for me. Flights should be seamless and your experience should be simple and easy and straightforward. Sometimes the airports make a difference, but I feel like it is the company's job to make sure that the airlines like in every like different like sect to terminal or airport all over the world should go smoothly, like the company needs to

talk to the airport, needs to talk to whatever it needs to manage some way to make their customers feel special or different, even if it's a run down property like an airport, that they need to be able to offer that because it needs to go with the airlines itself and what the people are experiencing from the beginning to the very end of it, you know. That's how I feel about it.

[00:17:46.170] - Researcher

Yeah, and how has this experience in particular influence your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:17:48.120] - Participant 2

Well, I don't want to travel with them again so negatively, obviously.

[00:17:51.580] - Researcher

OK, so do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase with Airline X, even after this experience?

[00:17:54.620] - Participant 2

No, no, definitely not. And I will do everything in my ability to be able to try to sway them to not fly with them. Even if it means taking a transit. Because a transit might be a bit more physically exhausting yes, but you know that once you get on the plane, they will do everything they can, like a different airlines generally, will do everything they can to make you happy, to make you feel pleased, to manage to make your flying experience comfortable

and satisfactory to the very least. You know what I mean? So even if it's a bit longer, it's a bit more difficult. You know, if you're choosing to fly with a different airline, especially one of those top luxury ones like Airline Y or like Airline Z or like any one of those, you know, that it's going to be seamless. You know that even if you have to wait at the airport, you will find a really nice, you will find something to make you one of those beds that you can sleep on it. You could even potentially find a spa at the airport. If you're booking on Airline Y, you can probably take a shower, chill, have that spa experience right inside the plane itself, even if you take a transit and wait longer. So in the end of the day, that is what you're paying for, right? You're not paying like if you're paying for a luxury first class, you're not paying for not waiting in line a bit too long. No, you're paying for everything, you know, not to wait in line, not to have complications to get your bags done quick, to have a welcoming kind of like an attitude, to be treated with respect, to be offered top notch service, that's why you're paying thousands for a plane ticket or for a flight that takes, I don't know, like two hours. So it's quite logical.

[00:19:55.320] - Researcher

Thank you. Thank you so much for your time and taking part in the interview.

[00:19:58.100] - Participant 2

Thank you so much for having me be part of the study. This is great and I wish you all the best. And if you ever want to reach out at any given moment to ask me anything else, I am more than happy to help.

[00:20:05.440] - Researcher

That's so sweet, thank you. Thank you so much.

[00:20:07.840] - Participant 2

Thank you. Have a good day and wish you luck.

[00:20:09.740] - Researcher

Thank you. Have a good day, bye.

[00:20:11.530] - Participant 2

Bye.

Participant 3:

[00:00:01.290] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:03.400] - Participant 3

I'm good, I'm good, how are you doing?

[00:00:06.280] - Researcher

Good, thank you, could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:13.940] - Participant 3

My name is Participant 3, I am a banker and, um, what else? I am single without kids, and I travel frequently.

[00:00:34.510] - Researcher

Alright, OK, so within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:44.960] - Participant 3

Yes, I have.

[00:00:46.850] - Researcher

Alright, awesome. Could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:00:53.130] - Participant 3

Tourism, usually 90% of my travels are for tourism.

[00:01:00.200] - Researcher

OK.

[00:01:01.130] - Participant 3

Sometimes I travel for work, but to very close countries.

[00:01:06.480] - Researcher

OK, and what's the travel class that you booked?

[00:01:12.490] - Participant 3

Business, if it's a very long flight, I would take business class and if it's a short flight, less than less than four five hours, I would book economy.

[00:01:25.090] - Researcher

OK, OK. Could you please explain for this particular experience what airline you chose and why you chose them specifically to travel with?

[00:01:42.180] - Participant 3

Airline X. They are convenient for me and I trust them because I have travelled with them many times before.

[00:01:54.570] - Researcher

Airline X. Alright, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:02:02.010] - Participant 3

I did book through the application. Like I usually book on something like booking, but for flights, but when it comes to airlines that I use a lot, I do have their own applications. And at the beginning, it used to be a bit complicated and it was annoying when I was younger. So I'd use travel agents for me. But now they are starting to get easier and better. So I booked through the airlines application. OK, so for that trip, I booked through Airline X's application.

[00:02:39.440] - Researcher

OK, could you please describe what you thought about the application or booking the ticket?

[00:02:50.060] - Participant 3

I used to find it hard, they made some things to make it easier, but for someone who who is new to the application, they will find it a bit a bit complicated, just like I do think it might be complicated. It's just I played with it a lot and I learned how to use it. But there are some things that are not easy to to understand how to use.

[00:03:20.390] - Researcher

OK, and what do you feel is more important to you during this process?

[00:03:27.940] - Participant 3

It is it is very annoying when the app is all over the place and the writing is in, it's in very tiny letters. I feel like when I see that I don't trust the app, I feel like they're trying to. You know, when you read the terms and conditions of something and the letters are very tiny, it's like they don't want you to read something.

[00:03:55.450] - Researcher

Yeah, yeah.

[00:04:00.230] - Participant 3

Sometimes I feel like that with some apps and and I do care about how the app looks. I do, because it makes me feel that this is a professional company that I'm dealing with, but I'm not

looking for a fun app just a professional one, easy to use and things are very clear, especially when you get to choose your meals and stuff like that.

[00:04:25.080] - Researcher

OK. Alright, and for this specific experience, could you please rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased?

[00:04:37.900] - Participant 3

I'd say I'd say four.

[00:04:42.120] - Researcher

OK, cool. So moving on to the day of the travel, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

[00:04:51.230] - Participant 3

OK, what happened is I went to the to the airport. I usually go early. I don't like to go last minute. And there was a delay. And I didn't think of it that much because I thought everything was going to be taken care of, even though I have a transit. Because even if the even if like the flight that's supposed to take me to Geneva is going to go or I'm going to miss it, I'm still going to find another flight like it's Airline X. Like I thought every couple of hours it's going to fly. And so we get to the transit destination and then we realize that there is a mess at the gate where everyone's flight to wherever destination they were going. Mostly

Europe are like late and they didn't get to catch their flight and and and the time between, the transit time is very short. The thing is, they they they put that time available, even though they tell you not not they like everyone knows, like you're not supposed to book a transit that is very short just in case. But this is not my responsibility as a client. If I see the available time, I'm going to take it. It's the airlines and the airport's responsibility to to not make me miss my flight because this is a transit process. This is not me coming from my house to the airport where I'm the one to blame for being late anyway. So I missed the we missed the flight and they they were trying to offer for us to stay for a full twenty four hours for the next flight to Geneva. And I didn't agree to that because I needed to get to Geneva on that day. And I was I was saying that what if someone has work? What if someone has got something very important? You can't you can't give me this as the only option. And I didn't like the fact that I had to fight for an hour to not fight, argue for an hour or two to to make them understand that I need to fly today like you you are the one who made me miss my flight. So you're the one who is supposed to compromise, not me, not waste my time. And that changed my mind about the company. I know that these things happen, but it's just the fact that you're not giving me any other option. You want me to do what's convenient for you and I don't like that. You, as in, you know, the people that were in charge of scheduling all the flights, finally they, on this trip, I was first class so they we got a flight to Munich and then from Munich to Geneva. But the flight from Munich to Geneva, they said that they can't guarantee that it's going to be first class. But I booked for my trip to be first class. So, again, I had to argue about the fact that you're not giving me my right, you are not giving me the trip that I booked for, and that's not fair. Finally, they agreed, but the plane was small anyways, the one from Munich to Geneva, so I had like, it's the same thing. There is no difference between first class and economy at that point. Like when I went to Munich and then from Munich a three hours transit and then I went to Geneva, it was I we were very tired. So we just like we didn't want

to take another flight. And it did make me lose a bit of trust in the process if a crisis like that happens. Like for me, it's it's very important to to know that if anything goes wrong, that the company that I booked with, they will take care of everything, not me. I don't have to worry about that. And I felt like if I was the kind of person that don't know how to talk or maybe don't speak the same language, they would have made me think made me take a route or fly in a way or stay longer that I didn't want to.

[00:08:33.430] - Researcher

Wow, yeah of course, and so backtracking a little, how was the check-in experience?

[00:08:39.510] - Participant 3

OK, so I check-in online because I would like to take the fast lane to the check-in because there is a specific counter for people who checked in online.

[00:08:51.730] - Researcher

OK, and what is more important to you during this process?

[00:08:56.400] - Participant 3

I think even if I waited for a long time, the interaction with the employee would make this entire waiting process better. So the interaction is important to me. The service, the way they communicate with their customers is very important. I feel comfortable like I travel with some people that are very anxious about flying and this kind of treatment, just in a way it

makes the the customer feel safe, I think, in my opinion. I really think no matter what happens, the treatment of the employees really affect everything, and it might make things go from really bad to to really good and make a bad experience, go away or make me go from, oh, my God, I love this airline I would never change them I'm very loyal to I'm never going to travel with them again. So I was basically standing in line in the airport and it was the new airport they just opened. And it was so crowded because of the lack of employees and there were two. And on top of all of that, there were a lot of people that are traveling. And then there was a crew of actors and actresses that they made them go in front of the line. I don't know who made them go in front of the line and everyone started yelling and fighting and screaming. It was so bad. It made me very nervous, made me feel like, oh, my God, is this a sign for me not to travel? Like it was so annoying. It was just so annoying. And then the people behind me started talking and people started pushing, like not pushing, pushing, but like, go to the front, go to the back and people sneaking in and it was just very bad and I had twenty five minutes till my flight at that point and I was very early, I was two hours before my flight and then I had twenty five minutes left. So I saw people, I noticed that the employee that's standing, he didn't want this to happen. He didn't want the actors and actresses crew to come to the front. And he was kind of from his attitude refusing to do the paperwork, though I uhh when I got there. And to the counter, I saw how frustrated the guy was, so I just said hi and I didn't complain and and because everyone before me was complaining and yelling to him, because he's the face of the airline, like he's the one who's checking us in. When I went there and I didn't do that and he was like, oh, my God, this is this is just getting out of hand. This is not our fault. I don't know why. I don't know who brought those people to the front. This is so unprofessional like, that employee, he showed me that he's not OK with this process that happened. And it's made me not want to complain to him. So I just went quiet and I was like, basically like, good job, like something like that,

like God bless you or whatever. And then and then I was still annoyed at that point. I was like, oh my God. Like, I'm going to miss my flight or what? I still didn't go to the checkpoint and the passport. So he goes like, just because you're nice, I'm going to bump you into economy plus that I'm supposed to pay to pay extra for. And I was like, oh my God, thank you. It's like, do you want the window or the middle seat? Like he actually made me choose and and that treatment and what happened and how he made me feel like, oh, you're a nice person for for you're just a nice person. And him doing that is just that interaction made me forget about the entire situation that happened, the entire waiting process. I was just like, oh, this happened for a reason for me to go to economy plus or next to the window. So it was it really, really makes things better. The service. Well, that's that's it.

[00:12:12.040] - Researcher

Wow, that's amazing. Thank you for sharing.

[00:12:15.040] - Participant 3

Of course.

[00:12:18.030] - Researcher

OK. Alright, and for this particular experience of the check-in, could you please rate the experience out of five?

[00:12:23.340] - Participant 3

For sure, five.

[00:12:26.420] - Researcher

OK, alright, do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:12:32.070] - Participant 3

Yes, yes, it does. Like, for example, I feel comfortable going to certain airports and the way they treat their people in general, it's that the airline might be really good but if I'm going to have to worry about how I'm going to be treated in that airport, yes, I might avoid because, you know, a lot of airports or like employees they don't make sense when they're being rude, as if you're a criminal, I don't like that treatment just because it's in the Air Force, everyone acts this way. I don't I would I would avoid that. I would try to avoid going to the airport, even if the airlines are very good. And even if it was it was a shorter flight, I would still avoid it. It might make me it might make me nervous the entire time so I don't get to enjoy the experience of the airline, even if it was good, you know.

[00:13:11.600] - Researcher

Yeah, alright, and based on that incident, could you please rate the boarding experience out of five?

[00:13:21.940] - Participant 3

The boarding experience, the first time I got on the plane It was very normal, like a normal process, like I give it a four, I guess, out of five and then the second time after after arguing about the entire situation, they were being very nice, to be honest yeah, maybe it's just complaining and nagging sometimes makes them give you a better service, ok. I'd give them a three out of five.

[00:13:52.720] - Researcher

OK, and can you please describe your experience entering the plane. Like what did you first notice?

[00:14:01.480] - Participant 3

I guess the crew like how friendly they are, like, hello, welcome on board and stuff like that, like these are the first people I see and I notice how dirty or clean the plane is. But in that case, it was clean.

[00:14:13.280] - Researcher

Yeah, and so what's more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:14:18.810] - Participant 3

Like for me, I think, like I don't focus a lot on on the meals or how comfortable the chair is, but i'm, but I'm guessing for other people who might be a bit overweight and like they do need for a for the chair to be comfortable, that it can be really annoying. And it can I mean, it

can be really small that's annoying. But but for me personally, I don't care. I don't really focus if it's a short flight, if it's a long flight, yes I do care about the food because if it's a ten hour, eight hour, seven hour flight like I want to eat something and how comfortable the chair is so I could sleep.

[00:15:02.960] - Researcher

Yeah OK, and can you please describe the entire experience, like after being seated? Were there any incidents that happened?

[00:15:11.340] - Participant 3

They were they they knew, like it was very obvious that the crew were notified about us, that they were giving us a better treatment and extra dessert. I remember getting it was it did feel good, like I would I would still travel with them again, regardless of that, even though, like, I do have some trust issues, basically, I'm not going to depend on them a hundred percent if I know there's a chance I'm going to miss my flight. So I'd make my transit a bit longer just to avoid even if it's more expensive. And that's obviously changed my mind about like how I trust them. But at the same time, the way they handled it afterwards and how they were giving a really good service and all of that was it still kept me loyal, like they didn't lose me entirely.

[00:16:03.730] - Researcher

OK. That's great, and so based on the in-flight experience, could you please rate it out of five.

[00:16:10.060] - Participant 3

I would say five.

[00:16:14.610] - Researcher

OK, awesome, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence? Like, does that have an impact on your experience?

[00:16:22.210] - Participant 3

When it when it comes to that I understand that there are some stuff that are out of hand, but on that particular flight, I don't remember any turbulence. But sometimes when I I can feel that the plane is so old that any kind of inconvenience and the weather would shake it. No, I don't. I don't I don't I wouldn't trust to travel on that particular flight but for this flight, I didn't feel any turbulence that I would remember to the point where I, like, questioned the plane.

[00:16:52.910] - Researcher

Ok, and can you please describe the process of landing and getting your bags? Like, were there any incidents after landing?

[00:17:01.470] - Participant 3

After the transit fight, nothing that is memorable, to be honest, welcoming all of that happened, just like just the crew, like telling you good morning or whatever. But other than that I have traveled on Airline X to so many countries and I've noticed that receiving the bags depends on the airports. It has nothing to do with the with the flights, with the with the airline itself, because I've been to countries that that I've got my bag really fast and some other countries where I haven't as long as I don't lose my bag. I'm fine with waiting. OK. And that on that day, because of the entire process of switching planes, I don't remember waiting for that long, but I was very glad that I got my luggage because I was expecting with all that mess that I would not get my luggage.

[00:17:38.390] - Researcher

Yeah, of course, and if you would please rate your experience after landing out of five?

[00:17:42.800] - Participant 3

Five.

[00:17:46.800] - Researcher

Ok, great, could you now please rate your entire experience with Airline X with five being very pleased and one being not pleased?

[00:18:02.200] - Participant 3

I would give it four because of the way it was handled.

[00:18:10.200] - Researcher

OK. Alright. So you mentioned that you would still purchase another ticket with Airline X solely based on this experience. Why do you think you would still go again?

[00:18:21.250] - Participant 3

Because this was one incident from all the times that I've traveled. It's not something that would regularly happen. I wasn't pleased with that, with the way it was going to be handled if I didn't nag about wanting to travel today on that day. But this doesn't usually happen with them like it doesn't. That's why I, that's why I said I didn't lose my trust entirely I just wouldn't trust their timing that much. So I wouldn't book a short transit. Some flights even though there is no service, nothing but they're very strict with their timings. And if I'm traveling for work, I would choose a flight that are strict with their timings instead of everything else.

[00:19:01.960] - Researcher

So you'd say that this experience hasn't influenced your attitude towards them?

[00:19:06.820] - Participant 3

Not yet, because it happened only once within, like me traveling with them for 15 times maybe, or maybe more. I don't know the numbers specifically and this is a very low percentage. So, yes, I didn't lose much. But if that would happen again, I would like for the

second time, yes, I would start to not make them my first choice. And the reason why they are my first choice before anything else is because it's the closest transit to Kuwait. So at the end of the day, there are other good airlines that I can trust. Just my my flight is my journey is going to be longer. But there are other options, its not the only option for me.

[00:19:35.150] - Researcher

Yeah, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase the ticket, like even after your previous experience with the airline?

[00:19:44.830] - Participant 3

I do I do listen to people's opinions when when I know they are they have the same traveling style as me, so, yes they can affect my decision.

[00:19:56.340] - Researcher

OK, cool. Alright, awesome, awesome, thank you, thank you so much for the interview. Thank you for your time. You've been such a great help. So thank you.

[00:20:03.810] - Participant 3

Anytime, no problem, bye.

[00:20:06.010] - Researcher

Bye.

Participant 4:

[00:00:01.350] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:03.240] - Participant 4

Hi, I'm good. How are you?

[00:00:04.920] - Researcher

I'm good. I'm good. Can you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:09.780] - Participant 4

Yes, my name is Participant 4. Um, I'm 44 years old and I work in the advocacy and human rights field in the Gulf region.

[00:00:23.600] - Researcher

Alright awesome. Well, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. So within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:37.850] - Participant 4

Yes, several I think the last three years were probably excluding after Corona, but before that it was monthly. So every other weekend I would be traveling and it was mainly one specific airline, but sometimes I would use different airlines.

[00:00:59.840] - Researcher

OK, and was there a specific trip you'd like to mention?

[00:01:05.800] - Participant 4

Yes, Airline X, so, I'm very loyal to this airline. I usually travel on Airline X due to constantly going back and forth between my country and theirs. And so I've I've been able to gather enough points and to to reach the gold level in Airline X. So knowing that, I know that

when I travel, regardless of traveling first or economy, my bags, my luggage is always placed in first class cabin because of the privileges of membership. So I remember once I had a trip from Oman back to Kuwait. So I went from Kuwait to Qatar and then from Qatar to Oman and then I had to come back to Kuwait. So I took Airline X back to Kuwait with a very short transit period in between and I remember arriving and, keep in mind that this was on a Saturday. So I was very well aware that I arrived in Kuwait late and I had work the next day at seven thirty a.m. so I booked the flight that was I think at one one a.m. I was supposed to fly from Qatar to Kuwait. So when I arrived from Oman, when we arrived at Hamad International Airport, the plane just, just stopped so that we were waiting outside. We were waiting in the plane for a while before they started letting people off the plane. And I was getting nervous. I was getting nervous because my my next flight is soon a very, very short transit period. Less than two hours maybe. So I was in the first class of economy, like the first row of economy. So I thought it would be smart for me to get up, carry my stuff and go to first class and let the air hostess know that I would like to be I would like to be let off the plane with the first class passengers because I need I can't be waiting for the next bus because my next flight is soon. And I had my boarding pass. I had my club membership card. I had everything. So I remember I did that. I stood in line because I knew that the first class bus was was outside. Now, this is after having waited for for a good amount of time. So the first class bus arrived and I stood there in line. So they were letting the first class passengers out. And the air hostess just looks at me and then she she she stops me. And I explained to her, you know, I'm I'm a club member and my next flight is is very soon and this is my boarding my boarding ticket for the next flight. So I'd like to please be let off with those people. So she looked at me and then she looked at her colleague and she smirked in a way that felt like it was it was condescending. It was it felt like she was in her mind saying, you know, oh, look at this person trying to get on the first class bus. And that for me, just it was it was rude it was

disrespectful. No, nothing was said. There wasn't an exchange. It was just the way that she treated the situation instead of calming me down. The passenger. Yeah. So she didn't let me get on that bus. She asked me to go back to my seat and wait for the economy class bus, which I did. Again, just going back to what I mentioned at the beginning, I know that my luggage gets placed in first class because it even gets the first class like Badge or something gets put on it when I check in my luggage. So eventually the bus, the economy class bus comes and we get on and they drop us off at the airport, usually at any airport, if they know that there is a connecting flight and there are passengers and a flight that just arrived and they have a very short transit period, you'll usually see someone standing right at the door with a sign that says, you know, Kuwait or Oman or whatever, so that they can get these passengers and take them to the gate immediately and inform the gate that, you know, these passengers are coming. So hold the flight again, because I've I've traveled over I've traveled to Qatar over forty five times in the span of two years. So I know how long their procedures take. I know exactly what they do. I've timed these things several times because I'm just very familiar with it. Yeah. And with Airline X specifically. So I we arrive at the at the airport and there wasn't anyone there with a sign. I'm like, OK, no worries. I still had about forty, forty five minutes in. A little less than an hour left before the next flight, before the gates closed for the next flight. So I remember trying to stop the the golf cart employees that were there, you know, asking them, you know, can you please help me? Because I was carrying seven kilos worth of sweets and stuff from Oman. And I also had my my my laptop. I had my bag. And I'm just trying to rush from one side of the airport to the other side. And Qatar's airport is pretty huge. So I had hoped to get the help of one of those cars. They refused to help me out, which is understandable. Just looking back at it. It's understandable because I know that that service is available to those who have some form of disability or are unable to walk. So they probably thought, this woman looks young, you know, saw me and just thought, you know,

she's capable of walking, she can run or whatever it may be, she can go. I make it to the gate. I have my boarding ticket. So I have I have everything ready. I'm about to board the flight. And it was, again, one of those things where, you know, they check you in at the counter and you get on another bus and then they take you to the plane. So it wasn't directly linked to the plane. And they looked at my boarding pass. Everything was fine. I was about to enter to go to the bus and then I turned around and I told I remember there was a man and a woman at the counter. And I remember I told them, you know, if I'd like to file a complaint, who do I email? And I wanted to file a complaint against the air hostess who I felt was was did not handle the situation well, you know, as I feel like it's your job when you see someone is panicking, a passenger is panicking, and the plane itself was just parked for a really long time. It's your job to try to calm them down and make them, you know, just just calm down. You don't want chaos created. If I was another person, I might have started yelling. But it's not it's not within my personality. So I stopped before getting on to the bus and I just asked them if I want to file a complaint, who do I email, who do I contact and then they looked at me and then they said, can we have your boarding pass? So they took my boarding pass and they said, sorry, we can't let you on the plane. And I'm like, what? So that doesn't make sense because I was just about to get on get on the bus to get to be dropped off at the plane. Yeah, I said, why? And here because keep in mind, this was late at night. And again, I'm thinking about having to go to work the next morning. So I don't have that flexibility of saying, you know, OK, it's fine. I'll just stay, no, I have to get on there and I was already very agitated by how the lady, the air hostess treated the situation, how I had to rush from one gate to another, how I didn't feel like I was helped out in any way. There was a lot of back and forth between us, they said, you know, we can't let you on the plane because your bags did not have enough. There wasn't enough time for us to transfer your bags from your Oman flight to your Kuwait flight. I said, well, that makes no sense because you had a good 40 minutes, over 40 minutes

for you to transfer my bags and having traveled on Airline X a lot of times, I know that it takes them way less than that to take the bags out and onto and onto the belts outside. So let alone transfer them from one airplane to another. He said, yeah, no, sorry. If you want, you can get on the plane, but your bags will not arrive at the same time. I said, you know, none of this was said when I was about to enter the flight, it was when I paused and I said, I want to file a complaint. That's when everything went down. I started getting very, very angry and agitated. And when that happens, my body doesn't handle it well. So I immediately start feeling nauseous. I start feeling dizzy and I feel like I'm going to faint. I start shaking. So I told one of the people on the counter, I said, you know, may I please get a chair because I feel like I'm going to faint and all of this. Keep in mind, I know that there are mics that record everything. There are cameras, there are mics on the counters. So all of this was recorded. So even when later on I tried to file a complaint, I said, you know, it's very easy. Just go listen to the recordings, go look at the camera footage and you'll see exactly how I was treated as a loyal customer. I told them that I'm going to faint. They were just telling me they were just brushing it all off. They're like, the next flight is in an hour, so just get on the next flight. And for me, at that moment, it didn't matter if the next flight was in five minutes because they've been handling everything so badly that this whole time that I'm not willing to even wait five minutes for you right now. I need to get on this flight. This is my flight. I need to get on there and my my luggage as well. And I need to get home because I need to rest before my job, you know. They decided, you know, my feelings aside, they they boarded everyone on that flight, left me outside, and when I had told the guy that I need a chair, I'm going to faint, he told me, step out of the way because we're boarding the next flight. Like the passengers for the next flight, and I just thought had I had I not been holding on to that counter and had actually let my body get weaker and just fainted right then and there, that would not look good for them. But I just decided, just hang on, just right now, all I want to do is I just want

to get home. And I remember I was I was texting my husband and I sent him a voice note and I'm just crying in the voice note, like they're not letting me on the flight. I just want to go home. I'm tired. I'm dizzy. They got the paramedics and then the paramedic told me that, you know, just just a piece of advice. He said, no matter what you're feeling right now, please don't let them know that you are feeling ill, because if you tell them that you have something as basic as a stomach ache, they won't let you on the next flight even. So, if you if you really want to get home, just simply put, just suck it up and they'll let you on the flight. So the paramedics checked everything, blood pressure, all of that stuff. And then eventually I got on the next flight and instead of having arrived at Kuwait, like I was supposed to arrive at Kuwait at around 2:00 a.m. or something like that, I arrive way later. I ended up having to miss work because I was just emotionally exhausted from everything that had happened before. And I tried to contact Airline X, i tried to contact I IATA, I had to yeah, I tried to contact them all because and every time I got because, like I mentioned earlier, I would visit Qatar every other weekend, so I was at their airport every other weekend and every other weekend I would go and I would try to find someone who I can file an official complaint to because it wasn't OK how the whole situation was treated. There was no form of compensation. There was no form of, you know, we apologize. No one was apologetic about anything. And my my my job requires me to deal with a lot of people from different backgrounds, from different cultures, from different religions and all of that so part of my role is having to be calm and trying not to take it personally when someone says something that might agitate me, but instead try to calm them down and just try to serve them, basically. But I feel like none of that was done in my case, especially when when the the male employee over there was just like, you know, please get out of the way. We're boarding the next flight passengers. And which was within minutes from when I said I need a chair because I feel like I'm going to faint. I explained to them as well. I explain to them that I have

anxiety, I have panic. I'm prone to just getting panic attacks in situations like this. But none of that was was made. It wasn't prioritized or even listened to. I still do travel on Airline X, but yeah, I just if you have any questions before I keep going. Sorry I was rambling on.

[00:14:24.100] - Researcher

No, no, no, no. Like that, that's awful what happened and, really sorry that happened to you. Like when was this, how long ago was this?

[00:14:35.260] - Participant 4

This was about late 2019.

[00:15:03.140] - Researcher

Yeah, OK, do you usually fly on economy or do you usually fly business class?

[00:15:14.400] - Participant 4

No, I usually travel on economy, so Airline X's economy's pretty spacious and I'm usually a single traveler. And like I said, my trips are Kuwait-Qatar. So it's not really worth it to to splurge on on first class.

[00:15:32.540] - Researcher

And is this why you chose Airline X, it's because you go to Qatar all the time?

[00:15:40.470] - Participant 4

Yes. That and because even when if I have to attend conferences elsewhere, my colleagues usually travel in Airline X as well so they just advised me, just keep on traveling on Airline X. And, you know, because if I stick to an airline and Airline X goes to several like a lot of countries. So if I stick to one airline, then I can also build up my points for the club membership and that would then benefit me and it really did benefit me later on. So there would be complimentary upgrades if the flight is full, like if economy's full and I'm traveling in peak like peak season because I'm a single traveler, they usually just bump me up to first class or business if even if it's a long flight. So I, I do like the airline and I've never faced any issue with the airline, whether it be with delays, whether it be with any of those things. It was just this whole situation where it was just one thing after the other that made me not be the biggest fan. But I flew back on Airline X two weeks after it. So the loyalty remains. It was just, you know, when you fight with a friend, but you kind of have to just kind of suck it up and just keep them there.

[00:17:07.400] - Researcher

Yeah, yeah. OK. So like, let's backtrack a little bit to the booking process, like could you please describe the booking process in great detail, like have you booked online for example through the airline's website, or did you use like a third party app?

[00:17:23.990] - Participant 4

I avoid using third party apps because I also know that if should there be a cancelation or anything, then you don't know who to hold responsible for your for refunding your tickets price. So I always prefer booking from the airline its website itself, even though sometimes it is more expensive. But I'd rather pay that extra money just in case because I'm the I'm dealing directly with the airline. I'm not dealing with a third party who then deals with the airline. Then it can get a bit messy. I have airlines that have not yet refunded my my my ticket, my ticket prices from from Corona. When everything got canceled, all flights got canceled. So and it was booked through third party websites.

[00:18:10.370] - Researcher

Oh wow OK, so have you encountered any incidents during the booking process, was it an easy process to navigate and book the ticket?

[00:18:22.160] - Participant 4

It usually is. I think um again referring back to Airline X, the only hassle is trying to get a hold of their customer service hotline. So just contacting them and trying to speak to someone is always a hassle. So whether it be the office in Kuwait, whether it be, you know, sometimes the office in Kuwait doesn't answer, so then it automatically transfers you to the office back there and that's when it gets a bit messy and they're not responsive. OK, so they're not quick to act. They're not quick to help you out. But usually if I just book through the app and I know exactly what my times are and I'm not going to change my flight and I'm not going to change anything about it. It usually it's very smooth. The fact that I can just choose my chair, I can choose my meal, I could choose everything I can check in before arriving to the airport. Everything is very straightforward on there. So it's so easy to navigate around.

[00:19:26.780] - Researcher

OK, and like what's more important to you during this process?

[00:19:36.100] - Participant 4

I care about the website design in a sense that I care about it being simple and accessible, it's easy to navigate. I'm I consider myself technologically illiterate to a certain extent. So when a website is constantly, you know, there are too many things and it's very messy, it bothers me because I don't know if I'm doing it right. If I'm booking right, some type of websites don't take specific payment methods, which is also frustrating because then you have to do all this transferring from one card to another because all of that and so with Airline X, it's just it's easy on the eyes. It's straightforward, the organization of it. You can filter it out. You can sort by you how you can sort it by by flights like a transit period. You can sort it out by pricing all of these things. So those all play a role. And the website that I choose for for what I booked my flights. I like simple websites. None of this complicated. Very messy, too many options. Yeah. Just I just want to book my flight and leave.

[00:20:55.300] - Researcher

Alright. OK, so if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you rate it?

[00:21:16.580] - Participant 4

Five.

[00:21:26.400] - Researcher

Alright, awesome. So backtracking again, could you please describe the check-in experience, so like were there any incidents that occured, did you check in online?

[00:21:49.920] - Participant 4

It's it's very rare that I'll check in online and I always get get attacked by my friends for doing this. But again, because I usually travel for work and am a single traveler and I have the club membership, so I usually arrive five minutes before they close the counter, especially when I'm departing Kuwait, because I know that there won't be traffic. I can just go and I check in my luggage. It's rarely ever overweight. It's very quick. It's very smooth and then I'm I'm in and out. So I, I usually find myself checking-in in person and again, because technologically illiterate, I'm worried sometimes that if I do check in online, what if it doesn't really check in? What does this mean? If I want to request a specific thing, can I do it? Can I not do it? So I find myself checking in in person most of the time.

[00:22:50.060] - Researcher

Alright, and what's more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:23:01.010] - Participant 4

Definitely the employee interaction. I feel like anything can be solved if both parties are very calm and they're very understandable. And if I'm if I'm waiting a really long time in line and I arrive to the counter, but the employee there is always welcoming, you know, not not necessarily apologetic for me having to wait because it's not their fault. I have to wait. It's just that the flight has a lot of people. But if they're they have a smile on their face, I understand that sometimes their job is hectic and a smile might be too hard to plaster on your face. But that that interaction is is very, very important because you don't want to wait a long time in line and then you get to the counter. And then the employee there is very moody. And, you know, I feel like it's unnecessary.

[00:23:59.840] - Researcher

Alright. So if you would rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give it?

[00:24:10.490] - Participant 4

A four.

[00:24:12.330] - Researcher

OK, yeah, alright, so moving on to the airport, like, do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:24:25.920] - Participant 4

Yes. Yes and no. So if if I have a chance that if I have a long transit, it's always nice being in Hamad International Airport because it's huge, you can walk around, there are different places you can go to. So it's nice. But if you have a short transit period, it's a hassle because you have to run from one gate to another and these gates can be as far as a ten minute walk from one another. So, again, the car service is not always available, the golf carts. They're not always available to take you to the gate in Kuwait. The Kuwait airport, for example, I, I like it regardless of it being very outdated. I'm talking about the old one, not the new airport. I like it because everything is very close to one another. It is a hassle when it comes to arrival arrivals and departures like they're all in the same place and it can get very crowded very fast. But I don't have to stress about going to to my gate because I know my gate is right after my passport gets stamped at the what when you first enter after the first checking luggage check. I know my gate is just within a few steps away from me, but and also what I really like about Hamad International Airport, is that when they announce the gate number, it's that they stick to it, you know, so sometimes it is a hassle when the gates are constantly changing or they don't announce it till very last minute. But they they I don't remember an incident in which, you know, they were still unsure as to what gate we have to be in. They announce it, giving passengers a good amount of time to go to the gate. And and yeah if they were around.

[00:26:37.360] - Researcher

OK. Alright. So you mentioned the boarding experience that you had with with the flight coming back to Kuwait. Did you feel like the second boarding experience impacted your experience heavily?

[00:27:07.270] - Participant 4

Yes definitely, and and keep in mind, when I went Kuwait to Qatar, I actually stayed for for two nights because I had work there. So when I when I traveled to Oman, I took my time with it because it was on my to my timeline. So I was managing my own time. And I was at the airport well before the boarding, but so that was all smooth. It was it was it was fine like my other flights. But Oman to Qatar it was it was very smooth. It was very easy, regardless of me being it was the first time I ever go to Oman's airport. But when I arrived to Qatar trying to get from Qatar to Kuwait, that was really bad. I remember being very, very, very upset about it just because there were so many factors. So I felt like that they undermined my my physical well-being or my emotional well-being when I had voiced it out. So I did tell them, you know, I'm I'm I can barely lift myself up. I'm barely standing right now. It wasn't taken seriously. All of these things for me as an individual, it just felt like I was everything was just brushed under the rug and the important thing for them at that point was just getting people on the flight, the next flight. And, you know, it was OK, it's fine. You know, it doesn't matter. Just get on the next flight. But it does matter because I have work the next day and because of all that, I had to miss work the next day. So it did affect how I view Airline X, especially with their lack of responding to my complaint. So until today, no response to the complaint. It's it's and and even when when I sent it and I sent them several emails, they didn't really respond with anything. I remember I think if anything, they responded saying there was nothing that we can do about it, that there is nothing that we can do about it. So, yeah.

[00:29:28.990] - Researcher

And so based on that boarding experience, how would you rate that experience itself?

[00:29:36.190] - Participant 4

Oh, definitely if there is anything below one. I would I would give it that. And to make matters worse, I was forced into a middle seat. So not not to sound spoiled or anything, but because I'm claustrophobic. So I can't sit in the middle, especially in a flight in a closed area. So I usually tend to take a window seat so I can at least look out the window or I take corridor seats. So they place me right in the middle. So that just made matters even worse because I was already here trying to deal with an anxiety attack. And you just placed me in the middle because that flight was overbooked as well. So.

[00:30:17.130] - Researcher

OK, so moving on to in-flight experience like when entering the plane, what did you first notice and what's more importat to you during this process?

[00:30:39.930] - Participant 4

Umm, for me the meals aren't that important. I would I feel more comfortable knowing that the that the plane that I'm in is a modern one. So you don't hear the rattling of the AC or your chair doesn't just move. It's not supposed to be moving. That just makes me feel a bit more comfortable because I also have a slight fear of flying. But overall, it's it's you know, if it's a plane and it can safely take me from one place to another, that's that's all that matters. And if the seats are a bit spacious, you know, there were there were flights I'm relatively a small person, but I'm I'm tall. So I'm one six one sixty five centimeters. So knee space is kind of important. So when sometimes you get on flights where your knees are on your lap against your chest. Sorry. So but with Airline X. No it's, it's not that big of an issue. So I think just if

it's comfortable, if it's spacious, it's perfect. And if they give me a window or a corridor seat than that's all I ask for.

[00:31:50.280] - Researcher

Alright. Did you experience a smooth ride overall or was there turbulence? Does that usually have an impact on your experuence?

[00:31:58.350] - Participant 4

The flights were smooth, but yes I remember actually, I remember several, several flights in which it wasn't necessarily turbulence. It was just I had an I had a panic attack in the flight and they responded very quickly. So they got the oxygen tank. They put the mask on me throughout the whole flight and so I remember one of them was because, in my head, the captain was speeding, so that freaked me out, so I don't I can't you can't explain it to someone who if they don't have a fear of flying, but the captain was speeding, so I just I freaked out. I had a panic attack. So they gave me an oxygen mask and the other time the flight was really hot so I just felt like I was suffocating throughout the whole flight. And when I expressed my discomfort, they immediately also provided me with the oxygen mask. I also remember once I just I was very uncomfortable with the fact that we were taking so long to take off. And when I ask them, you know, what's the issue? They said, you know, there is a signal that's appearing that's not supposed to appear. That immediately sparked a bunch of things in my head. You know, I just my my imagination just took me out of space. So when I went to I just I immediately got up. I went to one of the air hostesses and I told her, you know, I would like to get off the plane, please. And when she asked me why I started crying, keep in mind, this was back in like the early 2000's . I was in my 20's back then. I started crying. You know, she

gave me chocolates and orange juice. And she was like she was explaining the whole thing to me. She said, you know, it's fine. We usually get several engineers to come and check it out and they all have to report the same thing. And that made me feel comfortable, you know. But she still gave me the choice, the option of leaving the plane. Should I feel uncomfortable, like if I want to leave the plane, they were they were willing to accommodate. But that's what I'm saying. You know, sometimes you can you can really be at your worst. But the other person's reaction and how they deal with it can make the biggest difference.

[00:34:07.980] - Researcher

Yes, of course. Alright, and if you could please rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:34:22.220] - Participant 4

A four.

[00:34:23.280] - Researcher

OK, yeah. Alright and once you landed, obviously, you mentioned the incident with the crew member and like, if you could rate that experience out five? Also, did you wait a long time to receive your bags after landing?

[00:34:37.320] - Participant 4

Again, below, below a one like a one, and yeah imagine after all that I have waited a long time, but what can you do, the airport.

[00:34:44.510] - Researcher

Wow ok, so what experience was more impactful for you like was it this one or was it boarding for your flight?

[00:34:58.110] - Participant 4

I think the one where the one that happened after my my during my transit flight from Oman, that that was worse, I think that was the worst experience I've had, you know, and it's way worse than panic attacks or just unexplainable fears and all of these things. I think they're there because fears and panic attacks and all that, that's on me. That's on me as an individual, and the other party doesn't impact it. It's how they respond to it. That's that's that's where they start playing a role. But with the incident, with the transit flight, you know, it was it was both of us had a role to play and they failed to play their role. And again, had I not maybe had I not gathered this many points on Airline X, had I not reached a certain level with on their club membership, I would have easily just dropped the airline and stopped using it. There are airlines where I've flown on them just a couple of times and now I would never fly on them again because of bad customer service. So.

[00:36:10.500] - Researcher

Alright. So if You would please rate your entire experience with Airline X out of five?

[00:36:22.650] - Participant 4

A four, I'm very comfortable with this airline, but it's it's just bits and bobs that sometimes, you know.

[00:36:31.080] - Researcher

Alright, OK. And like so obviously like this trip impacted your perception of them. Like did it influence your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:36:45.030] - Participant 4

For a short period of time, yes. So for a short period of time, I just. I was just not their biggest fan, you know, and it was funny because I remember when I went there again, they remembered me, some of the workers there, they remember they remembered me like, oh, I remember you, you're that person. And I'm like, Yeah, but I mean, it's it's not how it happened, but they've given me way more positives than negatives to think about and to focus on.

[00:37:33.620] - Researcher

OK, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase a ticket even after your previous experience with them?

[00:37:43.820] - Participant 4

No. So a lot of my friends try to get me on the Airline Y wagon and no, I I'm very, very loyal to Airline X. So even if we're all flying together, I'll just tell them I'll meet you there. It's very rare that I'll change out of it. Because I've seen how they deal with other things. I've seen how they deal with when the flight is overbooked, no one is going to say no to a free upgrade. I have I have 50 kilos of of luggage weight that I can I can bring on with me. They really take into account the fact that you are a loyal member. So they they do take on the fact that you have the card, the club membership. Their lounges are usually exquisite in most airports that I've I've been to all of these things, they play a role as to why I I wouldn't change it even if it meant I'll probably have a longer flight than others but that's fine for me, again, because I'm a single traveler. So maybe when I'm with someone else like my husband or my friends, I have to compromise and go on the airline that they want to go on.

[00:38:58.550] - Researcher

OK. Alright. Well, thank you so much for agreeing to partake in this interview.

[00:39:04.700] - Participant 4

Thank you for including me. I hope I hope it was helpful.

[00:39:08.540] - Researcher

It was very, very helpful. Yeah. Gave me a lot of insight, thank you.

[00:39:13.010] - Participant 4

Awesome and I wish you all the best with this research. And I look forward to seeing how it turns out.

[00:39:17.690] - Researcher

Thank you so much. Alright. Take care. Bye

[00:39:21.140] - Participant 4

Bye.

Participant 5:

[00:00:01.110] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:06.090] - Participant 5

I'm good, how are you?

[00:00:07.440] - Researcher

I'm good, I'm good. So can you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:15.490] - Participant 5

Yeah, of course. So my name is Participant 5 and I'm 24 years old. I'm Spanish and I live in Kuwait.

[00:00:22.720] - Researcher

OK. So within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:30.400] - Participant 5

Yes, because I did my Masters in London and my undergrad in Los Angeles, so I would travel at least twice or four times a year.

[00:00:40.470] - Researcher

OK, and was there a particular trip you'd like to mention and how long ago was this trip?

[00:00:59.080] - Participant 5

I'll talk about the one that I went through Los Angeles because I had to go from Los Angeles to New York and then from New York to Kuwait because it was a transit in New York. The domestic flight from Los Angeles to New York was fine, but the international one, which is

Airline X from New York to Kuwait, was like terrible. OK, that was roughly around two years ago.

[00:01:25.880] - Researcher

Alright, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:01:37.790] - Participant 5

It was because I was a student, I was doing my undergrad two years ago, was actually my last year, two years ago, graduated, went to London for my Masters and then I came back to Kuwait.

[00:01:46.720] - Researcher

Alright. OK, and what travel class did you book?

[00:01:53.910] - Participant 5

First class.

[00:02:02.940] - Researcher

Alright. Could you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:02:07.710] - Participant 5

It's because my dad worked, he was an engineer there, so it's kind of like the easiest way, I guess, to book flights back and forth because I would get discounts.

[00:02:30.480] - Researcher

OK, could you please describe the booking process in great detail? Like, did you have to book online or through other channels?

[00:02:40.130] - Participant 5

I would usually talk to my dad and he would personally book them for me, he would book the ticket itself online. And then my dad would go there to confirm the booking and would print the tickets for me. And then I would be sent a confirmation number so I can have it on on an app. Or through my email, and then when I go there, it's basically my boarding pass, but I was also required to print it. Which a lot of airlines you don't need to because it can just be through the phone. Yeah, but with Airline X, that one incident that I'm talking about right now, they asked for a printed paper. And if I didn't have the paper, basically I didn't have a ticket, which didn't make sense because I had the confirmation on my phone.

[00:03:32.800] - Researcher

Alright. OK, so for this particular trip, did you book the ticket through the website, in person or using a third party?

[00:03:46.340] - Participant 5

Third party, Expedia.

[00:03:53.420] - Researcher

OK, and what do you find more important to you during the booking process?

[00:04:05.380] - Participant 5

Honestly, what's most important to me is just having the information that I need there, because a lot of websites just have a lot of information that is unnecessary. So I guess, how easy it is kind of to just input your information and have what you're looking for easily found. So, like simplicity, or how convenient it is as well, because it's like I'm trying to book, I just want to book it and get it over with quickly rather than spend a very long time trying to book a flight and then, like, the the seats go away and then I won't have a ticket to go home because the odds happened before where they tell you like, oh, there's only four seats quickly and then the websites all of a sudden very slow. So it's just kind of like the convenience of having to input the information.

[00:04:58.910] - Researcher

OK. So for this experience, can you please rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased?

[00:05:20.670] - Participant 5

OK, I would say like a two.

Alright. OK, so moving on to the day of travel, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

[00:05:34.340] - Participant 5

OK, so the day of travel, I packed all my clothes, obviously, and took my bag, went to the airport two hours earlier because they say you have to be there for the international flight, earlier and the flight was delayed for like four hours, I believe, four to five hours when I went to the check in area, they asked me for my boarding pass, my passport and everything which I provided to them, and they had all the documents. But they told me that I needed to have my boarding pass printed and I didn't have it printed. And they said I had no ticket. Even though I had the confirmation number, I had the email, I had everything online. And that was a problem for an hour I had to deal with after they ended up printing the ticket, which was, again, not really necessarily needed because they just ended up throwing that paper away and printing a boarding pass. After that, they took my bags and that's when I checked in and waited by the gate itself for four to five hours because they said it's three hours delayed. We waited three hours and then they were like, it's an hour delayed, et cetera, et cetera, until we waited for like five hours, basically four to five hours.

[00:06:53.660] - Researcher

OK, and backtracking to the check-in experience, did you check-in online and just dropping your bags or fully through the counter?

[00:07:14.370] - Participant 5

I checked in from the check in place itself yeah, not online.

[00:07:18.870] - Researcher

Alright, and what would you say is more important to you during this process?

[00:07:27.720] - Participant 5

The waiting time is very important because they're very slow, Airline X is very, very slow and thing is honestly every single time I've traveled, they never had a pre-check-in, from what I know of because I try to and there's no point of it, I either could not find the online check in or they didn't have an online check in, which could have made the process much easier, sped it up.

[00:07:52.170] - Researcher

Alright. OK. And if you could rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:07:59.280] - Participant 5

I'd give them a three.

Alright, OK, do you find that the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:08:12.280] - Participant 5

Yes, one hundred percent. So there are airports that when you go into, for example, talking about the five hour delay, if there was a five hour delay and the airport itself is pretty at least, you know, or there are things you can do like shops or food or restaurants, you kind of have the time that you have to wait, it would go by faster, you know, you won't feel it as much, but some airports, they don't really have anything that you can do and that you just end up being very bored waiting for five hours, you know. Also, Wi-Fi, that's a very important thing, yeah, because some airports I've been to, they don't have Wi-Fi and that's problematic because, for example, if you travel from one place to another and you wait in the airport, you don't really have Internet on your phone because you're in a different country. So if they don't have Wi-Fi, you don't really have anything to do other than just stare into space, especially if your flight is delayed and you can't even contact your loved ones saying, oh, like, I might be delayed. So they have to wait in the airport in the country you're going to be departing into I mean, arriving to for like five hours worrying about you.

[00:09:35.660] - Researcher

Yeah, yeah, Wi-Fi is very important. Alright, if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

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[00:09:50.290] - Participant 5

The boarding experience is not bad, so I would say probably a four because I usually travel Airline X's first class, so we're the first people to go in. But the thing is, they take forever to board everyone onto the plane. So, again, time being delayed. Yeah, but the boarding itself is not bad, like I'd get in quickly, I put my bag and I just wait. It's not it's not so bad as waiting outside by the gate.

[00:10:22.260] - Researcher

OK, could you please describe your experience like entering the plane. What did you first notice?

[00:10:30.470] - Participant 5

What I first noticed, when I enter the plane and sit down is the hygiene, if the seat I'm sitting in is clean, if the seat itself, does it have any food crumbs or anything from the previous passengers that were sitting there, how the staff interact with you, especially if you're like booking first class, you're expecting a better experience than, you know, if it's business or economy. So it's kind of like how people greet you. What they offer you the entire package.

[00:11:02.310] - Researcher

Yeah, yeah, OK, and could you please describe, like, the entire in-flight experience after being seated, like, were there any incidents that occurred?

[00:11:12.680] - Participant 5

Yes, OK, so basically when I walked in, the staff were very good, the flight attendants were very nice, offered me drinks, something to drink, like water, juice, food if I was hungry, the seats were very clean and everything, but my TV wasn't working, which was annoying. So they had to move me to another seat in first class, which was not very like I did not enjoy that, that annoyed me a little bit because I, like usually to be sitting next to the window and I had to be moved to the middle. So I had no window view.

[00:11:50.060] - Researcher

OK, and during your flight, did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

[00:12:15.990] - Participant 5

Yes, of course, because I'm very scared of turbulence. Also, that same flight, the storage where you put your luggage bag like the carry-on opened when there was turbulence, but it wasn't mine, it was a bit like the two seats behind me, it opened with one of the turbulence. So that was like a bit scary because it seemed like it was unsafe.

[00:12:44.120] - Researcher

Yeah, yeah. And like what's more important during the in-flight experience stage?

[00:13:07.060] - Participant 5

I would say, probably, like I would say the staff, the flight attendants, and actually the flight attendants were very good. So as soon as I pressed the button, they come quickly, whatever, like food, if I'm hungry or if I need something to drink or if I need a blanket, they help very quickly. It was annoying that I was moved from one seat to another. But the thing is, they solved the problem very quickly rather than making me wait and trying to fix it or whatever, they just were like, OK, is that OK for you to move? I was obviously forced to move, but they were very nice about it that it didn't bother me as much. So I would say that how you're treated by the flight attendants is very important. And of course, the way the plane looks is very important. Food is important for me, but then again, usually food on a plane is not is not great generally. So it's not something that I look into as much and I tend to have my snacks with me just in case, like I buy stuff from the airport. But, yeah, like the way the plane looks like I feel like the newer it looks, the prettier it looks, you kind of feel like you're safer in a way rather than an older plane or having the storage area opening up randomly, you know what I mean? Not locking properly. So, yeah.

[00:14:28.560] - Researcher

Alright. OK, can you please rate the in-flight experience out of five?

[00:14:36.810] - Participant 5

I would say four, I'll give it a four, because the only two things that were bad were the ones I discussed, the opening of the storage and the moving. But other than that, everything else was perfect, like it was fine.

[00:14:53.370] - Researcher

Alright, and could you please describe the process after landing? Were there any incidents that occurred?

[00:15:02.970] - Participant 5

There were no incidents, the crew members were actually very nice said, I'm glad you guys are home safe, very friendly smiles on their faces the entire time. So they are very friendly, very nice. They even offered to bring down my luggage, my carry on, sorry, so the whole thing was fine, but the waiting was annoying because when they land, they take forever to park the plane, I guess, to get to the terminal. So you have to wait for like a very long time. And then even after they stop the plane, we had to wait a long time for them, for us to leave the plane.

[00:16:00.480] - Researcher

OK. Alright, and like after passing the security border and everything, did you wait a long time to receive your luggage?

[00:16:10.900] - Participant 5

Yes, yes, a very long time, and that's the problem with Airline X everywhere, and everyone knows that as well. That's honestly one of the main reasons why people don't go on the airline, because they also take a very, very long time for your bag to come out. And let's say,

for instance, you're a first class passenger. You'd be the first person out of the plane. So you

go and wait for it literally over an hour for the the bags to come out. And generally speaking,

if if you're first class or business class, your bags are the first to come out before economy,

yet a lot of people that were sitting in economy got their bags and left the airport before I did.

And that was problematic because I should have, like you pay money for kind of having an

easier and smoother flight and experience. But that didn't happen. That wasn't the case.

[00:17:06.770] - Researcher

OK, and like if you could rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give

them?

[00:17:13.930] - Participant 5

Probably a two.

[00:17:17.570] - Researcher

OK, OK, so if you would rate this entire experience with Airline X, what would you give

them out five?

[00:17:28.050] - Participant 5

Two, because the waiting was very bad. Yes, the staff and the crew are very friendly and nice

and the plane was not bad. But it's just like you have to wait so long. You expect if you're

going to if you're going to book a flight on Airline X, it's always going to be delayed.

Everything's going to be delayed. The waiting time is very long. And considering the fact that you're going to take a 14 hour flight from New York to Kuwait, you don't want to wait another six hours to get delayed and another two hours for your bags to come out. You know what I mean?

[00:17:59.890] - Researcher

Yeah, yeah. OK, so do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience?

[00:18:12.360] - Participant 5

No, I wouldn't want to travel in Airline X unless I'm forced to travel in Airline X because the thing is, is a lot of other planes don't take you to certain areas. So, for example, if I'm going to if I'm going to book a flight from New York to Kuwait, if I would look into other flights, there would be a lot of transits and stops. So I would try to avoid that by going on Airline X because it's a direct flight and that's why I'm forced to take it. But if it was if there were any other planes that would directly take me there without any transits, I would take them in a heartbeat without having to even to think about going on Airline X.

[00:18:54.510] - Researcher

Alright, so, like, how has this particular experience influenced your attitude towards them?

[00:19:01.800] - Participant 5

It's like it's negatively influenced it, because every time I've been on Airline X it's just it's the same process again and again and again. And even if they've had newer planes or they got, they would offer you new features and they would say, oh, that you can skip the line or by paying this much more by doing this. It's still you still end up waiting. So it's kind of like a lot of false promises that they that they give you. And it's just it leads to disappointment every time.

[00:19:31.700] - Researcher

Yeah, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase a ticket on Airline X even after your experience?

[00:19:45.300] - Participant 5

I would say yes, actually, because I haven't traveled in a while. So if a friend of mine or a relative tells me that they've experienced it recently and it's so much better and that the waiting time is has decreased, then I would consider going again and trying it out.

[00:20:09.900] - Researcher

Alright, thank you so much for the interview. Thank you for sharing your experience. This has been great.

[00:20:20.640] - Participant 5

You're more than welcome, thank you.

Participant 6:

[00:00:01.110] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:02.830] - Participant 6

I am well, how are you?

[00:00:04.320] - Researcher

I'm good, I'm good. Thank you for asking. Could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:09.530] - Participant 6

Yes, my name is Participant 6, I'm 38 years old and I'm American.

[00:00:016.220] - Researcher

OK. So within the last three years, have you experienced any trip with an airline?

[00:00:21.040] - Participant 6

Yes, I have, two years ago.

[00:00:22.810] - Researcher

OK, which airline was this?

[00:00:29.940] - Participant 6

Airline X.

[00:00:30.840] - Researcher

OK. Could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:00:35.930] - Participant 6

It was a vacation, but also I was attending one of my best friend's weddings at the time.

[00:00:48.950] - Researcher

Alright, what travel class was booked?

[00:00:50.210] - Participant 6

It was it was business.

[00:00:51.980] - Researcher

Business. Alright. So could you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to

travel?

[00:00:59.690] - Participant 6

To be honest, it was just the time, convenience. I don't really have a preference when it

comes to airlines.

[00:01:07.730] - Researcher

OK. Alright. Could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:01:16.010] - Participant 6

Yeah, I booked through a travel agency here in Kuwait and was actually a very easy process

because the travel agency really facilitates everything that you need because it was a

connected flight. So they had to get the timing right and everything. And yeah, it was it was

just a very smooth operation.

[00:01:44.540] - Researcher

OK, so what do you feel is more important to you during this process?

I guess its the easiness of it, how long I'd have to wait in line and the process.

OK. Alright. So could you please rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased?

I guess I guess it would be a four.

All right. So moving on to the day of travel. Could you please describe that day in great detail?

Well, OK, so, it was a connected flight, so we we left Kuwait around 4:00 a.m.Then there was the stop first in the U.K., I'm not sure what the name of the airport is, I'm sorry, but we stop there first and then basically this is when the situation occurred. It was raining outside, and so I I was I was already a little concerned about whether or not our flight would be

canceled or not, because I noticed that a lot of flights were, but everything seemed to be going in order and basically that that flight had to continue, it was fine, but I noticed that the flight attendants were getting a little. What's the word I can use here a little? A little defensive, if that if that can be used here, I don't know why, but because I'm like I'm always very nice to like workers and stuff like that. So I I was surprised at the reaction I would get a simple request, OK, and so by the time we reached our first the second stop in the States, we it was in New York and I noticed that the weather there was also really horrible, like it was really bad. So like the same concerns obviously arose. So I was like, hey, are there going to be any problems? Because I really need to get to my car to get to my destination in time. I have a wedding to attend and that type of stuff. And I was, as soon as I tried to voice my concerns regarding the flights, I was asked to sit back down. And I was like. I was very taken aback by the reaction I got from the flight attendant, I was like, I was only asking you a question you didn't need to, like, raise your voice at me for asking a question. She's like and she said basically something in the lines of, if you had waited, you would have gotten the answers you needed without asking those questions. But as a passenger, how was I supposed to know that? Anyway, we sit down. I still didn't get any answers. Keep in mind. And like a good half an hour after the flight was supposed to leave, I stood up again. And the same flight attendant was like, you know what? Just go check with the with the with the the actual desk? Like they were because they were allowing people to leave the plane and I was like, OK, this isn't something that usually happens, but I'll go check with the desk. I went to check with the desk and they assured me that everything was going to be fine and that I should go back into the plane. I was like, OK, no problem, I'll go back. I went back, sat down waited for another two hours and then, as as predicted, the flight was cancelled. I was like, you could have just saved me time that I had to wait, like all that I had to wait almost three and a half hours to get a response that I already knew and that three and a half hours could have been used to

actually provide me with a second plan, which I ended up doing obviously. But the flight attendant's response to me was just so rude and so like out of the blue that it just came as a shock to me that I'm just it's not like I kept nagging about the questions or something like that. And nor was I disrespectful by any means. I was very pleasant to the lady and I, I made sure she wasn't busy when I called her. But yeah, I ended up taking like because the weather was so horrible, like all the apparently all the flights at the airport were canceled at that day. And so I ended up taking like renting a car and driving for almost 12 hours to get to my destination. So, yeah, that wasn't really the best experience I've had with the flight attendant. I mean, I'm I'm omitting details where she basically yelled at me to sit down. As I was trying to ask a question, but you know this, I've never had such an experience with the air with an airline before, so this is very shocking to me.

[00:07:52.720] - Researcher

Wow, alright. So let's backtrack for bit to the check-in experience, could you please describe the check-in process?

[00:08:08.620] - Participant 6

Well, I went to the counter and, keep in mind that I make a point to show up at least an hour before the flight because I find online checking, it's kind of difficult for me to I don't know, I've tried it once before and because I had luggage on me that day, I was like, no, let me actually go and check-in in person.

[00:08:30.730] - Researcher

And what's more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:08:39.790] - Participant 6

I guess I guess I would say the waiting time and how the employee interacts with you, actually, because the waiting time can be tedious, obviously. But when the employee is very welcoming and pleasant, it kind of, you know, buffers whatever inconvenience that you might have been facing while, you know.

[00:09:03.850] - Researcher

Alright. So if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:09:10.480] - Participant 6

The Check-in experience wasn't bad at all. I arrived pretty early, so I was I was at the front of the line almost entirely. So I'd say a five out of five.

[00:09:23.650] - Researcher

OK, and do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:09:29.460] - Participant 6

Oh. I say yes, because, again, I show up a little earlier to the flight, so I end up eating a lot like at least an hour of my time is spent just waiting at the airport. So if the airport doesn't

have the facilities that I need, like a cafe or restaurant or something like that, that is, you know, designed for all types of consumption. Yeah, it can be a little annoying to just wait to not do anything, you know.

[00:10:06.140] - Researcher

Yeah, and like how was the boarding process for you?

[00:10:14.350] - Participant 6

The boarding process was was fairly standard, I'd say it wasn't too slow and too fast. It's fine if if you were going to ask me to rate it, I probably give it a three because it wasn't anything like bad or great, it was like mediocre.

[00:10:35.190] - Researcher

OK, alright. So could you please describe your experience entering the plane?

[00:10:46.340] - Participant 6

Well, I guess, there were people standing in the way, and like, for me, I don't pay too much attention to my surroundings when it comes to yeah, I, I enter and I try to just go to my way and like, put my luggage and stuff like that and I'd be done with, you know. But again, for this flight, there was a baby crying which was a huge inconvenience.

[00:11:30.000] - Researcher

Yeah, and what do you feel is most important to you during your in-flight experience?

[00:11:42.270] - Participant 6

I say many things factor in my experience, you'd expect flight attendants to be friendly. And, you know, like at the bare minimum not be rude to you. Yeah. So that is one, and obviously, that how comfortable my chair is on the flight because again, it's a flight to the states from Kuwait. And so it's it's a very long flight. So I want to make sure I'm at least comfortable, you know, so hence me booking business.

[00:12:19.550] - Researcher

Alright. Did you experience, like, a smooth ride or maybe there was turbulence and does that usually impact your experience?

[00:12:25.160] - Participant 6

There was a bit of turbulence at the start because like at the start of the second flight, which was from the UK to New York, there was a bit of turbulence because of the weather. But like mostly once we got out of the region, it was fine, and also, nobody likes for the airplane to be shaky, so it does have an impact.

[00:13:03.140] - Researcher

OK, and how would you rate the in-flight experience out of five?

[00:13:10.940] - Participant 6

Well, the thing is my flight experience, like from Kuwait to the U.K. was fine, was perfectly fine. From the U.K. to the US, that's where the problems kind of started. Yeah, like from Kuwait to the U.K., I'd say a solid four and then from the U.K. to like New York, it was it was very stressful because I didn't get the answers I needed, even though I was promised I'd get the answers and stuff like that. So I'd say a one for that trip.

[00:14:02.830] - Researcher

Alright. Could you please describe the process after landing in great detail?

[00:14:13.530] - Participant 6

I mean, yeah, I have received a farewell greeting, but it's just I was very I was very distracted by everything that was happening. I had headphones on as I was leaving, you know, trying to make, like, call my friends and see if their flights have been canceled or something like that. So I didn't really pay much attention.

[00:14:44.030] - Researcher

OK, so like obviously with your flight being canceled and everything, like, did you wait a long time to receive your baggage or at least received a decent after service?

[00:15:08.920] - Participant 6

Because it was a completely different crew, yes, I did, actually like they were very helpful. They were very you know, they wanted to assist everyone and make sure that everyone, you know, got a place to stay. They were telling us of hotel options if we needed to stay the night, if we needed to drive. They were recommending agencies that were available to us. So they were actually very helpful in the process. I received my luggage, I'd say within an hour, I mean I didn't appreciate the airline making me wait, but then again, their service was nice.

[00:15:43.980] - Researcher

Yeah. Alright, so if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you them?

[00:15:54.190] - Participant 6

I'd say a solid four. Obviously, it's not a great experience to have to figure out what to do with everything, but they did try very hard to make it as accommodating as possible.

[00:16:11.530] - Researcher

Alright. So if you would rate your entire experience with Airline X out of five, what would you give them?

[00:16:22.630] - Participant 6

That particular experience would be a two out of five, based on the based on the unpleasant interactions with the flight attendant, to be honest.

[00:16:36.280] - Researcher

Alright, so do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience?

[00:16:42.670] - Participant 6

I mean, again, I really think it was it was a bad experience with that one flight attendant, so I wouldn't really judge an entire airline based on that. So I'd say, yeah, sure.

[00:17:00.250] - Researcher

OK, and how has this experience influence your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:17:06.970] - Participant 6

Well, I tell the story of that flight attendant being rude to me on occasion, so, yeah, it was I wouldn't say it impacted it greatly, but I am a little more apprehensive when it comes to asking flight attendants for things because, you know, as a person with anxiety and stuff like that, a lot of it really takes a toll on you when something like that happens out of the blue. So I like, I wouldn't necessarily be like, oh, the airline itself is bad, so I'm not going to use it. It's just now I'm very cautious in terms of speaking up overall on flights because of that, it's just a very stress and anxiety thing for me.

[00:18:16.280] - Researcher

Wow, alright. So do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase another ticket with Airline X even after your experience?

[00:18:28.570] - Participant 6

I'd say yes, only because, you know, if they found a flight that was the most time appropriate, that time is probably the main factor here. So if the ticket or the flight was at the most perfect time, I would be persuaded to purchase it. Yes.

[00:18:52.650] - Researcher

Alright. Well, thank you so much for your time and thank you for agreeing to the interview.

[00:19:00.910] - Participant 6

It's no problem at all, thank you.

[00:19:02.090] - Researcher

Bye.

[00:19:03.290] - Participant 6

Bye.

Participant 7:

[00:00:01.360] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:03.550] - Participant 7

Hello. Hi.

[00:00:05.530] - Researcher

Could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:09.600] - Participant 7

My name is Participant 7. I'm 33 years old.

[00:00:16.050] - Researcher

OK. Within the last three years, have you experienced any trip with an airline?

[00:00:25.020] - Participant 7

Yes, Airline X.

[00:00:29.970] - Researcher

Alright. How long ago was this trip?

[00:00:34.940] - Participant 7

It was 2019.

[00:00:40.920] - Researcher

OK. Alright, could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:00:47.480] - Participant 7

I went to Hong Kong for a vacation trip. And then I tried to book a way back to Kuwait with that airline, economy, and actually, the customer service wasn't very friendly, wasn't very clear. They didn't know how to communicate. Maybe it's a language barrier. Plus they were like Chinese. So their English wasn't that perfectly, understandable, and they weren't understanding me, too, and there is something wrong with the visa, sorry, because supposedly I have to pass through Hong Kong, Thailand, it wasn't a direct flight to Kuwait. I'm supposed to go to Thailand, and from Thailand, I take another airline. So they didn't want me to go to Thailand without a visa. But I was explaining to them, I do have a visa, I do have it. But the problem is I'm not going to enter the country. I'm just going to be in the airport. So I don't need the visa for that moment. But they thought that I need a visa. So we had this argument

for like a long hour and I had to call my embassy and I had to explain and everything. And they were delaying a lot of time. And they made me they made me book the ticket, which it was expensive, to be honest. And then when I went to the airport, they refused me imagine like the airport, the airline booked me. And then when I went to the airport, the check the counter refused me. So it was a. It was well, it was a long day just because we didn't really know the rules and didn't know what to do and it was miscommunication and I was explaining to them, I'm not going to enter Thailand. I'm going to be like a transit there. So I don't need the visa, it was like a mess.

[00:03:05.630] - Researcher

Ok, alright, so could you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:03:10.900] - Participant 7

It was the only airline that can take me and drop me to Thailand because Airline Y was fully booked and I was on the waiting list because my company and Airline Y had an arrangement together that I can take a free way back ticket. But when you go there, you have to, there's a waiting list. So I was like rather than me waiting because I'm not sure, because at that day at night, I need to go back to Kuwait with another airline, which is Airline Z and then they said that we have waiting lists and we're not sure that if you're going to hop into the airplane, but you're going to wait today or tomorrow. I can't do it tomorrow because I have the other airline, which is today. I was worried and I spoke with the Airline X and they were a mess. They want me to call my embassy. They want me to check I don't know with the airport, I did all of this, by the way, and each each end of the part of other person, they don't understand what they want. They don't understand what to do. The only thing in their head was the visa

part, and I'm trying to explain, I'm just a transit. I'm not going to enter the country. Why are you so focused on the visa? So, yeah. And, all of this happened in Hong Kong, everything happened in Hong Kong. On the phone, I was calling them, trying to arrange a flight way back and we're trying. I was like me and my friends, actually. I was trying to find a way to fix my ticket and they didn't want to issue a ticket for me. By the way, they were so worried that I needed a visa. And then they insisted to for me to buy the ticket and then go there and check it out, you know they wasted my money and I'm like, wow. It's like there's no communication with the one who was talking on the phone to customer service and the airport, airport office, both of them. They weren't like, you know, nobody was I think it's the English, they didn't understand me. I didn't understand them. And they were trying their best. But it's like they didn't know exactly the what to do with my situation. And I hope they learned something from my situation that if someone else had the same issue.

[00:05:48.960] - Researcher

OK, I'm sorry that happened to you, so backtracking a little bit, can you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:06:06.180] - Participant 7

Actually, they they asked me to book online. I did book online and that's it actually didn't even look at from their own side. They asked me to do it. I did it. And it was always done. Yes.

[00:06:22.180] - Researcher

OK, like so if you booked it online then could you please describe what you thought about the website or was it like an app?

[00:06:35.010] - Participant 7

Yeah, it was an application. Like I was checking actually, why did I call them? Because I was checking them, you know, like those applications skyscraper or.

[00:06:44.880] - Researcher

Yeah, so a third party app.

[00:06:47.080] - Participant 7

Yeah. I went there and I was looking for flights way back and then one of the options was Airline X. Yeah. So from that point on before I booked, I called them to make sure that what I was doing was right and nobody knew what I wanted from the start. So yeah. And then about Airline Y and I saw there was a vacancy, I called them and I told them I was from this company and in Kuwait blah, blah, blah and you had a partnership with my company and they're like, yeah, there's a waiting list to go back to Thailand. Fifteen seats, and we're not sure, blah, blah, blah. And they didn't even give me a guaranteed answer too because when I went there they were like ten empty seats. Why, why did you have to to treat me that way and then. Yeah.

[00:07:45.660] - Researcher

Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

[00:07:56.880] - Participant 7

The people who you're talking to to try to find an answer or try to find a solution for your problem, like you feel like most of the people are not experienced, experienced enough you know, and especially I had an incident a long, long time ago, which is like 2017 or 16. It wasn't that long, 16 or 17 with Italy, I had an entry visa. I didn't know it was only one entry. I didn't know and the counters and everybody else didn't even tell me it. By the way, it's one entry because I booked Serbia later on and I went out of the country of Italy. So I decided to come back because I booked an airline. And I have a problem with booking to get back to Italy, to go back to Kuwait. They were like, Serbia, they're like, I'm sorry, you can't go back to Italy because it's only one entry. So I'm like, what? So I can't go back there like, no, you entered already. We're coming. I was like, why? No one told me that. Oh, my God. Maybe it's my fault that time. But I was like, OK, before I booked the way back. Why would you want to? Because they check all my information. Why no one told me that way back you can't come like way back to Italy. You need a need you need a direct going way back from that country. The last destination I'm going to know. But that's my fault, maybe, but it would be nice if someone was like, just pinpoint, pinpoint this kind of, yeah.

[00:09:26.550] - Researcher

Yeah, OK, so if you can please rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

[00:09:48.792] - Participant 7

I would give them two. Because, imagine they were insisting me to book online and because they don't want to take the full responsibility if they book from their own, if a one employee book it from his own computer they wanted wanted to blame it on me, he's the one that booked it so it's his fault. And I was like telling them I was telling the counter in the airport, that your customer service was telling me to book. And I was asking her I was telling her about the problem I was facing. And then the one in the airport didn't want to issue my ticket, saying that you need a visa for the country. And imagine I went to Airline Y later on because Airline Y saw my other ticket that I'm going back to Kuwait, they know that I'm not going to go out of of the airport. If Airline Y and their country itself, made me go back with them. Why did Hong Kong refused my issued ticket with them, the one I paid? It's like they were playing, like they didn't care. I don't know. They just make me hate them.

[00:11:29.550] - Researcher

Wow, OK, alright. So could you please describe the check-in process?

[00:11:37.170] - Participant 7

The check-in was ok. I mean, um so like for me, I usually, like if I went to the airport early, I check check in there. If I was a little bit late thinking I'm going to be late, I check check it online. Sometimes when I go there, I don't know how to use those machines and the line was very long.

[00:11:59.860] - Researcher

Yeah, and what's more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:12:09.800] - Participant 7

The waiting time. I mean, for the waiting time, it's not that bad because you know that they need to finish this line, to close them, to close the flight, you know, to finish the line if it's too long, they're going to be late. So they need to finish us. But the counter, the people there, ugh they're weird because of the way of how they speak to you. Maybe it depends on your nationality. Hong Kong, they were so rude. I don't know. I don't know if it's happened to anybody else but with them. Yeah.

[00:12:47.440] - Researcher

OK, and if you could please rate your check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:12:53.640] - Participant 7

Three. They weren't that bad, I'll give them like three middle. I wasn't that happy.

[00:13:06.120] - Researcher

OK, and did the airport itself have an impact on your experience?

[00:13:11.030] - Participant 7

Actually, the airport is really nice, but even though it's so nice, the airport, that small experience with that counter, with that, you know, specific people make me hate, like it made me feel like I didn't want to explore the airport. You know, I stayed in this one chair with my stuff, hating myself and want to go anywhere else, because Hong Kong refused me to, I had to beg them and pretend that my life is going to be over if I don't go back now, today, you know, and they're like, yeah, actually, and then he called me the manager for Airline Y, telling me that there is space. And then I figured out there's 10 space going back empty. Why did he make me feel like why he made me feel like I can't go back. And and then went I booked to another airline. Because when I called them on the phone, they were like, oh, you're going to be in waiting list, maybe today, maybe tomorrow, we're full. It's something it was a it was like some celebration or something they had like on April. I don't know what maybe New Chinese New Year's. I have no idea what was it. But they said it is going to be busy people going back or something. I'm like, I don't know.

[00:14:46.360] - Researcher

OK, alright, and so how was the boarding process?

[00:14:57.600] - Participant 7

Oh, I was rushing because they called me the last minute, they're like, OK, you can board. So I was running and, you know, how big is the airport? I was run rushing to to the to the gate like crazy. I had to check in so fast and run and oh my God, I have to go through the immigration, then I had to go into the custom and it was really long and I was on my toes, like the whole time thinking, oh my God, I hope they don't close and be like, oh, you know, I

had to do it so fast. When you're at the checkpoints, I was thinking of everything so fast and throwing all my liquid and yeah let's go put this. I was rushing.

[00:16:07.790] - Researcher

Yeah. OK, so if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:16:17.290] - Participant 7

Three.

[00:16:18.900] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so can you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what did you first notice?

[00:16:27.900] - Participant 7

I first try to notice whether the plane is new or old.

[00:16:30.620] - Researcher

OK. Alright, could you please describe the entire in-flight experience after being seated?

[00:16:38.400] - Participant 7

Well, because I was the last seat, they gave me the last seat and then I there was there was no much option, by the way. And way back from Hong Kong to Thailand, there was there were Arab passengers and Muslims. So they had only two options, chicken or pork and the chicken and the pork by the time like when he come to me, when he came to me, that guy, there was no option, by the way. He had only pork and I told him I can't eat pork and he's like, it's OK. He gave me a bread. I'm like, wow. And I know in those airlines you have backup food for vegetarian people. Imagine they have backup food for vegetarian people. And I can eat vegetarian too. But he didn't offer me to give me a vegetarian food. He just gave me a bread. But, you know, I had I had a long day that day, so I was like calming myself down. I mean, I was like, it's just food, you know, I'm not going to be that mad. I was I was like thinking, I'm going to go to Thailand airport, I'm going to eat something there, cool. I did, actually. So that's why I was like, it's OK. It's OK. Just a few hours. Just only one hour. Forty five minutes from Hong Kong to Thailand. I'm like, it's cool. It's cool. And this guy, I saw him coming asking the flight attendant, please, do you have fish because I don't eat pork, and then he's like, no we don't have. I'm like, why are they so rude, just you do have backup food for vegetarian people or vegan, just heat it up and give it to him and ask him if he wants vegetarian, because we will eat vegetarian, too. It's not a big deal. But you don't know the reason why they didn't offer it to us.

[00:18:19.820] - Researcher

Yeah, yeah. OK, so like what is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:18:33.230] - Participant 7

Everything, everything. Because when you have bad experience and the ground staff and the airport itself, at least when you go inside the airplane, you need something to lift you up, just like, you know, a better service, something that would make me feel for me to forget what happened to me at the airport, you know, but it just added up, you know, from the airport to the airline to the cabin crew. So I was like, it's a good thing I was calm. You know, some some people will just flip and be like, there's no food, no nothing, you know? You know what I mean? I'm so tired. I was I was, they're going to explode, but for me, I was like, holding on to the point I'm going to go to Thailand Airport. I'm going to have Thai food. I'm going to be happy.

[00:19:22.340] - Researcher

OK, and did you like experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence?

[00:19:30.450] - Participant 7

No turbelance, it was only one hour and forty forty five minutes or 40 minutes, it was like a smooth, fast flight.

[00:19:36.280] - Researcher

Does turbulence usually have an impact on your experience?

[00:19:46.810] - Participant 7

Turbulence. Yeah, it happens everywhere, like when I travel to Nepal, I experienced some turbulence, I think, because the weather from Middle East going to Asia, the the air has something to do with it changes something. Yeah, I did experience some turbulence, but they were fine. Not that bad. Not that bad.

[00:20:16.600] - Researcher

Ok, so if you would kindy rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:20:21.290] - Participant 7

Three.

[00:20:26.690] - Researcher

OK, so moving on to the landing, can you please describe the landing process? Were there any incidents that occurred?

[00:20:36.740] - Participant 7

Umm, the crew members were nice, actually. They were nice. Look, the crew, they were nice, but they didn't have another option to help. Like, if the person was vegan or the person was vegetarian, they would be like, oh, my God, oh, my God. Yeah, sure. You know, it's like they would do their best to feed that guy because he's vegan, a vegetarian. But when a Muslim guy told you that he doesn't eat pork and the chicken option finished and we were the

last people on the plane. I didn't complain, but that guy in front of me, he complained. He said, if you have fish, he said no. If it was me, I would offer him a vegetarian option. If he says yes, I'll give it to him. If he says no, then it's OK. I did my best, you know what I mean? But there is no yeah. I just, they didn't want to do, they didn't want to go far enough, they just went far and they stopped there. So for like the landing process, I'll give them three.

[00:21:41.280] - Researcher

OK. Alright, did you wait a long time to receive your luggage?

[00:21:49.170] - Participant 7

No, no, it wasn't long. The airport was really long. When I when I have to go somewhere to the other point, it took me really. Yeah. To walk and to reach the other gate. It was really long.

[00:22:02.640] - Researcher

OK. Alright. So could you please rate your entire experience with Airline X with five being very pleased and one being not pleased?

[00:22:13.230] - Participant 7

Two, because Hong Kong was horrible to me.

[00:22:19.820] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience?

[00:22:28.530] - Participant 7

No, I wouldn't take like from my side, I'll take an Arab airline, it's easier for me to communicate with them, easier for me, easier for them to understand me. You know, even English airlines I wouldn't take with them because they wouldn't have the same communication between me to them. Or maybe they will, they will, because not all of them, but Asian. It's like if you don't speak the language, Chinese language with them, like the Hong Kong, I mean, or Thai, then they don't take you this like seriously to their heart. You know, it's like it's always different kind of a treat treatment from that person who has the same language or same nationality with another one, with the other person, you know. Yeah, I will take with, you know, any other Arab airline.

[00:23:25.180] - Researcher

OK, like, how has this experience influence your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:23:32.280] - Participant 7

Disappointed, like I thought, Hong Kong is a modern country with at least at least those kind of airlines, they would have like a group of those kind of people who are Arabs or who are from each country you know, I mean, like from each country you have this kind of people

that can deal with us and by the way, way back from Hong Kong, there were a lot of Arabs, businessmen. Doing their businesses in Hong Kong. So I was like. And by the way, I had another experience going in Hong Kong, but that one that's different, that's different, that's about the visa and stuff. But I have a problem with the visa. Hong Kong doesn't require my country for a visa. So when I entered, you have to give me this interrogation for one hour. Oh, my God.

[00:24:33.910] - Researcher

OK, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase with Airline X even after your experience?

[00:24:52.570] - Participant 7

I would ask a lot of questions and I'll be like, if it's one way, because that time I had to go transit. They didn't let me go through transit because they thought that Thailand needed visa and they thought that I'm going to go out of Thailand, I'm going to cruise around, but if it's direct, I'm not going to go anywhere just I'm going to go directly to Hong Kong. Maybe. Maybe why not? I may give them a chance if my family were with me, I wouldn't go alone. I wouldn't go alone again. No, no, no, no, no. If my family were with me, OK, I can blame somebody.

[00:25:40.520] - Researcher

Alright. OK, thank you so much for the interview. You've been a great help.

[00:25:47.850] - Participant 7

Thank you, bye.

[00:25:49.050] - Researcher

Bye.

Participant 8:

[00:00:00.700] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:02.770] - Participant 8

Hi, I'm good, how are you?

[00:00:04.810] - Researcher

I'm good. I'm good. Can you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:09.240] - Participant 8

My name is Participant 8. I'm twenty seven years old.

[00:00:15.100] - Researcher

Awesome alright. So within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:23.350] - Participant 8

Yes. I experienced a trip with Airline X, it was back in 2019 and I went with my friends to meet my other friends in London and we were all coming back to Kuwait together, we were a group of fourteen people.

[00:00:35.150] - Researcher

Wow, OK, and what travel class did you book?

[00:00:40.800] - Participant 8

Economy.

[00:00:43.800] - Researcher

OK, and what made you choose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:00:49.710] - Participant 8

They had very convenient timing to be honest and also it's a reputable airline.

[00:00:58.940] - Researcher

Alright, could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:01:03.730] - Participant 8

Well, I booked online using the airline's application and I remember the app always crashing or lagging, I don't know if it was my internet, but it was just so annoying.

[00:01:20.770] - Researcher

OK, and what do you find more important to you during the booking process?

[00:01:26.129] - Participant 8

Their ease of use for sure, I don't want for the app to be complicated and lag all the time, it's like fix everything and make me book my ticket quickly please.

[00:01:49.202] - Researcher

No for sure, so for the booking experience, what would you rate Airline X out five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased?

[00:01:58.209] - Participant 8

I would say a three.

[00:02:05.030] - Researcher

Alright. OK, so could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

[00:02:11.130] - Participant 8

The experience happened on the way back, so it wasn't it wasn't on the way going, it was on the way back, it was supposed to be a direct flight from London to Kuwait. And what happened was that during the flight, there was a weather problem. So we had to make a stop in Germany. And the airline caused us to panic during the flight. They didn't tell us about the weather problem in a calm way or tell us that we're landing in a calm way. Actually everyone on the plane panicked. Do you want me to continue, like, further on when like when we landed and what happened after?

[00:03:00.820] - Researcher

Yeah. So let's just let's backtrack just a little bit, how was the check-in process for that day?

[00:03:06.040] - Participant 8

The check in process was really good. We checked in through the counter, everything was good then.

[00:03:14.037] - Researcher

Alright, and what do you think is more important to you during the check-in experience?

[00:03:21.580] - Participant 8

Um, just the easiness of it to be honest, like how friendly the staff are, you know.

[00:03:28.640] - Researcher

Alright. OK, so for the check-in experience, could you please rate them out five?

[00:03:34.640] - Participant 8

The check-in experience was a five.

[00:03:38.130] - Researcher

Alright. So do you think the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:03:42.970] - Participant 8

Yes it definitely does, their airport was good. It was really nice, it had like a lot of coffee shops to sit in and a lot of shops for buying last minute souvenirs, had a good experience at the airport.

[00:04:02.660] - Researcher

OK, and have you waited a long time for your flight? How was the boarding process?

[00:04:08.600] - Participant 8

The boarding process was actually really good, keeping in mind that we were fourteen people, and the fact that they were able to process our papers easily and check-in our bags quickly, it was pretty good.

[00:04:24.900] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:04:29.860] - Participant 8

Five.

[00:04:33.030] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so can you please describe your experience entering the plane, what did you first notice?

[00:04:40.540] - Participant 8

Just the way that the staff members in the plane are welcoming and are able to guide us to our seats easily.

[00:04:51.660] - Researcher

OK, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:04:58.700] - Participant 8

The comfort is important to me, also the flight entertainment is important to me, especially if it's a long flight.

[00:05:09.320] - Researcher

Alright. So were there any incidents that occurred during the flight?

[00:05:15.220] - Participant 8

Yes. So the incident that happened was that we were supposed to have a direct flight from London to Kuwait, OK, and there was a weather problem which made us where we had to

land in Germany because of a storm. And the crew members and the the captain on board made us panic. And they didn't inform us in a calm way. They actually made everyone on the plane panic and the landing was horrible. It was very scary. And ever since that, I have a fear of flying.

[00:05:54.820] - Researcher

Oh my god. I'm so sorry that happened to you. OK, so if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:06:04.340] - Participant 8

Defintely a one, I'd rate them below a zero if I could.

[00:06:11.880] - Researcher

OK, so could you please describe the process after landing? Like what happened when you landed to Germany?

[00:06:17.640] - Participant 8

When we landed in Germany, it was very stressful. We had to wait a very, very, very long time. We didn't know what was happening and we knew later on that we couldn't find us another flight because we were fourteen people and the flights were full to Kuwait, and we couldn't find a plane that would fit all of us. We couldn't get checked into a hotel because none of us had visas for Germany. And so they they told us that we had to stay at the airport

for two whole nights where we slept in the airport, like in the corridors of the airport where they got us like paper beds and thin sheets to sleep on, and they gave us three vouchers a day for meals or or any like we could use those vouchers either for a meal or to, like, buy anything from, like the pharmacy or use the the salon at the airport or any any kind of stores at the airport.

[00:07:27.770] - Researcher

Oh my God. That's horrible.

[00:07:32.050] - Participant 8

It's very horrible, horrible. We had to brush our teeth in the the airport bathroom when we had no change of clothes. We didn't have our luggage. We just had our backpacks. And if someone wanted to buy any kind of like personal care, they had to basically skip a meal and use that voucher for that.

[00:08:03.170] - Researcher

Oh, my God. I'm so sorry that happened to you, OK, so if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

[00:08:14.260] - Participant 8

Definitely a one.

[00:08:16.850] - Researcher

Wow, OK, did you at least, like, make your way back safely to Kuwait?

[00:08:21.260] - Participant 8

Yes, eventually they put us all in a small plane and we went back.

[00:08:27.790] - Researcher

Good, alright, so if you would kindly rate your entire experience with Airline X out of five, what would you give them?

[00:08:32.530] - Participant 8

One. Because even though the boarding experience was good, even though they checked us in so quickly, but after that, everything that happened after that, like, deeply affected all of us. And it was like really traumatic and scary and like really uncomfortable. So based on that whole experience, I'd definitely just rate it as a one.

[00:08:58.510] - Researcher

Wow, so do you do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

[00:09:05.740] - Participant 8

No, never. Not after what happened.

[00:09:09.260] - Researcher

OK, and how has this experience influence your attitude towards them?

[00:09:16.310] - Participant 8

I feel like they're very irresponsible. They didn't think of how fourteen people were sleeping in the corridors of the airport. Like if other there were other people at the airport who had to go into their flights and go on board and we were sleeping in the corridors. The fact that we didn't have our luggage. For for a change of clothes, just all shows you how inexperienced they are and how unprofessional they are, the fact that that they weren't able to get us checked into a hotel or at least anywhere near the airport shows as well, lack of an experience like you never know when you're on a plane what's going to happen. So they should be able to they should have been able to know what to do if something like this would happen, where they'd have an emergency landing to.

[00:10:08.680] - Researcher

That's true, I'm very surprised to be honest.

[00:10:13.100] - Participant 8

Yeah.

[00:10:16.620] - Researcher

Alright, so do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase with Airline X, even after your experience?

[00:10:22.780] - Participant 8

No, definitely not, because as I told you earlier, I now have the fear of flying because of that airline, so I already have that fear. So it's very scary for me to go on other airlines. So I would definitely not go on that one.

[00:10:40.270] - Researcher

Yeah, I can only imagine, OK, that's all the questions I have. Thank you. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed.

[00:10:50.730] - Participant 8

Thank you, it's no problem at all, bye.

Participant 9:

[00:00:01.670] - Researcher

Hello, how are you?

[00:00:03.530] - Participant 9

I'm good, how are you?

Good, good. Could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:09.140] - Participant 9

My name is Participant 9. I'm Sudani Canadian and I live here in Kuwait and I'm a teacher.

[00:00:21.170] - Researcher

OK, so within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:26.100] - Participant 9

Yes, I have, it was a trip with um, what's it called, Airline X and it was back in 2019.

[00:00:39.650] - Researcher

Alright, could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:00:45.450] - Participant 9

Well, it was like I was on my own personal trip, but it I was essentially visiting family.

[00:00:51.810] - Researcher

OK, so did you book economy, business?

[00:00:57.070] - Participant 9

Economy.

[00:00:58.480] - Researcher

Alright, so could you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:01:05.600] - Participant 9

Well, um at that time, um, what was I going to say, oh yes, I was visiting my family and it was really it was actually quite affordable with Airline X so that's why I chose them specifically.

[00:01:30.670] - Researcher

OK, so could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:01:41.280] - Participant 9

OK, so we booked the ticket, my family and I through an agent, through an agent. So yeah, I I'll be honest with you, I definitely do look online when I travel by myself, but when I'm traveling with my family and trying to navigate many, like many destinations or like kind of

like a multi-stop situation or different people leaving at different times of it, making sure we all come back at the same time. I like to do it through an agent just because it's easier to talk to somebody. I'm just very like analog in that way. Like I might be like pretty tech savvy for myself, like when I'm booking my ticket now to go back home, I'll book it online, like I'll go directly through the website and book my plane ticket. But when I'm doing it with my family it's just easier to deal with the travel agent.

[00:02:29.520] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so like what's more important to you during the booking process?

[00:02:46.810] - Participant 9

Um, hold on, um, OK, for me, it's the accessability, that I can call them and at any point to know that a problem will be resolved. So how I connect with that agent there will give me a card or a cell phone number or if they have an email address that they can't check up, that they have follow up with you.

[00:03:04.940] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

[00:03:20.710] - Participant 9

Five, but to be honest, I worked with an agent, so they they're like, perfect. You don't have to wait in line. You just call them they answer right away. You can go into their office. They're always ready to help you.

[00:03:35.680] - Researcher

Awesome. Awesome. Alright, moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

[00:03:53.350] - Participant 9

OK, so let's see, starting from the check-in, I went to the counter, see I never check-in online. I'm definitely that person that goes in. And even though I should, even though I always want a window seat or I always want an aisle seat, I'll be at the desk, be like, what do you mean there's no aisle seat? Because I never do it online. Even though I have everything on my phone, I do everything on my phone and can be easily done, but I still expect it to be done for me at the counter and that's a personal preference.

[00:04:32.320] - Researcher

Alright, so what's more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:04:40.950] - Participant 9

Oh, my, I would say talking to the employees, I like when I go to a counter and they're super helpful. We'll talk about my destinations, where I'm going, and they explain every single

ticket I get. So it's like this will be here. This is your gate number. Then you have to go here. You don't have your gate number, but it will show up. So then you can go to the counter at this airport and they'll get your information. I love that whole process where the things are explained to me. I do prefer human interaction over things than online to know and they like will work with you and put you where you want to be seated and explain all the seats to you.

[00:05:12.520] - Researcher

OK, cool, so if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:05:22.550] - Participant 9

Like a four.

[00:05:24.500] - Researcher

Alright. OK, so does the airport itself have an impact on your experience?

[00:05:32.760] - Participant 9

No, I've traveled to like really s***ty airports before and really amazing airports, so as long as there is an outlet, I can charge my phone with my laptop or that there might be a restaurant I can use. But the most important thing is a clean washroom.

[00:05:48.700] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so, like, have you waited a long time for your flight, like how was the boarding process?

[00:05:56.850] - Participant 9

Oh, yes, so this experience, I did have a really long wait, I think it was over 10 hours or so, but it was we did have to wait and the airline gave us free food. We got a food voucher, so they gave you free food for the airport so like they explained why they were late or it wasn't too late, I think it was just part of because you were stuck at the airport for that long. They give it to you. So I know like when I've traveled with Airline Y because my connection flight out of Kuwait was one way. And then I was only able to take this flight and then my next flight from Jordan to go to Canada was 20 hours and they gave me a free hotel during that wait, so depending, I prefer airlines, at least when when you book directly through the website, that they they give you more accommodation than booking through like third party resources, this is why I like to use travel agents or go directly to their website. So either Airline Z, Airline Y directly on the website, not third party websites, so so you have to do it directly through the website, not online and with Airline Y, they do it. So I remember in the past when I traveled, I got a hotel with my flight that I booked and my friend didn't get a hotel because I booked mine through Airline Y and she booked hers through Skyscanner.

[00:08:09.560] - Researcher

Wow, alright, so if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:08:15.980] - Participant 9

Oh, you know what, I didn't like the boarding experience, and I don't like boarding experiences a lot of the time, because my I think that there are, there are elements of racism sometimes when you board, right, so I think when they see that you are, you might hold a certain passport and I understand it goes with international security, but if they see you that they see your passport and then they see where you're born on your passport, it's always like you are not truly Canadian. So let's go put you through extra security clearance to make sure it's not a fake passport trying to come in to Canada. So I always find when I travel through Middle Eastern countries, I always have to go through an extra security check compared to traveling through European countries because they're so used to multinational people holding different passports.

[00:09:02.810] - Researcher

So you basically experienced racism.

[00:09:06.590] - Participant 9

Yeah, like like microaggressions, like these micro ones where it's like it's very like it's obvious, you know, like especially to someone like me who's I understand I'm a naturalized Canadian.

[00:09:21.450] - Researcher

No, that's horrible. No one should feel like that when they fly, and did that have an impact on your experience?

[00:09:33.150] - Participant 9

No, I I don't blame the airline. I blame because these airports have to hold a certain level of security. Right. They have to make sure because you're dealing with national security, you're dealing with with if something does happen, your country will be blamed for allowing this stuff to happen. I mean sure everyone should have the same amount of security and not like, instead of just like picking and choosing certain people and you would think that where I would have sometimes when I go through customs of certain countries, it'd be like, OK, so who are your what are your parents names? It's like, why do you care who my parents are? Like, I'm a grown woman. You know, but it's like, it's a cultural thing. And I think I experience some of these problems in more third world, not third world countries, but developing countries where I think understanding like certain social policies that we're used to seeing in the West aren't really the same thing that you'd experience, say, in countries like Egypt or Jordan or other Arab countries.

[00:10:48.310] - Researcher

Yeah, you're right. OK, so for this particular boarding experience, what would you give them out of five?

[00:10:59.770] - Participant 9

I think I'll give it a two. I think most of my boarding experiences, I'd give like a two.

[00:11:06.490] - Researcher

Alright, so can you please describe your experience entering the plane? Like, what did you first notice?

[00:11:16.570] - Participant 9

Like if the person is like, hi, how are you?

[00:11:21.760] - Researcher

OK. So like, what's more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:11:43.450] - Participant 9

Sorry hold on, OK so yeah what's more important, oh definitely the seats and how comfortable they are, like for me I don't eat when I fly and I need to have a comfortable travel experience because I'll sleep longer so I don't have to interact with the the crew members.

[00:12:15.010] - Researcher

Alright, so how was the in-flight experience, were there any incidents that occurred during this flight?

[00:12:22.710] - Participant 9

No, the crew members were really friendly, I was traveling with my youngest sister at the time, so they brought us extra blankets. They brought crayons for her. I think they could see that it was my first time traveling with a young child, especially not being a mom, but it's like being a sister. But you have all this responsibility of a whole different person with you. So I think they saw that I was like super overwhelmed, like multiple passports in my bags dealing with a child and, you know. It's good, though. They were considerate.

[00:12:59.130] - Researcher

Alright, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

[00:13:10.020] - Participant 9

No, so the flight experiencehere's when there's turbulence or even children crying on the airplane doesn't faze me. I think it's because I come from such a large family that being on a family airplane and sometimes you go on these trips, you specifically know. So when I fly certain airlines, I know, I'm like, well, this is a family trip, especially when you're you're traveling during summer holidays or traveling back to certain countries or leaving certain countries during certain seasons. You know, they're like family airlines so loud children, children who are like running around on the airplane doesn't faze me. I think I just need to make sure that the seat is comfortable. So yeah, I'm a teacher so I have a high tolerance for annoying.

[00:14:00.990] - Researcher

I'm sure you do. Alright, so if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five?

[00:14:16.220] - Participant 9

Like a four.

[00:14:17.500] - Researcher

Alright, can you please describe the process after landing?

[00:14:26.760] - Participant 9

Yeah, so we received a farwell greeting from the crew members, yeah, there goodbyes is really sweet and they help me collect my stuff. They got my stuff from the overhead compartment and they were good.

[00:14:48.250] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so after landing did you wait a long time to receive your luggage?

[00:15:10.580] - Participant 9

Not really. So, oh my God, OK, so I find that certain airlines, not certain airlines, certain countries struggle with baggage processes. So depending on the airport I'm in, I will understand how long I'll wait for my bags. You know. So, like, if I'm traveling to like kind of

a third world country or like a country that's airport is like I have, one time I waited like over three hours for my bags in Kuwait, you know, flying in from Canada. So it's happened. It happens. But when I fly to Canada, I never have those problems. It's like forty five minutes you're in customs. There's like kiosks to go through the customs. You don't have, like, everything is so smooth, you know. It depends on the country and the management, so the airlines need to be aware that this impacts our overall experience.

[00:16:13.140] - Researcher

Alright, so if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

[00:16:20.760] - Participant 9

A five.

[00:16:23.610] - Researcher

Alright, so if you would kindly rate your entire experience with Airline X out of five, what would you give them?

[00:16:34.000] - Participant 9

I would say, a four.

[00:16:38.050] - Researcher

Yeah, OK. Alright, so do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

[00:16:49.230] - Participant 9

No, so I, I, I fly almost every other, like every year, twice a year minimum, right. I have been flying since the age of 15 to my dad. Every year I've been on an airplane, I've gone through multiple passports and I have no loyalty cards to any airline. Like none, I don't collect points, I can care less. I'm definitely the type of person that's like what is the most affordable ticket? What is like that's how I fly, right. So are there specific airlines I choose? Yes. Do I prefer my experience traveling from Kuwait to London through a direct flight? One hundred percent. I prefer traveling direct flights when traveling to Canada. Yeah, but this summer I'm traveling through this other airline because the tickets only two hundred and fifty quid to go from Kuwait to Canada back. And I've flown before, so it's affordable, it's a good airline, I'm flying through Germany, if I want to stay in Germany for a couple of days, I can. So there's also those options. But those are things I look at. I look at affordability. I look at purchasing a ticket directly through the website. How can I deal with them? Because when I spoke with Airline Z, I know I can call Airline Z directly and be like, I need to move my ticket forward or make it back because they're easy to deal with. Right. I don't like booking multiple airline flights. So when I go on Skyscanner and I booked a flight, I might be going to Canada from Airline A and then hopping on Airline B and then coming back to to London and hopping Airline C back to Kuwait. I hate that. I hate having to change over my bags. I just want one baggage ticket. One thing I don't want, like complications. I'm a simpleton in that sense.

[00:18:48.610] - Researcher

So it's more about convenience for you.

[00:18:53.220] - Participant 9

Yes, I like convenience travel like airlines that are convenient. I like airlines that have great relationships with airports and other carriers. So there are no complications in terms of your baggage.

[00:19:07.650] - Researcher

Alright, so how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards Airline X.

[00:19:18.310] - Participant 9

Actually, if I see a Airline X flight, I won't like one side it, right, like I'd take it again.

[00:19:25.830] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase or choose another airline even after your experience?

[00:19:39.180] - Participant 9

Yeah. I think people like if someone told me, like there's this same flight ticket, but with this airline, we should go on this airline because it's so much better. And are we have access to

the first class lounge based on our credit cards or they give me a reason to change? Yeah. Maybe they're easier to upgrade their upgrade from economy to be cheaper? I might be convinced yeah.

[00:20:10.680] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

[00:20:18.540] - Participant 9

You're welcome, thank you, take care, bye.

[00:20:20.940] - Researcher

Take care, bye.

Participant 10:

[00:00:01.260] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:03.120] - Participant 10

Hi, I'm good, how are you?

[00:00:05.040] - Researcher

Good, good. Could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:09.970] - Participant 10

My name is Participant 10, I'm 27 years old and I work in insurance.

[00:00:21.610] - Researcher

Alright, so within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:27.240] - Participant 10

Yes, the worst airline, it was the worst experience I ever had, Airline X.

[00:00:34.880] - Researcher

OK, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:01:21.840] - Participant 10

Alright, um, hold on a second, OK, alright, sorry, um I was coming back to Kuwait, OK, I was going back and forth to Jordan to study, so I used to travel like three or four times a year. Different areas. So the worst one was Airline X because it's just sometimes I just book a ticket because it's suitable for the time that I need. But most of the time, it's always um, it was just not comfortable at all.

[00:01:53.070] - Researcher

Yeah, and what travel class did you book for this trip?

[00:02:01.280] - Participant 10

Economy. But if I feel like it's too crowded, I book business.

[00:02:05.130] - Researcher

OK, and how long ago was this trip?

[00:02:15.130] - Participant 10

It was 2019.

[00:02:16.540] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so could you please describe why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:02:25.670] - Participant 10

Because of how convenient it is.

[00:02:27.950] - Researcher

OK, alright, so moving on, could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:02:37.840] - Participant 10

Sorry could you please hold on a sec, yeah, so I booked online through their website. It was an easy process.

[00:03:15.570] - Researcher

Alright, so what's more important to you during the booking process?

[00:03:34.440] - Participant 10

How easy the process, I just wanted to book the ticket, but the websites are always a bit messy. It should be a little bit better and updated, and yeah.

[00:04:04.370] - Researcher

Yeah OK, and if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

[00:04:17.010] - Participant 10

Um, like a three.

[00:04:18.180] - Researcher

OK. So moving on, could you please describe the day of travel, starting from check-in process?

[00:04:36.660] - Participant 10

Yes, hold on, OK, so I checked in using the counter. Everything went OK, didn't have to wait a long time, but imagine they changed the gate twice without informing or announcing it properly. Like the flight the plane stayed for a long time waiting for me to get in and the gates were so far away from each other. So I was looking for the gate and then they told me that it's gate. I forgot the number, but it was really far. So I went there and there were people there, and then I noticed that the people actually they looked like they weren't going to Kuwait, like it was weird, so I was asking and they didn't know. So I literally had to go roaming around the airport until I heard my flight and the gate and it was different again. It was just very confusing. but I was like I was literally making sure that I get to the flight because once I missed my flight, you know, with another airline, Airline Y, because I had to

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be there two hours earlier. So I reached an hour and a half and the flight was there but I but they didn't let me in. So I had to book another ticket for like 12 hours. So I had to stay here because it was the airport was really far away from my place, it was from Jordan to Kuwait.

[00:06:46.330] - Researcher

Wow alright, OK, so let's backtrack for a little bit, what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:07:02.350] - Participant 10

Definitely the waiting time and like managing all the crowds. Once it gets crowded, they need more employees. I mean like they really need to manage because it's really crowded like a lot of people are booking through Airline X now because it's cheap and it's always available, but they're not managing properly, even in the flight when they pass food and everything, like there's nothing, like just because they're not in the mood and a lot of fights happen in the flight and it's really loud, it's not comfortable at all, with Airline X.

[00:07:57.460] - Researcher

Yeah, alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:08:03.860] - Participant 10

Two

[00:08:06.330] - Researcher

OK, so does the airport itself have an impact on your experience?

[00:08:15.270] - Participant 10

No, not really, but they should manage and take care of like switching gates and everything and controlling because sometimes the airports are really crowded, so it's really difficult to hear or you don't know exactly where you should be.

[00:08:39.990] - Researcher

Yeah of course, alright so you mentioned your boarding experience, obviously waiting that long and switching the gates. If you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:09:00.420] - Participant 10

One.

[00:09:01.840] - Researcher

Alright, so could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what did you first notice? Were there any incidents that occurred?

[00:09:11.130] - Participant 10

Sorry, hold on, OK, yeah I noticed the design because it's cheap, it looks cheap. And yeah, no incidents occurred.

[00:09:34.230] - Researcher

OK. Alright, and so what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:09:51.490] - Participant 10

Um, what's important to me are the crew and how they treat me, also the design and the comfort of the seats. Yeah, and they really need to manage the crowd because it's always crowded, that's mainly my struggle.

[00:10:08.030] - Researcher

Yeah, OK, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

[00:10:29.300] - Participant 10

Yes, it was crowded, the plane was shaking, it does have an impact because I have a fear of flying.

[00:10:38.400] - Researcher

OK. So if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:10:45.490] - Participant 10

A two.

[00:10:45.490] - Researcher

OK. Alright, could you please describe the process after landing? Were there any incidents that occured?

[00:11:03.270] - Participant 10

It was just really really crowded and it took a lot of time for us to leave the plane, like, people get a lot of packages with them in the flight and the plane. So it's really, really crowded. And we had to wait for like a whole 30 minutes after landing just for us all to get off. Very poor management and handling.

[00:11:38.600] - Researcher

Yeah, some flights take a long time to get passengers off. Alright, did you wait a long time to receive your bags?

[00:11:49.380] - Participant 10

Yes. A very long time, I know they tell you it's not the airline's fault but, yeah, they should coordinate properly with whoever's in charge because the people will blame the airline you know? The airline needs to place proper management everywhere.

[00:12:07.050] - Researcher

Yeah, of course, and if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

[00:12:14.310] - Participant 10

Two.

[00:12:17.260] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so if you would please rate your entire experience with Airline X out of five, what would you give them?

[00:12:25.780] - Participant 10

One sec, OK, so the entire thing? Two.

[00:12:35.950] - Researcher

OK. So do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience?

[00:12:55.930] - Participant 10

Um, no I won't. If I had no other option then I guess I would but in general, no. I just don't feel comfortable. It's always a mess. Like everything should be managed. Everything should be neat. Everything should look comfortable and clean. The design, the crew members and the toilets and the food you know everything should be proper. Sorry one second. Yeah sorry OK, and yeah.

[00:13:49.470] - Researcher

OK. So do you feel like this experience influenced your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:13:55.520] - Participant 10

Yes. For sure. In such a negative way. Hold on one second, I'm so sorry, yeah so I wasn't comfortable at all.

[00:14:13.830] - Researcher

OK, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to purchase with Airline X even after your experience?

[00:14:22.340] - Participant 10

Sorry for the pauses, my dog keeps annoying me, um, back to the question, no they can't, if they all decide to book Airline X, I would go on another airline.

[00:14:34.690] - Researcher

OK. Alright, thank you for your time and the interview.

[00:14:46.570] - Participant 10

It's no problem at all, take care.

[00:14:48.280] - Researcher

Take care, bye.

Participant 11:

[00:00:01.140] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:02.700] - Participant 11

Hey, I'm good, how are you?

[00:00:07.950] - Researcher

Good, thank you, could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:10.400] - Participant 11

Sure, my name is Participant 11, I'm 29 years old, I'm Kuwaiti / American, I work in project

management and in the telecom sector here in Kuwait.

[00:00:26.210] - Researcher

OK, so within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:32.110] - Participant 11

Yes. um, it was Airline X back in.. sorry, 2019.

[00:00:45.110] - Researcher

Alright, could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:00:50.470] - Participant 11

It was for a vacation, for leisure.

[00:00:53.350] - Researcher

Alright, and what travel class did you book?

[00:00:54.030] - Participant 11

Economy.

[00:01:00.490] - Researcher

Alright, could you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:01:06.820] - Participant 11

It was the most convenient because the timings were good and the destination was good for the transit. Like the transit is halfway through the journey. It's not like in the beginning or the end. I like splitting my like my air time between two planes, you know what I mean?

[00:01:26.080] - Researcher

Yeah, OK.

[00:01:27.310] - Participant 11

But mostly it's convenient because it was the timing, they had a lot of timings and the price was really good.

[00:01:38.940] - Researcher

OK, alright, so could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:01:46.030] - Participant 11

Um, well, we booked through the app itself and like, it was pretty standard like compared to other like booking websites was pretty standard, I think, like compared to booking through a travel agent, like they do like I don't have to worry about anything, so it's easier booking through a travel agent, although a lot more expensive, but it was more easier.

[00:02:26.390] - Researcher

OK, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

[00:02:40.620] - Participant 11

The timing. The space, the seats, obviously. Yeah, those are the two main things, like the comfortability of the plane and the timing. It's the perfect time for me to fly and the price, the price does play a huge factor. Like in terms of the app itself I just want it to be very easy and very straightforward and like, something to represent the airlines. Like when I go on it, I know that it's like for Airline X or other airlines or whatever, you know.

[00:03:24.930] - Researcher

OK, and if you could please rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

[00:04:04.110] - Participant 11

Um.. I would say a three, just because I find it easier to book through a travel agent rather than go online and having to deal with like an app or anything online.

[00:04:04.390] - Researcher

Yeah, OK, so moving on to the day of the travel. Could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

[00:04:22.130] - Participant 11

Um, OK, so we entered the airport, we checked in using the counter, but sometimes when I come back to Kuwait, if I want to check-in an extra bag or something, I'd want to do it online because I feel like I have enough time, but usually I go for a counter because it's easier.

[00:04:41.410] - Researcher

OK, and were are there any incidents that occurred during the check-in encounter?

[00:04:56.570] - Participant 11

Um, I would say it was pretty standard like I gave them my passport, they gave me the ticket, she weighted my bags and sent them off. It's pretty easy.

[00:05:05.030] - Researcher

OK, and what's more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:05:12.240] - Participant 11

Hmm.. well I don't really care about like, of course, you can't be rude, you know, but like, I don't care if she interacts with me that much, as long as she's fast you know, and she's she's very efficient. I want her to be done really quick.

[00:05:34.800] - Researcher

OK, and could you please rate the check-in experience out of five?

[00:05:36.970] - Participant 11

Four.

[00:05:39.220] - Researcher

Alright, so, do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:05:44.470] - Participant 11

Yes, of course, because if I'm going to be spending like a few hours there, I want it to be nice, I want it to be, you know, I don't know. I just want I just want to be hanging out in nice airport, you know, just sets the mood for the trip, you know what I mean?

[00:06:10.760] - Researcher

Yeah, alright,and have you waited a long time for your flight? Could you please describe the boarding process?

[00:06:15.650] - Participant 11

It was pretty easy. We went in early because our flight was at three a.m., we just hung around the lounge, had some coffee. Yeah, it was pretty easy. The flight did leave later than expected, I believe so, like maybe 30 minutes after. So we didn't leave on time.

[00:06:37.360] - Researcher

Alright, and if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:06:44.100] - Participant 11

A three, because it was late.

[00:06:45.830] - Researcher

OK, alright, could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what did you first notice?

[00:06:55.420] - Participant 11

Where the exit seats are, the life jackets, seatbelts, no, because I have a big fear of flying. Like I always hope that I would get a seat, like, not way in the back, because when I want to leave the airplane, I want to be the first people to leave. So I usually hope for like seats in the front and, yeah, Like when I go in the plane like I always see who's going to be next to me, like how annoying my neighbors are, if I want the windows or the aisle seat, you know, typical stuff.

[00:07:28.780] - Researcher

Yeah. OK, and like, what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:07:42.820] - Participant 11

Like the food, the meals obviously and also the flight attendants interaction, they have to be sweet like and most of them really are and yeah, I also care about the entertainment system like on a plane, I really care about that, even though that sometimes I like download a bunch of stuff on my phone, like it's nice to have the option to see what kind of entertainment the plane offers, you know.

[00:08:16.700] - Researcher

Alright, and like, did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence? Also, does that have an impact on your experience?

[00:08:21.730] - Participant 11

Obviously, there was turbulence because I was on the plane, but I can't blame them. I can't blame it on the plane. That's just how it goes. I like hate it when there's turbulence on a plane because it just ruins my mood and anxiety. But I don't really blame the plane. You know, it's like what else can they do with it, you know, turn around and go on a different route, you know what I mean, but it does really like turbulence really like ruins my experience, like I really do get scared and it's a legit phobia.

[00:09:17.430] - Researcher

Yeah, I bet. Alright, so if you would please rate the in-flight experience out of five?

[00:09:23.220] - Participant 11

Four, because I slept the entire way because it was really late.

[00:09:35.250] - Researcher

OK. Alright, could you please describe the process after landing? Like, were there any incidents that have happened?

[00:10:06.390] - Participant 11

Yes, I lost my bag, imagine I had to wait for like an hour and a half waiting for my bag. And then I just realized it wasn't there. So I had to go to the to the place where you go and report that your bag is missing. That took a while too because there were other people with me on the plane and they lost their bag, too, and they were they were supposed to leave to Rome the next day so they couldn't stay in Milan. So they had an issue with that because they were like, when we get the bag, we'll send it to your hotel and they were like, we're just here for this for today. I don't know what happened with them because we got our bag like the second day at night, and imagine this happened me twice with that airline, they lost my bag twice, so annoying.

[00:10:56.950] - Researcher

Wow, OK, and so based on that experience, could you please rate the experience after landing out of five?

[00:11:14.660] - Participant 11

A one. Yeah, because we lost our bag once when I was when we were when we were in Switzerland, going to Switzerland, and we changed our flight three times and Airline Y was able to find our bag before we got on the plane. So I know that if they if they have the ability to get it to us faster, they can, they just didn't.

[00:11:41.340] - Researcher

Yeah, alright, so if you would kindly rate your entire experience with Airline X out of five, what would you give them?

[00:11:50.190] - Participant 11

Three, because I do fly with them a lot, and their destinations are very diverse. Yeah, but like the whole experience is a blah because I compare them now because I usually never fly on Airline Y and Airline Z and now recently I've been flying more on those airlines and wow, it's a totally different like totally different like it's like a whole different level of experience.

[00:12:15.620] - Researcher

Yeah. Alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

[00:12:24.300] - Participant 11

If I have to and it's a last resort, I would. Like I wouldn't cancel my travel plans if the only

flight was Airline X, because I'm not that kind of person.

[00:12:36.770] - Researcher

Alright, and how has this experience influence your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:12:43.400] - Participant 11

It made me think of them a certain way, like they made me side eye them a lot like every time

I fly with them, I make sure that I have the number for the baggage claim. I check with them

a lot to make sure I tell them like you, you guys lost my bag before, so please make sure that

it gets to me on time. Like, I have to say it now when I travel with them, so it's basically like

it's something that you put on your mind and something that I associate them with.

[00:13:11.500] - Researcher

OK, interesting. Alright, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your

decision to fly with Airline X, even after your experience with them?

[00:13:20.440] - Participant 11

No, no, no, definitely not after that, no.

[00:13:23.590] - Researcher

OK. Alright, um, thank you. Thank you so much for your time and for agreeing to be interviewed.

[00:13:32.850] - Participant 11

Yeah, of course, not a problem at all, have a good day.

[00:13:36.690] - Researcher

You too, bye.

[00:13:37.890] - Participant 11

Bye.

Participant 12:

[00:00:01.770] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:10.090] - Participant 12

Good, how are you?

[00:00:11.590] - Researcher

Good, good, thanks. Could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:15.870] - Participant 12

Alright, my name is Participant 12 and I'm 31 years old.

[00:00:23.480] - Researcher

Alright, OK, so within the last three years, have you experienced any trip with an airline?

[00:00:30.850] - Participant 12

Yes, there was one very intense trip that had everything that could go wrong, kind of did go wrong on that trip. It was before the pandemic and was in 2019 and it was on Airline X.

[00:00:49.690] - Researcher

OK. Alright. Could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:00:56.900] - Participant 12

I was going to Australia, I was tending my studies over there, and that was one of my last trips before I came back to Kuwait, my home.

[00:01:08.180] - Researcher

Alright, what travel class did you book?

[00:01:14.150] - Participant 12

It was economy.

[00:01:15.890] - Researcher

OK, alright, could you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:01:24.460] - Participant 12

From Kuwait to Australia, we have a limited amount of airlines that actually provide flights all the way back with the same airline. So it was it's usually either Airline X or Airline Y, rarely any other airlines that I deal with.

[00:01:44.890] - Researcher

Alright. OK, so could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:01:53.600] - Participant 12

Yeah, so the booking process was pretty easy, like I never had any trouble with it, booked online through their website, their confirmation process was also very easy. The check-in was was OK, you know, it was like a smooth experience up until parts of the flight.

[00:02:12.660] - Researcher

Alright, and for the booking process, what do you feel is more important to you during this process?

[00:02:28.170] - Participant 12

Well, for one I need the website to feel secure. So there are some airlines where you feel like the website isn't really clear or secure and can be misleading in some sorts, especially for the seating process and how you choose your seats and extra costs and things like that. But I really like their layout and I like how how very clear it is. So that's why I usually end up booking with either Airline X or Airline Y because their platform is pretty reliable.

[00:03:03.690] - Researcher

Alright, OK, so for the booking experience, could you please rate the experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased?

[00:03:23.830] - Participant 12

Five.

[00:03:25.170] - Researcher

Alright. So could you please describe the day of travel in great detail, like how was the check-in process?

[00:03:36.020] - Participant 12

OK, so the check-in process was OK, like for checking-in I always go to the counter because I, I usually have extra weight, so I'd like to see if there is some wiggle room, if they see my carry on. And, you know, sometimes sometimes they let go of the carry on the carry on weight like they they let go of an extra couple of kilos.

[00:04:11.530] - Researcher

OK. Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:04:24.710] - Participant 12

Definitely how the staff are with me, because it depends on how I'm treated and it depends on like a lot of it does depend on some wiggle room for certain things, especially since I'm traveling as a student back and forth because a lot of the time I do have some extra weight or extra baggage. So they they give you some sort of leeway sometimes. So that's that's why I like the interaction and it's very important to me.

[00:04:55.280] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so if you could please rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:05:02.880] - Participant 12

Five out of five.

[00:05:04.530] - Researcher

Nice. Alright, so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:05:12.510] - Participant 12

Not so much, because I've been through different airports with the same airlines, like I usually don't change my airlines too much, it's between three or four airlines internationally for every vacation time. But yeah, no, it doesn't it doesn't really impact me that much.

[00:05:31.350] - Researcher

OK. So have you waited a long time for your flight? Like, how was the boarding process?

[00:05:40.160] - Participant 12

The boarding process was pretty smooth in regards to the, the seating arrangements of the boarding, you know, the zones and everything, but that was one of the things that happened. It was we had a layover for a couple of hours. Then when we wanted to get back on the plane, I felt like it was a little bit. Not, not only was it disorganized, I felt like there was a little bit of a threat over there, like not a threat, but something was wrong, like that's where things started to go wrong. OK, so, as you know, they usually board in zones. So I was towards the back of the line and there was a guy, an older, not an older man, but like he was a little bit older than I was and with a young teenager. And he was talking aloud. And if I could hear him in the back of the line, I'm pretty sure because he was like right next to the check-in boarding counter and he was saying that, oh, did you smell the airplane? And the airplane did smell a little off. And she looked at him and he said, that's the smell of Muslims. And he looked back at me and I looked at him and he saw that I was looking at him, and if I can hear that, other people could, too. And even before, instead of going through that process of security, he skipped it. He skipped the entire process and just went in with his briefcase and his duty-free bag and no one said anything, which was very, very upsetting because regardless if it was an Arab airline or not, but that's no one should experience that kind of harassment and no one did anything, nothing, not a word, not excuse me, sir, where you going? At least come back and check in your bag or let's check your baggage or something. Nothing. Nothing. He just he he waltzed through because he was wearing a suit and he looked, sadly to say, he didn't look brown. It just, it just made me feel like I'm not safe on that flight. It made me feel belittled and demeaned, especially since the airline itself is an Arabic airline and it belongs to a Muslim country. And with that said, you know, you'd you'd think that you'd feel safe as a woman like I cover. So it's like even parts of their uniform represents the tradition of, like, you know, the hijab and things like that and. To see that happening on an airline and for them to hear it, I know they heard it because I heard it too, and I was like in

the back of the line and no one said anything and he just walked in, that's not only rude and and just unacceptable, that was also a security breach. So it was disappointing all around.

[00:09:48.040] - Researcher

I'm so sorry that happened to you.

[00:09:49.210] - Participant 12

Thank you.

[00:09:52.870] - Researcher

OK. wow, and if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:10:00.910] - Participant 12

A definite zero if I could.

[00:10:05.490] - Researcher

OK, so, like, could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what did you first notice?

[00:10:14.350] - Participant 12

OK, so when I first entered the plane, I noticed that, you know, there there is some sort of organization within the seating arrangement, as in like, you know, these people or they try to seat people by zones. So I like that effort. And I like the effort of if they if they see someone, so I'm not very tall so I need some help sometimes with my with my luggage to be put overhead. So they also they're very helpful with that.

[00:10:52.360] - Researcher

OK, cool, and could you please describe the in-flight experience? Were there any incidents that occurred?

[00:11:05.140] - Participant 12

Um, yes, actually, there was on that same flight, a seating incident, because some people change their seats and things like that after the layover, you know, there was a man in my seat and I talked to him and I know that he was Australian like I could tell because I used to live there for like a very long time. And so I asked him, I showed him my ticket and I said, this is my seat and he pretended like he didn't understand me because of the way I looked. And I repeated it, OK, so I have the aisle seat and he was supposed to have a middle seat and then there is this guy in the window seat and I asked him again and he pretended not to understand me. He just had a blank look on his face and then the stewardess she came along and she asked him to move and he didn't. He was like, what? I don't understand, what? Like and he he was speaking English and we were all speaking English, but he just, he just pulled this I don't know what you're saying, and it's not like he had special needs or dementia or he

needed extra help, it's just that he pretended not to understand because he wanted that seat. And instead of asking him firmly, she just asked me to accommodate that man and sit in the middle seat. So that was that was very disappointing, especially coming from a woman. I mean, he was an older gentleman, so I guess and it is a busy flight and it is a layover and people are like all over the place. So I get why why she wasn't going to make a scene. But it was just it was disappointing because things after that happened because of that seating arrangement, which put me in danger, and I highly doubt that I would take a flight with Airline X after that experience, because because of that seating arrangement, the guy in the window seat started harassing me. Yes, he started harassing me. He started saying very uncomfortable things. He tried to touch me. I kept giving the stewardess looks and I kept asking, like pressing a button and just like you know, trying to ask for different things and just showing that I'm uncomfortable and I'm a grown woman, mind you, like I'm a grown woman. I'm not in my twenties or in my late teens. I'm a grown woman and I felt uncomfortable. And no one came to help, no one recognised that. And so if that could happen, you know, if that could happen to a grown woman, then that could happen to a child. Then that can happen to a special needs person on there and no one would know. So that was very, very disappointing. I didn't feel safe and I didn't feel like there was a way to say anything without, you know, with all the things that happened with the guy and the security and then the guy in my seat and then now this dude? I was just like, I just want this to be over. And I needed help and I didn't get it. And it was very discouraging all around those two experiences, so that third one really put the last nail in the coffin and imagine this went on the entire trip, from from the whole seating arrangement with the layover and things like that the entire way back, and it was and that was from, from Singapore, all the way back to Dubai, and it was horrible, it was horrible to the point where I had to make a call on the airplane just

to feel a little bit safe. And I had to call my husband, and it was it was bad, like it was just very bad. This guy was was disgusting. So, yeah.

[00:16:17.470] - Researcher

I'm so sorry. This is not OK.

[00:16:21.000] - Participant 12

It really wasn't, it wasn't, but things like that do happen to women, I understand, but what was very alarming is that no one caught on. And if if I'm a grown woman and no one caught on to that, how will they catch on to human trafficking, how would they catch on to children being harassed or people that can't necessarily speak out like special needs or people that have a language barrier, which you know, that was very alarming to me is that you see this person call you back and forth, giving you these looks, cringing, you know, and you just go on your merry way. It was just, it wasn't a good experience. From that point on, like I wanted my original seat and they didn't even give it to me. So I felt very trapped at that point and they didn't act accordingly from the start and they chose their convenience over the safety of their passengers. So that was one of the last experiences that I had with that airline. And I highly doubt that I would be dealing with them ever again. It was an intense flight, I've never experienced something like that. You get the the the usual snarky comments and things like that, but you never like I never experienced something like that all together in one flight, it was just it was all around bad, you know, because you can't you couldn't have expected this to happen.

[00:18:24.820] - Researcher

Wow of course, again I'm so sorry that happened to you.

[00:18:28.630] - Participant 12

Thank you, I appreciate that.

[00:18:29.440] - Researcher

OK, so, as a passenger, what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:18:52.100] - Participant 12

Sorry, sorry, OK. What's more important to me, honestly, is the the seating, because if it's a long flight and usually I do take very long flights, then that's a major inconvenience that would actually cause me to change the airline. So that's that's the primary thing that I'm looking for.

[00:19:16.230] - Researcher

OK. Alright, did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, like do you feel like it has an impact on your experience?

[00:19:29.190] - Participant 12

Not so much, because I understand that, you know, it depends on the weather and it depends on where we're going. Sometimes there is turbulence and it's never too bad on the on the airplanes that I usually take, like it's not a big deal for me. So, yeah, I was it was pretty much smooth.

[00:19:50.940] - Researcher

OK, alright, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:19:59.100] - Participant 12

It's a zero because of what happened, if there was a minus, I would give them minus.

[00:20:08.250] - Researcher

Alright, could you please describe the process after landing, like was there anything that happened?

[00:20:17.050] - Participant 12

No, because there were a couple of layovers, so like we would, we got off at Dubai and then it went to Kuwait, so yeah, like it wasn't, that was like that was a very short ride and it was it was pretty smooth. So after landing and especially after landing in Dubai, everything seemed to change because I guess, you know, it depends on your destination or where you're going and who the people on your flight are. So if it's a layover and they're they're going to another

layover to a different destination like, you know, countries that are not predominantly Muslim or Arab, I guess they might react differently to different passengers. But when it's when you're heading home and you're heading somewhere where you're local and you're heading somewhere where, you know, they expect people that are like you to be on a flight, you get treated differently, which is, you know, it's sad to say, but that was my experience. It's usually a weird start to up until I get to Dubai and then after Dubai, it's usually like smooth sailing all the time. So and this has been going on for like a very, very long time. Like, I feel like it has it has to do with even the crew. They understand that, oh, now we're going now these people are from Dubai, which is that they're coming from Dubai to Kuwait. Like they they have this mindset and they understand this, you know, traditions and they just expect you to be there. So it was, I guess that like that affects it somehow. But the experience beforehand, and especially from Singapore, although it's it was like, you know, that that wouldn't have been pulled on on a flight to Kuwait. That wouldn't have, you know the the harassment and the guy pretending not to understand like that wouldn't have been even tolerated if it was in Dubai Airport or a flight to a flight to Kuwait. So, you know, I really believe that the destination and the crew on the flight towards that destination have a have a shift in the attitude. Like, I would feel much safer if I was going or headed to an Arab country. Like even like I don't think I'd mind if there is no other choice. I don't think I'd mind going on Airline X again to an Arab country or to a predominantly Muslim country. But if I'm going to a country that is more Western and the layovers are in different destinations that are not Muslim, I don't think I'd be comfortable with that anymore.

[00:23:47.360] - Researcher

Wow, OK, so after landing in Kuwait and everything, did you wait a long time to receive your baggage?

[00:23:51.910] - Participant 12

Yes, but, you know, that's very expected from Kuwait Airport. Not not from the flight, you know, not from the airlines itself.

[00:24:23.420] - Researcher

Alright, and if you could please rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

[00:24:32.400] - Participant 12

For the airlines itself, I'd give them five.

[00:24:38.330] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so based on your entire experience with Airline X, what would you rate them out of five?

[00:24:43.260] - Participant 12

My entire trip, to be fair, I'd probably give them a two.

[00:24:53.040] - Researcher

OK, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

[00:24:58.860] - Participant 12

No, no. Unless I it's an emergency or like I'm, I really have absolutely no choice of any other airlines than I'd have to. But other than that, no, I would never willingly do it again.

[00:25:01.450] - Researcher

OK. Alright, and how has this experience in particular influence your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:25:13.340] - Participant 12

It made me realize that after years and years of traveling with them, by the way, this wasn't a one time experience. It was always my choice. Airline X is usually my choice to travel back. I think, more than twice, I would look for different airlines in general, other than that honestly, now it's not them, it's not them, and they affected the way that I feel on flights now and they affected the way that, I feel like I should keep an eye out for other people that get harassed on flights and so on and so forth, which you know, this isn't my job, but it just it doesn't feel as safe anymore or as as relaxed anymore. Beforehand, I didn't feel like that. I felt like they knew what they were doing. They're trained to know what they were doing and and look for the signs of someone in need or in danger or being harassed and things like that. And

mind you, you know, like there's a lot of especially in the past couple of years, talk about human trafficking and things like that. And it just to see that go over their heads was just sad. So it just it changed my view of the airline and of just flying in general. So, you know, it just it just really isn't OK and I just hope that after this pandemic, you know, they they they really get it together because that was just unacceptable.

[00:27:13.710] - Researcher

Of course, exaclty, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase with Airline X even after your experience with them?

[00:27:21.460] - Participant 12

I mean, if it was a family trip that we had to take and we had no choice, then, yeah, most likely because I'd be traveling with a lot of people that I know, I'd most likely feel much safer. But I would I would also give them my input and try to change their their airline decision at least.

[00:27:47.830] - Researcher

Yeah, OK. Alright. Well, thank you very much for sharing your story and your experience. Thank you. It has been an amazing interview.

[00:27:59.050] - Participant 12

No worries. Thank you for having me.

[00:28:00.810] - Researcher

Thank you.

Participant 13:

[00:00:00.910] - Researcher

Hi, how are you?

[00:00:02.770] - Participant 13

Hi, I'm good, thank you.

[00:00:06.310] - Researcher

Could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:09.070] - Participant 13

Yeah. Hi, my name is Participant 13, I'm 27 and I'm Nigerian.

[00:00:14.380] - Researcher

Alright. So within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:24.760] - Participant 13

Yes I did, Airline X, back in 2019.

[00:00:34.330] - Researcher

OK, could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:00:38.730] - Participant 13

I was living in London and basically I was returning on a vacation back home. So my my flight was London and then Kuwait.

[00:00:49.600] - Researcher

OK, and what travel class did you book in?

[00:00:56.003] - Participant 13

Economy.

[00:00:56.030] - Researcher

OK, and could you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:01:02.780] - Participant 13

Because it had the convenient time, I was a student at the time and I wanted to travel on that day and they had a night flight and I needed a night flight usually in Airline Y. But Airline Y has an early flight, so I had to opt and use Airline X at the time.

[00:01:23.240] - Researcher

OK, alright. Could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:01:32.770] - Participant 13

Um, well I booked online, actually, through Airline X's website, and it was a smooth process to be honest, I found their website pretty organized, pretty straightforward, and I didn't have any payment with processing any issues with processing the payment, which is something that I worry about a lot because it happened to me with other airlines and, yeah.

[00:02:15.250] - Researcher

Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

[00:02:15.810] - Participant 13

To me it's a bit of everything really, like I like a simple design that wouldn't confuse you by having different tabs and then like you would be confused sometimes, like where should I go? I like the fact like when I interact with the website itself, the information would be there in your face, especially when you book a flight, because it's just such a sensitive process. So yeah, I found that in Airline X's website as well. Like everything was listed as like you don't need to click a certain tab or to just like double check your flight. Like you can see your inbound outbound all in one page, you know. Yeah so it was simple.

[00:03:27.460] - Researcher

OK, alright, so if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you rate them?

[00:03:35.920] - Participant 13

Five, five.

[00:03:37.240] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so could you please describe the day of travel in great detail, starting from the check-in experience?

[00:03:50.650] - Participant 13

Yeah. So basically we went to the Airline X terminal, it was a smooth process. Yeah. Before I checked in, I wanted to upgrade my ticket to economy. Sorry to business. However, the business class was fully booked and first class was fully booked, so I did not. So I went and I remember I self checked in, scanned my passport and then the tags for the bags were printed and then I attached them to my luggage and went. There was a person standing next to where you weigh your bags. Yeah, and they were checking the weight and then I was off by a

couple of kilos, so they asked if I would like to pay or I can put it on my carry on. So and they were like mainly books so I placed the books in my carry on and it was a smooth process. And then I finished with the security check-in and went in basically.

[00:05:17.650] - Researcher

OK, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

[00:05:25.700] - Participant 13

For me, It's mainly how the employee treats me, because I don't mind sometimes like waiting in line because you have to, especially if it was a season and actually it was, for this trip it was Christmas. .. Sorry about that, yeah, so it was a peak season and like we all know sometimes there are certain peak times where you need to wait, whether you're business class, whether you're first class, whether you're economy. So I don't mind the wait. However, if I wait and I end up with a rude employee, this is my problem. So to me, the attitude of the brand's representative is everything, you know.

[00:06:40.280] - Researcher

Yeah, so if you if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:06:45.950] - Participant 13

I would give them four. Yeah, I would give them a four because I was OK with it, but was a bit confused because at the beginning there was, like I've never used self check-in before and there was no one to explain it. So they had I think it would have been better if they had someone at that station to explain it to those who do not know what they were doing. Like me.

[00:07:11.100] - Researcher

Yeah, OK and do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:07:14.600] - Participant 13

Oh, yes. Yeah, like this is the first thing I notice, because the way I see it, the airport is the gate of whatever city you're leaving. It's either the first impression or the last impression, you know.

[00:07:33.100] - Researcher

Yeah, exactly. OK, alright, so have you waited a long time to board your flight? Like, how was the boarding process?

[00:07:42.410] - Participant 13

The boarding process was fine, I was traveling with a friend basically and we wanted to be there a bit earlier so we can have dinner before going back home. So we were at Natalie Portman at the airport, having dinner there chatting and we were killing time and then we

headed to duty free, and I remember like us commenting on how this Duty-Free is nothing compared to the other Duty-Free and how it wasn't the same because we're used to the other one because it had many options compared to this one, and most of the stores actually were closed as it was a late night trip.

[00:08:56.850] - Researcher

OK, so if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:09:01.280] - Participant 13

I would give them a four.

[00:09:03.260] - Researcher

Alright, and so could you please describe your experience entering the plane? Like, what did you first notice?

[00:09:13.470] - Participant 13

The flight attendant's attitude when you give them your boarding ticket. Attitude is something really important to me, you know? Because you're being a brand ambassador, you know, you can either make someone want to fly or like we're talking about airlines you know, the attitude of the flight attendant is everything. So this is what I first noticed, like because they

have the power to actually make you want to travel with them again or in my case, say never again.

[00:10:06.560] - Researcher

Wow, alright, so what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:10:21.930] - Participant 13

.. Sorry about that, yeah so It's basically it's the crew. It's their interaction, how comfy the seats are and the model of the plane, whether it's new or old, that's a big factor to me.

[00:10:59.420] - Researcher

OK. Alright, and so did you experience like a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence?

[00:11:03.930] - Participant 13

There was turbulence. Yes, I would say it was kind of on the scary side, to be honest. It was one of those flights.

[00:11:11.580] - Researcher

Oh, OK, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

[00:11:17.140] - Participant 13

No, because this is something that like if it happens, it happens. You cannot control the weather, you know. However, when it comes to landing and take-offs and landing, this is a different story because this tells a lot about the pilots that the company hired.

[00:11:52.670] - Researcher

Yeah, OK, could you please describe the in-flight experience, were there any incidents that occurred?

[00:11:59.090] - Participant 13

Yes, and that's why I will never, no matter what, I'll never go on Airline X again. OK, so basically I fell asleep and during the flight. It was a night flight and I had a really long day, so basically I fell asleep and I was I was basically I was at an aisle seat and suddenly like I hear someone saying in a really loud, angry, rude voice, Jesus Christ, and I open my eyes and I realize that it was time for either the meals or the snacks and one of the flight attendants was basically pushing the the cart, actually pulling because it was the other side, you know like how one is pulling it, the other is pushing, so basically the flight attendant had his back to my side so he couldn't see what's happening, and apparently, while I was sleeping, my legs were out. One of my legs were extended and they were out and he tripped, and when I opened my eyes hearing him say Jesus Christ, I realized what happened and I was actually about to apologize because, again, I was sleeping and when you sleep, sometimes you don't know what you're doing now, you know? And then he screamed something along the lines of, do you mind? And he was screaming. He didn't even say it in a pleasant way, like, I understand

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what happened. But again, you work you're a brand representative and he was screaming, do you mind your your leg or something like that. And it was really rude and everyone on the plane was actually looking at my direction and I felt embarrassed, and I looked at him and I was in shock. So I didn't say anything and just like removed my leg. And basically I wanted to talk to someone in the flight about the incident. But as I said, it was one of those flights that had a lot of turbulence and everything. So I wasn't like prioritized at the time, just like I wanted to go back home safe, like it was really about turbulence. So when I arrived back to Kuwait, I remember emailing Airline X and automatically what they did is they offered me points, and the thing is, I'm not even a frequent traveler, you know? So I feel like the way they handled it, they should have even at least asked if I'm a frequent traveler or not, because if I'm not a frequent traveler on Airline X, why would they have the offer in the first place, especially after such an incident? You wouldn't encourage me like that to use your airlines again. You know, like just at least a sincere apology for what happened. Because I understand, like maybe the employee had a difficult day, maybe like they were going through something, I understand that they're humans after all, but however, like, the way they handled the situation was wrong, the least that they could have done, especially that I was about to apologize, like I was literally saying I'm sorry, it was on the tip of my tongue and then they exploded in my face and that everyone was looking at me and it was so embarrassing. It felt like, you know, like I was the center of attention for a few seconds and I hated that you know, so even if the employee themselves apologized during the flight, I would have let it go, to be honest, because, again, all of us have those kind of days, but I didn't get an apology from the employee. I didn't even get a sincere apology from the airlines. Like, I don't need your points and you didn't even bother yourself with checking if I'm a frequent flier or not, if that's your way of trying to make me like a frequent flier or like join your frequent flier program by

giving me points? No, I just, it's not going to work because I just came to you and I told you that I had a really unpleasant incident. So this is not the way to do it.

[00:17:34.170] - Researcher

Wow, I'm so sorry that happened to you.

[00:17:36.260] - Participant 13

It's OK. Life goes on, but never again, never again.

[00:17:44.010] - Researcher

Alright, so based on the in-flight experience, what would you give them out of five?

[00:17:50.950] - Participant 13

One, one.

[00:17:53.980] - Researcher

Alright, could you please describe the process after landing?

[00:18:03.670] - Participant 13

Honestly, I was too p***ed. I just wanted to leave the plane. Yeah, like, I was really mad and I just wanted to leave the plane. I'm like, OK, I'm home, just like go and see your family, just finish immigration and everything and go and see your family.

[00:18:25.060] - Researcher

OK, and did you wait like a long time to receive your baggage?

[00:18:29.770] - Participant 13

Yes, but I don't think that's the airlines fault to be honest, because it Kuwait's airport, it's pretty problematic, let's put it that way when it comes to baggage claim.

[00:18:44.770] - Researcher

OK, and could you please rate the experience after landing out of five?

[00:18:51.290] - Participant 13

It was, I would say .. a five, because nothing like significant happened, you know.

[00:19:08.230] - Researcher

OK, alright, so if you would please rate your entire experience with Airline X out of five, what would you give them?

[00:19:19.250] - Participant 13

The entire thing, I would give them three.

[00:19:25.710] - Researcher

Alright, so do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your

previous experience with them?

[00:19:34.170] - Participant 13

No, I wouldn't. Like the the day that I would purchase a ticket from Airline X would be day

where it's like my last option, you know.

[00:19:48.530] - Researcher

OK, and how has this experience in particular influence your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:19:56.900] - Participant 13

Anyone who basically tells me they're traveling Airline X, I would tell them to not travel

with them. Especially that you know like, Airline X has been in the business since God

knows when, for decades, and I remember when I saw the plane, it was really outdated. It

was literally one of those planes that we were used to say in the 90s, to be honest, and for a

fleet like Airline X to have such planes in your fleet, I don't think that's a good thing for your

brand, to be honest. So basically, whenever anyone would tell me, like they're traveling with

the airline, I would tell them about the flight itself, like the plane itself, and I would tell them about this experience and I'll be like, piece of advice, don't.

[00:21:00.900] - Researcher

Wow, OK, alright, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase with Airline X even after your experience?

[00:21:08.070] - Participant 13

I don't think so, and I told you like that time I was traveling with a friend who was studying with me at the time and we decided to actually go to Kuwait after a while, and instead of traveling together, he took Airline X because he has been a frequent traveler since 2010 and and even the way he describes it, he's like, I only take Airline X because I have a lot of points. That's it. And it was my only choice when I was studying in the States. It was the most convenient choice. So I scored good points with them. So that's why I keep on using them, because I was telling him, let's fly with another airline and he was like, no, I think I'm going to do Airline X and I'm like, OK then I'll see you back home. You know, I'm not going to be traveling with you on Airline X. Like, I don't know, maybe I'm being a tad bit dramatic, but I hated the way I was treated and I have other options, so why not? This is not the only direct flight from London. You have another direct flight, which is Airline Y and when you compare all of this to Airline Y, the way I see it, they give you good services, especially in terms of the plane design where all of their fleet is upgraded so no matter what airplane you're on, no matter what model you're on, you know, like even if you're traveling economy, the seats are comfy with me personally, I never had an unpleasant experience with the crew, when it comes to their pilots, I would definitely say they have the best pilots you know, when

it comes to handling, landing and taking off. Like for the past five, six years, I've been using Airline Y, you know, and I only used it once when I was going to New York and I wanted to finish my immigration in Abu Dhabi instead of waiting in JFK, although there was a straight flight from sorry, direct flight from Kuwait to New York, and the other one is Airline X. Like I don't remember using anything other than Airline Y for the past six years and I travel a lot, you know, and I'm not saying Airline Y are perfect. However, I know a lot of people who had like bad, bad experiences there, but it never happened to me. So until now, Airline Y are in my good side.

[00:24:36.220] - Researcher

Alright. OK, wow, thank you. Thank you so much for the interview and for sharing your experience.

[00:24:43.420] - Participant 13

You're most welcome. I wish you all the best, take care.

[00:24:45.910] - Researcher

Thank you, take care.

Participant 14:

[00:00:02.670] - Researcher

Hi, how are you? Could you please introduce yourself?

[00:00:10.810] - Participant 14

Hi. My name is Participant 14, I'm Qatari and I'm 31 years old.

[00:00:16.760] - Researcher

OK. So within the last three years, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

[00:00:27.620] - Participant 14

Yes, back in 2019 with Airline X.

[00:00:30.080] - Researcher

OK, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

[00:00:34.970] - Participant 14

I was Studying abroad in Egypt.

[00:00:36.910] - Researcher

OK, and what travel class did you take?

[00:00:41.380] - Participant 14

Economy.

[00:00:43.380] - Researcher

OK, could you please explain why you chose Airline X specifically to travel with?

[00:00:49.460] - Participant 14

It was the cheapest flight back home.

[00:00:50.720] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

[00:01:10.340] - Participant 14

Sorry, yeah the booking process was a smooth, easy process actually, booked online through their website and yeah.

[00:01:16.550] - Researcher

OK, and what do you feel is more important to you during this process?

[00:01:26.750] - Participant 14

Like the easiness of it, the simplicity of it, I always check if the prices are cheap. Hold on

sorry .. yeah and this is the most important thing to me actually, especially being a student

back then.

[00:02:05.070] - Researcher

OK, alright, and if you would please rate the booking experience out of five with five being

very pleased and one being not pleased. What would you give them?

[00:02:15.530] - Participant 14

Three, three.

[00:02:16.670] - Researcher

OK, Alright, so moving on to the day of travel, could you please describe the day of travel in

great detail?

[00:02:38.890] - Participant 14

OK. So it was so crowded and like and like it was so slow. They don't know how, like to

speed up, like speed up the queue and this kind of stuff. We wanted to check-in using the

counter and it was very slow. Chaos, crowded. The system is I think it's like an old version of

the check-in systems they don't have like an online system or something. You have to wait and like the luggage weighting system was like very slow as well, I didn't like it. Anyway, when I wanted to check-in , it was really bad because I had the most like the worst experience of my life. They refused to let me in the airplane. They said that because I look like a male and the passport says female. And this issue happened to me because Airline X does not know how to handle this kind of stuff like being transgender. I was really upset and angry, I even cried because I felt like embarrassed because other people were looking at me, like, in a weird way, because they said that we can't let you in to to the airplane and we can't take your luggage. You can't, like, go back to your country because we think that your passport is not the original one. Or maybe you did something to the passport and they were so rude to me, they even like contacted the police officers that were working in the airport and they sent me to them. They sent me to the manager. Yeah, and everything was really bad that day. Like they refused to let me in the airplane and all. I waited for two hours till I could sort it out with the government. After that, I contacted the embassy and they spoke to one of the, like, the headquarters of the airline itself and after that, they said, yeah, it's fine, it's the same person after sending me to the police officer and doing some checks with me. But I stayed for like two hours. It was really a nightmare and everyone knew about the issue because the employer was shouting, this is not you, this is someone else. You you need to see, like the police officers, he was very loud. And she like even like even inside the airplane when I sat down, she was like speaking to me, like madame, sir, madame like in a loud voice and, they were doing something that I can't even like say to anyone, because no one will know, like what's happened until they experienced this scene, which was really hard.

[00:07:38.420] - Researcher

Wow, I'm so sorry that happened to you.

[00:07:40.278] - Participant 14

Thank you.

[00:07:41.250] - Researcher

Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check in process?

[00:07:53.418] - Participant 14

The the Waiting time definitely, and how they treated me, I will never forget it.

[00:07:57.120] - Researcher

OK, and so based on the check-in experience, what would you rate them out of five?

[00:07:58.630] - Participant 14

Zero.

[00:07:58.630] - Researcher

Alright, so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

[00:08:06.510] - Participant 14

Yeah, it does, because like going from Kuwait to to Egypt, it was like smooth, but inside the airport in Egypt, the staff were like calling me incorrect pronouns, so what happened in the airport and what happened in the airplane itself, like it was, I was really under pressure, you know. That's why I felt like every like every thing they are saying, it was like, embarrassing to me, like life threatening. I felt like I was like, and everyone was watching, you know, so that's why I felt that I was just not safe.

[00:09:08.310] - Researcher

Yeah. Of course, and have you have you waited a long time for your flight? Like, how was the boarding process?

[00:09:22.910] - Participant 14

It was very slow. I waited like maybe two hours until they had a decision if I can go on board or I go back to Egypt and go to the police station. Yeah. And they like they contacted the police and the police came and took me to the police officer desk and she was shouting like, this is not you. This is not the original Passport and I was really embarrassed because of this issue.

[00:10:08.010] - Researcher

Wow, I'm so sorry, alright and if you would kindly rate the experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:10:11.460] - Participant 14

Zero.

[00:10:13.860] - Researcher

OK. Alright, so could you please describe your experience entering the plane? Like, what did you first notice?

[00:10:22.780] - Participant 14

Everyone was watching. Everyone was looking at me like in a weird way, I was like feeling embarrassed and shy and I didn't want to go to the airplane. They let one of the police officers, like, take me inside the plane as well, because they thought that I'm like I'm still like a dangerous person and I shouldn't go inside the airplane and they were keeping their eye on me all the time, till I got back home.

[00:11:08.000] - Researcher

Wow, and could you please describe the entire in-flight experience, like after being seated? Were there any incidents that occurred?

[00:11:15.770] - Participant 14

No, just the pronouns were really awkward. Like they were shouting the wrong pronouns and everyone was watching, like, who is this person like why are they calling him like she or he or whatever. Yeah, and they were like speaking to me rudely as well because I think they are not accepting like me being this way. So, that was just really rude.

[00:12:02.350] - Researcher

Yeah, OK, and so what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

[00:12:21.940] - Participant 14

Sorry, yeah, what's very important is definitely how the the crew treats you, like they should be like more kind of like more friendly and not be like judgmental that they shouldn't be judgmental inside the airplane. Like at that moment, I didn't really care about anything, actually. I just wanted to go back like, safely. Like I didn't want to be like seen, you know, because my issue is not like something simple, they're Arabic countries, so I just wanted to be like not seen. I just want to be in a friendly place, friendly, crew friendly members so this is all what I'm looking for, you know.

[00:13:12.130] - Researcher

Yeah, OK, and did you experience like a smooth ride overall? Maybe there was turbulence? Also, does that have an impact on your overall experience?

[00:13:20.980] - Participant 14

No, I just felt like I was really feeling down and I didn't recognize everything, I was over thinking, and I just I didn't want to be seen anymore. I just wanted to disappear from the airplane. And this is what I felt during the flight till I get back home.

[00:13:44.460] - Researcher

Yeah I can only imagine, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

[00:13:52.500] - Participant 14

A one.

[00:13:56.400] - Researcher

OK, and could you please describe the process after landing, were there any incidents that occurred?

[00:14:06.120] - Participant 14

There was a police officer that was waiting for me because they said they told them about the incident that happened in Egypt. So when I landed, one of the crew members told me that you have to go this way, don't follow the line. When I went there, I saw like two police officers and they like they said that someone contacted us from Airline X. They said that you don't have the original passport for this kind of issue and they told them everything. I gave them my my passport. And even I gave them like my my I.D. and they checked everything and

they said that everything is legit. Everything is original. Why were they doing this to you? I said, I don't know. They said that they they did report that I'm like, this is not me and that I'm like doing something really dangerous and I was like, no, it's me. This is all my papers. This proves that it is me. So after that, two police officers took me outside the airport and this is what happened when I landed.

[00:15:22.320] - Researcher

OK, well I'm glad you landed safely back to your home country, and did you wait a long time to receive your baggage?

[00:15:33.300] - Participant 14

Of course, yeah, Airline X, like everyone knows that you have to wait, like, for a long, long, long time until you take the baggage.

[00:15:45.360] - Researcher

OK, and if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

[00:15:52.200] - Participant 14

One, because the waiting time there was too long, like I waited like for an hour, an hour and a half for taking the luggage and it was just a very crowded place as well.

[00:16:24.800] - Researcher

OK, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with Airline X out of five, what would you give them?

[00:16:34.850] - Participant 14

One.

[00:16:37.220] - Researcher

Alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with Airline X solely based on your past experience?

[00:16:48.130] - Participant 14

No, like I don't want to, like, use this airline anymore, especially after the incident that happened.

[00:17:01.610] - Researcher

Yeah, and how has this experience influence your attitude towards Airline X?

[00:17:08.030] - Participant 14

Like, I was put in a very bad situation, I was depressed after this, I was like, I had more anxiety regarding this incident. I was like not feeling safe anymore. I was like, I was thinking

about what should I do? How can I just travel safely? Like, I don't want for this incident to happen again. So now I search for western airlines like European airlines or maybe like other another different like airline company that can accept this kind of issue with genders, and just accept kind of like my kind of people and not look just based on gender or something.

[00:18:12.070] - Researcher

Yeah, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase with Airline X even after your experience?

[00:18:21.280] - Participant 14

No, never, if they plan on booking a trip with them, I'll just choose another airline and meet them.

[00:18:25.870] - Researcher

OK. Alright, thank you. Thank you so much for sharing your story.

[00:18:31.300] - Participant 14

It's fine, thank you, have a good day.

[00:18:36.060] - Researcher

You too, bye.

Participant 15:

0:00:01.9 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:04 PARTICIPANT 15: I'm good.

0:00:07 RESEARCHER: Could you please introduce yourself really quick?

0:00:12.7 PARTICIPANT 15: My name is participant 15, I'm 27 years old and I work in the private sector media industry.

0:00:25.9 RESEARCHER: Nice. Alright, so within the past 6 months, have you experienced any tips with an airline?

0:00:31.1 PARTICIPANT 15: Yes, it was with a trip with airline X going back from the US, and it was a bad experience because of a problem I had with the seating and passenger.

0:00:51.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, so could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:01:00.6 PARTICIPANT 15: Tourism.

0:01:05.6 RESEARCHER: Tourism. Alright, so did you book economy business?

0:01:10.6 PARTICIPANT 15: Economy.

0:01:14.6 RESEARCHER: Economy? Perfect. Alright, so could you please explain why you chose that specific airline to travel with?

0:01:33.7 PARTICIPANT 15: It's because it was...I have flown with them before and it was convenient at that time. That's why.

0:01:56.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, so moving on, can you please describe the

booking process in great detail?

0:02:10.1 PARTICIPANT 15: Ok, so I booked the ticket online. It was two ways from Kuwait to the US and from US to Kuwait and actually back then it was the most expensive tickets because I got it for over a thousand dollars. But I needed to book it because I needed to be on that trip. I was like, I need to book now.

0:02:38.6 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:02:50.9 PARTICIPANT 15: I think when the airlines has good reviews, it's like the seats are comfortable, there's space between... Like, I would pay more. I don't mind paying more for my comfort. In terms of the app I look for the easiness and much rather have less information, like just for the icons to be simple with less words, that the most important information is out there, and that's it. I don't need to know about all the details. So, the more information in the page, the more I will get turned off and I will go to the other page.

0:04:10.0 RESEARCHER: Ok, nice. Alright, so if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased at all, what would you give them?

0:04:28.0 PARTICIPANT 15: I would give them a three.

0:04:35.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, awesome, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:04:56.1 PARTICIPANT 15: Okay, so I went to the airport... I remember that the check-in line was easy, and it was mostly... to be honest, I didn't have any problem. The flight itself, I was surprised because it was really huge, the plane... I mean, the seating was very comfortable, it was okay. The only issue I had is the flight experience itself, actually, this is the initial story... And that was my only issue. And yeah, everything else was fine.

0:05:59.3 RESEARCHER: Yeah. Alright, ok, and going back to the check-in, what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:06:19.1 PARTICIPANT 15: Okay, first, it will be the way wait, if it is a long line. I like to check-in online because I hate waiting. Second, is how they interact with you, I would prefer the staff to be friendly, more easy-going. They would give you a special treatment, I don't know, they would suggest a seat for you, for example, having a quick chat with you with a smile.

0:07:03.7 RESEARCHER: Yeah, alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:07:17.1 PARTICIPANT 15: The check-in was a five.

0:07:19.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, ok, so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:07:30.3 PARTICIPANT 15: Yes, I do prefer bigger airports, like if there are more

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options, like more coffee shops, more restaurants, more places to go, and if there is a hotel inside the airport, because if you have to wait for seven hours, for example, you need somewhere to rest.

0:08:02.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, perfect, so moving on, have you waited a long time for your flight, like how was the boarding process?

0:08:22.0 PARTICIPANT 15: I didn't wait a long time, it was an easy and smooth process, got the tickets scanned and we entered the plane.

0:08:37.4 RESEARCHER: Ok, nice, and if you would kindly rate the boarding process out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:43.4 PARTICIPANT 15: Five.

0:08:46.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, so could you please describe your experience entering the plane, what did you first notice?

0:08:55.0 PARTICIPANT 15: I notice if like the stewardess says hi, also what they are wearing, like if the plane is clean, the design, I care about that.

0:09:19.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:09:27.2 PARTICIPANT 15: The seats, that there is spacing between the seats, comfort is

the most important thing for me.

0:09:35.8 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, and were there any incidents that occurred during the flight?

0:09:46.4 PARTICIPANT 15: Yes, ok, so the guy in the counter gave me a seat in the front, which is next to the exit doors, and what happened is that when I went to my seat, I found a mother with her new born baby sitting in my seat, so of course confused, I told her that this is my seat, and she was like, oh yes, I know, but it's because I have a baby. So, if you can just sit in the back seat, and I would like to sit here. I was like, no, but you didn't ask me. You decided already that you're going to take my seat and you didn't ask me. So no, I want my seat, I booked it and I want it. She told me, but I talked to the employees that are inside the flight, and when I went back to her, she said oh yes, can you please sit in the back seat because she has a baby. And I was like, no, even if she has a baby. It's my seat, it's a long flight and I'm not going to go sit in the back. So, the husband came along and he started talking to me in a very awkward tone. I didn't like it. He was like, yes, okay, but I am sitting in the back and we are separated already, and I decided that she needed to sit in front because of the baby, and they kept saying that because of the baby, we have to sit there... and I was like, no, it's my seat. First, you need to ask me, and I need to allow it because it's my seat. So we had this long argument about this, then the employee was like, okay, okay, and I eventually sat in my seat, and the mother got really mad because I didn't give her the seat, and I was mad at the employee for doing that from the beginning, and I told her that it's not okay, you have to ask me first if I'm okay with it, if you came to me and you asked me before setting, I might allow it, but you decided for me already, so you don't have the right to do that and before the mother got out of my seat, there's was an Indian guy sitting next to her. He got

mad because I didn't agree. And he said, okay, okay, it's fine, just take my seat, he talked to the mother and he was like, I'm going to sit back with your husband and you can take my seat, and we were sitting next to each other for like eighteen hours, the whole entire flight.

0:13:18.6 RESEARCHER: Oh my God, sorry that happened to you, that must have been awkward.

0:13:25.5 PARTICIPANT 15: Very.

0:13:28.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, ok, and was it a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually impact your experience?

0:13:35.5 PARTICIPANT 15: It was a bit shaky, but it wasn't the scary kind, but overall yes turbulence does scare me.

0:13:42.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:13:45.5 PARTICIPANT 15: Oh, definitely a one, because of the tone from everyone that I didn't have the right to sit on my seat just because I don't have a baby, or because I'm not pregnant or have a baby, you know. So that she has the right to take the seat and I don't, and I sensed that even from the employees.

0:14:15.1 RESEARCHER: Yeah, so like just the assumption, yeah, alright, ok, so could you please describe the process after landing?

0:14:29.4 PARTICIPANT 15: Yes, so we land, and in the back of my mind, I did expect like an apology from the crew member or something, but nothing happened. As if they don't care, or if it wasn't that big of a problem and didn't notice that and I didn't like it, that's why I've sent an email later on based on the incident saying that it wasn't fair and because the mother for some reason said that the front row was for mothers and babies, and I wasn't sure if this information is true, but because I saw mothers with their kids in the back before so I knew that she was just saying that to have the seat. So, they replied to the email saying that they were sorry, they apologize, and they just wished me to have a better flight next time. Even like getting back, I waited for the bags for two hours and a half, imagine, there were more than five flights coming at the same time, and it was crazy, it was crowded, and I just had a really bad experience in the flight, so that was also the cherry on top of it.

0:15:38.9 RESEARCHER: Wow, sorry you had to wait that long, and if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:16:04.4 PARTICIPANT 15: I would also give them a one.

0:16:12.3 RESEARCHER: Wow, ok, and if you kindly rate your entire experience with airline X, what would you give them?

0:16:23.2 PARTICIPANT 15: I would give them a two out of five just because when they responded in their email, it was just an apology, there was nothing else, and because of that, that's why I would give them a lower rating, but everything else was okay.

0:17:00.0 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, and so do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

0:17:10.6 PARTICIPANT 15: Because of their seats, probably I would say, yes.

0:17:18.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:17:30.0 PARTICIPANT 15: It made me a little bit angry at the stereotype that if there is the mother with the baby that they would always get the privilege and they don't consider the other people... For example, if someone has a visible disability, I don't need to explain myself that I have the disability, but because they see you walking and being healthy and fine, they automatically assume that you are and that who eventually will get the front seat as with my example is the mother and the baby, even if they are both healthy and fine.

0:18:03.2 RESEARCHER: Exactly, ok and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase a ticket with airline X even after your experience?

0:18:14.7 PARTICIPANT 15: No, they can't convince me, I don't think so. Like whatever they say, I don't think I will change my mind.

0:18:22.9 RESEARCHER: Alright, perfect. So, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:18:31.7 PARTICIPANT 15: Thank you for having me. Bye.

Participant 16:

0:00:01.9 RESEARCHER: Hi, could you please introduce yourself really quick?

0:00:10.9 PARTICIPANT 16: Hi, my name is participant 16, from Kuwait. I work in the banking sector, I graduated back in 2013 and my major's management.

0:00:34.0 RESEARCHER: Ok, so within the last 6 months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:47.4 PARTICIPANT 16: Yes, I had an experience with airline X, I was traveling from Kuwait to Barcelona and the trip I will be mentioning is the transit flight back to Kuwait.

0:01:01.4 RESEARCHER: Ok, and could you describe the reason for travel and what travel class you booked?

0:01:09.9 PARTICIPANT 16: It was for tourism, and I booked premium economy because they give you extra seat room and more baggage allowance, I think it was 40 kilos.

0:01:25.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:01:34.9 PARTICIPANT 16: For two reasons, the first is because it was the least duration to Barcelona. I prefer low durations, I don't like going for long flights, so the shorter the better. Also, because I prefer traveling on Airbus and not Boeing, as they have more

comfortable seats than Boeing coming from personal experience.

0:02:05.9 RESEARCHER: Ok, nice, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:02:16.4 PARTICIPANT 16: Yes, I booked my tickets through the airline's official website, as you can book directly through your debit card, so no need to have a credit card. So that's why I prefer booking my tickets through the debit card, as you don't need to pay fees when booking unlike a credit card.

0:02:27.0 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:02:35.4 PARTICIPANT 16: Actually, first of all, I like to check if the website looks professional, if everything is clear and simple. Then, I look at if there is a package or there is a promotion, sometimes the airline makes a promotion for business class, for the first class, but during my vacation, they stopped promotions because it was like the end of Black Friday for Europe.

0:03:03.4 RESEARCHER: Ok, and if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:03:09.0 PARTICIPANT 16: It was easy, and everything was clear, I would give them a five.

0:03:16.5 RESEARCHER: Ok, so could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:03:22.3 PARTICIPANT 16: Yes, so we checked-in in the counter, everything was ok with no problems, my issue was when we landed after the transit flight waiting to go back to Kuwait.

0:03:41.7 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:03:47.7 PARTICIPANT 16: Definitely the customer interaction, even if you are late, the employee needs to be well-mannered into handling stressful situations.

0:03:54.7 RESEARCHER: Ok, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:03:58.7 PARTICIPANT 16: A five.

0:04:03.6 RESEARCHER: Ok, so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:04:09.4 PARTICIPANT 16: Yes, it does, like I need to be able to locate where everything is when for example you need someone to talk to or you are late for a flight, that's why I prefer smaller airports.

0:04:25.2 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, so moving on, how was the boarding process, like have you waited a long time for your flight?

0:04:32.9 PARTICIPANT 16: Yes, so here is where the problems started, when we arrived at the transit airport trying to board our next flight. They told me you're like 10 minutes late, and we can't take you back to Kuwait, so you will travel on the next flight, which is around four hours later, and I saw two people who were with me in the plane and I saw them enter the plane where I got refused. So, I went to airline X's counter, and I told them why have you let other people to travel back to Kuwait while me and my family have to stay back here for four hours. The employee over there was very rude, very disrespectful, he told me to wait. I told him, ok, but at least give me lounge access or give me something. He said if you want to book a hotel, then you have to pay money. I told them, It's not my mistake, it's your mistake. Like I'm not asking for a hotel, at least give me a lounge to stay in, till the next flight. He told me no, you have to pay, you have to pay money to stay in the lounge, and on top of that, he was rude with his answers, I asked to call the manager, so I told him the story and he didn't give me a brief answer. He was playing around with his answers and was being indirect, like he was saying, oh, we are there for you, we will help you and do everything for you. I thought he could give me a solution, but he's not giving me a solution. What bothered me with the flight was that the two people that were with me on the previous flight managed to go and It was already late, I didn't sleep and managed to stay awake for over 15 hours and was very tired. So, since that day, I told to myself that I will never ever book with airline X. I wasn't happy with everything, with their service, with their attitude.

0:07:26.3 RESEARCHER: Wow, I'm sorry that happened to you. So, if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:07:32.9 PARTICIPANT 16: For sure a one.

0:07:36.3 RESEARCHER: Ok, and could please describe your experience eventually entering the plane, like what did you first notice?

0:07:43.9 PARTICIPANT 16: It was ok, like I notice how clean the plane is and just headed to my seat.

0:07:49.3 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:07:54.4 PARTICIPANT 16: So, what I look for in the flight is definitely the seat comfort, of course, that comes number one. Their seats were ok, they weren't bad, they were ok. I liked the in-flight entertainment, they had nice movies. I don't usually eat on airplanes so I can't really judge their food, but other than that, yes that's it.

0:08:19.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and was it a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:08:26.4 PARTICIPANT 16: No, everything was smooth, it doesn't usually affect me personally.

0:08:30.1 RESEARCHER: Ok, so if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:35.4 PARTICIPANT 16: Like a four.

0:08:38.1 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, and could you please describe the process after landing?

0:08:42.9 PARTICIPANT 16: Yes, so we got our bags fast actually, everything went smooth, and after landing I sent an email to airline X to complain about what happened and to this day, haven't received a reply back from them.

0:08:52.7 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, and if you could kindly rate the process after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:58.9 PARTICIPANT 16: I would say four also.

0:09:03.7 RESEARCHER: Ok, and could you please rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:09:11.6 PARTICIPANT 16: I'll go with two.

0:09:15.9 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, okay, so do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X solely based on your past experience?

0:09:23.6 PARTICIPANT 16: No, no, never.

0:09:28.9 RESEARCHER: Ok, and how has this experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:09:35.0 PARTICIPANT 16: Actually, before this experience I was loyal to airline X, and after this experience I became not loyal to them.

0:09:46.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase your tickets with airline X, even after your experience?

0:09:54.0 PARTICIPANT 16: No, they can't, once I made up my mind about them, it's very hard to convince me otherwise.

0:10:06.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, so thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:10:13.0 PARTICIPANT 16: Thank you.

Participant 18:

0:00:01.7 RESEARCHER: Hi, could you please introduce yourself really quick?

0:00:08.1 PARTICIPANT 18: Hi, my name is participant 18, I live in Kuwait, and I'm a software engineer.

0:00:19.2 RESEARCHER: Ok, so within the last 6 months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:26.8 PARTICIPANT 18: Yes, it was with airline X, like four months ago.

0:00:32.4 RESEARCHER: Ok, and could you describe the reason for travel and what travel class you booked?

0:00:39.8 PARTICIPANT 18: It was to visit a friend, I booked economy.

0:00:44.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:00:51.6 PARTICIPANT 18: It was because I know the airlines, I have flown with them before and I trust them.

0:01:03.9 RESEARCHER: Ok, nice, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:10.8 PARTICIPANT 18: The booking process was fairly easy, I booked online.

0:01:16.1 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:01:21.3 PARTICIPANT 18: Well, for me, it needs to be easy, like I need for everything to finish fast, like it's all about the ease of use. When I'm on their website, the information needs to be straightforward and clear.

0:01:43.4 RESEARCHER: Ok, and if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:01:56.2 PARTICIPANT 18: Umm, I would give them a five.

0:02:02.3 RESEARCHER: Ok, so could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:09.2 PARTICIPANT 18: Okay, so starting from the check-in, I checked-in online and it was fairly easy, I went to the baggage drop area and everything was smooth throughout.

0:02:17.6 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:02:24.4 PARTICIPANT 18: I would say just getting things done in proper time because I just hate waiting, also, the way that you speak to me makes a difference, like you don't want to be waiting just so you could get a rude employee, and this has happened to me several times.

0:02:42.8 RESEARCHER: Ok, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five what would you give them?

0:02:48.7 PARTICIPANT 18: A five.

0:02:53.6 RESEARCHER: Ok, so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:02:59.2 PARTICIPANT 18: Yes definitely, I prefer smaller airports to be frank as it's much easier to locate and walk to your gate, especially when you're late for a flight.

0:03:13.1 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, so moving on, how was the boarding process, have you waited a long time for your flight?

0:03:22.2 PARTICIPANT 18: Yes, so we were all waiting for the plane to arrive and like there was no plane, like it still hasn't arrived. They made us wait for like two and a half hours and when the plane finally arrived, it took a lot of time for the people to leave the plane and then cleaning it, and like it wasn't even just about the waiting time, it was about how the airline responded like they haven't even calmed us down or let us know what was going on, they just left us there like you know what, you're just going to sit there for two and a half hours without us explaining anything, like no apology, no nothing. I don't know it's just weird, like coming from an airline like airline X, no one was there to explain what happened and everyone was just left there wondering, are we going to fly or is it going to get cancelled like what's going on you know, and no one responded like there weren't any staff present from the airline, like it was just weird, and things started getting even weirder, like this was just the boarding process.

0:05:47.3 RESEARCHER: Wow, I'm so sorry that happened to you. So, if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:05:56.9 PARTICIPANT 18: A one to be honest, because of the waiting time and because no one was there to explain what was going on, so I would give them a one.

0:06:10.3 RESEARCHER: Ok, and could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what did you first notice?

0:06:16.9 PARTICIPANT 18: Like what I first notice is how clean the planes are because they literally cleaned the plane really fast, so I notice how clean the seats are and also how the staff greet you and everything.

0:06:30.5 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:06:41.9 PARTICIPANT 18: I would say the seat comfort, okay, that's what I look for, like how comfortable my seats are, also how the crew members treat me, okay, this is very important, like how they respond, how they smile, it's important to me if they have the right attitude.

0:06:54.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how was the in-flight experience, were there any incidents that occurred?

0:07:03.1 PARTICIPANT 18: Yes, this is when things started to blow up, okay, so even after waiting forever to board to then sitting down, like no one came to apologize or nothing, they just continued the process as it is, and when I asked for a glass of water, no one gave me the water, and they were just very non-cholent and very rude, and while I was sitting in my seat, there was this person next to me who was just coughing and coughing and coughing, so because there's still Covid, I started panicking, and because I experienced Covid, my panic attack went through the roof and I started to feel very uncomfortable, so I got up my seat and went to a cabin crew member and I asked them to change my seat because the person next to me was just coughing very much, and they were like, sir you have to wait for the flight to

take off for you to change your seat. I was like, I am not waiting, I'm not waiting because I'm scared I might catch Covid, it's not just one or two coughs, it's a continuous cough, I couldn't sit there and I was like, I'm not gonna go back to my seat and I didn't know what else to tell them, like I told them because I do have a fear of Covid, and they were still insisting. So, eventually, they call the captain, and like people were watching, it was a full-blown scene. It's not like the plane was full, there were seats that were empty, like no one was boarding anymore, so I don't understand why I wasn't able to change my seat. So when the manager / captain came, I explained my situation, he was understanding, but still he was like, sir, I understand but it's protocol so please stay in your seat and when the flight takes off, you can change, and then here, I just couldn't, my panic attack just started getting even more intense, so I went back to my seat, the person was still coughing and it was so horrible, like I had to wait for a whole hour before I could change my seat, and I couldn't ever forget that experience because of it, because they wouldn't be considerate of the passenger's needs, like I paid for a ticket, they should be understanding of people's insecurities and also be more lenient towards this, like we're still in the middle of a pandemic. So, yeah, it was just horrible.

0:11:15.1 RESEARCHER: Wow, I'm so sorry that happened to you, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or was there turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:11:32.5 PARTICIPANT 18: Yes, there was slight turbulence, it severely impacts my experience. I do have a fear of flying and like I understand that it's something that's unavoidable and I wish there were ways for the passengers to not experience turbulence, but it does have an impact on my experience like, I remember I had a flight a while back and, it

was just turbulence all the way, and if I would rate the entire flight, I'd rate it a one just because of the turbulence, so yeah it does have an impact.

0:12:12.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:12:19.4 PARTICIPANT 18: One out of five for sure.

0:12:26.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the process after landing, did you wait a long time for your luggage?

0:12:36.7 PARTICIPANT 18: Yeah, so the process after landing was smooth, once we arrived, the luggage was already there, so everything went smoothly.

0:12:47.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate your experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:12:55.2 PARTICIPANT 18: I would give them a five, like nothing happened.

0:13:02.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:13:08.5 PARTICIPANT 18: I would give them a two out of five, because of the wait, and also because of the lack of empathy, like they need to understand their customers and they don't, it's like protocol over the customers' needs, you know, and that's what I don't like. It's

like you have to make exceptions for some cases, like I have severe health anxiety, and the person was like severely coughing, I don't know if he had Covid or not, but because Covid has impacted me severely, so they should be more lenient with their protocols, especially in a pandemic, so yeah, two out of five.

0:13:58.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and do feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X, solely based on your past experience with them?

0:14:06.1 PARTICIPANT 18: Actually… I would if I didn't have any other choice, but if I had a choice between airline X and another airline, I'd choose the other airline in a heartbeat, because I didn't really like the way their staff handles situations, like their service is also bad, so yeah, I wouldn't choose them, but if it came down to convenience, I would.

0:14:42.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards airline X?

0:14:49.3 PARTICIPANT 18: Negatively of course, because I wouldn't willingly choose them again after what happened unless I absolutely had to, like every time I remember that airline, I'm going to remember this experience.

0:15:05.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase another ticket with airline X, even after your past experience with them?

0:15:16.5 PARTICIPANT 18: No, no, they wouldn't. They can't influence my decision, if I

had a really bad experience, I wouldn't be influenced. I'd influence them, it'll be the other way around.

0:15:31.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, so thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:15:37.1 PARTICIPANT 18: Thank you for having me, good luck with your thesis.

0:15:47.3 RESEARCHER: Thank you.

Participant 19:

0:00:01.3 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:05.4 PARTICIPANT 19: Hi, I'm good, how are you?

0:00:10.1 RESEARCHER: Good, good, can you please introduce yourself really quick?

0:00:16.2 PARTICIPANT 19: Yeah sure, my name is Participant 19, I'm Lebanese and I'm a teacher.

0:00:23.1 RESEARCHER: Ok, so within the last six months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:27.6 PARTICIPANT 19: Yes, I have, with Airline X about two months ago.

0:00:31.3 RESEARCHER: Ok, could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:36.5 PARTICIPANT 19: It was a personal trip actually, basically to go see my mother in London who was sick at the time.

0:00:43.2 RESEARCHER: Oh, I'm sorry about that, I hope she's doing well now.

0:00:47.9 PARTICIPANT 19: Yes, thank you.

0:00:51.7 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what travel class did you book?

0:00:56.3 PARTICIPANT 19: I booked business.

0:00:59.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, so could you describe why you chose Airline X specifically to travel?

0:01:04.8 PARTICIPANT 19: Well, I chose them specifically because of the timings, I usually fly with other airlines but because it was direct to London I chose to book with them, even though I don't really have experience with them, like I booked with them a long time ago, but I don't remember the trips, but for this one, I obviously remembered because a lot of things happened.

0:01:22.1 RESEARCHER: Oh wow, ok, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:27.2 PARTICIPANT 19: Yeah, so I booked my ticket with a travel agent because I usually like when I go to a travel agent, they book the whole package and everything, and that's why I prefer doing it with them.

0:01:39.0 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:01:44.8 PARTICIPANT 19: Umm for me, it's basically how I get treated, that's why, like for example, the interaction between me and the employees, how professional they are, how long I have to wait for them to book the process, I just want it to be an easy process, but at the same time like the travel agent themselves need to be very professional.

0:01:59.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, so if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:02:08.4 PARTICIPANT 19: I'd give them a five, the treatment was really good, and it was just an easy process.

0:02:15.5 RESEARCHER: Ok, awesome, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:20.1 PARTICIPANT 19: Alright, so basically it was me and my cousin, we went to the airport and during the check-in, the employee on the counter, she was like you need to have the like the country's vaccine application installed with the two vaccine doses showing on your phone. So I basically explained to her that I don't have the application installed and that

I have the UK NHS application instead, which is the country that I'm visiting, installed showing the two vaccines, so like there's proof, then she was like no this won't be accepted. So, I tried to do it, I downloaded it, but it showed that they needed time to approve the vaccinations that I did in the UK. So, I explained to her my situation and the manager came and everything, and they insisted that it needed to get approved first, even though my friend, like I know someone who traveled without the app, they were like, it's fine if you just have the NHS app. So, moving on, I explained my situation to the manager, I explained to them that my mom was sick, I explained to them everything, and they were very apathetic, they weren't even concerned, they behaved very robotic and weren't giving me what a human being feels for another human being. They were just very cutthroat, which I did not appreciate it at all. Like their attitude, their attitude was just very appalling, I couldn't believe that was the attitude from them, like the way they handled this. So basically, after a long process of me trying to convince the manager and everything, they eventually approve the two doses and I got to travel just in time, finally.

0:06:01.2 RESEARCHER: Wow, ok, I'm so sorry that happened to you.

0:06:06.6 PARTICIPANT 19: Thank you.

0:06:12.3 RESEARCHER: So, what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:06:18.7 PARTICIPANT 19: It's definitely the interaction, the way that they handle situations, the way that they talk to me, you know, because if they're rude and everything and not appreciative like they were, it just makes my experience, like my whole trip, it just ruins

it. For me, that's like everything, the mood, the attitude.

0:06:36.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, cool and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:06:41.5 PARTICIPANT 19: Definitely a one. My check-in experience was just very, very bad.

0:06:46.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, ok, so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:06:50.8 PARTICIPANT 19: Yes, yes it does. I prefer airports to have things going on, like many things open, like restaurants, some cafe shops. I like that, and specifically for the airport that I traveled through, they didn't have anything, like everything was closed or shut down or whatever, so I was just, I was there like so bored, I wanted at least just a coffee or whatever, and everything was shut down, I don't know why at the time, maybe they're doing refurbishments or something, but at the same time, I didn't appreciate that. So yeah, definitely, the airport does have an impact on my experience.

0:07:22.0 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, so moving on, how was the boarding process, like did you wait a long time for your flight?

0:07:26.5 PARTICIPANT 19: The boarding process was okay, like the plane got there on time, everything went smoothly and yeah, like there wasn't anything special. I was just bored waiting because there wasn't anything to do in the airport.

0:07:37.3 RESEARCHER: Ok, and if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:07:43.9 PARTICIPANT 19: I would give them a four just because like, it wasn't my favorite experience, it was ok.

0:07:48.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, ok, and could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what did you first notice?

0:07:56.6 PARTICIPANT 19: What I first noticed were the cabin crew, like how they smile, how they greet you and everything, and that's very important, it sets the tone for how the service is going to be, in my opinion, like that smile and friendliness is how I basically know if that crew member is going to be still stoic or rude, or if they're going to be friendly and smiling all the time, it's very apparent from that moment.

0:08:31.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:08:37.4 PARTICIPANT 19: What's very important to me is of course the service, the interaction, like if I want a glass of water or a drink or anything, that they cater to it and they bring it to me fast, and they smile and they say here you go, I hope you have a pleasant flight or what not, like these things are very important to me, as well as the seat comfort, that's why I book business, because the comfort of the seats are very important, especially in long flights, because if I don't have anything to watch or whatever downloaded on my phone or

iPad, like I just want to sleep. So yeah these are all very important.

0:10:01.2 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, and were there any incidents that occurred during the flight?

0:10:06.4 PARTICIPANT 19: Yes actually, so we had food and everything and they were removing people's meals and stuff, and basically the flight attendant came, and I basically asked her for another glass of water, and so she was like yes sure ok and after that, no one came. Like especially in business class, you would think after paying extra for the ticket like the service is going to be phenomenal, but in this case, it was just very disappointing like I don't know what they were doing, the crew members were just not always around, they were just literally around for the food and have just asked me once if everything was ok, only during the beginning of the flight. So, I was surprised, like I turned on the flight attendant button, like I pressed that and still no one came, so I was just very, like it was awkward, but other than that, it was just an average flight, like nothing really special. The seats were ok, they weren't like wow. The service was basically there, but not there, so it was just an average, less than expected flight to be honest.

0:11:33.3 RESEARCHER: Ok, and did you experience a smooth ride overall, or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:11:47.2 PARTICIPANT 19: Yes, because you don't want a shaky flight, like if it always shakes, everyone is bound to feel very anxious, like even though turbulence is normal, I wish they would like, I don't know, maybe invent something in the future for the plane to not always shake like that because it's very scary for people who have anxiety like me or like

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overall, you know.

0:12:09.7 RESEARCHER: Yeah, alright, ok, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:12:17.7 PARTICIPANT 19: Like a three, I would give them a three because there wasn't anything special. I expected better service and better seats, but it was ok.

0:12:28.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, ok, and could you please describe the process after landing?

0:12:34.8 PARTICIPANT 19: Yeah, so basically we land and everything and like everything went smoothly until I had like a mini scare as receiving the bags took longer than expected, like I couldn't find them, but eventually I found them and I was like thank god it didn't get lost or something, so yeah.

0:12:50.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate your experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:12:56.1 PARTICIPANT 19: Like a four.

0:13:02.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:13:08.2 PARTICIPANT 19: I would give them a three, like overall, it was just a very

average flight, it wasn't very special, I had difficulties along the way, my experience wasn't that good, it was just meh, like that's a perfect word to describe the experience, meh.

0:13:21.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, ok, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X, solely based on your experience with them?

0:13:28.9 PARTICIPANT 19: Honestly no, like I expected better from them and like for future instances, I won't be purchasing another ticket with them.

0:13:38.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:13:46.4 PARTICIPANT 19: I would say it just, like my expectations were high and it fell like really, really short after that experience, so my attitude towards them is obviously negative because I won't be purchasing another ticket with them, like I expected better. Better service, better seats, better everything, especially since I purchased a business class ticket, so yeah.

0:14:14.5 RESEARCHER: Ok, alright, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase a ticket with airline X, even after your experience?

0:14:22.3 PARTICIPANT 19: I wouldn't say they can influence me, but if everyone decided to book airline X because they can't find another trip or whatever, I would be like ok, but if it was on my own terms, I wouldn't fly with them no.

0:14:35.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, ok, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

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0:14:41.8 PARTICIPANT 19: You're welcome, thank you for having me.

Participant 20:

0:00:02.8 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:04.9 PARTICIPANT 20: I'm good, thank you. How are you?

0:00:06.5 RESEARCHER: Good, thank you. Could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:10.5 PARTICIPANT 20: Okay, my name is Participant 20, I'm a civil engineer and I live in London.

0:00:16.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and within the last 6 months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:26.2 PARTICIPANT 20: Yes, I will be talking about airline X, a trip from London to Istanbul.

0:00:36.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:41.4 PARTICIPANT 20: Tourism.

0:00:44.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, what travel class did you book?

0:00:49.9 PARTICIPANT 20: It was economy.

0:00:52.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, so could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:00:57.9 PARTICIPANT 20: It wasn't for a specific reason, at that time, I just had to fly back home, and that flight was the only one available.

0:01:08.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:18.8 PARTICIPANT 20: I booked through their website; the process was ok.

0:01:21.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:01:44.7 PARTICIPANT 20: Umm, the website needs to look professional, it needs to be easy you know, not too complicated and… that's it.

0:02:05.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate your booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:02:19.5 PARTICIPANT 20: A five.

0:02:20.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:39.1 PARTICIPANT 20: Yes so, I arrive at the airport and I drop my baggage off as I checked-in online and it was a fairly easy process, nothing major that happened.

0:02:44.0 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:02:54.3 PARTICIPANT 20: I would have to say waiting time, because sometimes you need to wait for ages when in-line or when dealing with the staff.

0:03:08.0 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:03:15.6 PARTICIPANT 20: I would give them five for the check-in experience, it was quick so yeah.

0:03:19.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, and so do you feel like the airport itself has an

impact on your experience?

0:03:27.1 PARTICIPANT 20: It does definitely because obviously, if it is a smaller airport, it means that I can get to my gate on time without having to worry if I'll be late or not, especially if you're transiting you know.

0:03:39.1 RESEARCHER: Yeah, alright and have you waited a long time for your flight, like how was the boarding process?

0:03:46.9 PARTICIPANT 20: It was good, I didn't wait for a long time.

0:03:51.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:03:55.9 PARTICIPANT 20: Umm, I would give them a five.

0:04:02.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, so moving on, could you please describe your experience entering the plane, what did you first notice?

0:04:12.7 PARTICIPANT 20: I think the cleanliness is really important because when you go on to specific planes sometimes like they leave things, especially in the seating area where the pocket is, so many times I have experienced that with the people leaving before you, they leave their stuff and it's not been taken out, so yeah, I will say the cleanliness.

0:04:39.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during

the in-flight experience?

0:04:45.4 PARTICIPANT 20: Definitely how comfortable the seats are like that is the most important things for me, especially during long flight hours, you know.

0:05:02.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:05:16.6 PARTICIPANT 20: It does yeah, it's very scary, but for this specific trip I didn't experience any turbulence as it was also during the summertime as well.

0:05:25.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:05:31.4 PARTICIPANT 20: A five.

0:05:33.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, so could you please describe the process after landing?

0:05:38.8 PARTICIPANT 20: Okay, so what happened is when I arrived, my luggage got lost, I was waiting in the airport for a whole two hours and then just asking around, and then they said that my luggage wasn't there, and then when I ran to the desk, they couldn't help much as they were saying that I checked in my bag but it's not there and that I needed to wait, so I had to obviously go as it wasn't my last destination as well, I had to take an internal flight to another city and I had to travel without my luggage, so it wasn't the best experience I had. Imagine, what happened is that after seven days, they contacted me back to say that

apparently, I checked-in late which wasn't true because I was there two hours before the flight time, so apparently my luggage, it was here so it didn't make it to the plane, so that was the reason, but they were saying, actually, I arrived and I contacted the airline, and then they were saying oh, your luggage is already on the plane, so it should be there. So, after the investigation, they figured out that it never made it to the plane, so yeah, I received it after like seven days.

0:07:07.9 RESEARCHER: Wow, I'm sorry that happened to you, okay so if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:07:12.8 PARTICIPANT 20: Definitely, one.

0:07:16.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X, what would you give them?

0:07:22.0 PARTICIPANT 20: I would give them a two. I mean, after this experience, I have never flown with them again, because they weren't really being helpful, and then also I had a return ticket as well, and with the return ticket, I couldn't make it because I had to have an emergency surgery back home, and then even though I explained the situation to them, they literally refused to be of any help, like it wasn't a big deal, but it was just kind of you know, just being in that kind of situation, you kind of have to accept it and move on, and yeah obviously, I missed my plane and didn't make it, and then one month later, I booked another airline and came back to London.

0:08:13.1 RESEARCHER: Wow, I'm so sorry, so do you feel like purchasing another ticket

with airline X, even after your experience with them?

0:08:18.0 PARTICIPANT 20: No, never.

0:08:22.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards airline X?

0:08:29.6 PARTICIPANT 20: I mean, it wasn't anything against the airline specifically, but the reason I just decided not to fly with them anymore is because of their staff not being helpful and understanding when I had my surgery, and also, losing your luggage for a week and not having any clothes to wear, this all negatively impacted my attitude towards them.

0:09:01.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase with airline X?

0:09:05.6 PARTICIPANT 20: Umm, maybe yeah, if everyone decided to board with them, then I might consider it.

0:09:11.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:09:15.6 PARTICIPANT 20: Thank you, no problem.

Participant 21:

0:00:01.1 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:04.3 PARTICIPANT 21: Hi, I'm good, how are you?

0:00:07.7 RESEARCHER: I'm good thank you. Could you please introduce yourself really quick?

0:00:12.2 PARTICIPANT 21: Hi, my name is Participant 21, I'm British, and I live in Manchester.

0:00:15.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, so within the last six months, have you experienced any trip with an airline?

0:00:22.7 PARTICIPANT 21: Yes, I have, it was with airline X and I was flying to Sweden.

0:00:31.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:38.0 PARTICIPANT 21: Yeah, it was just for visiting some friends.

0:00:44.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, and what travel class have you booked?

0:00:50.5 PARTICIPANT 21: I booked economy.

0:00:56.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, so could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:01:07.7 PARTICIPANT 21: Umm, well, they're very convenient. It was just like really good prices and they had the timings that I wanted for that trip.

0:01:18.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, so could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:22.7 PARTICIPANT 21: Yeah, so I booked through their website and yeah, everything was clear, everything was simple, it was just an easy process.

0:01:36.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:01:43.4 PARTICIPANT 21: For me, it's basically how clear and simple the website is, and just booking and getting the process of paying for a package for example, everything has

to be clear and concise as I don't want a website that's very complicated and not user friendly.

0:02:05.9 RESEARCHER: Of course, and if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:02:11.1 PARTICIPANT 21: I would give them a 5 because it was a very easy process, and nothing happened really.

0:02:18.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, awesome, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:29.9 PARTICIPANT 21: Umm, okay, so starting from the check-in, it went smoothly, like I usually check-in online and just drop my bags off, and I remember that went by pretty fast.

0:02:44.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:02:49.0 PARTICIPANT 21: Oh, definitely the waiting time, I hate waiting for anything, the process has to be very smooth, easy and fast.

0:02:55.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:03:05.2 PARTICIPANT 21: I would give them a five, the process went smoothly.

0:03:12.7 RESEARCHER: Nice, okay, so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:03:18.5 PARTICIPANT 21: Not really, not for me. The airport, obviously, it has to be nice and everything, but it doesn't impact me personally, it's just like a transit place for me, not my destination.

0:03:32.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, so moving on, how was the boarding process, like have you waited a long time for your flight?

0:03:39.6 PARTICIPANT 21: The boarding process was okay, nothing really that happened, like we boarded on time and everything, so I was pleased about that.

0:03:56.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the boarding process out of five, what would you give them?

0:04:01.4 PARTICIPANT 21: I would give them a five.

0:04:04.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, so moving on, could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what do you usually first notice?

0:04:10.2 PARTICIPANT 21: What I first noticed is how clean the plane is, like for me that's very important, especially near my seat.

0:04:17.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and what do feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:04:24.1 PARTICIPANT 21: I would say it's the handling, like with the crew members and everything, because what happened with me during the trip was just appalling, I literally couldn't believe what I experienced. Basically, when the food came and everything, one of the crew members was just looking at me really funny, she just kept on giving me these stares, I was just smiling and everything was and she was just giving me these glares and I couldn't understand, like is it the color of my skin, like I just don't understand. So, when the food came, she just literally threw the sandwich at me, like at my tray table and I just found that to be very, very rude, and then when it was time to pick up the trash, she came in with another crew member, picked up the trash, glared at me and started talking to her peer, I don't know what language that was but they were clearly talking about me. I just felt very uncomfortable, I just sat there and was like, what did I do? Why did you do that? And so I just felt very uncomfortable for the rest of the trip.

0:06:18.6 RESEARCHER: Wow, I'm so sorry that happened to you, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:06:26.9 PARTICIPANT 21: No, it doesn't really, there wasn't any turbulence, it was a smooth flight.

0:06:34.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out

of five, what would you give them?

0:06:39.7 PARTICIPANT 21: Based on that experience, I would give them a one. I just felt very, very uncomfortable the entire trip. If it was something that I did, then okay. I would actually say, okay, I did something and there was a reason, but there wasn't actually a reason for her to do that. I don't know, maybe she's just racist or... I don't know, I honestly don't know.

0:07:08.5 RESEARCHER: Yeah, okay, and could you please describe the process after landing?

0:07:15.5 PARTICIPANT 21: Nothing special, just landed. Everything was okay, and when I was leaving the plane, like that flight attendant was there and she didn't even look at me, like to say bye or anything, like she honestly made me feel like I had a personal beef with her, I don't understand. So clearly, after that, I left a huge complaint. I sent them an email, like the airline, and I referenced the flight number, I wasn't really sure what her name was, but I described what she looked like as she had this red dark hair and had really prominent facial features, so that's why I described her and yeah there wasn't any reply imagine, like the flight was like three months ago, and I still didn't receive a reply to this day, and I sent like a reminder email, but no one replied to me. So yeah.

0:09:07.9 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, alright, and if you would kindly rate your experience after landing, what would you give them?

0:09:16.2 PARTICIPANT 21: I'd give them a two because even like after, it took a while

for them to get our luggage out so just the cherry on top of that experience.

0:09:27.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X, what would you give them?

0:09:33.3 PARTICIPANT 21: I would give them a two, it was just a very uncomfortable experience, especially with what happened inside the flight, like the boarding was nice, everything was nice, but that particular experience ruined everything. The food wasn't even good. The seats were uncomfortable, like really, really uncomfortable, and yeah, overall a two.

0:09:54.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

0:10:03.8 PARTICIPANT 21: I would, okay, especially because they're a very convenient airline, like their prices, timings and everything. However, if I find another airline that is as cheap or had similar timings, then hands down I would fly with the other airline as I did not like the way they handled everything, like after the situation and not replying to my emails, so yeah.

0:10:54.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards airline X?

0:11:02.1 PARTICIPANT 21: Umm…for sure negatively, I thought they would at least have friendly staff that were trained to smile at you or something, that's why I know if I had a

choice, I wouldn't fly with them ever again.

0:11:21.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, and do you feel like your peers, or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase another ticket with airline X, even after your experience?

0:11:35.3 PARTICIPANT 21: Umm… yes, yes they can…like if we were all going away for a girls trip or whatever, like yeah sure, I'd tag along with them, but if it was like, if there was another airline option, then I would definitely persuade them to take the other one, you know.

0:12:08.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:12:17.6 PARTICIPANT 21: You're welcome, good luck with your project.

0:12:24.5 RESEARCHER: Thank you, bye.

0:12:27.1 PARTICIPANT 21: Bye.

Participant 22:

0:00:01.4 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:05.2 PARTICIPANT 22: Hi there, good thank you.

0:00:09.7 RESEARCHER: Could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:15.1 PARTICIPANT 22: My name is Participant 22, I'm Australian, and a sales manager.

0:00:21.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, so within the last six months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:27.5 PARTICIPANT 22: Yes, I have, it was with airline X. I was flying from Sydney to Los Angeles.

0:00:36.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, could you please describe your reason for travel?

0:00:42.2 PARTICIPANT 22: Yeah, it was just to see some friends, so tourism.

0:00:48.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what travel class did you book?

0:00:54.3 PARTICIPANT 22: I booked a business class ticket.

0:00:59.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:01:05.9 PARTICIPANT 22: Well at the time, it was just convenient, I was looking at other airlines too, but it seemed like the better option.

0:01:13.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:19.5 PARTICIPANT 22: I booked my ticket through their website by finding deals online, so that's why it led me straight to their website and have booked there.

0:01:29.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:01:34.6 PARTICIPANT 22: For me, it's the convenience of it, so the ease of use, how clear everything is, especially when you fill in your details and everything, I just want it to be really simple and easy.

0:01:46.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:01:56.7 PARTICIPANT 22: I would say like a three. It wasn't an amazing experience or website for that matter, it was just average.

0:02:07.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:15.2 PARTICIPANT 22: Okay, so I remember going to the airport, dropping off my luggage, I usually check-in online to avoid the long ques as I hate waiting, so I went to the kiosk machine to print my ticket and luggage tag, dropped my bag off and left for the gate.

0:02:31.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:02:37.8 PARTICIPANT 22: Umm, what's important to me is that I don't wait, like no waiting time would be very ideal, I just hate waiting in line mate, that's why I just finish my things earlier and check-in online.

0:02:50.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:03:02.0 PARTICIPANT 22: I would say a five. It went really smoothly and everything,

no ques, no hassle.

0:03:13.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:03:20.0 PARTICIPANT 22: Well, yeah, it does because airports in general, they need to be smaller in size, I hate big airports, you get lost and you waste time, especially when you're late for your transit or something, I just prefer them to be smaller airports.

0:03:42.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how was the boarding process, have you waited a long time for your flight?

0:03:48.6 PARTICIPANT 22: The boarding process was smooth. Everything went smoothly, up until I was on the plane.

0:03:57.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:04:02.1 PARTICIPANT 22: I would say five.

0:04:06.0 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, so moving on, could you please describe your experience entering the plane, what do you usually first notice?

0:04:14.9 PARTICIPANT 22: Umm, I usually just go directly to my seat and I usually notice if the seats are nice or not, especially if it's a plane, like an airline I've never been with

before, it was the first time for me flying with airline X, and it was business class, so I didn't know what to expect.

0:04:35.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:04:43.5 PARTICIPANT 22: Definitely the seat comfort, I usually book business or first because of the seats as I generally tend to sleep on flights. So yeah, just how comfortable the seats are and yeah, that's basically what I look for.

0:04:56.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and were there any incidents that occurred during this flight?

0:05:03.3 PARTICIPANT 22: Well, yeah, basically the engine exploded, everyone heard a loud boom and we all got super scared, like the Captain told us that one engine malfunctioned, but there's a back-up engine so no need to panic, but the way they said, they said it so nonchalantly, it scared us even more, like it wasn't a big deal. Everyone was panicking throughout the entire duration of that flight, like the rest of the eight hours, we were just all on edge, especially me, I was very anxious. I took sleeping pills just to forget about that because I couldn't sleep and yeah, it was just a horrible experience living through that, as it doesn't often happen to people.

0:06:05.4 RESEARCHER: Oh, wow, I'm so sorry you had to go through that, and was there turbulence along the way, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:06:18.4 PARTICIPANT 22: Well, yeah, especially with turbulence and everything, that has just added to the fear. We had a shaking plane, had one engine and it was just horrible, like my anxiety was through the roof that day and it lingered on for quite some time, It was just such an awful experience that I'm very reluctant to travel unless it's with a very reputable airline.

0:06:37.9 RESEARCHER: Oh wow, again I'm so sorry that happened to you.

0:06:42.3 PARTICIPANT 22: Thank you.

0:06:46.1 RESEARCHER: So, if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:06:57.3 PARTICIPANT 22: I would give them a one, even less than that, it was just horrible and I didn't like the way they handled this crisis, and this was a crisis, they just handled it very, very poorly, they didn't calm the passengers down, didn't reassure us about the procedures and that this for example, these things happen and whatever, it was just a shock to us all.

0:07:22.3 RESEARCHER: Wow, and could you please describe the process after landing?

0:07:28.5 PARTICIPANT 22: So yeah, the landing went smoothly, everyone wanted to get out of the plane as soon as possible, and I was seated at the front so I was one of the first ones to rush to the airport, I got myself some water, sat down and just took some deep breaths, appreciating that I'm alive and well. I remember the bags arrived early, but there weren't

many people, then I figured that many of them went to complain to get compensated or something because I remember one person just screaming the entire time, like she wasn't having it.

0:08:09.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:18.2 PARTICIPANT 22: I would say like a three. The process was okay, it was just the trauma that lingered on from what had happened. I also went to the desk after receiving my luggage to ask for compensation and it was just a mess.

0:08:30.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:37.8 PARTICIPANT 22: I would give them a one hands down. The airline should have known better, they should have handled it better, they should have calmed the passengers down and instead they just left it there, like for the last eight hours of the flight, everyone was just quiet and people were screaming, people were panicking, and they didn't handle it properly, so I'd give them a one.

0:09:02.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

0:09:07.9 PARTICIPANT 22: No, for sure no, with an experience like that, you're basically traumatized for life.

0:09:17.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:09:22.2 PARTICIPANT 22: I would never fly with them again, that's how much it influenced my attitude, because it's a matter of safety at the end of the day, like if it was anything else, then I'd let it go, but it's a safety matter, so no, I'd never be able to forget that.

0:09:36.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to repurchase another ticket with airline X, even after your previous experience them?

0:09:45.0 PARTICIPANT 22: No never, even if they wanted to book with that airline, I'll book another one and meet them wherever.

0:09:52.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, thank you so much for the interview, and again I'm so sorry that you had to go through that, it's not easy.

0:09:58.7 PARTICIPANT 22: Thank you, I appreciate that mate, best of luck.

0:10:00.6 RESEARCHER: Thank you, bye.

0:10:01.5 PARTICIPANT 22: Bye.

Participant 23:

0:00:02.4 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:09.2 PARTICIPANT 23: I'm fine, doing good.

0:00:12.5 RESEARCHER: Could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:16.4 PARTICIPANT 23: My name is Participant 23, I'm 26 years old, I work in the oil industry, I'm Kuwaiti and yeah that's it.

0:00:25.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, so within 6 months have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:28.6 PARTICIPANT 23: Yes, airline X.

0:00:31.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:35.2 PARTICIPANT 23: Tourism.

0:00:38.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what travel class did you book?

0:00:44.7 PARTICIPANT 23: I booked business class.

0:00:48.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please describe why you chose airline X to travel with?

0:00:55.9 PARTICIPANT 23: I always choose airline X because it's the safest option for me, I trust them because I've had experiences with them before.

0:01:07.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:14.9 PARTICIPANT 23: I booked through a travel agent, the price was very good, and uh, one second… sorry about that and yeah, it had nice timings as well.

0:01:26.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:01:38.7 PARTICIPANT 23: How easy the process is, like how the travel agency finishes the procedures in time and how they treat their customers is very important, that's why I deal with an agent I trust to handle everything for me.

0:01:52.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the booking process out of

five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:01:59.2 PARTICIPANT 23: Five.

0:02:03.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:07.2 PARTICIPANT 23: Yeah so first off, we couldn't check-in online for the safety, we had to check-in the airport, so they could ask some questions like, why are you traveling during that time, and why are you going to visit Beirut? This is the kind of questions that they were asking us about, the reasons and where we are going to stay in Beirut, it's for our safety.

0:02:31.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:02:36.7 PARTICIPANT 23: It's the way they handle everything, like how the employee talks to you and everything makes a difference to me.

0:02:48.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:02:53.1 PARTICIPANT 23: Actually, it was five, and it's like one of those times that the safety is more important than anything else. Especially now when they need to make sure that everything goes smoothly, like they were asking some questions like, where are you going to stay, like the address, and they took our passports and they take copies also, they put our

names on the list, so they could know how many bags are going to be on the plane, like very detailed.

0:03:33.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:03:41.8 PARTICIPANT 23: Yeah, it does, I like airports that are small, like for this time, the security checks were the main theme, it was very secure at that time, for our safety, there were a lot of check points, they was checking our bags, like regularly, more than three times they were checking our luggage because of the safety, and so I've waited a long time before the boarding process, I don't know maybe they were searching for something specifically like a weapon or something like that, like they even took from us like any glass items in the bag, they took a few shampoos as well. They don't want anything flammable or sharp in the bags during the flight.

0:05:06.0 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the boarding process out of five?

0:05:09.7 PARTICIPANT 23: I would give them 3, it was just a hassle, but I get where they are coming from.

0:05:16.9 RESEARCHER: Alright, so moving on, could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what do you usually first notice?

0:05:23.3 PARTICIPANT 23: I noticed that everything was organized, they let us like wait

in the queue until they let us in the plane and also they did last checkups on the bags, they opened our carry-on bags again before entering the plane, they opened the bags again, there were two guys, I think they were from aviation protection. They opened the bags again and checked, every carry-on bag before entering the plane and then they organized the bags, like every passenger, and put the bags in your designated, like you can't leave your bag in the back and sit in the front. They put it like every passenger on top of his carry on. So yeah the reason why they do this I think is because that time, things were going on in the country or something happened that made them have these extra security checks with people. So, I think that's why they were very protective regarding the bags and what the bags contain and I don't know, I was like feeling a bit scared, like what's going on? This is the first time this has happened to us, but at the same time, the flight attendants were very nice, and they were explaining to us why they needed to keep opening our bags, and the whole procedure was very organized. They even apologized to us like they told me and my mom, we are sorry, this is an unusual thing that happened, but this is for safety matters, so please be understandable and they were really nice to my mother.

0:07:54.5 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, at least everything was in order, alright and so, what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:08:00.3 PARTICIPANT 23: Well… at that time, I was just looking for our safety to be honest, but I think because the flight attendants were explaining everything and were nice to us, I felt protected, like everything was going to be okay.

0:08:18.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:25.7 PARTICIPANT 23: Actually, it was five because they explained everything to us, they let us know why they are doing this, everyone was so very kind and nice and they made us feel so safe, so yeah we enjoyed the trip even though we had every reason to panic.

0:08:43.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, that's good, and did you experience a smooth ride overall, or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:08:54.7 PARTICIPANT 23: Not really, everything was nice and smooth, no issues.

0:08:59.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and so could you please describe the process after landing?

0:09:04.4 PARTICIPANT 23: After landing, there was an awkward thing that happened when we arrived, they took our names again and they took our passports, and they checked us. There were two men, again, not the same men that were from aviation protection. Anyway, they put us in a cue, they separated guys from families, and then there was another cue to check the bags again, they opened our carriers again and they check every bag that we have, they open the bags to check again if there were any weapons, explosives, that kind of stuff. They also took our address details again. We then took our bags from the airport that were already there when we came, and I'm pretty sure they opened them to check as well.

0:10:35.8 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, and if you would kindly rate the process after landing out five, what would you give them?

0:10:44.2 PARTICIPANT 23: After landing, it was fine, like I get where they are coming from so I would rate them five again.

0:10:56.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:11:06.2 PARTICIPANT 23: It was five out of five for me because of the safety procedures and protection, and the staff were also very nice during the flight.

0:11:18.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X, solely based on your past experience with them?

0:11:26.9 PARTICIPANT 23: Yeah, of course because when an unusual thing happened, they were extra cautious and the staff were explaining to us what was going on and calming us down, so yeah I would definitely fly with them again.

0:11:43.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards airline X?

0:11:50.8 PARTICIPANT 23: Very positively, like I liked the way that they explained everything to us, the way I felt protected, I felt more like I'm home, like this is my airlines, even in my flight, I felt protected 100%.

0:12:04.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to not purchase a ticket with airline X, even after your experience with them?

0:12:14.7 PARTICIPANT 23: Umm…I don't think they can. When I tell everyone about this, like the story that like something happened to another country and they hear how the airlines took proper care of us, they would automatically feel safe to purchase a ticket with them, because everyone likes the feeling of being safe on an airplane.

0:13:00.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:13:07.7 PARTICIPANT 23: No worries, take care.

Participant 24:

0:00:01.9 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:03.9 PARTICIPANT 24: I'm great thank you.

0:00:07.6 RESEARCHER: Could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:10.3 PARTICIPANT 24: My name is Participant 24, I'm 30 years old and I'm a freelancer.

0:00:15.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, so within the past 6 months have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:25.3 PARTICIPANT 24: Yes, it was a trip with airline X.

0:00:29.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:36.4 PARTICIPANT 24: It was for tourism, as well as we had a course to take for work, so we combined the two reasons.

0:00:44.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what travel class did you book?

0:00:48.8 PARTICIPANT 24: It was economy, we were a party of five.

0:01:00.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please explain why you chose to airline X specifically to travel with?

0:01:06.1 PARTICIPANT 24: I chose it because it had very convenient timing, as well as an appropriate timing for a layover.

0:01:25.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:34.6 PARTICIPANT 24: Well, I booked online for the whole group, through a third-party website. Sorry hold on… back, so yeah, I prefer it because they give me the comparison of different price tickets and stuff.

0:02:08.9 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:02:20.8 PARTICIPANT 24: I actually don't mind, like I'm very smooth when it comes to that, but I do like how the website is clear and straightforward, like comparing between different timings, the baggage weight allowance is also important and yeah.

0:02:42.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please rate the booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:03:01.2 PARTICIPANT 24: A five.

0:03:06.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:03:29.2 PARTICIPANT 24: Okay, so first off, like me as a person, I am very concerned with or I'm very adamant about the fact that we need to check-in online, just in case something happens during the way, like in the airport. So, I checked in online the night before when it was first available, for me and the entire group and have issued them boarding passes, so once I got to the airport, it was very smooth from there.

0:04:17.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:04:30.2 PARTICIPANT 24: The waiting time for sure. That's why I prefer checking in online, I don't like waiting, I don't like it when I give things to chance, so let's say I am late for some reason, something happens on the way, at least I have my boarding pass, they know I'm there.

0:04:48.0 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:04:53.2 PARTICIPANT 24: A five.

0:04:57.0 RESEARCHER: Okay, so moving on, do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:05:08.3 PARTICIPANT 24: No, but I would... unless if like there's a chance, unless the airport is a humongous airport and any change is inconvenient, it doesn't matter the size or the airport... actually, actually, actually, actually, sorry, it's important. Sorry, going back, the airport size is important as well as the ground staff that handle everything. So, all over the world, I've been to a lot of airports, there was just one airport that I will not go back to, and I haven't since because of their staff handling and my interaction with them.

0:06:17.1 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, and how was the boarding process, did you have to wait a long time for your flight?

0:06:28.6 PARTICIPANT 24: Boarding, was good, like I would give them a five. Everything was on time, there was no delay, even on the monitors, the flight showed it was on time, the gate opened on time, everything was good until we got on the plane, that's when things got... that's when things went bad. Let's say from that moment on. Yeah, so once we were on the plane and everything, we were waiting for departure, so we noticed that we were waiting for a while. So once things got uncomfortable and people started to feel the delay, feel fidgety and stuff, then the captain announced that we are waiting for a connecting flight to get to land in the airport that we're in for the other customers to board for their flights. So, he didn't actually mention waiting time at all, he's like we're going to departure as soon as the people board and yeah, we ended up waiting for almost approximately two hours and a half

and it was hot. It was conditioned, but it wasn't the conditioning that was cold, it was just basically hot air coming out. Children were crying and we just basically had no idea when we were leaving and like we had connecting flights, that was another concern, we had a connecting flight, like so when I calculated it, just based on of course, the timing of when we were gonna get there, when is the other timing of the next flight's departure, and then we had another connected flight, so I had to manage two different connecting flights based on the timings they announced, so these couple of hours delay was very, very bad for me and my group because I only calculated, like gave my group a time of, let's say 60 minutes in between each flight, so it gave us, like in my head, to give us enough time to land, go through customs, walk or get to the gate, and it was all good, but this two hour and a half hour wait was very bad.

0:09:31.9 RESEARCHER: Wow, sorry that happened to you, going back before the incident, could you please describe what you usually first notice when you enter the plane?

0:09:45.4 PARTICIPANT 24: Usually the TV, like if there's an entertainment system on board, especially if it's a long flight.

0:09:53.8 RESEARCHER: Ok, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:09:57.3 PARTICIPANT 24: The in-flight entertainment, it's very important to have in-flight entertainment for me, like I always have a book or a plan B with me, but it's very important 'cause I'm not the type to sleep on flights, so I need something to keep me distracted and plus, I do have this really bad ear problem, so actually going up like the

process while we're flying, my ears get really, really painful, so the headphones really calm me down because there's sound going into my ear, so it relieves the pressure of it, so the in-flight entertainment is a must I guess. Also, and also the cabin crew interaction is almost very important to me. Like I'm not a demanding person, so I would ask for a blanket here and there and that's okay, but for that specific flight, I talked to them about our next connected flights, I needed them to know that I had two other connected flights, so I wanted them to give word to their.. because it was with the same airline so I thought they had the communication process under control, so I needed to voice it out, so that once I get there, at least I have voiced it out, I've talked to more than one person about it and they know, and the cabin crew were like okay but when we got there, that wasn't the case at all.

0:12:20.8 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, did you experience any turbulence during the flight and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:12:27.7 PARTICIPANT 24: No, actually it doesn't, I don't get scared. I don't get scared from turbulence nor a rough landing.

0:12:41.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:12:47.5 PARTICIPANT 24: A one.

0:12:51.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the process after landing?

0:12:56.8 PARTICIPANT 24: Okay, so we got to the transit destination and we had two

other flights, one to Barcelona and one to Mallorca, so I looked up our next flight and it wasn't there, so I went looking for the customer service so I could check the availability of another flight and like what will happen after that, and of course, keep in mind, it's one of the busiest airports in the world, so you have millions of travelers going through this specific airport. When I got there, I went to look for someone and... so it's usually not very hard for me to crack a smile from someone but this time I couldn't, like as much as I was friendly, as much as I was… like I had the right to ask... I had the right to demand what I was demanding, anyway I got there, there was a woman and she didn't speak English very well, which I found very strange because of the situation of that airport, so I would assume that they would learn English or something. So, she looked at me and she was like, you have to wait for a second and she went and looked for another flight then she gave me the details of it, so I told her, is there another like a note or something on any of our tickets that we missed the flight, like did anyone make it? I was very angry because I wanted to know if they actually said something, the cabin crew that I thought handled the situation, but nothing, there was no notes or anything, and then she told me, this is the details for the next flight and it was, it was a bit of a wait, I remember having to wait for five to six hours for the next flight, and then they asked me to pay. That's when I got shocked and I was like why am I paying? That doesn't make sense. I already paid for whole thing and I have issued the tickets for every single one of the flights, and I wasn't a no show, if I was a no show, I would understand, but I wasn't a no show, I was here. I was in there or I was stuck in the airport. But again, it's not my problem, it's not my fault. So told me, but yeah this is what it is. Then I told her, give me another solution, you can't just close every door and window in my face. So, she's like, this is what I could do and I asked her like okay, is there someone I could talk to? And she's like, no. I'm like, what no? Are you the only person here, I can't talk to anyone else? Then she said no again and I'm like, I'm not leaving until you give me a solution, and there was a line behind

me full of people because we weren't the only ones who missed that flight, and I think she told me to move or something to indicate the end of the conversation, so I'm like no, I'm not moving, can you give me a solution or someone I can talk to? So, she was talking gibberish to someone next to her I guess and then she went and brought this man thinking that he would solve our issue, like he would be nicer to a bunch of women going on vacation, so yeah I talked to him and he's like, no we have to pay, like he wasn't nice at all, he was even worse. He was like can you move along please, there's a line behind you, and I'm like no, I'm not paying and subduing to this, it doesn't make sense. So I moved away from the line and since we had a lot of time for the next flight, like five hours, I managed to send a few emails here and there, 'cause when I get angry, I send out emails to everyone I know so they can come up with a solution. So I sent out, let's say, I think seven emails to seven different airline managers, and I got a response actually saying that we're sorry and all that and that they were going to get someone to contact me within a few minutes, and because I was in a different country, there was also this calling problem, our phone lines were not working but thankfully, I managed to buy a phone line from the airport so I got contacted by someone there and we went to their office, and then we got our tickets exchanged so thankfully that was done, but you'd think it's over. It's not over. So we get to our other transit destination, and then we had to run to get to the gate and when we got there, like we were a group of five, like everyone got in, but me, she told me that, please ma'am you'll have to wait. I was like why? Then she was like you have to wait until everyone has actually boarded so we can tell if there are any available seats. I was shocked, like I didn't even hear of overbooking the flight until it happened to me, like I haven't heard of anyone going through that, so yeah she continued saying that they were waiting for all tickets to be accounted for, like for all the passengers to go in and if there is a no show, then you'll be boarded, but if there isn't then you'll have to wait for the next flight. That shocked me, it shocked, shocked, shocked me to even bringing

me close to tears, I was so shocked and sad and I felt left out, and I don't know, it was a lot of things and I didn't even do anything wrong, like we had gone through so much and you over-book me, really? I didn't even understand the concept of overbooking, that they actually sold more tickets to the seats that were available, I didn't think it was a thing that airline do, which I don't think it's fair, like it's not fair for the people, like what if they all show up? Do you not have a plan for that? There's no contingency plan for what happens if? But no, there isn't apparently. Thankfully, I managed to board the plane, we waited for five, ten minutes maybe after everyone boarded, more even because I waited since the gate opened, so I had wait even after final calls and for them shouting people's names in the microphone, so it's a long process of waiting, like waiting for your simple right to board, like it's my right.

0:23:51.0 RESEARCHER: Wow, I'm so so sorry, that must have been so frustrating, watching that process.

0:23:55.1 PARTICIPANT 24: It was very frustrating, very frustrating, and I didn't know what to do, what to say, it was just horrible.

0:24:16.7 RESEARCHER: So, you felt devalued as a customer.

0:24:19.4 PARTICIPANT 24: Oh yes. Oh yes, I'm telling you, I haven't flown with that airline ever again or even thought of going through their airport since, I'm not kidding you. Everyone I know, everyone I ever encountered in my life that takes that airline complains about how rude they are, that's the number one thing I hear is that their airport staff is very, very rude. Like I try to avoid booking through their airport, like I'd go through longer routes just to avoid them, it's that bad.

0:25:07.9 RESEARCHER: Wow, again I'm sorry that happened to you, and after landing to your final destination, did you receive your luggage all okay?

0:25:46.1 PARTICIPANT 24: …sorry about that. No, actually, because of that whole debacle of changing flights and everything, our luggage got tangled up. Once we landed, during that time of like baggage transfer, we wanted to ask about our baggage once we got to the second airport and they told us it was already on the flight that we missed. So, once we land to our final destination, our luggage got lost and they basically have no idea where they are. The cherry on top of a fantastic trip. It took them four days to bring us our luggage back.

0:26:48.5 RESEARCHER: Oh my god. Wow okay, and so if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:27:04.6 PARTICIPANT 24: A one, and that's me being very generous.

0:27:05.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:27:10.4 PARTICIPANT 24: A one, because that was the third time something like that happens with them, like a plane leaves without me, and none of the cases I was actually late, so I was always on time for the three different instances, and all the three instances, it was the connected flight that was the issue.

0:27:52.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, and so do you feel like purchasing another ticket with

airline X solely based on your previous experience with them?

0:28:00.1 PARTICIPANT 24: No, no, no, no, never again.

0:28:04.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:28:25.1 PARTICIPANT 24: Very negatively, like whenever someone talks about the airline, I bring up the situations I had with them, like this recent one was the last straw and after that, never again.

0:28:57.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase a ticket with airline X, even after your experience with them?

0:29:20.2 PARTICIPANT 24: No actually, I wouldn't think I would be peer pressured into it, because actually I'm thinking like maybe if I'm in a group or I'm in a work situation, or it's a workplace or something that the work thing is the only time that I wouldn't have a say in it, but I would still say something, like I wouldn't even want to have a layover there, that's how much I don't want to, like thinking back to an instance to go to London it would've been better and cheaper for me to go with that airline but I picked the more expensive airline and the more uncomfortable route just to avoid them.

0:30:40.6 RESEARCHER: Wow, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:30:46.3 PARTICIPANT 24: Thank you for having me, and good luck with your project.

0:30:51.8 RESEARCHER: Thank you, bye.

Participant 26:

0:00:02.8 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:06.5 PARTICIPANT 26: I'm good thanks and you?

0:00:11.3 RESEARCHER: Good thanks, could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:15.9 PARTICIPANT 26: My name is participant 26, I'm 34 years old and I work in the ministry of finance.

0:00:24.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, so within the last six months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:28.9 PARTICIPANT 26: Yes, it was a trip with airline X to Italy, about a month ago.

0:00:36.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:44.8 PARTICIPANT 26: Tourism, it was a trip with my family.

0:00:49.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what travel class did you book?

0:00:55.6 PARTICIPANT 26: Economy.

0:01:00.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:01:05.6 PARTICIPANT 26: It's because I have traveled with them before and it was just very convenient timing as well.

0:01:14.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:19.5 PARTICIPANT 26: Yeah, so I booked through their website, it was a simple process, not too complicated.

0:01:28.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:01:35.4 PARTICIPANT 26: Just that I find good deals and seats, that the website is simple and not complicated, I like it when they have a simple design, like a very simple layout, which I appreciate.

0:01:48.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:01:57.1 PARTICIPANT 26: I would give them a five, like I didn't face any issues.

0:02:04.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:09.0 PARTICIPANT 26: Alright, so I remember during the check-in process, the lines were very long, like I understand because it was new years' time, so everyone was wanting to travel, so once we got to the counter, they checked our baggage weight and we had an extra kilo or two over our allowance and the employee wasn't being lenient at all, they were like you have to pay the difference and everything, so we had to pay the difference eventually, I mean what can we do, we got stuck with that kind of employee or ground staff, so yeah, the check-in process took a while, took a long while actually, but eventually we did check-in.

0:02:48.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and so what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:02:56.1 PARTICIPANT 26: I would say it would be the staff interaction, because to me it does make or break the entire experience because even when we waited a long time, they did make us pay for the extra baggage which was even more unpleasant, so yeah I didn't appreciate that at all, it's just the small things that lighten up the mood of the customer, you know.

0:03:32.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:03:38.7 PARTICIPANT 26: I would say a two out of five. Yeah, it wasn't the best experience.

0:03:46.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:03:54.5 PARTICIPANT 26: I would say not really, like I mean I would love it if the airport has nice restaurants and cafes, but other than that it doesn't really play a major role for me.

0:04:08.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and could you please describe the boarding process?

0:04:16.5 PARTICIPANT 26: The boarding process was smooth, we didn't experience any problems, the flight came on time and everything went ok.

0:04:25.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the boarding process out of five, what would you give them?

0:04:32.9 PARTICIPANT 26: I would give them a five.

0:04:36.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, so moving on, could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what do you usually first notice?

0:04:45.7 PARTICIPANT 26: I usually notice the way that the crew members greet us, to

me, the interaction is everything, like a smile goes a long way.

0:04:57.9 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:05:04.9 PARTICIPANT 26: I would say it's the way the crew members interact with me when I for example, ask for something, like smile and be nice you know. Also, the in-flight entertainment is very important because I usually can't sleep on flights, so it's important they have a good selection of movies and stuff, like I do appreciate that.

0:05:31.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and so how was the in-flight experience, like were there any incidents that occurred during the flight?

0:05:37.4 PARTICIPANT 26: Yes actually, as soon as we started to depart, there was this passenger in front of me with a baby that was just crying and crying, and it was just very annoying for me 'cause I usually, like I don't like to have babies onboard if it was up to me, but what can I do. Anyway, it was very annoying, I wasn't comfortable at all and I couldn't change my seat because the plane was full, so I was basically stuck for 6 hours with a baby that was crying nonstop. I tried putting headphones on and watching movie after movie just because of the noise but it was just so annoying, and yeah.

0:06:32.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually impact your experience?

0:06:40.1 PARTICIPANT 26: Yes, there was a bit of turbulence, but it doesn't really phase

me.

0:06:48.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:06:57.2 PARTICIPANT 26: I would give them a three out of five, like it's not really the airline's fault, but it was just a very annoying experience, like I wish they would have a section in the back of the plane just for families and babies or something like that.

0:07:21.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please describe the process after landing?

0:07:27.9 PARTICIPANT 26: The process was smooth, we received our bags in time, and yeah everything was nice.

0:07:38.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:07:47.4 PARTICIPANT 26: I would give them a five.

0:07:55.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X, what would you give them?

0:08:08.2 PARTICIPANT 26: I would give them a three out of five, like it wasn't the best trip and things could have been worse, so yeah.

0:08:20.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X, solely based on your past experience with them?

0:08:28.3 PARTICIPANT 26: Yeah, yeah, I would. I mean they were okay. It wasn't really, really bad.

0:08:36.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards airline X?

0:08:45.2 PARTICIPANT 26: I would say… I would just want them to pay attention more, like give more leniency to baggage allowance, because a lot of people do have excess baggage and the process is always a hassle, like I understand it's a way for airlines to make money and everything, but at the same time, it's ridiculous, like the amount of money for 1 kilo, so yeah, my attitude towards them, like I would still fly with them.

0:09:38.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase with them, even after your experience?

0:09:49.4 PARTICIPANT 26: Yes, they can actually influence my decision, because if someone had a bad experience with an airline, I would want to know about it or like I would want to know what happened, so, yeah.

00:10:04.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, so thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:10:11.1 PARTICIPANT 26: No problem, thank you for having me and good luck with

your thesis.

0:10:19.0 RESEARCHER: Thank you, bye.

0:10:24.5 PARTICIPANT 26: Bye.

Participant 27:

0:00:02.8 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:05.0 PARTICIPANT 27: Good thanks, and you?

0:00:10.8 RESEARCHER: Good thank you, could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:16.4 PARTICIPANT 27: Yeah, my name is participant 27, I'm 37 years old and I'm an engineer.

0:00:27.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, so within the last six months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:34.5 PARTICIPANT 27: Yeah, one to the US, on airline X.

0:00:45.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:56.0 PARTICIPANT 27: Yeah, I had to go to visit my grandma, she had a liver transplant, so I went to visit Minneapolis.

0:01:11.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what travel class did you book?

0:01:17.0 PARTICIPANT 27: Business.

0:01:22.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and could you please explain why you chose this airline specifically to travel with?

0:01:34.1 PARTICIPANT 27: Because I never tried it before and every time, I'm like this time I'll try it but never get to, anyway it was the most convenient one.

0:01:47.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, so could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:53.3 PARTICIPANT 27: I booked through a travel agent, it was an easy process like it wasn't that hard, I just gave the guy my passport, he needed some papers or documents, like the PCR, insurance and all that.

0:02:10.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during booking process?

0:02:28.8 PARTICIPANT 27: Mostly the waiting time, that's why my travel agent just takes care of everything, I hate waiting in the office, so I just have to email him the documents he needs, and it's done.

0:02:47.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:02:57.5 PARTICIPANT 27: I'll give them a five 'cause the guy I booked through is very efficient.

0:03:04.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:03:18.5 PARTICIPANT 27: Yeah, so I went to the check-in counter and, it was kind of an easy process, but like with covid and everything, it's a slightly harder process, but still, it wasn't that bad. So, like… sorry one sec… hi, sorry about that, so like the issues became more when I landed in the US.

0:04:13.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:04:22.4 PARTICIPANT 27: Like waiting in line, I always hope there aren't any people there, so I don't wait in the line.

0:04:28.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:04:35.4 PARTICIPANT 27: Like a four.

0:04:43.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:05:01.3 PARTICIPANT 27: …of course, like the time I went to Singapore, the airport had a huge effect. It was very nice. You could see the things they spent there, I really enjoyed it. Like you can spend time, even if you had the transit there, like you can enjoy six, seven hours there without feeling it.

0:05:37.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, so moving on, how was the boarding process, did you wait a long time for your flight?

0:05:52.0 PARTICIPANT 27: …Oh yeah, we boarded after waiting a long time, so what happened is, I booked both ways business, so I was wearing shorts and slippers, like something that I feel comfortable with traveling, so nothing fancy, so boarding time came and they told us, business and first class, may you please come in. So, I went to the guy that works there, and he was like sorry sir, first and business class first, economy is later. I was like, yo, that's my ticket, you're judging me just 'cause I was wearing shorts and slippers? The guy acted weirdly with me and apologized, but I just felt really uncomfortable, like the way I was judged was not cool.

0:08:33.8 RESEARCHER: Wow, yeah of course, and if you would kindly rate the boarding process out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:45.1 PARTICIPANT 27: I'll give them a one.

0:08:53.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and so can you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what do you usually first notice?

0:09:04.9 PARTICIPANT 27: How new the plane is, like booking a business class ticket, I'd expect the plane to be comfortable and new. For that trip, like the seats were okay but the food wasn't that good

0:09:27.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:09:36.5 PARTICIPANT 27: Definitely how comfortable the seats are, and also that if I needed a crew member to help me like they'd be there quickly and not take a long time, so like better services.

0:09:54.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and was it a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually impact your experience?

0:10:02.4 PARTICIPANT 27: …sorry one minute

0:10:06.1 RESEARCHER: Okay.

0:12:07.7 PARTICIPANT 27: …back, sorry, so yeah turbulence. Yes, no, so I didn't feel it that much, it doesn't usually affect me.

0:12:18.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:12:32.1 PARTICIPANT 27: I would give them a two, like I honestly expected better out of the business class after having paid so much, it wasn't as expected at all.

0:12:48.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, and could you please describe the process after landing?

0:13:01.5 PARTICIPANT 27: Yeah, so my cousin was waiting for me outside and I had a bag that I needed to collect, so when I got the bag, there was this guy that came and he told me to follow him so that he could check the bag. I opened the bag for him to check and he was asking all these questions and it took more than I expected. It was just a weird situation like why me exactly, I didn't have anything in my bag that caused suspicion, I don't know, maybe it was the beard and the fact that I was wearing shorts and slippers, I don't know.

0:14:14.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:14:20.6 PARTICIPANT 27: I'd give them a four, other than the interrogation that happened, everything went ok.

0:14:26.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:14:36.0 PARTICIPANT 27: A three. It's because I expected more out of the airline, and there were situations where I was uncomfortable.

0:14:51.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

0:15:01.2 PARTICIPANT 27: No, I don't think so, I finally tried flying with them and they are way too overrated.

0:15:12.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:15:21.6 PARTICIPANT 27: Negatively. Like now, every time I'm going to book business or a first-class ticket with any airline, I'm going to wear an even more 'poor-looking' outfit, just to see what their reactions would be like.

0:15:34.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase another ticket with airline X, even after your experience with them?

0:15:52.9 PARTICIPANT 27: No, so even if someone had a good experience with this airline like I'm not going to fly with them again, and no one can convince me otherwise.

0:16:06.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, thank you, thank you so much for the interview. Have a lovely day.

0:16:13.9 PARTICIPANT 27: Thank you, you too.

Participant 28:

0:00:00.0 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:06.8 PARTICIPANT 28: Hi, I'm good, how are you?

0:00:12.3 RESEARCHER: I'm good thank you, could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:19.2 PARTICIPANT 28: Yeah, hi, my name participant 28, I'm 32 years old, I'm from Hong Kong, and I'm a teacher.

0:00:28.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, so within the last six months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:36.8 PARTICIPANT 28: Yes, I have. It was a trip with airline X, going from London to New York.

0:00:47.9 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:55.8 PARTICIPANT 28: Yeah, it was just for leisure, to celebrate New Year's with my friends.

0:01:03.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what travel class did you book?

0:01:07.9 PARTICIPANT 28: I booked business.

0:01:12.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:01:20.8 PARTICIPANT 28: Well, at the time, it was just convenient and because I've flown with them before and I know they're a nice airline to fly with.

0:01:39.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:46.4 PARTICIPANT 28: It wasn't anything special, I booked online through their website, I normally just look at different airlines and their prices and try to compare and so, the booking process went smoothly.

0:02:07.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important you during the booking process?

0:02:16.6 PARTICIPANT 28: It's how easy everything goes during booking, It's also how professional the website looks, for me, it's all about that element of professionality, like when you see their website looking very modern, very up to date, I don't want a complicated looking website.

0:02:34.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and if you would kindly rate the booking

experience out of five with five being very pleased and one being not please, what would you give them?

0:02:48.7 PARTICIPANT 28: I would give them a 5.

0:02:51.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:59.2 PARTICIPANT 28: Alright, let's see. So we went, I remember me and my cousin, I ordered an Uber to take us to Heathrow Airport and basically, 'cause we had a lot of luggage, so that's why we didn't want to ride a train, so yeah, we took an Uber and everything, and we went inside, we checked in our baggage, I usually check in online, but for this time I just completely forgot and I just had to wait in the queue for so long, I remember waiting for so long because it was like New Years and everyone wanted to travel and it was just a long, long wait. So the ground staff person that was there, they checked in the bag and everything, and I remember we had extra baggage weight, so we had to rearrange our bags and stuff, putting some of my stuff inside my cousin's bag, and it was just such a hassle.

0:04:01.5 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:04:07.3 PARTICIPANT 28: For me, because I hate waiting, it's the waiting time for sure. I usually check-in online, but for some reason I just forgot for this trip.

0:04:22.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience

out of five, what would you give them?

0:04:27.9 PARTICIPANT 28: I would say a three because of the waiting time and because of the whole mess, I just didn't like that particular check-in experience and it was average at best.

0:04:44.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:04:53.6 PARTICIPANT 28: I wouldn't say it does, it's just I would like it if the airport had a lot of things to experience because I am a huge shopper, so I usually spend money on the duty-free and everything, and yeah, I'm one of those people.

0:05:07.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and so how was the boarding process, have you waited a long time for your flight?

0:05:16.8 PARTICIPANT 28: Not really, it was just delayed for maybe 10 minutes, but eventually it got there. We only waited a little bit because we booked business class, but because there was a lot of people, it was a long queue for even the business class.

0:05:39.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, and if you would kindly rate the boarding process out of five, what would you give them?

0:05:48.7 PARTICIPANT 28: I would say like a four, it was okay.

0:05:57.9 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please describe your experience entering the plane, what do you usually first notice?

0:06:09.5 PARTICIPANT 28: I first notice how clean the area is for me sanitary is everything to be clean, and for that trip, the seats were clean, so I was happy.

0:06:26.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:06:38.7 PARTICIPANT 28: For me, it's the service to make sure everything that you need is catered to, and to have comfortable seating as well.

0:06:51.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how was the in-flight experience, were there any incidents that occurred?

0:07:00.9 PARTICIPANT 28: Not really, no. It was pretty smooth. We had really nice flight attendants, they were always smiling, and we talked a lot with one of them.

0:07:18.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:07:32.2 PARTICIPANT 28: We have and yes it does, I know it's not the airline's fault, but at the same time, it's just for me, I'm terrified of flying, and whenever I feel like the plane is shaking, I just get terrified even more and get into a state of panic, so that's why I usually take a pill before to calm me down.

0:08:03.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:15.7 PARTICIPANT 28: A four. It was nice, but the turbulence made it quite scary.

0:08:24.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and if you could please describe the process after landing?

0:08:32.9 PARTICIPANT 28: So yes, after landing, basically, my cousin's bag wasn't there, and we had to file for a complaint, it was just a huge mess because we had to wait for a while, like 2 days before they eventually got her bag, she had no clothing for two days, and some of my items were missing too, it was completely the airline's fault, my cousin had to borrow everything from us.

0:09:15.8 RESEARCHER: Wow, alright, and if you would kindly rate the experience after landing out of five, what would you give them?

0:09:26.3 PARTICIPANT 28: I'll give them a one because it's just, it's not acceptable for them to lose an entire bag, I understand it's New Year's and it was crowded but it's their responsibility to keep the bag safe and not lose it.

0:09:39.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you could kindly rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:09:50.7 PARTICIPANT 28: I would give them a three, usually I'll give them more because I know the airline and I know how professional they are, but for this particular experience, I was just shocked because they lost my cousin's bag. I know it happens, but I didn't think it would happen from them.

0:10:11.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X solely based on your past experience?

0:10:20.6 PARTICIPANT 28: Well, yes, I'll book with them again, because nothing personally happened to me, and this was just a recent instance where I flown with them and usually, they're excellent.

0:10:34.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:10:42.3 PARTICIPANT 28: Definitely for this experience, it did affect my perception towards them, I was just shocked because I didn't really think that they would have the capacity to lose a business class baggage, let alone just make my cousin wait for two days before giving her back her bag.

0:11:06.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase with airline X, even after your experience?

0:11:18.8 PARTICIPANT 28: Yes, they can, but in a nutshell, I would still fly with them because I do like them and I do trust them in general.

0:11:32.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:11:41.6 PARTICIPANT 28: You're welcome, thank you, take care.

0:11:48.9 RESEARCHER: Take care, bye.

Participant 29:

0:00:02.4 RESEARCHER: Hi there, can you please introduce yourself?

0:00:09.8 PARTICIPANT 29: Hi, my name is participant 29, I'm 33 years old, Indian national and I work in trading. I'm here to share one of my airline experiences and I hope that it helps somebody somewhere.

0:00:18.8 RESEARCHER: Perfect, alright, so within the last six months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:31.3 PARTICIPANT 29: Yes, it was with airline X, about four months ago.

0:00:39.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:49.7 PARTICIPANT 29: So, it was a holiday, I was returning back to my residential country, I had gone for a holiday and I was coming back to my home, basically.

0:01:01.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and what travel class did you book?

0:01:09.3 PARTICIPANT 29: It was economy class.

0:01:10.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:01:20.3 PARTICIPANT 29: This was the only direct flight from the place, I was traveling from Kuwait, so this was the only convenient flight at the time.

0:01:36.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:47.9 PARTICIPANT 29: I had booked it with the airlines itself, because I just wanted to be precise with the whole process. When you book online, sometimes things may go wrong, there might be a problem with the payment and the whole process of websites crashing, so I decided to go to the agency and book the whole ticket and everything and paid up front for it. So, when you go to the agency, you take a little longer time because online, you can see what flights have labeled the timings and everything, but when you go to the agency, the system that they use, it's really slow, even though it's like just one airlines traveling to the country, they still have a lot to process to see what services they have, they might also cross sell and make you offers and advise you to travel on specific days whereas online, they will show you the lowest class average, but that's not the same at an agency.

0:03:04.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:03:11.1 PARTICIPANT 29: I like the details to be out there up front, whatever it is, that's why it's important the employee is clear with everything, but I think more importantly, I think for me is the seat selection because I don't want to be sitting in a trampoline for that long, right.

0:03:31.9 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the booking process out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:03:46.4 PARTICIPANT 29: I think it would be neutral, just three.

0:03:48.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:03:57.7 PARTICIPANT 29: Yes, so I was returning back and what happened basically was I finished my check-in and the whole process of putting in my luggage and it went completely smooth, there was no issues in terms of the ground staff there. So this airlines basically, even though they have online check-in, it's of no use, you have to go to the counter and check-in to give you the details, most of the seats online are taken and then you go to the counter and it's not, because they keep it for check-in's at the place, that's the reason it's better to go on the spot and check-in rather than check online. Anyway, I finished checking-in at the counter, I finished my immigration and after immigration, there is obviously the Duty-free and everything, and the flight was actually delayed, so we start with me and my friend were traveling, so we sat down at the bar at the duty-free, and we had a couple of drinks as we knew that the flight is going to be delayed. It was supposed to be delayed for a really long, but it did not do that, it came much earlier, so we had to board the flight and I had not finished my drink, so I took the can along with me and stood in the line to get the boarding pass verified to enter the flight, and they allowed me through the boarding gate. Before boarding, actually, we went through basically scanning your luggage again before the boarding gate place, so they scan the luggage and everything that is your hand luggage, and

mind you all this, while I have the can in my hand, even when they do a check, they check your body and up and everything, the can was still in my hand, and then the boarding pass check, also it was in my hand. So I enter the flight, the hosts at the plane, they welcomed and everything, and I went on for my seat and I sat down, then immediately after I sat down with my friend, one of the hostesses came to me, and mind you, my seat was right at the back, so it was really almost close to the air hostesses, then basically she saw me with the can and she came up to me and she's like, do you know you're not supposed to be drinking on the flight, and I'm like, oh, I didn't know that. I said 'm sorry, let me just finish the can really quickly and I immediately finished it off, and I told her, you can take this and she took it and she went, and because we were sitting in the back, we could hear her, we heard give a call to the, I don't know, but she gave a call to someone and she's like, oh, we have a drunk girl on the flight, and she is misbehaving. Me and my friend were really surprised and we looked at each other like, is she talking about us, and before we know it, she's back, so she opens my table and she just keeps the can of beer on the table and she goes away and I'm like, what is happening? And the next thing I know, the captain, the ground security is there, everybody is there, like there are still people boarding on the flight, and I'm like, what is happening? And then she's like, see, she's a drunk, she's refusing to give up the alcohol, she's come drunk on the flight, I don't think this is safe for the passengers and blah, blah, blah, and I'm like, I'm not drunk, I had only had this one can, and either way I was behaved, I was talking to her properly, she just refused to, she basically didn't want me to be right and she made a big deal, and the captain was a really nice man, he was like, let it be, he was trying to make her understand to let it go, and she is an elderly woman, so she was refusing to listen to them as well, she's like, no, she's going to be a hazard for the flight and the security guy himself was like it's fine, and then because they could not convince her, they were convincing me basically to say sorry to the air hostess, and I was denying it, because I didn't see the point, I

was not being rude to her, I was not doing anything with her, so I didn't see why I had to say sorry, she should apologize to me for what was going on, it was a big commotion. So, everyone on the flight was very intrigued of what was happening, and everyone started to put their cell phone out to record this and oh my god, that was really embarrassing, we were feeling really, really embarrassed that this is actually happening, so we got a bit mad at that, and I told the Captain, I said, you make sure that all these videos are deleted from people or I'm going to really make a big deal out of this, so he did go to them, but then he came to me and he's like, please apologize to her, we are really getting late to go on, we are already late and delayed, so I was like, fine, I said you want me to apologize? I looked at her with full anger, I said, sorry auntie, because I was really mad, and basically in Indian culture, calling somebody auntie is an elderly person thing, so she didn't want to be called as an auntie, so she got even more offended, so she turned to the captain and said what I mean is she's really drunk and blah, blah, blah, and the captain was like, you got your apology, just let her be, he didn't really want to push me on her and just wanted to fly off 'cause he had to reach the destination on time. It's like I am the customer at the end, what else are you asking from me? And then she's like, fine, I will allow her to be here, and she's saying this, I will allow her to be here unless we see any drunk behavior on the flight, and I'm like yeah, I paid for the flight, it's my right, so you can't really deny somebody that, then they were calming us down again till eventually she left. And so yeah, it was pretty bad.

0:11:41.6 RESEARCHER: My God, I'm really sorry that happened to you, that's just not acceptable at all, so like going back to the trip from the check-in process, what do you feel is more important to you during that process?

0:11:51.7 PARTICIPANT 29: Having the option of online check-in, I just want to be able to

skip the line, I want to go, put my luggage out there and just go like, fine, it's done, I don't need to stand in a que and wait for my turn to come, I don't want that, I would like to be able to just skip the line.

0:12:13.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:12:19.4 PARTICIPANT 29: I would give them a two.

0:12:26.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:12:40.8 PARTICIPANT 29: Yes, yes, definitely, because it depends on how many counters are open, like the airport overall has to have, like the maintenance has to be proper, so I think that it has to be an overall smooth process, and you would think the airport that I was in was a really small airport, so you would think that it should be smooth enough, but it's not, like international airports are much, much bigger and they have I think a better process, but this wasn't the same.

0:13:19.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and moving on, how was the boarding process exactly, you mentioned that your flight got delayed?

0:13:29.7 PARTICIPANT 29: Yes, so if you see certain airlines, you see when they call you in, they call you batch by batch so that everyone can board the flight in a proper manner, but here, that wasn't the case, it was just like, the gates are open, please start the boarding. So, I

think that for me was not a really good experience because everyone, there's a commotion when you go inside the flight, it's all crowded and the space was very small, and it's really a commotion.

0:14:10.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the boarding experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:14:17.7 PARTICIPANT 29: I think it would be a two as well.

0:14:20.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, so could you please describe your experience entering the plane, what do you usually first notice?

0:14:32.4 PARTICIPANT 29: Actually, the first thing I notice is how welcoming the hostesses, like the cabin crew. Basically, that's the first thing you want to know, that you will be taken care of if anything. Next thing is, of course, the seats, are they clean enough? Is the carpet clean? Other seats clean? Is everything maintained well? I don't want to sit at a place where things are broken and mind you, this airline has been flying for many, many years, but their aircrafts are really not maintained well, they use have old airplanes and everything. It's really sad. It's a very bad experience.

0:15:21.1 RESEARCHER: Alright, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:15:26.8 PARTICIPANT 29: Yes, definitely, because when you're sitting in the flight, you can literally hear the air outside, the engine, everything, and with the plane shaking, it doesn't

really help because you get scared at the end of the day.

0:15:55.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and so what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:16:10.8 PARTICIPANT 29: I think it's a combination of many things, like they all are correlated, so I think like you can have a smooth flight, but if you have a grumpy cabin crew, it does not work, the same goes like even if the flight is fine, but if cabin crew is nice and the flight is making noise, it doesn't really work, but I think the cabin crew being nice and friendly is more important. For me, the pleasant behavior really impacts you throughout.

0:16:52.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:17:07.3 PARTICIPANT 29: Definitely a one, a negative one if I had the option.

0:17:16.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you could please describe the process after landing?

0:17:24.0 PARTICIPANT 29: It was a really smooth landing, the ground staff at the destination were good, it was another country, so they were fine, there were no issues out there, we didn't wait a long time for our bags, maybe like 15 to 20 minutes or so, so I think I would rate that experience a good five, because there were no issues.

0:17:48.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with

airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:17:59.4 PARTICIPANT 29: A one.

0:18:06.1 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with them solely based on your past experience?

0:18:17.9 PARTICIPANT 29: No, no, I have completely stopped actually flying with them, completely.

0:18:26.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:18:36.5 PARTICIPANT 29: It impacted it in a very negative way, I would rather go, because I said this was the only direct flight, like I would rather take a flight that stops in transit countries rather than taking them again.

0:18:52.6 RESEARCHER: Wow, alright and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase another ticket with airline X, even after your experience with them?

0:19:04.1 PARTICIPANT 29: No, no, I can influence them because this is a really terrible experience and they trust my judgement when I say it, because I do fly a lot so I have experiences with airlines which are really, really good, but then this was really a horrible one, so I think I would influence them even if they are convinced that this airline is good.

0:19:33.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, perfect, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:19:41.2 PARTICIPANT 29: Anytime, thank you so much for having me and good luck with everything.

Participant 30:

0:00:00.5 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:05.2 PARTICIPANT 30: Hi, I'm good. How are you?

0:00:06.8 RESEARCHER: Good, thanks. Could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:11.3 PARTICIPANT 30: Okay, my name is participant 30. I am 29 years old. I am Indian but was born in the states, and yeah, that's basically it.

0:00:30.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, so within the last 6 months, have you had any trips with an airline?

0:00:42.6 PARTICIPANT 30: Yes, it was with airline X.

0:00:48.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:55.5 PARTICIPANT 30: The reason was tourism as well as it was my best friend's graduation, so it was an opportunity to go to London.

0:01:09.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what travel class have you booked?

0:01:17.7 PARTICIPANT 30: I had booked economy.

0:01:25.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please explain why you chose airline X specifically to travel with?

0:01:38.4 PARTICIPANT 30: I chose them because I knew that it would be a long trip, so I wanted to book a flight that would be comfortable for me, and I had booked in advance actually, just to make sure everything is within my budget.

0:02:02.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and so could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:02:12.5 PARTICIPANT 30: I booked through a travel agency in San Francisco, so it was very straightforward that I needed a return ticket going from New York to London and then London to New York.

0:02:36.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:02:45.1 PARTICIPANT 30: What I'm looking, I look for, well, I'd like to book in advance just so it's budget friendly, and comfort is a big factor for me when I'm traveling, so that's what I look for. I also hate waiting, so when I book with a travel agency, I usually just send all my documents and they get the tickets and accommodation sorted for me.

0:03:24.9 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and if you would kindly rate the booking experience out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would

you give them?

0:03:36.6 PARTICIPANT 30: At this point of the story, I would give them a five.

0:03:47.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, so moving on, could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:04:01.6 PARTICIPANT 30: At this point is where things started going south for me. So, I always check-in online and when I was checking-in online, it didn't say I was flying with airline X, it said I was flying with airline Y, and it turns out, it's just an affiliated airline associated with airline X and that it's the flight that would be taking me to London, which obviously upset me because I specifically booked airline X knowing what they're like.

0:04:39.3 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the check-in process?

0:04:50.6 PARTICIPANT 30: The most important thing to me is the waiting time, the less I wait, the better. I'm a very paranoid traveler, so I need to make sure things are done on time and everything is in the right order, that's more important to me, and obviously if the person at the check-in counter is nice, that's a bonus.

0:05:14.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:05:25.9 PARTICIPANT 30: I would give them a three because I had asked them, how

come I'm on a flight with airline Y instead airline X and it was not something that was mentioned before? They were like sorry about that, this is just the policy, it's out of our hands. I wish they could have explained it better; they could have been a little more helpful.

0:06:04.5 RESEARCHER: Yeah, okay, and so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:06:15.3 PARTICIPANT 30: It actually does. I feel like some airports can be depressing when you're landing or you're coming to a country, I think the way the airport looks gives you an overall feel of how your visit will be like if that makes sense.

0:06:34.8 RESEARCHER: Yeah, alright, and so how was the boarding process, did you wait a long time for your flight?

0:06:48.6 PARTICIPANT 30: The boarding process was quite fast, it was on-time, obviously, like I said, I'm very paranoid, I'm at the age where I need to be there on-time or even earlier.

0:07:06.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and if you would kindly rate the boarding process out of five, what would you give them?

0:07:12.6 PARTICIPANT 30: Five.

0:07:17.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what do you usually first notice?

0:07:33.1 PARTICIPANT 30: What I first notice is the spacing of the seats, the seats that are in front of you and your seat, and how the staff greet you, because that's also very important to me, like the flight attendants, if they're nice, you feel a need to be nice, you know, but if they have an attitude, it kind of puts you off.

0:08:01.0 RESEARCHER: Alright, and what do you feel is more important to you during the in-flight experience?

0:08:12.0 PARTICIPANT 30: For me, it's the comfort and the entertainment. It doesn't have to necessarily, the entertainment doesn't have to be the best, as long as there is something that you can do to pass your time, and the comfort is the most important, especially for long flights I feel, like I'm someone who cannot sleep on flights, so at least if it's comfortable, then I'll be fine.

0:08:54.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and did you experience a smooth ride overall or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:09:05.9 PARTICIPANT 30: The turbulence, not so much, it's just something that I've gotten used to flying all these years, but it was not a comfortable flight at all, like I said, I was expecting airline X and then I got airline Y, which is a B-grade airline for me, it wasn't the value of the money I spent, and it was so uncomfortable that for the next two days when I landed in London, my back was completely gone, and I had to be careful of how I was moving, what I was doing, what I was carrying. So yeah.

0:09:42.7 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:10:04.0 PARTICIPANT 30: …I'll give it a one 'cause it was very uncomfortable, it just got me to the place I needed to be.

0:10:12.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and can you please describe the process after landing?

0:10:20.6 PARTICIPANT 30: So when I was going through passport control and immigration, once I was in London, it was quite a fast process because, going to London, you need to provide some documentation, I had to actually provide a letter of invitation from my friend's graduation to make sure that that's where I'm going, so you know, all those documents were ready and well prepped, so that way it was quite a smooth transition, and by the time I was out, baggage didn't take long either. So, yeah, I'll give it a five.

0:11:04.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate your entire experience with airline X or Y, what would you give them?

0:11:14.4 PARTICIPANT 30: Exactly, like I don't even know what to say. Overall, I would give it a four out of five because the overall experience was changed because I was on a non-airline X flight.

0:11:31.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and would you purchase another ticket with airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

0:11:40.1 PARTICIPANT 30: With airline X, definitely, but I would make sure it's the actual carrier this time.

0:11:45.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and how has this experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:11:55.5 PARTICIPANT 30: I'm a very forgiving person, I mean it changed my experience a little bit, but then you know, you live and you learn, I've had good and bad experiences with multiple airlines, and I feel like at least with airline X, hopefully this was a one-time thing, and again, I would just make sure I am flying an airline X flight, and in that way, I would definitely still fly with airline X.

0:12:28.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to re-purchase another ticket with airline X, even after your experience with them?

0:12:43.9 PARTICIPANT 30: 100%. Yeah, personally for me, most of my family members work in airline X so I can get easily convinced by them, but overall, even for those who do not work in airline X, if someone is convincing enough, it can be done

0:13:07.6 RESEARCHER: Alright, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:13:13.4 PARTICIPANT 30: Thank you so much, good luck with your research, bye.

0:13:20.9 RESEARCHER: Thank you, bye.

Participant 31:

0:00:02.9 RESEARCHER: Hi, how are you?

0:00:06.3 PARTICIPANT 31: I'm doing good, how are you?

0:00:13.9 RESEARCHER: Could you please introduce yourself?

0:00:18.3 PARTICIPANT 31: My name is participant 31, I'm 24 years old, and I work in the oil and gas industry.

0:00:26.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, so within the last six months, have you experienced any trips with an airline?

0:00:31.5 PARTICIPANT 31: Yes, airline X.

0:00:36.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the reason for travel?

0:00:41.8 PARTICIPANT 31: Tourism.

0:00:45.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what travel class did you book?

0:00:50.2 PARTICIPANT 31: I booked economy.

0:00:54.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and could you please describe why you chose airline X

specifically to travel with?

0:00:59.8 PARTICIPANT 31: I always choose airline X because I traveled with them before and they're a very good airlines in general.

0:01:06.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the booking process in great detail?

0:01:12.3 PARTICIPANT 31: I booked online, I remember it was such an easy process, like nothing happened, I was just looking at prices and comparing sites and, yeah.

0:01:21.7 RESEARCHER: Okay, and what do you feel is more important to you during the booking process?

0:01:30.1 PARTICIPANT 31: It's just how the website is like; everything has to look professional and everything has to be clear and straightforward.

0:01:38.6 RESEARCHER: Okay, and if you would kindly rate the booking process out of five, with five being very pleased and one being not pleased, what would you give them?

0:01:52.0 PARTICIPANT 31: I would give them a five. it was a really easy process, like nothing happened.

0:02:01.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, and could you please describe the day of travel in great detail?

0:02:08.9 PARTICIPANT 31: Okay, yeah, so I remember going to the airport with my friend, I remember our luggage being slightly, like just a little bit overweight. We did check-in online, but when we went to the counter to drop off our bags, the person that was in charge told us that we had excess baggage and we needed to pay. So, I was put in a situation, me and my friend where we needed to pay more, and I remember we had to pay extra more money that we didn't have at the time, so I needed to talk to people that I know, and it was very early in the morning, and so no one was awake for them to transfer the money, so even my friend had the similar situation, we couldn't call anyone, and it was just a very bad situation, I tried to talk to the manager and they didn't do anything, they didn't help me out, it was just an extra two kilos, so it wasn't that much of a big deal. They could have just, they could have just made us get away with it or something, but they chose to be like that, so I remember going to a store and purchasing something, and with the plastic bag we literally had to put our clothes, I'm not joking, our actual clothes inside, and it was just awful because there was no time and the gate was going to close soon, we were very late and we're the last two to board on the plane imagine. So yeah, it was just a messy process just because of that incident, which we could have avoided, like you could have just made us go through without this. I've had similar situations where they just let the situation off and it's passed by, it's just a kilo or two, it's not like five or six kilos where they actually can't let it go, so yeah.

0:04:59.4 RESEARCHER: Wow, okay, and going back to the check-in process, what do you feel is more important to you during the process?

0:05:11.9 PARTICIPANT 31: It's definitely the way that the staff handles a situation, it could be crowded, it could be such a long queue, but the way the staff handles the situation is

everything they need to know how to handle problems, they need to know how to fix situations, where they don't make it harder for the customer. That's my main issue with staff, when they make it harder for the customer, it's not your job, like your job is customer service, so it's your job to make it easier on the customer, and when you have a rude employee, that's just a big no-no for me.

0:06:12.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the check-in experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:06:22.3 PARTICIPANT 31: Oh my god, definitely one. It was so horrible, the way they handled everything.

0:06:34.4 RESEARCHER: Okay, and so do you feel like the airport itself has an impact on your experience?

0:06:40.9 PARTICIPANT 31: Yeah, of course it does, yeah. So, I like airports where there is space to roam around, where there are areas to explore, especially if I need to wait for my next flight and there's transit time, so it's nice to have options like shops, restaurants, different new things to explore. I don't like airports that are very confined where there's nothing like open. So yeah, it does have an impact on my experience I feel.

0:07:06.3 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how was the boarding process, did you wait a long time for your flight?

0:07:15.9 PARTICIPANT 31: So, the boarding process was fine, we were the last two

people to board the plane, I remember just going there and giving our tickets to the staff and yeah, we just quickly explained the situation to them before running, we were literally running and running and I remember just laughing. It was just funny. We were just like, oh my god, let's go, let's go, we're late, and yeah, it was crazy.

0:07:58.4 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the boarding process out of five, what would you give them?

0:08:11.7 PARTICIPANT 31: I don't know… like a three. It was okay. It was just a matter of us rushing to the gate, I would have loved to take my time, shopped a little bit, just cruise around the airport a little, but we had to rush because we're already late and all the passengers were waiting for us.

0:08:38.5 RESEARCHER: Okay, so moving on, could you please describe your experience entering the plane, like what do you usually first notice?

0:08:50.2 PARTICIPANT 31: Oh yeah, so basically, when we entered the plane, everyone was staring at us, it's like, oh, it's them, the reason why we're late, and I was just looking at people, and saying sorry out loud, but that's just concerning this flight, what I usually first notice is obviously how new the plane is, and also how the staff greets in the front, I'm very big on smiles and greetings, and I do expect them to say like, hi, can I see your ticket, and then they show me the way, it's nice, it's a nice gesture, and obviously, I need to see whether the plane itself and my seats are clean because that's very, very important to me.

0:09:38.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and so what do you feel is more important to you

during the in-flight experience?

0:09:44.6 PARTICIPANT 31: Okay, so like I said, the cleanliness is like very, very important, and also like the food. I do expect the food to be really good, especially like airline X usually has good food, I do expect that because sometimes I get hungry and I forget to even eat, and if it's like a long flight, I do expect the food at least to be very delicious and, yeah, the seat comfort is also really important.

0:10:38.0 RESEARCHER: Okay, and how was the in-flight experience, were there any incidents that occurred?

0:10:49.4 PARTICIPANT 31: Nothing really special happened… like everything was in order, everyone was nice, like the staff, and yeah.

0:11:20.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the in-flight experience out of five, what would you give them?

0:11:32.8 PARTICIPANT 31: I would give them a five. Actually, I always love their in-flight experience because they have comfortable seats, the food is nice, staff are super friendly, I like looking at the plane, the colors, everything went smoothly and yeah, I'd give them a five.

0:11:48.2 RESEARCHER: Alright, and did you experience a smooth ride overall, or maybe there was turbulence, and does that usually have an impact on your experience?

0:11:56.5 PARTICIPANT 31: Yes, yes, yes. It has a major impact on my experience, like turbulence for me, I'm the ultimate scaredy-cat, I get super scared with turbulence and everything, and usually I remember this one flight where the plane was shaking and I screamed, then I cried like a baby, it was so embarrassing but at the same time I couldn't help it, it was just very scary, and yeah, so that's why I usually, when I get on the plane, I try to calm myself down. It was worse before, I mean now it's better, but I still get a little bit panicky if it's like a turbulent flight.

0:12:44.3 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, and could you please describe the process after landing?

0:12:53.6 PARTICIPANT 31: Yeah, so after landing, I remember we arrived at Rome. We took our bags, and everything was fine, we arrived on time and we couldn't wait to go out and explore the city.

0:13:08.7 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you would kindly rate the process after landing out five, what would you give them?

0:13:16.9 PARTICIPANT 31: I would give them a five, like everything went smoothly, we had a really nice trip.

0:13:28.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, and if you kindly rate your entire experience with airline X out of five, what would you give them?

0:13:36.4 PARTICIPANT 31: I would give them… I would give them a three, because of

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the whole check-in experience, it's just a matter of, like I usually rate them a five because I do love the airlines, but at the same time for this particular experience, I don't know if the ground staff were a part of the airline or not, but I remember I saw the badge of an airline X staff and so that's why I thought they were related or something, it was just a matter of, I did not expect for them to be that forceful with the rule for a kilo or two, and yeah, it was just a matter of they couldn't be more lenient about it, and if it was any other time where I could call someone for them to transfer money or something like that, it would have been different, but this time, it's just a matter of, the timing was off, no one was picking up, like it was such a hassle and it was just very, like it could have been avoided. So yeah, I would give them a three just for this reason.

0:14:58.8 RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and do you feel like purchasing another ticket with airline X solely based on your past experience with them?

0:15:09.0 PARTICIPANT 31: Yes, for sure, for sure I would. Like yeah, it wasn't like a big deal, I mean it's a bump on their record, but at the end of the day, I would still fly with them again.

0:15:26.8 RESEARCHER: Alright, and how has this particular experience influence your attitude towards them?

0:15:33.8 PARTICIPANT 31: Yes, so I'm much more wary of the things that I put in my bag and for the weight, because I do realize that it depends on the staff that I'm getting because some staff are nicer and have more room for leeway, but the other kind of staff, they just like making it harder for people. Okay, so I understand it's protocol, but at the same time,

have a little bit of a leeway and be nicer to the customer you know, so I don't know, my attitude is just a matter of, it got affected in a negative way, like I just wish that they hire more staff that are nicer instead of just staff that are just going to be like, oh, protocol, protocol, you know.

0:16:41.2 RESEARCHER: Okay, and do you feel like your peers or relatives can influence your decision to purchase with airline X, even after your experience with them?

0:16:55.8 PARTICIPANT 31: For sure. For sure. They can definitely influence me; I'm the biggest people pleaser, like I'm the person who's always like, okay, sure, so yeah, they can definitely influence my decision.

0:17:09.5 RESEARCHER: Alright, okay, thank you, thank you so much for the interview.

0:17:17.4 PARTICIPANT 31: No worries, thank you for having me, have a nice day, bye.

0:17:28.7 RESEARCHER: You too, bye.