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From Service Quality to Airline Choice: The Mediating Role of Pricing and the Moderating Role of Passenger Satisfaction

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The objectives of the study are to identify the Factors of Airline Selection. Objective of Study: It is also the objective of this study to determine if Passenger Satisfaction acts as a moderator between Pricing and Airline selection. Convenience sampling was applied to achieve the sample. This paper examines the determining factors that influence passengers' levels of satisfaction and their choice of airlines in international air travel, contrasted with a total airline selection at the destination airport. The model also incorporates the relationship between core service dimensions (assurance, customization, available facilities, and employee efforts) and perceived pricing as hypothesised to impact passenger satisfaction, followed by airline choice. The present study also suggests that national identity (as reflected in the airport environmental cues) can moderate the influence of the physical environment on passengers' emotional responses and coping behavior. The findings enhance the understanding of service process dynamics at airports, and thereby discuss potential actions for airport authorities and airline operators to improve customer service. Practice and limitations, and future research directions are discussed.

1. Introduction

Over the last 20 years, the global airline sector has been transformed by deregulation, digital booking systems, more competition, and rising customer service standards. As more and more airlines fly between domestic and foreign destinations, up-to-date travelers can rely on anything but being taken for a flight from one airline to the next, making what makes them choose an airline an area of academic and practical interest (Paithankar et al., 2024). Once upon a time, traveler preferred to consider two factors: price and availability when considering their buying decision. Now, whereas other factors such as intangibles, service quality, and personalized experience, onboard comfort becomes more influential towards purchase decision (Theingi, 2009; Çebişli et al., 2025).

In a more competitive environment, the how of passenger process service characteristics (especially employee behaviour, safety and professionalism, tailored services, airport/in-flight facilities) will be useful in increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Wittmer & Bieger, 2021). When these positive factors are relatively associated with price fairness, they could not only affect customer choice but also the long-term preference of a brand (Chao, 2015; Cha & Lee, 2025). Functionally, the research offers airlines the guidelines they need in deciding where they should invest their resources, whether to educate staff, increase facilities, or tweak pricing structures. Such appetite is particularly salient in the post-pandemic period when consumer demands for cleanliness, customisation, and faster are heightened (Khan, 2021).

The global airline industry has been reshaped over the last 20 years by deregulation, computerised reservations systems, more competition, and better customer service (Vinod, 2021). Although the lines between domestic and foreign destination options are blurring with numerous airlines serving many city-pairs, modern travellers need not rely on anything other than being taken for a ride from one airline to another, justifying academic and practical interest in what they consider when choosing an airline (Iaia & Sestino, 2021). In the past, a traveller only took two factors into account when making a decision: price and availability; however, today other factors such as intangibles (ie, service quality and tailored experience) and on-board comfort start to play critical roles in purchase decisions (Theingi, 2009; Lai, 2023).

Passenger satisfaction: if passengers are processed in a more competitive way, how passengers perceive service characteristics (employee behaviour, safety and professionalism; tailored services; airport/in-flight facilities) will help raise customer satisfaction and loyalty (Wittmer & Bieger, 2021). When these positive aspects are relative to price fairness, they could not only influence a customer's choice but also the long-term brand preference (Chao, 2015; Li et al., 2024).

Functionally, what the research does is provide the airlines with some guidelines that might help them determine where they should put their resources, whether it's focusing on educating employees to avoid unconscious bias, expanding facilities slightly so they can keep children separated from one another, or modifying a pricing structure. This kind of appetite is particularly noticeable in post-pandemic times, when the demands for cleanliness, customization, and faster by consumers increase (Khan, 2021).

The quality of the service provided by airlines has been widely investigated; however, the literature is frequently looking at components such as safety, comfort, or price on an individual basis rather than through a comprehensive form (Clemes et al., 2008; Li et al., 2024). Service quality in the Airline industry is multi-faceted and it is measured by the service attributes

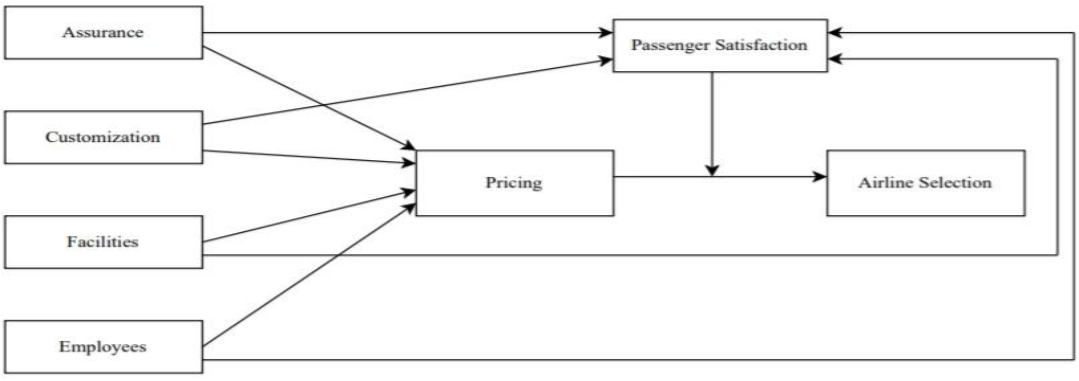
tangible, responsiveness, reliability while undertaking different models such as SERVQUAL and AIRQUAL offered by the service but often do not take into account interaction of the constructs with overall- effects on passenger satisfaction (Parasuramanet al, 1988; Iaia & Sestino, 2021).

Too often, studies concentrate on functional aspects-such as flight arrival times-rather than experiential ones such as employee politeness and emotional comfort (Park, 2004; Khan, 2021). Nonetheless, more intangible aspects of the experience, such as levels of staff interaction with employees and trust in passengers , as well as service personalization, have started to take on an added significance (especially during the post-pandemic period) (Khan, 2021). In the majority of research on this topic, service quality and price are not examined conjointly; a situation which might be less realistic when taking into consideration that customers may be willing to pay more in order to experience a high-quality service (Theingi, 2009; Wittmer & Bieger, 2021). Despite extensive research on passenger satisfaction as an independent variable, its moderation between service dimensions and choice of airline is not investigated (Ali & Iqbal, 2023). Furthermore, the mediating effect of pricing in a service quality-satisfaction relation has not been found, even this the impact on airline choice (Mutalib et al., 2020). There are knowledge gaps regarding the extent to which service attributes, including customization, human element, and physical evidence, interact in shaping decisions handled by airlines, more so when pricing correlates these relationships. Previous research tends to concentrate on developed markets or Western consumer behaviour, overlooking emerging economies with different customer expectations and sensitivity towards pricing (Al G. et al., 2005; Paithankar et al., 2024). In some of these markets, service components such as employee attitude might be more important than loyalty programs or mobile apps.

1.1 Research Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how key factors – Assurance, Facilities, Employees, and Customization – influence choice towards an airline. In particular, the aims are to study how each of these aspects impacts the underlying passenger decision process. It will also investigate the mediating effect of pricing in these factors and airline selection, as well as the moderating role that passenger satisfaction plays within these relationships, and move to the question. This research attempted to solve the question of whether or not Assurance, Facilities, Employees, and Customization have a positive effect on representing an airline. This study also tests the mediation effect of pricing on the relationship between these factors and airline choice, and the moderating role of passenger satisfaction in the relationship between these factors and selection.

Figure No 1: Conceptual Framework



2. Literature Review

2.1 Underpinning Theory

This study is in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991), which emphasizes that three fundamental characteristics constitute an individual's behavioral intentions, including attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the case of choice of airlines, T PB gives a theoretical platform to understand what passengers perceive about service quality attributes, Maslow's quality, security assurance, personnel behavior customization, and facilities provided by an airline, which drives their decision to select a specific airline.

The attitude component of TPB is related to passengers' evaluation of airline characteristics (e.g., safety and cabin services) as these can affect their preference (Ajzen, 1991). For example, subjective norms could be filed under the social effects on passengers and reviews that they encounter, which influence their decisions, while perceived behavioral control links to passengers' ability to act upon those preferences, given pricing and availability.

Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) (Oliver, 1980) incorporates the moderating role of consumer satisfaction and the mediating role of pricing in the framework. EDT is a response that reflects the comparison of expectations and actual experiences due to satisfaction. Satisfaction will rise if the prices of service performances (for instance, employee behavior, or facilities) are in line with and above what is real, such that customers' expectations along the trip path (e.g, service satisfaction customer expectations when compared to price), hence affecting customers' future behaviors, i.e., airline choices (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Both TPB and EDT together allow a broad view to evaluate the impact of service quality directly on airline selection, as well as how pricing mediates this relationship and satisfaction moderates it.

Fare has always been seen as a primary influencer in passengers' choice of airline, especially so in low-cost carrier (LCC) markets, which are highly price sensitive (Piga, 2007). Non-price service elements in the long run. In addition to strategic implications, the overemphasis on price can result in severe evidential distortion that misinforms about what truly drives brand loyalty and satisfaction at repeat patronage levels in a competitive environment-forwarding this information may not only be misguidance but malfeasance and incompetence. Carriers with a low-cost strategy might overlook ways to create value based on service distinctions.

2.2 Assurance in Airline Selection

Reassurance is the perceived security, reliability, and credibility of the airline, is an important determinant in consumer decision making. Especially in the post-COVID-19 era, health-related reliability and safety communication are even more important because of customers' need for assurance (Park et al. Direct assurance is found to be associated with consumer trust and indirectly affects their choice of airline (Saha & Theingi, 2009).

H1: Assurance has a positive impact on airline selection.

2.3 Facilities in Airline Selection

Air travel customers today are in search of comfort and service, the main influence of which is the quality of on-board and ground services. This category comprises factors such as seat comfort, in-flight entertainment, airport lounges, and check-in counters. Facilities that are of high quality mean more perceived value and satisfaction to the consumer, thus airlines have a

higher chance for selection (Chen & Chang, 2005; Park et al., 2004).H2: Facilities have a positive impact on airline selection.

2.4 Employees in the Airline Selection

The conduct and professionalism of staff are to a large extent responsible for passengers' experience. Prompt, friendly, and informative service is the determinant of overall satisfaction, and this determines customer loyalty and preference for an airline (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Emotional connection and service empathy are even more crucial in high-contact service industries (such as aviation, Bitner 1990).

H3: Employees have a positive impact on airline selection.

2.4 Customization in Airline Selection

Personalisation, like dietary options, seating, and personalised communication, fulfils customers' needs by catering to their specific requirements. Personalised services of airlines can lead to a feeling of recognition and control, which in turn will increase satisfaction with the service provider and decision-making process (Chua et al., 2014; Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

H4: Customization has a positive impact on airline selection.

2.5 Pricing in Airline Selection

Although assurance increases trust, its impact on airline carriers may be stronger when travelers feel that the price is fair for the level of safety and trust provided. It has been found that perceived value (the total benefits derived by the customer in connection with both quality of service and the price paid for it) is among the motives of consumer behavior (Zeithaml, 1988; Chen & Dubinsky, 2003). Better catering might not even encourage passengers to prefer one carrier over another if they can not believe the higher fare can be justified by a better service level. As such, pricing serves as a means for value screening in order to moderate the effects of tangible service attributes on airline selection (Piga & Bachis, 2007; Chao et al., 2015). As much as specialized-employee service, goods price fairness is a significant factor in developing an overall favorable evaluation. Price may moderate the service-choice outcome, that is, passengers may pay acceptably higher fares if employee behavior goes beyond their expectations (Theingi, 2009). The customization of perceived value makes the service personalized, and passengers' willingness to select which airline is based on their perception of whether the personalized service is worth the price. Therefore, pricing crosses the perception-action gap (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Chen & Dubinsky, 2003).

H5: Pricing has a mediating impact on the relationship between assurance and airline selection.

H6: Pricing has a mediating impact on the relationship between facilities and airline selection.

H7: Pricing has a mediating impact on the relationship between employee behavior and airline selection.

H8: Pricing has a mediating impact on the relationship between customization and airline selection.

2.6 Passenger Satisfaction in Airline Selection

Happy customers will be more willing to look past a trust issue in the airlines' safety and reliability. Assurance has a stronger impact on airline choice when satisfaction is high (Fornell et al., 1996; Ajzen, 1991). Greater satisfaction can increase the impact of facilities with regard to airline choice. If the overall service is considered satisfactory by passengers, then they could be more likely to place a greater proportion of the decision-making emphasis on facilities (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1980). Airport preference mitigates the positive influence of employee behavior on passenger satisfaction. Happy guests are more likely to memorize pleasant personnel exchanges, which in turn affect their future behavior (Bitner, 1990; Brady & Cronin, 2001). Happy passengers are going to have a higher regard for more personalized services, the survey suggests — and may make that belief felt in their loyalty or purchase decisions. Satisfaction strengthens the association between customisation and brand selection (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Chua et al., 2014).

H9: Passenger satisfaction has a moderating impact on the relationship between assurance and airline selection.

H10: Passenger satisfaction has a moderating impact on the relationship between facilities and airline selection.

H11: Passenger satisfaction has a moderating impact on the relationship between employees and airline selection.

H12: Passenger satisfaction has a moderating impact on the relationship between customization and airline selection.

3. Research Methodology

In this respect, we focus on the airline choice taking service dimensions like security, comfort, behavior of employee, and personalization of service into account by applying passenger satisfaction and pricing felt by the passengers. The research adopts a positivist philosophy, which approaches exploring consumer behaviour through objective methods where measured and observed phenomenon is supplemented by the use of the literature, e.g., Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991) as well as Lancaster's Consumer Choice Theory (1966). The method is deductive, moving from the general to the particular and from theory to hypotheses that are then tested on the basis of empirical data. In order to quantify potential Airline customers, a questionnaire approach was used, of self-administered format questions (which used measures of attitude, preference, and perception about service quality and choice of airlines). A non-experimental design study is employed to support the objective appraisal with statistical procedures. A further limitation of the study is that it is cross-sectional, yet only measuring service quality and price at one point in time does allow for examination of the association between service quality variables, price, and airline choice. First-hand information is gathered from passengers who have traveled in the last year using a well-structured questionnaire and a convenience sampling method. A sample size of at least 300 completed surveys is desired for statistical correctness. The descriptive information is presented in demography, and the reliability is tested through Cronbach's alpha; Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) analysis is conducted to test the measurement model. The inferences have been drawn with a good rigorous analysis of it-y relationship, where the assurance, facilities, employees' behavior , and customization were independent variables against the selection of

airline using hotshot software SmartPLS, which calculated a structural equation model for finding intended relationships among the shown variables.

Table No 1: Measurements Items adapted

Construct	Source/Reference	Adopted/Adapted	No. of Items
Assurance	Parasuraman et al. (1988); Tsaur et al. (2002)	Adapted	3
Facilities	AIRQUAL Scale (Tsaur et al., 2002); Custom additions	Adapted	3
Employee Behavior	SERVQUAL dimension (Empathy/Responsiveness)	Adapted	3
Customization	Based on service personalization literature (Chao & Kim, 2015)	Adapted	3
Pricing Perception	Piga (2007); Dunn (2014) on perceived value	Adapted	3
Passenger Satisfaction	Oliver (1980); Han et al. (2019)	Adapted	3
Airline Selection Decision	Ajzen (1991); Lancaster (1966) Framework	Adapted	3

Table No 2: Respondents Profile

Demographic characteristic		
Gender	Male	28
	Female	13
Nationality	Pakistani	49
	Other	2
Age	20-25	25
	26-30	8
	31-35	4
	36+	3
Yearly travel frequency	1–2 times	15
	3–5 times	9
	6–10 times	6
	More than 10 times	3
	0 times	9

4. Resuts

4.1 Measurement Model

Convergent validity of the measurement model was tested. This was investigated by factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All item loadings are above the threshold value 0.7 (see Table 2; Chin, Peterson, & Brown, 2008). Composite Reliability (CR), i.e., the degree to which item indicators represent an underlying latent variable, was higher than 70, and Average Variance Extracted(AVE), which measures of total amount of variance in the indicator explained by the latent construct, was higher than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2013).

The next stage was assessing discriminant validity, which concerns the degree to which measures are distinct from other constructs through a low correlation between the target construct and unrelated scales. The square of the diagonal values (AVE) of each construct is greater than its cross-construct correlation coefficient. Recent critique of the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. The limitations of using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion to detect lack of discriminant validity, such as in common research situations, have recently been criticized (Henseler, Ringle et al., 2015). Henseler et al. proposed an alternative method, based on the multitrait-multimethod matrix, to test discriminant validity: the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015). This new method was further applied to assess discriminant validity, and the results are presented in Table 4. First, a value higher than 0.85 (Kline, 2011) discriminant if the HTMT is the problem of value. As shown in Table 4. Nevertheless, we have our values well below 0.85.

Table No 3:Validity and reliability for constructs

Variables	Items	Outher Loading	AVE	Composite Reliabilty (CR)
Airline Decision	ASD1	0.726	0.58	0.805
	ASD2	0.804		
	ASD3	0.753		
Customization	C1	0.791	0.553	0.787
	C2	0.672		
	C3	0.763		
Employees Behavior	EB1	0.759	0.511	0.415
	EB2	0.809		
	EB3	-0.548		
Facilities	F1	0.596	0.467	0.718
	F2	0.583		
	F3	0.84		
Pricing	PP1	0.691	0.624	0.831
	PP2	0.877		
	PP3	0.79		
Passenger Satisfaction	PS1	0.846	0.508	0.582
	PS2	0.857		
	PS3	-0.268		
Safety Assurance	SA1	0.873	0.705	0.877
	SA2	0.763		
	SA3	0.877		
Passenger Satisfaction X Pricing	PSxPP	1		

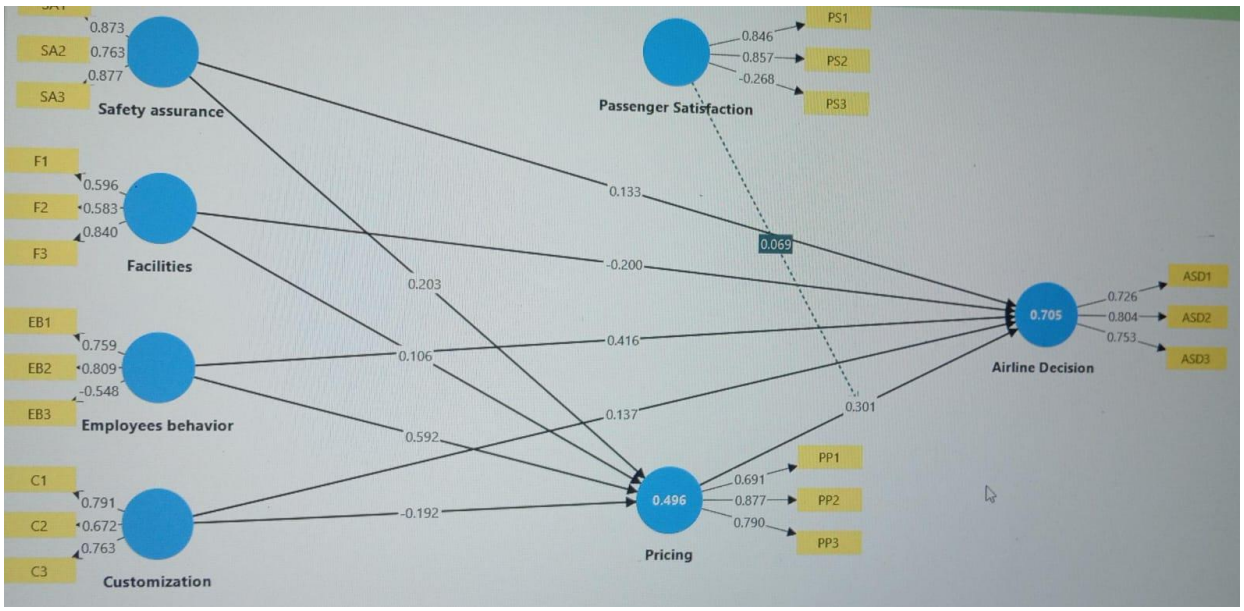
Table No 4: Validity and reliability for constructs (Hetrotrait-monotrait (HTMT)

Construct	ASD	C	EB	F	PS	PP	SA	PSxPP
Airline Decision								
Customization	0.85							
Employees Behavior	1.204	1.121						
Facilities	0.901	1.096	1.447					
Passenger Satisfaction	1.015	0.812	0.821	0.875				
Pricing	1.056	0.53	0.973	0.969	0.954			
Safety Assurance	0.756	0.487	0.772	0.778	0.758	0.645		
Passenger Satisfaction X Pricing	0.348	0.365	0.342	0.127	0.517	0.309	0.202	

Table No 5: Validity and reliability for constructs (Fornell and Larcker Criterion)

Construct	ASD	C	EB	F	PS	PP	SA
Airline Decision	0.762						
Cutomization	0.52	0.744					
Employees Behavior	0.733	0.648	0.715				
Facilities	0.504	0.615	0.752	0.683			
Passenger Satisfaction	0.617	0.362	0.435	0.29	0.712		
Pricing	0.703	0.318	0.66	0.546	0.585	0.79	
Safety Assurance	0.541	0.302	0.557	0.555	0.411	0.533	0.839

Figure No2: the Relationship of The Construct and Latent Variables



4.2 Structural Model

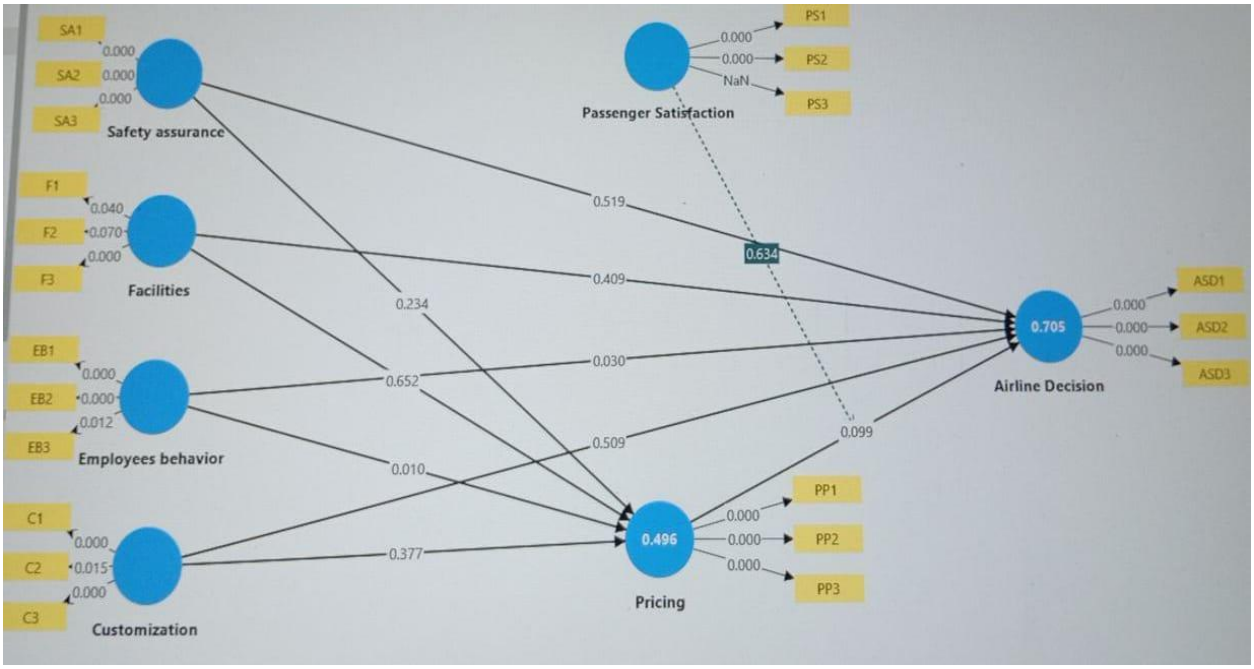
Firstly, the measurement model was examined with respect to convergent validity. This was tested through factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As reported in Table 2, all item loadings surpassed the suggested >0.7 (Chin et al., 2008). Regarding the construct validity, composite reliability values (the proportion of variance of the scale score that is true) surpassed 0.7, and average variance extracted (the portion of variance in indicators by overall variance) was higher than 0.5 as suggested by Hair et al. (2013). The next phase was to assess the discriminant validity by examining how distinct the measures are from other variables, as indicated by the low correlation between the predictor and other constructs not intended to be represented by it. 3 present the x2 of AVE (Diagonal values) of every construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs, which reflects sufficient discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). A Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach and SmartPLS were used to test the theorized relationships between the constructs. Path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values that tested the significance were estimated based on a bootstrapping technique of 300 resamples.

The true nature of this relationship was also proved by PA that Employees Behavior (EB) has a significant positive impact on Airline Selection Decision (ASD) (β = 0.416, t = 2.152, p=.032), and Pricing (PP) (β = 0.592, t = 2.761, p=.006), which supported their corresponding hypotheses respectively. However, facilities (F) tended to negatively affect ASD significantly (β = -0.200, t = 0.895, p = 0.007), and this coefficient was in the negative direction. But saline had no significant effect on PP (β = 0.106, t = 0.442, p = 0.659). The paths from Customization (C) to ASD (β = 0.137, t = 0.698, p = 0.486), and PP (β = -0.192, t = 0.822, p = 0,412) were also not significant. Passenger Satisfaction (PS) also did not have a significant effect on ASD (β = 0.252, t = 1.446, p = 0.149), and the interaction effect between PS and PP (PS × PP) was still nonsignificant (β = 0.069, t = 0.477, p = 0.634). The association between PP and ASD was significant (β = 0.301, t = 1.626, p = 0.105). Furthermore, SA was not significantly associated with ASD (β = 0.133, t = 0.672, p = 0.502), but it was significantly associated with PP (β = 0.203, t = 1.116, p < .05).

Table No 6:Structural estimates (hypothesis testing)

Construct	Beta	T Stats	P Values	Result
C->ASD	0.137	0.698	0.486	Rejected
C->PP	-0.192	0.822	0.412	Accepted
EB->ASD	0.416	2.152	0.032	Accepted
EB->PP	0.592	2.761	0.006	Accepted
F->ASD	-0.2	0.895	0.007	Rejected
F->PP	0.106	0.442	0.659	Rejected
PS->ASD	0.252	1.446	0.149	Rejected
PSxPP->ASD	0.069	0.477	0.634	Rejected
PP->ASD	0.301	1.626	0.105	Rejected
SA->ASD	0.133	0.672	0.502	Accepted
SA->PP	0.203	1.116	0.026	Accepted

Figure No 3: Path Coefficients and p-values.



5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the core service dimensions of airline choice, which are assurance, facilities, employee behavior, and customization, and their impact on pricing as an intermediary variable, along with the moderating role of passenger satisfaction. Based on established theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), these results provide important theoretical and practical implications to the airline sector, especially for emerging markets, as in the case of Pakistan.

The most important factor in the structural model was the employee.; behavior (positive effect on airline selection ($\beta = 0.416$, $p = 0.032$) and price perception ($\beta = 0.592$, $p = 0.006$). Our findings also confirm the results of previous studies (Bitner, 1990; Brady & Cronin, 2001), suggesting that friendly and professional service staff's responsiveness is required for a positive customer experience, and willingness to pay is essential. This result contradicts the former assumption that price is the main consideration for choosing an airline (Basu, 2023; Mutalib et al., 2020), and indicates that passengers reevaluate pricing criteria depending on the service quality they receive, a behavior which is consistent with Theingi's (2009) assertion that excellent service could be a justification for higher prices. Additionally, assurance had a significant positive effect on pricing perception ($\beta = 0.203$, $p = 0.026$), highlighting that when passengers feel confident in an airline's safety, reliability, and professionalism, they are more accepting of price levels. This is particularly relevant in a post-pandemic context where hygiene, health safety, and operational transparency have become central to passengers' decision-making (Park et al., 2004).

This research empirically investigated the main service determinants of airline choice, namely assurance, facilities, employee behavior, and customization, as well as examined the

mediating effect through pricing and moderating role through passenger satisfaction. Informed by established theories, namely, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), results provide theoretical as well as practical implications for the aviation literature, particularly in developing countries such as Pakistan.

Interestingly, facilities had a negative but significant influence on airline choice ($\beta = -0.200$, $p = 0.007$), which was inconsistent with the findings of Wong (2003) and Park et al. (2004), focusing on the importance of concrete service elements such as lounges or entertainment facilities. This result could be due to dissatisfaction with current amenities, or a change in customer quality expectations; customers may now consider such accommodations as standard features of lounge services instead of an enhancement, at least in some cost-conscious markets.

The other constructs, i.e., customization, passenger satisfaction, and pricing did not have strong direct effects on airline selection. In addition, passengers' satisfaction with the decision to travel by that airline did not moderate the relationship between pricing and choice of airline ($\beta = 0.069$, $p = 0.634$), which is contrary to Pine & Gilmore (1999) as well as to Fornell et al. (1996), who argued that satisfaction increases brand loyalty and repurchase behavior. However, it is possible that in the population represented in this study, satisfaction operates less as an exceptional experience than as a minimum expectation, meaning satisfaction may not be as salient at the decision point.

5.1 Implications

The contribution of this study to existing literature is its combination of the service quality dimensions—assurance, employee behavior, customization, and facility—pricing, as well as passenger satisfaction and their collective instead of separate impact on airline choice. It supports the theoretical applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory, finding that passengers evaluate the price in terms of perceived value, tending to accept higher prices when service quality, employee support, and customization options are all high, as well as when they obtain emotional and psychological satisfaction. Managerial implications: The results indicate that airlines in price-sensitive markets, for example, Pakistan, could benefit from closely matching service-level with pricing, investing in professional training of employees, and implementing an effective customer feedback mechanism to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, as the customers will make long-term commitments in case they enjoy good experiences with high-quality services. They also help inform regulators when it comes to establishing service-quality standards aligned with passenger priorities, and encourage airport authorities and ground-service partners to work with airlines on significant enhancements in lounges, boarding facilities, and check-in locations that impact overall performance.

5.2 Limitations

The current research has a number of limitations that must be mentioned. It is based on a cross-sectional survey with convenience sampling for the Pakistani passengers, making it impossible to establish causation and generalize these findings into other markets or passenger segments. Second, the small size of the sample and questionnaire-based self-report data could be subject to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), recall problems, and social desirability. Third, the model has a limited scope with regard to which service quality dimensions (assurance, facilities, employee behaviour, and customization), pricing, and passenger satisfaction it addresses, as well as in not incorporating brand image, flight schedule, loyalty programmes, and

digital service quality. Finally, several constructs demonstrated questionable reliability and should be used conservatively.

5.3 Future Research

Future studies can address these limitations by employing more representative, probability-based samples across countries or regions, and in a longitudinal manner or through the use of experimental designs to enhance understanding of causal relations among service quality, pricing, satisfaction, and airline choice. Researchers could develop and validate the measurement scales, especially constructs with low reliability; they could also possibly apply mixed methods to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of passenger experiences. Future research can also consider other variables like brand trust, perceived risk, service recovery mechanism, online service-specific features, and segment–specific (business and leisure travellers) analysis to arrive at a more comprehensive model of airline selection in developed as well as developing areas.

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