

fluctuations. In addition, ticket price emerged as the most influential factor affecting airline selection, as passengers tended to balance travel costs with service quality by preferring airlines that offered the best value for money. Overall, the findings demonstrate that airfare price fluctuations substantially affect passengers using Najaf International Airport by influencing their decisions to switch airlines, modify travel schedules, or reconsider booking choices. Based on these findings, the study recommends that airlines adopt transparent and flexible pricing strategies, improve digital booking platforms, and maintain an appropriate balance between ticket prices and service quality to enhance passenger satisfaction and strengthen their competitive position in the aviation market.

Keywords: Najaf International Airport, price swings, traveler behavior, airlines, and airline choice.

Overview:

Air travel is one of the most significant tourism-related industries since it makes travel between other nations and locations possible. Air travel is now the most popular option for both domestic and international travel due to its speed and convenience. Swift economic and technological progress has led to flight prices constantly changing due to several elements, such as rising fuel costs, seasonal shifts in demand, airline rivalry, and global health and economic challenges. The actions of travelers and their selection of airline have been directly affected by these fluctuations.

Value is a significant factor for tourists. As most explorers desire the best amenities for the lowest feasible cost, airlines employ diverse pricing

The impact of price fluctuations on tourist behavior in choosing airlines: A case study of passengers traveling through Najaf International Airport

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the impact of airfare price fluctuations on passengers' airline choice through a field study conducted at Najaf International Airport, one of Iraq's major aviation hubs serving domestic and international travelers, particularly religious pilgrims. The study hypothesized that fluctuations in airfare prices significantly influence passengers' travel behavior and airline selection decisions. A descriptive-analytical research design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to a random sample of 437 passengers. The reliability of the research instrument was confirmed by a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.911$), indicating excellent internal consistency and measurement reliability. The collected data were analyzed using multivariate regression analysis. The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between airfare price fluctuations and passengers' airline choice at the 0.05 significance level, confirming the study hypothesis. Among the examined dimensions, price variability had the strongest influence on passengers' decisions ($\beta = 0.942$), followed by pricing changes and their immediate effects on travel behavior. The results further indicated that airline competition, peak travel seasons, and rising fuel costs were the principal determinants of airfare

choices may be affected by several pricing-related factors, including fare fluctuations, fare levels, promotional discounts, and individual price sensitivity. Moreover, the influence of price may vary according to the perceived quality of airline services, as passengers may be willing to pay higher fares when they perceive greater value in terms of safety, reliability, comfort, and service quality. Despite the growing importance of dynamic pricing strategies in the aviation sector, there remains limited empirical evidence regarding how these interrelated pricing dimensions collectively influence airline choice, particularly in the Iraqi context. Accordingly, this study seeks to develop a clearer understanding of the relationship between airfare pricing dynamics and passengers' airline selection behavior at Najaf International Airport. Based on this research problem, the study addresses the following questions:

- 1-To what extent do airfare pricing dimensions—including fare fluctuations, fare levels, promotional offers, and passengers' price sensitivity—influence airline choice?
- 2-Does perceived service quality moderate the relationship between airfare pricing and passengers' airline selection?
- 3-Which airfare pricing dimension exerts the greatest influence on passengers' airline choice?
- 4-Do passengers' responses differ according to their demographic characteristics (e.g., age and gender) and travel purpose?

1-3. The Research's Significance

Scientific Significance

1. Enhancing research on consumer conduct and travel promotion.
2. Clarifying the link between airline selection habits and cost.

strategies to attract the largest number of travelers. Conversely, differing income brackets and levels of travel familiarity lead to varied responses to shifts in airfare rates. Some vacationers prioritize punctuality, ease, and superior provision irrespective of cost increases, whereas others prefer budget-friendly airlines.

This research is significant as it clarifies how price shifts impact the conduct of Iraqi respondents, particularly those transiting through Najaf International Airport, a vital aviation hub due to its connection with ongoing trips and spiritual pilgrimages. Furthermore, this investigation aims to explore how alterations in airfare influence travelers' purchasing choices and the extent to which this affects their inclination towards different airlines. The study's outcomes are anticipated to furnish a scientific foundation to assist air carriers and tourism companies in formulating pricing and service strategies that meet client demands and foster tourism's resurgence.

1. Research Techniques

1-1. Research Concept

This research centers on assessing how recent variations in airfare costs influence passengers' choices when picking a preferred airline, given that Najaf International Airport serves as a key center for religious tourism in Iraq.

1.2 Research Issue

The airline industry operates in a highly competitive and dynamic environment where airfare pricing has become one of the most influential determinants of passengers' travel decisions. However, airfare is not a single-dimensional construct. Passengers' airline

2. There is a relationship between price offers and booking intent.

3. There is a relationship between price increases and changing travel dates.

4. Price sensitivity varies according to age, gender, and purpose of travel.

1-6. Research Approaches

The study relies on:

- A descriptive-analytical method is employed to outline price fluctuations and scrutinize their influence on traveler conduct.

The primary method for collecting information from travelers at Najaf International Airport will be a questionnaire.

1-7: A Synopsis of Najaf International Airport

Najaf International Airport is considered one of Iraq's most important modern airports due to its favorable position and vital role in enabling air travel and religious tourism within the country. Located in the sacred city of Najaf, the airport is among the busiest in the nation, processing millions of travelers annually, predominantly worshippers journeying to the holy sites in Najaf and Karbala.

The aerodrome was officially inaugurated in 2008, following its renovation and conversion from a military base to a civilian international transport hub. Since it began, the number of flights and carriers operating there has significantly increased, connecting Iraq to a number of Arab, regional, and Asian nations and promoting travel, tourism, and business.

Practical Significance

1. Assisting airlines in developing effective pricing strategies.

2. Providing insights that aid travel and tourism businesses and the management of Najaf International Airport.

3. Improving marketing support for visitors.

1.4 Research Goals

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1-To examine the concept of airfare price fluctuations and their implications within the airline industry.

2-To investigate the effect of airfare price fluctuations on passengers' airline choice at Najaf International Airport.

3-To identify the key factors influencing passengers' airline selection decisions, with particular emphasis on airfare pricing.

4-To assess the relative importance of airfare pricing compared with other factors affecting airline choice.

5-To provide practical recommendations that assist airlines in developing effective pricing strategies to enhance passenger satisfaction and strengthen their competitive position.

1-5. Research hypotheses

Main hypothesis:

Price changes have a statistically significant effect on travelers' airline selection behavior.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between ticket price volatility and changing airlines.

study (Muhammad.,2021). With the emergence of online reservation sites and heightened rivalry among airlines, price has become a vital element in attracting and retaining travelers, especially at airports like Najaf International Airport, which experiences considerable tourist and religious movement.

2-1. The Pricing Concept

Pricing is a vital element of the marketing mix. It denotes the procedure by which firms ascertain the monetary value of items or services offered to travelers, aiming to synchronize their objectives with those of their travelers. Price is a significant factor in the air transport sector due to the characteristic of air travel, the severe rivalry amongst carriers, and its direct impact on passengers' and holidaymakers' choices when selecting an airline (Kotler et al .,2022). Pricing is the act of establishing service charges based on a range of economic and business considerations, encompassing operational expenditures, demand levels, fuel expenses, festive periods, and airline competitive approaches (Holloway et al .,2023). Travelers often evaluate costs and offerings to achieve the greatest value for their outlay, thus pricing is another potent instrument for affecting their buying choices. According to current research, employing adaptable and assertive pricing strategies enhances traveler contentment and attracts more passengers, especially at terminals such as Najaf International Airport which experience substantial tourist movement. This highlights how critical pricing is in granting airlines a competitive advantage (Al-Ubaidi.,2021).

The airport provides a variety of services to travelers, such as air travel, reservations, freight, and airport greeting, in addition to building its passenger terminals, runways, and air traffic control systems. Furthermore, it has a substantial economic effect by creating employment and boosting the travel, transport, and service sectors.

Being the main hub for religious tourism in Iraq, the airport's significance increases significantly during religious holidays due to an increase in tourists from many nations. Additionally, it promotes local growth and strengthens Najaf Governorate's reputation as an important religious and tourism destination both locally and globally.

2. Variations in Prices

Price swings are a major economic phenomenon that quickly impacts the travel and aviation industries. Airfare price is influenced by a number of interrelated factors, including demand levels, fuel costs, travel durations, airline competition, and global economic and political factors (Kotler et al.,2022). These changes surely affect tourist behavior when making travel decisions and selecting the best airline because many tourists research costs and search for deals and price reductions before completing their reservations. Pricing is an important marketing tactic for airlines because it affects how travelers view the value of their money and the quality of the services they receive (Holloway et al.,2023). Lower pricing and special promotions increase demand for travel and have a direct impact on consumer preferences when choosing an airline, according to some Arab

financial elements. Airlines consistently assess these matters to achieve a harmony between fiscal success and traveler attraction. Fares significantly impact flyers' choices when selecting the optimal carrier, considering the intense competition between airlines. The following are the principal determinants impacting flight prices (IATA.,2023):

1. Operational expenses: These include upkeep, energy expenses, staff compensation, and landing charges. Rises in these expenses have a direct effect on ticket rates (Bieger et al.,2022).
2. Supply and demand: Because of increasing demand, ticket prices climb during times of high travel needs, religious pilgrimages, and national holidays, while they decrease during periods of low activity.
3. Fuel expenses: As fuel is a principal expenditure of flying, shifts in the price of oil have a prompt effect on how much airlines charge.
4. Airline rivalry: Airlines employ reductions and particular deals to attract patrons and maintain their standing in the market.
5. Technological progress and digital booking systems: Contemporary booking systems offer adaptable pricing, which alters expenses according to seat availability and reservation timing.
6. Financial and official circumstances: Economic declines, political changes, and currency values all impact travel and ticket prices, especially at airports like Najaf International Airport that welcome a considerable number of tourists and religious passengers (Doganis .,2021).

2-4: Strategies for Pricing

2-2. Pricing Definition

A central concept in marketing and management is pricing, or determining the amount a customer would pay for a particular good or service. Pricing, a strategic tool, directly affects demand, profitability, and a business's ability to compete. The significance of pricing in the air transportation industry is highlighted by the quickly evolving air services landscape, intense airline competition, and the relationship between fares and economic and travel-related factors (Armstrong et al.,2021).

Airline pricing is the method by which companies establish the price of tickets, considering a variety of factors such as operational expenses, fuel costs, airport charges, seat inventory, and travel demand. Furthermore, adaptable or dynamic pricing structures—which constantly adjust rates based on booking times, travel lengths, and trip categories—are a significant aspect of contemporary airlines. This approach boosts income and enhances airline capacity usage (Bieger et al.,2022).

However, price undeniably impacts tourist conduct and travel choices because cost is one of the most crucial elements visitors scrutinize when contrasting different airlines. Recent research indicates that lower prices or unique promotions assist in attracting more tourists and boosting traveler interest, especially at airports with substantial tourist flow, such as Najaf International Airport (Al-Samarrai.,2023).

2-3. Factors Influencing Costs

Ticket rates' values and changes are influenced by a broad spectrum of operational, promotional, and

Beyond just the expense of their trip, voyagers also consider the caliber of amenities, encompassing convenience, punctuality, and digital provisions. As a result, competitive pricing functions as an integrated marketing tactic that influences consumers' perceptions of the value they receive. Airlines at Najaf International Airport compete by offering a range of fees and extra amenities during times of religious pilgrimage. This surely affects how travelers behave and make decisions about reservations and airlines (13).

2-6-Discounts and Offers

Air carriers use promotions and price reductions as a primary marketing strategy to boost demand and boost passenger numbers, particularly in fiercely competitive industries where costs are constantly changing. These incentives, which help draw in a variety of traveler demographics, include lowered fares, free value services, frequent flyer programs, and discounted advance reservations. According to recent research, pricing incentives have a significant impact on passengers' decisions because they seek to optimize their financial gain, especially in light of changing economic conditions and rising flight costs (14).

Seasonal pricing reductions help airlines become more competitive in the travel industry in addition to increasing occupancy and decreasing empty seats. According to research, promotional offers have a psychological impact on travelers by creating a sense of value that leads consumers to select one airline over others. For tourists, the significance of promotions and discounts is especially clear .using Najaf International Airport

Given that pricing strategy directly influences travelers' choices regarding which airline to select, it serves as a crucial instrument for airlines aiming to achieve profitability and attract customers. To adjust to shifts in demand and rivalry within the travel industry, businesses employ various methods, including variable pricing, special deals, and seasonal modifications. Variable pricing involves continuously altering ticket costs based on supply and demand, advance booking periods, and seat occupancy. This enables companies to boost income with increased adaptability. Furthermore, many budget airlines employ reduced fares to draw travelers on a limited budget, which solidifies their market standing and augments demand for journeys. These strategies are vital in shaping passenger actions at Najaf International Airport, particularly concerning Iraqi aviation, especially during periods of high visitor interest and religious journey seasons.

2-5. Competitive Costs

Airlines employ competitive pricing as their primary strategy in today's air travel landscape. Companies aim to align their ticket costs with those of competitors in the market to remain viable and attract a substantial volume of passengers. This method is especially crucial in travel segments with many carriers and significant seasonal variations, where passenger decisions about which airline to choose are heavily influenced by expense. Some companies occasionally implement short-term price cuts or unique offers to stimulate demand and improve occupancy rates, particularly during periods of reduced travel.

elements impacting airlines' running expenses. Shifts in fuel costs have an immediate effect on ticket rates. Regular fluctuations in demand, especially during busy travel and holiday periods, also lead to price increases due to higher demand for journeys than available seats. Moreover, because carriers must continually adjust their prices to remain competitive and maintain their market standing, airline rivalry is a crucial element in pricing volatility.

The utilization of big data and AI-powered dynamic pricing systems also permits real-time price modifications based on booking trends and purchase timing (19).

These factors are clearly connected in the scenario of Najaf International Airport during religious travel periods, when a sudden surge in demand causes a substantial price hike, affecting travelers' choices of the optimal airline concerning both expense and service.

2-9: The Effects of Demand and Supply

The law of supply and demand, a fundamental economic principle, drives fluctuations in the price of air travel services. This directly influences ticket costs and their variation over time. The demand aspect, affected by factors such as income levels, religious journeys, and festive periods, reflects passengers' willingness and capacity to purchase airline tickets. Conversely, the supply side indicates the number of seats airlines make available at any given moment. When demand increases while supply remains constant or restricted, prices escalate considerably; when demand decreases,

during periods of religious travel, when airlines vie to attract travelers by offering appealing prices and various additional amenities.

2-7: Variations in Airfare

The unpredictability of airfares is a major issue for the aviation industry. Their prices are unstable due to a variety of factors, including seasonal demand, operational costs, fuel charges, and airline competitive strategies. Because of this volatility, airfares frequently fluctuate over brief periods of time, making travel plans unpredictable for travelers. Airlines employ dynamic pricing strategies that allow for rapid price adjustments contingent on seat availability and booking windows (16).

Furthermore, investigators observe that price alterations profoundly affect tourist actions, prompting individuals to routinely assess tickets, seek more economical choices, or modify their travel itineraries to align with reduced costs. This could sometimes lead to postponing the purchase decision, or selecting a different carrier with superior deals or more stable pricing. When selecting an airline, expense is a vital element as the effect of this fluctuation is particularly apparent for travelers flying from Najaf International Airport during periods of pilgrimage (17).

2-8: Causes of Price Variations

Several factors explain why the price of air travel services differs. Flight costs are directly influenced by a number of market, operational, and financial considerations tied to this context. The variation in fuel expenses is one of the most significant

impressions of worth, it is regarded as one of the most vital economic determinants affecting this conduct (22).

Furthermore, academics observe that beyond economic anxieties, personal elements such as ease, safety, and the caliber of service, alongside the influence of advertising and online channels, all shape tourist actions (23). Regarding air journeys, travelers' habits are quite evident as they weigh elements like expense, worth, and flight timetables when choosing airlines. Occasional cost adjustments intensify these intricacies for respondents utilizing Najaf International Airport, increasing the sensitivity and adjustability of visitor conduct to supply and demand, as well as fiscal conditions.

3-1-1: The Value of Researching Traveler Behavior

Comprehending passenger decision-making is vital, particularly within the air travel sector, characterized by fluctuating fares and intense competition among airlines. The subsequent points underscore the significance of this investigation:

1. It aids carriers in better grasping the determinants influencing traveler selections, such as price responsiveness, service excellence, and safety demands, thereby enhancing service provisions.
2. It facilitates an analysis of customer responses to price alterations, simplifying the development of more flexible pricing strategies that accommodate erratic shifts in demand.
3. It helps in recognizing travelers' buying tendencies, allowing companies to offer tailored offers and support for each customer group.

costs decline as carriers aim to stimulate bookings (20).

As companies manage operational capacity and strategically allocate seats based on demand forecasts, the aviation sector's supply adaptability also contributes to pricing instability. Carriers employ advanced pricing strategies that utilize data analysis to predict passenger behavior and adjust fares accordingly, leading to continuous price shifts.

During periods of religious journeys, the impact of supply and demand on Najaf International Airport is especially apparent. Travelers must reassess their choices among different airlines due to restricted seat availability caused by heightened flight urgency, considering factors such as price, service quality, and departure times. Consequently, the interplay between supply and demand is crucial in shaping how passengers act and select an air carrier (21).

3. Traveler Conduct

3-1- The Idea of Traveler Conduct

Tourist conduct encompasses the selections and actions a traveler undertakes before, during, and after their journey, influenced by diverse psychological, financial, communal, and cultural elements. This conduct addresses the phases of tourist decision-making, commencing with the inclination to travel, progressing through the information-seeking phase, weighing alternatives, selecting a locale or transport provider, and subsequently appraising the excursion post-completion. Given that cost molds tourists'

pricing, which modifies their reservation options (26).

3-1-2-2: Quality of Service

As travelers strive to balance cost and value, particularly during the busiest times of year for religious travel, price changes make service standards even more crucial. Service standards have a big impact on a traveler's choice of airline because the decision is now based not only on price but also on the quality of the service received and the entire trip. The following are the most important aspects of service standards:

1. Timeliness: Due to its impact on travel plans, travelers choose airlines with less delays, making it a crucial factor in evaluating airlines (27).
2. Cabin Ambience and Seat Comfort: These elements, which directly impact customer satisfaction, include legroom, neatness, and general comfort.
3. Cabin Crew Operations: This includes promptness, courtesy, and professionalism in delivering services, all of which contribute to a gratifying travel occasion.
4. Digital Offerings: These encompass straightforward online bookings and ticket management via applications, which have grown into a modern standard for evaluating excellent service.
5. Baggage Handling: Precise baggage management and timely delivery allow travelers to feel more relaxed and content.
6. Additional services: such as food, onboard entertainment, and internet connectivity, which elevate the journey's perceived value.

4. It supports marketing plans and choices by delivering accurate details on passenger preferences and real actions.

5. It is particularly vital at Najaf International Airport, where airline selection is directly influenced by the considerable changes in availability and costs during sacred periods (25).

3-1-2: Elements Affecting the Choice of Airline

3-1-2-1: Economic Aspects

Financial considerations are among the most significant factors influencing travelers' selection of an airline, and they play a crucial role in shaping choices when faced with shifting airfares. Among these, the most apparent ones are:

1. Airfare: Presented with many choices, travelers usually select the airline providing the best service for the least expense, rendering this the most crucial element (25).
2. Personal Income Level: As a visitor's income significantly affects travel expenditure, individuals with limited earnings often select budget carriers.
3. Price Elasticity of Demand: Passengers are more likely to switch carriers with minor price differences if they are more cost-aware.
4. Special Offers and Discounts: Seasonal discounts and early bird reservations assist draw tourists and lessen the impact of price changes on them.
5. Total Tour Expenses: The choice isn't just based on the cost of the ticket; it also takes into account additional costs like luggage and supplementary services that affect the final financial figure.
6. Currency currency Rate: Variations in currency rates impact international tourists' effective ticket

3.2.2 Making Travel Decisions

A traveler's decision-making journey is a crucial element of their buying habits, as it encompasses all stages from acquiring details and weighing alternatives to picking an airline and confirming the reservation. This selection is influenced by several behavioral and financial factors, foremost among them the changing price of air tickets, which leads to unpredictability in the traveler's perceived worth and delays the choice process.

The ticket's ultimate price: When the quality of service is the same, travelers usually choose the cheapest choice, making this the most crucial factor (12).

Schedule flexibility: While time limitations compel tourists to decide quickly, the more adaptable the trip timing, the more time they may have to wait for a better price.

Price alteration anticipation: Because of a fear of missing out, booking choices are shaped by the expectation of future price hikes.

Presence of alternative flights: The quantity of airlines facilitates cost and service comparisons, complicating the selection process.

Value perception: Price, along with service quality, comfort, and safety, is considered.

Perceived risk: A significant factor in speeding up the purchase decision is apprehension about price increases or full flights (31).

These factors hold greater importance at Najaf International Airport during periods of religious travel, when heightened demand and shifting prices compel visitors to make travel choices more swiftly while endeavoring to balance expenses, service standards, and travel duration.

7. Streamlined security and transit procedures: bolster assurance and improve the overall travel experience (28).

3-2- The Traveler's Purchase Choice

3-2-1: Information Acquisition

One of the most crucial steps in a traveler's decision to purchase is acquiring information. It precedes the ultimate choice of airline, especially considering the volatility of airfares. To minimize uncertainty and risk associated with the purchase, the tourist now endeavors to gather as much data as possible. Airline websites, online booking applications, traveler feedback, and social media are merely a few of the resources employed for this purpose.

Online Resources: When comparing prices and amenities, travelers primarily depend on official websites and reservation apps (29).

Personal suggestions: Relying on past encounters, a voyager's selection of specific carriers is affected by the accounts of companions and kin.

Digital feedback: An individual's view of a service's caliber is partly formed by user scores on electronic sites.

Specials and ads: These assist in capturing travelers' notice and directing their quest toward certain options.

Social media: These have become a significant source of current information concerning prices, offerings, and actual experiences (30).

During religious pilgrimage seasons, travelers are more likely to rely on information research due to price changes and strong demand, which compel them to thoroughly compare several airlines before making a final booking.

adjusting travel dates, or reducing the quantity of flights (31).

4-1. How Prices Affect Travelers

One significant aspect impacting travelers' buying choices in the aviation sector is the influence of expenses. A primary consideration dictating airline selection is the cost of the flight. Price is a vital element in the thought process as travelers often seek an equilibrium between the expense and the caliber of assistance provided, especially given the assortment of carriers and the broad spectrum of possibilities. According to recent research, lower airfares enhance demand, whereas higher airfares decrease demand or cause travelers to look for less expensive options or put off their travels (33).

Considering that expense is perceived as integral to the entire journey, incorporating convenience, timeliness, and provided facilities, rather than being separate from service levels, it also influences a traveler's sense of value. Price adjustments can considerably affect travelers' choices, prompting them to change airlines, alter their travel plans, or select different reservation periods. Throughout periods of spiritual observance, Najaf International Airport experiences greater influence from costs due to a noticeable rise in demand, making travelers more budget-aware when making their ultimate selection (33).

4-2. How Travelers React to Price Adjustments

Feedback from visitors is most noticeable during times of religious pilgrimage, when price changes and increasing demand cause reservations to

4. The Connection Between Traveler Behavior and Price Changes

Grasping the connection between shifts in airfare and traveler actions is crucial for comprehending the forces driving choices within the airline sector. Price changes have a direct impact on passengers' preferences and choices. Tourists' price sensitivity amplifies with price fluctuations, leading them to persistently alter their purchasing actions, alternating between waiting, comparing offers, and booking at the last moment.

Price Sensitivity: Studies indicate that during uncertain periods, holidaymakers are more attuned to cost changes and will seek out excellent offers (32).

Adjusting Booking Choices: Because of cost variances, some tourists opt to reserve in advance to avoid unforeseen price hikes, while others delay hoping for a potential price decrease.

Comparison Habits: With the increase in the quantity of price comparisons among different carriers, online platforms persist in being vital in shaping customer decisions (31).

Psychological Effect: Instability and a dread of missing opportunities are triggered by fluctuations, potentially causing travelers to make hasty decisions.

Choosing an airline: Cost, service standards, and airline reliability are all factored in when making a selection.

The link between cost variations and passenger conduct is most apparent during religious festival periods, when elevated demand results in price shifts that directly impact passenger conduct when picking an airline, whether by changing carriers,

The study population consisted of all travelers who used Najaf International Airport during the data collection period. To ensure adequate representation of the study population, the researcher employed a random sampling method for selecting participants. The questionnaire was distributed to travelers at different times throughout the study period to minimize bias in sample selection and maximize the representation of diverse traveler groups. The sample selection process considered the variety of travel circumstances, including different departure and arrival times, travel days, and travel patterns. This ensured that the sample adequately represented the study population and increased the generalizability of the research findings within the study population.

5-2-Field Research Tool

A four-section survey form was created that included employee personal information. Five items were included in the first part to examine changes in airfares. Five items were included in the second section to examine the variables affecting airline choice. Five items were included in the third segment to examine how tourists react to price adjustments. Four items were included in the fourth segment to examine how price affects purchasing decisions. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, was utilized in the survey. The range for each level of agreement is displayed in Table (1).

change quickly. This involves choosing different airlines or altering travel dates to secure more economical fares. Comprehending how passengers react to rate adjustments is a significant behavioral element in grasping their decisions within the aviation sector. It illustrates how individuals cope with variable air ticket prices by booking, postponing trips, or switching carriers. Voyagers tend to frequently re-evaluate their arrangements and are more responsive to price shifts.

Modifying Reservations: People may be adaptable when it comes to their purchases, delaying reservations, waiting for prices to drop, or acquiring reservations as soon as they anticipate price increases (34).

Changing Carriers: Due to price disparities, travelers may try to find the best deal with a respectable level of service by switching airlines.

Increased Search and Comparison: As costs change, more people look for information, and travelers use internet resources to compare costs and services.

Psychological sway (feeling of chance): The fear of missing out on ephemeral deals or unexpected price reductions drives travelers to act quickly.

Evaluation of value: The response is based on the idea of total value, which takes into account aspects like convenience, dependability, and extra features in addition to price (35).

5. The Useful Aspect

5-1. Examine the Sample and Population

Table No. (1): Survey item response scale.

Degrees of Agreement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Degree	1	2	3	4	5
Range	1.80 :1	2.60 :1.81	3.40 :2.61	4.20 :3.41	5 :4.21

- Range (class length) = $(5 - 1) / 5 = 0.80$

5-3. Reliability of Investigations

Table No. (2): Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for measuring the reliability of the investigation.

Number of phrases	Alpha coefficient
19	911 0.

wording of the items. The pilot sample was excluded from the final study sample.

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument was **0.911**, indicating excellent internal consistency and confirming the suitability of the questionnaire for data collection and statistical analysis. This coefficient represents the reliability of the questionnaire as a whole. Since the instrument comprises multiple dimensions, future studies are encouraged to estimate Cronbach's Alpha separately for each dimension to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the internal consistency of each construct.

5-4-Results and Discussion

5-4-1- Demographic Data of respondents:

Table (3) Analysis of respondents' Personal Data

The variable		Frequencies and percentages		Arrangement
		frequencies	%	
Sex	Male	320	73.2	1
	Female	117	26.8	2
the total		437	%100	
the age	Less than 30	43	9.8	4
	30-40	185	42.3	1

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of **seven experts** specializing in tourism management, air transport, research methodology, and statistics. The experts evaluated the relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire items in relation to the study objectives and variables. Based on their comments and recommendations, several items were revised linguistically and conceptually to improve clarity and ensure the appropriateness of the instrument. Furthermore, a **pilot study involving 30 passengers** was conducted prior to the main survey to assess the clarity of the questionnaire, estimate the time required for completion, and identify any ambiguities in the

	40-50	110	25.2	2
	More than 50	99	22.6	3
the total		437	%100	
Academic qualification	General Diploma	101	23.1	2
	University	302	69.1	1
	Postgraduate Studies	34	7.8	3
the total		437	%100	

most of the sample held a university degree (69.1%), followed by those with a diploma (23.1%), while those with postgraduate degrees comprised 7.8%. This distribution reflects the high educational level of the participants, which may contribute to enhancing their ability to evaluate the factors influencing the choice of airlines and to respond to changes in ticket prices.

Table (3) shows the demographic characteristics of the study sample. The results indicate that males constituted the majority of the sample (73.2%), while females comprised 26.8%. This percentage may reflect the nature of the travelers included in the study during the data collection period, but it should be considered when interpreting the results and assessing their generalizability to all users of Najaf International Airport. Regarding age, the results showed that the 30–40 age group was the most represented (42.3%), followed by the 40–50 age group (25.2%), while participants under 30 years of age constituted 9.8%. This indicates that the majority of the sample belonged to the most active travel age groups. As for educational level,

5-4-2-Descriptive Analysis of Research Themes:

Table (4): Reasons for Fluctuations in Airfare Prices

The sentence		Frequency rate and percentage					Statistical indicators		Order
		1	2	3	4	5	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	
Pricing is impacted by airline competition.	frequencies	7	37	55	265	73	3.82	.864	3
	%	1.6	8.5	12.6	60.6	16.7			

Tickets cost more when there is a greater demand for flights.	frequencies	27	41	61	226	82	3.68	1.075	4
	%	6.2	9.4	14	51.7	18.8			
Travel seasons have an impact on airfares	frequencies	11	28	36	149	213	4.20	1.007	1
	%	2.5	6.4	8.2	34.1	48.7			
Tickets cost more when fuel prices rise	frequencies	12	15	51	274	85	3.93	.832	2
	%	2.7	3.4	11.7	62.7	19.5			
The state of the economy affects how volatile airfares are	Frequencies	47	99	51	139	101	3.34	1.337	5
	%	10.8	22.7	11.7	31.8	23.1			
General arithmetic mean							3.79	1.023	-

- " Tickets cost more when there is a greater demand for flights." (Standard Deviation: 1.075, Mean: 3.68)

One of the assertions in the section on the causes of swings in ticket prices, " The state of the economy affects how volatile airfares are," received indifferent responses from the study participants, according to Table 4. (Standard Deviation: 1.337, Mean: 3.34)

Four statements from the section on the reasons why ticket costs fluctuate were agreed upon by the survey participants, according to the results in Table (4):

- " Travel seasons have an impact on airfares." (Standard Deviation: 1.007, Mean: 4.20)
- " Tickets cost more when fuel prices rise." (Standard Deviation: 0.832, Mean: 3.93)
- " Pricing is impacted by airline competition." (Mean 3.82, Standard Deviation 0.864)

Table (5): Manifestations of fluctuations in airfare prices.

The sentence		Frequency rate and percentage					Statistical indicators		Order
		1	2	3	4	5	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	
	frequencies	10	52	125	114	136	3.72	1.097	4

The cost of tickets varies based on the time of .booking	%	2.3	11.9	28.6	26.1	31.1			
For the same flight, ticket costs fluctuate .periodically	frequencies	10	30	29	236	132	4.03	.922	1
	%	2.3	6.9	6.6	54	30.2			
Prices are often changing due to deals and .promotions	frequencies	15	78	42	73	229	3.97	1.283	3
	%	3.4	17.8	9.6	16.7	52.4			
Rarely do airline ticket .costs hold steady for long	frequencies	36	37	63	204	97	3.66	1.155	5
	%	8.2	8.5	14.4	46.7	22.2			
For the same destination, different airlines charge different prices for .tickets	frequencies	10	20	37	257	113	4.01	.857	2
	%	2.3	4.6	8.5	58.8	25.9			
General arithmetic mean							3.88	1.06	-

The findings in Table 5 demonstrate that all of the claims pertaining to the elements of changes in ticket prices were accepted by the study participants, specifically:

- " For the same flight, ticket costs fluctuate periodically." (Standard Deviation: 0.922, Mean: 4.03)
- " For the same destination, different airlines charge different prices for tickets." (Standard Deviation: 0.857, Mean: 4.01)
- " Prices are often changing due to deals and promotions." (Standard Deviation: 1.283, Mean: 3.97)
- " The cost of tickets varies based on the time of booking." (Standard Deviation: 1.097, Mean: 3.72)
- " Rarely do airline ticket costs hold steady for long." (Standard Deviation: 1.155, Mean: 3.66)

Table (6): Effects of price fluctuations on travelers

The sentence	Frequency rate and percentage					Statistical indicators		Order
	1	2	3	4	5	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	

A tourist's desire to travel is diminished by price rises.	frequencies	3	64	70	211	89	3.73	.970	1
	%	0.7	14.6	16	48.3	20.4			
When prices increase, travelers look for less expensive carriers.	frequencies	14	46	235	142	0	3.16	.732	4
	%	3.2	10.5	53.8	32.5	0			

Travelers research airlines before making a reservation due to price variations.	frequencies	64	48	128	92	105	3.29	1.337	2
	%	14.6	11	29.3	21.1	24			
Travel demand rises when prices are lowered.	frequencies	130	207	54	24	22	2.09	1.043	5
	%	29.7	47.4	12.4	5.5	5			
Travel dates are occasionally altered due to high costs.	frequencies	0	39	254	144	0	3.24	.602	3
	%	0	8.9	58.1	33	0			
General arithmetic mean							3.10	0.937	-

• "Travel dates are occasionally altered due to high costs," with a mean of (3.24) and a standard deviation of (0.602).

• "When prices increase, travelers look for less expensive carriers," with a mean of (3.16) and a standard deviation of (0.732).

The results in Table (6) show that the study sample members do not agree with one of the statements in the section on the effects of price fluctuations on travelers, which is "Travel demand rises when prices are lowered.." With an arithmetic mean of (2.09) and a standard deviation of (1.043).

The results in Table (6) show that the study participants agreed with one statement from the section on the effects of price fluctuations on travelers, namely, "A tourist's desire to travel is diminished by price rises," with a mean of (3.73) and a standard deviation of (0.970). The results in Table (6) also show that the study participants gave neutral responses to three statements from the same section:

• "Travelers research airlines before making a reservation due to price variations," with a mean of (3.25) and a standard deviation of (1.337).

Table (7)
): The impact of price fluctuations on tourist behavior in choosing airlines.

The sentence	Frequency rate and percentage	Statistical indicators	Order
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		1	2	3	4	5	Arithmeti c mean	Standar d deviati on	
When there's a big price difference, I switch airlines.	frequen cies	3	64	70	211	89	3.73	.970	3
	%	0.7	14.6	16	48.3	20.4			
Booking and travel selections are influenced by price offers.	frequen cies	66	126	169	55	21	2.63	1.038	4
	%	15.1	28.8	38.7	12.6	4.8			
The choice of airline is directly influenced by the cost of the ticket.	frequen cies	10	20	37	257	113	4.01	.857	1
	%	2.3	4.6	8.5	58.8	25.9			
I favor airlines that charge fair pricing for the services they deliver.	frequen cies	12	15	51	274	85	3.93	.832	2

deviation for this statement were 4.01 and 1.857, respectively.

- "I favor airlines that charge fair pricing for the services they deliver." The mean and standard deviation for this statement were 3.93 and 0.832, respectively.
- "When there's a big price difference, I switch airlines." The mean and standard deviation for this statement were 3.73 and 0.930, respectively.

5-4-3-Testing the Research Hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant effect of the dimensions of applying the impact of price fluctuations on tourist behavior in choosing airlines.

Table No. (8): Results of the multiple regression analysis of the relationship between the

	%	2.7	3.4	11.7
General arithmetic mean				

One statement from the section on how price changes affect travelers' behavior when selecting airlines, "Booking and travel selections are influenced by price offers," received neutral reactions from survey participants, according to Table (7). The mean and standard deviation for this statement were 2.63 and 1.038, respectively. Three statements from the same area were likewise agreed upon by the study participants, according to Table (7).

- "The choice of airline is directly influenced by the cost of the ticket." The mean and standard

dimensions of applying the impact of price fluctuations on tourist behavior in choosing airlines.

Variables	Tourist behavior in choosing airlines				
	Regression coefficient	Calculated T-value	Significance level	Significance	Rank
Constant	1,734	9,123	0,000		2
Signs of Airfare Price Fluctuations	0,684	11,865	0,000	Essential	
The Effects of Price Fluctuations on Travelers	0,502	13,439	0,000	Essential	3
Causes of Airfare Price Fluctuations	0,942	19,974	0,000	Essential	1

airfare price fluctuation dimensions have a statistically significant effect on passengers' airline choice. To provide a comprehensive evaluation of the regression model, the results should also include the overall model statistics, namely the correlation coefficient (R), the coefficient of determination (R^2), the F-statistic and its significance level, together with the standardized regression coefficients (β), thereby demonstrating both the explanatory power and the overall goodness-of-fit of the model.

Findings and Suggestions

The researcher's most significant conclusions are:

The Researcher's Most Significant Conclusions

1-The findings confirmed that airfare price fluctuations have a statistically significant influence on tourists' airline selection behavior, as the main research hypothesis was supported through multiple regression analysis at a significance level of (0.05).

*Significant at a level of 0.05

Table (8) presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the effect of the dimensions of airfare price fluctuations on passengers' airline choice. The regression coefficients indicate that all three dimensions have a statistically significant positive effect on airline selection decisions at the 0.05 significance level. Among the explanatory variables, **the causes of airfare price fluctuations** exerted the strongest influence on airline choice ($\beta = 0.942$, $t = 19.974$, $p < 0.001$), followed by **the manifestations of airfare price fluctuations** ($\beta = 0.684$, $t = 11.865$, $p < 0.001$), and **the effects of price fluctuations on travelers** ($\beta = 0.502$, $t = 13.439$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that all examined dimensions contribute significantly to explaining variations in passengers' airline choice.

Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, confirming that

5-The statement that "ticket price directly influences airline choice" obtained the highest mean score (4.01), emphasizing that price remains a major determinant of airline selection. Nevertheless, this influence should be interpreted within the framework of **perceived value**, where travelers evaluate ticket prices together with service quality, flight schedules, reliability, and overall travel benefits rather than considering price alone.

6-The finding that passengers prefer airlines offering reasonable prices relative to service quality (mean = 3.93) further supports the concept of **perceived value**. Travelers seek to maximize the balance between monetary cost and the expected quality of the travel experience, indicating that value for money is more influential than simply choosing the lowest fare.

7-The results showed that increasing ticket prices reduce travelers' willingness to travel (mean = 3.73), demonstrating a relatively high degree of **price sensitivity**. However, this sensitivity varies according to the purpose and urgency of travel, suggesting that leisure travelers are generally more responsive to fare increases than travelers undertaking essential or time-specific journeys.

8-Respondents indicated that substantial price differences encourage them to switch airlines (mean = 3.73), reflecting rational consumer behavior aimed at maximizing economic utility. This behavior is consistent with theories of tourist consumer decision-making, where travelers

This result is consistent with consumer behavior theory, which suggests that price serves as a primary informational cue influencing purchase decisions, particularly when consumers compare similar airline services.

2-The causes of airfare price fluctuations recorded the highest standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.942$), indicating that this dimension exerts the strongest influence on airline choice. This finding supports the concept of **price sensitivity**, demonstrating that travelers are highly responsive to changes in ticket prices because airfare constitutes a substantial proportion of total travel expenditure.

3-Peak tourism seasons achieved the highest mean score (4.20) among the factors contributing to airfare increases, followed by rising fuel prices (3.93). These findings reflect the principles of **dynamic pricing**, whereby airlines continuously adjust fares according to fluctuations in demand, operational costs, and seat availability. Such pricing strategies become particularly evident during periods of intense travel demand.

4-Respondents strongly agreed that ticket prices for identical routes vary over time (mean = 4.03), confirming travelers' awareness of dynamic fare changes. This indicates that tourists recognize airlines' revenue management practices and often attempt to identify the most favorable booking periods before making purchasing decisions.

related factors. Although airfare remains the most visible determinant of airline choice, its influence should be interpreted alongside perceived value, perceived risk, and traveler characteristics. Moreover, the findings should be understood within the unique context of **Najaf International Airport**, which primarily serves **religious tourism**. Unlike purely commercial airports, a substantial proportion of travel demand at Najaf is associated with fixed religious occasions that cannot easily be postponed. Consequently, while ticket prices significantly influence airline selection, they may not always determine the decision to travel itself, since many pilgrims continue their journeys despite fare increases because of the religious importance and fixed timing of their visits.

Suggestions:

1. Airlines that use Najaf International Airport should use flexible and thoughtful pricing strategies that balance the needs for financial success with the ability of customers to make purchases.
2. It is essential to regularly monitor periodic changes in traveler interest because peak travel times are among the most important elements influencing ticket price variations. Forward-looking pricing arrangements are therefore required.
3. Offer competitive rates during times of peak activity and pilgrimage travel to sustain interest and lower the number of passengers switching to other airlines.
4. Improve price transparency by making sure that travelers may see the final price and any additional

compare available alternatives before making their final purchase decision.

9-The relatively low mean score (2.63) regarding booking trips primarily because of promotional offers suggests that discounts alone do not determine purchasing behavior. This finding may be explained by the concept of **perceived risk**, as many travelers prioritize airline reputation, safety, reliability, and schedule convenience over temporary price reductions when making reservation decisions.

10-The demographic characteristics revealed that most respondents were male, aged between 30 and 40 years, and held university degrees, corresponding to the profile of many travelers using Najaf International Airport during the study period. This demographic composition may also indicate greater awareness of price comparisons and online booking practices.

11-The findings confirmed that airfare differences are significantly influenced by airline competition and booking timing, both of which directly affect tourists' airline choices. These results further support the effectiveness of dynamic pricing strategies adopted by airlines to optimize revenues under changing market conditions.

12-The study concluded that tourists' airline purchasing behavior is shaped by a complex interaction between price-related and service-

12. Urge forthcoming scholars to explore further elements associated with traveler conduct, such as earnings, journey length, airline category, and service tier, to achieve more comprehensive outcomes.

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fees at the time of booking. This will reduce decision-making reluctance and promote trust.

5. Connect cost to service quality. According to research, passengers favor airlines that charge a reasonable price for the high caliber of amenities they provide. Therefore, the emphasis should be on increasing perceived value rather than just lowering fares.

6. Create customized price plans and deals according to traveler attributes like age, reason for travel, and frequency of travel. This will assist in focusing on the most regular travelers to the airport.

7. Install digital booking platforms and smart pricing strategies to offer more adaptable costs determined by occupancy and booking timelines, while also simplifying option comparisons for vacationers.

8. Considering non-monetary aspects along with cost, such as convenience, travel process simplicity, the caliber of flight services, and punctuality, as expense isn't the only determinant when selecting an air carrier.

9. Fostering collaboration among airlines, travel and tourism entities, and the administration of Najaf International Airport to cultivate an operational setting that enhances the traveler's journey and aids in sustaining cost uniformity.

10. Observing traveler inclinations and cost leanings via ongoing investigation so that pricing and marketing approaches can be altered to mirror evolving market demands.

11. As cost decreases weren't decisive for all, focus on distinct deals with tangible benefits and link them to additional advantages like baggage entitlement or flexible booking changes.

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